

MAINTAINING THE BRITISH ARMY, 1793 TO 1820

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Abstract

The British army in the period of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars was maintained through a system that could trace its roots back to the fifteenth century. It was a system that had been shaped in the preceding periods and was significantly influenced by the administrative revolution of the eighteenth century. This situation had arisen due to events at the end of the seventeenth century and the start of the eighteenth, when the relationship between army and state had been redefined. This relationship was to have significant implications for how the army was maintained as maintaining the army was in many ways central to this relationship.

Traditionally historians have considered how the army was maintained from the perspective of either the fighting arms in the field or how the state maintained the army as an institution. This study focuses upon the intermediate organizations tasked with maintaining the army, departments such as the Commissariat and Royal Wagon Train that bridged the gap between the policies and practices of the state and the fighting elements. They illustrate the impact of the relationship between the state and army on the force, as well as how army had some autonomy within the boundaries and responsibilities imposed on it by its relationship with the state. This study also considers how far the state was willing to alter this important relationship in response to military necessity. Maintaining the army went to the heart of the relationship between the force and the state in the period, but it was the question of how best to maintain the army in the event of invasion that most threatened to fray, if not destroy, this defining relationship.

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i)	C. Chilcott, 'English counties and defensive planning, 1803 to 1805', in <i>Bulletin of the Military Historical Society</i> , vol. 54, no.215, February 2004, pp.149-154.
ii)	C. Chilcott, 'The Royal Wagon Train (notes and documents)', in <i>JSAHR</i> , volume 82, number 330, Summer 2004, pp.175-177

**PLEASE NOTE THAT APPENDICES I
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Abbreviations used

ADM	Admiralty
AG	Adjutant General
BMHS	Bulletin of the Military Historical Society
CG	Commissary General
CO	Colonial Office
CUP	Cambridge University Press
HO	Home Office
HMSO	His/Her Majesty's Stationery Office
IHR	Institute of Historical Research
JSAHR	Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research
JSH	Journal of Social History
KGL	King's German Legion
NAM	National Army Museum
OUP	Oxford University Press
PC	Privy Council
PRO	Public Records Office
QMG	Quarter Master General
RA	Royal Artillery
RAMC	Royal Army Medical Corps
RASC	Royal Army Service Corps
RHS	Royal Historical Society
T	Treasury
UCL	University College London

WO War Office
WSRO Wiltshire and Swindon Records Office
YUP Yale University Press

Introduction

The maintenance of armed forces is an under researched subject. This can create a significant gap in our understanding of history as it is a subject concerned with a variety of issues, not merely the effectiveness of armed forces. The existence of a gap in our knowledge is demonstrated by the maintenance of the British army at the end of the eighteenth century. It is incorrect to believe that the subject of how the army was maintained in the period is concerned solely with wagon counting. It was entwined with economics, politics, stability and military power, and remains an under considered area. This has arisen due to a polarisation in the canon of literature relating to Britain's military in the period. Historians including Clive Emsley, Jeremy Black and Lawrence Stone have written extensively on how the British state sought to support the army. Other historians, including Paddy Griffiths, Ian Fletcher and Philip Haythornthwaite, have described the army in the field. The gap in our knowledge of the period exists because there is little consideration of how the resources provided by the state were translated into a form that could be utilised by the army in the field. It is through this process that an army is maintained, and it is also through this process that the consequences of the relationship between an army and state become apparent.

In his influential study of the subject, Martin van Creveld has described military logistics as being 'the practical art of moving armies and keeping them supplied'.¹ He notes that this was a key element of strategy that relates not only to requirements such as food but also organisation, administration and transportation. An important refinement of this argument has been made by Damon Schechter and Gordon Sander, who highlight that military logistics has since the Age of Enlightenment ceased to be 'just a uniformed matter', that is to say one concerned

¹ M. van Creveld, *Supplying War: Logistics from Wallenstein to Patton* (CUP, 2004), p.1.

exclusively with the military.² They argue instead that military logistics are often based on the ability of a nation, including its manufacturing base and infrastructure, to support its armed forces. There is thus a close relationship between the state and military logistics, as demonstrated by the relationship between the British army and the state during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

The implications of the close relationship between state and army in the period could be significant. The force was contained by the state, which imposed political and economic boundaries on the army that restricted its influence and size. This was achieved through the intermeshing of the military structure with that of civilian government, the army being unable to act without the support of the latter. This intermeshing occurred not only at the higher levels, with half of the army controlled by a civilian (the Master of the Ordnance), but also in the field, where commissaries working alongside the army were employed by the Treasury. The consequences of the intermeshing of military and civil were to have an impact at a variety of levels, the extent of which has yet to be fully considered by historians.

The relationship between the state and army had considerable implications for both defence policy and the nature of the military power that stemmed from it. Jeremy Black states that the keystones of British military power in the period were four fundamental capabilities: suppression of revolt, a small but effective army, naval dominance and an ability to wage trans-oceanic warfare.³ This study, however, takes the view that British military power was instead based on three pillars: the navy, subsidy of foreign allies and the army. That this policy existed has often been used by historians as evidence of Britain's industrial strength. This study demonstrates that this

² D. Schechter and G. Sander, *Delivering the Goods: The Art of Managing Your Supply Chain* (New Jersey, John Wiley & Sons, 2002), p.21.

³ J. Black, *The British Sea Borne Empire*, (London, YUP, 2004), p.170.

strength was fragile, and that the three tier policy was only practical because the army was given a low priority.

The lower priority given to the army did not prevent the state from at times ruthlessly utilising the force to pursue its own aims, a fact particularly apparent in regard to Empire. The global deployment of the army arose as a direct consequence of it being a tool of an Imperial power and it was expected to police the Empire, a keystone of the British state in the period, despite itself occupying the third tier of British defence policy. Thus the state frequently expected a return in excess of its sometimes-miserly investment in the army, and the disparity between resources and expected function was to continually hinder the army.

The relationship between army and state not only influenced the force's deployment and resources available but also had a significant impact on its structure. Through the intermeshing of civil and military, and the dominance of the former, the army adopted many of the characteristics of civilian administration in the period, including bureaucratic practices and departmentalisation, along with the benefits and drawbacks of each. The organizations tasked with maintaining the army exhibited such traits to a high degree and they were heavily departmentalised, various bodies having specific roles, albeit on occasion overlapping jurisdictions. The advantage of the departmentalisation for the historian is that the administrative structures provide a framework around which a study of how the army was maintained can be structured. This study differs from many works relating to the maintenance of the army as it does not focus on a single department but instead focuses on several.⁴

In some cases the organizations upon which this study is based were large and their role significant, so they are considered in their own chapters. The first to be

⁴See for example J. Sutton (ed.), *Wait for the Wagon* (Barnsley, Leo Cooper, 1998); Lieutenant Colonel J. H. Plumridge, *Hospital Ships and Ambulance Trains* (London, Seeley, 1975).

considered will be Commissariat (chapter 2). This department is one of the few involved in maintaining the army that receives any attention of note from historians, who are often critical of the organization. The Commissariat had various roles, including storekeeper, supplying food and book keeping. It was a civil-military hybrid and a study of this organization is effectively a study of the relationship between army and state in the field, while its bureaucratic practices ensure it is also a case study of military administration in the period. As this study will demonstrate it was neither the complete failure that it is often portrayed, nor wholly responsible for many of the failings in the logistics system. The only other organization to be allocated its own chapter is Royal Wagon Train (chapter 4). This organization is almost entirely ignored by historians but warrants a much a higher profile than it is commonly given. Through an extensive consideration of the Royal Wagon Train's structure and evolution, this study demonstrates how the army was able to display some structural autonomy and had an ability to adapt to new challenges, despite the constraints placed on it by the state.

Organizations that fulfilled less important roles are grouped on a thematic basis. The first group to be considered form the basis of chapter 3, and are organizations tasked with procurement for the army. This group includes the Barrack Master General and Quarter Master General, the role of which was providing accommodation; the Clothing Board, that co-ordinated uniform provision; and the Ordnance Board, that supplied munitions. The attitude of historians towards these organizations and the items that they supplied has often been apathetic. Furthermore, when these issues have been considered it has tended to be from a limited perspective. Often little consideration has been given to how these items were supplied. Much has be written, for example, about the appearance of uniform and regulations concerning

it but not how it was regulated. The situation regarding accommodation is particularly interesting as historians have tended to focus on the political significance of barracks, rather than their importance for soldiers. As chapter 3 will demonstrate, there is much to be learned by examining these organizations in a wider context. In particular it will challenge common perceptions of Britain's industrial strength through illustrating fundamental shortcomings in production.

Traditionally, studies concerned with the maintenance of the army have focused on the consequences of production, that is to say physical items such as guns. The view taken in this study, however, is that not everything required by an army can be carried on a wagon. To be maintained an armed force requires a diverse range of services. Thus chapter 5 is concerned with the second group of organizations, specifically the Medical and Chaplain General's Departments, as well as various policies adopted by the army. The final group of organizations to be considered are those that were tasked with county governance and defence. This group forms the basis of chapter 6, a chapter that demonstrates the involvement of civilian bodies in the maintenance of the army. This is arguably the most important chapter in the entire work. Through utilising rarely used sources chapter 6 highlights the willingness of the state to drastically alter its relationship with the army to aid national defence.

The objective of the above chapters is not to provide a complete overview of how the army was maintained in the period, but rather to examine key features in the context of the relationship between state and army and the consequences of this. One aspect that could warrant consideration in a study of this nature is soldiers' pay. While an important consideration, however, it is apparent that it was something that soldiers could and, importantly, did do with out for many months and this study instead

focuses on more necessary items.⁵ Other important aspects that could have warranted consideration include cartography and intelligence gathering. The two issues could be closely linked but data concerning them tends to be either scarce or fragmentary. Another issue absent from this work is how foreign armies were maintained. This is because frequently the system utilised by Britain was by far the most comprehensive, the organizations utilised by other nations being smaller, not so well organised, crippled by corruption or even non-existent. There is also the question of doctrine: that of living off the land as used by the French compared to that of supplying items from markets at home and abroad as used by the British. The distinction between these two doctrines, however, was not always clear. In 1805, for example, French forces marching through neutral Hesse-Kassel were expected to exist on rations rather than plunder.⁶ There is also the difficulty of comparing the military capability of states due to their diverse circumstances and practices.⁷

Although using the departmentalisation of the force as a structure, the study is not solely concerned with how individual departments operated. Instead it demonstrates that while the army is traditionally seen as a conservative institution, it could be innovative and flexible. Although confined within certain boundaries by its relationship with the state the army had some autonomy and utilised this to good effect. The force not only modified its structure and practices to better suit its requirements but also implemented policies concerned with aspects such as welfare and regulations to limit corruption. The army was not unique in addressing such issues

⁵ For a consideration of the difficulties of supplying the monetary requirements of the Peninsular army, see C.D. Hall, *Wellington's Navy: Sea Power and the Peninsular War 1807 to 1814* (London, Chatham, 2004), pp.129-136. André Corvisier stated that following the military revolution armies without pay had a tendency to mutiny but the British army demonstrated this was not always the case. A. Corvisier (trans. A. T. Siddall), *Armies and Societies in Europe 1494 – 1789* (London, Indiana University Press, 1979), p.61.

⁶ Creveld, *Supplying War*, p.45.

⁷ For a consideration of systems utilised by other armies see Corvisier, *Armies and Societies*; J. R. Elting, *Swords Around the Throne: Napoleon's Grande Armée* (London, Phoenix Grant, 1998); Creveld, *Supplying War*.

and in many cases, particularly welfare, the army lagged behind the Royal Navy.⁸ Yet this does not detract from the fact that many of the policies adopted by or in regard to the army would not be implemented outside of the British military for several decades, by which time many would become important social issues.

The factor that made the army distinct from the navy was its relationship to the state as it was often the third pillar of national defence, after the Royal Navy and subsidy of foreign allies. Because of this for much of the period the army would remain under funded and thus under resourced. How the army contended with this situation, which for the most part originated in the system of safeguards intended to limit the power of the army in the seventeenth century, is also reflected in a study of the organisations tasked with maintaining the force.

The organizations tasked with maintaining the British army in the period are frequently been overlooked by historians, who are often critical of the systems used to maintain the army. Yet these organizations faced many difficulties that hindered their activities. Some difficulties were the result of problems created by the practices of these organizations, some were attributable to the limits of contemporary knowledge, while factors as diverse as sleepy muleteers or heavy snowfalls could also have a significant impact. One of the most fundamental difficulties, however, was the relationship between the state and army in the period, and it is the nature and origins of this relationship that is the focus of the chapter 1.

⁸ The personnel of the Royal Navy enjoyed benefits such as more efficient medical provision, a subsidised postal service and a system of pension some years ahead of that in the army. C. Emsley, *British Society and the French Wars 1793 - 1815* (London, Macmillan, 1979), p.55; M. Duffy, 'The Foundations of British Naval Power', in M. Duffy (ed), *The Military Revolution and State, 1500 to 1800* (Exeter University, 1980), pp.49–84.

Chapter 1

The relationship between state and army

It is generally accepted that the changes that occurred in British politics and society due to the political turmoil of the seventeenth century brought with them many advantages for the nation's armed forces. It is a commonly held view that the administrative and financial revolutions enabled the state to channel to its military the resources provided by Britain's industrialisation. This chapter challenges this somewhat cosy picture by demonstrating how the state inhibited the army as much as it facilitated the army's success and expansion. Andre Corvisier wrote that the military revolution created obstacles for states to overcome.⁹ A study of eighteenth-century Britain demonstrates how a state contended with these obstacles. This was to be achieved through the maintenance of the army becoming driven by political and economic concerns rather than military ones.

John Brewer has described the relationship between the British state and its army in the period as the fiscal-military state.¹⁰ This somewhat over-simplifies the situation through accommodating diverse strands within one neat theory. In particular it downplays the importance of the military revolution as a distinct event, even though this revolution was in some ways a pre-requisite for the creation of the fiscal-military state.¹¹ While the concept of 'the fiscal-military state' maybe flawed, it is apparent that a fiscal-military state existed. That is to say a state in which fiscal policy and the military were closely linked, with implications for aspects such as defence and taxation policies. In any case, the fiscal-military state is a useful term to describe the British state at the end of the eighteenth century.

⁹ Corvisier, *Armies and Societies*, p.61.

¹⁰ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, passim.

¹¹ M. Duffy, 'The Military Revolution and State', in Duffy (ed), *The Military Revolution and State*, p.1.

Since the publication of *Sinews of Power*, historians such as Lawrence Stone have discussed and expanded Brewer's arguments and theories.¹² In both *Sinews* and subsequent works historians have tended to shy away from defining the boundaries of the fiscal-military state and the implications such boundaries may have had. Brewer touched on the subject in his consideration of British sensibilities regarding enforced service in the military, but the boundaries still remain an under-considered area.¹³ A concept central to Brewer's model of the fiscal-military state is that the nation underwent significant political, economic and social modifications to accommodate the needs of its armed forces. Taken to a logical conclusion this dictates that the armed forces would be able to expand perpetually to meet operational requirements but this was not to occur. During the eighteenth century the demands of Britain's growing military power had been met through the expansion of central government's ability to raise finances (and the willingness of British subjects to fund this through paying their taxes). By the end of the century it was apparent that this expansion could not continue indefinitely and the ability of the state to raise revenue was stretched to the limit by the Napoleonic Wars. This arose because there are limits to the concessions a state is able or willing to make to meet the needs of its armed forces. Once these limits are reached, the needs of the armed forces can no longer shape the state. In such a situation the armed forces are contained by the boundaries imposed by the state. Thus the military is tailored to the needs of the state, not the state modified to meet the needs of the military.¹⁴

Historians generally agree that the power of the state was confined within certain boundaries but have failed to address a fundamental issue: the state could have ridden roughshod over the sensibilities of British citizens. Asking why the state did

¹² See L. Stone (ed), *An Imperial State At War: Britain From 1689 – 1815* (London, Routledge, 1994).

¹³ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.63.

¹⁴ This was the situation in a civilian state. In a military state, such as Prussia, the state was more likely to adapt to meet the needs of the military. Corvisier, *Armies and Societies*, p.61.

not do so is important as the answer addresses important issues that are central to understanding Britain in the period. The first issue was that the state could only operate through a consensus across the various socio-economic and political groups and could ill afford to upset the proverbial apple cart. The system of tax collection, for example, would have been redundant if citizens had refused to pay their taxes en masse.¹⁵ The second reason for the inability (or failure, depending on perspective) of the British state to ignore the concerns of its citizenry in favour of the armed forces was that those in power often shared similar concerns to those same citizens, thereby lacking the will or, for that matter, any interest in disturbing the status quo. The acquisition of wealth was a common goal across most sections of British society, from the landed gentry to the newly emerging industrialists and the growing ranks of the 'middling sort', and growing militarism would threaten this activity.¹⁶ As Julian Hoppit states, the economic consequences of larger armies – higher taxes, diversion of resources, disruption to markets and reductions in available labour - were far-ranging and, most importantly, had already been experienced in Britain to varying degrees during the early eighteenth century.¹⁷

The existence of a large army would have struck at the key element of British economic growth, specifically the existence of a large pool of labour that was readily available to be transferred between economic sectors and industries (an oft-quoted example being from agriculture to weaving).¹⁸ The relatively high productivity levels of the British workforce, particularly in agriculture, worsened the problem because each individual removed from industry or agriculture resulted in a greater drop in

¹⁵ While there is no reason to believe such a move was mooted, it was feasible. The rise of the anti-corn law movement could be seen as evidence of a national protest movement.

¹⁶ B. Harris, 'Praising the Middling Sort: Social Identity in Eighteenth Century British Newspapers', in A. Kidd and D. Nicols (eds.), *The Making of the British Middle Classes* (Stroud, Sutton, 1998), p6; F. M. L. Thompson, *English Landed Society in the Nineteenth Century* (London, Routledge and Kegan, 1963), p.7.

¹⁷ J. Hoppit, *A Land of Liberty? England 1689 – 1782* (Oxford, Clarendon, 2000), pp.128-9.

¹⁸ N.F.R. Crafts, *British Economic Growth during the Industrial Revolution* (Oxford, Clarendon, 1985), pp.115-116.

production. Wrigley estimates, for example, that British agricultural labourers produced enough food for three families (including their own), compared to those in France who produced sufficient to support only one and a half families.¹⁹

Historians have overlooked the irony of a situation whereby Britain's military expansion in the eighteenth century was financed by and utilised institutions that were originally envisaged as means to limit the armed forces in general, and the army in particular. To appreciate this argument it is necessary to consider when a fiscal-military state began to emerge in Britain. One of the main weaknesses of Brewer's hypothesis on the existence of the fiscal-military state is that its origin is not clearly defined. Brewer's argument is that the fiscal-military state was created in the aftermath of the Glorious Revolution, as the relationship between monarch, parliament and the nation was redefined following decades of political turmoil.²⁰ It is clear, however, that the processes involved commenced much earlier than this. Lawrence Stone cites the mid-seventeenth century (approximately 1640 to 1660) as the starting point.²¹ During this era Britain experienced several traumatic events, including the civil wars, the rise and fall of a republic, dictatorship, restoration of the monarchy and foreign invasion in the form of William III's accession to the throne in 1689.²² These events had a significant impact on the psyche of many Britons that persisted into the nineteenth century, creating an aversion to military power in the country that no amount of administrative reform could counter. This was to have significant implications for the army in the eighteenth century and helped define the boundaries within which its growth was contained.

¹⁹ E. A. Wrigley, 'Society and the economy in the eighteenth century', in L. Stone (ed), *An Imperial State At War: Britain From 1689 – 1815* (London, Routledge, 1994), pp.76-77.

²⁰ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.xiii.

²¹ L. Stone, 'Introduction', in Stone (ed), *An Imperial State At War.*, p.46.

²² While William III's arrival was generally welcomed as a liberation, it was effectively an invasion.

To state that there was a fear of a powerful army in Britain is an oversimplification of an important issue that went deeper than questions relating to the armed forces alone. Certainly the dictatorship of Cromwell's generals in the 1650s had created a fear and distrust of the army, a fear so deep rooted that it shocked many soldiers into eventually supporting the restoration of the Stuart dynasty in 1660.²³ The hatred of soldiers and the army in which they served was, however, only part of the equation, just as military rule was only a part of the widespread and longer-lasting upheaval in seventeenth-century Britain. Significantly, it was not the existence of a powerful standing army that had triggered the events that led to the eventual collapse of the Commonwealth, but rather the role of the army in politics. Thus, in 1660 efforts were made to depoliticise the army and in 1661 a new type of standing army was created, described by John Childs as being 'a non-political body, concerned solely with the execution of the civil authority's wishes regarding national defence and preservation of internal law and order'.²⁴ This enabled the army to undo some of the damage done to its reputation by its actions in the aftermath of the civil war but its standing was further damaged by events in the reigns of Charles II and James II, events that created a fear of the army being used as a tool, rather than an instigator, of tyranny. Such fears had appeared to gain most credibility in the reign of James II, when the perceived threat was not only of an army used as an instrument of power but also as a Catholic and even foreign one (troops being introduced from Ireland was a persistent fear of James' opponents).²⁵

To counter the threat posed by the army, two policies were adopted that were to become keystones of British military policy during the eighteenth century. The first was the maintenance of only a small standing army, which during the reign of Charles

²³ R. Hainsworth, *The Swordsmen in Power* (Stroud, Sutton, 1997), pp.250-269.

²⁴ J. Childs, *The Army of Charles II* (London, Routledge, 1976), p.1.

²⁵ P. Seward, *The Restoration, 1660-1688* (London, Macmillan, 1991), pp.127-130.

It was restricted to six regiments and a garrison in the North African port of Tangier.²⁶ Such was the mistrust of the army that this policy was to persist even when it was clearly detrimental to Britain's security, such as when Jacobite unrest was at its height during the early eighteenth century.²⁷ The second policy to contain the power of the army was that the force was to swear an oath to the monarch but be funded through parliament.²⁸ Both policies were refined and developed during the reign of William III, the Bill of Rights in 1689 establishing that a standing army required the consent of parliament, while the Disbanding Act of 1699 established the number of troops that could be maintained.²⁹

Of the two policies adopted to contain the army the most significant was that its relationship with the state was a dual one: with the crown and parliament, the former commanding and the latter paying for its upkeep. This concept was introduced in the Militia Act of 1661 and then reinforced in the 1689 Bill of Rights.³⁰ This relationship between army and state was unusual, as armed forces in Europe tended to be appendages of the crown.³¹ The dual relationship was to have an impact on the structure, organisation and effectiveness of the army. It was also crucial to the financial and administrative revolutions that occurred during the eighteenth century, as the state would seek to expand and improve its ability to raise the revenue required to support the army. To finance the wars fought in the 1690s a system based on taxation was adopted, while from the Wars of the Spanish Succession the precedent was set of funding wars through credit.³² These practices remained keystones of

²⁶ Childs, *The Army of Charles II*, p.30

²⁷ G.C. Gibbs, 'The Revolution in Foreign Policy', in G. Holmes (ed), *Britain After the Glorious Revolution* (London, Macmillan, 1980), p.66.

²⁸ Childs, *The Army of Charles II*, pp.30 and 218.

²⁹ J. Carter, 'The Revolution and the Constitution', in G. Holmes (ed), *Britain After the Glorious Revolution* (London, Macmillan, 1980), pp.43 to 44.

³⁰ Childs, *The Army of Charles II*, p.218; Carter, 'The Revolution and the Constitution', p.43.

³¹ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, pp.43-4.

³² Carter, 'The Revolution and the Constitution', p.48; W.A. Speck, 'Conflict in Society', in Holmes (ed), *Britain After the Glorious Revolution*, p.142.

Britain's wartime finance until the end of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars.³³ These policies were to have two main impacts. The first was that the system of procurement utilised by the army was also to become based on credit.³⁴ The second consequence was more indirect but arose as a result of the growing number of government departments such as the excise, departments created to raise or allocate taxation.³⁵ The creation of such departments had implications for administrative practices throughout the state, eventually influencing the way in which the army itself was administered.

Although the dual-relationship continued to exist by the end of the eighteenth century its role had changed. Fears concerning militarism persisted, it being a subject frequently addressed by the cartoonists, caricaturists and pamphleteers.³⁶ Militarism was seen to threaten the relationship between the centre and periphery in British politics, opening the way for the former to attain more power at the expense of individuals. Because of this, fear of militarism was also linked to the notion of liberty that existed in Britain, which was based on the preservation of parliamentary democracy and rights of subjects.³⁷ It is apparent, however, that fear of militarism was not the only factor that sustained the dual-relationship: the tendency to applaud the success and capability of the fleet was, after all, militarism.

By the late eighteenth century the real fear of military expansion was as much economic as political; a large army would have tied down resources seen by many to be better spent on industrial expansion at home and imperial expansion overseas.

³³ E.L. Ellis, 'William III and the Politicians', in Holmes (ed), *Britain After the Glorious Revolution*, p.126.

³⁴ See below p.40

³⁵ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, pp.67, 102-112.

³⁶ R. J. White, *Waterloo to Peterloo* (London, Mercury Books, 1963), pp.7-8. See also J. Brewer, *The English Satirical Print, 1600-1832: The Common People and Politics, 1750 – 1790s* (Cambridge, Chadwyck, 1986).

³⁷ S. Caunce, 'Not Sprang from Princes: Middling Society in Eighteenth Century West Yorkshire', in Kidd and Nicolls (eds.), *The Making of the British Middle Classes*. pp.26-29. True liberty was seen to be as dangerous as militarism. E. Royle, *Revolutionary Britannia: Reflections on the Threat of Revolution in Britain, 1789 to 1848* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2000), p.14.

Conversely, through safeguarding mercantile interests, the Royal Navy was seen to contribute directly to British economic growth, while the exploits of explorers such as Cook had further focused public attention on the importance of maritime affairs.³⁸ Although such reasoning does not give due credit the part played by the army in the growth and maintenance of the Empire in this and the preceding period, it is fair to say that the importance of the army to British ambitions was considerably less than in the late nineteenth century. Crucially, the protection of India was not the responsibility of the British army but rather the army of the Honourable East India Company, and remained so until the mutiny of 1857.³⁹

Besides economic and colonial concerns (the two could become inseparable during this period) there were sound strategic reasons for successive governments to support the navy over the army. As an island nation it made more sense for Britain to maintain a strong fleet to prevent an invasion, rather than a strong army to repulse one, and there was what Jeremy Black describes as a belief in Britain's 'maritime destiny'.⁴⁰ In this regard the policy of the government was a success, and through an unequal allocation of resources the navy was able to take a lead over its rivals in the fields of armament and hull design, while through installations such as rope works and government dockyards the navy had considerably more control over production of its own material than did the army (including facilities overseas such as the rope works in Malta).⁴¹ Even when the latter maintained its own facilities, such as the Woolwich arsenal, a certain proportion of output would be allocated to the navy.⁴² The infrastructure allocated to support the navy was far greater than that allocated to the

³⁸ D. A. Baugh, 'The Maritime State and Atlantic Commerce', in Stone (ed), *An Imperial State At War*, pp.185-223; Black, *Sea Borne Empire*, p.127.

³⁹ Partridge and Oliver, *The British Army and Her Allies*, pp.88-90. The company's army was of further importance to Britain's military power as, through acting in conjunction with other British forces, it was able to seize and garrison enemy colonies in the Indian Ocean region (notably Java and Madagascar) and supplied troops for the Egyptian campaign during the wars with France.

⁴⁰ Black, *Sea Borne Empire*, p.125.

⁴¹ Black, *Sea Borne Empire*, p.161.

⁴² Baugh, 'The Maritime State and Atlantic Commerce', p.186.

army, and John Brewer estimates the cost of supporting a sailor was double that for a soldier.⁴³ Part of this cost included certain benefits for sailors that were not enjoyed by soldiers, a particularly contentious one being the availability of wine to naval officers free of duty, while army officers had to pay all such charges.⁴⁴

The difficulty that faced the government by the time of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars was the success of the policy that gave priority to the navy over the army. It is apparent that this led to a situation in which the expansion of the navy continued to be tolerated while the army was allowed to stagnate.⁴⁵ The success of the Royal Navy, which, it must be stated, came about as a result of a defence policy that enabled the fleet to take a qualitative and quantitative lead over its rivals, was a fragile one. The crucial issue to appreciate is that despite the emphasis placed on the Royal Navy in British defence policy it also lacked sufficient resources. While politicians may have approved funding for the fleet to expand, in practice the effects of this were limited. Manpower, in particular, was in short supply, despite the use of enforced service through the press gang.⁴⁶ Press gangs were selective and not a significant benefit for recruitment to the navy. In 1808 and 1809, for example, recruitment to the navy suffered a shortfall of 16,000 men and even as early as 1800, failure to meet recruitment targets was hampering operations. By the time of the Battle of Trafalgar British warships regularly sailed undermanned, Nelson's flagship *Victory* sailing with only 703 of her 837-man crew in 1805. Added to the Royal Navy's recruitment shortfall should also be that of the marines, who were 7,000 below establishment by 1803.⁴⁷ By 1812 the fleet was even showing signs of problems in quality, when U.S.

⁴³ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.31.

⁴⁴ See Lieutenant Fairman, *A Letter on the Expediency of Allowing Wine to the Army Free of Duty as in the Navy* (London, Carpenter, 1803).

⁴⁵ C. Emsley, *British Society*, p.52.

⁴⁶ P. Woodfine, 'Proper Objects of the Press': Naval Impressment and Habeas Corpus in the French Revolutionary Wars', in K. Dockray and K. Laybourn (eds), *The Representation and Reality of War: the British Experience* (Stroud, Sutton, 1999), pp.39-60.

⁴⁷ Hall, *British Strategy*, pp.11-13. For a full consideration of the navy in this period see N. Rodger, *The Wooden World: An Anatomy of the Georgian Navy* (London, Collins, 1986).

warships of a similar size outgunned British frigates.⁴⁸

The impact of the policy favouring the navy over the army was not entirely detrimental to the force. Sea power was utilised to significant effect to maintain the army, being used to move supplies and protect lines of communication. Traditionally historians considering the latter, such as Christopher Hall and Piers Mackesy, have focused on sea borne lines of communication but the importance of sea power to the protection of those on land should not be overlooked. Piers Mackesy notes that Britain's naval power enabled her to harass the enemy's coasts but this argument should be extended to include the fact that Britain's own coastal flanks were secure, preventing similar raids on British supply lines.⁴⁹ Disadvantages of the policy placing the navy first not only included inevitable budget deficiencies for the land based force but also influenced its deployment. The Royal Navy could only project its power with secure bases and in consequence large garrisons were deployed for the defence of locations that included Sicily, Minorca, Greece and Alexandria.⁵⁰

Whatever its impact on the army, the policy favouring the Royal Navy continued, allowing it to continue to defend the home nation, expand the Empire and safeguard commerce. This preference for the navy existed not just in government but also society in general, despite the fact that the navy could be as disruptive as the army. The presence of large dockyards and fleets, for example, inflated food prices in the locality and in 1795 this led to riots in certain regions.⁵¹ The unfavourable attitude of the population exasperated soldiers such as Ensign John Aitchinson, serving in the 3rd Regiment of Guards, who complained that until late in the Napoleonic Wars, when success in the Peninsular War finally elevated the prestige of the army, 'the navy had been the darling of the people, the likes of Nelson and Hood having looked down on

⁴⁸ P. J. Haythornthwaite, *Napoleon's Military Machine* (Staplehurst, Spellmont, 1988), pp.186-187.

⁴⁹ P. Mackesy, *The War in the Mediterranean, 1803 to 1810* (London, Longmans, 1957), p.7.

⁵⁰ Mackesy, *The War in the Mediterranean, 1803 to 1810*, p.16.

⁵¹ Black, *Sea Borne Empire*, p.162.

the army'.⁵² There are a variety of reasons why Britons continued to have an aversion to the army. As suggested above fear of overt militarism was not necessarily a factor as it existed in regard to the navy and, furthermore, was eventually fully embraced during the Peninsular War as the nation celebrated victories such as Salamanca and Vittoria with peals of church bells, special edition newspapers and other revelry.⁵³ Neither were economic arguments concerning the value of the fleet as opposed to the army necessarily significant, this being a concern primarily of the wealthy or those educated enough to read about the markets and other financial affairs in newspapers, an activity that was increasingly popular amongst the middling sort in the provinces but less so among poorly educated labourers.⁵⁴

The factor that united many elements of society against the army was the disruption it could cause at a local level. directly affecting the lives of individuals. Fights between soldiers, which were often fuelled by alcohol, were a feature of life in garrison towns, and particular those that contained depots at which new recruits would arrive. This was the situation facing Private William Wheeler of the 51st Regiment of Foot when he arrived at Maidstone in April 1809, when he described scenes of 'drunkenness and riot' amongst the newly arrived troops in the town.⁵⁵ Such disorder could be dangerous to inhabitants and on occasion required the deployment of other military forces to restore order. The memoirist Benjamin Harris recorded such an incident, which occurred while he was travelling from Ireland to depots in southeastern England and accompanied by fellow recruits to the 95th Rifles. Trouble

⁵² W. F. K. Thompson (ed), *An Ensign in the Peninsular War: The Letters of John Aitchinson* (London, Michael Joseph, 1981), p.230.

⁵³ Hugh Marendes to Privy Council, Edinburgh, 25th July 1813, PRO PC 1/4011, Privy Council Miscellaneous Unbound Papers, July 1813; *Salisbury Journal*, 24th August 1812, p.4.

⁵⁴ Harris, 'Praising the Middling Sort', p5; J. Brewer, 'Commercialisation and Politics', in N.McKendrick, J Brewer and J.H. Plumb (eds.), *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialisation of Eighteenth Century England* (London, Europa, 1982), p.216.

⁵⁵ B. H. Liddell – Hart (ed), *The Letters of Private Wheeler 1809 - 1828* (London, Michael Joseph, 1951), pp.17-18. Such disorder could involve sailors but they tended to spend more time isolated from the population aboard ship.

began shortly after the party left Ireland, when fights broke out between Irish Roman Catholics and Protestants in the group. Harris noted how the recruits, drawn mainly from rural backgrounds, were too overawed by the cities of Bristol (the port at which they disembarked) and Bath to cause more trouble. This situation continued until the group reached Salisbury Plain, at which point a sectarian fight broke out and violence continued when the group reached the town of Andover. At this point the local Volunteers were called out to restore order with loaded muskets and calm was restored.⁵⁶

A more serious outbreak of disorder occurred amongst troops billeted in Cork during September 1795. Troops of the 105th and 113th Regiments of Foot, en route to the West Indies, mutinied, marching through the city with bayonets fixed and releasing prisoners from the jail.⁵⁷ Needless to say the scenes caused considerable concern amongst the inhabitants of the city, although control was restored relatively bloodlessly following the imposition of a curfew and arrival of troops from the 7th Dragoon Guards.⁵⁸ In this case the disorder had gone beyond drunken or rowdy troops and was a mutiny but, while one of the more extreme examples of what could happen in a garrison town or city, it was a realistic threat and ample reason for civilians to oppose the presence of soldiers in a locality, even if they were not opposed to the army as an institution of the state.

Mutinies and drunken brawls were not the only reasons for hostility between citizens and soldiers. Indeed, while instances such as those noted above could potentially create conflict between soldiers and civilians, it was often the use of the army to restore control that caused hostility (a role that determined the locations of

⁵⁶ E. Hathaway (ed), *A Dorset Rifleman: The Recollections of Benjamin Harris* (Swanage, Shinglepicker, 1995), pp.20-21.

⁵⁷ Deployment to the West Indies also initiated a mutiny amongst sailors in 1801. Black, *Sea Borne Empire*, p.161.

⁵⁸ John Travers to Lord Lismore, Cork, 4th September 1795, NAM 6807/370/44; Notices Announcing a Curfew in Cork, 4th September 1795, NAM 6807/370/43.

their peace time deployments).⁵⁹ It is apparent, therefore, that for civilians contact with soldiers could be disruptive, unpleasant and dangerous. Appreciating that citizens were sometimes opposed to the army at a local level, whether it was due to disruption to markets, drunken brawls or its role as a police force, but not opposed to the army as an institution per se is vital for understanding the relationship of the army with the state and the continued existence of the dual relationship with crown and parliament. The attitude of the population in general is perhaps best described as 'not in my back yard': the army was necessary but citizens preferred it not to disrupt their lives.⁶⁰ The fear essentially was of disruption (be it social, political or economic), not of the force being used as an instrument of tyranny. Even when fears of mutiny and revolution were at their height following the French Revolution and Irish Rebellion of 1798 fears related not to the army itself but the actions of individual soldiers. By the time of the unrest in the post-war period the army was seen as reliable and called on by the government to suppress disorder in the capital.⁶¹ Thus, in regard to the situation at the time of the outbreak of the Revolutionary Wars, it is an oversimplification to state that the dual relationship the army had with crown and parliament existed as a means to control the force. Such a concept no doubt provided comfort to liberty minded liberals but more importantly the dual relationship had shaped and become embedded in the British state. It was the dual relationship that provided the driving force for the administrative and financial reforms of the eighteenth century, creating the need for parliament to expand and even create its own financial apparatus so that it, rather than the monarch, could support the armed forces.⁶² Safeguards that restricted and

⁵⁹ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.51.

⁶⁰ Hoppit, *A Land of Liberty?*, p.157.

⁶¹ Mr. Wood, Mayor of London, to Major Elington of the Tower Garrison, Mansion House, December 1816 (undated), PRO WO 94/15, Tower of London Constables Office: Letters and Orders 1816-31, f.4; M.I. Thomis and P. Holt, *Threats of Revolution in Britain 1789 – 1848* (Archon Books, 1977), pp.39-75.

⁶² Carter, 'The Revolution and the Constitution', p.48.

controlled the army were in some respects redundant by the end of the eighteenth century but were nevertheless an integral part of the state, one example being the policy that placed the Royal Navy before the army. Effectively the dual relationship continued to exist not for its original purpose – that of controlling the army – but because it enabled Britain to sustain its economic growth and social stability. A key factor in the relative stability enjoyed by Britain compared to other nations in the period of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars was that this suited both the government and large sections of the population alike.

Although the reasons for the dual relationship had changed from that initially envisaged (as a means of controlling the army and preventing it from becoming involved in politics), its impact on the army remained and should not be underestimated as it characterised the organisation of the force into the nineteenth century. Because of the dual relationship, civilian authorities governed Britain's armed forces to an unprecedented degree when compared to the situation elsewhere in Europe, particularly in Prussia, Russia and Austria.⁶³ This created an increasingly significant role for government, with the result that the army was administered through what can be considered a combination of old and new departments. The old departments predated the reign of William III and in the eighteenth century existed in forms quite different to those originally envisaged, in terms of both role and structure. Some, such as the Ordnance Board, had evolved over centuries while others, such as the War Office, had began to emerge in the 1640s.⁶⁴ Conversely, the new departments were created during or after the reign of William III, and included the Home Office. Another group of departments of note were those that predated the reign of William III but lost significance in relation to the army, an example being the Privy Council,

⁶³ Corvisier, *Armies and Societies*, pp.76, 116-122.

⁶⁴ For the various stages in the evolution of the Ordnance Board from its creation in the fifteenth century to its decline in the nineteenth, see F. Duncan, *History of the Royal Artillery* (2 vols, London, John Murray, 1879), passim.

the roles of which in the affairs of the army were largely absorbed by the Cabinet during the eighteenth century.⁶⁵

The dual relationship and subsequent administrative revolution created changes at the heart of civilian administration that, while not directly affecting the army, were to influence indirectly its own administration and effectiveness. The rise in the number of new departments and increasing prestige of existing ones served in part to undermine traditional patterns of patronage. The patronage of royalty and the aristocracy continued to dominate most departments, especially those that pre-dated the reign of William III, but the creation of newer departments opened the door for new elites, those whose power stemmed from politics and administration, to exercise their own patronage. It would be incorrect to assume that these appointments were free of the patronage of either royalty or the aristocracy as the new breed of politicians and administrators frequently owed their own positions to such patronage networks, but by the end of the eighteenth century there was evidence that the traditional patterns of patronage were beginning to break down, with the influence of traditional families being exercised rather more indirectly. This was to have implications for administration in both the military and civilian spheres, and enabled the gradual rise of professional administrators.⁶⁶

As the army swore an oath to the Crown the ultimate authority in the army was, in theory, the monarch. This was the case during the reign of William III but royal influence declined thereafter, as did the role of bodies such as the Privy Council, the role of which gradually became one of gathering information for enquiries, such those conducted regarding outbreaks of disease in the West Indies garrisons.⁶⁷ The

⁶⁵ J. Innes, 'The Domestic Face of the Fiscal-Military State: Government and Society in Eighteenth Century Britain', in L. Stone (ed), *An Imperial State At War: Britain From 1689 – 1815* (London, Routledge, 1994), p103.

⁶⁶ Brewer, *The English Satirical Print*, p.74-87.

⁶⁷ Carter, 'The Revolution and the Constitution', p.52; Innes, 'The Domestic Face of the Fiscal-Military State', p105; for an example of such an inquiry see PRO PC 1/13/149, Sickness in the West Indies

result of these changes was that by the time of the outbreak of the Revolutionary Wars, the army was, in practice, a tool of parliament or, more specifically, whatever government was in power as it was this body that decided where and when the army would deploy. Thus, in some respects, the army was subordinated to the civilian administration, which had the Prime Minister at its head.⁶⁸ The power of this office over the army was limited due to the nature of British politics. In particular, the Prime Minister did not necessarily lead the largest political group in parliament, or even draw members of the government from his party. As a consequence the role of the Prime Minister more often became one of performing a political balancing act rather than direct involvement in every aspect of policy. Of the Prime Ministers in the early nineteenth century, only Pitt and Grenville became seriously involved in the affairs of the army. Pitt was one of the instigators of the army's involvement in operations against enemy colonies and reformed the national command structure through creating the post of Secretary for War and the Colonies, while Grenville's Foxite Ministry of Talents fell following attempts to reform the army.⁶⁹

The principal means through which a Prime Minister was able to influence the actions and structure of the army was through the appointment of his Cabinet, a body that had risen to prominence during the reign of William III to meet the need for wartime planning.⁷⁰ Although attempts were made to run the affairs of government through consensus the personality of those individuals appointed to lead ministries and departments could be significant. It has been suggested, for example, that

Raised at Privy Council.

⁶⁸ For a consideration of the relevant departments and how they operated in regard to the armed forces, see Partridge and Oliver, *The British Army and Her Allies*, pp.5-9; Haythornthwaite, *The Napoleonic Source Book*, pp.195-6.

⁶⁹ Emsley *British Society*, pp128-9. For a consideration of how the varying domestic political situation could have an impact on a military campaign and the army, see R. Muir, 'Britain and the Peninsular War', in P. Griffiths (ed), *A History of the Peninsular War Vol IX: Modern Studies of the War in Spain and Portugal 1808 - 1814* (London, Greenhill Books, 1999), pp.335-372.

⁷⁰ Carter, 'The Revolution and the Constitution', p.50; Innes, 'The Domestic Face of the Fiscal-Military State', p.103.

differing preferences expressed in Cabinet concerning who should lead the British army dispatched to Portugal in 1808 caused the confused situation that resulted in the Convention of Cintra and subsequent recall of the officers concerned (Sir Arthur Wellesley, Sir Hew Dalrymple and Sir Harry Burrard).⁷¹ Of particular importance to the army were the following government departments and their heads: the Foreign Office, the policies of which could dictate where and when the army was deployed; the Home Office, which had jurisdiction over militia, fencible and volunteer forces; and the Treasury. The latter was possibly one of the largest and most important government departments and, amongst other roles, was responsible for the Commissariat.⁷² This organisation was effectively part of the army and the principal organisation tasked with supplying the force.

Two Cabinet posts had more direct control of the army. These were the Master General of the Ordnance and the Secretary of State for War and the Colonies. The former was head of the Ordnance Board, which had responsibility for the engineers and artillery, but had only an advisory role in Cabinet. Conversely, the Secretary of State for War and the Colonies was a government post and had more influence over policy. This post was a development of the Council of War, formed in 1620, and the office the Secretary of War, which had emerged in the reign of Charles II. John Brewer describes this latter post as being only a minor one and suggests that its holders were generally unimportant government officials who only rarely sat in Cabinet and thus had little impact on policy.⁷³ While such a view is to an extent true, it is excessively dismissive of a post that was to evolve into an important government department. The office of the Secretary of War rose to prominence largely due to the efforts and ability of the first holder of the post in the reign of Charles, Sir William

⁷¹ C. J. Esdaile, *The Peninsular War*, (London, Allen Lane, 2002), p.95.

⁷² Innes, 'The Domestic Face of the Fiscal-Military State', p.103. For a consideration of the Commissariat, see chapter 2.

⁷³ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.44.

Clarke, and his close co-operation with the Commander-in-Chief, General Monck. The next significant stage in the evolution of the office of the Secretary at War occurred in 1678 when parliament declared that it, rather than the Secretary of State, was to sign commissions. From 1683, following the appointment of William Bluthwayt as Secretary of War (first from 1683 to 1688 and then from 1690 to 1704), further powers were gained and the office began to maintain its own copies of warrants, entry books and letters, thereby creating a War Office and junior ministry.⁷⁴ By 1685 the duties of the War Office included the issuing of marching orders, deciding regimental seniority and creating military codes of conduct.⁷⁵

The importance of the War Office continued to increase during the eighteenth century and in 1798 it was merged with the Colonial Office, to form the office of the Secretary of State for War and the Colonies. Appointments to this post operated through traditional patronage networks and it changed hands seven times in the period 1800 to 1815. Amongst the six holders of the post (Castlereagh being in office twice), there were no fewer than four lords and one viscount. These were Lord Hobart (1801 to 1804), Lord Camden (1804 to 1805), Viscount Castlereagh (1805 to 1806, 1807 to 1809), Lord Liverpool (1809 to 1812) and Lord Bathurst (1812 to the end of the war). The only non-titled holder of the position in the period was William Windham (1806 to 1807).⁷⁶ That the post frequently changed hands was a consequence of its being a political appointment and thus vulnerable to fluctuations in political fortunes and changing ministries. Another characteristic of this post was that, being a civilian, the Secretary of State for War and the Colonies had only a directional and administrative role in the structure of the army. The office was perhaps best utilised to co-ordinate the activities of the various departments concerned with the operation and

⁷⁴ Carter, 'The Revolution and the Constitution', p.53.

⁷⁵ Childs, *The Army of Charles II*, pp.92-100.

⁷⁶ Partridge and Oliver, *The British Army and Her Allies*, p.9.

maintenance of the army. It was rarely fully effective in fulfilling even this limited task, however, and could be so ineffective that Richard Partridge and Michael Oliver describe its creation as being little more than a 'political fudge' by Pitt the Younger to strengthen his control over government.⁷⁷

Despite the powers over the army granted to it by the Act of Settlement, parliament, through the Cabinet and then the Secretary of War, could do little more than order the army into a theatre of war and issue guidance, such as on the need to avoid casualties or to aid an allied nation. On occasion politicians did intervene more directly, as in the case of the Walcheren fiasco, but in such circumstances the army rarely met with success. It is important to note, however, that the support and guidance of politicians was not without value to the army. One of the few occasions when the army did act largely on its own initiative was the expedition to Buenos Aires in 1806, which proved a complete military disaster and resulted in the surrender of the force involved.⁷⁸ This event was also to have political repercussions as it gave the Spanish colonists a new self belief and increased their determination to achieve independence from Spanish colonial rule, an event British foreign policy makers sought to avoid or delay for as long as possible.

Below the Secretary of State for War and the Colonies the national command structure of the army became more complex, leading André Corvisier to state that one characteristic of the system was confusion, although this is perhaps excessively harsh about administrative practices that could prove effective.⁷⁹ The combat elements of the army were divided between those of Horse Guards (regular infantry and cavalry), the Ordnance Board (regular artillery and engineers) and the Home Office (militia, yeomanry, fencibles and volunteers). It is apparent that there was no single military

⁷⁷ Partridge and Oliver, *The British Army and Her Allies*, p.8.

⁷⁸ Black, *Sea Borne Empire*, p.163.

⁷⁹ Corvisier, *Armies and Societies*, p.76.

department with responsibility for the entire army, and of the three departments, Horse Guards was unique in having a military man in charge, known as the Commander-in-Chief.⁸⁰ The control exercised by the Home Office over auxiliary forces was only nominal with the result that the British army was effectively divided into two departments. A similar situation existed in the French army but differed in that the separation was based on function rather than type of arm.⁸¹

Although only having direct control over the cavalry and infantry, the Commander-in-Chief was the senior military figure in the British army. Furthermore, the importance of the arms under Horse Guards enabled the Commander-in-Chief to exercise a degree of operational control over the army as whole. The Ordnance Board may have collated the returns of its own forces and maintained them, but it was with the forces under Horse Guards that they marched and relied on for their protection. It would be incorrect to view the importance of the infantry and cavalry arms as enabling the Commander-in-Chief to circumvent the national command structure and the checks in place to curb the power of the army, although they did permit him more influence than was allowed on paper. Despite this the Commander-in-Chief remained powerless without the co-operation of certain civilian-led departments.

The office of Commander-in-Chief for much of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars was held by Frederick, Duke of York, George III's second son. York temporarily left office in 1809 due to his affair with Mary Clarke and, although cleared by Parliament of any wrongdoing, he resigned as a matter of honour. York returned in 1811 and it has been argued that during his brief time out of office he was still effectively in control, as interim Commander-in-Chief General David Dundas

⁸⁰ S. J. Park and G. F. Nafziger, *The British Military: Its System and Organisation 1803 - 1815* (Cambridge (Canada), Rafm, 1983), pp.5 - 11.

⁸¹ In the French army the combat arms were under the chief of staff while the general staff tended to fulfil logistical duties. J.F.C. Fuller, *The Conduct of War 1789 - 1961* (London, Methuen, 1961), p.53.

continued his policies.⁸² That York held the post of Commander-in-Chief almost continually from 1796 to 1827 would suggest a stagnant and conservative administration, in an era that would begin to require a gradually more educated rank and file, along with increasingly complex equipment. Fortunately for the army York, while a poor field general, was unafraid of innovation and was a first class administrator. Reforms implemented during his time in office included regimental schools, a staff college, published rules and regulations for non-commissioned officers and a subsidised mail service.⁸³ Such reforms helped drag the army from its nadir of the previous decade, thereby directly improving morale. This was noted by fighting soldiers and in 1805 Captain Thomas Browne of the 23rd Foot wrote of 'a rejuvenated British army, whose spirit had been rejuvenated by internal reform and improvements'.⁸⁴

Under the Commander-in-Chief was a secretary, who enabled him to communicate with other departments. Initially this was a civilian post but from 1811 became a military appointment, a demonstration of increasing professionalism within the military hierarchy.⁸⁵ Besides this secretary, infantry and cavalry, Horse Guards contained two departments. These were the Quartermaster General, who was responsible for troop movements, information gathering and the supply of camping equipment, and the Adjutant-General, who was responsible for drill and discipline.

The combat arms not under Horse Guards – the artillery and engineers – were the responsibility of the Ordnance Board. The two organisations had developed along markedly different lines, this being apparent by the fact that while the Horse Guards

⁸² Partridge and Oliver, *The British Army and Her Allies*, p.6.

⁸³ Such a mail service already existed for the sailors of the Royal Navy. J. Bartlett, *The Development of the British Army During the Wars with France 1793 - 1815* (unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of Durham, 1997), p.184; Partridge and Oliver *Army Handbook* p.7.

⁸⁴ R. N. Buckley (ed), *The Napoleonic War Journal of Captain Thomas Henry Browne 1807 - 1816* (London, Army Records Society, 1987), p.xi.

⁸⁵ Partridge and Oliver, *The British Army and Her Allies*, p.7.

had at its head a soldier and, until 1811, a civilian secretary, the situation in the Ordnance was reversed. The head of the Ordnance was a civilian with a seat in the Cabinet but below him was an army officer, known as the Deputy Adjutant General. The Deputy Adjutant General's department was created to rectify a peculiarity of the Royal Artillery, specifically that despite being granted the title of 'regiment' it lacked many of the administrative organs associated with such a formation. Prior to the creation of the department it had been the responsibility of the individual company and battalion officers deployed around the globe to transmit inspection returns to the Ordnance Board and make requests concerning supplies. It is possible to draw parallels between the creation of the Deputy Adjutant General's department and the administrative revolution in general, particularly in the field of data collection and compilation of statistics, activities that saw the growth of government departments to achieve this.⁸⁶ How far the formation of the Deputy Adjutant General's department was linked to this trend is, however, questionable. Far more influential was the poor performance of the army in North America, which triggered several reforms of the army in its aftermath.

When the Deputy Adjutant General's department was formed in 1783 the post carried the rank of Brigadier General, although in 1795 this was elevated to the status of a staff appointment.⁸⁷ The department was to fulfil many of the administrative roles of the Commissariat but in relation to the artillery and engineers.⁸⁸ Significantly, despite its name, the Deputy Adjutant General's department was a quite separate entity from the Adjutant General's department under the Commander-in-Chief at Horse Guards, the role of that organisation being primarily to ensure discipline and

⁸⁶ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.222-225.

⁸⁷ Deputy Adjutant General, 8th April 1795, PRO WO 55/3045, Board of Ordnance Orders and Regulations foot Artillery Order Book c1790 to c1846, p.73.

⁸⁸ See Chapter 3.

the movement of troops.⁸⁹ The first holder of the office was Brigadier General Macleod, who remained in the post throughout the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. As stated by John Brewer, the systems of patronage utilised to fill positions such as the Deputy Adjutant General's department did not necessarily result in poor administrators and Macleod is proof of this.⁹⁰ On several occasions Macleod demonstrated that he possessed a good understanding of the difficulties experienced by the artillery in the field, and not only gathered data on these difficulties but also proposed effective solutions.⁹¹

An important factor that contributed to the persistent inefficiency within the departments under the Board of Ordnance was the nature and structure of the board itself. Many of the departments responsible for the administration of the army had been created during the seventeenth century. In contrast the Ordnance Board had existed in various forms for several centuries and despite reforms was a product of a previous period, a situation that had implications for its structure and efficiency. Although the role of the Ordnance had changed over the centuries it continued to have at its head the Master General of the Ordnance, a post perceived as being one of the most important and prestigious in the United Kingdom. Its responsibilities included supplying the Royal Navy and army with munitions, although it was the latter that virtually monopolised the board's time, and, unlike the post of Commander-in-Chief, the post of Master General also entitled its holder to a seat in the Cabinet.⁹² The individuals who held the office during the period of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars were the Duke of Richmond (1784 to 1795), Marquis Cornwallis (1795 to

⁸⁹ Park and Nafziger, *The British Military*, p.5.

⁹⁰ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, pp.75-81.

⁹¹ For his efforts relating to straw yards see Brigadier General Macleod to R.H. Crew, Woolwich, 3rd April 1807, PRO WO 55/1314, Letters to Board of Ordnance from Adjutant General, February 1807 to July 1809.

⁹² Duncan, *History of the Royal Artillery*, Volume 2, p14; Park and Nafziger, *The British Military*, pp.7-8.

1801), the Earl of Chatham (1801 to 1806 and again from 1807 to 1810), Lord Moira (1806 to 1807) and Lord Mulgrave (1810 to 1819).⁹³ John Brewer notes that the armed forces were well represented in parliament but that the politicians concerned only rarely promoted the interests of the armed forces (or even safeguarded them).⁹⁴ Examples of such individuals include the Masters General of the Ordnance.

It was common for the Masters General to hold other posts and they were frequently active in the House of Lords, but their activities tended to focus not on their duties in regard to the Ordnance but rather their own careers and interests. This was particularly so in the case of Lord Mulgrave, whose activities and other commitments interfered with the efficient running of the Ordnance Board to such an extent that Brigadier-General Macleod at times found it almost impossible to arrange meetings. On occasion important decisions were delayed because Lord Mulgrave was unavailable; for example, in 1811 an urgent decision concerning the deployment of draught animals to the artillery in Portugal was delayed due to his being in parliament.⁹⁵ The situation so frustrated Brigadier-General Macleod that he remarked in one letter to Lord Mulgrave 'I shall be in town today, if your Lordship happens to be at the Ordnance'.⁹⁶

The difficulties caused by Mulgrave's absence from the Ordnance at crucial times was an example of how practices that were deemed acceptable could prove detrimental to the efficiency of the army. In this case difficulties arose due to the close relationship between the civilian and military spheres in the British state. This relationship was to significantly influence the structure of another department, the Commissariat, the organization that is the focus of the following chapter.

⁹³ Duncan, *History of the Royal Artillery*, Vol. 2, p.34.

⁹⁴ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.44.

⁹⁵ MacLeod to Major Chapman, Woolwich, 8th June 1811, PRO WO55/1369, Adjutant General's Confidential Letters (Outward), September 1810 to February 1816.

⁹⁶ MacLeod to Lord Mulgrave, Woolwich, 17th February 1812, PRO WO55/1369.

Chapter 2

The Commissariat and associated organizations

Of the organizations associated with the maintenance of the British army in the period of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, the Commissariat was the most significant. It was an organization that has attained a degree of notoriety for its failings, being described by Mark Adkin in his analysis of the 1815 Waterloo campaign as ‘a much maligned body’.⁹⁷ As this chapter will demonstrate, however, it was also an organization that achieved a rarely credited degree of success through the adoption of new policies. This success was notable as it was achieved despite the constraints placed upon the organization by the practices of the period and policies of British governments, such as an at times labyrinthine bureaucracy, the need to manage finance carefully and the need to operate throughout the Empire. Through the latter the Commissariat would also demonstrate that many of the advantages supposedly provided by the fiscal-military state were only effective within certain geographical boundaries.

The Commissariat exemplified many aspects of administration and government that had developed in the eighteenth century, although the whole logistics network of the British army (and navy) demonstrated one characteristic in particular, a multitude of departments and organizations with overlapping jurisdictions, many of which were created in the turmoil and administrative reforms of the later Stuarts.⁹⁸ None of these departments matched the Commissariat in terms of either size or capability. For example, logistics in the Alexandria garrison in 1807 were the responsibility of four organizations. The smallest to maintain stores was the Royal

⁹⁷M. Adkin, *The Waterloo Companion* (London, Aurum, 2001), p.325.

⁹⁸ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.67; Childs, *The Army of Charles II*, pp.96-105. For a consideration of the similar system that operated in the navy see Duffy, ‘The Foundations of British Naval Power’, pp.49–84; Black, *Sea Borne Empire*, pp.171-208.

Corps of Engineers, which employed only one clerk in the garrison. Marginally larger was the stores organization of the Royal Artillery, which employed a clerk and two keepers of stores, and the Quartermaster General's Department, which employed a deputy quartermaster, and assistant quartermaster and one servant. The Commissariat overshadowed these organizations, the department employing a deputy commissary general, an assistant commissary, fourteen storekeepers and clerks, nine labourers and seven servants, almost five times the size of the other organizations in Alexandria combined.⁹⁹ Of note is the fact that the personnel of the Commissariat were not only employed on administrative tasks, demonstrating that the size of the organization was not merely the result of the need to meet the demands of increasing bureaucracy, unlike the situation regarding certain governmental departments.¹⁰⁰ The high proportion of storekeepers and clerks indicates that bureaucracy was a feature in the growth of the organization in the period but, to use a physiological analogy, labourers represented muscle rather than the mere fat that administrators represented. The Commissariat was not just an administrative body, but also one capable of performing functions such as moving and storing supplies.

In Alexandria the organization that most closely replicated the function and role of the Commissariat was the Quartermaster General. The primary role of the latter organization was the distribution of items designated camping equipment, which, in addition to items such as tents, included corn sacks for the cavalry, associated forage, entrenching tools for the infantry and slack lime to dispose of animal carcasses.¹⁰¹ It is apparent that in Alexandria the ability of the Quartermaster

⁹⁹ PRO WO 164/525, Royal Hospital Chelsea Prize Records, Alexandria Garrison 1807.

¹⁰⁰ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.102.

¹⁰¹ General Order No. 188, by Order of the Commander of the Forces; 'Rules and Regulations Under Which the Foraging of the Horses of the Cavalry in Ireland is to be Conducted', PRO WO 63/91, Entry Book of Letters Received at Commissariat Headquarters, Dublin, 1810 – 1812, p.49; Extracts from General Orders, Quinta, 16th June 1811, Porta Legre, 28th July 1811, NAM 6807/221, Books of Commissary General N. Jackson, c1814, pp.16 and 22.

General to distribute such items was limited and to a large degree depended upon the infrastructure of the Commissariat. Thus the definition of many items as being the responsibility of the Quartermaster General rather than the Commissariat was administrative and had little bearing on practice. In effect, the Quartermaster General was required to ensure an adequate supply of certain items, while the Commissariat would distribute them. Such anomalies in regard to corn sacks and forage would persist until 1810, when the Commissariat was finally made responsible for their provision.¹⁰²

Another organization that duplicated some of the Commissariat's duties was the office of the Store Master General, which was created in 1808. Primarily based in Britain, and not present in Alexandria, its tasks included making accounts of all goods held in depots and the packing of military stores (prior to 1808 this had been carried out by civilians). The organization maintained a small number of personnel and in 1808 its entire staff consisted of fewer than forty personnel, including ten porters, nineteen clerks, an accountant, a storekeeper and his deputy. The Store Master General's department did not have a role in the field but due to its specialist function the significance of the department was greater than its size alone would suggest.¹⁰³ The Store Master General's department reflected a trend towards greater professionalism that was occurring in both the armed forces and administration, because specialist organizations were created to meet specific needs. Despite the existence of such departments the Commissariat remained the premier organization involved in the maintenance of the army. It was a cog in the logistical machine without which the others could not turn, not least because other departments were to rely on the Commissariat, whether as a store keeper, distributor or administrator.

¹⁰² General Order No. 188, PRO WO 63/91, p.49.

¹⁰³ *Eighth Report of Military Enquiry* (London, Office of the Secretary at War, 1809), pp.161-2.

Reasons for the Commissariat's rise to prominence can be traced back to the military revolution. This had created a need for accurate pay and muster records, a task allocated to the Commissary General by the reforms of Charles II.¹⁰⁴ This function would later devolve to other departments but the organization had become an important part of military administration, although even at this early stage it was an organization characterised by its shortcomings, particularly corruption.¹⁰⁵ The Commissariat was a civil-military hybrid as its personnel wore military uniforms and held commissions but were employed by the Treasury and addressed as 'Mister'.¹⁰⁶

The Commissariat was the principal logistical organisation in the army and to a degree this enabled it to cut the across boundaries created by the division of the force into those arms under Horse Guards and those under the Board of Ordnance.¹⁰⁷ The Ordnance maintained its own stores and supply organizations such as the Field Train of the Ordnance, that included the Ordnance Commissary. The logistical organizations of the ordnance, however, had only limited capabilities compared to the Commissariat or Royal Wagon Train due to the smaller scale of their task, the majority of the army being concentrated in the arms under Horse Guards.¹⁰⁸ Procurement for the arms under the Ordnance was the responsibility of the Surveyor General's Department, in conjunction with the Clerk of Deliveries and Store Keeper.¹⁰⁹ Another department of the Ordnance that possessed capabilities similar to the Commissariat was the office of the Deputy Adjutant General, which conducted administrative tasks such as the collation of returns and co-ordination of requests for supplies.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁴ Corvisier, *Armies and Societies*, p.65; Childs, *The Army of Charles II*, pp.104-105.

¹⁰⁵ J. Kinross, *The Boyne and Aughrim: the War of the Two Kings* (Gloucester, Windrush Press, 1998), p.34.

¹⁰⁶ See PRO T1/1061, Instructions to His Majesty's Deputy Commissary of Accounts; PRO WO 63/43-49, Letters to Commissariat Officers 1808-1815.

¹⁰⁷ See above p.24.

¹⁰⁸ See Chapter 4.

¹⁰⁹ Duncan, *History of the Royal Artillery*, Vol. 2, pp.14 - 17.

¹¹⁰ See PRO WO 55/1314.

Generally, whether forces were administered from Horse Guards or by the Board of Ordnance was of little consequence for logistical operations, and while slight variation in procedures existed the organizations concerned tended to work along similar lines. That the officers of the artillery and engineers were recruited from the Royal Military College at Woolwich, for example, made little difference; neither did the alternative system of bounty payments in the artillery nor the fact that rules governing women accompanying the regiments were more relaxed.¹¹¹ Gunners and artillery drivers required munitions, food and uniform just as infantry and cavalymen did. Even if uniform was of a different colour, or ammunition larger, such items were generally purchased from similar sources, requiring similar standards of transportation, storage and distribution.

The role of the Commissariat can best be described as logistics in its broadest sense. Frequently the term logistics is used purely in relation to the movement of supplies, although in the case of the Commissariat this included the procurement, storage and distribution of such items. The numerous aspects of the Commissariat's task become apparent through a study of Commissariat accounts from the period. Figure 1 illustrates the diverse roles of the Commissariat through the thirty-three different accounting categories, along with their relevant codes, to be found in the Commissariat ledgers used in the Peninsular War. Figure 1 demonstrates that ultimately every individual employed by the army, from the common soldiers to chief surgeons, would in some way rely on the Commissariat, while there was even special provision in its administrative practices for temporary organizations such as recruiting parties.¹¹²

¹¹¹ Macleod et al to Mulgrave, Woolwich, 2nd January 1811, PRO WO55/1369, Adjutant General's Confidential Letters, Out letters, September 1810 to February 1816; Macleod to R.H. Crew, Woolwich, 17th June 1807, Macleod to Crew, Woolwich, 25th July 1807, PRO WO 55/1314.

¹¹² Wellesley-Pole to Commissary General Handfield, Dublin Castle, 2nd October 1810, PRO WO 63/91, p.159.

A	Imprests	T	Portuguese Government
B	Bat and Forage	U	Spanish Government
C	Staff Payment	V	Loss on Bills Negotiated
D	Military Contingencies	W	Property Tax
E	Secret Service	X	Pay of Commissariat Department
F	Clothing and Field Equipment	Y	Treasury Bills
G	Ordnance Department	Z	Sums received from accounts
H	Engineer Department	AA	Stores and Provisions Sold by Authority
I	Supplies	BB	Property Tax Charged Upon Incomes
J	Purchase of Horses, Mules	CC	Bills from the Ordnance Commissary and Paymaster
K	Labourers	DD	Sums received, no particular abstract allocated
L	Transport by Land	EE	Balance Paid
M	transport by Water	FF	Bill received upon Paymaster in England
N	Indemnifications		
O	POWs		
P	Stationery and Printing		
Q	Commissariat Contingencies		
R	Medical Department		
S	Deputy Paymaster General		

Figure 1: Commissariat Accounting Categories.¹¹³

While the information in figure 1 is evidence of the diversity of the Commissariat's responsibilities, it reveals little about the organization's activities at the various stages of the supply chain. Indeed, when considered in isolation, there is little in the above to suggest that the Commissariat was in fact the army's premier logistical organization, and such accounting practices may appear to be little more than an example of bureaucracy run amok in the military. Of particular note in figure 1 is the fact that supplies are referred to in a single category, although it will become apparent that the significance of the other categories to logistics are masked by the language of administration in the period.

A more detailed and revealing overview of the activities actually conducted by the Commissariat in relation to logistics can be found in the account books of Assistant Commissary General George Grellier. Grellier was responsible for maintaining the accounts of the Commissariat in Sicily, which was one of the larger overseas deployments of the organization and as a result serves as a useful case study. The accounts for the months of September to November 1813 are summarised below:

¹¹³ Detailed Instructions to Commissariat Accountants, Cash Accounts, NAM 6807/221, p12.

Date	Service	Payment		
16 September	Hire of 153 pairs of bullocks	£40	0s	10d
25 September	Artificers and labourers employed for making gun carriages	£5	18s	
9 October	For shoeing the mules of the train	£1	4s	
	Arrears of pay to Corporals and Muleteers	£15	9s	11d
	Labourers employed in loading wheat	£1	12s	9d
24 October	Pay to coopers and labourers	£12	18s	9d
	Hire of magazine to contain forage	£12	13s	4d
	Pay of Corporals and Muleteers	£15	9s	11d
27 October	Balance of hospital stoppages due 75 th regiment	£22	8s	10d
	For hire of boats, labourers and 100 planks for use by the King's bakery		£12	8s
8d	Sundry articles furnished to the Ordnance department	£28	13s	7d
28 October	Grinding wheat to make biscuit	£75	15s	6d
29 October	Pay of artificers and labourers employed by the engineers department	£7	10s	1d
30 October	Ditto	£7	1s	3d
31 October	Pay of officers and labourers in service of the Barrack Department	£1	3s	11d
5 November	Pay of Capo Master of the engineer works	£5	14s	4d
6 November	Pay of artificers and labourers employed by the engineers department	£5	18s	9d
	Hire of boats labour	£2	2s	8d
7 November	Allowance for hired servants	£13	11s	1d

Figure 2: The account books of Assistant Commissary General George Grellier, September – November 1813.¹¹⁴

In the three months covered by figure 2 the Commissariat was involved in the activities of procurement (the hire of 153 pairs of bullocks on 16 September), manufacturing (the grinding of wheat to make biscuit on 28 October), storage (the hire of a magazine to contain forage on 24 October), and transport (the hire of boats on 27 October).¹¹⁵ Besides demonstrating the extent of Commissariat involvement in the full range of activities associated with logistics, both figures 1 and 2 are of note as they illustrate the wide range of tasks associated with maintaining an army, from simple accountancy to construction projects.

¹¹⁴ NAM 7902/36, Account Book of Assistant Commissary General George Grellier.

¹¹⁵ All are key components of logistics. Schechter and Sander, *Delivering the Goods*, p.22.

The involvement of the Commissariat in the supply chain often began at the point at which items were procured. In Britain and Ireland this involvement primarily took the form of administering and awarding contracts to civilians.¹¹⁶ It was, however, on campaign that the Commissariat's activities had the most impact. When there was no existing infrastructure of barracks and stores, a situation that faced the army when it first arrived on the continent in 1808 but also as it advanced across the Iberian Peninsula, the purchasing agents of the Commissariat, frequently supported by British diplomats, would precede the army, roaming the country for supplies and sites for depots.¹¹⁷ The importance of this activity was such that it featured in the planning of campaigns, as was demonstrated by the fact that upon his arrival in northern Spain in 1808 Sir John Moore was informed that 'it will be necessary to concert with the Commissary General, W. Erskine, who will be attached to your army, the best means of assembling an adequate supply of horses and mules for rendering your army mobile'. At the same time a group of agents was travelling to Asturias to procure 'such horses and mules as that country can furnish'.¹¹⁸ Such activities frequently required close co-operation between commissaries, especially when newly arrived commissaries liaised with their more established colleagues, the latter possessing useful knowledge of the local economy and practices. As a result, Arthur Wellesley in 1808 informed General Burrard that 'I will desire the commissary to let your commissary know, the price of the hire of carts and mules, and of other items purchased by him'.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ See below p.87.

¹¹⁷ Lord Elgin, the British Ambassador at Constantinople, was particularly active in preparing the army for the campaign in Egypt. P. Mackesy, *British Victory in Egypt, 1801* (London, Routledge, 1995), p.18.

¹¹⁸ To Lieutenant-General Sir John Moore, Downing Street, 26th September 1808, PRO WO 1/236, War Department in Letters: Sir John Moore and General Baird, September 1808 to January 1809, p.9. For a further discussion of this mission, see p.164.

¹¹⁹ A. Wellesley to Sir Harry Burrard, Aeyria, 11th August 1808, PRO WO 1/228, War Department in Letters and Papers, June to August 1808, p.191.

The goods acquired by the roving commissaries would be purchased with either cash or credit. The former was most preferred by the vendors but was not always available, particularly during the prolonged campaign in Spain and Portugal when shortages of specie were common.¹²⁰ In 1810, for example, £5,382,166 in treasury notes was shipped to the Peninsula, as well £679,069 in hard cash, but the Commissariat was to be only one recipient for this, along with army wages and cash earmarked for foreign governments and other political goals.¹²¹ As a result of the shortage of specie items were frequently purchased using promissory notes at home and abroad. The use of credit to support the army became an increasingly common practice from the 1690s.¹²² As well as credit raised by government from institutions, the system of credit in Britain operated through the issuing of bills drawn on a third party, a system frequently utilised by the Commissariat to fund its own transactions.¹²³

Whether supplied by contractors or procured locally, paid for with credit or cash, goods were commonly stored in depots overseen by Commissariat storekeepers (the principal exceptions being those stores manned by organizations under the Ordnance). Depots could be separated by many miles, or concentrated in small areas, depending on the items stored in them and the requirements of the locality concerned. In Dublin, for example, there initially existed no fewer than four depots located at various buildings, all of which were rented by the Commissariat. Figure 3 shows the locations and costs of annual rental for these depots.

Address	Rent per annum	Address	Rent per annum
Queen Street	£391 5s	Rogerson's Quay	£120
Lime Street	£200	Cardiff Street	£120
	Total		£831 5s

Figure 3: Commissariat depots in Dublin, 1806.¹²⁴

¹²⁰ Muir, 'Britain and the Peninsular War', p.350.

¹²¹ Hall, *Wellington's Navy*, p.131.

¹²² Speck, 'Conflict in Society', p.142.

¹²³ Brewer, 'Commercialisation and Politics', p. 205.

¹²⁴ W. Elliot to Commissary General Handfield, Dublin Castle, 27th July 1806, PRO WO 63/88, Entry Book of Letters Received at Commissariat Headquarters, Dublin, 1805 – 1806.

In 1806 it was the possibility of relocating the four Dublin depots into a single, specially constructed building was considered. This was to cost £6,713 for five storeys but it was discovered that if reduced to four storeys the cost would amount to only £5,609. Besides saving £831 paid for rent each year, the single depot would require only one assistant storekeeper rather than the four then employed. This represented a total saving (in rent and wages) of £1037 17s per annum. The scheme proved successful and the policy of amalgamating depots was implemented across Ireland. By 1811, of the sixteen towns and cities in which Commissariat depots were located, only one, Enniskillen, was listed as having two.¹²⁵

The amalgamation of the depots in Ireland demonstrated that financial administration in the Commissariat during the period was not concerned solely with allocating revenue, and that an element of economy was involved. This reflected a boundary imposed by the state, a boundary created by the need to monitor expenditure. It was economics that restricted the number of depots available and although the amalgamations ultimately proved beneficial by increasing efficiency, the situation may have been different if the fear of large-scale unrest in Ireland had been proved true. In such a scenario single depots may have been unable to cope with demands for various supplies, while the loss of a single amalgamated depot would have caused greater disruption than if the stores it contained had been split between several sites.

Much of the pressure for economies in the Commissariat was due to parliamentary scrutiny. The cost of supplying the army (as opposed to paying soldiers' wages) had traditionally been a contentious issue for parliament and it was not until 1691 that parliament was willing to provide a single annual budget for supply. Prior to this a distinction had been made between ordinary (peace time) supply and

¹²⁵ Elliot to Handfield, Dublin Castle, 27th July 1806, PRO WO 63/88.

extraordinary supply (that required in wartime), a situation that had enabled an army to be maintained while having its activities curtailed.¹²⁶ During the eighteenth century, the Committee for Public Accounts ensured that expenditure remained under scrutiny, while detailed investigations were conducted for Reports of Military Enquiry.¹²⁷ Such scrutiny encouraged efficiency but potentially made finance, rather than capability, a priority.

While at a depot the primary role of Commissariat personnel was ensuring the distribution of supplies, monitoring stock levels and keeping accounts. To assist this task a number of special aids, including branding irons and stamps, were employed by storekeepers to identify Commissariat property. Various weights and measures were also utilised. A typical Commissariat store, for example, contained scales and weights for candles ranging from ten ounces to eight pounds and coal measures in quarter, half and whole bushels.¹²⁸ In addition to keeping records and monitoring stores commissaries were also authorised to sell certain items. Generally these items were damaged and judged too costly to repair but in some cases were simply no longer required. The nature of these sales, and the commissaries' role in them, is demonstrated in the clear instructions given to Commissary Healy of Cork concerning the selling of camping equipment in December 1805:

The list of camping equipment in the Cork store now being recorded you will please to advertise and sell by public auction the entire of that under the head unserviceable be particularly careful that nothing is disposed of but what truly comes under that description and that nothing is preserved under the head of serviceable adverting to repair the doing of which may almost amount to the original value of the article. Your particular attention will be required during the sale to this point – the unserviceable camp equipage in those stores are at present selling and to much advantage which I trust will be the case at Cork and that every publicity will be given which may tend to ensure it.¹²⁹

¹²⁶ Carter, 'The Revolution and the Constitution', p.47.

¹²⁷ *Eighth Report of Military Enquiry*, passim; Hoppit, *A Land of Liberty?*, p.147.

¹²⁸ *Letter from Barrak [sic] Master General to Barrak Masters* (Barracks Office, 1797), appendix.

¹²⁹ Punctuation as in original. P. Singer to Mr Healy, Commissary General's Office, 30th December 1805, PRO WO 63/40, Letters to Commissariat Officers 1803 – 1807.

Items sold did not merely include camping equipment but also ammunition pouches and bayonet holders.¹³⁰ That the latter items were sold to civilians is somewhat surprising, particularly in Ireland where fears of rebellion persisted. Other items that could be sold included unwanted mules and horses, along with the offal and hides of cattle slaughtered while on campaign.¹³¹ Items sold by commissaries included those required by soldiers to replace lost or damaged uniforms and equipment (although this was not strictly selling, as costs were deducted from soldiers' pay). The sums of money involved could be considerable and, following regulations introduced in 1810, cavalymen were expected to pay 7s 6½d for new water decks and 4s 2d for corn sacks. Of note is the fact that soldiers would only be expected to pay for repairs if the object was slightly damaged, at a rate 3s 9¼d and 2s 1d for decks and sacks respectively, giving some indication of the condition equipment had to be in for the army to consider it unserviceable.¹³²

The storage of items was not without difficulty as many required special consideration. A seemingly obvious example is meat, although extensive cold stores were not utilised as livestock would be slaughtered as required or meat preserved by salting, smoking or similar methods. The storage of fodder was surprisingly complex and caused difficulties: old straw, for example, could not be mixed with new but new and old hay could be mixed freely.¹³³ Such difficulties were often resolved through the use of various containers, barrels being a common type of storage vessel used for certain liquids, fodder, food and gunpowder. Several Commissariat stations – including Heligoland and New South Wales - employed coopers permanently, while

¹³⁰ Major B. Woodward to Major Ramsey, Royal Barracks, 17th September 1810, PRO WO 63/91, p.148.

¹³¹ Standing Orders, Order No. 17, NAM 6807/221, p.3.

¹³² General Order No. 188, PRO WO 63/91, p.49.

¹³³ Commissary General Handfield to Sir W. Berdett, Commissary General's Office, 31st August 1810, PRO WO 63/45, Letters to Commissariat Officers 1810 – 1811.

others – such as Malta and Sicily - employed them on a regular basis as required.¹³⁴ The storage of bread required more consideration than that of many other items, as there were optimal ways to store bread depending on how fresh it was.¹³⁵ As a result two vessels were employed specifically for this purpose – a wooden basket and a more robust version braced by iron. The former was intended for distribution to units in the field, while the more costly braced version was intended for use solely in Commissariat stores. There were strict rules concerning the proper use of each type and a misallocation of bread containers during 1811 resulted in a severe reprimand for a Commissary Dunne.¹³⁶

In addition to various tools and items required to administer maintenance, the Commissariat's personnel were responsible for considerable sums of money that were either held in pay chests or used to pay for goods and services. Such money was paid out using a system open to fraud, in which payments were made (as either cash, cheques or promissory notes) and subsequent expenses claimed by the commissary concerned. That fraud occurred was well known and Captain Thomas Browne of the 23rd Foot complained that commissaries could make considerable sums of money from illegal activity, a situation that damaged the reputation of the Commissariat irreparably in the eyes of contemporaries and historians alike.¹³⁷ Common examples of fraud included claiming the pay of deserted muleteers, buying bills at half face value from illiterate soldiers and fraudulently drawing expenses for cheques that were never issued or should have been destroyed.¹³⁸

¹³⁴ PRO WO 61/25, Commissariat Department 1816 – 17; NAM 7902/36, Account Book of Assistant Commissary General George Grellier.

¹³⁵ PRO WO 30/141, Proposals for Rendering the Body of the People Instrumental in the General Defence, saving their property, and distressing the enemy, by removing the means of subsistence, from threatened parts of the country. Published by authority, p.30.

¹³⁶ N. Malissis to Mr. Dunne, Commissary General's Office, 12th January 1810, PRO WO 63/45.

¹³⁷ Buckley (ed), *Journal of Captain Thomas Henry Browne*, p.203.

¹³⁸ Court Martial, Cartaxo, 30th January 1811, Extracts from General Orders, NAM 6807/221.

The existence of fraud in the Commissariat can be attributed to a variety of factors. Administration in the period is generally perceived to have been corrupt and the Commissariat frequently sought to recruit personnel from occupations that were particularly associated with the practice, including professionals such as lawyers and estate agents.¹³⁹ Despite these factors it is incorrect to dismiss corruption in the Commissariat as being solely a symptom of administration in the period, as such organizations have traditionally attracted corruption throughout the world. In 1835, for example, the logistical organization of the Mexican army in Texas was rendered ineffective by corruption, despite the fact that Mexico exhibited few characteristics that we would associate with Britain at the end of eighteenth century.¹⁴⁰

Pressure to limit fraud within the Commissariat appears to have originated internally as much as from pressure from parliament, and it was clearly in the organization's interests to optimise its financial resources by reducing fraud. The Commissariat's method of achieving this, through introducing new procedures, was in some respects typical of a trend towards increased regulation in the period. Regulation was not, however, the traditional approach to combating corruption. In the Excise, for example, corruption in the 1780s had been controlled through the introduction of new personnel to supervise tax collectors, thereby adding a new tier of administration rather than extra regulation.¹⁴¹ Thus, the Commissariat was utilising its own approach to resolving problems and not necessarily following trends in administrative practice. Indeed, the Commissariat was prevented from introducing a new tier of administration due to restrictions on manpower, either though none being available or unwillingness on the part of the state to fund it.

¹³⁹ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, pp.72-73, 211; G.E. Mingey, 'The Eighteenth Century Land Steward', in E.C. Jones and G.E. Mingay (eds.), *Land, Labour and Population in the Industrial Revolution* (London, Edward Arnold, 1987), p.8.

¹⁴⁰ A.A. Nofi, *The Alamo and the Texas War of Independence* (New York, Da Capo, 1994), p.195.

¹⁴¹ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, pp.102-110.

The regulations introduced by the Commissariat to limit corruption (which primarily took the form of fraud) were mainly directed at those responsible for stores. Instructions were issued in July 1812, intended to prevent the ‘losses which have in some instances been occasioned to the department, in consequence of the store keepers on foreign stations obtaining more monies on account of the ordnance military corps than the services required’.¹⁴² Measures included requirements for receipts, a second signature on bills and monthly reports. Shortfalls in the delivery of supplies to units, whether due to shortages in the depot or their not being required, were to be regularly reported to prevent them being sold on illegally. Additional instructions, issued in July 1815, prevented commissaries claiming funds on behalf of other departments, such as the artillery and engineers.¹⁴³ Equipment could only be removed from stores at the request of authorised personnel and a commissary in Ireland was reminded of the rules in 1811 following the removal of items by the Royal Wagon Train: ‘the Commissary General directs that you should be appraised that so far from granting such articles on the requisition of the officer in command at your station you ought not to grant them at all without special permission from headquarters’.¹⁴⁴ Thus, rank alone was not sufficient to authorise the removal of stores. The reforms introduced in the late war period reveal that, prior to this period, great trust was placed in the integrity of individual personnel.

To reduce fraud further Commissariat accounts were carefully controlled and administered, with the result that the organization became increasingly bureaucratic. There were, for example, 23 separate articles, which required seven different forms

¹⁴² PRO WO 55/635, Miscellaneous Orders to Commissariat.

¹⁴³ June 1808, PRO T1/1061, Instructions to His Majesty’s Deputy Commissary of Accounts; Standing Orders, Order No. 19, NAM 6807/221, p4; Circular of July 1815 Issued to all Commissaries, PRO WO 55/635, Miscellaneous Orders to Commissariat.

¹⁴⁴ H. Webb to J. Jones, Commissary General’s Office, 23rd February 1811, PRO WO 63/45.

that governed expenditure on forage for cavalry units in Ireland.¹⁴⁵ Such bureaucracy was not without difficulties and at times it appears completing paperwork threatened to surpass logistics as the primary aim of the organization. This was demonstrated in 1811 when Commissary Hagan faced disciplinary action for incorrectly listing shirts after shoes in a list of expenses, the reprimand being more severe than that received by a fellow commissary known to have ‘misplaced’ militia stores (including ordnance) but who was not guilty of filling out forms incorrectly.¹⁴⁶ The most significant consequence of increasing bureaucracy was its impact on the structure of the Commissariat itself. The organization was effectively split into two branches, designated stores and accounts, with the latter becoming so large that it accounted for half of Commissariat personnel employed in garrisons such as that of Gibraltar in December 1816.¹⁴⁷ Thus the organization had evolved administratively, an evolution that went hand-in-hand with increased professionalism created by the need for skilled accountants and administrators.

There was a trend in the period towards the gathering of precise information, whether it was statistical, tabular or mathematical.¹⁴⁸ This was apparent in Commissariat practices and perhaps the most important elements in its bureaucracy were the ledgers and account books. The information contained within them ultimately formed the basis of returns utilised by the Commissariat to maintain the army, by generals to formulate strategy, by government to formulate policy and by parliamentary and Privy Council enquiries to draw conclusions on the efficiency of the armed forces. Commissariat accountants were issued four ledgers and instructed to

¹⁴⁵ ‘Rules and Regulations Under Which the Foraging of the Horses of the Cavalry in Ireland is to be Conducted’, PRO WO 63/91.

¹⁴⁶ Commissary General to Mr Hagan, Cork, 17th April 1811, PRO WO 63/46, letters to Commissariat Officers 1811-1812.

¹⁴⁷ See below p.58.

¹⁴⁸ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.222.

carry them at all times, 'on every march and change of station'.¹⁴⁹ To aid efficiency each ledger was colour coded according to its intended use – brown for income and expenditures, green for provisions, blue for transfers of stores and red for provisions issued to troops. Returns were to reach the Commissary General by a given day of each month or week:

Date in Month	
1	Pay estimates
11	Abstract of bills to the Portuguese
15	Costs of hired vessels
24	Beginning of monthly cash and store accounts for month
25	Return of provisions supplied to regiments
	Abstract of bills to the Spanish
	Returns of forage
	Reports of shortfalls in delivery of supplies

Figure 4: Schedule for Commissariat reports and returns in Spain.¹⁵⁰

Weekly returns were normally expected to have arrived by Monday morning (or in some cases, Thursday). Serviceable and unserviceable items were only distinguished in the monthly, rather than weekly, returns.¹⁵¹ Practices such as these failed to eradicate fraud completely, although the regular monitoring of accounts ensured that perpetrators were more likely to be apprehended and that damage done by inefficient administrators limited.

Fraud was not the only problem faced by the Commissariat. Many of its personnel were guilty of inefficiency rather than corruption and practices intended to detect fraud also served to highlight irregularities caused by errors on the part of commissaries. During the winter of 1810, for example, it was noted that although no deceit was involved certain regiments were still waiting to pay for uniforms six months after being issued them.¹⁵² Occasionally, commissaries were guilty of neither

¹⁴⁹ Cartaxo, 16th January 1811, from Extracts of General Orders, NAM 6807/221, p.1.

¹⁵⁰ Detailed Instructions to Commissariat Accountants, Cash Accounts, NAM 6807/221, Books of Commissary General N. Jackson, c1814, *passim*.

¹⁵¹ 4th Article of the 9th Section of General Instructions to Resident Store Keepers, PRO WO 63/45.

¹⁵² 16th January 1811, Extracts from General Orders, NAM 6807/221, p.1.

fraud nor error but outright incompetence. Personnel found guilty of this could be dismissed, although a written warning or reprimand was more common and was frequently sufficient to resolve the situation. A typical example of a warning was that issued to Commissary O. Timms in March 1806. The following extract reflects the way in which such matters were approached, the practices that could cause disciplinary action and what constituted ‘incompetence’:

complaints having been made by Mr Heathy, which also he has been under the necessity of repeating of the extreme inconvenience to which he is constantly subjected by the irregular transmissal [sic] and altogether inadmissible form in which your vouchers are made up, I beg in the first instance to put you on your guard against a repetition of errors which they can (thus persisted in) be accounted for on the ground of incompetence for the situation of a public accountant... must end if the matter is brought before the Commissary General as it quickly must – in the summary measure of removing you from your present station.¹⁵³

Of particular note in the above extract is the structure of the disciplinary process: a complaint was made by a fellow commissary, which was handled by the office of the Commissary General and then only passed to the Commissary General himself if the situation remained unresolved. Furthermore, the complaint only arose after Timms persistently failed to complete and return paperwork satisfactorily, indicating that the Commissariat tolerated a degree of incompetence amongst its personnel. Finally, it must be noted that the warning worked as Timms evidently continued in his post. Just as advances in administration enabled efficient administrators to rise to prominence, so too did they allow less competent individuals to remain in post.¹⁵⁴

As noted previously, not all cases of inefficiency could be attributed to the incompetence described above. Genuine mistakes were made, which was inevitable when the sheer scale of the task facing the organization is considered: the

¹⁵³ Punctuation as in original. W. Webb to O. Timms, Commissary General’s Office, 25th March 1806, PRO WO 63/40.

¹⁵⁴ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.77.

Commissariat was a global organization. Our perception of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars is often Eurocentric, shaped by the writings of historians such as John Keegan, David Chandler and Charles Esdaile, all of whom emphasise conflict in the European theatre. Thus, there is a tendency to overlook the extent of Britain's imperial commitments in the period. Even when these are considered they usually involve the expeditions sent against French colonies or rebellious Indian princes. For the Commissariat, the reality was quite different to this Eurocentric perception and the organization found itself attempting to supply garrisons dispersed across the empire and beyond, which often included remote and militarily quiet regions of Africa or Asia, proving Daniel Baugh's assertion that despite their economic advantages colonies could be a strategic burden.¹⁵⁵ Supplying the more isolated outposts could be amongst the most difficult tasks faced by the Commissariat and the situation was such that Charles Greenwood estimated it could take as long as two years for items arriving in a colony to reach the most distant outposts. The isolation of certain garrisons also hampered communications, which disrupted the normal pattern of Commissariat activities and therefore disrupted the delivery and monitoring of stores. Greenwood wrote of regiments in foreign stations that they 'may be, and frequently, are so divided and dispersed as to make it extremely difficult to ascertain the quantity of clothing delivered [or required]'.¹⁵⁶

The numbers of items to be supplied posed further problems for the Commissariat, the scale of the task being demonstrated by the request of the Duke of Wellington in 1811 for the delivery of 150,000 pairs of shoes to the River Tagus by

¹⁵⁵ Baugh, 'The Maritime State', p.186. Historians including Jeremy Black have argued the converse: that colonial expansion contributed to success in warfare. Such views, however, are often based solely on the economic contribution of colonies, with little reference to their strategic consequences. Black, *Sea Borne Empire*, p.170.

¹⁵⁶ C. Greenwood to Lieutenant-Colonel Torrens, Craig's Court, 30th March 1811, PRO WO 377/2, Various Papers, 1809 upon the System of Clothing and Off Reckonings for the Army.

sea.¹⁵⁷ Added to the burden of the Commissariat in each locality was the requirement to procure supplies for forces in other regions. Ireland, for example, was to become a significant source of food and clothing for the Peninsula army.¹⁵⁸ Sicily fulfilled a similar role, and is described by Piers Mackesy as being ‘the granary’ for the large British military presence in the central Mediterranean.¹⁵⁹

Corruption, incompetence and the scale of its task were not the only factors that served to undermine the effectiveness of the Commissariat and efforts to increase the organization’s efficiency. As is often the case in any situation involving military organizations there was competition for resources and like the Royal Wagon Train, the Commissariat found itself in competition with the artillery for draught animals.¹⁶⁰ In 1811, for example, it was proposed that the Royal Artillery acquire mules from the Commissariat to transport mobile forges.¹⁶¹ In addition there was a myriad of other difficulties with which the Commissariat had to contend. These included clashes of jurisdiction with other organizations and the practice of employing civilians in overseas postings. The latter caused difficulties due to the requirement that payments be made in their local currency: in Sicily, for example, the pay chest included pounds sterling, Spanish dollars and Sicilian dollars.¹⁶² The need to make payments in foreign currency was one of the greatest challenges faced by an army due to the need not only to acquire but also exchange specie.¹⁶³

Organizations upon which the Commissariat relied made errors that compounded its own inefficiency. The transfer of horses required record keeping by both the receiving and transferring organization, and it was frequently the case that the

¹⁵⁷ Wellington to Liverpool, Cartaxo, 31st March 1811, PRO WO 1/248, War Department in Letters: Wellington, January to March 1811.

¹⁵⁸ Treasury Minute, 8th January 1811, PRO WO 63/91, p.256.

¹⁵⁹ P. Mackesy, *The War in the Mediterranean*, pp.14-15.

¹⁶⁰ See below pp.156-157.

¹⁶¹ PRO WO 37/10/26, Papers Relating to Provision of Portable Forges, 1810-12, paragraph 17,

¹⁶² Statement of Money Remaining in the Military Chest, 1st January 1814, NAM 7902/36/

¹⁶³ Corvisier, *Armies and Societies*, p.67.

parent formation rather than the Commissariat made mistakes. Horses were identified by name, distinguishing marks and a code (consisting of a letter and number) but in July 1806, for example, two horses transferred from the Dragoon Guards were wrongly reported as being E31 and F77 by the regiment. The numbers should have actually been G31 and G77, and for a time it appeared that the correct horses were not present.¹⁶⁴ This was only a minor administrative error as the correct number of animals was received, although this was not always the case. In April 1810, for example, fifteen horses were supposed to be transferred from the 2nd German Heavy Dragoons, but thirty-six were delivered.¹⁶⁵

Despite a growing dependency on, not to mention an apparent obsession with, data collection and related paperwork in the administrative organizations during the period, bureaucracy alone could not guarantee the availability of supplies. Improvements in administrative efficiency, measures to reduce fraud in the Commissariat and even the economic strength of the British state were futile if the required goods could not be procured. Frequently the efforts of the Commissariat were hindered, if not thwarted, by the simple fact that the supplies it required did not exist. During the Peninsular War providing grain proved to be particularly problematic due to the scarcity of that commodity in the theatre. Due to the Continental System this could only be rectified by importing great quantities directly from the United States, Canada and Brazil.¹⁶⁶

Of the difficulties encountered regarding the supply of grain to the Peninsular army Arthur Wellesley noted that:

in the present season of the year [summer] you cannot depend upon the country for bread. Portugal never fed itself during more than seven months out of twelve, the common consumption of the country is Indian corn; and the

¹⁶⁴ Return of the Horses of 7th Dragoon Guard to be Transferred to the Commissariat in Half Yearly Inspection in July 1806, Major General Affleck, 1st August 1806, PRO WO 63/88.

¹⁶⁵ Adjutant General's Office to Commissary General, Dublin, 9th April 1810, PRO WO 63/91, p.63.

¹⁶⁶ Hall, *Wellington's Navy*, p.6; Mackesy, *The War in the Mediterranean*, p.10.

little wheat there is in the country cannot be ground at this season of the year as the mills are generally turned by water and there is now no water in the mill ponds.¹⁶⁷

Wellesley's comments not only highlight the difficulties of procuring sufficient supplies but also the difficulties that could be encountered when processing them (in this case, milling). Added to these problems was the difficulty of transporting the required items, whether in raw (such as harvested crops) or refined (such as flour) forms. The Commissariat was hampered in this activity by the inefficient tasking and utilisation of the wheeled conveyances operated by the army. Not only were these vehicles split between various organizations, including the Royal Wagon Train and Commissariat, there were also pools of vehicles held by individual regiments.¹⁶⁸ As a result the only means through which a deficiency of transport could be rectified was by utilising assets otherwise allotted to other duties, thus Commissariat carts that could have been moving supplies were frequently used to move wounded personnel between hospitals (the situation could of course be reversed, with serious consequences for the medical services).¹⁶⁹ Significantly, even if these duties were conducted on return journeys, that is to say after carts had delivered supplies and were empty en route to the depot, their journey was still slowed.

Even if available, many of the carts operated by the Commissariat were often unsuited to the task, and a report on wagons was sceptical about their use over the rough terrain encountered in Spain and Portugal, a region noted for its poor roads. In Spain there existed Royal Roads, constructed using the latest building techniques and 30 to 60 feet wide but these were few in number, linked only major cities and were badly maintained. The most common types of roads were known as caminos and

¹⁶⁷ Wellesley to Burrard, Aeyria, 11th August 1808, PRO WO 1/228, p.191.

¹⁶⁸ See below pp.133-134.

¹⁶⁹ Thomar, 8th March 1811, Extracts from General Orders, NAM 6807/221, p.8.

carrils, both types being essentially dirt tracks, although the latter had two rows of paving stones that, only in theory, eased the passage of wheeled vehicles.¹⁷⁰ As a result travel could be treacherous and it was noted that ‘accidents are continuously occurring... carts seldom make a march without the occurrence of such accidents... no wheeled carriage can, with any degree of security, travel over mountains’.¹⁷¹ Significantly, wagons were easily hindered by bad weather, a shortcoming that was apparent during the winter of 1810 – 1811, when parts of the United Kingdom experienced heavy snowfalls that closed many roads and caused chaos for logistical organizations such as the Commissariat. Despite the mobilisation of the nation’s resources, nature could not be overcome.

In a letter to Commissary James Gilchrist, who was located in a badly affected area, the Commissary General in Ireland stated ‘I presume the roads are so much injured from the late fall of snow, that you will have suspended drawing oats from [your usual source] or any other distant quarter’.¹⁷² Of note is the fact that no attempt was made by the Commissary General to ascertain the situation regarding roads as it was assumed they were impassable to wagons. Interestingly, it appears that in such circumstances it was not common practice for Commissariat personnel to determine which roads, if any, were passable. This was demonstrated in another letter from the Commissary General’s office, this time to Commissary Colvill, who was instructed that:

as the very heavy fall of snow may have rendered the roads in a certain degree impassable... the Commissary General wishes you would carefully ascertain and report on the state of the road leading from Fermoy to Clonell [sic] and Cork, it would not be inadvisable also to inquire as to the other... roads branching from your station.¹⁷³

¹⁷⁰ Hall, *Wellington’s Navy*, p.4.

¹⁷¹ PRO WO 37/10/26, Paragraphs 7 and 9.

¹⁷² Charles Handfield to James Gilchrist, Commissary General’s Office, 4th February 1811, PRO WO 63/45.

¹⁷³ P. Singer to R. Colvill [sic], Commissary General’s Office, 31st January 1811, PRO WO 63/88.

That it was not standard practice for commissaries to inspect roads automatically in such circumstances is somewhat surprising when it is considered that the organization relied on the movement of wagons by road to undertake its duties. In part this could be explained by the structure of the British army, specifically that the movement of troops was the responsibility of the Quartermaster General, although this applied mainly at a strategic level and responsibility inevitably devolved to local officers.¹⁷⁴ Even if local roads were found to be open, however, there was then the problem of snow in other areas forcing significant detours. The drivers of one group of wagons were instructed that ‘the weather and state of the roads must govern the departure of the detachment; and it will march through Limerick (the crossroads at Cashel being reported impassable) and Birr, where fresh horses will be supplied’.¹⁷⁵

The snowfalls experienced in the United Kingdom that winter were unusually heavy, but, while accompanying a wagon train to Almeida during the winter of 1812, Conductor of Stores W. Morris recorded in his diary the difficulties that could be encountered when moving convoys even in relatively good weather:

Wednesday 18 November 1812

We were very unfortunate this day with our mules falling down particularly in passing over the water... some of them fell with our boxes but nothing of very serious consequence... the road [to Almeida] was wholly lined with sick and convalescing troops – marching for different villages in the neighbourhood of Almeida.

Friday 20 November 1812

We could scarcely make any way in consequence of the road being crowded with bullock cars conveying the sick and wounded baggage.

Added to Morris’ problems was that on Sunday 22 November the column did not move at all because it was still awaiting orders concerning the route that it was to

¹⁷⁴ Park and Nafziger, *The British Military*, p6; see also Macleod to Crew, Woolwich, 17th June 1807, PRO WO 55/1314..

¹⁷⁵ Brackets in original. N. Malasses to Robert Colvill [sic], Commissary General’s Office, 4th February 1811, PRO WO 63/45.

take.¹⁷⁶ This is significant as it demonstrates that the routes of supply columns were not planned in advance. As highlighted by Morris, however, this could prove detrimental and delay the delivery of supplies. In contrast the French army operated with sometimes-strict traffic regulations, with certain bridges open to only specific traffic, such as troops, wounded or supplies.¹⁷⁷

Another factor that hindered the activities of the Commissariat was the allocation of its personnel, which could at times appear to be chaotic. This was particularly apparent in 1808 when elements of the army were deployed for action in Spain, Portugal and Gibraltar. Lieutenant-General Sir David Baird, for example, was instructed to lead to the Peninsula a sizeable contingent of reinforcements that consisted of seven infantry battalions and two companies of artillery. The force was to travel from Cork to Falmouth but was delayed for three weeks by the late arrival of transport vessels. Eventually arriving in Falmouth and already several weeks late, Baird discovered that several key personnel were not awaiting his arrival. This was reported to the War Office, the general informing Castlereagh that 'I think it necessary to appraise your Lordship also that I have not as yet heard of any paymaster or commissary being appointed to this army'.¹⁷⁸ Thus, even after a three-week delay, the commissary (and paymaster) had not arrived. Two days later there was some confusion when an officer from the Commissariat reported to the general, who promptly informed the War Office that he would take matters into his own hands if the situation was not resolved soon:

I beg leave to state that an assistant Commissary of accounts, I. Dickson Esq. – has just reported to me his arrival from Portsmouth, but does not appear to know whether he should consider himself part of the army, as he has received no instructions upon the subject. I understand some under Commissaries are

¹⁷⁶ NAM 7508/24, Notebook of W. Morris, Conductor of Stores, 1812.

¹⁷⁷ Creveld, *Supplying War*, p.53.

¹⁷⁸ Lieutenant-General Baird, to Castlereagh, Falmouth, 1st October 1808, PRO WO 1/236, War Department in Letters: Sir John Moore and General Baird, September 1808 to January 1809, p.337.

also here in similar circumstances – I intend taking the whole with me, unless I should receive any particular instructions respecting them.¹⁷⁹

The force left Falmouth on 9 October, over a month late, but with its full complement of Commissariat personnel. That the force embarked late was bad enough, but that a general had been forced to consider acting on his own accord to ensure a commissary sailed with him says much about the system through which commissaries were assigned to individual forces. The concern expressed by Baird at the absence of a commissary is also significant, as it reflects the importance attached to the Commissariat, although much more may perhaps be inferred by the placing of the missing paymaster before the commissary in his letter of 1st October. More significant is how the episode highlights that, despite improvements in administration, the system struggled to co-ordinate the various departments and organizations that had been created, even for a small force such as that commanded by Baird.¹⁸⁰

Despite its obvious importance to the operational capability of the army, the Commissariat took second place to the manpower requirements of the front line formations. This was inevitable when it is considered that a fully manned Commissariat would have been of no value to an under-strength army (although that neither the army nor the Commissariat were ever at full strength is evidence of the state's inability to sustain the army). Some manpower could be made available through centralising depots but, while the centralisation of depots in a city such as Dublin was feasible, the policy could not be implemented across an organization operating in war zones or far-flung colonial outposts.¹⁸¹ This was one of the features of the Commissariat that set it apart from other supporting organizations, as its

¹⁷⁹ Lieutenant-General Baird, to Castlereagh, Falmouth, 3rd October September 1808, PRO WO 1/236, p.340.

¹⁸⁰ Baird's force would face further delays due to lack of shipping and chaotic Spanish organisation before disembarking in Galicia. Hall, *Wellington's Navy*, p.66.

¹⁸¹ See W. Elliot to Handfield, Dublin Castle, 27th July 1806, PRO WO 63/88.

deployment was truly global; other organizations deployed personnel overseas but none to the extent of the Commissariat.¹⁸² Of the organizations that comprised the British army only the fighting arms were as widely dispersed as the Commissariat. The global deployment of Commissariat personnel in December 1816 is illustrated in figure 5. The postings cited in the table are based on the definitions used in Commissariat documents and, although seemingly straightforward, they require some explanation. Such names were not universal in the army, different departments and organizations using various names to describe the same geographical area. Interestingly, it seems that there existed standardised forms for submitting returns of strength, but not standard terminology for describing Britain's colonial possessions.

Region	Number	Region	Number
Africa		Europe	
Cape Colony	30	France	150
Mauritius	24	Gibraltar	21
Africa	15	Mediterranean	97
Total	69	Portugal	79
Caribbean		UK	52
Bahamas	5	Heligoland	3
Bermuda	12	Total	402
Honduras	2	North America	
West Indies	10	Canada	137
Windward &		Newfoundland	16
Leeward Is.	98	Nova Scotia	46
Total	127	Total	199
		Australia (New S. Wales)	44

Figure 5: The Global Deployment of the Commissariat, December 1816.¹⁸³

In the above table the term Mediterranean refers to garrisons in Sicily, Malta, Corfu and the Ionian Islands. 'Africa' is a reference to the various colonies scattered across this continent, sometimes referred to as West Africa or Gorre in general army returns.¹⁸⁴ Of note is the absence of Commissariat personnel in regions such as the

¹⁸² See chapter 4 and chapter 5.

¹⁸³ PRO WO 61/25.

¹⁸⁴ See PRO WO 17/2814, Monthly Returns of the Army at Home and Abroad.

Indian subcontinent, a region that was the responsibility of the Honourable East India Company.

Figure 5 reveals little about the roles of personnel and in some respects the data in the original source is fragmentary. This is especially so in regard to the respective branches of the Commissariat in which individuals were employed. Some regions were defined as having distinct stores and accounts departments (such as Canada) while others did not (such as Africa) or were listed as having stores only (such as Heligoland). Figure 6 illustrates how personnel were divided between stores and accounts in the relevant countries or regions:

Posting	Stores	Accounts	% Employed in Accounts	
Canada	125	12	8.7%	
Cape Good Hope	26	4	13.3%	
Gibraltar	11	10	47.6%	
Mauritius	18	6	25%	
Mediterranean	85	12	12.4%	
Nova Scotia	41	5	10.9%	
Portugal	60	19	24.1%	

Figure 6: Commissariat stores and accounts departments, December 1816.¹⁸⁵

Where the two branches of stores and accounts were listed separately, it is apparent that the latter could account for 30% of the personnel.

Administration was not solely the domain of the accounts branch, and stores employed a considerable number of administrators. Of the 125 personnel employed in stores in Canada, fifty-three were clerks, which, along with the two office runners, amounted to approximately 42% of the branch's manpower. In Britain the manpower of the Commissariat at this point appears to have been almost entirely administrative and among its fifty-two personnel there were four chief clerks, thirty-eight clerks, three messengers and one office keeper. Unusually on the strength in Britain there were also five domestic staff consisting of two housekeepers and three housemaids.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁵ PRO WO 61/25, Commissariat Department 1816 – 17.

¹⁸⁶ PRO WO 61/25.

The system utilised to support the Commissariat was cumbersome but it was in some respects efficient and in particular it appears that its administrative apparatus would have been able to cope with a significantly expanded organization without itself expanding. Returns and finances were handled efficiently and there were few signs of strain in an administrative system co-ordinating a globally deployed organization, evidence that Commissariat administration could have shouldered an additional burden with the resources that already existed.

There was no typical structure of a Commissariat station and there was much variation due to individual circumstances and the nature of certain postings. Personnel were employed to fulfil a wide range of tasks depending on local requirements, while it is apparent that there was also some variation in which the role of personnel was recorded. In Bermuda and Malta, for example, boatmen were employed, the Commissariat in New South Wales was unusual in having a bookbinder on its strength, Nova Scotia was the only station to record the specific roles of its issuers (either fuel or food) and in 1816 Mauritius was the sole location in which a store serjeant (sic.) was present.¹⁸⁷ Figure 7 is based on a single and relatively small Commissariat station (in this case Calais) in February 1816. Of note is its very conventional structure, with only storekeepers and clerks employed, and neither labourers nor specialists, such as coopers and boatmen.

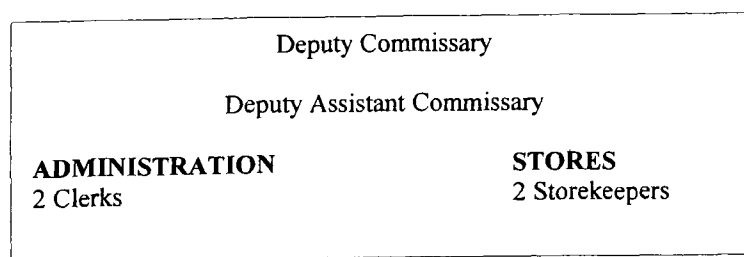


Figure 7: Personnel of the Commissariat serving in Calais, February 1816.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁷ PRO WO 61/25.

¹⁸⁸ Commissary General J. Drummond to Quarter Master General Murray, Paris, 1st February 1816, PRO WO 28/14, Letters from Quarter Master General's Department, 1816 January to June.

During 1816 the senior Commissariat officer in France (with 150 personnel), Portugal (with 79) and Canada (with 137) was a Commissary General. Although larger than the department in Portugal, that in the Windward and Leeward Islands, along with the Mediterranean, were split between several locations and in consequence three Assistant Commissaries General in each region shared command. In Honduras the senior Commissariat officer was only a temporary clerk, the affairs of the department being overseen by a committee that was collectively granted the rank of Deputy Assistant Commissary General, demonstrating that the Commissariat was on occasion able to modify its practices to accommodate certain local situations.¹⁸⁹

As the Napoleonic Wars progressed the Commissariat frequently found itself hamstrung by global deployments and the need to expand despite already having insufficient manpower. As a result the organization employed a large number of foreigners, particularly locals in Italy, Spain and Portugal. The contribution of foreign personnel to the British armed forces as mercenaries has long been recognised, E.A. Wrigley citing them as a tangible way in which the financial strength of a state could be applied to its army.¹⁹⁰ By the time of the Napoleonic Wars the use of true mercenaries in the British army had declined and foreign troops tended to be either exiles from occupied countries, prisoners of war, or motivated by ideology or patriotism rather than financial gain, examples being the forces of the Duke of Brunswick and the King's German Legion.¹⁹¹ More significant to the British army in this period were the foreigners employed in organizations to support the army, of which the Commissariat was perhaps the largest employer.

¹⁸⁹ PRO WO 61/25.

¹⁹⁰ Wrigley, 'Society and the economy in the eighteenth century', p.73. The Royal Navy also used a considerable number of foreigners and it is estimated that in 1812, 9% of trained seamen serving in the royal Navy were not of British origin. Duffy, 'British Naval Power', p.9.

¹⁹¹ Partridge and Oliver, *The British Army and Her Allies*, pp.86-88.

The Commissariat's reliance on foreign personnel in certain stations was reflected in the garrison of Sicily in 1813, the returns for which note that the personnel employed by the organisation consisted of eight Italians, five Sicilians, four English (with no reference to Scots, Irish or Welsh) and one Swiss.¹⁹² The differing nationalities present were concentrated in certain occupations and, significantly, Englishmen did not hold all of the senior positions. This says much about the structure of the Commissariat overseas, as British personnel would be expected to dominate by rank, if not numerically. This was the case in the Sicilian garrison itself, which was supported by British troops and advisors. Those listed as English were concentrated in the bakery, occupying three of the four positions there: they were the master baker John Henderson and the two head bakers Robert Witlaw [sic] and Thomas Richardson, while the overseer of bakery was a Swiss named François Solincy. The remaining Englishman, John Mitchel, was the senior Commissariat administrator in Sicily and held the post of clerk. Mitchel's office also consisted of five under clerks, all of whom were listed as Italians: Dominico Agedo, Parlo Averia, Antonio Grosso, Fransico Scullina, Giuseppe Bruno. Of the remaining posts, Italians also occupied those of storekeeper and under storekeeper, these being held by Pasquale de Gaelano and Puolo Chilleme respectively, while the Sicilian Andrea Caravello oversaw the officers' mess. All three posts were positions of responsibility and required trustworthy individuals as they involved the handling of money and management of stores. Finally the labourers and craftsmen were all Sicilian. These were the coopers Alberto Castelli and Antonio Caiopardo, along with Gioachine Crisalli and Antonio Pioro, both of whom were labourers. It is apparent that other than Andrea Caravello in the officers' mess, Sicilians held few positions of trust.

¹⁹² Monthly returns of those employed in the Commissariat Department under the control of Assistant Commissary General Grellier at Milazzo, 25th October 1813 to 24th November 1813, NAM 7902/36.

The example of the Sicilian garrison demonstrates that personnel from various nations occupied the ranks of the Commissariat and overseas it could be a cosmopolitan organization. If the financial power of the state did provide the British army an advantage by giving it a capability to employ foreigners it was these personnel, rather than mercenaries, that proved most crucial to the war effort. The role of foreign personnel in the Commissariat is highlighted by the fact that, due to the publication of his memoirs, the German A.L.F. Schauman is arguably the most famous commissary of the period.¹⁹³ As a serving officer, however, Schauman was not a typical example of the majority of foreigners employed by the Commissariat. More common were the local civilians employed under contract to support the army overseas, the most significant group of such persons being the Spanish and Portuguese muleteers who transported supplies in the Peninsula.

Initially, little thought was given to the utilisation of drivers indigenous to the nation in which the army was operating, despite the fact that such a policy had proved successful for Napoleon during his campaign of 1805.¹⁹⁴ It was believed that the vehicles and personnel of the Royal Wagon Train, in conjunction with the logistical organizations of allied armies, would be sufficient to meet the logistical needs of the army.¹⁹⁵ This was reflected in the orders issued when the army first arrived in the Peninsula, where the only mention of the region's indigenous transport capability is in relation to the purchase of mules, horses and oxen.¹⁹⁶ John Brewer writes that a major advantage provided by the fiscal-military state was one of the most advanced transport infrastructures of the era.¹⁹⁷ This infrastructure, however, terminated at Britain's borders and was of little relevance to the army operating overseas. The initial

¹⁹³ See A. L. F. Schauman, *On the Road with Wellington* (London, William Heinemann, 1924).

¹⁹⁴ Schechter and Sander, *Delivering the Goods*, p.38.

¹⁹⁵ See chapter 4.

¹⁹⁶ To Lieutenant-General Sir John Moore, Downing Street, 26th September 1808, PRO WO 1/236, p.9.

¹⁹⁷ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.183.

experiences of the army soon proved that its existing transport capability was inadequate and in a letter dated 11 August 1808, Arthur Wellesley informed General Burrard that 'you must therefore depend on the carriage of the country drawn by bullocks... each of these [animals] will carry about 600lbs and travel in a day about 12 miles'.¹⁹⁸

It was fitting that a significant number of these locally procured oxen found themselves drawing local carts. These carts did not benefit from the advances made in transport technology in Britain and were poorly produced using square axles. This gave them a distinctive sound which Grenville-Eliot of the Royal Artillery, writing to his wife in August 1808, described as a 'voice that could be heard a mile off'.¹⁹⁹ Those who drove these carts were Portuguese and Spanish muleteers, individuals who performed a vital role but who have been virtually written out of the history of the British army. At no point in the works of P.L. Isemonger or I. Fletcher, which examine the personnel of the British army, are the muleteers mentioned.²⁰⁰ They have fallen victim to both the general apathy shown by historians towards the logistical elements of the army and the unwillingness to acknowledge the contribution of the Spanish and Portuguese to the successful outcome of the Peninsula War, an attitude criticised in the works of Charles Esdaile.²⁰¹ As Christopher Hall states, their existence was fortunate for the Peninsula army as it is likely that without them the British transport system would not have been able to achieve the success that it did.²⁰²

¹⁹⁸ Wellesley to Burrard, Aeyria, 11th August 1808, PRO WO 1/228, p.191.

¹⁹⁹ Grenville Eliot to Wife, Llavos, 7th August 1808, NAM 5903/127/6, letters of William Grenville Eliot, R.A.

²⁰⁰ See P. L. Isemonger, *Wellington's War: A Living History* (Stroud, Sutton, 1998); I. Fletcher, *Wellington's Regiments* (Staplehurst, Spellmont, 1994).

²⁰¹ C. Esdaile, 'The Peninsular War: a Review of Recent Literature', in *The Historian*, No.6, (Winter 1999), pp.9-13; Esdaile, *The Peninsular War*, passim.

²⁰² Hall, *Wellington's Navy*, pp.130-131.

The existence of the muleteers rests uneasily with John Brewer's model of the fiscal-military state, discussions about which tend to be Anglocentric.²⁰³ The emphasis of historians has, to date, been on the domestic implications of the fiscal-military state, particularly in the fields of politics and economics, rather than a broader consideration of its impact on the army and the reach of the fiscal-military state overseas. This has led to a somewhat over-optimistic appraisal of the situation regarding logistics, it being assumed that as the fiscal-military state successfully encouraged the development of an efficient domestic transport infrastructure a similar situation also existed in the army. Improvements to the road and canal network in Britain, however, were in many respects irrelevant to the army serving in Spain and Portugal. The cornerstone of the fiscal-military state was control, whether it was of state apparatus or resources, but this control was effectively limited to geographical boundaries (Britain's borders and certain parts of the Empire) and was seriously weakened beyond them.²⁰⁴ Despite the backing of the British Empire and state, military strategy could start to fall apart due to the tendency of Portuguese drivers to take siestas at awkward times, due to the use of out dated wagons or because narrow Spanish roads were easily congested.

Spanish and Portuguese muleteers could be as important to the success of the British army in the field as the soldiers themselves and, by implication, the success of the state in supporting the army. The initial impression of the muleteers was often less than favourable and they soon gained a reputation for laziness and desertion. After only a few weeks of employing these individuals Arthur Wellesley informed General Burrard that 'I don't believe any power you exert over them... would induce the

²⁰³ See for example Wrigley, 'Society and the economy', pp.72-95; Innes, 'The Domestic Face of the Fiscal-Military State', pp.96-127.

²⁰⁴ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.251.

owners of the carts to go from their horses a greater distance, than to the nearest place you could get carts to relieve them'.²⁰⁵

Despite the obvious failings of the muleteers many contemporaries sympathised with their plight. W. Morris, leading a wagon train through Spain in November 1812, regarded them as equals and the officers of Morris' unit shared accommodation with them while in the field.²⁰⁶ Time was also spent attending to the needs of the muleteers and concerning preparations for a march Morris wrote: 'this morning was all bustle and confusion. In looking after the stores [and] muleteers we had no time to get any refreshment ourselves'.²⁰⁷ At times even Arthur Wellesley sympathised with the difficulties faced by the muleteers, and once tempered his criticism of them by explaining that they were exhausted after having 'made an exertion against the enemy by the assistance which they have given to me'.²⁰⁸ Perhaps most significant was the attitude of the army to the muleteers, as they were allowed relative autonomy and normal military protocols relating to rank were followed. They were not second-class personnel and a muleteer occupied the same position in the military hierarchy as an English fighting soldier of that rank. Muleteers were divided into sections under their own corporals (known as capatrases) who were responsible for distributing rations, while orders issued in 1811 instructed that soldiers escorting mules to the rear were there purely as escorts (it being advised to select 'one steady man' for each column) and were told to 'not force them to march faster or further than the capatraz is inclined to go'.²⁰⁹

The reputation of muleteers rapidly improved following 1808 and they came to be acknowledged as an important element of the logistics system. A report on forge

²⁰⁵ Wellesley to Burrard, Aeyria, 11th August 1808, PRO WO 1/228, p.191.

²⁰⁶ Wednesday 4th November 1812, NAM 7508/24, Notebook of W. Morris, Conductor of Stores, 1812.

²⁰⁷ Saturday 7th November 1812, NAM 7508/24.

²⁰⁸ Wellesley to Burrard, Aeyria, 11th August 1808, PRO WO 1/228, p.191.

²⁰⁹ Standing Orders, Order No. 37, NAM 6807/221, p.8; Villa Formosa, 10th December 1811, Extracts from General Orders, NAM 6807/221, pp.12-13.

wagons in 1811 highlighted the advantages of using muleteers, although it also stressed the differences between the army's official practices and the opinions of an individual experienced in their successful employment. The report stated that a significant advantage of employing local drivers, besides releasing military personnel for other duties, was that 'by this means you place the beasts... under the charge of people of the country, who are more capable of doing it well'.²¹⁰ It was advised that the ideal ratio of muleteers to mules should be one to four, rather than the standard practice in the army of one to three. This suggests the report's anonymous author had greater faith in the abilities of muleteers than did his superiors.²¹¹ His most surprising recommendation, however, was the following as it was concerned with the ownership of the mules:

it is most strongly to be recommended however that these mules be the property of the muleteer, and not of the government for from the circumstance of it being proposed to place them entirely under the charge of the muleteer himself, not allowing the farriers to interfere with them at all, they are most likely to be well treated, and kept in readiness to march if the private property of the individual.²¹²

This would have been a considerable departure from previous policy, in which the mule occupied an ambiguous position, being the property of the army but only for the duration of the muleteer's employment.²¹³

An important element in the relationship between the British army and state was the legislation that prevented the army from requisitioning civilian property. Issues relating to the relationship between the British army and civilians tend to be seen in the context of England, but this policy was to have implications not only

²¹⁰ PRO WO 37/10/26, paragraph 14.

²¹¹ Standing Orders, Order No. 37, NAM 6807/221, p.8.

²¹² PRO WO 37/10/26, paragraph 17.

²¹³ Standing Orders, Order No. 36, NAM 6807/22, p.7.

throughout the British Isles but also overseas.²¹⁴ One way this manifested itself in the Peninsular War was through an ambiguous approach regarding the employment and, indeed, ownership of the mules utilised by the respective logistical organizations of Horse Guards and Ordnance Board. Those employed by each arm of service had a distinct brand (see figure 8) and Commissariat personnel were under strict instructions not to operate unmarked animals.

<u>Brand</u>	<u>Arm of Service</u>	<u>Branch</u>
A	Foot Artillery	Ordnance
C	Cavalry	Horse Guards
D	Infantry	Horse Guards
HA	Horse Artillery	Ordnance

Figure 8: Marks denoting the ownership of mules operated by each arm.²¹⁵

Despite such marks, however, mules hired by these organizations were not included in separate returns, but instead counted under a single heading. This suggests different policies existed regarding the operation of mules at strategic and operational levels.²¹⁶

The report of 1811 raised issues relating not only to the ownership of the mules themselves, but also items required for their effective operation. Its author recommended that ‘the pack saddle should be the property of the muleteer and the shoeing of the mules his own private concern’.²¹⁷ The proposals might appear to be an overwhelming vote of confidence in the muleteers, but their appeal to a budget-conscious military establishment should not be overlooked. By 1811 the financial position of the Peninsular Army was, to say the least, uncertain and if implemented

²¹⁴ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.49.

²¹⁵ Standing Orders, Order No. 39, NAM 6807/221, p.8.

²¹⁶ Standing Orders, Order No. 40, NAM 6807/221, p.9.

²¹⁷ PRO WO 37/10/26, paragraph 18.

the system would have removed almost all the expenses associated with the operation of mules. The Commissariat was the first organization to adopt a similar system for its muleteers and it soon discovered that muleteers were indeed more effective when employed in this way.²¹⁸

An organization with diverse personnel, with diverse roles fulfilled with mixed success is perhaps a suitable description of the Commissariat. Its scope, in terms of both brief and geographical area of operations, was indeed large but it has come to be most associated with one item in particular: food. When hungry, soldiers had little doubt upon whom to heap the blame. Private James Gunn of the Black Watch Regiment noted that ‘I never complained but when the Commissariat was at fault (and that was not seldom)’, while a Rifleman of the 95th Rifles declared to his colleagues ‘damme, boys, if the commissary don’t show his front we must find a potato field or have a killing a day’, this being a reference to the practice of looting dead French soldiers for food.²¹⁹ Criticisms concerning the role of the Commissariat in the supply of food were justified, as the organization was involved in the procurement and supply of this commodity to such an extent that it was almost solely responsible for its provision. This was unlike the situation regarding other items, such as uniform, which were frequently the responsibility of other departments and the role of the Commissariat in their provision tended to be one of distribution or storage rather than procurement.

Although food may simply be seen as the bread, meat and biscuit supplied to the troops, there is a broader definition, one that includes drinking water, alcohol and the fodder for the numerous animals utilised by the army. It is also important that the significance of regular supplies of food should not be underestimated. If the

²¹⁸ PRO WO 37/10/26, paragraph 17.

²¹⁹ Brackets in original. R. H. Roy (ed), ‘The Memoirs of Private James Gunn’, in *JSAHR*, Vol 49 (1971), p.119; A. Brett-James (ed), *Edward Costello: The Peninsular and Waterloo Campaigns* (London, Longmans, 1967), pp.122.

Commissariat failed to ensure adequate supplies of food troops would be required to spend more time foraging, while generals could not plan future operations with any certainty. The Duke of Wellington demonstrated an awareness of these difficulties and their importance throughout the Peninsular campaign, declaring in 1809 that ‘the foundation of all military plans is compounded of the situations of one’s own troops, those of the allies, and those of the enemy; but if I cannot be certain even of my own, it is impossible for me to form, much less execute, any military plan’.²²⁰ In the worst case scenario an army deprived of food may collapse into a starving rabble, looting friend and foe alike in an effort to survive. Park and Nafziger state that British soldiers were particularly susceptible to this weakness, noting that they ‘tended to fall apart faster than the French when deprived of regular rations [or] subjected to hardship’.²²¹ Such a conclusion is contentious considering the fate that befell Napoleon’s Grand Armée in 1812 but it clearly highlights the potential consequences of an army’s failure to provide food.²²²

An insight into the type and quantity of food supplied by the army to its troops can be gained from a return of the supplies available to the army in December 1813. Those available to three divisions are shown in figure 9:

Division	Days of Bread/Biscuit	Days of Meat	Days of Wine/Spirit
3 rd	5	13	2
4 th	1	13	2
7 th	None	11	3

Figure 9: Availability of supplies in the centre army corps, December 1813.²²³

²²⁰ Wellington to Rt. Hon. J. Villiers, 27 May 1809, L. C. Gurwood (ed), *Despatches and General Orders of the Duke of Wellington* (London, Murray, 1841), p.261.

²²¹ Park and Nafziger, *The British Military*, p.14.

²²² P. J. Haythornthwaite, *Napoleon’s Military Machine* (Staplehurst, Spellmont, 1988), pp.140-141. For a consideration of French discipline during adversity in general, see also Elting, *Swords Around the Throne*, passim.

²²³ NAM 7512/124, Supplies to the Divisions of the Centre Army Corps in the Peninsula, December 1813.

Despite occupying an approximately similar geographical position in the same time frame, it is apparent that the level of supply to the three divisions was somewhat inconsistent: the 3rd division possessed only two days of full supply and the 4th one, while the 7th did not have sufficient quantities of each commodity for a single day. The situation for the 3rd is improved significantly (to five days) by discarding alcohol. The importance of this commodity should not, however, be discounted, due to its influence on morale and discipline.

Perhaps the most notable feature of the data in figure 9 is the disparity between reserves of meat when compared to those of bread and biscuit. This situation was primarily due to the differences in how meat, bread and biscuit were supplied. Meat marched on the hoof with the army, was available regardless of season and could be slaughtered as required on the spot. Conversely bread and biscuits required some effort to produce and their manufacture was a relatively long process. To begin with, baking required wheat, which was not always available and also required processing.²²⁴ Another difficulty was procuring or manufacturing sufficient yeast for the baking process, great efforts being made by army bakers throughout the period to increase both the quality and cost effectiveness of this important ingredient.²²⁵ Finally, even if these difficulties could be overcome the baking of bread was time consuming.²²⁶ This affected strategy and planning at the highest levels and was apparent in the orders issued to Lieutenant General Sir John Moore concerning his expedition to northern Spain in 1808: 'a large proportion of biscuit has been sent in the victuallers [sic] that you may be relieved from the inconvenience of baking when the troops are in motion'.²²⁷

More easily stored and preserved, biscuit was generally seen as an emergency

²²⁴ p.54.

²²⁵ PRO WO 30/141, pp.30-32.

²²⁶ Wellesley to Burrard, Aeyria, 11th August 1808, PRO WO 1/228.

²²⁷ To Lieutenant-General Sir John Moore, Downing Street, 26th September 1808, PRO WO 1/236.

ration that could take the place of bread when required, but such characteristics also made it preferable for an army wishing to remain on the march, hence its inclusion in the same category as bread in returns. Despite the advantages of biscuit, however, bread was more easily digestible and thus popular with the troops, especially if consumed fresh. Regular stops to bake bread would have hindered an army on the march but there was no such difficulty when encamped. In consequence, units on occasion produced bread independently of the Commissariat. Following the Battle of Talavera, when supplies became short due to the large number of troops present in the region, Lieutenant Bingham of the 53rd Regiment of Foot wrote that ‘we were living at Talavera from hand to mouth, that is we were obliged to thrash the corn ourselves, grind the flour and make the bread’.²²⁸ The duty was clearly unpopular with the lieutenant and he was relieved to write in a letter home the following month that ‘we are, however, plentifully supplied, having an excellent market’.²²⁹ On other occasions the bread ration was issued as grain to speed up the supply process.²³⁰

Bingham’s account of bread production after Talavera reveals two important issues. Firstly it says something about the composition of his unit, which contained personnel able to harvest wheat, mill it and then bake bread. The personnel need not have been professional farmers, millers or bakers before enlisting but it is likely they had some experience in such backgrounds. More important than the composition of Bingham’s unit, however, is the fact that the situation after Talavera demonstrates the relationship between strategic and local supply. In 1809 stores of flour in Lisbon were so full that vessels allocated to transport the commodity were reassigned to other tasks, yet soldiers in the field, such as Bingham, had to find their own sources of

²²⁸ Bingham to mother, Delatosa, 10th August 1809, Vol. 1, NAM 6807/163, p.62.

²²⁹ Bingham to mother, Badajoz 13th September 1809, Vol. 1, NAM 6807/163, p.68.

²³⁰ G. Larpent (ed), *The Private Journal of F S Larpent: Judge Advocate General of British Forces in the Peninsula*, vol 3 (London, Richard Bentley, 1853), p.6.

flour.²³¹ The stocks held in Lisbon no doubt enabled markets to recover rapidly, but it remains apparent that the existence of such extensive stocks did not always benefit the army in the field. This gives rise to a situation in which there is a considerable disparity between anecdotal evidence and official records regarding the supply of food to troops in the field.

Whatever the type, the food supplied by the Commissariat was sometimes of questionable quality and its nutritional value was clearly in some doubt, indicating a preference for quantity rather than quality. In his melancholy 'Subaltern's Elegy' Ensign Meade described his pitiful rations thus: 'see in camp kettles all we have to dine, yielding soup meagre to frighten swine', and there was also a tinge of envy and longing for the comforts of Britain when he wrote of 'ye fat rich citizens of London... snug over claret... Blest be the land of rich turtle soup – glamorous venison haunches'.²³² The poor quality of rations was not merely a complaint of troops in the field. Judge Advocate Larpent, based at army headquarters, complained that ration beef 'cooked up like Indian rubber', while a letter written concerning the Commissariat depot in Longford described a sample of biscuits containing 'dust and dirt and bad bits'.²³³

The poor diet of the army was a source of some concern for several soldiers, although it is apparent that the food available to soldiers may have been of a superior quality and more plentiful than that available to civilians. A study based on scientific data such as the average calories consumed by civilians and soldiers would be of interest, although the lack of suitable information concerning their respective diets precludes an accurate comparison from being made. Despite the scarcity of data, general conclusions can be drawn concerning the diet of soldiers compared to that of

²³¹ Hall, *Wellington's Navy*, p.115.

²³² NAM 7505/10, J. R. Meade, 'The Subaltern's Elegy' (Spain, 1st July 1813).

²³³ P. Singer to Mr. Heathy, Commissary General's Office, 25th March 1806; G. Larpent (ed), *The Private Journal of F S Larpent*, Vol. 1, p.36.

civilians. The period from 1790 to 1820 was in general characterised by declining food consumption across much of the civilian population, a decline triggered by rising prices and falling wages, factors from which soldiers were relatively isolated due to the impact of long-term government contracts.²³⁴ The potential differences between the diets of soldiers and civilians were not only quantitative. Meat was only a small part of the diet for many labourers and when available tended to be lamb or bacon, while there was a growing reliance on potatoes.²³⁵ Conversely, for soldiers, approximately half of the diet consisted of meat, which was most commonly beef.²³⁶

Although a consideration of trends in the availability of food suggests that the diets of soldiers were indeed superior, it is necessary to appreciate that there existed a considerable difference between the prescribed diet of soldiers and that which they actually consumed. Furthermore, while superior in some respects to that of civilians, the diet of soldiers was not always adequate for their needs. William Dent, then serving as a hospital mate, attributed an outbreak of typhus amongst the Colchester garrison in April 1809 to the poor quality of rations. He believed that 'it was brought on from the soldiers being exposed to the cold and being weakened from not having sufficient quantity of nutritive food proportionable [sic] to the quantity of fatigue and exercise they had daily to undergo'.²³⁷ Whether or not poor diet did indeed significantly contribute to the spread of typhus at Colchester is unknown. More likely culprits included poor living conditions in barracks and cramped medical facilities but that Dent, a future surgeon, noted the poor state of army rations is noteworthy as it displays a level of competence rarely attributed to military surgeons in the period.²³⁸

²³⁴ Bartlett, *The Development of the British Army*, p.136; Crafts, *British Economic Growth*, pp.98-104

²³⁵ A.H. John, 'Farming in Wartime, 1793 to 1815', in E.C. Jones and G.E. Mingay (eds.), *Land, Labour and Population in the Industrial Revolution* (London, Edward Arnold, 1987), pp.39-40; E.W. Bovill, *English Country Life 1780 – 1830* (London, OUP, 1962), p.20; R. J. White, *Life in Regency England* (London, Batsford, 1963), p.26.

²³⁶ M. Glover (ed), *A Gentleman Volunteer: The Letters of George Hennell From the Peninsular War 1812-13* (London, Heinemann, 1979), p.79n.

²³⁷ Dent to Mother, London, 3rd April 1809, NAM 7008/11/2, Dent Letters.

²³⁸ See below pp.195-198.

A disease more easy to attribute to poor diet than typhus was dysentery, outbreaks of which were common. Lieutenant Bingham believed 'a total want of vegetables and salt, introduced dysentery amongst both officers and men to rather an alarming degree', although in many cases dysentery may well have been due to the poor quality of drinking water.²³⁹ Conductor of Stores W. Morris attributed a period of ill health to the effects of poor quality water, stating that 'I was taken vehemently ill this day with a pain in my bowels, accompanied by a flux. The water in this country is very bad'.²⁴⁰ The following particularly unpleasant event, recorded by Surgeon Henry, also relates to the safety of drinking water. A thirsty group of soldiers stopped to drink from an old fountain and subsequently 150 of them were rushed to hospital with leeches in their mouths, nostrils, throats, gullets and stomachs.²⁴¹

Concerns about the safety of drinking water led to the widespread consumption of alcohol, hence the inclusion in the return of food available in December 1813 a listing for wines and spirits but none for potable water. Such was the importance attached to ensuring supplies of good quality alcohol that brewers, unlike other contractors, were required to take an oath guaranteeing its quality.²⁴² Such measures, however, were seen by certain soldiers to be insufficient, and they requested that to ensure adequate supplies army officers be exempted from paying duties on alcohol so that they could purchase their own stocks more easily. Lieutenant Fairman was such an individual and he described wine as being among 'the heaviest, if not the most necessary, articles of expenditure', estimating that one-quarter of a subaltern's pay would be spent on alcohol.²⁴³ He went on to state that 'its moderate use proves

²³⁹ Bingham to mother, Badajoz 13th September 1809, Vol.1, NAM 6807/163, p.68.

²⁴⁰ Saturday 31st October 1812, NAM 7508/24.

²⁴¹ P. Hayward (ed), *Surgeon Henry's Trifles: Events of a Military Life* (London, Chatto & Windus, 1970), pp.53-4.

²⁴² *Letter from Barrak [sic] Master General to Barrak Masters* (Barraks Office, 1797), pp.22-23.

²⁴³ Fairman, *A Letter on the Expediency of Allowing Wine to the Army Free of Duty as in the Navy*, p.27.

very essential towards the preservation and recovery of health, and not infrequently operates as a preventative against epidemic disease'.²⁴⁴ Such views permeated the upper ranks of society and the army itself, General Wetherall recommending that regimental canteens be set up to guarantee the supply 'of good and wholesome liquor'.²⁴⁵ Considering that such policies and attitudes concerning alcohol existed it is perhaps unsurprising that, in the words of Lieutenant John Ford of 79th Cameron Highlanders, drunkenness became 'the bane of the British army'.²⁴⁶

Even if the Commissariat could have ensured adequate supplies of food there were numerous problems associated with its provision. As the army marched through the Pyrenees in 1813, for example, Rifleman Costello stated that his daily ration consisted of a single biscuit per day, while Private Howell of 71st Regiment of Foot confessed to stealing the dog biscuits that he was preparing for the Duke of Wellington's hounds to relieve his hunger.²⁴⁷ There was a variety of factors that could lead to such a desperate situation. Simply cooking the meat ration could be a problem due to either a shortage of cooking implements or lack of time caused by rapid marches, the latter being a significant cause of hunger on the retreat from Burgos.²⁴⁸ The problem of scarce cooking implements was partly rectified following the widespread issue of tents later in the war – a unit's mules being tasked to carry these, while utensils were carried by the men and thus available as soon as the unit encamped. Carriage by the unit, however, did not always ensure the safe and timely arrival of the required equipment, as troops carrying utensils could get delayed,

²⁴⁴ Fairman, *A Letter on the Expediency of Allowing Wine to the Army Free of Duty as in the Navy*, p.35.

²⁴⁵ Letter from General Wetherall to Governor General of Calcutta, the Earl of Moira, Bangalore (sic), 28th November 1813, NAM 6112/78, Wetherall Papers Inspection Returns and Correspondence of Major General F. A. Wetherall, p.230.

²⁴⁶ NAM 6807/71, Notebook of Lieutenant John Ford 1808 - 12, p.111.

²⁴⁷ Brett-James (ed), *Edward Costello*, p.122; C. Hibbert (ed), *A Soldier of the 71st* (London, Leo Cooper, 1976), pp.72-73.

²⁴⁸ H. F. N. Jourdain, *The Connaught Rangers*, Volume I (London, Royal United Service Institute, 1924), p.105.

redirected or even lost (another example of how factors outside of its control could bring the best efforts of a state to support its military grinding to a halt). Due to these risks, units tasked to carry items such as camp kettles received an armed escort, initially of mounted dragoons although this task was eventually allocated to soldiers on foot.²⁴⁹

No matter what escort was provided, utensils could only arrive if they had been issued. Although supplied with an adequate number of camp kettles in 1815 (157 – approximately one per four men), the 1st battalion of the 88th had an insufficient number of billy hooks (94) to support them over fires. In 1809 the ratios had been even worse, at one kettle per 6 men and one hook per 10 men.²⁵⁰ The actions of soldiers themselves also served to undermine the efforts of the Commissariat. Lieutenant Bingham was critical of the actions of fellow officers, noting that supplies went ‘but little way with young gentlemen who have been used to gorge themselves at a regimental mess’.²⁵¹ Judge Advocate Larpent’s criticisms were aimed at the actions of common soldiers upon receiving their rations. He wrote that:

the poor soldiers, having three days rations served out at once, consume all the drink on the first day, sell the meat to save carriage and the trouble of cooking it, and live upon bread and grapes and water, till their next supply comes.²⁵²

In consequence of such actions the Commissariat sought to issue rations only on a daily basis but this was rarely achieved and the policy could only ever be feasible if the units in question were in close proximity to permanent depots, a situation that rarely arose due to the centralisation of stores or the need to avoid their proximity to the enemy.²⁵³

²⁴⁹ Qunita, 2nd July 1811, NAM 6807/221, p.15.

²⁵⁰ NAM 6112/689, Field Equipment Return for the 1st Battalion 88th Foot, 9th June 1815.

²⁵¹ Bingham to mother, Almofala, 5th October 1813, Volume 4, NAM 6807/163, p.21.

²⁵² G. Larpent (ed), *The Private Journal of F S Larpent*, Vol. 1, pp.18-19.

²⁵³ Villa Formosa, 15th April 1811, NAM 6807/221, p.13.

Of the arms of service in the army the cavalry was to cause the most problems for the Commissariat - although the number of animals used by the infantry divisions should not be underestimated. In the 7th Infantry Division, serving in Spain in 1813 and consisting of 5,876 men, there were 244 horses, 268 mules operated by the regiments and 246 mules operated by the Commissariat, giving a total of 758 animals, which was the equivalent to a full-strength cavalry regiment.²⁵⁴ Added to the animals already consuming forage could be those that were not officially on the strength of the regiment or even in the army. General Cole, for example, maintained a menagerie consisting of ten goats, a cow and thirty-six sheep to supplement his rations, and even if the animals did not consume army fodder, their grazing would have consumed local supplies that could potentially have been utilised by the army.²⁵⁵

For units stationed in Britain a common difficulty relating to the maintenance of animals was not a shortage of fodder so much as an excess of this commodity. The seasonal production of forage inevitably resulted in gluts at certain times of year, the results of which were noted by P. Singer of the Commissary General's Office when he declared that 'the straw in Commissariat Depots throughout the kingdom is rather decayed' as it remained in storage too long.²⁵⁶ Storage was less of a problem in the case of hay, as old and new hay could be mixed, while different deliveries of straw had to be kept separately.²⁵⁷ Forces in Spain and Portugal faced the opposite problem to those in Britain, and the difficulty was procuring sufficient fodder to start with. The quantity required by the Peninsular army was considerable and in 1809 the cavalry ration was defined as being 14lb of hay, 12lb of oats or 10lb of barley per horse, while

²⁵⁴ NAM 7512/124, Supplies to the Divisions of the Centre Army Corps in the Peninsula, December 1813; Partridge and Oliver, *The British Army and Her Allies* (London, Constable, 1999), p.28.

²⁵⁵ G. Larpent (ed), *The Private Journal of F S Larpent*, Vol 2, (London, Richard Bentley, 1853), p.65.

²⁵⁶ Singer to Heathy, Commissary General's Office, 25th March 1806, PRO WO 63/40.

²⁵⁷ Handfield to Sir W. Berdett, Commissary General's Office, 31st August 1810, PRO WO 63/45.

that of mules employed on supply operations was 30lbs corn per week.²⁵⁸ Demand could in part be met by importing forage from Britain, 4.5 million pounds of straw and oats being requested in 1809.²⁵⁹ Other than this the Commissariat had little choice except to make do with what it could find in each region, often with serious consequences for the local economy and the cavalry itself. The latter was particularly true when the only fodder available was green corn and, due to the potential risks to horses, commissaries were instructed to use it only as a last resort.²⁶⁰ The difficulty of supplying the cavalry with fodder was a source of consternation for Commissary Schauman, who was critical of the practices employed by cavalrymen. In particular he complained that they preferred hay instead of straw to feed their horses, although it must be noted that in some cases this is a preferable food source for horses so Schauman may have been displaying a lack of knowledge regarding this. Schauman also complained that cavalrymen frequently swapped their forage ration for alcohol, but noted that following the introduction of regulations to prevent this British horses soon became fatter and those of the locals thinner.²⁶¹

Any failure by the Commissariat to supply food adequately for either man or beast is highly visible to the historian, such situations being enthusiastically recorded by letter writers, diarists and memoirists alike. Frequently these individuals aimed their criticisms directly at the organization. Rifleman Costello, for example, complained that throughout the Peninsular War ‘we suffered much from a deficiency of supplies from the Commissariat’, while Private Gunn wrote of the campaign that it was ‘not seldom’ at fault.²⁶² It is clear that criticisms of this nature were not unjustified, even though it is apparent that many of the difficulties encountered by the

²⁵⁸ Arthur Wellesley to Castlereagh, 31st May 1809, PRO WO 1/238; Standing Orders, Order No. 37, NAM 6807/221, p.8.

²⁵⁹ Arthur Wellesley to Castlereagh, 31st May 1809, PRO WO 1/238.

²⁶⁰ Villa Formosa, 13th April 1811, Extracts from General Orders, NAM 6807/221, p.13.

²⁶¹ Schauman, *On the Road with Wellington*, pp.219, 227.

²⁶² Brett-James, *Edward Costello*, p120; Roy (ed), ‘The Memoirs of Private James Gunn’, p119.

Commissariat were beyond its control, and a study of the organization's efforts to supply food highlights what was possibly its greatest weakness regarding operations in the field: specifically a reflexive doctrine that aimed to react to situations rather than prepare for them.

Crevelde states that the first requisite of any logistics system is an exact definition of requirements.²⁶³ This was clearly lacking in the Commissariat's doctrine and from the very start of a campaign the resulting limitations were apparent. As noted above, the first personnel from the organization to arrive in a region were purchasing agents. The task of these individuals was not one of ascertaining the ability of a province to sustain a force in the long term but rather to purchase the supplies required by army when it arrived. This was to be achieved regardless of long-term consequences for the local economy and, by implication, future procurement activities. This was demonstrated in August 1808, when commissaries in the force under the command of Arthur Wellesley procured so many mules that subsequent forces were compelled to purchase other draught animals.²⁶⁴ Further evidence is provided by the disastrous effect of procurement activities on local markets and commodity prices. Captain Bragge of the 3rd Dragoons noted of the vicinity of Belem in 1811 that 'the English have ruined this market as they do all others, and at this moment everything from a hen's egg to a mule is dearer than in England', while Judge Advocate Larpent complained in May 1813 that 'we cannot buy anything to eat except honey, sugar, bacon, bread and cheese'.²⁶⁵

The depletion of markets alone was not sufficient to end the activities of the Commissariat in a region and its personnel were expected to utilise any means

²⁶³ Crevelde, *Supplying War*, p.18.

²⁶⁴ Wellesley to Burrard, Aeyria, 11th August 1808, PRO WO 1/228, p.191.

²⁶⁵ S. A. C. Cassels (ed), *Peninsula Portrait 1811 - 1814: The Letters of Captain William Bragge 3rd (Kings Own) Dragoons* (London, OUP, 1963), p.13; G. Larpent (ed), *The Private Journal of F S Larpent*, Vol. 1, p.195.

necessary to acquire supplies. This was achieved through the employment of occasionally brutal tactics that could literally be those of an occupying army: to counter local attempts to conceal stores underground, for example, commissaries resorted to the French practice of pouring water on the ground to locate areas of recently disturbed soil (where it drained away quicker).²⁶⁶ Some of the other methods used by commissaries were little more than terrorism and in 1813 a commissary was found guilty of burning down a Spanish house.²⁶⁷ It is also interesting to note that commissaries co-operated with guerrillas, Lieutenant John Ford recording in his diary that 'the inhabitants of Amarez were very much alarmed by the arrival of a commissary and a company of guerrillas... to search the houses for provisions'.²⁶⁸

The plundering of supplies in this way was dramatically at odds with a concept that was crucial in defining the relationship between the British army and state, specifically that the army should cause as little disruption to civilians as possible.²⁶⁹ Although primarily a domestic policy, it would be incorrect to view the tactics utilised by the Commissariat overseas as evidence that the concept of limiting disruption to civilians was applied only in the home nation or its colonies. The British government was anxious not only to avoid upsetting its allies but also the population of France, therefore an extension of a policy that inflicted minimum disruption to civilians was thus required on the continent²⁷⁰. Ultimately, however, operational requirements would on occasion take precedence over political expediency and the practices normally utilised to placate civilians were ignored.²⁷¹ Thus the Commissariat continued to utilise all means at its disposal when the situation warranted.

²⁶⁶ Buckley (ed), *The Napoleonic War Journal of Captain Thomas Henry Browne*, p.181.

²⁶⁷ L C Gurwood (ed), *General Orders of the Duke of Wellington in the Campaigns of 1809-14* (London, Clowes and Son, 1837), p.14.

²⁶⁸ NAM 6807/71, p.53.

²⁶⁹ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.49.

²⁷⁰ Esdaile, *The Peninsular War*, passim.

²⁷¹ It is likely that such a situation would have existed in Britain also had the French invaded. See chapter 6.

The ruthlessness of commissaries in the field was to have implications for the organization. In a country already devastated and left, in the words of Henry Booth, ‘wretched in the extreme from the French occupation’, it was inevitable that the inhabitants of towns and villages would react with hostility to the arrival of a commissary intent on plundering what remained of local stocks.²⁷² On occasion this led to violence and in 1810 Spanish civilians set upon two members of a foraging party, one receiving seven gunshot wounds and the other being shot through the lung.²⁷³ This was a consequence of a policy that sought to provide supplies through legalised plunder; an unbalanced policy that, instead of maximising the potential of a region to sustain a force, could provide only a short-term solution to the problem of maintaining the army.

The plundering of supplies was a crucial element of the reflexive doctrine in the field, although this doctrine was also to have an influence on other aspects of the Commissariat, including its bureaucracy and administration. General J.F.C. Fuller cites planning as a key element of warfare in the period, noting that Napoleon himself said that ‘nothing is gained in war except by calculation’ and that ‘it is only when plans are deeply thought out that one succeeds in war’.²⁷⁴ Yet planning was noticeably absent in the Commissariat. The many volumes of paperwork tended to be concerned primarily with returns relating to the situation at the time of writing, rather than what was required in a week, a month or a year (data collection, rather than estimation and projection appears to have been the objective of such bureaucracy). Information of this nature was vital if shortages caused by the mismanagement of local resources were to be rectified through imports, yet it was rarely collated. There is little evidence that the Commissariat sought to understand what was required by a body of men such

²⁷² Henry Booth to wife, nr Vittoria, 20th June 1813, NAM 6702/33/102, Booth Letters.

²⁷³ W. Tomkinson, *The Diary of a Cavalry Officer 1809 - 1815* (Staplehurst, Spellmont, 1999), p.35.

²⁷⁴ Fuller, *The Conduct of War*, p.47.

as a regiment over a period of time and returns were rarely accompanied by estimates of how long the listed stores would last. Thus, the activities of the Commissariat were based on the supply situation as it had been up to a year earlier: estimates of the fodder required in the Peninsula, for example, were based on the previous year's consumption.²⁷⁵ Such practice was sound but only when force levels were stable; in particular, they did not take into account increases in the number of personnel and animals in the theatre. This doctrine of response rather than preparation was possibly the greatest failing of the Commissariat, although it was a doctrine forced on it by circumstance, not least being the limitations imposed on the army by the state's desire to limit its size and cost.

When considering the Commissariat it is necessary to note that it met many of the criteria stated by P.D. Foxton in the twentieth century to be essential for a sound logistical system. The five key elements were foresight, flexibility, simplicity, economy and co-operation. Only in the case of foresight (the ability to plan ahead) was the Commissariat lacking, its doctrine making up for this in flexibility, economy (forced upon it by the demands of the state) and co-operation (the utilisation of resources in the host nation, such as muleteers).²⁷⁶

When considering how the relationship between state and army influenced the Commissariat, it is apparent that it facilitated the creation of a relatively effective system to support the force, but it was a system constrained by geography. In the United Kingdom a policy based on purchase rather than plunder was feasible due to continuing improvements in the national transport network and proximity to both markets and sources.²⁷⁷ Overseas, however, this situation did not always exist and the

²⁷⁵ Arthur Wellesley to Castlereagh, 31st May 1809, PRO WO 1/238/

²⁷⁶ Schechter and Sander, *Delivering the Goods*, p.22.

²⁷⁷ Wrigley, 'Society and the economy in the eighteenth century', pp.76-77; Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.183.

flexibility of secure naval transport was only of benefit in proximity to the coast.²⁷⁸ Thus the Commissariat was forced to rely on the local infrastructure to carry out its task, a situation that hindered the distribution of supplies be they purchased or attained through plunder. The result was that troops in Britain were well maintained and provisioned but those overseas less so. The Commissariat therefore represents both the worst and the best aspects of British defence policy.

Besides the geographical boundaries of the state, the Commissariat also had to contend with an increasingly bureaucratic and regulated system. This proved to be a double-edged sword. On the one hand bureaucracy hampered activities and was not always as comprehensive as it could and should have been, a situation that contributed to the reflexive doctrine, but in other respects bureaucracy was beneficial. Regulations gave the Commissariat structure and a framework in which its personnel could act, a situation that did not exist to a significant degree in the French army until the bureaucratisation of its own logistics system from 1805.²⁷⁹ When the systems used to govern the Commissariat worked, the organization proved a success but outside of sometimes-limited boundaries and constrained by regulation it could prove a notable failure at worst and, at best, barely able to match the effectiveness of methods utilised to maintain the armies of continental states. The Commissariat, however, was not the only organization employed to achieve this aim and it is the organizations with which the Commissariat shared responsibility that form the basis of the following chapters, beginning with those involved at the start of the logistical process: procurement.

²⁷⁸ Hall, *Wellington's Navy*, p.6.

²⁷⁹ Creveld, *Supplying War*, p.44.

Chapter 3

Procurement for the British Army

Procurement for the British army in the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars relates in particular to one aspect of the relationship between the army and the state, this being the extent to which the force benefited from Britain's growing economic and industrial power. By the time of the Revolutionary Wars Britain's armed forces were to become not only a means to promote the nation's diplomatic ambitions but also economic, colonial, industrial and even technological growth. Initially a reason for the financial revolution, the armed forces had rapidly become a means to sustain it through their role in the economy, providing employment, possessing considerable purchasing power and safeguarding the Empire.²⁸⁰ Such was the importance of the armed forces that an increasingly broad section of society shared a common interest in their development and maintenance.

In coastal areas in particular the state had become the largest purchaser of food, clothing and metal ware, while also providing the biggest source of employment in the construction industry due to the building of dockyards and barracks.²⁸¹ Members of the public took an increasing interest in military affairs. During the eighteenth century it was to become ever more fashionable to read about the exploits of Britain's soldiers and sailors, while during the Nine Years War days of public thanks were introduced to celebrate important victories, a practice that persisted into the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars.²⁸² When these factors are added to Britain's expanding industrial and economic potential it would appear that the scene was set for the army to be supported to an unprecedented level.²⁸³

²⁸⁰ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, pp.27, 59.

²⁸¹ Duffy, 'British Naval Power', pp.51-60

²⁸² Harris, 'Praising the Middling Sort', p.5; Hoppit, *A Land of Liberty?*, p.130.

²⁸³ Wrigley, 'Society and the Economy', p.72.

It is estimated that in 1811 Britain's expenditure on war amounted to sixteen percent of gross national product, the same as that expended in 1915.²⁸⁴ It would thus appear that the army had reaped the rewards from a financial revolution that it had helped to create, but this was not the case. Due to the policies implemented by successive British governments, figures concerning expenditure on the war are relatively meaningless in the context of the army. Indeed, figures of this nature in general should be avoided, as they can overawe as much as inform. Because of the army's bureaucratic practices the historian can learn, for example, that the cost of the army maintained in Britain and Ireland during 1803 amounted to £2,322,700. Compared to the figures for the previous year or peacetime, this impressive total would show an increase that, while improving the capability of the force, also masked its deficiencies.²⁸⁵ As Jeremy Black notes, a thriving economy and effective public finances were useful, but the war still had to be fought.²⁸⁶ The state would prove unable to maintain the army to its maximum potential, in part due to its own policies but also certain economic and industrial practices that developed alongside it, the allocation of labour being one of them.

The British economy dealt a double blow to the army because while it effectively limited the manpower available to the army by encouraging the concentration of human resources in key sectors, the extra output this allowed did not fully benefit the army either.²⁸⁷ Another difficulty was that a defining feature of the British state in the period was that economics and social stability were persistently given priority over military effectiveness.²⁸⁸ Because of these factors the armed forces would remain unable to capitalise fully on the benefits offered by Britain's growing

²⁸⁴ A.D. Harvey, *Britain in the Early Nineteenth Century* (London, Batsford, 1978), p.334.

²⁸⁵ Journals of the House of Commons, vol 58, 1802 to 1803, p.323.

²⁸⁶ Black, *Sea Borne Empire*, p.170.

²⁸⁷ Emsley, *British Society*, pp.83-84, 110-111.

²⁸⁸ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.49.

manufacturing capability. It is incorrect to dismiss the role of Britain's growing economic strength in aiding the procurement activities of the army, however, and it will become apparent during this chapter that the army was able to exploit certain advantages but not to utilize them to their full potential.

Almost all of the numerous organisations and departments in the army would be involved at various stages of procurement, whether it was through actually purchasing goods or issuing a specification for requirements. In addition to the Commissariat, four departments in particular stand out and form the focus of this chapter, as they were concerned with specialised items. These were the Quarter Master General (one concern of which was the supply of camping equipment), the Barrack Master General (who oversaw barracks), the Clothing board (which set the standards for uniform and oversaw its supply) and Ordnance Board (munitions production). A fifth department with specialist requirements was that concerned with medical provision but this is considered in the subsequent chapter. Of the aforementioned organisations, only the Ordnance Board possessed its own production facilities, and in most cases procurement was conducted through civilian contractors.

The utilisation of contractors intermeshed military organisations with private companies, making the army an important element in the British economy, while contracts also enabled the army to exist without the need maintain its own extensive production facilities. The terms of individual contracts could vary, but generally contractors would produce goods, which were then transported to army depots by either themselves or a different contractor. Distribution to the troops would then be conducted through the appropriate army organisation. Local laws could have an impact on how contracts could work, and this was particularly so in Portugal where a royal warrant was required to sell soap, tobacco and snuff. So as not to contravene

these regulations the army itself was unable to supply these items to its troops and fourteen suppliers were contracted to supply the divisions of the British army in Portugal. As supplying these items without a contract was effectively a breach of Portuguese law, the Provost Marshal was given responsibility for enforcing and monitoring the relevant contracts.²⁸⁹ Through the involvement of an organisation that had little else to do with procurement other than through monitoring its own logistical requirements, the situation regarding the supply of soap and tobacco in Portugal highlighted how the structures and procedures put in place by the state could have little relevance outside of the United Kingdom. This was a significant limitation that was to have implications for the effectiveness of the army and its supply organisation.

The details of contracts varied according to the nature of the items supplied, although an example of how a contract may have operated can be found in that for supplying fodder to the Norwich garrison in 1797. The terms of the contract were explained to the commanding officer of the garrison in a letter from the Barrack Office:

Sir,

It has been found expedient to enter into a contract for the supply of forage to the troops stationed in the barracks at Norwich, from the 1st day of October 1797, to the 30th day of September 1798, a copy where of is in the hands of the Barrack Master, who is directed to communicate its contents to you as well as my instructions with regard to the receipt and delivery of the forage, to which I am to desire you will confirm whatever is required from you as commanding the troops in the said barracks; and that a regular succession in the supply of forage may be kept up, you will be pleased to make a requisition in writing, fourteen days before the quantity to be delivered is wanted, to the Barrack Master, who will call upon the contractor to furnish it accordingly; and you will, on each delivery, give a receipt for the quantity, for which you are to remain accountable: and that at such periods as the contractor, in conformity to the terms of his agreement, is entitled to be paid for the quantity of forage issued, you will give him a draft upon the agent of your regiment, at ten days sight, for the amount of the stoppages; and for the amount exceeding the stoppages, you will give him a draft upon me, at ten days sight; and as the General Return and Certificate required by the 18th article of His Majesty's Regulations for the Government of Barracks, is the only voucher money can

²⁸⁹ Extracts from General Orders, Cartaxo 28th February 1811, NAM 6807/221, pp.5-7.

be paid for the purchase of forage, you will be pleased, when you give the draft to the contractor, to furnish to the Barrack Master / who is responsible for the due transmission thereof / a General Return and Certificate of the quantities of each species of forage that have been issued in conformity to the before mentioned article of the King's regulations: to which necessary forms are annexed. And you are also, in compliance with the said article, to give the Barrack Master every Monday morning, the customary return of the horses belonging to the officers, Quarter Masters, and soldiers, which have been foraged the preceding seven days, specifying the names of the said officers and quartermasters.²⁹⁰

The letter reveals several key points about the operation of such contracts. They were of twelve months' duration (in this case September to August inclusive), responsibility for administering the contract locally rested not with personnel from the Commissariat or Barrack Master General's office but the commanding officer, requests for supply were made through the Barrack Master's Department, a degree of estimation was required on the part of the officer – requests having to be made fourteen days in advance of forage being required, bills were to be paid within ten days, and anti-fraud measures (including receipts, returns of horses on the unit's strength and payment of excess bills by Barrack Master's department) were in place.

There was some flexibility in contracts, which could work to the advantage of either the contractor or the army. Those supplying forage, as in the above example, were sometimes able to negotiate clauses that allowed them to buy back, borrow or otherwise acquire excess fodder from the army.²⁹¹ The terms of such an agreement, operating in 1806, were explained as follows:

it has been considered an object of advantage to permit the forage contractors to have the use of a part of it [excess forage] under the personal responsibility of the Assistant Commissary of the District, you will therefore please on the requisition of Mr. Joseph Webb forage contractor... to cause such a proportion to be issued to him as may he may want under stipulation of his returning it into store when called on for that purpose.²⁹²

²⁹⁰ Punctuation as in original, NAM 7211/58/1, Barrack Office to Officer Commanding in Barracks at Norwich, 20th September 1797.

²⁹¹ This situation was particularly common at harvest time. p.80.

²⁹² Singer to Heathy, Commissary General's office, 25th March 1806, PRO WO 63/45.

Such arrangements were only temporary (effectively only while there was excess forage available) and by June 1810 the situation was such that personnel were informed 'it is not expedient just now to part with the hay and straw in any depot.'²⁹³ While the clause had operated, however, Mr. Webb the forage merchant had effectively been allowed to use the forage store as an extension of his own at no extra cost. Furthermore the arrangement had benefited the army, the Commissary being informed that it was 'an object of advantage'. The reasons for this were not explained in the letter, although difficulties were frequently experienced regarding the storage of excess fodder.²⁹⁴

Contracts were monitored and would be lost if the contractor was found to be in breach of the terms. Particularly large contracts came under the scrutiny of Parliament itself, and in 1809 a contractor named John Trotter was called to give evidence to a parliamentary enquiry. Mr. Trotter had a contract to supply camping equipment to the army and was the nephew of the individual (also called John Trotter) awarded the same contract in 1775. While the inquiry lasted several days, and the minutes are therefore too long to reproduce in their entirety, it is of value to consider some of the questions and responses as they reflect how such a contract operated. Of particular interest were the following extracts:

Question 13: In what manner have you made your charges on the current articles?

Answer: The charge to government is made on the same principles in both; the cost of the materials is brought to the money price, as I have before stated, to which we add the price of labour, and these two form the net ready money cost on which all other percentages are calculated.

Question 14: What expenses and outgoings are covered by the ten percent charge?

²⁹³ Malisses to G. Bimiy, Commissary General's Office, 9th June 1810, PRO WO 63/45.

²⁹⁴ See above p.78.

Answer: It is intended to be a clear profit for the services we perform, which are not confined to the provision of the articles simply, but include excessive labour and anxiety in the subsequent management.

It is apparent that there was some confusion concerning the charges made by the contractor. After total costs including labour and raw materials were calculated an additional ten percent was added and the commissioners clearly believed this was intended to cover additional costs. Conversely Mr. Trotter, despite a somewhat vague answer to the second question, primarily viewed it as profit. The second issue raised in the above extract is that of how contracts could encourage inefficiency. In this case, for example, the contractor's profits effectively increased with costs: whether or not the ten percent was wholly profit, the percentage was of more value when costs were higher. Thus, a contractor seeking to increase profits could potentially benefit from inefficiency and would have made false reporting of costs particularly lucrative, such practices being relatively common in the period.²⁹⁵ The enquiry convened and on the following day questioned Mr. Trotter about who authorised him to deliver items:

Question 19: On what requisitions or authority do you issue the supplies of the articles?

Answer: The camp necessities are issued by authority of the Quartermaster General, and hospital stores by that of the Surgeon General; occasionally they are issued by order of the Commander-in-Chief [or] the Secretary at War.

It is apparent that orders for the items produced by Mr. Trotter could come from no fewer than four separate departments, one of which was the civilian War Office. Utilising a single manufacturer maximised the potential economic benefits of such a contract and ensured that the equipment used by the various organisations was compatible. Both advantages, however, would have been greatly enhanced had a central store of camping equipment existed in the British army. This would have allowed a rationalisation of the stores held by each department, improving efficiency,

²⁹⁵ Brewer, 'Commercialisation and Politics', p.197.

while fully exploiting the compatibility of equipment derived from a single source.

The next question concerned the delivery of items:

Question 20: Are you responsible for the safe delivery of the articles at the places in Great Britain to which they are ordered?

Answer: Certainly not. At the same time permit me to add, that I know not of any instance of loss by miscarriage, one alone excepted.

At the point of leaving the source of production, therefore, the items concerned ceased to be the responsibility of that particular contractor, a different contract being awarded for their transportation. Evidently Mr. Trotter satisfied the enquiry as he continued to supply camping equipment to the army following his interview.²⁹⁶

Contracts were of benefit to the military for a variety of reasons. Not least was the fact that they could fix prices for a length of time that could not be guaranteed in a wartime economy. Furthermore, the already limited manpower of organisations such as the Royal Wagon Train and Commissariat muleteers was not employed in transporting large quantities of goods from their source but more usefully in supplying the troops. The contractors themselves, however, also benefited and this went beyond merely earning a steady income and reliable payments. Dealing with the military allowed them to operate under special rules, exempt from certain regulations. In 1805, for example, it was ruled that the Russian, Danish and Swedish vessels chartered by Turnball, Forbes & Co. to deliver wine to the garrison in Gibraltar could not be seized by the Royal Navy, which was the common practice regarding vessels of this type.²⁹⁷ Similarly exports of arms to Africa were exempt from certain customs inspections to avoid 'an unnecessary delay in carrying on this trade'.²⁹⁸

Despite contracts to supply the army being put out to tender, the system had

²⁹⁶ *Eighth Report of Military Enquiry*, pp.227-8.

²⁹⁷ Draft of Instructions to the High Court of Admiralty Respecting Vessels Belonging to Russia, Denmark or Sweden, 2nd February, 1805, PRO PC 1/3643, Privy Council Miscellaneous Unbound Papers, February 1805.

²⁹⁸ Privy Council to (Illegible), 17th August 1813, PRO PC 1/4013, Privy Council Miscellaneous Unbound Papers, August 1813.

only a façade of fair competition, a characteristic of contracts in general during the period.²⁹⁹ Consider, for example, the tender put out by the Barracks Department in 1802 for the supply of coal to certain barracks. Adverts were placed in the relevant local press and on 5th April 1802 it was announced that the contract would run for twelve months, from 25th June that year. Proposals for the contract were to be delivered in sealed envelopes to the Barrack Master General on or before 12th April (seven days after the announcement). The terms of the contract were not advertised at this time but were available from either local barrack masters or the barrack office itself. An insight into early-nineteenth century British bureaucracy is provided by the fact that the latter was open for such enquiries only between 12pm and 3pm each day, except for Sundays. Proposals were required to specify the pits from which the coal was to originate, to be supported by 'adequate security' and to include the names of two referees willing to confirm these details. Clearly the requirement for securities gave some protection to the army but the time period of seven days was too short for many potential contractors to respond, particularly considering that little would happen on the Sunday and that the terms of the contract first needed to be acquired.³⁰⁰ In short, only a supplier aware of the contract in advance would have been able to meet the terms of the tender, and this could only have been achieved through inside knowledge.

The utilisation of contractors by the army was to be both beneficial and detrimental. The state benefited as contracts, if properly managed were economical and prevented the need for the army to acquire its own manufacturing capability, a situation that would have undermined the state as it would have enabled the army to obtain a greater degree of autonomy. John Bartlett states that the greatest advantage,

²⁹⁹ Brewer, 'Commercialisation and Politics', p.199.

³⁰⁰ *Salisbury Journal*, 5th April 1802, p.3.

however, was that contracts isolated the army, and consequently its troops from the price rises and fluctuations of the wartime economy.³⁰¹ Such a statement overlooks more fundamental benefits of contracts, specifically that they prevented the need for the army to maintain its own extensive production facilities and therefore freed manpower for military duties. This itself brought disadvantages, especially that of the army being dependent on outside agencies.

By their nature contracts were inflexible and it was one thing to maintain a garrison in this way as it represented a military presence that would remain in a single location for a long period, even though its constituent military units may have changed, but it was quite a different matter for specific formations as they could potentially be redeployed within a short period of time. An unexpected movement could take place before supplies were delivered, and while a unit may have taken several days to reach a port of embarkation, the logistical system and communications also moved at a slow speed. Such a situation, involving several companies of artillery from the King's German Legion, arose in 1807. Initially concern was expressed that the contractor had failed to supply the units in question with feathers, but a subsequent investigation by Brigadier General Macleod revealed that the contract had had another eight weeks to run when the units had embarked and the contractor had intended fulfilling the contract in this final period. Of note is the fact that Macleod warned that several other companies would leave Britain without this item, indicating that no attempt would be made to rectify the situation and that any deficiencies would only be remedied at their eventual destination.³⁰²

It is important to note that the army's controlling of production may not have resolved the problems caused by relying on civilian producers. Evidence of this may

³⁰¹ Bartlett, *The Development of the British Army*, p.136.

³⁰² Macleod to Crew, Woolwich, 1st May 1807, PRO WO 55/1314.

be found in the manufacture and supply of munitions, which was primarily the responsibility of the Ordnance Board. The organisation controlled several locations concerned with the production of armaments, the most important being the Woolwich Arsenal in London. This site included a sizeable garrison to provide both defence and a workforce, while non-military personnel were also employed.³⁰³ Despite such facilities, however, the army enjoyed only limited success in meeting demand for munitions. During the summer of 1810, for example, the Duke of Wellington was compelled to request ordnance from Portuguese stores, including 2,000 barrels of powder, 1,000 rounds of canister and 1,000 rounds of howitzer ammunition, to rectify deficiencies of British arms.³⁰⁴ Significantly, these stores were ammunition rather than actual weapons, items with which British formations on the continent were normally adequately supplied, unlike their counterparts dispersed across the Empire.

It is apparent that the success of the British army in the campaigns on the European continent may have masked deficiencies in other theatres. Even units deployed in the defence of Britain and Ireland suffered from shortages of munitions, and auxiliary units raised specifically for home defence could be particularly deficient.³⁰⁵ The armament returns for three regular regiments stationed in Britain during 1808 are shown in figure 10.

Unit	Date	Location	Weapon	Required	Short-fall	Deficit as % of Requirement
4 th Dragoons	7 th May	Canterbury	Carbine	844	56	7%
20 th Light Drg.	4 th May	Chichester	Carbine	513	146	28%
51 st Foot	23 rd April	Unknown	Musket	624	57	9%

Figure 10: Weapon deficiencies amongst three units deployed in Britain, 1808.³⁰⁶

³⁰³ Council Chamber, Whitehall, 2nd March 1816, PRO PC 1/4087, Privy Council Miscellaneous Unbound Papers, March 1816; J MacLeod to Mulgrave, Woolwich, 17th February 1812, PRO WO55/1369.

³⁰⁴ Wellington to Liverpool, Alvera, 22nd August 1810, PRO WO 1/245.

³⁰⁵ See below p.247.

³⁰⁶ PRO WO 27/92/1, Office of Commander in Chief and War Office: Adjutant General and Army Council Inspections, 1808.

The above data has certain characteristics that warrant consideration before discussing its implications for the regiments concerned. Of particular note is the fact that, unlike returns of available stores of food submitted by the Commissariat, inspection reports made by the department of the Adjutant-General highlight deficiencies as well as what was available.³⁰⁷ This allowed the army to estimate what items were required to bring units to strength, a crucial element that was lacking in Commissariat record keeping.³⁰⁸ Secondly, it is apparent that deficiencies are based on the actual strength of the units concerned, not their authorised or paper strength. John Brewer states that the collection of such comprehensive data was characteristic of administration in the period, especially in the tabular form utilised in inspection returns.³⁰⁹ Such practices, however, were not typical in the army because departments such as the Commissariat could be less meticulous in their collation of data. Pressures caused by operational requirements and the breakdown of peacetime practices in wartime overrode, or at least eroded, advances in administrative practice.

That the data was based on actual strength rather than paper strength is demonstrated by the disparity between the requirements of the 4th Dragoons and 20th Light Dragoons, the theoretical strengths of the two units being the same (approximately 900 to 1,000 men). Thus, a considerable number of personnel (over one quarter of the 20th Dragoons) did not possess a firearm or, in the case of the cavalry who carried a mixture of swords, carbines and pistols, a full complement of such items. This is clear evidence that the army was unable to supply its troops with the small arms they required, whether through its own output or contractors, and that this applied to even under strength regiments. That the regiments concerned were

³⁰⁷ The original listed the number of items that the regiments were deficient, while the percentages were calculated for comparative purposes in this study.

³⁰⁸ See above p.80.

³⁰⁹ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, pp.222-225.

deployed in Britain, however, raises the question of whether such shortages were significant if troops were not deployed in war zones.

As these units were not in the frontline equipment shortages maybe considered to be insignificant, but there was a realistic possibility of them becoming involved in action. Britain appeared to be enjoying a period of stability, the threat of revolution having declined considerably since the 1790s and early 1800s.³¹⁰ This stability, however, was fragile as there was continuous unrest across Britain during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, including food riots, enclosure protests and industrial unrest.³¹¹ 1812 was a particularly turbulent year as large numbers of troops were deployed to suppress disorder in northern England, more troops in fact than were sent to Portugal in 1808, while Prime Minister Spencer Perceival was assassinated in the lobby of the House of Commons.³¹² The unrest continued into the post-war period and included the Spa Fields Rally (1816), the March of the Blanketeers (1817) and the Cato Street Conspiracy (1820).³¹³ There is little reason to doubt that if the economic conditions that forced the Luddites onto the streets in 1811 had taken hold a few years earlier, perhaps due to a premature outbreak of war with the United States of America or successful French occupation of Portugal, similar unrest could have occurred in 1808 and the army may have been called upon to suppress disorder. As it was the army did on occasion become involved in suppressing disorder in 1808, but only on a small scale.

While it is apparent that there was a realistic possibility of widespread disorder at any point of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, a successful landing by

³¹⁰ E. Royle, *Revolutionary Britannia: Reflections on the Threat of Revolution in Britain, 1789 to 1848* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2000), *passim*.

³¹¹ A. Charlesworth (ed), *An Atlas of Rural Protest in Britain, 1548 – 1900* (London, Croom Helm), pp.51,97,104.

³¹² Emsley, *British Society*, p.158; D. Read, *The English Provinces c.1760 – 1960: a Study in Influence* (London, Edward Arnold, 1964), p.63.

³¹³ Thomis and Holt, *Threats of Revolution*, pp.39-75; Read, *The English Provinces*, p.70.

enemy forces appears to have been so unlikely that it was almost fantastical. By 1808, the year in which these inspections occurred, the threat of French invasion was virtually non-existent, due to a combination of Britain's almost insurmountable naval supremacy and Napoleon's own strategic aims, the latter ensuring that French attention would be focused almost exclusively on the continent (and increasingly on the Iberian Peninsular).³¹⁴ Yet, there was a threat, albeit slight, and that the government recognised this is demonstrated by the continued existence of coastal artillery and similar defences against amphibious attack. As Jeremy Black highlights, the importance of British naval success after 1805 was just as important as Trafalgar if French ambitions were to remain contained.³¹⁵ Since 1796 and 1798, when French forces had reached Ireland, French naval power had been substantially reduced but it still remained capable of conducting operations. Of note is that the French fleet had been blockaded in 1798, just as it was in 1811 and 1812 when the Toulon fleet sortied.³¹⁶ In short, it was not beyond possibility that the French could have made a landing of some form on the British coast, particularly in an area such as the South East; an area, which, according to John Brewer, would have been a tempting target for a raid designed to cause maximum panic and economic disruption.³¹⁷ That the French never attempted such a raid, choosing instead to attack the peripheries of British power, brings this assumption into doubt but considering its proximity to French ports and those of the Low Countries, it would have been a viable option in the event of a plan based on a rapid dash across the Channel.

There clearly existed the potential for units on home defence to become embroiled in action so the effectiveness of such units must be considered. Regarding

³¹⁴ N. Tracy, *Nelson's Battles* (London, Caxton, 2001), p.217; C. J. Esdaile, *The Wars of Napoleon* (Addison Wesley, 1995), passim.

³¹⁵ Black, *Sea Borne Empire*, p.157.

³¹⁶ Tracy, *Nelson's Battles*, pp.36-37, 215-216; Black, *Sea Borne Empire*, p.159.

³¹⁷ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.191.

civil disorder it appears that cavalry armed merely with sabres would be sufficient, as demonstrated bloodily at Peterloo. An insurrection or landing would, however, have been a different matter and the experiences of the army in suppressing the Irish rebellion demonstrates that enthusiastic rebels could, in the right circumstances, inflict a reverse on an ill-prepared force of regulars, as could a small force of regular troops landed to either support such a rebellion or act independently.³¹⁸ Despite the relative security of Britain, therefore, it is apparent that a deficiency of munitions could have had potentially serious consequences for units deployed on home defence duties. Added to this should also be the fact that insufficiently armed units could not be sent to fight on the continent and thus had only limited utility until deficiencies could be rectified. Depriving units on home defence was thus a way of maximising the potential of the field army but was nonetheless a dangerous gambit.

Shortages of weapons could be serious enough, but the effective strength of units may have been even lower when other factors are considered. In particular it is important to appreciate the ergonomic aspects of infantry weapons, as equipment of this nature required items such as rifle straps, pistol holsters and sword scabbards to be properly utilised. That the army acknowledged the significance of such items was demonstrated by their inclusion in the section of inspection returns concerned not with aesthetics (such as uniform) but armaments. This was illustrated by a return of the weapons present in the 4th battalion, Royal Artillery in Canada, during May 1808, the following items being listed: muskets, bayonets, rammers, musket slings and ammunition pouches. Besides indicating the items required to utilise a musket fully, the return is of further note because it was made as part of the 'demand of arms and accoutrements for four companies of the 4th Battalion, Royal Artillery in Canada, in

³¹⁸ T. Pakenham, *The Year of Liberty: The History of the Great Irish Rebellion of 1798* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1992), pp.95-105.

lieu of those in possessions [sic] of the companies, being rendered totally unfit for any further service, having been in use for twenty-two years'.³¹⁹

It is apparent that the small arms of the 4th battalion were in desperate need of replacement. Even though they were not technologically obsolete (as few advances had been made in musketry technology during the intervening decades) they would have been subjected to considerable wear and weathering.³²⁰ Black powder weapons employed only basic mechanisms but were susceptible to both factors and even a heavy shower of rain could degrade effectiveness. During 1798 Captain Jennings of the 14th Regiment recorded that following a march in such weather 'the 14th were mostly employed repairing the injury done to our arms and ammunition'.³²¹ That the 4th battalion had to wait so long for replacements may be attributed to its deployment in a colonial garrison, as British units deployed on the continent tended to receive the pick of equipment. As demonstrated by the Canadian garrison in 1808, however, formations deployed to relatively quiet postings could soon find themselves in a war zone, with Canada becoming a front line in the war against the United States four years later.

Weaknesses in the infantry and cavalry could have been rectified through artillery but this was an arm in which the British army was notoriously weak. Again the forces deployed in defence of Britain suffered from deficiencies, the situation regarding coastal artillery in the county of Dorset during 1798 being shown below in figure 11.

³¹⁹ Major-General Stead to Crew, Woolwich, 9th May 1808. PRO WO 55/1314.

³²⁰ A. Harman, 'They decide not, nor are they chiefly relied upon in battle': British Rifles and Light Infantry in the Peninsular War', in P Griffiths (ed), *A History of the Peninsular War Vol IX: Modern Studies of the War in Spain and Portugal, 1808 - 1814* (London, Greenhill Books, 1999), p.273.

³²¹ NAM 8301/102, Memoirs of Captain Peter Jennings, p.7.

Serviceability	Calibre					Total
	6lb	9lb	12lb	18lb	24lb	
Serviceable	2	18	-	11	12	43
Unserviceable	12	4	-	7	-	23
Deficient	-	14	2	3	-	19
Total	14	36	2	21	12	85

Figure 11: Artillery allocated to coastal defence in the county of Dorset, 1798.³²²

Taking into account guns that were unserviceable (not useable) and deficient (not present) the county lacked almost half of the artillery required for defence against French landings. This was a shocking situation considering that the survey was conducted five years after the start of hostilities and, most significantly, when there existed a real threat of French invasion: the French fleet was still strong in northern waters, while Dorset's geographical position made it vulnerable to French amphibious operations be they full-scale invasions or large-scale raids.

It is often said that the devil is in the detail and the state of coastal artillery was no exception. As noted by the survey's author, many of the guns available were too small a calibre for the task of coastal defence, indicating that deficiencies existed in terms of both quantity and quality. 6-pound artillery pieces in particular were of questionable value and they were to be slowly replaced by 9-pound calibres in the field artillery units of the British army, their use largely being confined to the horse artillery where weight and thus speed of movement were as important as lethality. The trend towards 9-pounders in the field artillery is in part reflected by the limited availability of this calibre for coastal defence, while the large number of unserviceable 6-pounders reflects pieces of this calibre being removed from field duties and

³²² PRO WO 30/116, Report on the Coast of Dorsetshire, 1798, p.17.

reallocated to other roles. The reason for the scarcity of 12-pounders was similar to that for 9-pounders, 12-pounder artillery being considered the highest practical calibre for field artillery. Of all the calibres, only the 18- and 24-pounders approached authorised strength. These calibres were too large for field use and classed as either siege or garrison artillery (the latter being their role in coastal defence).³²³

The army failed to meet the demand for munitions due to a variety of reasons. One factor was the constant attrition to which weapons were subjected in the field: during 1808 the Royal Artillery alone in Spain lost or had rendered unusable 355 swords, along with 375 items of associated equipment.³²⁴ Such attrition, however, should have been easily absorbed by an industrialising nation such as Britain.³²⁵ That this was the case was demonstrated by the fact that, for the most part, the level of munitions supplied to the army remained relatively consistent throughout the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. There is no evidence that soldiers serving in Flanders in the 1790s, for example, were significantly less well armed than those serving in the Low Countries in 1815.³²⁶

More significant than attrition in limiting the nation's ability to supply the army with munitions were factors that underpinned the British state itself. These were the guiding principles of foreign policy, specifically the pre-eminence of the Royal Navy and the subsidising of Britain's continental allies.³²⁷ There existed, for example, a fundamental imbalance in British artillery production that favoured the Royal Navy in terms of quantity and quality that was to have a direct influence on the composition of the field army and its operational capability.³²⁸ It is of note that during the siege

³²³ Partridge and Oliver, *The British Army and Her Allies*, pp.28-9.

³²⁴ Macleod to Crew, Woolwich, 22nd May 1809, PRO WO 55/1314.

³²⁵ Crafts, *British Economic Growth*, passim.

³²⁶ Although the latter forces were better maintained in other ways. See M. Adkin, *The Waterloo Companion* (London, Aurum, 2001).

³²⁷ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.178.

³²⁸ The Board of Ordnance supplied both the army and navy. Duffy, 'British Naval Power', p. 78.

actions of 1812 the army was compelled to rely on ordnance temporarily transferred from the fleet, and captured Russian pieces, to provide guns of the necessary calibre to pound enemy fortifications.³²⁹ Piers Mackesy states that often this arose not due to a shortage of army guns (a contentious point) but due to a preference for the greater mobility of naval guns. This, however, further highlights the technological lead enjoyed by the navy.³³⁰ More significant than the navy in drawing munitions away from the army (not least because the former had its own production facilities such as those at Carron) was the policy of supporting allied nations. This was a policy that both exploited and maximised Britain's economic potential. The former was achieved through supplies of cash and material to allied nations, while the latter was facilitated by Britain maintaining a small army and letting its proxies do the fighting.³³¹

The extent of Britain's military contribution to the successive coalitions created to counter French power during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars is open to some doubt and it was perhaps Austria that deserved the title of Napoleon's most resolute enemy. There can be little question, however, regarding the important role played by Britain as both financier and arsenal for the major European nations.³³² In the first three years of the Peninsular War, British vessels alone delivered 200,000 muskets and 155 artillery pieces to Spanish and Portuguese forces, and initially individual ships captains in the Royal Navy were given free reign as to who they supplied muskets too, often several hundred at a time, in an attempt to raise bands of guerrillas.³³³ Historians such as Christopher Hall see this in the context of Britain's contribution to the Allied war effort and evidence of Britain's industrial strength, yet

³²⁹ Partridge and Oliver, *The British Army and Her Allies*, p.49; C. W. C. Oman, *A History of the Peninsular War*, (Oxford, Clarendon, 1930), V, pp.257-61.

³³⁰ P. Mackesy, *British Victory in Egypt, 1801* (London, Routledge, 1995), p.27.

³³¹ And the supply of munitions to allied forces was not always cost effective. By 1808 many of Sicily's fortresses remained unarmed and the army was ill equipped. P. Mackesy, *The War in the Mediterranean*, p.108.

³³² See R. Muir, *Britain and the Defeat of Napoleon* (Yale, YUP, 1996).

³³³ Hall, *Wellington's Navy*, p.137.

this was only achieved at the expense of the British army. In 1810, for example, a consignment consisting of 20,000 stands of arms (a stand consisting of a musket and associated equipment such as ammunition pouches) was despatched to Portugal. 16,000 of these, and other 'corresponding equipment', were subsequently sent to Cadiz for allocation to Spanish forces, with only 4,000 held in reserve for British, or other allied forces, at the Tagus.³³⁴ This is significant because within months the Duke of Wellington would be requesting the transfer of munitions from Portuguese stores, demonstrating that items supplied to allied armies were also required by British forces.³³⁵ It appears that the shortages rectified by the transfer of Portuguese stores in August 1810 may in part have been caused by their allocation to Portugal to begin with.

The supply of arms to allied nations was evidence of the army's role as one of three elements of British defence policy, along with the Royal Navy and support of coalition partners. It is apparent that in some cases, due to the supply of munitions to foreign powers, the army was third place in this relationship, although that the army was not adequately supplied may also indicate the limitations of British manufacturing output. There is a tendency to focus on the achievements and capabilities of British manufacturing, although the fact that the army was not adequately supplied may indicate an inability on the part of British industry to produce sufficient munitions for both the army and foreign powers. The question is not merely one of manufacturing capacity and relates to the fact that industry operates in sectors and that deficiencies in one sector may not always be rectified up by reallocating capacity from another.³³⁶

While a consideration of munitions is fundamental to any study concerning the effectiveness and capability of an armed force, it is a subject that, on occasion, has

³³⁴ Wellington to Liverpool, Cartaxo, 12th January 1811. PRO WO 1/248.

³³⁵ Wellington to Liverpool, Alvera, 22nd August 1810, PRO WO 1/245.

³³⁶ P. Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (London, Fontanna, 1988), passim.

been given too much attention by historians. The most famous example of this is Charles Oman's theory on the role of British firepower in countering French infantry tactics. This theory is now discredited due to the work of historians such as Brent Nosworthy, who have sought to consider how various factors, including firepower and discipline, combined to cause events on the battlefield.³³⁷ While the significance of munitions has been overemphasised, the converse is true regarding uniform in debates concerning the army in the period. It is often overlooked, for example, that soldiers in many allied armies were clothed as well as armed by British manufacturers.³³⁸

When considering uniform it is necessary to appreciate that, while the canon of literature concerned with the subject is of both considerable quantity and quality, it has traditionally been confined within relatively restricted boundaries. In particular studies related to uniform have tended to focus on uniform as defined in the regulations laid down by Horse Guards, with little consideration of the actual state of uniform. While common sense compelled historians to consider that dress was not always immaculate and often patched or torn, the image portrayed by them (and artists) was still at times far removed from that of reality. Recently there has been a trend towards a more realistic appraisal of uniform, a trend apparent in the illustrations accompanying Mark Adkin's work regarding the Battle of Waterloo, illustrations that show how soldiers would probably have appeared on campaign, not how regulations instructed them to dress.³³⁹ There remains, however, a gulf between how the uniform worn in the field is portrayed by historians and by contemporaries.

³³⁷ B. Nosworthy, 'Charles Oman on Line versus Column', in P Griffiths (ed), *A History of the Peninsular War Vol IX: Modern Studies of the War in Spain and Portugal 1808 - 1814* (London, Greenhill Books, 1999), pp.231-264.

³³⁸ Hall, *Wellington's Navy*, p.137.

³³⁹ Adkin, *The Waterloo Companion*, plates 1 – 16.

Interestingly there is some evidence that, regarding uniform, twentieth century popular culture may have overtaken historians in terms of accuracy.³⁴⁰

Historians may have struggled to address fully issues relating to uniform, as military dress is rarely seen outside its role as a means of battlefield identity. Besides preventing a full understanding of the significance of uniform to soldiers and the army, this can also limit attempts to understand its provision and issues surrounding this. In consequence a certain degree of complacency has risen regarding uniform, leading to a tendency to accept the regulations laid down by Horse Guards at face value and assume that this was how soldiers appeared on campaign.³⁴¹ Only by fully appreciating the importance of an item such as uniform, however, can there be a consideration of the wider issues that surround it.

Central to a broader perception of uniform is its relationship to British society and perceptions of the army in the period. Military uniform came to symbolise many things; masculinity in portraits, military glory in art and national pride in propaganda.³⁴² Dress and appearance very much represented the public face of the army and its condition was seen as a measure of how tough fighting had been during a specific campaign. This was apparent in a newspaper article that recorded the return of troops from the Mediterranean to Southampton during February 1802. It reported that ‘different detachments of the 10th and 22nd Light Dragoons have... lately landed

³⁴⁰ Although largely derided by Charles Esdaile in his survey of Peninsular War literature, the television series *Sharpe* is to be commended for promoting the image of vagabond soldiers. The main protagonist has a French pack and sword, his sergeant carries a non-regulation firearm and his other troops wear a mixture of headgear. While precise details may indeed be of dubious accuracy it is an image concurrent with that given by memoirists such as Private Wheeler and Lieutenant Grattan. C. Esdaile, ‘The Peninsular War: a Review of Recent Literature’, in *The Historian*, No. 6, (Winter 1999), p.9; B. H. Liddell – Hart (ed), *The Letters of Private Wheeler 1809 - 1828* (London, Michael Joseph, 1951), p.74; W. Grattan, *Adventures with the Connaught Rangers, 1809 - 1814* (London, Greenhill, 1989), p.135. The issue of captured equipment is well highlighted in the episode entitled *Sharpe’s Gold*, Carlton DVD, 2002.

³⁴¹ See for example Park and Nafziger, *The British Military*, passim; R. M. Barnes, *A History of the Regiments and Uniforms of the British Army* (London, Seeley Service & Co), passim; P. J. Haythornthwaite, *Uniforms of Waterloo* (London, Arms and Armour, 1974), passim.

³⁴² L. Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (London, Vintage, 1996), p.303; J. Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, (Cambridge, C.U.P., 1989), p.58.

from Egypt, and their appearance testifies the hardships and fatigue they have undergone since they embarked at this port nearly 18 months ago'.³⁴³ The state of a uniform could also be used to signify military effectiveness, or lack thereof. The latter was apparent in the sometimes-comical depiction of Irish rebels and French soldiers by caricaturists, who frequently over-emphasised their patched and battered clothing or mixture of badly fitting civilian and military apparel.³⁴⁴

One of the most intriguing aspects of British uniform in the period is the ambiguous attitude of the population towards it. As well as being a symbol of national pride military uniform also made the population uneasy, being associated with overt militarism.³⁴⁵ The Duke of Wellington wrote that 'we are not naturally a military people; the whole business of an army upon service is foreign to our habits', and it is interesting to note that a suspicion of those in uniform not only existed in civilians.³⁴⁶ Many Auxiliary units did not always muster in uniform, and the dress code for a particular event was posted along with its announcement in the local press. In 1803, for example, troopers of the Hampshire and Fawley Light Dragoons were informed that 'the corps will meet out of uniform' for a meeting to discuss new recruits.³⁴⁷ It is thus apparent that there existed two divergent perceptions of military uniform in Britain. They would appear to be diametrically opposed but coexisted in the British mindset because, as John Brewer notes, 'they [the British] wanted military glory without what they saw as European militarism'.³⁴⁸ The two views of uniform demonstrated this notion in practice.

³⁴³ *Salisbury Journal*, 15th February 1802, p.2.

³⁴⁴ Brewer, *The English Satirical Print*, passim; A. M. Broadley, *Napoleon in Caricature*, 2 volumes. (London, John Lane, 1911), passim.

³⁴⁵ p.9.

³⁴⁶ Wellington to Right Honourable J. Villiers, 30 May 1809, Gurwood (ed), *Despatches and General Orders*, p.263.

³⁴⁷ *Salisbury Journal*, 11th July 1803, p1.

³⁴⁸ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.60.

When considering both contemporary and modern attitudes towards the uniform of the British army in the period, it is apparent that ambiguity existed. This ambivalence, however, existed not only in attitudes but also the administration of uniform. There existed over 100 volumes relating to the regulation and administration of uniform, while being improperly dressed on parade was a court-martial offence, yet on campaign certain officers appeared to be particularly lax.³⁴⁹ Of the Duke of Wellington, an individual known for conservatism, Lieutenant Grattan noted that:

[he] was a most indulgent commander... provided we brought our men into the field, well appointed, and with sixty rounds of good ammunition each, he never looked to see whether their trousers were black, blue or grey; and as ourselves, we might be rigged out in all the colours of the rainbow if we fancied it.³⁵⁰

The provision of uniform was unusual, as, unlike many other items required by the army, it was overseen not by a single department but various sub-organisations. This was unusual because the trend in the period was for increasing regulation, and in many respects the regulation and provision of uniform had changed little since the late seventeenth century despite the administrative revolution. Although the reasons for this are unclear, and may possibly be found in the structure and interdepartmental power struggles of the eighteenth century, a logical answer is simply that uniform had changed relatively little in the era other than to conform to fashion and thus its administration remained relatively unaltered. The bodies responsible for regulating the provision of uniform, including the style and material to be used, were the Clothing Board, commissions of military enquiry and various 'Boards of General Officers'. The latter were created to consider specific matters, such as proposals to modify items of uniform or appropriate regulations. These boards were primarily drawn from a single

³⁴⁹ Draft Warrant, 1816, PRO WO43/296, Amalgamation of Boards of General Officers with Inspectorate of Clothing to form the Consolidated Board; PRO WO 90/1, General Courts Martial Abroad, 1796 - 1825.

³⁵⁰ Grattan, *Adventures with the Connaught Rangers*, p.50.

body, which consisted of seven generals, ten lieutenant generals and two major generals.³⁵¹ Such boards were not always well attended and during one such meeting only two generals and three lieutenant generals were present, the absentees including the chairman, General Grenville.³⁵² Following the Napoleonic Wars the various boards were merged into a single body known as 'the Consolidated Board of General Officers', a study of which reveals much about the functions and procedures of both itself and predecessors. Its role was described as 'the inspection and sealing of pattern articles of clothing and appointments for the army', a task for which it inherited a vast number of associated records.³⁵³ The records included:

- 44 Assignment books.
- 14 General Officers' Letter Books.
- 8 General Officers' Minute Books.
- 8 Computations of Off Reckonings.
- 2 Books of General Entries.
- 3 Establishment Books.
- 3 Warrant Books.
- 1 Computation of Musters.
- 1 Regulations of Clothing Appointments for Regiments of Cavalry and Infantry, 1st July 1751.
- 1 Regimental Memoranda.
- 2 Agents' Accounts.
- 2 Abstracts of Assignments.
- 1 Regulations for Clothing Appointments for Regiments of Cavalry and Infantry, 19th December 1768.
- 6 Books of Pattern Looping for Regiments of Infantry of the Line from 1st Foot to 101st.
- 2 Books of Pattern Looping for Regiments of Cavalry.
- 6 Books of Pattern Looping for English and Scottish Militia, Lettered A to Y.
- 2 Books of Pattern Looping for Foreign Corps, and others on the British Establishment.
- 1 Invalid Clothing.
- 1 The book now in use for entering abstracts of assignments on an improved plan.

³⁵¹ Minutes of the Proceedings of the Board of General Officers, 13th March 1811, PRO WO 377/2. Various Papers, 1809 upon the System of Clothing and Off Reckonings for the Army.

³⁵² Minutes of the Proceedings of the Board of General Officers, Great George Street, Westminster, 15th April 1811, PRO WO 377/2.

³⁵³ Draft Warrant, 1816, PRO WO43/296.

This was a total of 108 books and these volumes say much about the administration of the provision of clothing: books relating to regulations in 1751 and 1768 were superfluous considering that more up to date books existed from 1798, while the reference to invalid clothing serves as a useful reminder that uniform was not only issued to fighting soldiers.

The ten pattern books reflect the scale of the task facing the Consolidated Board and its predecessors; while the existence of books concerned with particulars as specific as looping demonstrates the level of detail involved in the regulation of uniform.³⁵⁴ The image is of a highly regulated and bureaucratic system, both of which were characteristics of administration in the period. Yet the extent of the bureaucracy surrounding uniform should not be entirely attributed to contemporary administrative practices. Of note is the fact that, through relying not on a major department but minor organisations, the system of uniform provision was not typical of military administration. There is also the issue of military uniform itself, which has traditionally been a complex subject requiring its own administration. In the French army of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, for example, uniform was dictated by convention, particularly following the reforms of the Marquis de Louvois.³⁵⁵

It would be incorrect to infer that uniform provision operated entirely outside of normal administrative practices. Rather it functioned within the system to a lesser degree than was the case regarding munitions and similar items, due to the way in which responsibility was shared amongst various boards. In December 1816 this situation changed when the Consolidated Board of General Officers came into being. It consisted of eighteen Generals, twenty Lieutenant Generals and seventeen Major Generals, the senior officer being the Earl of Harcourt, while R. Barry was appointed

³⁵⁴ R. Barry, Secretary Consolidated Board of General Officers, to Secretary at War, Office of Military Board, 23rd January 1817, PRO WO43/296.

³⁵⁵ C. S. Grant, *From Pike to Shot, 1685-1720: Armies and Battles of Western Europe* (Devizes, Wargames Research Group, 1986), p.59.

secretary.³⁵⁶ This new board was to work in close co-operation with the Inspectors of Army Clothing while it could, in addition, call upon other organisations, as made clear in its instructions:

His Royal Highness thinks it highly necessary that the committee shall, in addition be allowed at their discretion the occasional assistance of two quarter masters, or other persons experienced in the nature and quality of army clothing, to inspect and examine materials in the presence, and under the personal direction of the committee... the two quarter masters or other persons... should receive an allowance of 5s for every day their attendance is required [and officers] the staff pay of their respective ranks.³⁵⁷

The recommendation that the board call upon the services of experts was significant, being tacit acknowledgement that a group of such high-ranking officers may not themselves have possessed sufficient knowledge to conduct their duties. The pride of these officers was preserved by instructions that the experts could only 'examine materials in the presence, and under the personal direction of the committee'. Despite this clause, the introduction of experts was evidence that the provision of clothing was adopting more characteristics of administration in the period, in this case the use of professionals or specialists.³⁵⁸

Despite the efforts of the various boards and commissions that existed to set the standards of army uniform, it is apparent that the dress of soldiers in the field was frequently far removed from that laid down in regulations. As Piers Mackesy writes, regulations were only relevant if they were enforced, and it is apparent that those relating to uniform were frequently not.³⁵⁹ Lieutenant Ford, for example, wrote that in the 79th the coats of its officers were 'black or blue of various forms', not the

³⁵⁶ 'Warrant for consolidating into one establishment from 25th December 1816 inclusive, the Clothing Board and all other boards of General Officers usually held in London'; Heylehurst to Secretary of State for War, Horse Guards, 2nd October 1816, PRO WO43/296.

³⁵⁷ Illegible to Secretary of State for War, Horse Guards, 21st June 1816, PRO WO43/296.

³⁵⁸ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.67; Childs, *The Army of Charles II*, p.81; Mingey, 'The Eighteenth Century Land Steward', p.8.

³⁵⁹ P. Mackesy, *British Victory in Egypt*, p.30.

regulation red, while top hats became popular with officers serving in Egypt due to the greater protection they offered against the sun.³⁶⁰ That such dress was the norm, and not merely a practice in the field or on informal occasions, was demonstrated in Major General Cartwright's report on the uniform of the 4th Queen's Own Dragoons. He concluded that the standard of uniform in the regiment was good even though many of the pairs of breeches worn were not regulation issue and were purchased from several sources.³⁶¹ This last point is significant as the state was clearly unable to provide the items of clothing that officers required, which led to individuals purchasing their own items. Besides being more colourful than often thought (and allowed in Kings Regulations) uniform may in some cases have been torn, patched or even ragged. Lieutenant Meade, complaining as usual, wrote of his uniform: 'see the crimson coat beseeamed with stitches. The torn degenerate regimental breeches'; Captain Tomkinson described the cavalry helmets issued to his unit as 'completely worn out, and so warped... that the men could scarcely wear them'; and Private Wheeler wrote of his unit: 'it was difficult to tell to what regiment we belonged, for each man's coat was like Joseph's "a coat of many colours"'.³⁶²

The sometimes-shocking state of soldiers' clothing could be attributed to a variety of factors. Uniforms were subjected to constant attrition caused by weathering and other wear and tear on campaign. Both Wheeler and Tomkinson attributed their complaints to this but the situation was worsened by the provision of poor quality items. Particular difficulties were encountered in regard to equipment and clothing made from leather. From 1807, for example, the spur leathers of artillery drivers were to be replaced annually, rather than every two years, due to 'many [spurs] being lost

³⁶⁰ NAM 6807/71, p. 133; P. Mackesy, *British Victory in Egypt, 1801*, p.29.

³⁶¹ Major General Cartwright's confidential report on the actual state of the 4th Queen's Own Dragoons, 7th May 1808, PRO WO 27/92/1, Office of Commander in Chief and War Office: Adjutant General and Army Council Inspections, 1808.

³⁶² NAM 7505/10; Tomkinson, *The Diary of a Cavalry Officer*, p.34; Liddell – Hart (ed), *The Letters of Private Wheeler*, p.74.

due to the spur leather perishing'.³⁶³ More significant were the doubts expressed concerning the durability of footwear. Of that issued to cavalry it was noted the contractor 'instead of jacking them by boiling them and beating them in the proper methods, barely stiffens them by means of some gummy substance'.³⁶⁴ Similarly Captain Jennings noted of infantry boots issued to his unit that 'the shoes finished by the contractors were so bad that in twenty four hours they were useless, the soles were very little thicker than the uppers and had paper between the soles to make them stronger. Most of the men carried their shoes in their hands'.³⁶⁵ It is interesting to note that both of the above criticisms extended not from flaws inherent in the design of the specified items, but the fact that contractors sought to limit costs. This is evidence of competition for contracts, with consequences for troops in the field and, by implication, the effectiveness of the army itself. Through encouraging such practices the system was contributing to the army's problems rather than resolving them: when supplying the army in this way the imperative was economics as much as effectiveness.

Supplies of good quality footwear were important both aesthetically and for speed during marches, although these were not the only issues. The Duke of Wellington, for example, believed that 'as the soldiers pay for the shoes they receive, it is but fair towards them that they should be of the best quality for their purpose and should fit them' (this is also further evidence of the inability of the state to supply soldiers as their footwear was only subsidised, not purchased for them).³⁶⁶ Good quality boots were required both to improve the effectiveness of troops and for safety. This was particularly true of the cavalry arm, which, while not requiring boots

³⁶³ Macleod to Crew, Woolwich, 19th July 1807, PRO WO 55/1314.

³⁶⁴ Duke of Northumberland to Lieutenant Colonel Hill, Alnwick Castle 4th February 1812. NAM 6309/138, Various Letters from the Duke of Northumberland.

³⁶⁵ NAM 8301/102, no page number or other reference and the passage is included on a separate, undated, sheet.

³⁶⁶ Wellington to Liverpool, 31st March, 1811, PRO WO 1/248.

designed for long marches, had other requirements. Thus in 1812 the Duke of Northumberland felt compelled to complain about the standard of boots supplied to the cavalry. In particular he highlighted that:

Jack boots properly made are the most advantageous to troopers under service, they not only save the man's legs and knees from that most severe pressure, occasioned by such horses in a charge, which I have known attended by various injurious consequences but in case of the horse falling upon his side, they are certain to save the trooper's leg being broken.³⁶⁷

Considering the potential implications of poor quality uniform, it is surprising that when defective or poor quality items were returned to the depot they were not destroyed but merely re-issued, often without modification. In 1807, for example, a consignment of greatcoats intended to be issued to the Royal Artillery in Malta were returned as defective, but were then re-issued to new recruits in Britain. This situation was seen as unsatisfactory by Brigadier-General Macleod, and his subsequent communication with the Board of Ordnance on the subject demonstrated that the defects were not minor: 'I am sorry to add, that it would have been better if they had been destroyed at Malta, as they are so bad, that battalions will not be able to profit by any of them'.³⁶⁸ Issuing clothing already acknowledged to be defective was further evidence that the state lacked the ability to supply the army adequately. This was despite the fact that the British armed forces were, in 1807, below strength and that the challenges of the Peninsular War had yet to be faced.

Even if the clothing available was of sufficient quality there were other factors. Some deficiencies could be attributed to the actions of soldiers themselves, who discarded clothing to make their packs lighter or during sieges threw shakos into the

³⁶⁷ Duke of Northumberland to Lieutenant Colonel Hill, Alnwick Castle 4th February 1812. NAM 6309/138.

³⁶⁸ Macleod to Crew, Woolwich, 5th March 1807, PRO WO 55/1314.

air to give the defenders a target and waste ammunition.³⁶⁹ Soldiers, however, had ample incentive to respect their uniform: being improperly dressed on parade was potentially punishable by court-martial and they were charged for replacement clothing, soldiers in the Peninsula paying 6d for a pair of boots and 6d 7s for shirts.³⁷⁰ In many cases uniform deficiencies were caused not by destruction of the item (be it through wear, weathering or misuse) but rather the fact that items were not available, as noted by General Wetherall in his report concerning the 83rd Foot. Describing the regiment's great coats as 'entirely worn out', he blamed not misuse by the men but the poor provision of replacement clothing.³⁷¹ Brigadier-General Macleod noted a similar situation existed in relation to the state of the artillery of the King's German Legion in May 1807, informing the Board of Ordnance that:

I also take this opportunity of observing, that a very small portion for the King's German Artillery has as yet been delivered into store and that consisting of incomplete suits; I have directed a survey to be immediately held upon what has been delivered in.

As the German artillery are now under orders for foreign service, I am very apprehensive that they will not be supplied with their clothing (of which they are in extreme want).³⁷²

Even the 4th Dragoons (850 all ranks), a unit noted as being well attired, was deficient of 154 pairs of breeches, 46 pairs of gloves, 46 hats, 3 cloaks and 32 saddles and bridles.³⁷³

A significant reason for the shortages experienced by units newly arrived or awaiting deployment overseas was that the provision of uniform in such cases depended on an at times confusing combination of items received upon arrival and

³⁶⁹ Grattan, *Adventures with the Connaught Rangers*, pp.87, 104; J. Green, *The Vicissitudes of a Soldier's Life* (Cambridge, Ken Trotman, 1996), p.p.80, 149.

³⁷⁰ Standing Orders, Order No 27, NAM 6807/221, p.5.

³⁷¹ Half Yearly Report of 83rd Regiment, Cape of Good Hope, NAM 6112/78, p.15.

³⁷² Under lining and brackets as in original. Macleod to Crew, Woolwich, 1st May 1807, PRO WO 55/1314.

³⁷³ Returns of clothing and accoutrements of the 4th Queen's Own Dragoons, 7th May 1808, PRO WO 27/92/1, Office of Commander in Chief and War Office: Adjutant General and Army Council Inspections, 1808.

items taken with them. This was demonstrated by the orders issued concerning the embarkation of several militia units in August 1811:

the commander of the forces for the time being having been pleased to direct that the several regiments of Irish militia under orders for embarkation should take with them their canteens and haversacks, I have the honour to inform you that the necessary directions have been given to officers commanding the several corps to retain these articles in their possession, delivering in the remaining articles of field equipment into store as at first intended.³⁷⁴

The practice of militia units taking some items of equipment and uniform with them was to prove a double-edged sword. It was often the case that the militia concerned were not merely redeploying but joining a different regiment. This meant the parent formation would need to be brought back to strength, requiring the replacement of items taken by those personnel deploying overseas (in the case of the units in the above example this meant canteens and haversacks). The extent of losses is illustrated by those incurred during 1805, 2,927 watch coats being lost from a total of twenty-five Irish militia regiments due to deployments overseas. Of these units six (Carlow, Kings County, Louth, Tipperary, Tyrone and Westmeath) each lost more than 150 such coats.³⁷⁵

Inconsistencies in what units took with them when deploying overseas could not always be put right from stores at the destination and in consequence newly arrived units often lacked even basic equipment. For example, in November 1808 Brigadier Taylor complained that the 2nd battalion of the 72nd Foot arrived in South Africa fresh from the Isle of Wight depot 'with a short compliment of necessities'.³⁷⁶ While the arrival of a unit in such a state in a distant colony may be excused due to

³⁷⁴ Assistant Quarter Master General to Lieutenant Colonel John French, Quarter Master General's Office, 4th August 1811, PRO WO 63/91.

³⁷⁵ E.B. Littlehales to Commissary General Hanfield, Dublin Castle, 13th September, 1805, PRO WO 63/88.

³⁷⁶ Letter from Brigadier General J. Taylor to Adjutant General Horse Guards, Isle of Wight Army Depot, 8th November 1808, NAM 6112/78, p.76.

more pressing needs in Europe, even units deploying to this theatre did not always arrive correctly attired. In a complaint forwarded to the Earl of Liverpool by the Duke of Wellington, General Peacock expressed concern at 'the improper state in which some detachments sent from England'.³⁷⁷ This was not a new occurrence and in the previous October Wellington himself had written to the War Office concerning '3,500 accoutrements of those lately arrived from England... which it appears are not new [and] too small'.³⁷⁸

While regulations concerning the clothing of units deploying overseas could be confusing enough, there were other factors that complicated the issuing of uniform. Not least in this regard was that the attire of some units could be modified by the whim of commanding officers. This was a practice that primarily occurred in the auxiliary forces, and was demonstrated by the request made in September 1810 by Major B. Woodward of the Cavan Militia for 150 bayonet belts to be supplied to the unit. This purchase was to be made at Woodward's own expense (Woodward offering to pay 5d per belt) 'for the purpose of fastening by the accoutrements in the quick movements of the light infantry'.³⁷⁹ The request was refused because according to Commissary General Handfield 'only an order from the Lord Lieutenant [can allow] any article of store to be disposed of'.³⁸⁰ This did not end the matter, however, and Handfield advised Woodward that he could purchase the items he requested at the next sale of surplus equipment. It is necessary to note that Woodward's initial request was denied not on grounds of military regulations relating to uniform conventions but rather due to regulations concerning stock control as the items could not be supplied directly from army stores. That Woodward sought to improve the effectiveness of the

³⁷⁷ Wellington to Earl of Liverpool, Cartaxo, 19th January 1811, PRO WO 1/248.

³⁷⁸ Wellington to Earl of Liverpool, Alvera, 9th July 1810, PRO WO 1/245.

³⁷⁹ Major B. Woodward to Major Ramsey, Royal Barracks, 17th September 1810, PRO WO 63/91, Entry Book of Letters Received at Commissariat Headquarters, Dublin, 1810 – 12.

³⁸⁰ Commissary General Charles Handfield to Major B. Woodward, Commissary General's Office, 19th September 1810, PRO WO 63/91.

unit is commendable, and it must be noted that the only factor hindering the implementation of the scheme was bureaucratic regulation. A unit of the British army could not obtain equipment from stores, but through the auction of surplus equipment such items were available to civilians in Ireland, a country in which armed insurrection was perceived as a near constant threat.

There existed other conventions and rules governing uniform to hinder its effective supply. Although items were referred to with catchall terms, such as tunics, those required by various units or personnel were not always the same and there were variations in style and colour stipulated in regulations.³⁸¹ A company's designation as line, light or grenadier dictated the arrangement of its lace and shoulder decoration. Tunic colours were broadly divided into red for the infantry, blue or red for cavalry and blue for the supporting arms, although there were variations (most famously the green of the Rifle Brigade) and the facing colour of regiments also varied (basically this was the colouring of the cuffs and collar). Furthermore, details concerning colours could be confused and in the 4th Dragoons, for example, the commanding officer was unsure whether the holsters should have been black or bearskin.³⁸²

Uniforms were expensive, a parliamentary report of 1807 revealing that of 319 articles waiting to be settled, approximately one-third (98) related to uniform or similar items including horse furniture.³⁸³ An average price for uniforms being £1 17s 10d for a private soldier's, £3 12s 10d for a drummer's and £5 1s 3d for a sergeant's.³⁸⁴ Interestingly David Dundas (the Commander-in-Chief in 1809) believed that there was little variation in these costs when uniforms were purchased overseas, noting that

³⁸¹ See for example E. Littlehales to Commissary General, Dublin Castle, 1st March 1811, PRO WO 63/91.

³⁸² Major General Cartwright's confidential report on the actual state of the 4th Queen's Own Dragoons, 7th May 1808, PRO WO 27/92/1.

³⁸³ Statement of the Number of Unsettled Accounts in The Miscellaneous Department, in *Eighth Report of Military Enquiry*.

³⁸⁴ *A Treatise on Military Finance* (Whitehall, Egerton, 1796), pp.113-5.

'the expense of clothing in Europe, Africa and America is nearly the same'.³⁸⁵ A more significant factor than cost was the scale of the task required to guarantee an adequate supply of replacement clothing, the Peninsular army requiring 30,000 pairs of shoes in 1809, rising to 150,000 in 1810.³⁸⁶ The problem of supplying new uniform was only partly rectified by recycling old ones – such as cutting down the previous year's tunics to make waistcoats.

In the case of munitions the army was involved in procurement through issuing specifications and production orders (the War Office) and manufacture (arsenals), while the production of uniforms was merely directed by the army. The situation regarding accommodation and shelter was decidedly different and the organisations concerned not only issued specifications (be they for the construction of structures or supply of associated items) but were also actively involved in both maintenance and administration: it was the task of the Adjutant-General's department and commanding officers, rather than the clothing boards, to compile returns of uniform, while barrack masters themselves reported on the condition of barracks maintained by the Barrack Master General's department.

Accommodation and shelter in the army during the period can be divided in to the categories of permanent (barracks), temporary (tents and shelter provided by the army) and field (any shelter considered expedient). Responsibility for providing the latter frequently rested with commissaries, individuals who were expected to be familiar with all the resources required by the army in their area. Troops, however, also relied on their own ingenuity for such shelter and Captain Bragge wrote how his unit had resided in 'very indifferent huts built of boughs and open at each end, without

³⁸⁵ Memo from David Dundas, Commander in Chief, PRO WO 377/2, Various Papers, 1809 upon the System of Clothing and Off Reckonings for the Army, paragraphs 1 to 2 and 9.

³⁸⁶ Wellington to Castlereagh, 31st May 1809, PRO WO 1/238; Wellington to Liverpool, 31st March, 1811, PRO WO 1/248.

any straw, palliasses or things of that nature to lie on' for several days.³⁸⁷ To construct such shelters units were compelled to utilise whatever building materials were at hand, with the result that frequently whole villages could be stripped to provide building materials for makeshift shelters and, more commonly, fuel. The practice was to become so widespread that in 1811 general orders were issued in an attempt to limit such activity:

The commander of the forces requests the general officer commanding divisions will place safeguards in the villages in the neighbourhood of encampments to prevent the soldiers from carrying off furniture, poles of the vines, and other property of the inhabitants.³⁸⁸

Away from the frontline, when troops tended to be less mobile, the allocation of shelter and associated items, such as fuel, could be better controlled. Indeed, troops were less likely to be given a crude shelter and instead find themselves billeted in the home of a local civilian (a policy that was in theory the responsibility of the Quarter Master General but practicalities in the field dictated that it was executed by the Commissariat).

In Spain and Portugal the practice was popular amongst many locals as those most commonly accommodated in this way were officers, the presence of whom were believed to deter looting. The validity of such a belief was seemingly demonstrated during the storming of Badajoz. Lieutenant Grattan was invited to dine in a house at this time and he wrote, 'all outside was noise and pillage [but] affairs within went on agreeably enough'.³⁸⁹ Despite protection from looting, however, the arrival of an officer was not always welcome and they could prove to be less than gracious guests. Captain Browne, for example, instructed his servant to steal clothing from his Spanish

³⁸⁷ Cassels (ed), *The Letters of Captain William Bragge*, p.75.

³⁸⁸ Poimbera, 18th March 1811, Extracts of General Orders, NAM 6807/221, pp.8-9.

³⁸⁹ Grattan, *Adventures with the Connaught Rangers*, p161.

host.³⁹⁰ The rank and file rarely had the luxury of being billeted with a family, although Private Thomas Howell of the 71st Regiment of Foot experienced this during the winter of 1812-13. This was a learning experience for both parties and demonstrated the ignorance each had of the other's culture – Howell was surprised to find Spanish children so well treated and the local priest amazed to discover the 'heretical' English knew the Lord's Prayer.³⁹¹ Despite the example of Howell, for most of the rank and file local accommodation tended to be a crowded barn or peasant dwelling. This could be an unpleasant experience for owner and occupier alike, as demonstrated by the fact that Commissary Schauman deliberately billeted troops in the properties of locals he disliked.³⁹²

The billeting of troops in local properties was not unique to overseas deployments, and during the early stages of the Revolutionary Wars it had been common practice in Britain to billet troops at local inns and even in local homes. This latter practice went against a concept central to British policy in the period: that the existence of the army should cause minimum inconvenience to civilians.³⁹³ The billeting of troops in homes continued as a result of a loophole in seventeenth century legislation that had allowed the practice to continue in certain parts of Edinburgh. Furthermore the owners were only eligible for compensation if the property was located in certain suburbs of the city, going against another concept that characterised the relationship between the army and society: that the army had to pay its way and not requisition items.³⁹⁴ This did not stop officers from renting rooms but merely prevented them from being forced on homeowners, although even the leasing of rooms could be unpopular. This was particularly so in 1809, when large numbers of

³⁹⁰ Buckley (ed), *The Napoleonic War Journal of Captain Thomas Henry Browne*, p.181.

³⁹¹ Hibbert (ed), *A Soldier of the 71st*, pp.80-2.

³⁹² Schauman, *On the Road with Wellington*, p.76. See also Hibbert (ed), *A Soldier of the*, p.57.

³⁹³ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.49.

³⁹⁴ Anon, *A Treatise on Military Finance*, p.66; Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.36.

officers suffering from fever contracted in Walcheren were understandably but cold-heartedly refused accommodation by the citizens of Harwich.³⁹⁵ The billeting of troops at inns was another unpopular practice, drunkenness amongst soldiers being common.³⁹⁶ The blow to innkeepers was partly softened by the payment of generous financial compensation, which amounted to 12d to 16d per cavalryman with horse, 6d if without a horse, 10s 6d per chaplain and his horse and 4d per infantryman.³⁹⁷ In addition to these payments for accommodation, innkeepers also received money described as being 'in lieu of beer' directly from the War Office.³⁹⁸

It was one thing for soldiers to participate in an occasional fracas while drunk, but the billeting of troops in inns also significantly increased the danger of them becoming involved in more serious politically motivated, even revolutionary, disorder. Partly in response to this threat, but also in response to the growth of the army during the period of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, the government of Prime Minister William Pitt instigated a barrack-building programme.³⁹⁹ The concept of barracks was not new, but rather their widespread introduction to Britain was. Barracks had long existed in Britain and overseas, frequently earning a reputation for poor conditions. Captain Jennings, for instance, described the Picket Yard barracks of Gibraltar as 'this cursed garrison' during a brief visit in 1799.⁴⁰⁰

The expansion of available barracks brought with it significant improvements to living conditions, including schools and hospitals.⁴⁰¹ As was usual in the period this

³⁹⁵ Dent to Mother, Colchester, 12th September 1809, NAM 7008/11/2. The fact that they had to seek accommodation of this nature is further evidence of the limitations of the barrack-building programme discussed below.

³⁹⁶ NAM 6807/71, p.111.

³⁹⁷ PRO WO 55/3045, , p44; Anon, *A Treatise on Military Finance*, pp.66-9.

³⁹⁸ PRO WO 12/1522, Royal Wagon Train 1799 – 1801.

³⁹⁹ C. Emsley, 'The Military and Popular Disorder in England 1790-1801' Part 1, in *Journal of Army Historical Research*, Volume LXI, (Spring 1983), pp10-21 and Part 2, (Summer 1983), pp106-112.

⁴⁰⁰ NAM 8301/102, p.14.

⁴⁰¹ Few historians consider barracks beyond their role in isolating soldiers from the population. For an exception see C. Jones, 'The Military Revolution and the Professionalism of the French Army under the Ancien Regime', in Duffy (ed), *The Military Revolution and State*, p.42.

also created extra regulation but this bureaucracy generally benefited soldiers by going some way to ensure their barrack accommodation was of a reasonable standard. Barracks were the responsibility of the Barrack Department, which in 1812 consisted of three inspectors general; twelve assistant inspectors general and one hundred and fifty barrack masters (approximately one for each barrack, although some postings had two). Other personnel employed included varying numbers of artificers (for example six in 1806, none in 1812)⁴⁰². Barrack masters oversaw individual barracks and their role was to ensure the blocks were properly equipped, maintained and run in accordance with a bureaucratic system of regular returns, including monthly, four-monthly and six-monthly reports.⁴⁰³

In barracks the rooms of officers were equipped almost solely as a place to sleep, containing few items other than those for bedding, washing and heating, a desk and a chair (with a variety of ‘luxury’ options, including rosewood inlays). Even these basics were not always available, however, as Judge Advocate Larpent complained that he lacked even a stool.⁴⁰⁴ Captains were allocated individual rooms, while two subalterns or staff officers shared a single room. An inventory of the differing items in the rooms of officers and the other ranks, compiled from a list of requirements written in 1797, is shown in figure 12. It can be seen that one of the primary differences between the rooms of officers and other ranks was the provision of cooking implements, including a wide variety of pots and pans. Conspicuous by its absence from the list of officers’ furniture is bedding, although other sources indicate its presence. The rooms of the other ranks were clearly intended for use by far greater numbers of men, and the rooms also contained lower-quality bedding materials – primarily straw and sacking.

⁴⁰² Army List, 1806 to 1812 (London, War Office, 1806), *passim*.

⁴⁰³ See *Letter from Barrak [sic] Master General to Barrak Masters* (Barraks Office, 1797).

⁴⁰⁴ Larpent (ed), *The Private Journal of F S Larpent*, Vol. I (London, Richard Bentley, 1853), p.66.

Officers	Other Ranks	
Tables	Fire Irons	Wooden Ladles
Chairs	Fenders	Large Bowls
Fire Irons	Iron Pots	Large Platters
Fenders	Iron Boilers	Small Bowls
Coal Scuttles	Pot Covers	Trenchers
Bellows	Boiler Covers	Spoons
Coal Trays	Iron Work	Tin Beer Cans
Mops	Pot Hooks	Tin Drinking Cups
Hair Brooms	Hand Hooks	Candle Sticks
Earthen Salting Pans	Coppers	Water Buckets
Urine Tubs	Trivets	Blankets
Chamber Pots	Flesh Forks	Sacking
Coal Baskets	Frying Pans	Cordial
	Grid Irons	Round Towels
	Iron Ladles	

Figure 12: An inventory of furniture and utensils in a barracks, c1797.⁴⁰⁵

There was little variation between the barracks of the cavalry and infantry other than extra candles for the stables of the former.

Despite the increased number of barracks and the benefits that they brought, the success of the barrack-building programme in the period is easy to overestimate. The pace of construction was slowed by the outbreak of peace in 1802, during which period certain barracks were sold-off at public auctions, one example being the almost new 900 man barrack block near the Backwater at Weymouth.⁴⁰⁶ As a result, even as the Napoleonic Wars reached their final stages, there was less barrack accommodation available in Britain than required. This was demonstrated in the following letter, written in 1812 and concerning the militia billeted at Woolwich artillery barracks:

for tho' [sic] the number of our recruits in the country exceed the space we have left the space we have left for their accommodation... we are always more or less, but particularly at this time sending off drilled parties to fill deficiencies abroad.⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰⁵ Letter from Barrak [sic] Master General to Barrak Masters (Barraks Office, 1797), Appendix.

⁴⁰⁶ *Salisbury Journal*, 15th February 1802, p.2.

⁴⁰⁷ Underlining in original. MacLeod to Mulgrave, Woolwich, 17th February 1812, PRO WO55/1369.

In effect, there was only sufficient barracks space for the artillery while large numbers of its personnel were deployed abroad. The experience of the Royal Artillery at Woolwich suggests, therefore, that the success of the barrack-building programme in terms of accommodating troops may not have been due to an impressive rate of construction so much as extensive commitments on the continent and in the colonies.

Barracks were to play an increasingly important role in accommodating the army. It was apparent, however, that the needs of the force could not be met through the utilisation of barracks and civilian properties alone; in particular the army needed to expand its capability to house troops in the field. The solution was to make greater use of camping equipment. As demonstrated by the contract awarded to the uncle of John Trotter in 1775, the concept itself was not new, although its use to accommodate troops grew during the course of the Napoleonic Wars. The provision of camping equipment was theoretically the responsibility of the Quarter Master General's department, although as noted in the previous chapter some of its tasks were in practice conducted by the Commissariat.

Initially the provision of camping equipment was such that, according to Lieutenant Grattan, the only cover for many troops was 'the canopy of heaven'.⁴⁰⁸ Sleeping in the open in this way could be particularly ruinous to health and Private Howell wrote of awaking one morning that 'we were up, an hour before day, and wrung out our blankets, emptied our shoes of the water, each man trembling like the leaf of a tree'.⁴⁰⁹ The first (and on occasion only) line of defence for a soldier against the elements was his blanket. This could be used either conventionally or as part of a crude shelter, supported by muskets. The latter role was facilitated by the introduction of a reinforced ring in the corner of army blankets.⁴¹⁰ Not all soldiers, however,

⁴⁰⁸ Grattan, *Adventures with the Connaught Rangers*, p.292.

⁴⁰⁹ Hibbert (ed), *A Soldier of the 71st*, pp.79,22.

⁴¹⁰ L. C. Gurwood (ed), *General Orders of the Duke of Wellington in the Campaigns of 1809-14* (London, Clowes and Son, 1837), p.35.

enjoyed even this basic protection from the elements: until 1810 only half to three quarters of infantry serving in the Peninsula had been issued with these special blankets, and of those received many were lost or, as in the case of Private Wheeler's, illegally sold or traded by soldiers for food, alcohol or clothing.⁴¹¹ In addition, the erection of the makeshift shelter was noted as being unpopular by Quarter Master Surtees because it provided little protection during cold nights.⁴¹² A more substantial solution than the blanket shelter was the round tent, which was initially developed for use in Flanders but officially issued to all British forces from 1811.⁴¹³ In practice many units received them much later than this or not at all, and Judge Advocate Larpent noted that there were sufficient tents available only if absentees, servants and sentries were discounted.⁴¹⁴

The procurement of tents, like other items, for the British army reflects an important factor in the relationship between the force and the state – the extent to which the state was willing to allocate resources to sustain the force. When considering the procurement activities of the army it is clear that Britain's economic and industrial capability was not fully exploited. This was because the machinery of the British state was created not to pander to the needs of the army but to contain its power. There is no evidence that there was a concerted policy to keep the army in check through deliberately failing to meet its needs. Rather it was a question of priority. The first hurdle confronting the army was the attitude of both the state and society towards the military and war, conflict being seen as disruptive to the economy. The proportion of output allocated to fighting the Napoleonic Wars, however, demonstrates a willingness on the part of the state to meet the challenge of war. The difficulty facing the army was thus not one of resources committed to the war in

⁴¹¹ Liddell – Hart (ed), *The Letters of Private Wheeler*, p.70.

⁴¹² W. Surtees. *Twenty Five Years in the Rifle Brigade* (London, Greenhill, 1996), p.189.

⁴¹³ Bartlett, *The Development of the British Army*, p.136.

⁴¹⁴ Larpent (ed), *The Private Journal of F S Larpent*, Vol. 2, p.63.

general, but the proportion of these resources that it would receive. Regarding this the force faced not only competition with the Royal Navy but also the armies of other countries. Therefore, the army did not necessarily receive a fair share of the resources allocated to the national war effort and it was often hampered in utilising those that it did receive by the policies of the state. The use of contractors, for example, was not always an efficient way to meet the needs of the force, while the need to comply with regulations was not necessarily compatible with operational necessity. These regulations could be overridden when required but the rise of the professional administrator in the period, at the expense of less able but more military minded counterparts, ensured that administrative concerns would increasingly take precedence over military issues.

Regulation and bureaucracy were to have an increasing (and often detrimental) influence on the army but the force remained able to maintain a certain amount of autonomy in its structure if not its administration and prove able to adapt despite the limitations imposed on it due to the nature its relationship with the state. This is demonstrated in the following chapter, which is concerned with the Royal Wagon Train.

Chapter 4

Transport in the British Army⁴¹⁵

Transport is a central but often overlooked part of logistics.⁴¹⁶ One might assume that the British army was almost certain to possess a sound transport infrastructure due to the support of the state yet as in the case of manufacturing this support was neither total nor adequate. By the time of the Napoleonic Wars Britain lay between the end of the canal building boom and on the brink of railway mania, possessing national canal and road networks that were unrivalled. The significance of such advances for the army, however, was far less than that for industry and, as noted in the previous chapter, the resulting industrial and economic benefits of canals and roads could not be fully exploited by the army. The simple fact was that while operating in its home country the British army had internal lines of communication unlike any other force in Europe but, while this may have been a factor if an invasion had occurred, in the event had little significant impact in the main theatres of war. Roads and turnpikes may have enhanced the mobility of British forces travelling to and from ports of embarkation but this then depended on shipping schedules to be of value.

For the army, shipping was to be the most reliable aspect of Britain's transport infrastructure. Between 1808 and 1814 404 convoys sailed from Britain to the Iberian Peninsular, a total of 13,427 voyages in a system that proved secure from any action.⁴¹⁷ British naval supremacy was such that its merchant ships no longer had to be designed with defensive armament in mind, allowing increases in cargo capacity and

⁴¹⁵ Some of this research has been published. C. Chilcott, 'The Royal Wagon Train (notes and documents)', in *JSAHR*, volume 82, number 330, Summer 2004, pp.175-177.

⁴¹⁶ Creveld, *Supplying War*, p.1.

⁴¹⁷ Hall, *Wellington's Navy*, p.113.

stowage capability.⁴¹⁸ Such naval transport was not infallible, as demonstrated in 1808 when delays relating to shipping impeded the embarkation of units bound for Spain and Portugal, but was nonetheless a significant factor in the successes of the army.⁴¹⁹ The land-based infrastructure of Britain was too remote from the battlefields of Europe to influence the army's operational capability significantly, and its significance to the force even in Britain was limited by regulations. These regulations related to a concept that characterised the relationship between army and state in the period – that the force should cause as little inconvenience to the population as possible.

The goal of minimal inconvenience was to be achieved through several means. One of the most fundamental was that when arriving in a new area, troops were to present a warrant authorising their entry, which was then to be signed by a magistrate who would subsequently direct them along the quickest route to their next destination or billet.⁴²⁰ The system ensured troops arriving in unfamiliar territory would receive the benefit of local knowledge, as well as minimising the time spent transiting an area and ensuring that military forces remained under the close supervision of the civil power, in this case magistrates. The weakness of the system was that it could only operate if the correct papers were presented. If this did not occur magistrates were able to refuse a force entry to their area, as was the case in June 1807 when a column of wagons carrying supplies for the artillery arrived unexpectedly at the Sussex town of Winchelsea. As he had not been informed of their pending arrival the local magistrate refused them passage and sent the column on a detour around the town, resulting in a four hour delay.⁴²¹ Such incidents were rare but highlighted the problems

⁴¹⁸ Black, *Sea Borne Empire*, (London, YUP, 2004), p.155.

⁴¹⁹ Baird, to Castlereagh, Falmouth, 1st October 1808, PRO WO 1/236, p.337.

⁴²⁰ Minutes of 2nd February 1808, WSRO B18/100/7, Salisbury Division, Justices Minute Books, January 1808 to January 1809.

⁴²¹ Macleod to Crew, Woolwich, 17th June 1807, PRO WO 55/1314.

that could potentially occur when the army was required to co-operate with the local authorities.

The concept of minimal inconvenience further restricted the mobility of the army by limiting the manpower and vehicles that were available for general transport duties. Until 1795 the army had little integral transport capability of note and instead relied on civilian contractors. This practice had come to the fore in Europe during the Thirty Years War and has been defined as effectively marking the start of modern logistics.⁴²² Yet it was a system with drawbacks and such contractors were not always reliable. This was illustrated by the case of James Maton, who was called before Wiltshire magistrates in November 1808 ‘for not attending with a wagon and five horses in the market place [of] Sarum to receive the arms, clothes and accoutrements of the 5th Dragoon Guards and then convey the same to Stockbridge’, despite being contracted to do so.⁴²³ Another feature of the employment of civilian drivers, and one not typical of British politics in the period, was a lack of regulation from central government regarding their employment.⁴²⁴ Instead these contracts were administered at county level, and local magistrates were allowed to determine payments to be made based on mileage and transport supplied. In October 1803, for example, it was agreed that contractors in Wiltshire would receive 1s per mile for wagons, with an additional 3d if towed by four horses or six oxen, while payments for carts were to be 9d per mile, with an additional 2d for four horses or oxen.⁴²⁵ It is apparent, therefore, that due to their role as guides, allowing entry to convoys and establishing rates for contractors, magistrates fulfilled a vital role in military transport within Britain.

Considering the inefficiency of a transport system utilising only civilian drivers, the reluctance of the state to allow the army control of civilian property and a

⁴²² Schechter and Sander, *Delivering the Goods*, p.35.

⁴²³ Minutes of meeting held at Fisherton Anger, 8 November 1808, WSRO B18/100/7.

⁴²⁴ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.102.

⁴²⁵ *Salisbury Journal*, 31 October 1803, p.1.

growing tendency towards professionalism and specialisation in society in general, it is surprising that no dedicated corps dedicated to transport in the army existed until 1795. Known as the Corps of Royal Waggoners, this formation soon proved inadequate and was disbanded.⁴²⁶ Subsequently, in 1799 the Royal Wagon Train was formed from a cadre of cavalry personnel to meet the transport requirements of the British army in the Netherlands.⁴²⁷ Like its predecessor, the Royal Wagon Train would prove incapable of carrying out its task and the Commissariat would be forced to rely upon civilian drivers to maintain the majority of the supply network. Despite its shortcomings, however, the train provided a professional core around which the transport network could operate, reflecting the increasing professionalism of the army in general during the period.

The employment of military drivers rather than civilians gave the Royal Wagon Train flexibility, as it was not hindered through operational constraints imposed by contracts. Military drivers could be called on to deliver supplies under fire, for example, and were thus more effectively utilised if assigned to such tasks, rather than transporting manure from barracks, a role, amongst others, for which civilian contractors continued to be employed.⁴²⁸ The employment of military personnel as drivers also enabled the army to resolve difficulties more rapidly as its personnel could be subject to action far sooner than civilians could through the courts. Besides being able to use military discipline officers on occasion resorted to their own initiative to get convoys moving, as was the case when Major Dickson found six of his drivers drunk. He noted that ‘previous to moving from Torquemada I ducked [in a water barrel] drivers Henderson, Mitchell, Ash, Farmer, O’Neal... and driver Doran

⁴²⁶ Even prior to its employment in Flanders senior British officers had expressed doubts about its effectiveness. P. Mackesy, *British Victory in Egypt*, p. 10.

⁴²⁷ The designation of this organization from 1799 to 1802 was the Royal Wagon Corps, but for clarity the later designation of Royal Wagon Train is adhered to in this work.

⁴²⁸ Singer to Boyes, Commissary General’s office, 24 March 1806, PRO WO 63/45.

was so completely inebriated that he was left behind'.⁴²⁹ Inevitably there were difficulties involved in employing civilian or military drivers, but it is the consequences for the individuals involved that underline the value of the latter. Dickson was able to resort to instant (not to mention dramatic) measures to resolve his difficulties, while in the case of civilians such as James Maton (above) there were few sanctions beyond any penalty clauses, revoking the contract and a fine (in this case 40s) imposed by a civilian court days or weeks after the event.⁴³⁰ A footnote to Dickson's actions, and one that puts the issues into perspective, is that if he had ducked contractors he would have effectively been guilty of assault as British soldiers were bound by civil law even when carrying out their duty.⁴³¹

Besides illustrating the benefits offered by the employment of military personnel, the Royal Wagon Train is important to a study concerned with the maintenance of the British army for a variety of reasons. One of the most fundamental is that it was an organization that played a significant role in logistics but a detailed study of the train also reveals much about the relationship between state and the army. The Royal Wagon Train perhaps reflects this relationship more than any other formation because it was a product of the contemporary state. The train had no real roots in an earlier period, unlike the Commissariat, which had slowly evolved, with each new development or practice, be it administrative, social, military or technological, being added to and eventually absorbed by the organization (as was to occur in many institutions in the period).⁴³² Conversely the Royal Wagon Train was created at the end of the eighteenth century, when many of these developments had occurred or were underway and were incorporated into the organization from its conception. Thus the Royal Wagon Train warrants a detailed consideration, not only

⁴²⁹ Leslie, *The Dickson Manuscripts*, Vol. 4, p.712.

⁴³⁰ Minutes of meeting held at Fisherton Anger, 8 November 1808, WSRO B18/100/7.

⁴³¹ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.48.

⁴³² Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.69.

to reveal the relationship between the state and army but also to demonstrate a product of this system. In addition a study of the Royal Wagon Train will bring together issues previously raised in this study, particularly in regard to the reflexive or pragmatic policies that characterised the methods used to maintain the army.

The Royal Wagon Train performed a crucial role for the army but is one of the least studied units of the British army. The train is frequently overlooked in works by informed contemporaries such as Lieutenant Colonel Wilson, J. MacDonald and the anonymous writer of *A Treatise on Military Finance*, all of whom paid scant attention to the organization and its role in logistics.⁴³³ The train was a relatively anonymous organization in the Napoleonic British army, a situation that has often worked to its advantage as criticism is deflected to the much more prominent Commissariat. This was apparent in Arthur Wellesley's letter of 16 August 1808, in which he informed Castlereagh that 'I have found the British Commissariat to be so ill composed as to be incapable of distributing even to the British troops the ample supplies which have been procured for them'.⁴³⁴ Wellesley made no mention of the pathetically small, and totally inadequate detachment of the train then operating in the theatre.⁴³⁵ This was despite the fact that Wellesley was well aware of the limitations of the Royal Wagon Train, believing that no effective wagon train had existed in the British army until the absorption of the Irish Wagon Train.⁴³⁶

The operation of wagons in the army was not exclusive to the Royal Wagon Train and regiments held a limited number. These were utilised for duties including the distributing supplies from regimental depots, carrying wounded and administrative tasks. Commissaries accompanying units used a wagon for the carriage of ledgers,

⁴³³ See L. T. Wilson, *An Enquiry into the state of the Forces of the British Empire* (London, 1804); J. MacDonald, *Instructions for the Conduct of Infantry in Actual Service* (London, 1807); Anon, *A Treatise on Military Finance*.

⁴³⁴ Arthur Wellesley to Castlereagh, 16 August 1808, PRO WO 1/228.

⁴³⁵ Monthly return of the Royal Wagon Train, August 1808, PRO WO 17/54/1, Wagon Train 1805 – 12.

⁴³⁶ Arthur Wellesley to Castlereagh, 8 August 1808, PRO WO 1/228.

while Paymasters often commandeered vehicles against regulations to ease the carriage of pay books.⁴³⁷ This latter practice frequently utilised wagons that were otherwise allocated for medical duties (an extreme example of bureaucracy interfering in military operations!) and prompted the Duke of Wellington to condemn the practice in a general order of 11 September 1809.⁴³⁸

The difference between the train and other wagon using organisations was not so much the ability to operate wagons but a capability to maintain them. Organisations such as the Quartermaster's Department and Commissariat hired civilians, on contracts of varying length, to maintain their wagons; the train employed its own specialist personnel.⁴³⁹ Personnel employed by the Royal Wagon Train on maintenance duties included blacksmiths, cotton weavers, wheelwrights, collar-makers and farriers. An interesting feature of administration in this period is that, while in many respects comprehensive, its lexicon could vary and these individuals were variously referred to using either the blanket term of artificers or identified by their speciality.⁴⁴⁰ The importance of such personnel was highlighted in a report of October 1811, which outlined the difficulties encountered when untrained personnel, specifically cavalry farriers, attempted to repair carts and wagons:

[they] are able to perform the smallest repair on the cart but in clumsiest manner, and are wholly ignorant how to refit it, in case of serious accident – the very repairs thus made by [them], from being so clumsily performed, prove a means of tearing to pieces and ultimately demolishing a cart... in the event of a wheel being broken, these carts remain totally unserviceable unless a wheel man can be obtained.⁴⁴¹

⁴³⁷ Standing orders, order number 2, NAM 6807/221, Books of Commissary General N. Jackson, 1814.

⁴³⁸ Gurwood (ed), *General Orders of the Duke of Wellington*, p.49. Logisticians refer to the practice of improperly holding on to utilising resources in this way as 'hoarding', a practice that continues into the twenty-first century and remains a drain on resources in any combat zone. Schechter and Sander, *Delivering the Goods*, p.84.

⁴³⁹ Monthly returns of those employed in the Commissariat department under the control of assistant Commissary General George Grellier at Milazzo, NAM 7902/36.

⁴⁴⁰ See PRO WO 12/1522, Royal Wagon Train 1799 – 1801.

⁴⁴¹ PRO WO 37/10/26, paragraphs 5 to 6.

It is necessary to appreciate that employing specialist personnel was not itself unusual as the cavalry employed farriers, but employing them to maintain wagons was. Furthermore those employed by the train covered a range of trades.

An additional specialist appointment, although not one unique to the Royal Wagon Train, was the post of Veterinary Surgeon (who was, in theory, also assigned a deputy). Interestingly, the train went for three years (1803 – 1806) without a veterinary surgeon and the deputy filled the role, although this occurred during a relatively quiet period for the army and does not appear to have unduly affected the operational capabilities of the organization.⁴⁴² Finally, the skills of the drivers themselves should not be underestimated. The report of October 1811 stated that ‘no wheeled carriage can be securely drawn over an [sic] hilly country for even one march, especially when drawn by horses little accustomed to draught, and under the charge of men wholly ignorant of governing horses’.⁴⁴³

The specialisation of the Royal Wagon Train was significant as it demonstrated the future of military logistics and maintenance. The organization would evolve throughout the nineteenth century, leading to the formation of the Army Service Corps in 1889, and the Royal Army Service Corps (R.A.S.C.) in 1918.⁴⁴⁴ As a predecessor of the R.A.S.C., the Royal Wagon Train must thus be considered as representing the British army at its most progressive. It is incorrect to view the Royal Wagon Train as merely an ancestor of the R.A.S.C., in the way in which, for example, the guards regiments raised during the Restoration were forerunners of modern formations bearing the same name.⁴⁴⁵ The concepts that lay at the heart of the Royal Wagon Train – specialist military personnel and the concentration of assets (in this

⁴⁴² PRO WO 17/54/1, Monthly returns of the Royal Wagon Train.

⁴⁴³ PRO WO 37/10/26, paragraph 9.

⁴⁴⁴ J. Sutton (ed.), *Wait for the Wagon* (Barnsley, Leo Cooper, 1998), pp.33-37; R.H. Beadon, *The Royal Army Service Corp*, (Cambridge, CUP, 1931), passim.

⁴⁴⁵ Childs, *The Army of Charles II*, p.233.

case transportation) – represented a new way of maintaining the army and ultimately waging war.

The employment of specialists also reflected the trend towards professionalism that was occurring in both the army and society. While that of society increasingly relied on education through the use of examinations, however, the army was adopting both an academic approach and one emphasising practical skills.⁴⁴⁶ The latter is important as it demonstrates that the army was starting to appreciate the importance of experience, a crucial step towards undermining the worst aspects of the purchase system. This is apparent when it is considered that in the period increasing numbers of officers were indeed promoted based on this principle, rather than through purchase, patronage or other privileges.⁴⁴⁷

Despite the fact that the concept of the Royal Wagon Train was progressive, its structure reveals origins rooted in contemporary military thinking. At the heart of train's organization lay the troops, which approximately equated to companies or squadrons in the regiments of the combat arms, and reflected the fact that the organization shared many of its administrative practices with the cavalry. The number and composition of these troops were not constant, as shown in figure 13. The number of troops on the strength of the train fluctuated due to a variety of factors. These include the absorption of the Irish Wagon Train following the Act of Union (reflected by the increase from three troops in September 1799 to eight by 1801); the reductions in defence expenditure caused by the Peace of Amiens; the restructuring of the troops in 1804; the invasion scare of 1805 which promoted an increase in Britain's military readiness; the peak of the organization's efficiency in 1813-14; and the dispersal of

⁴⁴⁶ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.88.

⁴⁴⁷ P. J. Haythornthwaite, 'The British Army, Wellington and Moore: Some Aspects of Service in the Peninsular War' in P. Griffiths (ed) *A History of the Peninsular War Vol. IX: Modern Studies of the War in Spain and Portugal 1808 - 1814* (London, Greenhill Books, 1999) pp.90-100. For a wider consideration of purchase and its demise see also A. Bruce, *The Purchase System in the British Army 1660 - 1871* (London, RHS, 1980), passim.

the force in 1814 – 15 to maintain forces in Britain, France, Spain, the Netherlands and Hanover. Figure 13, therefore, reveals how decisions made at state level could directly influence the composition and thus capabilities of an organization such as the Royal Wagon Train.

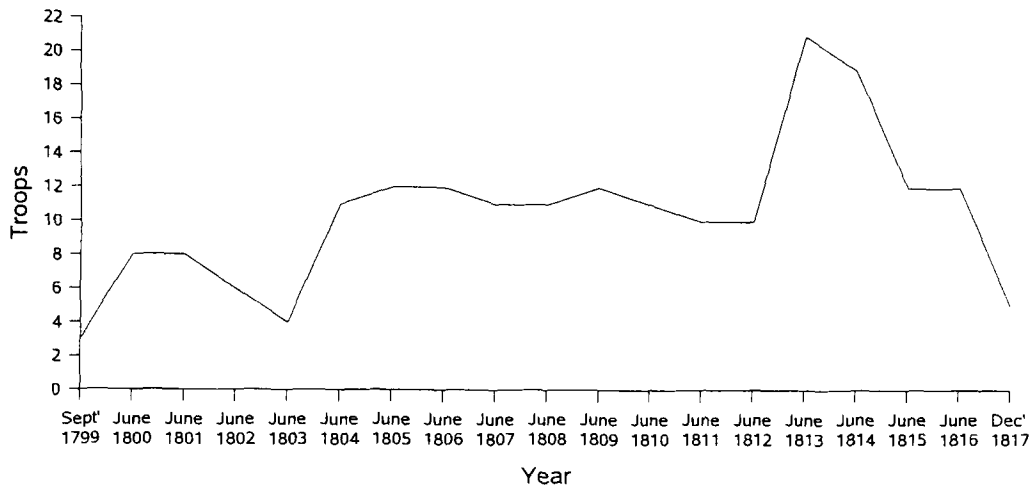


Figure 13: Active Troops in the Royal Wagon Train 1799 – 1817.⁴⁴⁸

Upon its formation in 1799 the train was based at Canterbury and consisted of six troops. Officially, no 1st Troop existed and its place in the returns of the Royal Wagon Train was filled by a list of staff appointments. In August 1799 this consisted primarily of the regiment's commanding officer, Colonel Digby Hamilton (who would remain in command of the regiment for the duration of the war), Surgeon John Oxley, Assistant Surgeon John Geddes, Veterinary Surgeon John Burke and Pay Master William Pettigrew. The remaining troops were numbered two to six although they were sometimes identified by the name of their commanding officer, a practice that had been discontinued in the combat arms during the early eighteenth century. That this practice occurred in the Royal Wagon Train is intriguing as it was a new

⁴⁴⁸ Royal Wagon Train monthly pay lists, PRO WO 12/1522 to WO 12/1526, Royal Wagon Train 1799 – 1809.

formation in the British army, with no real roots in an earlier period (although it could claim some cavalry heritage). Only three of the six troops (3rd, 4th and 5th) conformed to a normal structure, the second was in the process of forming, while the 1st and 6th each had a special function and organization. Of note is that, while the structure of the Royal Wagon Train was, due to its role, unconventional it remained a recognizable part of the British army. Commanded by a colonel, and with each troop commanded by a major or captain, in terms of organization it was effectively a six-company regiment. For comparison purposes, infantry regiments had ten companies and cavalry had ten troops.

The 2nd Troop was building up its strength during 1799 and contained only a small cadre of essential personnel. Consequentially it had no wagons on strength but had a headquarters that consisted of a captain, a lieutenant, a cornet and a quartermaster, all of whom were unpaid until the troop became active. The 6th Troop contained personnel categorised as reduced troops and was principally a reserve of manpower. The 3rd, 4th and 5th troops followed a standard model and were commanded by either a major (the 3rd) or captain (the 4th and 5th). The officers commanding each troop of the train in August 1799 are illustrated in figure 14:

Commanding Officer, Royal Wagon Train	Colonel Hamilton
2 nd Troop	Captain J. W. Whittle
3 rd Troop	Major W. Langley
4 th Troop	Captain Steele
5 th Troop	Captain Cunningham
6 th Troop	Lieutenant Wishens

Figure 14: Troop commanders of the Royal Wagon Train, August 1799.⁴⁴⁹

Other personnel in each troop typically consisted of two lieutenants, three sergeants, two corporals, three artificers and 55 privates. Occasionally a trumpeter may have

⁴⁴⁹ PRO WO 12/1522.

been present in a troop although this was an exception rather than the rule. The artificers included a mixture of wheelwrights, farriers, blacksmiths and collar-makers.⁴⁵⁰

This was the organization of the Royal Wagon Train that went to war in the Netherlands. The logistical services were singled out for harsh criticism after this war but the performance of the army in general was unsatisfactory, it being in this campaign that Wellington famously learned 'what one ought not to do' in war.⁴⁵¹ Following the campaign in Flanders the train avoided the fate of its predecessor and instead of disbanding was restructured. By June 1800 the headquarters formation, renamed the Commandant's Troop, was brought up to the strength of a troop, a process that had began the previous December with the addition of four non-commissioned officers. The following personnel were employed in the troop at this time: Lieutenant Colonel Hamilton, Adjutant Walford, Surgeon Oxley, Assistant Surgeon Geddes, Veterinary Surgeon Burke, Paymaster Pettigrew, four sergeants, three corporals, two artificers and forty-five privates.⁴⁵² The Commandant's troop would remain active until April 1804, when it was again removed from the list of troops. The troop was reduced to a command formation and consisted of the following officers: Colonel Hamilton, Lieutenant Colonel Langley, Adjutant Purvis, Surgeon Oxley, Veterinary Surgeon Baker and Paymaster Pettigrew. Of note is that the regiment was still commanded by Digby Hamilton but he had now been promoted to a full colonel, while a new officer, Lieutenant Colonel Langley, had arrived to fill the vacancy created by Hamilton's promotion. The newly awarded colonelcy, therefore, was not merely a sop to the vanity of the Royal Wagon Train's commanding officer, but a reflection of the train's increasing status and importance to the army.⁴⁵³ The

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁵¹ C. Hibbert, *Wellington: A Personnel History* (London, Harper Collins, 1997), p.14.

⁴⁵² PRO WO 12/1522.

⁴⁵³ Royal wagon train monthly pay list, April 1804, PRO WO 12/1524.

addition of a lieutenant colonel was also to prove of considerable value operationally and ensured that a senior officer was available to remain with the units of the Royal Wagon Train that were deployed to Spain and Portugal.⁴⁵⁴

By 1800 the Royal Wagon Train had expanded to five full troops and one of reduced personnel. Its manpower and capabilities were further increased by the absorption of the Irish Wagon Train as a result of the 1801 Act of Union. The consequences of this are noteworthy for two primary reasons. The first is that it was the only major logistical organization of the Irish army to be fully absorbed into the British army immediately after the union, unlike the Irish Commissariat and barracks departments, both of which retained a degree of independence until 1822 (although in practice the Commissariat was unified).⁴⁵⁵ The second fact of note is that the absorption of the Irish Wagon Train resulted in a seemingly dramatic increase in the manpower of the train, and the number of active troops more than doubled from three to eight. Arthur Wellesley noted the importance of Irish wagons in a letter to Castlereagh as late as 1808, while historians such as Jac Weller and A.E.C. Bredin have highlighted the significant role played by the personnel transferred to the Royal Wagon Train following the act the Act of Union.⁴⁵⁶ It is apparent that the Royal Wagon Train may only have become effective because of the absorption of the Irish train.

As noted in the previous chapter the state proved unable to meet fully the demands of the army regarding procurement and so its capability to support the Royal Wagon Train should also be considered. Put another way, did the Royal Wagon Train achieve what it was later to do because of the absorption of the Irish train or the

⁴⁵⁴ PRO WO 17/54/2, Return of the Royal Wagon Train in Spain and Portugal, March 1810.

⁴⁵⁵ R. B. McDowell, *Irish Administration 1801 - 1914* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964), pp16-19.

⁴⁵⁶ Wellesley to Castlereagh, 8th August 1808, Gurwood (ed), *Despatches and General Orders*, p.204; Weller, *Wellington in the Peninsula*, p.29; A. E. C. Bredin, *History of the Irish Soldier* (Belfast, Century Books, 1987), p.234.

support of the state? While the number of personnel involved was considerable, approximately 300, the long-term significance of the absorption of the Irish Wagon Train may be overestimated. Not least is the fact that by 1803 the personnel of the Royal Wagon Train had been drastically cut back and in effect a new force, based on a cadre of former personnel, was raised to support the army in the Peninsular War. The importance attached to the Irish train has no doubt arose in part from the timing of its absorption – between the failure of the Royal Wagon Train in Flanders and its success (or rather improved performance) in the Peninsular War. Based on this it would appear that the Irish train had indeed been a catalyst for the success of the train in the Peninsula but other factors should also be considered. In particular the Royal Wagon Train had been in its infancy in 1799 and had gone to war below strength and in the process of forming. It will also become apparent that by 1808 the lessons of the first campaign had been learned and that the organisation, structure and composition of the train were significantly modified in the based on this. Crucially the organization would also receive more resources, a factor that can be attributed solely to the economic strength of the British state.

On 1 July 1802 the Wagon Train was organised as follows: commanding officer Colonel Digby Hamilton, the 1st Troop under Major William Langley, the 2nd Troop under Captain A. Robuy, the 3rd Troop under Captain Charles Tudor, the 4th Troop under Captain William Horton, the 5th Troop under Captain Thomas Shields, and the 6th Troop, which had no permanent commander assigned. The typical strength of the troops numbered 1 through to 5 was as follows: one captain (a major in the 1st troop), one lieutenant, one cornet, one quartermaster, three sergeants, three corporals, one trumpeter, one wheelwright, one collar maker, one blacksmith, two farriers and forty-nine privates.⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵⁷ Monthly return of the Royal Wagon Train, July 1802, PRO WO 17/53/2.

The Wagon Train was to remain based at Canterbury until 1803, when its headquarters were moved to Croydon Barracks.⁴⁵⁸ The 1802 Peace of Amiens was to cause a dramatic reduction in the personnel employed in the Royal Wagon Train, which was reduced to four troops, each with an average strength of 65 non-commissioned officers, privates and artificers. The command structure of the Royal Wagon Train in the aftermath of this restructuring, is illustrated in figure 15:

Troop	Commanding Officer
Commandant's Troop	Colonel Digby Hamilton
2 nd Troop	Captain Tudor
3 rd Troop	Captain Hart
4 th Troop	Captain Aird

Figure 15: The structure of the Royal Wagon Train after the Peace of Amiens.⁴⁵⁹

Following the resumption of hostilities in 1803 the number of active troops was increased from four to the pre-1802 strength of eight. This was later increased to twelve in consequence of a modification to the structure of the Royal Wagon Train, specifically the introduction in 1804 of Depot Troops.

The formation of Depot Troops was an indication of the flexibility of the Royal Wagon Train, a trait that could rarely be attributed to other formations in the British army of the period. The Depot Troops not only represented a reallocation of resources but a new approach to a situation, demonstrating the organization was capable of adapting its structure to meet new challenges. The creation of the Depot Troops allowed the Royal Wagon Train to deploy smaller, self-contained troops to support units and garrisons, rather than the system of detachments that had characterised the earlier deployments. This was significant as it maintained the integrity of formations, a practice perceived to be vital for both morale and efficiency.⁴⁶⁰

⁴⁵⁸ See monthly returns of the Royal Wagon Train, PRO WO 17/53/2.

⁴⁵⁹ Royal Wagon Train monthly pay list, July 1803, PRO WO 12/1522.

⁴⁶⁰ Tomkinson, *The Diary of a Cavalry Officer*, p.143.

The Depot Troops first formed as cadres in December 1803 and, while starting as under strength formations, they were soon to expand. This ability to expand (and contract) was a notable feature of the Royal Wagon Train and demonstrated that it could benefit from and utilise additional resources more rapidly than other organizations. Clearly there is a question of scale as it was easier to raise the manpower required for a troop for train consisting of approximately 60 personnel rather than a 100 strong infantry company, yet taking into account the equipment and animals required this was still a considerable achievement and one that gave the formation flexibility.

While the organization was relatively flexible, it is necessary to appreciate that any significant expansion of the Royal Wagon Train (one that involved the creation of new troops) would take time and could not necessarily occur as an immediate response to a crisis. The processes involved in the forming of new troops were demonstrated by the raising of the Depot Troops in 1803. In December of that year there existed four such troops, all of which were assigned a skeleton staff, as shown in figure 16:

1 st Depot Troop	Captain Turner, one Quarter Master, one sergeant and three corporals.
2 nd Depot Troop	Captain Green, one Quarter Master and two corporals.
3 rd Depot Troop	Captain Ewing, one Quarter Master and two corporals.
4 th Depot Troop	Captain Ravenscroft, one Quarter Master and two corporals

Figure 16: The Depot Troops of the Royal Wagon Train, December 1803.⁴⁶¹

In the months of January to March 1804 the process of enlarging the troops began but they remained well below operational strength (as shown in figure 17). Even the full complement of trumpeters (one per troop) was not attained until March.

⁴⁶¹ Royal Wagon Train monthly pay list, December 1803, PRO WO 12/1523.

	Officers	Non-commissioned Officers	Other Ranks
1 st Troop	4	5	9
2 nd Troop	4	5	8
3 rd Troop	3	6	7
4 th Troop	4	4	9

Figure 17: The Depot Troops of the Royal Wagon Train, March 1804.⁴⁶²

In addition to the above personnel there were eleven artificers shared between the troops. The 1st to 3rd Depot Troops each had a blacksmith, collar maker and wheelwright on strength, the 4th Depot Troop having only a blacksmith and wheelwright. The three artificers were temporarily removed from the 1st Depot Troop in March 1804 but returned the following month.⁴⁶³ In the subsequent twelve months the Depot Troops slowly increased their strength and Captain Green's troop was included in the returns as a regular troop, while Captain Turner's troop was approaching full strength. The number of privates in the 3rd and 4th Depot Troops languished at seventeen and eighteen respectively, although it is interesting to note that all four troops maintained a complement of four artificers.⁴⁶⁴

The employment of full complements of artificers and officers (both commissioned and non-commissioned) in otherwise under strength troops was important as it enabled them to form the core around which a new active troop could be raised. This reflected forward planning in the organization and structure of the Royal Wagon Train, a feature that set it apart not only from the Commissariat but also eighteenth-century administrative practices in general. The Commissariat utilised a

⁴⁶² Royal Wagon Train monthly pay list, March 1804, PRO WO 12/1524.

⁴⁶³ Royal Wagon Train monthly pay lists, April to March 1804, PRO WO 12/1524.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid.

reflexive policy and this in many ways was a characteristic of the British way of waging war in the period, as demonstrated by the raising of credit to finance conflict rather than maintaining a large cash reserve.⁴⁶⁵ Pragmatism in this field had existed in the financing of war since the seventeenth century, with annual budgets tending to be set according to the tempo of current, rather than anticipated, operations.⁴⁶⁶

Another factor that increased the flexibility of the train was the addition in 1804 of a Lieutenant Colonel.⁴⁶⁷ This was to prove vital because, in response to the Peninsular War, the organization would effectively be split into two – the Royal Wagon Train at Croydon and the Royal Wagon Train in the Peninsula.⁴⁶⁸ This administrative division was significant and set a precedent for the future overseas deployments of the organization. Despite being split between Britain and Flanders during the campaigns of 1793 to 1799, the train had functioned as an administrative whole: there was one headquarters (at Canterbury) that collated the returns of all the troops. This practice continued when the detachments of the Royal Wagon Train first arrived in Spain and Portugal during the course of 1808 and the returns of the relevant units were listed as footnotes in returns of total strength. By 1809, however, the force had grown from a number of detachments to complete troops and returns for the Royal Wagon Train in the Iberian Peninsula were collated by a headquarters established at Lisbon. This practice continued and the Royal Wagon Train would eventually be administered through what amounted to theatre commands, even though the forces concerned continued to be referred to as detachments. The most important overseas detachments of the organization in the period were located in the Peninsula, France (including the army of occupation) and Hanover.

⁴⁶⁵ Speck, 'Conflict in Society', p.142.

⁴⁶⁶ Carter, 'The Revolution and the Constitution', pp.41, 47.

⁴⁶⁷ Royal wagon train monthly pay list, April 1804, PRO WO 12/1524.

⁴⁶⁸ Monthly return of the Royal Wagon Train, September 1809, PRO WO 17/54/2.

Initially the deployment to the Peninsula was regarded as only a minor one, so the officers assigned were listed as a footnote at the bottom of the main return. This deployment included only two troops, each led by a captain, lieutenant and two sergeants in April 1809.⁴⁶⁹ The force despatched soon proved inadequate for the task and in 1808 Arthur Wellesley complained to Castlereagh that he was forced to leave behind heavy equipment at the beach after landing.⁴⁷⁰ Wellesley also noted that the inadequate provision of transport was worsened due to the poor Spanish logistical system.⁴⁷¹ The situation had arisen as a direct result of British policy because initially the force despatched to the Peninsula was seen as only expeditionary in nature and upgraded to 'the theatre of Spain, Portugal and the Mediterranean' only in 1809. The initial reluctance to commit Britain fully to the Peninsula venture can be attributed to a variety of factors. Charles Esdaile cites instability in British domestic politics as the major reason although involvement in the Peninsular War would also have conflicted with what John Brewer states to have been an element central to British attitudes towards war and foreign policy, specifically a reluctance to become embroiled in prolonged military operations on the continent.⁴⁷² In the event it seems that Esdaile's theory was correct as the initial objections were soon overcome and the British commitment to the Peninsula accelerated, a situation that would not have arisen if such a campaign had indeed conflicted with ideas fundamental to the British state.

The increase in the status of the force operating in Spain and Portugal that occurred during 1809 was reflected in the introduction of separate returns for the troops of the Royal Wagon Train deployed to the Iberian Peninsula in this period.⁴⁷³ It was an example, however, of how bureaucracy and terminology could have little

⁴⁶⁹ Monthly return of the Royal Wagon Train, April 1809, PRO WO 17/54/2.

⁴⁷⁰ Wellesley to Castlereagh, 8th August 1808, PRO WO 1/228.

⁴⁷¹ Wellesley to Marquis Wellesley KP, 30th October 1809, Gurwood (ed.), *Despatches and General Orders*, p.308.

⁴⁷² Esdaile, *The Peninsular War*, pp.87-91; Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.178.

⁴⁷³ Orders for June and August, PRO T1/1061.

bearing on the actual situation, and it was not until March 1810 that the Royal Wagon Train deployed a significant amount of manpower to the theatre: of the organization's nine troops, five were deployed to the Iberian Peninsula. The manpower of the force in that theatre consisted of the following: one colonel, one major, three captains, seven lieutenants, four cornets, one paymaster, one adjutant, one assistant surgeon, two quartermasters, six sergeant majors, twenty sergeants, four trumpeters and 293 rank and file. The presence of only four troop commanders (one major and three captains) indicates that one troop of reduced personnel operated in the Peninsula. Of the troops, four were based at Leira and one at Rio Mayor, while a small detachment was deployed to Belem. The number of officers was subject to some fluctuation and both Colonel Hamilton and Major Tudor, among others, were in the theatre for varying periods of time.

In September 1810 the 'Detachment of the Royal Wagon Train in Spain and Portugal', as the force became known, reached the peak at which it was to remain until 1814. Its principal officers were Lieutenant Colonel W. Langley, Quartermaster C. Carter, Quartermaster W. Newman, Adjutant J. Backer, Assistant Surgeon T. Noye, Paymaster J. Harrison, Major T. Aird, Captain F. Bloeme, Captain B. Jaimy, Captain G. Lenon, Captain S. Watson and Captain J. Whittle. Of note is the presence of the two quartermasters with the organization in the Peninsula, as typically only one such officer had been on the strength of the Royal Wagon Train in Britain. The presence of two with the organization in the Peninsula is perhaps indicative of that detachment's greater mobility and dispersal across the theatre.⁴⁷⁴ Additionally, this force provided the core of the 'Detachment Royal Wagon Train in France' that served in that country during 1814, where it was then commanded by Major Aird.⁴⁷⁵ That the strength of the

⁴⁷⁴ Royal Wagon Train monthly pay list, Leira, March 1810, PRO WO 12/1527, Royal Wagon Train 1810 - 11.

⁴⁷⁵ Royal Wagon Train monthly pay list, France, April 1814, PRO WO 12/1529, Royal Wagon Train 1814 - 15.

Royal Wagon Train in Spain and Portugal effectively peaked in 1810 should not be taken as evidence that optimum capability had been reached. Transport shortages continued, demonstrating that like other military organizations the Royal Wagon Train did not benefit from the full extent of the state's capabilities even when operating in a major theatre of war.⁴⁷⁶

By necessity the elements of the Royal Wagon Train based in Britain were seen as being of secondary importance to the force deployed in the Peninsula, and their capability reflected this. The Royal Wagon Train in Britain during this period was split between depots in Hythe, Canterbury, the Isle of White and Portsmouth. This deployment is interesting as none was based at Croydon, which remained the headquarters, demonstrating a split had occurred between operations and administration. By this stage of the conflict the majority of the organization's formations operating in Britain were Depot Troops, as opposed to the better-equipped and more mobile marching troops deployed to the Peninsula.⁴⁷⁷ Manpower present in Britain consisted of one colonel, three captains, six lieutenants, three cornets, one paymaster, one veterinary surgeon, one adjutant, one assistant surgeon, one quartermaster, twenty-one sergeants, three trumpeters and 186 rank and file. As in Spain, the number of captains (three) and the lack of a major indicates that one of the four troops was a battalion of reduced personnel.⁴⁷⁸ Thus, taking into consideration the number of Depot Troops deployed in Britain, it is apparent that the force deployed to Spain and Portugal represented the cream of the organization in terms of both quantity and quality. In March 1810 the organization was effectively at full stretch, with its main operational elements serving in the Iberian Peninsula and only a reserve existing

⁴⁷⁶ For a consideration of transport capabilities in the later phases of the Peninsular War, see Weller, *Wellington in the Peninsula*, passim.

⁴⁷⁷ Return of officers, non-commissioned officers, men and horses detached from headquarters of the Royal Wagon Train, Croydon, March 1810, PRO WO 17/54/1.

⁴⁷⁸ Monthly return of the Royal Wagon Train, Croydon, March 1810, PRO WO 17/54/2.

in Britain. If necessary the Depot Troops could have formed a core around which additional troops could be raised in an emergency, but not without weakening the units deployed at home. This is significant because it must be borne in mind that the Royal Wagon Train based in Britain, while maintaining a similar number of troops, was actually weaker than during the peace of Amiens when it had been drastically reduced (a strength of approximately 200 in 1810 compared to 250 in 1802).

There were several differences between the Royal Wagon Train as it deployed to Spain in 1809 and the Netherlands in 1799. By the time of the Peninsular War command and control in the train had improved dramatically and reflected trends elsewhere in the army due to the addition of an extra sergeant, sergeant major and lieutenant to each troop, while trumpeters were also more common.⁴⁷⁹ The introduction of such personnel related not only to discipline, however, but also reflected changes intended to improve the attractiveness of the army as a career through increasing opportunity for promotion.⁴⁸⁰ More significant for improving the operational capability of the Royal Wagon Train than the introduction of additional personnel was a slight increase in the number of wagons available in each troop (rising from 27 to 30). Besides a marginal increase in strength the Royal Wagon Train also benefited from improvements to transport technology in the period. This was an indirect consequence of the agricultural and industrial revolutions and arose due to improvements in agricultural practices.⁴⁸¹ The three types of wagon employed by the train during the Napoleonic Wars were designated as bread, sprung and forage wagons respectively. The regulation number of wagons per troop in April 1805 is shown in figure 18. Of note is the smaller number of wagons employed by the Depot Troops.

⁴⁷⁹ The addition of non-commissioned and lower ranked commissioned officers being an important reform of the British army operationally. Muir, *Tactics and the Experience of Battle*, p.55.

⁴⁸⁰ Bartlett, *The Development of the British Army*, p.137; Haythornthwaite, 'The British Army, Wellington and Moore', p.91.

⁴⁸¹ John, 'Farming in Wartime, 1793 to 1815', p.35; Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.183.

	Type of Wagon:		
	<u>Bread</u>	<u>Sprung</u>	<u>Forage</u>
Depot troops	15	3	-
Marching troops	21	3	6

Figure 18: Wagon allocation by type in 1805.⁴⁸²

By December 1812 wagons consisted almost entirely of the superior sprung type, with only four bread wagons and none of the forage type being on the strength of the train in either Spain or Britain.⁴⁸³ This demonstrates that the expansion of the Royal Wagon Train in the period occurred in conjunction with a corresponding upgrading of equipment. Thus improvements to the organization were both qualitative and quantitative, meaning that its capabilities increased further than the growing number of troops alone would suggest. This progressive upgrading of equipment was unusual in the army as for most of the period the technology remained relatively static, particularly regarding firearms, and even uniform, other than headwear, changed little. The existence of superior technology, and an ability to upgrade its assets correspondingly, was a direct benefit of the financial power of the British state enjoyed by the Royal Wagon Train and enabled the small organization to maintain a capability unmatched by continental counterparts.⁴⁸⁴

The increase in the number of wagons brought with it greater demand for draught animals. Traditionally these had been horses and such was the Royal Wagon Train's reliance on this animal that its administration shared much in common with the cavalry. This was to have surprising implications for the bureaucracy of the organization because, despite increasing professionalism and standardisation in bureaucratic practices in the period, the Royal Wagon Train was forced to adopt a

⁴⁸² Monthly return of the Royal Wagon Train, April 1805, PRO WO 17/54/1.

⁴⁸³ Monthly return of the Royal Wagon Train, December 1812, PRO WO 17/54/2.

⁴⁸⁴ Haythornthwaite, *The Napoleonic Source Book*, pp.109-110, 199-209.

relatively inefficient administrative system.⁴⁸⁵ Ironically, while the operational capability of the Royal Wagon Train in the field was characterised by specialisation, the converse was true of its administration. An important consequence of the administrative revolution had been the increasing use of specialised stationery for administrative purposes, such as pre-printed forms designed for specific purposes. Despite its unusual role and composition, however, the Royal Wagon Train possessed little pro-forma designed specifically for the organisations and instead relied upon documentation intended for use by the cavalry. The impact of the failure to give the Royal Wagon Train its own pro-forma was only minor, creating headaches for administrators rather than full-blown administrative problems. Yet the situation is worthy of consideration as it highlights an often under considered aspect of maintaining the army in the period: paperwork, the tool of a bureaucratic system.

The administrative practices of organisations followed a standard pattern, with slight variations in the format of paper work. The pre-printed forms upon which the organization supplied returns to Horse Guards were the same as those used by the cavalry, often being titled 'for the Regiments of Cavalry at Home', while its returns were sometimes grouped with those of cavalry regiments (such as returns of the 15th to 25th Dragoons, Brunswick Hussars and Wagon Train in 1814).⁴⁸⁶ A similar situation existed regarding pre-printed forms submitted to the paymaster. An example of such a form is the affidavit signed by the paymaster, sworn before a local justice of the peace and witnessed by the adjutant and commanding officer of the regiment in accordance with standard army practice:

I _____ do swear, that on _____ of _____ I mustered His Majesty's _____ Regiment of _____ at which time I saw such Commissioned Officers, Non Commissioned Officers and Private Men, as are borne on the foregoing Muster Roll

⁴⁸⁵ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.67; Childs, *The Army of Charles II*, pp.77-81.

⁴⁸⁶ For examples, see monthly pay lists of the Royal Wagon Train, PRO WO 17/53/ 1 and WO 17/53/2.

and Paylist (sic), excepting those for whom Certificates signed by the Commanding Officer and Adjutant of the said Regiment as given above, specifying the respective Reasons for their Absence, and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, the same are the true and the actual reasons thereof.

I likewise saw _____ Troop Horses, and believe the Number stated and certified as absent to be just, and their absence truly accounted for.

I do further swear, that all the sums set down in the said Roll, have been paid by me to the respective persons, and for the respective persons, and for the respective services therein specified, in strict conformity to the King's regulations.⁴⁸⁷

It is immediately apparent that the form is designed to record the pay of a regiment, not an organization such as the Royal Wagon Train. This is also of note as it is indicative of the Royal Wagon Train's status relative to other units, the organization being seen as the equivalent of a regimental formation. The fact that it had no regimental number would, however, place it at the bottom of the British army's list of regimental seniority (it was designated as being one of the 'Miscellaneous Regiments' and placed between the West Indies regiments and the overseas garrison battalions).⁴⁸⁸ Secondly, although not so apparent, is the reference to troop horses. This was intended for cavalry regiments but served the Royal Wagon Train just as well.

Two other forms were also submitted with the paymaster's affidavit, a certificate from the commanding officer of the regiment and a similar document from the adjutant, both confirming the authenticity of the paymaster's statements:

I do hereby Certify, upon my Word and Honour, as an Officer and a Gentleman, that I have carefully examined the particulars of the foregoing Muster Roll and Accounts of Sums paid by the Pay Master within the period commencing the 25th of _____ and ending the 24th of _____ following, and that to the best of my Knowledge, Information and Belief, I find, and declare them to be truly and justly stated, as to Names, Returns, Times and Payments.

I do further certify in like manner, that to the best of my Knowledge, Information and Belief, all those, who were not present, have the true Reasons of their Absence assigned against their names on the said Muster roll.

Commanding Officer
of the _____ Regiment

⁴⁸⁷ Affidavit of Regimental Paymaster Pettigrew, April 1800, PRO WO 12/1522.

⁴⁸⁸ *War Office, Army List*, (London, 1814), table of contents.

At first glance there is little to suggest that the intended user of the certificate was not the Royal Wagon Train. The location intended for the signature of the commanding officer, however, betrays the document as being intended for the fighting regiments of the army. In the case of a cavalry regiment, for example, this was intended to read:

Commanding Officer
of the 16th Regiment
of *Light Dragoons*.

For the Royal Wagon Train, however, this section of the form was amended by hand, with the appropriate wording crossed out or added, to read (italics indicating added text):

Commanding Officer
of the ~~_____~~ Regiment
of ~~_____~~ *the Royal Wagon Train*.

The forms used by the army were supplied from a variety of sources. Government printers working on behalf of His Majesty's Stationery Office provided those intended for the summaries of the organization's strength that were returned to Whitehall. These included printers T. Egerton of the Military Library Whitehall, Teape of Tower Hill, London, and W. Cloves of Northumberland Court, The Strand. Local suppliers such as J. Simms of Canterbury typically supplied the forms upon which more detailed returns were recorded. An example of such a form is the 'Return of the

⁴⁸⁹ Certificate of Commanding Officer Lieutenant Colonel Digby Hamilton, April 1802, PRO WO 12/1523.

Officers, Non Commissioned Officers, men, horses and wagons detached from the Headquarters of the Royal Wagon train', printed at Canterbury in 1803.⁴⁹⁰

It is interesting to note that a solitary contractor did not supply stationery, and that contracts were negotiated at both national and local level. This did not prevent the pre-printed paper work used by the army from following a standard format, an important characteristic of administration in the period.⁴⁹¹ Due to their widespread use these forms were printed in large quantities and as a result could be found in circulation years later. The strength of the Royal Wagon Train in Britain in December 1812, for example, was returned on a form printed on 6 February 1809.⁴⁹² Although there was a large reserve of forms, those available were sometimes available in insufficient quantities to satisfy the administrative requirements of the organization. In the returns for the Royal Wagon Train in France March 1814 two privates were recorded per line instead of one due to a shortage of forms, while no pre-printed form was available for Paymaster Pettigrew in April 1813, therefore his affidavit was written by hand.⁴⁹³ Manpower, uniforms, food and stationery – the state failed to provide them all in sufficient quantities.

The format used by the army for recording returns changed during the period. Until the summer of 1807 returns had been recorded on individual forms each month, army months being from the 'period commencing the 25th of [the month] and ending the 24th of following'.⁴⁹⁴ Under the new system, instead of returns being recorded on a different form each month, they were to be listed by quarter and the relevant part of the quarter (1st, 2nd or 3rd).⁴⁹⁵ To illustrate this change consider the period of 25

⁴⁹⁰ Monthly return of the Royal Wagon Train, April 1803, PRO WO 17/53/2.

⁴⁹¹ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.67; Childs, *The Army of Charles II*, pp.222-225.

⁴⁹² Monthly return of the Royal Wagon Train, December 1812, PRO WO 17/54/2.

⁴⁹³ Royal Wagon Train monthly pay list, France, March 1814, PRO WO 12/1529; Affidavit of Regimental Paymaster Pettigrew, April 1800, PRO WO 12/1528, Royal Wagon Train 1812 - 13.

⁴⁹⁴ Certificate of Commanding Officer Lieutenant Colonel Digby Hamilton, April 1802, PRO WO 12/1523.

⁴⁹⁵ Detailed instructions to Commissariat accountants, cash accounts, NAM 6807/221, pp.1-3.

December to 24 of March in a given year. Under the original system a unit's strength for the period would have been recorded on three separate returns: 25 December to 24 January, 25 January to 24 February and 25 February to 24 March. When a new system, based on quarterly returns, was adopted the strength of the unit was returned on the same sheet, with columns for the 1st, 2nd and 3rd periods (25th December to 24 January, 25 January to 24 February and 25 February to 24 March).⁴⁹⁶ Although perhaps only a minor modification to administration it did have some implications, especially for the Royal Wagon Train, as the forms were more compact and had marginally less space. The same categories existed on the forms (such as columns for sergeants, corporals, privates) but the Royal Wagon Train had traditionally inserted a section for artificers at the top of the return for privates, and modified the accompanying numbering system accordingly (each row on forms used for returns being numbered to ease the task of calculating strength. These numbers commenced from 1 at the start of each section. The column concerning sergeants, for example would include columns numbered one to eight and trumpeters one to six). With less space available on the new format of returns it is apparent that the artificers were included in the alphabetical returns for privates, with a brief note added to distinguish them (one such system being 'cm' for collar maker, 'bs' for blacksmith and 'ww' for wheelwright). Eventually the administrators of the Royal Wagon Train found a way to modify the forms to accommodate the artificers better, making the differences between them and privates clearer, although this is evidence of the difficulties that could be encountered when the specialist needs of an organization such as the Royal Wagon Train were not accommodated in general administrative practice.⁴⁹⁷

⁴⁹⁶ For an example of both systems in operation, PRO WO 12/1526, Royal Wagon Train 1807 - 09.

⁴⁹⁷ See monthly returns of Royal Wagon Train, 1816 - 17, PRO WO 12/1530.

The use of the administrative methods of the cavalry was to a large extent due to similarities between this arm and the Royal Wagon Train (specifically their use of large numbers of horses).⁴⁹⁸ At times the needs of the train would even be met by transferring animals from fighting units, a practice that was particularly desirable given that the cost of purchasing horses in Britain increased continually during the period.⁴⁹⁹ The number of animals transferred could be considerable. For example: 150 draught animals intended for General Spencer's artillery brigade in Portugal in August 1808 were reallocated to General Burrard for logistical tasks after their late arrival, while a total of 14 animals were transferred from the 16th Light Dragoons to the Royal Wagon Train in March 1810.⁵⁰⁰ Appreciating that the army possessed the capability to transfer horses in this way is important to this study not only because the practice increased the strength of the Royal Wagon Train but also because it is one of the few examples of different departments and organizations sharing resources in the period. It must be highlighted that the transfer of horses need not have occurred at the expense of a cavalry unit's strength, and the animals concerned tended to be unsuitable for cavalry service. This was made clear in Major General Mahon's report on horses to be transferred from the 7th Light Dragoons during 1810, in which he stated 'I certify that I have examined the above horses minutely and from the reasons there stated find them totally unfit for the service of the regiment and recommend them to be transferred'.⁵⁰¹ The case of horses being unfit for cavalry service but not draught duties was not unusual, and when arriving in a new region the army often fell victim to dishonest horse dealers.⁵⁰² Major General Cartwright noted that some horses employed by the 4th

⁴⁹⁸ Chilcott, 'The Royal Wagon Train', pp.175-177.

⁴⁹⁹ John, 'Farming in Wartime', p.28

⁵⁰⁰ A. Wellesley to Sir Harry Burrard, Aeyria, 11 August 1808, PRO WO 1/228; Return of horses received by the Royal Wagon Train, March 1810, PRO WO 17/54/2.

⁵⁰¹ Return of horses of the 7th Light Dragoons cast by Honourable Major General S. Mahon, Dublin, 16 September 1810, PRO WO 63/91.

⁵⁰² P. Mackesy, *British Victory in Egypt*, p.19.

(Queen's Own) Dragoons were too big for cavalry duties (being more suited to pulling wagons), while in April 1809 Arthur Wellesley had written to Castelreagh expressing concern that even the regiments of guards had on their strength horses that were unsuitable for combat duty.⁵⁰³

It is apparent that the Royal Wagon Train on occasion received the cast-offs of the cavalry. This says something about the pecking order in the British military establishment and, importantly, reveals that many of the animals it employed were not carthorses, but breeds more suited to cavalry use had it not been for their condition. Surprisingly this could be an advantage because while carthorses were ideally suited to the task of pulling wagons and carts, they were more costly both to purchase and maintain, while they also took up more room on naval transport vessels.⁵⁰⁴ Often there was barely sufficient transportation for the cavalry horses, let alone the animals required by the Royal Wagon Train, further evidence that the advances in British transportation capacity that occurred during the period were of little significance to the army on campaign.⁵⁰⁵ The difficulties encountered when moving horses to war zones was demonstrated by the instructions given to General Sir John Moore upon his arrival in Spain during 1808:

the cavalry you will... direct to move by land and if the horses for the artillery can take the same route so as to admit the whole of the horse transports being returned to England, it will tend much to accelerate the arrival of the cavalry from home.⁵⁰⁶

The orders make no mention of the animals of the train, indicating that they were either not present or too few in numbers to affect the planning of the operation. It is

⁵⁰³ Major General Cartwright's confidential report on the actual state of the 4th Queen's Own Dragoons, 7 May 1808, PRO WO 27/92/1; Wellesley to Castelreagh, Lisbon, 29 April 1809, PRO WO 1/238.

⁵⁰⁴ John, 'Farming in Wartime' p.28; Weller, *Wellington in the Peninsula*, p.29.

⁵⁰⁵ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.183. Advances in transport technology directly improved the effectiveness of the Royal Wagon Train but due to the small size of the organization and other factors the army gained only minor benefits from these advances.

⁵⁰⁶ To Moore, Downing Street, 26 September 1808, PRO WO 1/236.

interesting to note that during the months of July and August 1808 reinforcements from Britain were indeed delayed by the shortage of horse transports. Lieutenant-General Baird was due to leave Cork for Spain with a force of seven battalions and two artillery companies but was delayed for over three weeks due to the non-arrival of horse transports.⁵⁰⁷ Even by 1810, with the army established in the Peninsula, the situation had not been resolved: Colonel Bambury wrote that there were a number of 'horses waiting for a conveyance to Portugal' and that 'as soon as cavalry transports are at our disposal, sufficient tonnage will be allotted to the horses in question; but their embarkation has been delayed by the total want of the means of transporting them'.⁵⁰⁸ The Duke of Wellington also complained of transport vessels being requisitioned for other duties by the transport board.⁵⁰⁹ The simple fact of the matter was that with three organizations competing for space aboard horse transports (the regiments of cavalry, Royal Artillery and Royal Wagon Train) none of them would ever have adequate space allocated, but the needs of the cavalry would always be met first as it was one of the primary combat arms.

With the provision of horse transports so erratic it was inevitable the animals required by the Royal Wagon Train would not travel with them but would be procured at their destination. In some respects this is further evidence of a reflexive or pragmatic doctrine in the British army but it was due as much to strategic limitations as a lack of forward planning or reserves. In a letter intended to brief Sir Harry Burrard upon his arrival in August 1808, Arthur Wellesley stated:

I conclude that you will have come equipped with horses to draw your artillery; you will want therefore mules to draw the carriages of your reserve musket ammunition, and some to carry provisions for a few days to march with the troops.⁵¹⁰

⁵⁰⁷ Baird, to Castlereagh, Cork, 8 September 1808; Baird, to Castlereagh, Cork, 1st October September 1808, PRO WO 1/236.

⁵⁰⁸ Colonel Bambury to MacLeod, Downing Street, 6 February 1810, PRO WO55/1369.

⁵⁰⁹ Wellington to Liverpool, Celario, 18 August 1810, PRO WO 1/245.

⁵¹⁰ A. Wellesley to Sir Harry Burrard, Aeyria, 11 August 1808, PRO WO 1/228.

Prior to the full-scale deployment of the British army in a region of a friendly country such as Spain or Portugal, agents would be despatched to ensure an adequate number of animals were found. In 1808 the agents for Sir John Moore's expedition to Northern Spain were Deputy Commissary Azziotte and Colonel Hamilton of the Royal Wagon Train (recognition that a majority of animals purchased would be employed by these organizations). Their role was described in a letter from the Prime Minister to the General:

Deputy Commissary Azziotte has been despatched with Colonel Hamilton of the Wagon Train into the Asturias to procure such horses and mules as that country can furnish and he is directed to report the progress of his purchases to you – when ascertained the numbers of cattle of different descriptions, that you will require for rendering your army movable, which you will feel it important to restrict within the narrowest compass consistent with the efficiency of your Corps, you will be enabled to regulate the purchases made by the several agents, and should you deem it necessary to procure the support of His Majesty's Minister... who is now proceeding to the central Government to facilitate these purchases - you will address yourself to him on the subject or to any of His Majesty's Servants Civil or Military now employed in the respective provinces of Spain.⁵¹¹

This part of Sir John's orders reveals much about the Royal Wagon Train and the British army's system for the purchase of draught animals in the period. Immediately apparent is the fact that while the duties of the Royal Wagon Train included procurement, Colonel Hamilton was subordinated to a Deputy Commissary while undertaking this role. The importance of this mission is demonstrated by the potential involvement of a government minister and that every effort was to be made to ensure the required animals were purchased.

The letter is of further importance as it reveals that even at this very early stage of the peninsular war, the army was utilising mules and oxen for its mobility. This

⁵¹¹ Prime Minister Lord Portland to Moore, Downing Street, 26 September 1808, PRO WO 1/236.

contradicts the popularly held view that credits the Duke of Wellington with the widespread introduction of oxen as draught animals to the British army, such animals clearly being in use before the then Arthur Wellesley had any influence of note over policy.⁵¹² Significantly, in his detailed appraisal of the logistical situation facing General Burrard in 1808, Wellesley, the supposed instigator of the use of oxen by the British army in Spain and Portugal made little mention of draught animals except for horses and mules, other than to describe the limitations of oxen. They were certainly not Wellesley's draught animal of choice, and he stated:

as for mules for carriage I believe you will find none, for I believe my corps has swept the country very handsomely of this animal you must therefore depend for the carriage of the country drawn by bullocks.⁵¹³

Clearly Wellesley had gone to great lengths to ensure an adequate supply of mules for his force, leaving Burrard with what he believed to be animals of limited utility. Furthermore, even as Wellington came to appreciate the qualities of oxen as draught animals, he remained aware of their limitations. When he requested that a pontoon bridge be despatched to Spain, Wellington stated that bullocks would be used as draught animals but also requested that horse harness be sent in case the bridge needed to be moved more rapidly.⁵¹⁴ The Duke of Wellington's supposed faith in the value of bullocks as draught animals is often stated to extend from his service in India, years that are often seen as his most formative.⁵¹⁵ If the Duke did not in fact possess as much faith in these creatures as is often thought, many other aspects of the

⁵¹² For an example of this view see Schechter and Sander, *Delivering the Goods*, p.41.

⁵¹³ A. Wellesley to Burrard, Aeyria, 11 August 1808, PRO WO 1/228.

⁵¹⁴ Wellington to Liverpool, Cartaxo, 31 March 1811, PRO WO 1/248.

⁵¹⁵ Hibbert, *Wellington*, passim; E. Longford, *Wellington: the Years of the Sword* (London, Weidenfield & Nicolson, 1969), passim.

historiography (and mythology) surrounding Wellington may be brought into question.⁵¹⁶

In some respects the Royal Wagon Train managed its manpower as it maintained its animals. This is not a reference to harsh conditions but rather the way in which its strength was expanded or contracted to meet operational requirements. The variable strength of the Royal Wagon Train emphasises the pragmatic approach towards maintaining the army in the period. Peace in 1802, for example, triggered contraction, while operations in Spain during 1810 caused expansion. In essence, the methods employed by the Royal Wagon Train to recruit personnel were little different to those of other organizations in the British army, including the combat arms, although there were some differences between the practices employed by these organizations and the Royal Wagon Train. The focus of recruitment were the recruiting parties but it is apparent that officers played a lesser role in those of the Royal Wagon Train. Even during the period of expansion following the Peace of Amiens no officers were assigned to this task, but eight sergeants were.⁵¹⁷ The bounty offered to recruits by these parties was also different as it was much lower than that of these other arms. In 1802 recruits to the Royal Wagon Train would receive only £6 2s, compared to £13 5s for infantrymen (a difference of £7 3s), while infantrymen were also eligible for an extra bounty if transferring from the militia or volunteers (amounting to £7 12s 6d).⁵¹⁸ As the war progressed recruitment bounties for the train were significantly reduced, with the result that by January 1814 the Royal Wagon Train bounty payment amounted to only £4 4s, while in 1816 it fell to £3 14s.⁵¹⁹

⁵¹⁶ See N. Gash, *Wellington Anecdotes: a Critical Survey* (Southampton, University of Southampton, 1992).

⁵¹⁷ Monthly returns of the Royal Wagon Train, June 1803 and October 1804, PRO WO 17/53/2.

⁵¹⁸ Bounty payments, 1802, PRO WO 17/2813, Monthly returns of the British army at home and abroad, Jan 1803 - Aug 1805, with at front, scale of age and standards for recruits, 1802-1808, and scale of bounty, 1802-1823.

⁵¹⁹ Royal Wagon Train monthly pay list, January 1814 to January 1816, PRO WO 12/1529 and WO 12/1530.

Historians such as Ian Fletcher have cited recruitment bounties as being one of the most important elements of recruiting practices in the period, so it may thus be expected that a lower bounty would have had a detrimental impact on the quality and quantity of recruits.⁵²⁰ For those historians who have equated height to physical effectiveness there is ample evidence of this, as the height requirement for the Royal Wagon Train was lower than that of fighting arms.⁵²¹ In 1808 this was only five feet one inch for the train, compared to five feet five inches for the infantry and five feet seven inches for the cavalry.⁵²² It is contentious whether a link between height and effectiveness can be said to exist and a study of the Royal Wagon Train does little to aid the argument in either direction.⁵²³ In particular, it is interesting to note that despite their reduced height requirement the personnel of the Royal Wagon Train were generally fitter than those of other formations. At the headquarters of the Peninsular army in October 1810, for example, 276 personnel of the Royal Wagon Train were present, of which only 19 (approximately seven percent) were listed as sick, a figure that compares favourably with those for the infantry (1,191 sick out of 6,913 or 17%); the cavalry (1,451 sick out of 5,850 or 25%); and foot artillery (149 out of 637 or 24%).⁵²⁴ These other formations were, however, combat arms, the personnel of which were subjected to far more stresses and deprivations than those of the Royal Wagon Train, making any comparison of sickness rates in relation to general fitness unbalanced.

The strength of the Royal Wagon Train rarely fell below that required by regulations. This was particularly apparent regarding specialist personnel, who were

⁵²⁰ Fletcher, *Wellington's Regiments*, p.14.

⁵²¹ J. Mokyry and C. O'Grada, *The Heights of the British and Irish c1800-1815: Evidence from Recruits to the East India Company's Army* (unpublished research paper, University College Dublin, 1990), *passim*.

⁵²² Minimum height requirements, 1808, PRO WO 17/2813.

⁵²³ The Ghurkhas and Japanese are ample evidence to disprove the theory that shorter recruits do not necessarily equate to worse soldiers.

⁵²⁴ General return, WO1/246, War Department in Letters and Papers 1810, f.1.

vital for the successful operation of the train. In part this may be attributed to the pay structure of the organization, as special provision was made for such personnel. In 1799 artisans employed by the train were paid as follows: blacksmiths £4 13s per month, wheelwrights £3 9s and collar-makers £2 2s. For comparison privates received £1 10s 9d, corporals £2 3s 10 ½ d, sergeants £3 7s 2d and Quarter Masters £4 13s.⁵²⁵ During this period, however, a relatively unskilled London journeyman could earn at least £4 20d per month, and probably more.⁵²⁶ It is thus apparent that, despite being paid more than common soldiers, wages alone may not have been sufficient to attract artisans away from civilian occupations to serve in the Royal Wagon Train. Rather, it is likely that if such individuals had decided to serve in the army, they would then have been drawn to the Royal Wagon Train due to the extra money paid for their skills. The difference in pay between common soldiers and artisans was maintained despite successive wage increases and the ratios of pay remained approximately the same. By 1813 blacksmiths, wheelwrights and collar-makers were all included as artificers on returns and were in a single pay band (£11 7s 6d, compared to £3 8s and 3d for soldiers).⁵²⁷

Higher rates of pay for certain personnel were not the only factor that could attract recruits to the Royal Wagon Train. In fact, the overall manpower of the organization rarely fell below that of regulation strength, demonstrating that the Royal Wagon Train had a broad appeal. In some respects the train was something of a soft option compared to other organizations, its personnel being governed by the same regulations as those of the Commissariat.⁵²⁸ Despite this, service in the organization was not necessarily easy and its personnel could come under fire, even if not expected to take part in combat. Away from the front line, the role of the Royal Wagon Train

⁵²⁵ Royal Wagon Train monthly pay list, November 1799, PRO WO 12/1522.

⁵²⁶ Emsley, *British Society*, p.83.

⁵²⁷ Royal Wagon Train monthly pay list, January 1816, PRO WO 12/1530.

⁵²⁸ J. Burleigh, Circular letter to Commissaries, 18th February 1807, PRO WO 63/40.

dictated that it was continually active, and bad weather that forced fighting regiments to return to cantonments or remain in barracks was not allowed to hinder its activities. This was particularly apparent during the Peninsular War, a campaign in which the army pursued a strategy of fighting decisive battles and then withdrawing for long periods, a tactic exemplified by the retreat of the army to the lines of Torres Vedras in 1810.⁵²⁹ Captain Grenville-Eliot of the Royal Artillery believed such periods were ‘very much to the satisfaction of every individual in the army’ as they allowed the army to recuperate.⁵³⁰ This, however, could only be achieved if during such periods the activities of organizations such as the Royal Wagon Train continued; supplies were required not only to maintain forces but also to refit them following the previous campaign and prepare them for the next. The situation was worsened by the fact that the organization was required to transport not only essentials, such as food, fuel, clothing or munitions, but other items as well. In February 1811, for example, when Ireland was experiencing some of the worst snow in years, a troop of the Royal Wagon Train was still despatched to brave both blocked roads and the elements to move the belongings of Major General Beck to his new billet.⁵³¹ The result of such duties was that the personnel of the Royal Wagon Train were to become amongst the most mobile in the British army.

While on campaign the Royal Wagon Train followed the movements of the army, but even in Britain the troops of the train were redeployed to meet the requirements of the army on both a local and national basis. The latter is illustrated in figure 19.

⁵²⁹ W. F. P. Napier, *History of the War in the Peninsula*, Vol 3, (London, John Murray, 1890), pp.39-47.

⁵³⁰ Grenville Eliot to wife, Truxillo, 19th August 1809, NAM 5903/127/6.

⁵³¹ J. Malasses to J. Jones, Commissary General’s Office, 4th February 1811, PRO WO 63/45.

	November 1803	April 1805
Bexhill	None	One troop
Canterbury	Headquarters Four troops	Three troops
Chelmsford	Two troops	Four Troops
Croydon	None	Headquarters Four Depot Troops
Dover	Detachment	None
Dungness	Detachment	None
Isle of Wight	Detachment	None
Ramsgate	Detachment	None

Figure 19: The deployment of the Royal Wagon train, 1803 and 1805.⁵³²

While the movement of troops may appear unremarkable in a fifteen-month period, it demonstrates that the Royal Wagon Train was capable of both concentration and dispersal. The relocation of the organization's headquarters from Canterbury to Croydon was a significant event; while it is interesting to note that in 1805 the greatest concentration of assets was not at headquarters (or even Canterbury) as in 1803, but at Chelmsford (four troops were present at Croydon in 1805 but these were smaller Depot Troops). This is further evidence of the organization's ability to concentrate and disperse its assets as necessary, a policy made practical by the mobility and frequent movement of the troops, and one that enabled the train to support the pragmatic doctrines of the army.

The information in figure 19 demonstrates shifts in the location of troops, or rather their centre of gravity as personnel would be detached on various duties, using locations such as those listed above as a centre of operations. Due to the requirements

⁵³² Return of officers, non-commissioned officers, men and horses detached from headquarters of the Royal Wagon Train, November 1803, PRO WO 17/53/2; Return of officers, non-commissioned officers, men and horses detached from headquarters of the Royal Wagon Train, April 1805, PRO WO 17/54/1.

of the army at certain locations the workload of the Royal Wagon Train was not shared equally amongst troops, with the result that in a given period of time certain personnel would be more active than others. For example, between August 1799 and February 1800 the 2nd Troop of the Royal Wagon Train spent only nine days of the six months on the march, and the remainder in billet. In the same six-month period, the 3rd Troop (which was renumbered as the 5th Troop in January 1800) spent twenty-four days on the march, six aboard ship and the remainder in billet.⁵³³ Again, this data provides only a limited picture of the activities of the Royal Wagon Train's personnel. More informative is the data in figure 20. In addition to highlighting the varying level of activity in different troops, figure 20 gives some indication of distances involved, the 4th Troop having detachments en route from across England, including the southwest, midlands and northern England. Figure 20 also demonstrates the flexibility of the Royal Wagon Train, as it was capable of deploying assets en mass (as in the case of the 3rd Troop) or in small detachments (as in the case of the 4th Troop).

3rd Troop		
From	To	Number of Privates
Barnet	Enfield	70
Enfield	Barnet	70
4th Troop		
Penrith	Bromley	13
Newcastle	Bromley	5
Exeter	Bromley	17
Hull	Bromley	10
Sheffield	Bromley	9
Manchester	Bromley	6
Dover	Bromley	4
Bromley	Blackwall	6
5th Troop		
Newcastle	Bromley	27
Exeter	Bromley	4
Perth	Bromley	3

Figure 20: Marches of the Royal Wagon Train, August – September 1799.⁵³⁴

⁵³³ Royal Wagon Train monthly pay lists, August 1799 to February 1800, PRO WO 12/1522.

⁵³⁴ Monthly returns of the Royal Wagon Train, August to September 1799, PRO WO 12/1522.

Despite its flexibility, the size of Royal Wagon Train dictated that the organization was never adequate to meet the needs of the wartime British army fully. The force continued to rely on civilian transport, including muleteers and contractors, for much of its needs. Yet the organization was also too large for the peacetime establishment of the army. Combined with the fact that, as noted by Commissary Schauman, logistical organizations were traditionally amongst the first organizations affected by post-war defence reductions, it was inevitable that the Royal Wagon Train was significantly reduced in size at the end of the Napoleonic Wars.⁵³⁵ The process of demobilisation was rapid and serves as a useful case study not only of how logistical units were reduced after a war but also armies in general.

In January 1816 the number of troops in the Royal Wagon Train stood at fifteen, three of which were listed as foreign (primarily consisting of Germans).⁵³⁶ In April 1816 there remained three such troops in existence in the train, each led by a Captain (see figure 21):

	Troop			Total
	1	2	3	
Captains	1	1	1	3
Lieutenants	1	2	1	5
Cornet	0	2	2	4
Sergeant Major	1	1	1	3
Sergeants	7	7	8	22
Corporals	7	8	7	22
Privates	56	62	51	169
Trumpeters	4	0	1	5
Artificers	0	0	8	8
Total	77	83	80	240

Figure 21: Foreign units of the Royal Wagon Train, April 1816.⁵³⁷

⁵³⁵ Schauman, *On the Road with Wellington*, p.415.

⁵³⁶ Royal Wagon Train monthly pay list, April 1816, PRO WO 12/12017, Royal Wagon Train Foreign Corps, 1816.

⁵³⁷ Ibid.

In May 1816 these three troops were amalgamated into one. Of the forty-four non-commissioned officers employed in April, only sixteen remained, the number of privates was reduced from 169 to 70, and the artificers were removed from the strength of the remaining troop. As in earlier periods the trumpeters were among the first personnel removed from the strength of the troops when reductions were required, demonstrating the relative lack of importance attached to these individuals. Of note is the fact that after the contraction in numbers of May 1816, the overall strength of the troop increased following the amalgamation with the other troops. This is of note as it demonstrates that the process of demobilisation was not simply mobilisation in reverse. The latter had been achieved in the Royal Wagon Train through creating an administrative structure (containing a handful of personnel) and then progressively adding manpower. Demobilisation removed both manpower and administrative structures simultaneously; the same manpower could have been maintained in three separate troops but the policy of amalgamation was economical as it streamlined administration. This is further evidence of flexibility in the structure and administration of the Royal Wagon Train, but was a contrast to fighting formations, in which even heavily depleted companies and squadrons were maintained. An infantry battalion, for example, consisted of ten companies even if reduced to only 240 men from regulation battalion strength of 1,000, while in the train the practice was to concentrate strength.⁵³⁸

The changes in the number of personnel employed in the Royal Wagon Train during April and June 1816 are summarised below in figures 22 and 23:

⁵³⁸ Partridge and Oliver, *The British Army and Her Allies*, pp.27 to 28.

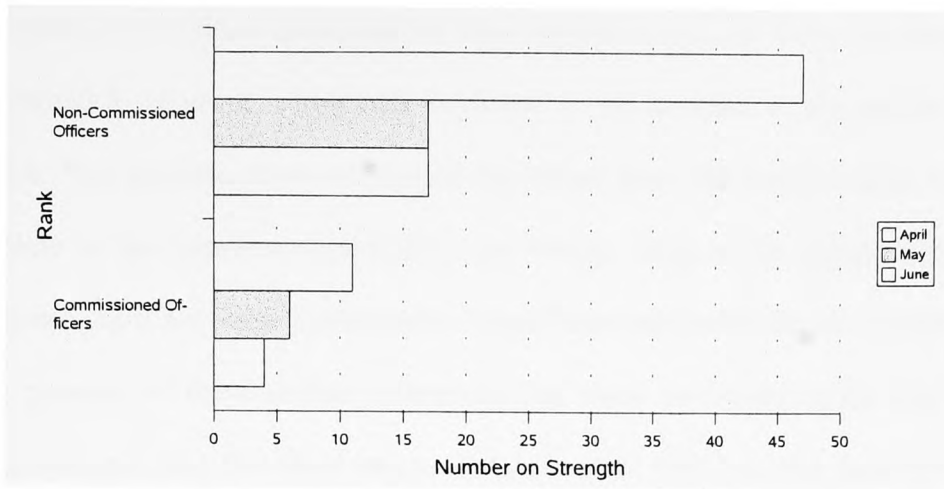


Figure 22: Officers serving in the foreign units of the Royal Wagon Train, April to June 1816.

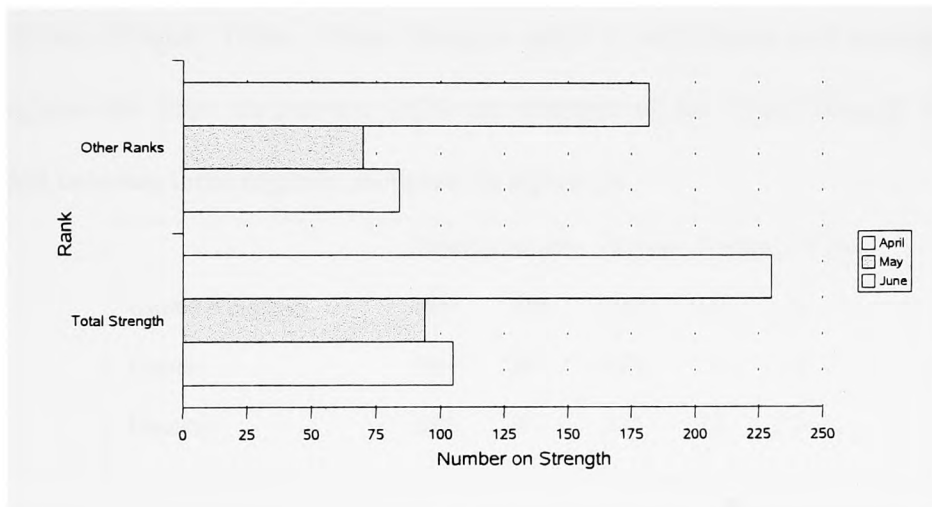


Figure 23: Other ranks and total strength of the foreign units of the Royal Wagon Train, April to June 1816.⁵³⁹

By June 1816 no captains remained on the strength of the foreign troop and the senior officer was a lieutenant, supported by an additional lieutenant, two cornets, a sergeant major, nine sergeants and seven corporals. Although the number of non-

⁵³⁹ Royal Wagon Train monthly pay list, April 1816, PRO WO 12/12017.

commissioned officers remained the same between May and June, one corporal was promoted to sergeant, a response no doubt to the increase in the number of other ranks. This increase, however, should not detract from the fact that there was a 55% decline in the numbers employed in the foreign units of the Royal Wagon Train between April and June. Furthermore no artificers remained with these units.⁵⁴⁰ It was the presence of these skilled individuals that made the troops of the Royal Wagon Train distinct from the other wagon-using units and their loss was indicative that the remaining foreign troops' days were numbered.

The hatchet of post-war reductions did not fall solely on the foreign units of the Royal Wagon Train. Peace brought with it reductions and re-organization throughout the train. In January 1816 the strength of the Royal Wagon Train was divided between three regions, as shown in figure 24:

	Privates	NCOs	Horses	Farriers	Troops
United Kingdom	989	115	310	68	6
France	444	56	561	24	4
Hanover	265	30	157	23	2

Figure 24: The distribution of the Royal Wagon Train, January 1816.⁵⁴¹

Confusingly, each region had evolved its own numbering system, demonstrating an emphasis on local rather than centralised administration. Those troops in France were numbered 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th, those in Hannover 4th and 6th, while the six in the United Kingdom consisted of the 2nd, 3rd, 6th, 7th, 8th and 12th. In September 1816 the Hanoverian force was disbanded and further reductions were made to the force in Britain, the strength of the Royal Wagon Train being concentrated in France. The

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁴¹ Royal Wagon Train monthly pay list, January 1816, PRO WO 12/1530.

reduction in the strength of the wagon train in Britain compared to that in France is shown in figure 25:

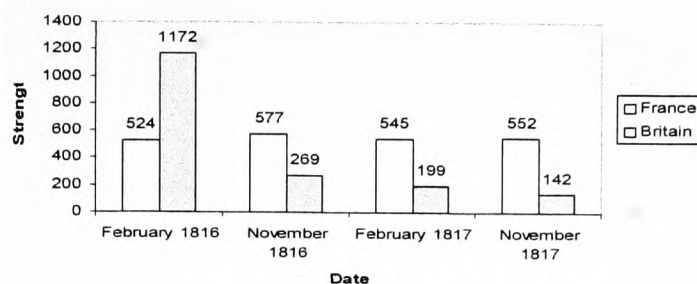


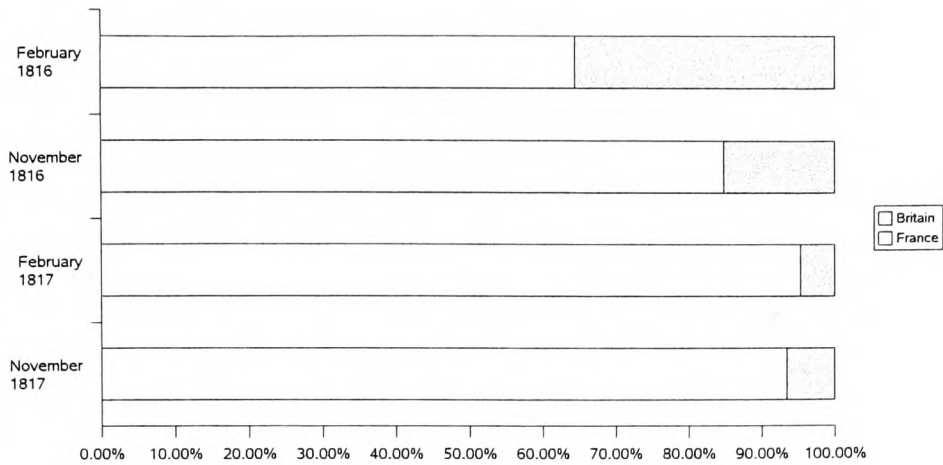
Figure 25: The deployment of the NCOs and other ranks of the Royal Wagon Train, 1816 – 17.⁵⁴²

It is apparent that following the reductions of 1816 the strength of the Royal Wagon Train became concentrated in the army of occupation serving in France. This was achieved not through significantly increasing the number of personnel in that country, but through reductions in the number of personnel deployed in Britain.⁵⁴³ In fact there would appear to have been little increase in the capability of the force operating in France with only a marginal increase in manpower between February 1816 and November 1817, an increase of only twenty-eight privates and NCOs.

The elements of the Royal Wagon Train deployed to support the army of occupation represented not only a concentration of manpower but also capability. This is an issue that cannot be ignored when considering the Royal Wagon Train because it was effectively the organization's capability to operate wagons that determined its effectiveness. Advances in wagon technology were important but the most significant factors remained the organization's artificers and draught animals. Figures 26 and 27 allow a comparison to be made between those assets deployed in Britain and France.

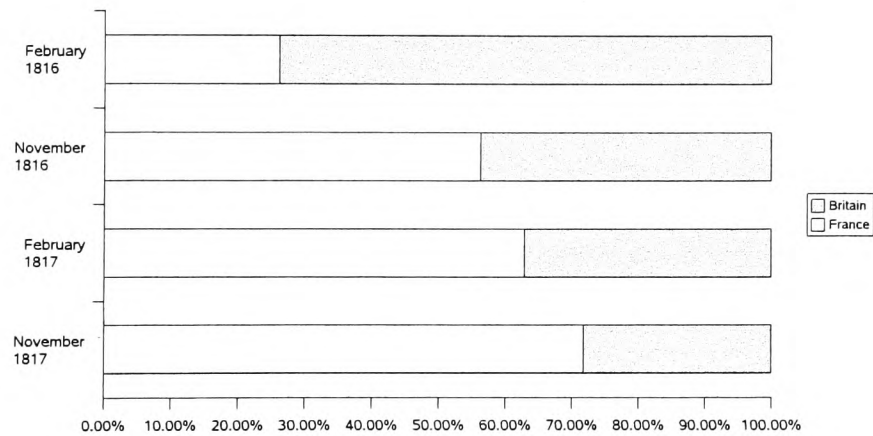
⁵⁴² Royal Wagon Train monthly pay list, February 1816 to November 1817, PRO WO 12/1530.

⁵⁴³ The force assigned to the army of occupation also included elements of the Royal Wagon Train despatched to support operations in the Netherlands during 1815.



	France	Britain
November 1817	711	50
February 1817	726	36
November 1816	750	135
February 1816	561	310

Figure 26: The allocation of the horses of the Royal Wagon Train, 1816 – 1817.⁵⁴⁴



	France	Britain
November 1817	24	68
February 1817	27	21
November 1816	22	13
February 1816	28	11

Figure 27: The allocation of the artificers of the Royal Wagon Train, 1816 – 1817.⁵⁴⁵

⁵⁴⁴ Royal Wagon Train monthly pay list, February 1816 to November 1817, PRO WO 12/1530.

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid.

By November 1816 there was clearly a concentration of capability as well as manpower in France. This was reflected in the number of active troops deployed, with four in France and only one in Britain. The solitary troop in Britain was, however, massively over strength compared to its predecessors earlier in the war. In terms of personnel this one troop, 166 strong, was approximately equivalent to the three active troops that accounted for the main element of the Royal Wagon Train in the summer of 1799, each of which had an average strength of approximately 60 privates. Furthermore, the number of artificers – eleven - was actually more than the total number employed by all of the troops in that same period. Thus, the operational capability of Royal Wagon Train in Britain was at least as good as, if not marginally better, than it had been at the turn of the century. That only one troop existed did not unduly influence its flexibility either. Although still based at Croydon Barracks, the Royal Wagon Train continued to maintain detachments at Hythe, Sandhurst and on the Isle of Wight.

The men of the Royal Wagon Train stationed in Britain in 1817 were administered differently to their comrades on the continent. Even the way in which Waterloo veterans were noted in returns was different, this practice being introduced in September 1817. In both cases the veterans were noted in muster rolls by a Union Flag symbol (specifically the cross of St. George and St. Patrick in red) next to their names.⁵⁴⁶ In Britain this was recorded in the column indicating length of service, whereas in France it was placed directly next to the individual's name. The most noticeable difference in the organization and structure of the two forces was the respective complements of their specialist sergeants. In Britain the train had on its strength a school master sergeant, an armourer sergeant, a saddler sergeant and a trumpet major sergeant, but no sergeant majors. In contrast the force in France

⁵⁴⁶ Royal Wagon Train monthly pay list, September 1816, PRO WO 12/1530.

deployed over a dozen of these latter individuals, indicating the emphasis placed on command and control over other aspects of army life. If there was no sergeant schoolmaster in France, then there was no regimental school, arguably one of the most significant additions to army barracks in the period.

The existence of the Royal Wagon Train into the post war period was an achievement for the organization and one that is often overlooked. Its survival was significant because the train had been created during the war, in response to a wartime situation, its continued existence in to peacetime evidence that it had become to be considered an essential element of the British army. The majority of transport duties for the army continued to be conducted by civilians but these duties tended to be the mundane, such as delivering produce from suppliers. It was in a war zone that the Royal Wagon Train came to the fore; delivering supplies at key moments in the heat of battle or ensuring troops at the very front line of an advance were maintained. The Royal Wagon train could easily have been disbanded in 1815, its forte being the support of large scale military operations, yet by maintaining the train the army demonstrated a reluctance to return to the rather ad hoc policy towards military logistics that had existed prior to the Revolutionary Wars. The army would eventually return to such a policy in 1833 following the disbandment of the Royal Wagon Train but this would be short lived.

The continued existence of the Royal Wagon Train reflected that an evolution had occurred in the army regarding logistics. Thus, the creation of the train could be considered progressive but it was restricted by the traditional shortcoming of all elements of the British military – lack of resources. There can be little doubt that a larger train would have achieved more even if it continued to focus on its main role, that of operating when civilians may have been less effective. The organization,

however, had a strength that allowed it in part to circumvent its small size, specifically an ability to evolve or adapt to a situation. In particular the train was able to restructure itself, contracting and expanding in response to peace and war time situations, creating new elements within its structure (the Depot Troops), splitting itself between different theatres and incorporating changes adopted by other elements of the army (such as new administrative practices). It is apparent that the Royal Wagon Train was the most flexible of the organizations tasked with maintaining the British army.

Although there were a variety of possible reasons for the flexibility of the train compared to other organisations, one of the most important is that it was a new organization and thus did not require extensive reform to remove outdated practices or to incorporate new ones. This was in contrast to the Commissariat, which was a lumbering behemoth compared to the leaner and more efficient Royal Wagon Train and was forced to expend its energies trying to improve practices rather than adapt to new situations.⁵⁴⁷ The Royal Wagon Train also had other advantages over the Commissariat and in particular it was one of the few organisations not to deploy assets outside of the European theatre in the period. Yet this factor should not be overestimated because there is little evidence to suggest that the Commissariat would have been significantly more efficient if its activities had been concentrated in Europe. The organisation would have been leaner but there is no reason to believe its systems would have been less cumbersome as a result.

Comparisons between the Royal Wagon Train and Commissariat are not always appropriate. The task of the latter was broad, while the focused on one aspect of logistics, transportation. When considering the Commissariat solely in regard to this, however, another advantage of the Royal Wagon Train over other organizations

⁵⁴⁷ See above pp.80 to 84.

becomes apparent. The Royal Wagon Train was able to benefit from the British state in an unusual way as it was able to utilise technology that was, in effect, transferred directly from the state and was a consequence of the agricultural and industrial revolutions. The period saw subtle but significant improvements to the technology of wheeled transport, including suspension and axle designs, and in many respects Britain led Europe in such fields. Using this technology made the wagons used by the train superior not only to those of continental armies but also superior to those hired by other British military organizations on the continent, particularly those utilised by muleteers, and upon which the Commissariat relied. The Royal Wagon Train was not unique in utilising the superior technology available in Britain during the period but that advances were made in its specialist field enabled it to benefit to a significant degree.

The state offered the train other advantages, the capability to expand in response to a situation being of note only when backed by the resources of the state. Yet the fact remains that, like other organisations, the train was constrained by the boundaries imposed by financial considerations and the resources that the state was willing to allocate. Thus, in many respects, the train reflected the best and worst aspects of the army's relationship with the state. The strength of the system was that resources (be it money, materiel or technology) could be made available quickly but these resources were limited due to the reluctance of the state to support the army to the extent that the force wished. Although important, it was not only lack of resources that limited the ability of Royal Wagon Train to maintain the army. Some commodities that the force required were less tangible than bread or guns and could not be carried on the back of a wagon. It is these commodities that are the focus of the following chapter.

Chapter 5

The provision of sundry necessities

The military revolution had created the need for a state to pay, train and equip its soldiers. In consequence military personnel represented an investment and, as noted by Colin Jones, one that had to be protected and nurtured, with states taking a growing interest in their welfare.⁵⁴⁸ Issues pertaining to welfare in the army can be divided into two categories: those related to specific departments and those that were more general issues, managed by either several departments or by government legislation. This chapter examines both, the former through the medical and chaplain's departments and the latter through a consideration of the army's policies to encourage men with families to enlist. In all three areas the army was to demonstrate both innovation and conservatism, with policies that had varying degrees of success. The common denominator, however, remained a concern for soldiers' welfare and while not logistics in a conventional sense this could be as vital to maintaining the army as guns or food.

One of the most innovative policies adopted by the army in the period was its encouragement of men with families to enlist. Through legislating for families the army was to increase its responsibilities, adding extra persons whose welfare the force had to consider. Despite such drawbacks, this policy was considered important not only to increase manpower but also because men with families were perceived to be of a higher standard and more reliable, the Duke of Wellington stating in a letter to Lieutenant-Colonel Torrens in 1811 that the army's failure to cater for their needs encouraged 'the worst description of men to enter the service'.⁵⁴⁹ Such a view was

⁵⁴⁸ Jones, 'The Military Revolution and the Professionalism of the French Army under the Ancien Regime', p.41.

⁵⁴⁹ Gurwood (ed), *Despatches and General Orders*, p.348.

progressive as the question of soldiers' families was a concept that led to the creation of married quarters in the mid-nineteenth century and has become something of an emotive subject and political issue in the twenty-first century due to media coverage concerned with the families of serving soldiers.⁵⁵⁰ The problem of soldiers' families is thus still a subject with which the state struggles to contend.

A potentially important reason for men with families not to enlist was economics. In civilian life women could make a substantial contribution to a family's income, earning an average of 6s per week in an industrial city such as Birmingham during the 1790s, which was almost equivalent to a soldier's pay of 1s per day.⁵⁵¹ In the Midlands during 1795 it was established that a family consisting of a husband, wife and two children should receive 15s per week, any shortfall in wages being rectified through poor relief.⁵⁵² Thus, for a man with a family to enlist there was a potential loss of income that could not be avoided if the husband was to serve in the army. The economic issues related to the recruitment of men with families, however, not only concerned incomes. While labourers and their families could earn more than soldiers their expenses could also be considerable. The terms 'labourer' and 'poor' have been described as being synonymous in this period and labouring families, particularly in rural areas, were not so well off as their incomes alone may suggest.⁵⁵³ It has been estimated, for example, that early in the nineteenth century a labouring married couple could spend £20 per year on food, £3 on rent and £8 on clothing.⁵⁵⁴ By enlisting at least these costs would be subsidised by the army, who would clothe, feed and provide accommodation for the soldier. Another consideration was the nature of

⁵⁵⁰ See for example, the media coverage concerning the 2004 Invasion of Iraq.

⁵⁵¹ I. R. Christie, *Stress and Stability in Late Eighteenth Century Britain* (Oxford, Clarendon, 1984), p.84.

⁵⁵² M. Blaug, 'The Myth of the Old Poor Law and the Making of the New', in M. W. Flinn and T. C. Smout (eds), *Essays in Social History* (Oxford, Clarendon, 1974), p.131.

⁵⁵³ R. J. White, *Life in Regency England* (London, Batsford, 1963), p.22.

⁵⁵⁴ E. W. Bovill, *English Country Life 1780 – 1830* (London, OUP, 1962), p.18.

the support offered through local poor rates, which was not always monetary. Authorities could be creative in how subsidies were paid, sometimes paying in kind through services such as clothing or laundry rather than with cash.⁵⁵⁵

Although the economic arguments against men enlisting were not as strong as they may first appear, there were other factors that could prevent men with families from enlisting. One difficulty was the family remaining together during the soldier's various redeployments and at the outbreak of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars the army made little provision for them to travel with soldiers. Regulations concerning this referred only to wives, it being assumed any children would also accompany them. It was relatively easy for wives to follow husbands serving in Britain and, despite the fact that married quarters and similar provision for wives did not exist until the mid-nineteenth century, families could remain together or at least in proximity due to the practice of billeting troops at inns (a practice that became less common as more barracks were constructed).⁵⁵⁶ When travelling overseas the army allowed a restricted number of wives (and their children) to follow each regiment. In such circumstances the army allowed for only six wives to travel with each infantry company or cavalry troop, while in the Royal Artillery the allocation was a more generous eight and ten for foot and horse batteries respectively.⁵⁵⁷ Rations were established as being half that of a man's for women and one third for children.⁵⁵⁸

Only the wives of privates and non-commissioned officers were permitted to travel with the regiments to foreign postings at the expense of the army, while

⁵⁵⁵ Christie, *Stress and Stability*, p.106.

⁵⁵⁶ M. Trustram, *Women of the Regiment: Marriage and the Victorian Army* (Cambridge, CUP, 1984), passim. Colonel N. T. St John Williams, *Tommy Atkins' Children: The Story of the Education of Army's Children* (London, HMSO, 1971), p.6.

⁵⁵⁷ H. Torrens to Duke of Wellington, Horse Guards, 5th November 1811, NAM 6807/221, p.40; Brigadier-General Macleod to R.H. Crew, Woolwich, 10th July 1809, PRO WO 55/1314. For the expedition to Egypt the permitted number of wives allowed to follow the force was reduced to three per company, a policy that adversely affected morale. P. Mackesy, *British Victory in Egypt, 1801* (London, Routledge, 1995), p.15.

⁵⁵⁸ Torrens Wellington, Horse Guards, 5th November 1811, NAM 6807/221, p.41.

commissioned officers frequently paid for their wives to travel with them. Grenville-Eliot of the Royal Artillery, for example, urged on several occasions that his wife travel with him so he could control her financial expenditure.⁵⁵⁹ Other men married local women while on service (despite the fact that since 1685 permission had been required from a soldier's commanding officer for him to marry), with the result that a large number of women and children followed regiments while they were deployed overseas.⁵⁶⁰ With the 25th Light Dragoon Regiment in India during the latter stages of the war, for example, there were no less than seventy-two women, forty-one of whom were European, the remainder being of local origin.⁵⁶¹

Whether widowed or married there was initially little provision made for the women who followed the army abroad. Left to fend for themselves they inevitably turned to looting, and in August 1812 the Duke of Wellington remarked that 'the followers of the army, the Portuguese women in particular, must be prevented by the provosts from plundering the gardens and fields of vegetables'.⁵⁶² Thus the army found itself on the horns of a dilemma in regard to women and children. They were seen to hamper the supply of the army by consuming food and taking up transport, and even those authorised to travel with the regiments required special permission to travel aboard ship.⁵⁶³ J. MacDonald, a former army officer writing proposals for reforms of the army in 1807, held such a view, stating that 'no woman, who is not by profession a washerwoman, will be permitted to follow the battalions'.⁵⁶⁴ Wives and children were, according to Mary Trustram, 'a millstone around the army's neck, affecting mobility, discipline and efficiency'.⁵⁶⁵ Despite the difficulties caused by their

⁵⁵⁹ NAM 5903/127/6.

⁵⁶⁰ The practice had been introduced into the regiments of guards in 1671. Trustram, *Women of the Regiment*, p.30.

⁵⁶¹ Half Yearly Report on 25th Light Dragoons, Bagalore, 15th February 1813, NAM 6112/78, p.184.

⁵⁶² Gurwood (ed), *General Orders*, p.32.

⁵⁶³ Macleod to Crew, Woolwich, 17th June 1807, PRO WO 55/1314.

⁵⁶⁴ MacDonald, *Instructions for the Conduct of Infantry*, p.7.

⁵⁶⁵ Trustram, *Women of the Regiment*, p.29

presence, however, women were not simply a burden on resources and performed useful duties such as nursing and foraging.⁵⁶⁶ Ultimately the army was forced to acknowledge that whatever their overall impact, wives would always follow the army and legislation was required to accommodate this fact of life.

In 1811 an act 'for enabling the wives and families of soldiers embarked on foreign service' was introduced. This effectively provided an allowance for families to return home, being extended to include widows in 1812 and regiments embarking in Ireland in 1818.⁵⁶⁷ Following the end of the Peninsular Campaign in 1814 it was the army's policy to encourage Spanish and Portuguese women to return to their own homes rather than follow their husbands back to Britain but this was not strictly enforced. In 1814 Adjutant General Edward Pakenham successfully argued that a limited number of foreign wives, selected with 'the greatest caution', be allowed back to Britain.⁵⁶⁸ Thus, during 1816 some 44 women and 27 children, who had been following the 88th Regiment on the continent, were allowed to return with their husbands.⁵⁶⁹ First proposed in 1811, wives, widows, children and orphans were eventually allowed to draw food from army stockpiles in 1818.⁵⁷⁰ Until 1846 many of these regulations continued to be applied even if the child was born out of wedlock.⁵⁷¹ Although rudimentary, the army operated a system of welfare for the families of its soldiers.

The legislation introduced to enable the army to provide for the families of its soldiers is an example of the force at its most innovative. From virtually ignoring the

⁵⁶⁶ Ensign Wheatley wrote of the of the benefits of women employed on such duties. C. Hibbert (ed), *The Wheatley Diary* (London, 1964), p18.

⁵⁶⁷ Letter from War Office to Regimental Colonels, 19th July 1811, PRO ADM 201/20, Discharges, Pay, Pensions and Allowances (Royal Marines).

⁵⁶⁸ Gurwood (ed), *General Orders*, p.323.

⁵⁶⁹ Illegible to Lord Bathurst, Paris, 19th March 1816, PRO WO 28/14, Letters from Quarter Master General's Department, 1816 January to June.

⁵⁷⁰ Torrens to Wellington, Horse Guards, 5th November 1811, NAM 6807/221, pp.41-42; Gurwood (ed), *General Orders*, p.324.

⁵⁷¹ Williams, *Tommy Atkins' Children*, p.11; Blaug, 'The Myth of the Old Poor Law', pp.123-53.

wives and children of its soldiers the army would adopt policies that were in some respects ahead of those in civilian society, as evident in regard to education. The availability of education, for soldiers and their children alike, was one of the more tangible advantages offered by a career in the army, the education of soldiers' children being an offshoot of programmes intended to educate the rank and file. The subject of educating soldiers was a source of some debate; one contemporary arguing that service in the army alone was sufficient, due to 'the beneficial influence of moderate instruction and impressing the mind with a due sense of moral and religious duty'.⁵⁷² Such a view, however, was not common and formal education in the British army had a history stretching as far back as 1675, when the first army school was created in the Tangiers garrison. The growth in the number of such establishments was not rapid but the barrack-building program enabled permanent schools to be established in most regiments by 1809. The purpose of these schools was to educate soldiers but it was common for their children to be taught in them when the regiment was away.⁵⁷³ Initially the provision of such education was at the whim of regimental colonels although a standard structure was soon adopted and General Wetherall noted that the school of the 80th Regiment in particular paid great attention to the children of the regiment.⁵⁷⁴

The Duke of York was a keen advocate of education in the army, for both soldiers and their children alike, and he considered that the cost of schools to be 'trifling compared to the benefits [of] attending such an establishment'.⁵⁷⁵ It is no coincidence that during York's tenure as commander-in-chief several notable advances in the field of army education were to occur. One of the most significant

⁵⁷² MacDonal, *Instructions for the Conduct of Infantry*, p.cl.

⁵⁷³ Williams, *Tommy Atkins' Children*, pp3-9.

⁵⁷⁴ NAM 6112/78, p155.

⁵⁷⁵ Duke of York to Viscount Palmerston, Horse Guards, 26th August 1811, Williams, *Tommy Atkins' Children*, Appendix B.

reforms implemented, and one typical of the period, was the formalisation of regimental school administration. This structure was explained to Lord Palmerston in 1811, by which time the scheme had been implemented. York wrote that:

a serjeant-school-master should be appointed to each battalion and... he should be paid according to the rate of pay now attached to the paymasters clerk. It will also be necessary that the commissioners for the affairs of barracks shall be authorised to appropriate one room in each barrack for the use of the school... and it will be essential to allow an extra charge upon the contingent account of each regiment, for the articles of stationery and books which be requisite for the use of the boys and children.⁵⁷⁶

The Royal Military Asylum at Chelsea and its sister institution at Dover were both clear indications of the army's commitment to a policy that emphasised education, at a time when it is estimated that only 15% of the population received any schooling.⁵⁷⁷

The establishment at Chelsea was funded by the state and in 1812 received a grant of £20,000, while civilian schools tended to be funded by charities and philanthropists, and did not receive significant state funding until 1831 in Ireland and 1833 in Britain.⁵⁷⁸ The army lagged behind the navy in education, as a similar institution for the navy had been established at Portsmouth in 1729. Despite this, the army was addressing what would later become an important social issue.⁵⁷⁹

Staff at the Chelsea establishment included a chaplain, reading and knitting mistresses, a serjeant-major instructor, serjeant master tailors and cobblers and nine serjeant assistants. Eighteen corporals and 36 lance corporals were recruited from senior pupils to assist the non-commissioned officers. Education was open to both genders - boys learning trades such as tailoring and cobbling, girls sewing and

⁵⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷⁷ E.G. West, *Education and the Industrial Revolution* (London, Batsford, 1975), p.75.

⁵⁷⁸ P. Horn, *Education in Rural England, 1800 to 1914* (London, Gill and MacMillan, 1978), pp.33-34;

J.H. Adamson, *English Education 1789 to 1902* (London, Cambridge University Press, 1964), p.20.

⁵⁷⁹ Although similar establishments had existed for the navy since 1729. Duffy, 'The Military Revolution and State', p.5.

laundry.⁵⁸⁰ This use of apprenticeships was not unique to the army and was similar to the system utilised in industrial schools, in which the child's labour contributed to running costs.⁵⁸¹ This should not detract from the fact, however, that the apprentice system was further evidence of a shift in army policy that improved the situation of soldiers' families. The majority of teaching was to have been conducted by senior pupils, this being a characteristic of the monitorial systems adopted in the eighteenth century.⁵⁸²

The education offered at institutions such as Chelsea, Dover and the regimental schools was in some respects innovative. Education available to civilians was dominated by Sunday schools of various denominations. These establishments had become increasingly secular during the 1790s with the result that by 1818 two thirds of children attending school in England did so at Sunday School.⁵⁸³ Secularisation in civilian education was such that it even interfered with learning, through preventing co-operation with similar establishments of different denominations or even by the fact that certain activities, such as writing, were not allowed on Sundays.⁵⁸⁴ Army schools differed as they were less concerned with religious matters and instead focused upon skills considered likely to be of use in adult life.⁵⁸⁵ In this respect the army occupied a middle ground in its education practices, ahead of such practices in the less progressive schools but lagging somewhat behind the ideas of educationalists inspired by the works of Rousseau, ideas that would remain on the fringes of education until the mid-nineteenth

⁵⁸⁰ Williams, *Tommy Atkins' Children*, p.12.

⁵⁸¹ W.A.C. Stewart, *Progressives and Radicals in English Education, 1750 to 1970* (London, MacMillan, 1972), p.92.

⁵⁸² Stewart, *Progressives and Radicals*, p.27.

⁵⁸³ Horn, *Education in Rural England*, pp.30-32..

⁵⁸⁴ A.P. Wadsworth, 'The First Manchester Sunday Schools', in M.W. Flinn and T.C. Smout (eds), *Essays in Social History* (Oxford, Clarendon, 1974), pp.110-114; Horn, *Education in Rural England*, p.31.

⁵⁸⁵ Williams, *Tommy Atkins' Children*, p.13.

century.⁵⁸⁶ This approach – the adopting of current but not necessarily established ideas – was to characterise army education and was reflected in the adoption of the Bell monitorial system prior to its use nation-wide.⁵⁸⁷

It is apparent that through policies such as those intended to support soldiers' families and, as discussed in previous chapters, soldiers themselves, the army was to become increasingly involved in welfare. The extent of and motivation for these policies is open to some interpretation but it is evident that the army was one of the few careers that fed, clothed, sheltered and even educated its employees. With the exception of the Royal Navy, other employers provided less comprehensive support, factory owners, for example, providing schools, and some farmers housing and feeding their labourers out of season.⁵⁸⁸ Another important area of welfare was the provision of pensions.

Initially perceived as a means to prevent disgruntled former soldiers becoming involved in unrest, pensions had, by the time of the Napoleonic Wars, become linked to the appeal of the army as a career and also related to the welfare of soldiers and their families.⁵⁸⁹ The army lagged behind the Royal Navy in the field of pensions and in 1806 William Windham, then Secretary of State for War and Colonies, proposed significant reforms of the system utilised by the army. If fully implemented, these reforms would have dramatically improved the status of the regular army as a possible career but they became entangled with politics and ultimately proved too ambitious.⁵⁹⁰ Windham recognised that for a career in the army to become viable, there was a need to improve pay and, most importantly, increase pensions. Following Windham's reforms every soldier was to receive a pension and in an effort to make some postings

⁵⁸⁶ Stewart, *Progressives and Radicals*, pp.21-22.

⁵⁸⁷ Stewart, *Progressives and Radicals*, pp.92-96; Williams, *Tommy Atkins' Children*, pp.24-26.

⁵⁸⁸ J. Foster, *Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution: Early Industrial Capitalism in Three English Towns* (London, Widenfield & Nicolson, 1974), p.215; Christie, *Stress and Stability*, p.209.

⁵⁸⁹ Jones, 'The Military Revolution', p.41; Corvisier, *Armies and Societies*, pp.83-83.

⁵⁹⁰ Emsley *British Society*, pp.128-9.

more acceptable, two years served in the West Indies were to count as three served elsewhere. Widows' payments were not increased by Windham, although they were raised in 1812. Details are provided in figure 28.

Rank	Pension	Rank	Pension	Rank	Pension
Colonel	£50	Lieutenant	£20	Chaplain	£16
Major	£30	Ensign	£16	Surgeon	£16
Captain	£26	Adjutant	£16	Q'Master	£16

Figure 28: Army pensions received by widows, c1796.⁵⁹¹

Windham's crucial pension reform was to ensure that they were available to every soldier, along with the widows, children, siblings and even the next of kin of those who died in service. Examples of such payments include that of £50 to a barrack master in Nova Scotia; £30 to each sister of a staff surgeon; £5 to William Marsden, whose three sons were all dead by 1813; and £150 to the widow of Captain William Wheatley.⁵⁹² To claim a pension a widow needed to take an oath and produce a certificate signed by an appropriate regimental colonel.⁵⁹³ To the credit of early bureaucracy in the period, cases in which the full pension was not received were resolved as swiftly as possible. Examples include the case of a Glasgow widow who was proved to be £4 short of her £9 entitlement, the matter being quickly resolved through Chelsea Hospital.⁵⁹⁴

Many of the pension reforms introduced by Windham would not benefit soldiers until later in the century. Sergeant Robert Edwards of the Wiltshire Militia was an example of an individual who entered the army during the Napoleonic Wars and, although it is pure conjecture as to whether or not his decision to enlist was influenced by the prospect of a pension, it is apparent that he did not receive such payments until 1834. Sergeant Edwards was typical of many soldiers and represents a

⁵⁹¹ *A Treatise on Military Finance* (Whitehall, Egerton, 1796), p.96.

⁵⁹² PRO WO 25/3995, Register of Annual Bounty Paid to Deceased Officers Widows.

⁵⁹³ *A Treatise on Military Finance* (Whitehall, Egerton, 1796), p.116.

⁵⁹⁴ PRO WO 245/134, W. Horton to Deputy Treasurer of Chelsea Hospital, Glasgow, 1816.

case study of how a soldier serving during the early nineteenth century benefited from his service in later years. Edwards enlisted in the militia, aged 28, in 1802, serving for 30 years and 1 month. Due to a condition described by doctors as ‘mental imbecility’ he became an outpatient of Chelsea Hospital at the age of 60, residing at Bishop's Canning's near Devizes. His annual pension was £17 6s 8¾d, paid at quarterly intervals as illustrated in figure 29.

	£	s	d
1 st January	4	5	6
1 st April	4	6	5¼
1 st July	4	7	4¾
1 st October	4	7	4¾

Figure 29: Quarterly pension payments to Sergeant Robert Edwards, 1834.⁵⁹⁵

To collect his pension Edwards, like all other pensioners, was required to prove his identity by producing two certificates signed by local magistrates – impersonating a Chelsea out-patient being an offence punishable by hanging until 1818.⁵⁹⁶ There were several ways in which he could have forfeited his pension, including refusal to serve again after less than twenty-four years in the cavalry or twenty-one years in the infantry; failing to claim in four successive quarters; fraud; and ‘violence or outrage towards persons employed in paying the pensioners’. Payments received in ‘countries not forming part of His Majesty's dominions’ also required special permission from the authorities, but it is credit to the efficiency of nineteenth century bureaucracy that pensions could be paid overseas.⁵⁹⁷

Pensions, education and providing for the families of soldiers were tasks shared by numerous departments. Conversely other areas of soldiers' welfare were

⁵⁹⁵ WSRO 632/134, Certificate(s) of Sergeant R. Edwards, Outpatient of Chelsea Hospital, 1834.

⁵⁹⁶ Affidavit of Magistrate, WSRO 632/134, Certificate(s) of Sergeant R. Edwards, Out Patient of Chelsea Hospital, 1834; E. L. Woodward, *The Age of Reform 1815-1870* (Oxford, Clarendon, 1938), p.431.

⁵⁹⁷ Rules Governing Payment of Pensions, WSRO 632/134.

almost the sole responsibility of certain departments, particularly in regard to the provision of medical care and religious services. Military medicine in the early nineteenth century was possibly most famous for its shortcomings. It is both an under-considered and under-appreciated aspect of army life in the period, while its availability was a tangible advantage enjoyed by soldiers over civilians. While facilities were often rudimentary and unsanitary they were regulated, and, in theory at least, staffed by trained personnel with access to up-to-date advances in medicine. At this juncture it is necessary to stress that military and battlefield medicine can be distinct and separate subjects. Battlefield medicine is concerned almost exclusively with wounds and other injuries sustained on the battlefield, in effect the occupational hazards of a career as a soldier, such as gunshot wounds. Conversely military medicine is much broader subject that encompasses not only battlefield medicine but also the provision of more general medical treatment, for those ailments and injuries that could be suffered by soldiers had they been civilians, such as fevers and broken legs caused by falls. Thus it is military medicine that forms the basis in this chapter as it covers the full range of activities conducted by the army's medical personnel.

The organisation with overall responsibility for the provision of medical services in the army was the medical board. This body consisted of the Surgeon General, Physician General, Inspector-General of Hospitals and a number of advisors, persons who were specialists in their fields but who only temporarily sat on the board. In 1816, for example, Surgeon James Fellows and Dr. Pym were consulted over the outbreak of fever amongst British troops in Spain.⁵⁹⁸ In his general overview of the army in the period, P.J. Haythornthwaite is critical of the board. In particular he states that the individuals who sat on the board possessed their own private practices in

⁵⁹⁸ Army Medical Board to Secretary at War, 28th March 1816, PRO PC 1/4087, Privy Council Miscellaneous Unbound Papers, March 1816.

civilian life and thus devoted little time to their military duties.⁵⁹⁹ While there can be little doubt that the board frequently failed to address issues with the required vigour, the potential benefits of its structure should not be underestimated. In one respect a part-time board of this nature went against the trend of increasing professionalism in the army during this period, but it was also concurrent with the trend as it utilised skilled specialists to meet the needs of the army. By allowing the members of the board to continue in their more profitable civilian careers the army gained the benefit of their expertise without the expense of paying their full wages. In consequence even advisors to the board were frequently individuals of some standing and held in high regard. Viscount Palmerston, the future Prime Minister, described Dr Pym as being 'an excellent man, [about which] I have heard a great deal in his favour'.⁶⁰⁰ Due to the advice of individuals such as Pym, medical provision for soldiers was more advanced than that available to many civilians.

The very existence of the Medical Board was itself evidence of the superior medical provision available to soldiers compared to civilians. A similar organisation for the civilian population was not proposed by the Royal College of Physicians until 1805 and, despite consisting of five rather than three permanent members, it was to have fewer responsibilities than its military counterpart, its primary role being to safeguard Britain from outbreaks of diseases such as the plague.⁶⁰¹ The advice of its own Medical Board led to the army adopting some of the most up to date medical practices available in the early nineteenth century.⁶⁰² In particular the army was at the forefront of inoculation and while soldiers were not necessarily inoculated as a matter

⁵⁹⁹ Haythornthwaite, *The Napoleonic Source Book*, p.209.

⁶⁰⁰ Palmerston to Mr. Wharton, 26th July 1813, PRO PC 1/4011, Privy Council Miscellaneous Unbound Papers, July 1813.

⁶⁰¹ Royal College of Physicians to Privy Council, 5th February 1805; Instructions to the Board of Health, 13th February 1805, PRO PC 1/3643, Privy Council Miscellaneous Unbound Papers, February 1805.

⁶⁰² With the exception of the treatment of battlefield wounds, the army was almost always several years behind the practices of the Royal Navy. M. Duffy, 'The Foundations of British Naval Power', in M. Duffy (ed), *The Military Revolution and State, 1500 to 1800* (Exeter University, 1980), pp.74-75.

of routine, the army invested considerable resources on the practice.⁶⁰³ In March 1801, for example, the army spent £115 inoculating slave labourers in Jamaica.⁶⁰⁴ Inoculation was one of the few fields in which the army did not lag significantly behind the Royal Navy, widespread inoculation not being introduced for sailors until 1798.⁶⁰⁵

Despite the expertise of those who sat on the Medical Board, the Board should not be perceived as an overwhelming success and it possessed several limitations. It is necessary to appreciate that while those who advised and sat on the board included some of the most eminent physicians in Britain, some of their ideas lagged behind those of their continental colleagues. This was a view expressed by Thomas Chevalier, a surgeon of some note who not only served as Surgeon to the Prince of Wales but also wrote a treatise on the treatment of musket wounds that was adopted by both the Irish and London Royal Colleges of Surgeons. In particular he urged a more modern approach be adopted towards amputation, a practice limited in the Prussian army from the mid-eighteenth century but one that remained common in the British army.⁶⁰⁶ Also apparent is that, even when the ideas of the Medical Board were in line with, or even in advance of, continental thinking the practice of medicine was further limited by nineteenth century opinions concerning anatomy, physiology and disease.⁶⁰⁷

An additional factor that inhibited the Medical Board was its role as an advisory body. Because of this the skills of its personnel were not directly available to

⁶⁰³ P.E. Razell, 'Population Growth and Economic change in Eighteenth century and Early Nineteenth Century England and Ireland', in E.C. Jones and G.E. Mingay (eds.), *Land, Labour and Population in the Industrial Revolution* (London, Edward Arnold, 1987), pp.263.

⁶⁰⁴ NAM 7508/55/2, Particular Account Number 2. Being for Monies Paid and Advanced by Matthew Atkinson, Agent General.

⁶⁰⁵ Duffy, 'The Foundations of British Naval Power', p.74.

⁶⁰⁶ T. Chevalier, *A Treatise on Gunshot Wounds* (London, Bagster, 1806), pp.104-122

⁶⁰⁷ Until the 1840s, for example, there were few advances made in the treatment of tropical diseases. P.D. Curtin, *Disease and Empire: the Health of European Troops in the Conquest of Africa* (CUP, 1998), pp.5-11.

troops in the field and it relied instead upon the personnel of other departments for this task. The day-to-day running of medical services in the army was the responsibility of the Medical Departments, one existing for each of the army's two branches (Horse Guards and the Ordnance). At the head of the Horse Guards Medical Department was a director-general and two principal inspectors, both of who were qualified doctors, and all three men had joint responsibility for employing personnel. The number of other personnel employed by the department was subject to some variation, and the following figures are based on those of 1812. The Inspectors of Hospitals and their deputies oversaw hospitals, a total of eight and twenty-three of these personnel respectively being on strength.

The Medical Department exhibited many of the traits of such organisations in the period, such as a bureaucratic administration, but differed from similar bodies as its structure, while conforming to conventional military practices of hierarchy, was not a pyramid.⁶⁰⁸ In 1812 the total number of staff employed in army hospitals were, in order of seniority, as follows: twenty-four physicians, one hundred and eighteen surgeons, ten assistant surgeons, five purveyors, twenty-five deputy purveyors and fifteen apothecaries. A total of thirteen personnel (an inspector, a deputy inspector, a deputy purveyor and ten surgeons) were noted as being foreign, although anecdotal evidence suggests that the number of foreigners employed to have been much greater.⁶⁰⁹ The discrepancy between sources such as surgeons' memoirs and returns concerning the number of foreign personnel employed in hospitals may be explained by the close co-operation that occurred between the medical services of the British army and those of other allied forces; certainly by the end of the peninsular war the forces of Britain, Spain and Portugal were co-operating so closely in military

⁶⁰⁸ NAM 6807/441, Appointment of John Webb as hospital mate. 24th December 1811.

⁶⁰⁹ Army List, 1812 (London, War Office, 1812), p. See P. Hayward (ed), *Surgeon Henry's Trifles: Events of a Military Life* (London, Chatto & Windus, 1970).

operations it was inevitable that supporting services were shared. A feature of medical staff was the relatively large number of servants allocated compared to other departments, including large Commissariat stations.⁶¹⁰ Physicians, surgeons, apothecaries, purveyors and some hospital mates each had a servant assigned, while inspectors were each allotted two. Curiously, however, funding for these servants was only to be received if they were recruited from amongst the local population.⁶¹¹ This policy placated medical personnel who wished to have servants, but also prevented the employment of soldiers as servants, which was to prove a contentious issue in the army.⁶¹²

Inevitably the composition and number of staff present at each hospital varied according to the requirements of the army in each region. Those employed at the hospital of the Alexandria garrison and their rates of pay are shown below in figure 30. A notable absence from figure 30 is a purveyor, who would have been present at a larger establishment but, as rarely more than half a dozen such persons were employed at any one time, the Alexandria hospital remains a typical example of such an establishment in the British army.

Rank Pay	Number Present	Daily Rate of		
		£	s	d
Deputy Inspector	1	1	5	-
Physician	1	1	-	-
Staff Surgeon	3	-	15	-
Apothecary	1	-	10	-
Deputy Purveyor	1	-	10	-
Hospital Mate	6	-	7	6
Hospital Clerk	2	-	7	6

Figure 30: The staff of the British army hospital in Alexandria, 1807.⁶¹³

Some idea of wages relative to expenses can be found in the costs incurred by

⁶¹⁰ See NAM 7902/36, Account Book of Assistant Commissary General George Grellier.

⁶¹¹ Quinto de Banos, 8th July 1811, NAM 6807/221, pp.17-18.

⁶¹² In 1811 orders were issued demanding that soldiers of the Peninsula army employed as servants without authorisation be returned to their units as the use of soldiers in this role was having a detrimental impact on manpower. NAM 6807/221, pp.14 -18.

⁶¹³ NAM 8010/19, Hospital Staff at Alexandria.

William Dent while serving as a hospital mate at Colchester: lodgings 5s per week, an additional charge for the use of sheets at his lodgings (Dent not citing how much this cost), a servant from the ranks 2s per week and meals at officers mess: breakfast 1s, dinner 2s 6d, supper 9d.⁶¹⁴ Subtracted from this should also be other expenses including the cost of clothing: in October 1810, for example, he spent £1 14s on new boots and a coat.⁶¹⁵

Due to their role surgeons, who comprised almost half the personnel of medical departments, were perhaps the most important medical personnel. The status of surgeons in the army was ambiguous and somewhat similar to that of commissaries. Surgeons wore a uniform (that of the infantry but with a black plume) and held a commission, but were not combat soldiers. Despite on occasion serving in hospitals that were within earshot of battle, it was not anticipated that surgeons would become involved in combat. This was demonstrated by the case of Surgeon Shakelton, who was refused compensation for a wound received because, as a surgeon, he was not expected to be in the line of fire (although in this case the wound had been caused by a stray bullet some distance from the battle).⁶¹⁶ It was not only surgeons serving in war zones, however, who had reason to feel aggrieved about their perceived low standing in the army: militia surgeons were amongst the lowest paid and in 1804 a group serving in Ireland petitioned the Duke of York for an increase in pay.⁶¹⁷ Despite such instances it would be incorrect to assume that the army failed to acknowledge the contribution of surgeons to the war effort and the sacrifices they could make. An interesting example is that of Surgeon Dr. William Irvine, who died of a fever contracted whilst treating prisoners of war: his widow received £60 in compensation

⁶¹⁴ Dent to Mother, Colchester, 5th March 1809, NAM 7008/11/2.

⁶¹⁵ Dent to Mother, London, 30th October 1808, NAM 7008/11/2.

⁶¹⁶ Sometimes referred to as Shekelton. PRO WO 43/366, Wound gratuity refused to army surgeon Robert Shakelton.

⁶¹⁷ NAM 6801/43, Letter from Irish Militia Surgeons to the Duke of York Expressing Concerns about Pay, c1804.

for her husband's death as it was considered to have been in the line of duty.⁶¹⁸

The cases of Shakelton and Irvine demonstrate that the life of an army surgeon could be dangerous; while their skills ensured that they would be moved between regiments, garrisons or theatres of war as required. Thus, unlike fighting soldiers who may well have remained with the same regiment for the duration of their career, surgeons had little regimental loyalty. Consider, for example, the career of William Dent. His first encounter with military medicine occurred in February 1809 while he was still a medical student and continued for several months at Colchester Barracks.⁶¹⁹ In May 1810 he qualified as a surgeon but continued to serve as a hospital mate at Hilsea Barracks. In August 1810 he arrived at Gibraltar to take up the post of Assistant Surgeon to the 9th Regiment but, due to the delay in receiving mail, did not receive confirmation of his new role until September. Dent then stayed at Gibraltar until March 1811, spending three months treating French prisoners of war at Cadiz. Until May he served as acting surgeon at Tarifa and then spent the winter in Portugal. In October 1814 he arrived in Canada, returned to England the following August and then served in the army of occupation. In 1819 he returned to England before being posted to St. Vincents in April. He was subsequently posted to Dominica in October 1820 and Trinidad in April 1823, after which he was promoted to surgeon.⁶²⁰

Except for those employed as veterinaries (which was in any case a separate department), all army surgeons were expected to hold an appropriate qualification.⁶²¹ Thus these individuals comprised a group of qualified persons, a situation reflected in a growing professionalism amongst army surgeons. This was evident in a petition made by militia surgeons in 1804, which in addition to improved pay, called for staff appointments to be made available and the allowances of militia surgeons to be

⁶¹⁸ PRO WO 25/3995, Register of Annual Bounty Paid to Deceased Officers' Widows.

⁶¹⁹ See below p.200

⁶²⁰ See NAM 7008/11, Dent Letters.

⁶²¹ *Eighth Report of Military Enquiry* (London, Office of the Secretary at War, 1809), p.150.

brought into line with those of the regulars (militia surgeons had to serve for fifteen years before gaining the same rights as their counterparts in the regulars). Most significantly the petition highlighted the fact that a majority of these surgeons already had successful careers in civilian life, to which they would return if their situation did not improve.⁶²² Yet, despite possessing qualifications and demonstrating growing professionalism, there remained a number of surgeons who were of questionable competence.

Surgeon Henry was highly critical of his superior, a German surgeon, and noted that he was 'much fonder of schnapps than of surgery; and from keeping late hours, not particularly punctual in his morning visits at the hospital; in fact, sometimes staying away altogether three or four days'.⁶²³ Interestingly, similar comments were made in regard to another surgeon in 1825, who was subsequently court-martialled. While falling just outside of the period covered by this work, the case of Surgeon Inglis is of significance as it reveals what the army expected of competent surgeons and their responsibilities. Inglis faced three charges in relation to his conduct at the army hospital on Corfu and it is interesting to note that while ostensibly a surgeon of the Ordnance Medical Department, the surgeon operated alongside those of Horse Guards.⁶²⁴ The first charge was of:

Great irregularity in his attendance on Sergeant Reavil of the Royal Artillery while in hospital having proscribed for him irregularly, and not having paid that attention to his case which it appears to have demanded... [and also] conduct tending to aggravate the complaint.⁶²⁵

Surgeons were expected to attend their patients at least twice a day 'to keep regular

⁶²² NAM 6801/43, Letter from Irish Militia Surgeons to the Duke of York Expressing Concerns about Pay, c1804.

⁶²³ Hayward (ed), *Surgeon Henry's Trifles*, p.29.

⁶²⁴ PRO WO 71/114, General Courts Martial of Assistant Surgeon Charles Inglis.

⁶²⁵ Charges Preferred Against Assistant Surgeon Charles Inglis of the Ordnance Medical Department, Office of Ordnance, Corfu 10th November 1825, PRO WO 71/114, General Courts Martial of Assistant Surgeon Charles Inglis.

books of diseases, medicines, diet tables and hospital funds'.⁶²⁶ Inglis' failure to keep adequate records of either the treatment or progress of his patients was raised in the second charge:

Negligence as a medical officer in not having regularly recorded or detailed the symptoms of Sergeant Reavil's case, nor the cases of other patients in his diary journal or register.⁶²⁷

The third charge was basically an addition to the first and would no doubt have seemed familiar to Surgeon Henry, specifically 'general irregularity in hours of visiting his patients in hospital, and for general inattention to those entitled to his attendance out of hospital'.⁶²⁸

The charges demonstrate that surgeons were expected to attend their patients regularly and keep records. This is hardly surprising, although the second part of the third charge, relating to patients outside of hospital, is revealing. During the hearing it was to emerge that Inglis failed to attend at the quarters of a sick officer, and it was the opinion of the court that it was the duty of an army surgeon to make house calls of this nature. Indeed, this was perceived as being of equal importance to his work in hospital. Another important issue raised in the case was the failure of Inglis to treat a civilian employed as the servant of an officer. Again the court ruled against the surgeon, indicating that servants and non-military personnel were regarded as part of the military establishment in regard to eligibility for medical treatment, even though they may not have been eligible to draw rations or clothing from the army.⁶²⁹

Non-military personnel were referred to in regulations as 'inferior persons' and the procedures for the treatment of such persons employed by the Commissariat were outlined in the following order:

⁶²⁶ NAM 6807/370/29, Orders For Regimental Hospitals, 1804.

⁶²⁷ PRO WO 71/114, Charges Preferred Against Assistant Surgeon Charles Inglis.

⁶²⁸ PRO WO 71/114.

⁶²⁹ Office of Ordnance, Corfu, 8th November 1825, PRO WO 71/114.

Whenever any of the inferior persons of the Commissariat department may require admission into any field or general hospitals application for that purpose must be made by the Commissariat officer under whom such inferior person or persons may be serving, to the senior medical officer of the hospital. And the Commissariat officer will send the sick person to the hospital with a ticket, specifying his name, trade and place of birth.⁶³⁰

Of note is that admission of 'inferior persons' to hospital, unlike cases involving military personnel, required authorisation from both the commanding officer and the senior medical officer, not just a sick certificate. The order also addresses the difficulty of identifying the large number of persons employed by the Commissariat, as the commanding officer was to provide proof of identity. This would have been of additional importance overseas, given that the personnel may have been locals unable to speak English.⁶³¹

The trial of Surgeon Inglis demonstrated that the army would not tolerate incompetent surgeons. In addition to doubts about their abilities, however, surgeons were also vulnerable to accusations of fraud and embezzlement due to their responsibility for medical stores including medicine but also items such as food for patients. Such charges were not always correct and in 1815, for example, Surgeon Barker, then serving with the 11th Regiment of foot at Gibraltar, was cleared of charges relating to embezzlement and failure to carry out his duty, although it was the opinion of the court that he had made some 'dubious decisions'.⁶³²

As a group surgeons were open to criticism but it is important to highlight in their defence that their effectiveness could be influenced by other factors. The daily running of hospitals effectively rested not with themselves but the sergeants allocated to each ward. Possessing at best a rudimentary knowledge of medicine, these individuals were expected to fulfil a variety of diverse duties within hospitals on a

⁶³⁰ Standing Orders, Order No. 52, NAM 6807/221, p.11.

⁶³¹ See above p.63.

⁶³² PRO WO 17/113, Proceedings Against Surgeon Barker, 1815.

daily basis. These included ensuring rooms were ventilated and cleaned, that 'no man able to sit up is to lie upon his bed during the day', taking responsibility for patients' possessions, washing patients, and administering medicine.⁶³³ Thus the success of treatments prescribed or administered by surgeons depended to a degree upon the abilities of the non-commissioned officers who ran each ward. If, for example, a surgeon correctly prescribed a medicine, this could only be effective if the sergeant ensured that it was administered.

Besides specialist knowledge to be effective the sergeants appointed to run wards also required integrity but this was a trait not always apparent in either themselves or their staff. Theft from patients was common, and of his time spent in hospital at Wlachern Private Thomas Howell of the 71st Regiment of Foot noted that:

All the time I was in hospital, my soul was oppressed by the distress of my fellow-sufferers, and shocked at the conduct of the hospital men. Often I have seen them fighting over the expiring bodies of the patients, their eyes not yet closed in death, for articles of apparel that two had seized at once; cursing and oaths mingling with the dying groans and prayers of the poor sufferers.⁶³⁴

Besides the limitations of those responsible for the daily running of hospitals, another factor that could hinder surgeons was that the system could be stretched beyond capacity by a large number of casualties sustained during a single military operation, a problem not only in war zones but also Britain itself. This was demonstrated during the Walcheren operation, which saw wounded conveyed directly from the war zone to hospitals in southern and eastern Britain, and the opening phases of the peninsular war, when the required infrastructure to handle large numbers of casualties was not in place locally. In such circumstances there was often an insufficient number of surgeons available, as the hospitals were prepared to cope with the sick and,

⁶³³ NAM 6807/370/29, *Orders For Regimental Hospitals*, 1804.

⁶³⁴ Hibbert (ed), *A Soldier of the 71st*, p.45.

occasionally, wounded soldiers encountered in a garrison, not battlefield casualties, while under normal conditions the ratio of the sick to medical personnel in garrison hospitals could be as low as eight to one.⁶³⁵ This resulted in medical students being sent into the hospitals at times of crisis and for William Dent this was to be his first experience of military medicine. The situation was such that he wrote 'the wounded are so numerous and the assistant surgeons so scarce, that the poor men are actually lost for want of surgical aid'.⁶³⁶ Besides being practical training for his future career (and enabling him to attain the rank of hospital mate before qualifying as a surgeon) it is interesting to note that service in the hospitals at this time gave Dent opportunities rarely encountered as he civilian. He recorded that 'I am glad that I came here [Colchester Barracks] for besides attending the sick and wounded we have the privilege of dissecting those who die, and in London we could not get a dead body under three guineas'.⁶³⁷

When a soldier was injured on the battlefield the first stage of his treatment was conveyance to a medical post or field hospital. The process of transporting wounded away from the field of battle was beset with difficulties. Essential for the rapid removal of wounded was the provision of sufficient transport but this was not always achieved. Captain John Aitchinson of the 3rd Regiment of Foot Guards highlighted this, when he noted that in the aftermath of the Battle of Salamanca there was sufficient transport in the 1st Division to transport only 42 wounded, despite the fact that the formation suffered 300 such casualties.⁶³⁸ The small number of wagons available to remove wounded after a battle was noted by the Duke of Wellington. He believed, however, the cause of the problem was not a poor allocation of wagons per

⁶³⁵ Dent to his Mother, Hilsea Barracks, 24th June 1810, NAM 7008/11/2.

⁶³⁶ Dent to his Mother, London, 17th February 1809, NAM 7008/11/2.

⁶³⁷ Dent to his Mother, Colchester, 5th March 1809, NAM 7008/11/2.

⁶³⁸ Thompson (ed), *An Ensign in the Peninsular War*, p.220; Smith, *Napoleonic Wars Data Book*, p.381.

se but rather the utilisation of those allocated to transport items such as regimental account books. As a result general orders were issued restricting the practice but this did little to improve the process of casualty removal from the battlefield.⁶³⁹

It is necessary to note that it was not practical for a division to possess a number of wagons sufficient to remove all its casualties at the same time, not least because casualty rates could vary from battle to battle. At Talavera, for example, Aitchinson's division suffered over 1,800 wounded, six times the number sustained at Salamanca in the following year.⁶⁴⁰ As a result it was inevitable that a number of movements would be required to clear casualties but this was hindered by other shortcomings. Of major importance was the absence of an effective triage system at any point in the process of casualty removal or treatment, with casualties being removed from the field as encountered and not according to the seriousness of their injuries.

A factor that aggravated the difficulties caused by insufficient transport was lack of discipline. Looting would invariably follow victory, while in the aftermath of a defeat the wounded would be left to fend for themselves as the army left the field. Himself wounded during the Battle of Salamanca, the anonymous author of *Life in the 38th Foot* wrote that 'I was so weak that I could not get in [the sick wagon] of myself so I was left laying on the ground and was taken prisoner'.⁶⁴¹ Those taken prisoner were perhaps fortunate as they were spared the fate of many other injured comrades, who, due to the lack of attention paid to the wounded in the aftermath of a battle, fell victim to looters, succumbed to their injuries or died of exposure as they lay on the battlefield. Immediately after a battle swarms of looters would descend, primarily locals but also soldiers and their wives. Captain Browne noted soldiers' wives were

⁶³⁹ Gurwood (ed), *General Orders*, p.49.

⁶⁴⁰ Smith, *Napoleonic Wars Data Book*, p.327.

⁶⁴¹ NAM 7912/21, Anon, *Life in the 38th Foot*, p.52.

particularly vicious looters, writing that:

They covered in number the ground of the field of battle when the action was over, and were seen stripping and plundering friend and foe alike. It is not doubted that they gave the finishing blow, to many an officer who was struggling with a mortal wound; Major Offley of the 23rd Regiment, who lay on the ground, unable to move, but not dead, is said to have fallen victim to this unheard of barbarity.⁶⁴²

After this looting many bodies were simply left to decompose and following a battle the dead were often left on the field in great numbers. During the days following the storming of Badajoz Ensign Hennell complained of ‘constantly treading on feet or heads’.⁶⁴³ The aftermath of Salamanca was particularly grim, Private Wheeler complaining that following the battle ‘the smell from a few dead bodies was very offensive’ and Captain Browne understandably found ‘the sight of unburied comrades, undergoing the different changes and progress towards putrefaction’ particularly distressing.⁶⁴⁴ Arriving in October 1812, three months after the battle, Conductor of Stores W. Morris wrote of the battlefield that ‘it still presents a shocking spectacle, great numbers remain on the ground, some partly buried with their bones scattered about, skulls [sic] and teeth. The effluence arising from it is very offensive’.⁶⁴⁵ Interestingly, barely a generation later in the late nineteenth-century, the failure to bury the dead of either side after a battle would be seen by Europeans as a characteristic of so called ‘primitive’ cultures such as the Zulu.⁶⁴⁶

A wounded soldier fortunate enough to be conveyed away from the battlefield then had to await treatment in a field hospital, which was often a makeshift

⁶⁴² R. N. Buckley (ed), *The Napoleonic War Journal of Captain Thomas Henry Browne 1807 - 1816* (London, Army Records Society, 1987), p174.

⁶⁴³ M. Glover (ed), *A Gentleman Volunteer: The Letters of George Hennell From the Peninsular War 1812-13* (London, Heinemann, 1979), p18;

⁶⁴⁴ Liddell – Hart (ed), *The Letters of Private Wheeler*, p89; Buckley (ed), *Journal of Captain Thomas Henry Browne*, p232.

⁶⁴⁵ 4th October 1812, NAM 7508/24, Notebook of W. Morris, Conductor of Stores. 1812.

⁶⁴⁶ During his second invasion of Zululand, Lord Chelmsford avoided the battlefield of Isandlwana due to the remains of British soldiers that lay on the ground months after the engagement. D. Rattray, *Anglo-Zulu War Battlefields* (Barnsley, Leo Cooper, 2003), p.135.

establishment in a hastily acquired local building such as a farmhouse. Here, despite the best efforts of surgeons, large numbers of casualties would result in a backlog that could take days to clear. In 1811 Dent was given the task of caring for wounded French prisoners of war, during which time he witnessed the consequences of a medical system without triage, and a situation where certain individuals were inevitably given a low priority:

We found these unfortunate creatures in a most wretched condition; I think without exception the ugliest wounds I ever saw, numbers of them having fractured limbs from grape shot, and not being dressed for three days after the action (on account of our own wounded being so numerous) they really had a frightful appearance, and to crown all, they were laying on the floor, it being impossible to procure hospital bedsteads in sufficient numbers.⁶⁴⁷

One positive consequence of the lack of triage was that there was little respect of rank regarding the treatment of the wounded in hospital. In such situations Surgeon Henry claimed to have worked on the principle of ‘first come, first served; without respect of persons [or their rank]’.⁶⁴⁸

Facilities with resources stretched beyond capacity, poor medical practice and a limited understanding of human physiology were not the only factors that restricted the effectiveness of surgeons in the British army. The failure of the army to supply hospitals adequately with basic medicines and equipment hampered surgeons. The Duke of Wellington complained to Lord Castlereagh that even a relatively small battle, such as Talavera, would deplete hospital stores.⁶⁴⁹ Perhaps the most significant difficulty facing surgeons, however, was that one of the most common lethal wounds, and therefore the most frequently treated, were those inflicted by musket balls. This was unfortunate as musket balls were capable of inflicting horrific and potentially life-

⁶⁴⁷ Dent to his Mother, Gibraltar, 21st August 1811, NAM 7008/11/2.

⁶⁴⁸ Hayward (ed), *Surgeon Henry's Trifles*, p82.

⁶⁴⁹ Wellington to Castlereagh, Talavera, 21st August 1809, PRO WO 1/228, War Department in Letters and Papers, 1808 - 1820.

threatening injuries. Of such injuries Chevalier wrote that:

a wound of this description must... produce more or less contusion and laceration of the wounded parts; will often be accompanied with haemorrhage; the fracture of a bone; and, in many instances, with the lodgement of extraneous substances.⁶⁵⁰

Frequently the velocity of gunshots was sufficient to allow a musket ball to strip muscle from bone after entering the body, further adding to the trauma caused by the injury.⁶⁵¹

Despite the severe damage inflicted by gunshots even serious wounds could be survived. In 1813, for example, Lieutenant Bingham noted how a soldier of his regiment survived being shot through both his nose and the roof of his mouth.⁶⁵² This is remarkable considering that, prior to Chevalier's treatise, the accepted medical practice in regard to gunshot wounds was, quite literally, hit and miss. In his treatise Chevalier urged surgeons to open wounds prior to operating. This was because such practice was perceived to be:

generally safer and better, and often gives much less pain, than poking into a narrow and inadequate aperture, or making a random plunge, which may include parts that had better be avoided, and perhaps even miss the vessel it was intended to secure.⁶⁵³

While primitive by twenty-first-century standards, the advice contained within Chevalier's work was a step forwards. Thus, the Royal Colleges of Surgeons adopted Chevalier's treatise in 1806 but until this information was disseminated to surgeons the wounded continued to suffer the 'random plunge' of medical instruments.

After leaving the field hospital the casualty, depending on the seriousness or nature of the injuries sustained, could return straight to his unit, begin a period of

⁶⁵⁰ T. Chevalier, *A Treatise on Gunshot Wounds* (London, Bagster, 1806), p.2.

⁶⁵¹ Chevalier, *A Treatise on Gunshot Wounds*, p.97.

⁶⁵² Bingham to his mother, nr Echelar, 3rd April 1813, NAM 6807/163, p.59.

⁶⁵³ Chevalier, *A Treatise on Gunshot Wounds*, p.75.

convalescence or be sent to a permanent hospital, such establishments tending to be located around six to ten leagues from the lead elements of the army.⁶⁵⁴ If transferred to another hospital those able to walk made their journey on foot while the others were conveyed in wagons or upon mules. Compared to the situation regarding transport assigned to remove casualties, transportation for those moving between hospitals was relatively well organised: a wagon was assigned to transport the packs of the wounded, while mules were allotted to carry either specified personnel or medicine.⁶⁵⁵ A column of such troops was placed in the charge of either a surgeon or an assistant surgeon and given rations for the required number of days, pre-cooked if possible.⁶⁵⁶ Containing large numbers of personnel and slow moving, these columns frequently caused heavy congestion on routes used for the transport of supplies and other military purposes. In November 1812, for example, Conductor of Stores W. Morris noted that 'the road [to Almeida] was wholly lined with sick and convalescing troops', making the movement of his supply column impossible.⁶⁵⁷

Some personnel did not survive these journeys and William Dent noted of casualties arriving in Britain that 'several [officers] have died and the men were buried by dozens... the landing at Harwich was truly an awful sight, several men died in the landing on the beach'.⁶⁵⁸ For those that did survive, however, the eventual destinations varied. Convalescing personnel generally remained at the rear of the army, although officers could be allowed to return home. In such cases the period of absence was strictly defined and contact was to be made with the appropriate headquarters as soon as it ended (commissaries, for example, were expected to report to the office of the Commissary General).⁶⁵⁹ For the remaining sick and wounded the

⁶⁵⁴ Quinta, 23rd June 1811, NAM 6807/221, p.16.

⁶⁵⁵ Porta Legre, 23rd July 1811, NAM 6807/221, p.21.

⁶⁵⁶ Thomar, 8th March 1811, NAM 6807/221, p.8.

⁶⁵⁷ Wednesday 18th November 1812, NAM 7508/24.

⁶⁵⁸ Dent to Mother, Colchester, 12th September 1809, NAM 7008/11/2.

⁶⁵⁹ Standing Orders, Order No. 52, NAM 6807/221, p.11.

likely destination would have been either a permanent hospital or hospital ship, either of which could have been in the same region as their posting or Britain.

Twenty-six hospital ships were active during the course of the Napoleonic and Revolutionary Wars, although the highest number active in a single year was nine in 1799. The navy had used hospital ships since Tudor times but the army had made little use of them and initially viewed such vessels as being little more than transports for the sick and wounded, although from 1808 limited use was made of them as floating hospitals (such as HMS Charon). Prior to this soldiers had been treated aboard similar vessels in colonies, such as HMS Seraphis in Jamaica, where shore-based medical facilities were limited. Some craft were designated as stationary hospital ships and permanently moored at a single location. Such vessels were not always well placed and one was moored a league off the coast of Cornwall, where it was noted that for at least one week per year poor weather made it 'almost impossible for a boat to have any intercourse [with the shore]'.⁶⁶⁰ Hospital ships were often no more than regular naval or merchant vessels, converted through the addition of extra bedding, and often retained a secondary role as store ships (such as HMS Magnificent). They were described as being cramped, dirty and airless.⁶⁶¹

Those soldiers sent to a regimental hospital were in theory better off than their comrades afloat. Regimental hospitals were governed by numerous regulations concerning ventilation, hygiene and diet but these were frequently circumvented or just ignored due to circumstance, lethargy or confusion. Much emphasis, for example, was placed on cleanliness but instructions regarding this could be vague. Consider the following order, which relates to the cleaning of wards: 'occasionally, in fine weather, the rugs and blankets [are] to be hung out and well aired, and the bedsteads and

⁶⁶⁰ Secretary of Customs, Extract on the Report on the Collector and Comptroller of the Customs at Scilly Relative to the Stationary Hospital Ships', 2nd February 1805. PRO PC 1/3643.

⁶⁶¹ PRO ADM 102/1, Hospital Ship Musters; Lieutenant Colonel J. H. Plumridge, *Hospital Ships and Ambulance Trains* (London, Seeley, 1975), pp.16-26.

canvas to be washed with soap and water, and the plastered walls to be frequently whitewashed⁶⁶². Although the requirement for regular cleaning is note worthy there was little real guidance in regard to the frequency of this activity. Is occasionally weekly, monthly, six monthly or bi-annually? And what of ‘frequently whitewashed’? Clearly there was a need for the frequencies to be stipulated, although even when this occurred it raised further questions: windows, for example, were to be opened daily but there is no indication whether this order was rescinded in winter. Often the regulations, even if the hospital staff wished to adhere to them, were simply impractical or even impossible. It is apparent that the orders were written with ideal conditions (such as those encountered in Britain) in mind. It was stated, for example, that each man was to be allocated a bed, the linen of which was to be changed fortnightly, and 5 feet of space. In practice hospital overcrowding, particularly following a large battle or in regions prone to high rates of sickness prevented such luxuries. At times the only available bedding was straw on the floor and space, especially in the wards of the West Indies, could be as little as 22 inches.⁶⁶³

There can be little doubt that conditions in military hospitals could be unpleasant and even hazardous to health, with death rates ranging from one in sixty-seven in Britain to one in twenty-four in the Caribbean.⁶⁶⁴ For patients this state of affairs was readily, and depressingly, apparent: Private Wheeler of the 51st Regiment of Foot spent five weeks in hospital with a fever and noted that during this time, in a bed adjacent to his own, five men died and another left in ‘a hopeless state’, while the anonymous writer of *Life in the 38th* was convinced he would not survive a prolonged stay in hospital⁶⁶⁵.

⁶⁶² NAM 6807/370/29, Orders For Regimental Hospitals, 1804.

⁶⁶³ *Statistical Report on the Sickness Mortality and Invaliding Among the Troops of the West Indies* (London, HMSO, 1838), p.4.

⁶⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶⁵ Liddell – Hart (ed), *The Letters of Private Wheeler*, p.153; NAM 7912/21, *Anon Life in the 38th Foot*, p.24.

The experience of a period spent in hospital would have been worsened for many soldiers by the strict regulations governing them. It is interesting to note that these regulations were to be posted in each hospital on a large notice and read out to new patients, in a manner similar to modern day health and safety regulations. A hospital uniform consisting of white long coat, flannel waist coat, shirt, trousers and cap was to be worn at all times and entry to hospitals was strictly controlled so visits from colleagues were rare. To ensure these rules were adhered to sentinels were appointed:

to prevent all persons from entering the hospital, the staff, or officers in uniform, patients and servants of the hospital excepted; to be particularly careful in preventing liquor, or anything improper from being carried into the hospital. No patients to be allowed to go out without a ticket of leave from the surgeon.⁶⁶⁶

Ward sergeants were responsible for imposing further restrictions and were instructed to 'prevent patients from spitting on the floor, irregularities, gaming [and] swearing', as well as preventing the defacing of hospital property. Although perhaps not common activities while in the ranks on the parade ground, these would have been common amongst soldiers at rest or even on the march, in regimental hospitals, however, soldiers were continually under the watchful gaze of the sergeants, who were to report any disobedience (although there is little evidence that sergeants did so). In addition to these restrictions normal military conventions, such as morning roll call, continued to be applied. Then, adding to the misery of a soldier wounded in service of his country, was the fact that he was also deducted nine pence per day for the duration of his stay in hospital!⁶⁶⁷

After several weeks or months in hospital patients would be either sent back to their units or allowed a period of convalescing. Some, such as Lieutenant Anderson of

⁶⁶⁶ Standing Orders, Order No. 52, NAM 6807/221, p.11.

⁶⁶⁷ Standing Orders, Order No. 52, NAM 6807/221, p.11.

the 78th Regiment of Foot, who was wounded at the Battle of Fuentes d'Onoro, were granted permission to return home for the period of convalescence.⁶⁶⁸ While popular with those concerned it was less so with senior army officers, who resented the loss of manpower: although required to maintain contact with the army, the personnel could still take days or weeks to return to a war zone depending on the movement of shipping.⁶⁶⁹ The Duke of Wellington in particular was known to be critical of the policy allowing troops to return to Britain and Lieutenant Bingham noted 'Lord Wellington is very adverse to sparing a man; and the two words "return home" puts him into a fury'.⁶⁷⁰ Other than officers, however, few soldiers enjoyed the privilege of being allowed permission to return home to convalesce. Private Green of the 68th Regiment of Foot was typical of soldiers allowed to convalesce by being given light duties. Billeted in a makeshift prefabricated hut along with fellow convalescing soldiers, he spent his time sweeping the streets of Lisbon until considered able to return to his regiment.⁶⁷¹ Even more common than the light duties in which Green was engaged while convalescing was an immediate return to the soldier's unit. This policy was popular with senior officers as it released manpower but frequently troops returned to active duty too early, a situation which brought with it implications for their health. Many officers were unsympathetic to the difficulties experienced by such men and Major Dickson of the artillery complained that 'our sick increase again, for the soldiers that have been cured of agues, from the imprudence in exposing themselves unnecessarily to the sun, have had many relapses'.⁶⁷²

Besides demonstrating a considerable lack of humanity (or, perhaps, a failure to understand the processes involved in recovery from an illness), Dickson's

⁶⁶⁸ J. Anderson, *Recollections of a Peninsula Veteran* (London, Edward Arnold, 1913), p.70.

⁶⁶⁹ Standing Orders, Order No. 51, NAM 6807/221, p.11.

⁶⁷⁰ Bingham to his mother, Burgos, 3rd October 1812, NAM 6807/163, p.98.

⁶⁷¹ J. Green, *The Vicissitudes of a Soldier's Life* (Cambridge, Ken Trotman, 1996), pp.201-202.

⁶⁷² J. H. Leslie. *The Dickson Manuscripts*, vol I, (Woolwich, Royal Artillery Institution, 1905), p.103.

complaint demonstrates that, in addition to wounds sustained during battle, patients were admitted to hospital with other complaints and conditions (in this case described as 'agues'). It is important to appreciate that military hospitals were not only filled with the wounded as soldiers could find themselves requiring medical attention for a variety of reasons. In such instances admittance to hospital was achieved through presentation for a sick certificate, applications for which were made through the office of the Adjutant-General or, in the case of Commissariat personnel, the Commissary General.⁶⁷³ These applications were assessed by medical boards, which met at selected hospitals on the fifth, twelfth and twentieth days of each month.⁶⁷⁴

Admittance to hospital for treatment of various ailments was an advantage enjoyed by soldiers over civilians because, despite their failings, military establishments were relatively well regulated and, while not free, incurred only a minor cost. Despite these advantages, however, disease and rigours of service took a toll on many soldiers. On 31st May 1808 Captain Jennings' of the 28th Regiment made his decision to retire from the army, stating that:

at this time my health having suffered considerably and finding myself no longer fit to encounter the hardship of actual service I resolve to retire... after eighteen years service chiefly foreign in which period I completed several hard campaigns without ever having experienced any wounds or other corporal injury, the usual consequence of field service.⁶⁷⁵

During service he had suffered from an occasional liver complaint, in addition to 'violent and alarming' bleeding from his head towards the end of his career.⁶⁷⁶ It is interesting to note that Jennings, despite the failing health that he attributed to military service, regarded himself as fortunate not to have sustained any wounds. Considering that Jennings avoided the fiercest fighting of the Napoleonic Wars this may at first

⁶⁷³ Standing Orders, Order No. 51, NAM 6807/221, p.11.

⁶⁷⁴ Cartaxo, 5th December 1810, NAM 6807/221, pp.3-4.

⁶⁷⁵ NAM 8301/102, Memoirs of Captain Peter Jennings, pp.133-4.

⁶⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p.134.

appear unremarkable, although the intensity of the fighting prior to the Peninsular War should not be underestimated. The significance of Jennings's case is that it demonstrates a soldier's health could suffer despite avoiding the trauma of injury on the battlefield.

Due to a combination of factors such as the limitations of nineteenth-century science, poor living conditions encountered by soldiers on campaign and the seriousness of wounds inflicted on the battlefield, death was a feature of military medicine during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. Many soldiers doubted they would survive time in hospital and in such situations turned to religion for comfort. Clergy, however, were often notable by their absence and Private Wheeler complained that there was 'no minister of religion to cheer the dying sinner' while in hospital.⁶⁷⁷ This was despite the fact that the army had a commitment to provide clergy, and associated facilities, to enable religious observance amongst its troops, including those in hospital.

The organisation responsible for providing soldiers with access to religion was the Chaplain General's Department, whose personnel operated at divisional level.⁶⁷⁸ Chaplains were exclusively Anglican in this period, and it was not until much later in the nineteenth century that those from other faiths were introduced.⁶⁷⁹ This was a direct result of the relationship between the army and state in the period, and the role of religion in the latter. Church and state in Britain were closely linked, the monarch being both head of state and head of the Church of England. Ideologically the maintenance of Protestantism was perceived as vital to concepts of cultural identity, parliamentary democracy and the British way of life.⁶⁸⁰ Non-Anglicans were viewed

⁶⁷⁷ Liddell – Hart, *The Letters of Private Wheeler*, p.153.

⁶⁷⁸ Adjutant General Harry Calvert to Duke of Wellington, Horse Guards, 8th November 1811, NAM 6807/221, pp.39-40.

⁶⁷⁹ G. Harries-Jenkins, *The Army in Victorian Society* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977), passim; J. Keegan, *The Face of Battle* (London, Johnathan Cape, 1973), p.137.

⁶⁸⁰ Colley, *Britons*, p.382.

with suspicion or hostility and Catholicism in particular was perceived as being particularly dangerous, with the fear of 'Popery' sometimes reaching hysteria. This manifested itself during the general election of 1807, described by Clive Emsley as being one of the most sectarian in British history, and saw Lord Grenville's government defeated by the Duke of Portland running on an anti-Popery ticket.⁶⁸¹ Another faith singled out as the target of suspicion was Methodism, a faith seen as subversive as it was non-hierarchical.⁶⁸² The prejudices inherent in the state were transferred directly to the army through regulations that limited the employment of non-Anglicans, imposing a glass ceiling on their advancement by restricting them to the rank of Captain or lower.⁶⁸³

Regulations limiting the advancement of non-Anglicans were based on the fear of subversion and rebellion, yet it is important to note that even the Anglican faith could at times be disruptive and not conducive to good military order. An example of a potentially serious conflict between the religious beliefs of an individual and military duty arose in 1808, when Private Philip Arthurs of the militia was 'imprisoned in the gaol of St. Helens for refusing to attend the regimental drills and military reviews on Sundays, from scruples of conscience and praying belief'.⁶⁸⁴ Arthurs was not a Dissenter but an Anglican, evidence that even adherents of the state religion could come into conflict with military authorities. Arthurs appealed against his imprisonment, stating that he would be willing to attend on a weekday. The military authorities stated that allowing the militia to choose their own day of drill would undermine discipline, although the appeal was dismissed by the Privy Council

⁶⁸¹ Emsley, *British Society*, p.129.

⁶⁸² Royle, *Revolutionary Britannia*, p.14.

⁶⁸³ Cookson, *The British Armed Nation*, p.156.

⁶⁸⁴ PRO PC 1/3866, Petition Brought by Philip Arthurs, Private of the South West Regiment of the Jersey militia, 11th April 1809.

on the grounds that Sunday morning drill was the least disruptive for those employed as labourers, farmers and fishermen.⁶⁸⁵

The case of the Philip Arthurs was a clear example of how religious beliefs could undermine discipline as they resulted in imprisonment. Less apparent, however, were the views of soldiers that, while rarely resulting in overt opposition to military practices, could potentially undermine discipline and morale. While serving on a court martial in 1813, for example, George Hennell wrote that he disapproved of the system because 'I am accountable to a superior tribunal whose judge has said "Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy"'.⁶⁸⁶ Another soldier whose views were shaped by his religious beliefs was Quarter Master William Surtees, who served with the Rifle Brigade and underwent a profound religious conversion while serving in Spain, after which he became highly critical of his fellow officers.⁶⁸⁷ Soldiers who sought to convert their comrades to their views often met with abuse and even threats of violence, as discovered by the anonymous author of *Life in the 38th Foot* who admitted his constant preaching made him unpopular.⁶⁸⁸

It is apparent that in regard to religion the army was perceived as a bulwark of the Protestant state, yet was itself was not excessively Protestant.⁶⁸⁹ Regulations such as the Mutiny Act served to limit the role of non-Anglicans, and Catholics in particular, but did not prevent them from serving and pursuing a worthwhile career.⁶⁹⁰ Not only did the ranks contain non-Anglicans but also the army co-operated with large numbers of such personnel. Examples include the personnel employed by the Commissariat in regions such as Spain and Italy, and the armies of Allied nations that

⁶⁸⁵ PRO PC 1/3866, Response of John de Veulle Griffith, Jersey, 16th August 1809.

⁶⁸⁶ Glover (ed), *A Gentleman Volunteer*, p.113.

⁶⁸⁷ Surtees, *Twenty Five Years in the Rifle Brigade*, p.314.

⁶⁸⁸ NAM 7912/21, pp.33-34.

⁶⁸⁹ Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation*, p.382.

⁶⁹⁰ Captain Jennings was a Catholic. NAM 8301/102.

were predominantly Catholic.⁶⁹¹ Protestantism was a principle that the state was willing to sacrifice in the face of military necessity, whether it was overriding the rights of an individual to worship on a Sunday or accepting Catholics and Dissenters into its ranks if not the hierarchy. The latter in particular was to be significant, leading to reforms that had implications for society in general.⁶⁹²

Despite high-minded principles such as defending the Church of England, the actual policy towards religion in the army can be best described as lethargic. This was apparent at the most basic level, specifically the allocation of chaplains. While divisional chaplains were, in theory at least, present in regular formations, there was no such provision in the auxiliary formations. This was caused by the structure of militia, volunteer and fencible units, formations that were often administered outside of a divisional structure and thus unable to benefit from the existence of associated personnel. In consequence chaplains were assigned to certain auxiliary formations, but were rarely on the active strength of such units. This was demonstrated by the case of Reverend Samuel Wells, who was appointed as chaplain to the Coleridge Volunteer Artillery in 1804. Despite the formation conducting drills and meeting on a regular basis, he was instructed not take up the full responsibilities of his post and 'not to take rank in the army except during the time of the said corps being called out into actual service'.⁶⁹³

By failing to integrate chaplains fully into the structure of auxiliary formations, the effectiveness of such individuals could have been undermined by lack of familiarity with those under their care. In part this could have been avoided due to the nature of auxiliary units, which tended to be drawn from a single locality, but it is possible that such a chaplain would have known few individuals originating from

⁶⁹¹ See above p.62.

⁶⁹² Cookson, *The British Armed Nation*, p.156.

⁶⁹³ NAM 6807/405, Commission from Lord Lieutenant of Devon appointing Samuel Wells Chaplain to the Coleridge Corps of Royal Volunteer Artillery, 24th October 1804.

outside of his own parish. Even chaplains in regular formations, however, failed to make close bonds with troops in regular formations. This included even the overtly religious memoirists Quartermaster Surtees who evidently underwent a profound and painful religious conversion during his time in the army with little input from military clergy.⁶⁹⁴ Above all the army's policy towards chaplains in the auxiliary forces demonstrated that there was relatively little concern about the religious practices of British soldiers, and in consequence only a limited effort was made to force the Anglican faith upon them.

The Duke of Wellington wrote that he believed 'the meeting of soldiers in their cantonments to sing psalms, or hear a sermon read... is, in the abstract, perfectly innocent'.⁶⁹⁵ This was typical of the army's policy, which sought not to instil Anglicanism into its troops but facilitate its practice. In consequence, chaplains on active service were expected to conduct church services twice per week and divine service each Sunday. For such services chaplains were instructed that 'more men shall not be assembled for that purpose [a church service] at a time, than the voice can reach, a precaution very necessary to ensure the attention of the soldier... [to allow this] the chaplain shall perform the service successively to the different corps of his division'.⁶⁹⁶ The preferred location for such services was the open air as the army did little to provide buildings. This may be significant for understanding the attitude of soldiers towards religion while in the army because the decline of religious observance in urban areas during the period has been linked with lack of religious facilities.⁶⁹⁷

There is evidence that, due to a variety of factors, services occurred

⁶⁹⁴ See NAM 7912/21, Anon, *Life in the 38th Foot; Surtees, Twenty Five Years in the Rifle Brigade*, pp.300-314.

⁶⁹⁵ Gurwood (ed), *Despatches and General Orders*, p.429.

⁶⁹⁶ Adjutant General Harry Calvert to Duke of Wellington, Horse Guards, 8th November 1811. NAM 6807/22, pp.39-40.

⁶⁹⁷ Harvey, *Britain in the Early Nineteenth Century*, p.71.

significantly less frequently than was recommended. Private Wheeler, for example, noted that ‘in winter quarters [chaplains] once on a Sunday (weather permitting), perform divine service, but when the campaign opens, it is seldom, or ever, an opportunity offers’.⁶⁹⁸ Thus weather and the practicalities of military life could prevent religious observance. Many battles – including Waterloo – were fought on Sundays, limiting the time available for religious observance.⁶⁹⁹ In consequence Sundays were frequently perceived by soldiers on campaign to be like any other day. This was a significant departure from attitudes in civilian life as both pressure from ecclesiastical authorities and state regulations restricted the activities that could occur. Non-religious meetings, for example, could not be held on Sundays following the Sunday Observance Act (1781) and Seditious Meeting Act (1795).⁷⁰⁰ Soldiers on campaign were effectively exempt from such regulations and their relaxed attitude towards Sunday may be evidence of the general decline in religious practice across Britain during the period, as noted by Anthony Harvey.⁷⁰¹

The lack of respect shown by many soldiers towards Sundays shocked recruits from staunchly religious backgrounds. Private Thomas Howell of the 71st Regiment of Foot was such a soldier, although he soon adopted the practices of his colleagues, and admitted that he did not attend a church service while serving in Spain.⁷⁰² It may be that this is further evidence of a general decline in religious adherence amongst soldiers, reflecting trends in society itself. Through being removed from restrictive Sunday regulations and social pressures to conform to religious codes of conduct, it is possible that Howell was able to display his true feeling about religious observance while on campaign. There were, however, a variety of reasons why formerly devout

⁶⁹⁸ Brackets in original. Liddell – Hart (ed), *The Letters of Private Wheeler*, p.153.

⁶⁹⁹ Keegan, *The Face of Battle*, p.138.

⁷⁰⁰ Foster, *Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution*, p.32.

⁷⁰¹ See Harvey, *Britain in the Early Nineteenth Century*, *passim*.

⁷⁰² Hibbert, *A Soldier of the 71st*, pp.16-17.

individuals, such as Howell, would be reluctant to attend the religious services provided by the army.

It is possible that the nature and content of religious services offered by the army may have served to deter some soldiers. A sermon preached to the Queen's Regiment of Volunteers in 1804, with its references to the destruction of Jerusalem, demonstrated that an element of 'fire and brimstone' existed in the discourse of army chaplains.⁷⁰³ That preaching of this nature could be unsuitable was demonstrated in advice issued by the Adjutant-General, who recommended that services should 'close with a short practical sermon, suited to the habits and understanding of soldiers'.⁷⁰⁴ These instructions are of note not only because of the advice they contained, but also that they were one of the few instances in which the army as an institution acted to increase its troop's attendance at religious services. This occurred at a time when there was growing concern at the spread of Methodism in the army. Thus, John Keegan argues, attempts to increase the attendance of religious services directed by army chaplains was an attempt to combat the spread of Methodism.⁷⁰⁵ Such a theory explains the sudden interest displayed by the army in the content of sermons during the later phases of the Napoleonic Wars, the preceding years having been characterised by the army's relative indifference to the religious practices of its troops.

Fears relating to the spread of Methodism demonstrated that there existed in the army a significant number of troops who were not of the Anglican faith, although the precise numbers concerned cannot be determined as the religion of troops was not included on returns until 1861 (further evidence that there was little concern about the religious composition of the army and, perhaps, a lack of administrative efficiency).⁷⁰⁶

⁷⁰³ NAM 7404/58, A Sermon Preached At The Presentation Of Colours To The Queens Royal Regiment of Volunteers in 1804. pp.1-2.

⁷⁰⁴ Adjutant General Harry Calvert to Duke of Wellington, Horse Guards, 8th November 1811. NAM 6807/221, p.40.

⁷⁰⁵ Keegan, *The Face of Battle*, p.137.

⁷⁰⁶ Cookson, *The British Armed Nation*, p.177.

For soldiers of other faiths the Anglican religious services provided by the army would have had little relevance and, as a result, they either failed to attend or utilised local religious facilities such as convents.⁷⁰⁷ Such practices, however, could make non-Anglican soldiers a visible minority and subject to the prejudices of their colleagues, the word Methodist being used as derogatory term to describe a reserved individual.⁷⁰⁸ Interestingly non-Anglicans were not the only soldiers of overt religious faith to be victimised by comrades: the Anglican Lieutenant George Hennell, for example, complained that his comrades were profane and mocked the bible, evidence of a general decline in deference towards religion in the period.⁷⁰⁹

It is apparent that there were a considerable number of reasons why soldiers would be reluctant or, for that matter, unable, to attend a religious service. Yet, despite a relatively low demand for their services, there were an inadequate number of chaplains available to meet this demand. Again this parallels developments in British society: a lack of clergy being the factor highlighted by John Foster as the reason for declining religious observance in British cities during the period.⁷¹⁰ Lieutenant Bingham in particular was critical of the lack of chaplains and complained that the small number available was barely sufficient to do more than 'remind us that we are Protestants'; he also noted that he believed only by allocating chaplains to brigades rather than divisions could this shortfall in religious provision be avoided.⁷¹¹ Bingham's belief concerning the allocation of chaplains cut to the heart of the problems concerning the provision and attendance of religious services in the army. There is evidence that otherwise regular churchgoers, such as Judge Advocate Larpent, Captain Browne and Private John Green, were unable to attend religious

⁷⁰⁷ Green, *The Vicissitudes of a Soldier's Life*, p.21.

⁷⁰⁸ Hibbert (ed), *A Soldier of the 71st*, p.xiii.

⁷⁰⁹ Glover (ed), *A Gentleman Volunteer*, p.201.

⁷¹⁰ Foster, *Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution*, p.29.

⁷¹¹ Bingham to his mother, Galispando 6th March 1813, NAM 6807/163, p.12.

services as frequently as they desired, and this inability could be attributed to deficiencies in the number of chaplains available.⁷¹²

The limited allocation of chaplains to divisions could significantly restrict the practice and observance of religion in the army (and it is important to note that there is little evidence the army failed to recruit the number of clergy it believed to be required - in this case the culprit was certainly policy, not manpower shortages). No doubt apathy towards such activities had to be overcome but it was also the role of chaplains to encourage faith as well as service the needs of those who possessed it, measures to combat the spread of Methodism being a case in point. As a result of this role, which was almost missionary in nature, the small numbers of chaplains available were overstretched, a fact demonstrated by the orders of 1811 which instructed them to deliver the Sunday sermon multiple times due to the size of their congregations.⁷¹³ When units were deployed in Christian countries this pressure on chaplains was in part relieved through the utilisation of local facilities by the troops, just as Catholic soldiers in Spain had used churches of their own religion. On occasion soldiers even proved willing to use other denominations' places of worship, the Protestant Private Green, for example, stating that he attended both 'churches and dissenting chapels' while in Ireland.⁷¹⁴ This, however, was not the situation in distant colonial garrisons, which often lacked access to local religious facilities of any Christian denomination.

While Bingham may have been justified to complain of a shortage of chaplains in the European theatre, such individuals were almost non-existent in the army overseas. The absence of chaplains in units deployed overseas can be attributed to a variety of factors. As previously stated, the army had a somewhat ambivalent attitude

⁷¹² Larpent (ed), *The Private Journal of F S Larpent*, vol II., pp.150-51; Buckley (ed), *The Napoleonic War Journal of Captain Thomas Henry Browne*, p.257; Green, *Vicissitudes*, p.185.

⁷¹³ Adjutant General Harry Calvert to Duke of Wellington, Horse Guards, 8th November 1811. NAM 6807/221, pp.39-40.

⁷¹⁴ Green, *Vicissitudes*, p.218.

to towards religion and it must be noted that, while many overseas garrisons possessed a sound supporting infrastructure of stores, hospitals and regimental schools, the same could not be said of the provision of chaplains.⁷¹⁵ This may, however, have been a consequence not of a deliberate policy (if chaplains were needed anywhere, it would be in garrisons isolated from Christianity in darkest Africa) but rather the practice of allotting chaplains to divisions. The majority of divisions existed in Europe so to ensure these formations were at strength, chaplains were also concentrated in this theatre. Conversely, units deployed on colonial duties tended to be deployed as regiments or even smaller formations and thus did not benefit from divisional level organisations as the provision of chaplains to garrisons at any level would have been contrary to established practice.

There is a more fundamental issue when considering the army's failure to allocate chaplains to colonial garrisons, which in part relates to the role of such individuals. Chaplains were a special case amongst the personnel who helped maintain the British army, as they required direct and, on occasion, one-to-one contact with the troops. Surgeons could claim such a role but chaplains were unique as to function with maximum efficiency their contact had to occur on certain days of the week (primarily Sunday) and at certain times of the year (such as Easter and Christmas). Achieving this proved a difficult enough task in the European theatre, where troops were heavily concentrated, and would surely have been almost impossible to achieve amongst the isolated outposts that controlled some of the more inhospitable parts of the British Empire. That concerns about the inability of chaplains to function adequately in dispersed garrisons persisted was demonstrated by their post war distribution. This saw chaplains primarily deployed not to the vast regions of Africa or Asia, which possessed scattered garrisons, but relatively self-contained areas

⁷¹⁵ NAM 6112/78, pp. 13-17, 115-18, 149-57.

such as the islands of the Caribbean (see below). In such locations the density of troops was higher (the garrison of Jamaica, for example, had a strength of 4,600, compared to approximately 1,000 defending scattered British outposts in western Africa) making it possible for chaplains to operate with some efficiency.⁷¹⁶

The end of the war in Europe brought with it changes that were to have an impact on the deployment of chaplains overseas. The divisions that had fought their way through Portugal, Spain and into southern France were, with the exception of the army of occupation, disbanded and the army began a transition away from a European field force back to one optimised for policing the Empire.⁷¹⁷ As the concentration of forces shifted away from Europe to the colonies, so too did the army's chaplains (it appears that in this regard reductions in the size of the army were less important than the relative concentration of forces in deciding the deployment of chaplains).

From 1812 to 1815 the only overseas garrison to have a chaplain assigned to it for any length of time had been Honduras (Chaplain J. Armstrong).⁷¹⁸ Between 1816 and 1820, however, there was to be a marked and steady growth in both the number of chaplains and the overseas garrisons to which they were deployed (see figure 31).

Year	Number of Chaplains	Garrisons Served
1816	6	2
1817	14	8
1818	19	8
1819	18	19
1820	29	19

Figure 31: Chaplains serving in overseas garrisons, 1816 – 20.⁷¹⁹

⁷¹⁶ PRO WO17/2814, Monthly Returns of the Army at Home and Abroad.

⁷¹⁷ I. Fletcher, *Wellington's Regiments* (Staplehurst, Spellmont, 1994), passim. This work contains extensive references to the pre-war, wartime and post-war activities of the British units that fought in the peninsular war, including their destinations after the armistices of 1814 and 1815.

⁷¹⁸ 'Particular sums Ordered in Repayment of Advances Made by the Commissariat Department Abroad, on Account of the Pay of Officiating Chaplains 1817', PRO WRO 25/254. Payments by the Commissariat 1812 – 30.

⁷¹⁹ 'Particular sums Ordered in Repayment of Advances Made by the Commissariat Department Abroad, on Account of the Pay of Officiating Chaplains 1817 to 1820', PRO WRO 25/254.

Of particular note is that besides serving an increased number of garrisons, in most years the number of chaplains actually exceeded the number of garrisons. This demonstrated chaplains were available to serve the more dispersed detachments.

While figure 31 clearly demonstrates that there was an increase in the availability of chaplains in overseas garrisons, it is important to note its limitations. First there is the question of garrisons and their definition. In this work overseas garrisons have generally been defined in accordance with the terminology used by the army to administer its forces deployed overseas. These could be somewhat arbitrary and of unequal size, Hanover, for example, counted as a single location, as did France, while Britain was divided into North (Scotland), South (including Wales and the Channel Islands) and Ireland.⁷²⁰ In the case of the deployment of chaplains to overseas garrisons, however, a different system was adopted. In the general army system, for example, modern day Canada was divided into Canada and New Foundland, while returns for chaplains added New Brunswick. It is this latter system that is used in figure 31, rather than that used elsewhere in the work, because, as discussed below, the information has implications for understanding how chaplains operated outside of Europe. This, however, makes it difficult to compare properly the deployment of chaplains to troop concentration. Both of the systems described above relied on vaguely defined areas of land, those relating to chaplains merely having the distinction of being slightly less general, and, as the more detailed data relating to garrisons in this area is incomplete, any comparisons must to a degree rely on estimation.

Another limitation of figure 31 is that it masks a significant imbalance in the way in which chaplains were allocated to serve overseas. Specifically, between the years 1816 to 1817 the number of chaplains serving overseas doubled from six to

⁷²⁰ PRO WO 17/2814, Monthly Returns of the Army at Home and Abroad.

fourteen, but of those fourteen no fewer than thirteen were deployed in the Caribbean region. The precise locations of these thirteen chaplains are shown in figure 32.

	Location(s) Served
Reverend A. Campbell	Jamaica
J. Morris	Jamaica
W. Hamilton	Jamaica
E. Marshal	Jamaica
J. King	Windward and Leeward Islands, Barbados
A. Stragham	Windward and Leeward Islands
J. MacMahon	Windward and Leeward Islands
J. Guilding	Windward and Leeward Islands, St. Vincents
W. Chaderton	Windward and Leeward Islands, Antuiga
A. Newman	Windward and Leeward Islands, Dominica
M. Wilson	Windward and Leeward Islands, Tobago
L. Berdhill	St. Kitts
J. Armstrong	Honduras

Figure 32: Chaplains serving in the Caribbean and Central America, 1817⁷²¹.

Besides demonstrating the concentration of chaplains in the Caribbean, figure 32 also explains a piece of seemingly anomalous data in figure 31. This is the fact that in 1819 there were eighteen chaplains serving overseas yet nineteen garrisons were served. The explanation for this is that chaplains were mobile. Chaplain Guilding, for example, was assigned to the Windward and Leeward Islands for two months (25th April to 24th June), St. Vincents for another two months (25th June to 24th August) and spent the remainder of the year at the Windward and Leeward Islands. Conversely, Chaplain Wilson began the year in Tobago, spent two months in the Windward and Leeward Islands and returned to Tobago that October. Others moved only once during the year: Chaplain Chaderton, for example, redeployed from Antigua to the Windward and Leeward Islands in June.

By 1819 the chaplains who were deployed abroad remained concentrated in the Caribbean, although deployments to Newfoundland and New Brunswick increased their number to sixteen.⁷²² The following year there was a more noticeable increase in the number of chaplains serving abroad, and they were to be found with garrisons

⁷²¹ 1817, Warrant Numbers 2777 to 2886. PRO WRO 25/254.

⁷²² 'Particular sums Ordered in Repayment of Advances Made by the Commissariat Department Abroad, on Account of the Pay of Officiating Chaplains in 1819', PRO WRO 25/254.

such as those in New South Wales, Cape Colony and West Africa. A consequence of these and previous deployments was a dramatic increase in the wage bill for chaplains serving outside of Europe. In 1815 this had amounted to only 7s a month, which was paid to Chaplain J. Armstrong in Honduras. By 1816, however, this bill had rocketed by a staggering 34,000%, to £120 2s 7d. It may be that the meaning of this seemingly outrageous figure is engulfed by its magnitude, serving as a lesson for historians to be wary of statistics, and especially those derived from a single source or limited sample. Yet, despite its gargantuan proportions, the increase emphasises the point that there was a dramatic increase in the number of chaplains serving abroad following the end of the war in Europe. This growth was sustained, as demonstrated by the wage bill of 1820, which stood at £416 13s 4d per month (a less impressive but still significant increase of 346%).⁷²³

Wage bills alone need not be evidence of expansion, merely higher wages. It must be noted, however, that the 346% increase of the wage bill was exceeded by a 500% increase in personnel during the years 1816 to 1820. This data is indicative of a slight decrease in the average wage of chaplains serving overseas, a conclusion supported by the fact that the average wage in 1816 was 7s, compared to 6s in the following year. It would be incorrect, however, to perceive this as evidence of chaplains' pay being reduced, rather it was indicative that a growing proportion of chaplains less-senior were present in overseas garrisons. As the number of chaplains deployed overseas grew, the organisational structures utilised in Europe for their administration were adopted.

The chaplains deployed to the Caribbean, circa 1817, are a useful case study of how chaplains operated. The senior, and thus highest paid, chaplains were among the

⁷²³ 'Particular sums Ordered in Repayment of Advances Made by the Commissariat Department Abroad, on Account of the Pay of Officiating Chaplains in 1816'; 'Particular sums Ordered in Repayment of Advances Made by the Commissariat Department Abroad, on Account of the Pay of Officiating Chaplains in 1820', PRO WRO 25/254.

first to arrive and were located on Jamaica and the Windward and Leeward Islands. New arrivals were of lesser rank and assigned to individual garrisons either in these island groups or elsewhere. Despite all holding the rank of major and being given the title of chaplain, there existed a separate hierarchy amongst chaplains, who received varying rates of pay according to their posting and responsibilities. In 1817 there existed six weekly rates of pay amongst the chaplains serving in the Caribbean region, as illustrated in figure 33:

Weekly Rate		Number of Personnel Receiving Rate
s	d	
2	6	5
7	6	1
9	6	3
10	6	0
11	5	3
14	3	2
Total		14

Figure 33: Rates of pay for Chaplains in the Caribbean, June 1817.⁷²⁴

This pay structure remained relatively unaltered until 1819, when an additional rate of pay (16s per week) was introduced for the senior chaplain on Jamaica in 1819, in this case Chaplain B. Harold.⁷²⁵ Although no chaplains received the rate of 10s 6d per week in June 1817, it was paid on occasion, reflecting the fact that rates varied according to posting or responsibility, a system that could only operate due to an efficient administration. While on the Windward and Leeward Islands, for example, Chaplain King was paid 10s 6d per week, but when serving in Barbados (where he was senior chaplain) he received 14s 3d. The pay of Chaplain Wilson switched between the 11s 5d and 7s 6d rate twice in 1817:

⁷²⁴ 'Particular sums Ordered in Repayment of Advances Made by the Commissariat Department Abroad, on Account of the Pay of Officiating Chaplains in 1817', PRO WRO 25/254.

⁷²⁵ 1819, Warrant Numbers 2802; 2804, PRO WRO 25/254.

25 th April to 24 th June (Tobago)	11s 5d
25 th June to 30 th July (Windward/Leeward)	7s 6d
31 st July to 24 th October (Windward/Leeward)	11s 5d
25 th October to 24 th December (Windward/Leeward)	7s 6d. ⁷²⁶

Besides highlighting the mobility of chaplains, these variations in wage also reveal that the hierarchy governing them was not necessarily as rigid as in other military organisations or, indeed, the Church of England itself. A colonel or a bishop, for example, remained just that even if not the senior officer or official following the arrival of a higher ranked individual, yet, as demonstrated by the wage variations experienced by chaplains this was not so regarding military clergy.

The success of the army's policies regarding the religious practices of its soldiers is difficult to measure. There were changes in religious practices in British society during the period and the army reflected these, including the growth of Methodism and a general decline in deference towards religion. It was inevitable that the army would reflect the situation in society, as the number of chaplains was too few to meet the needs of practicing Anglicans, let alone bring new believers to the faith. This was not necessary for the army to be effective, however, as the force demonstrated it could be a bulwark of the Protestant state without itself being Protestant. There were various motivations for the policies adopted in regard to religion in the army, these being military, political and social. Due to the status of non-Anglicans in Britain the army was largely dependent on state legislation to govern its own religious affairs. Whether as an institution it may have been significantly more tolerant is debateable, although the limited efforts made to provide chaplains and

⁷²⁶ 1817, Warrant Numbers 2777; to 2886, PRO WRO 25/254.

opportunity for Anglicans to worship is evidence of a more relaxed attitude, with Protestantism a feature rather than a principle.

The motivation for medical services were more clear-cut than those of religion in the army, the overriding concern being the maintenance of an effective fighting force. The limiting and defining factors of medicine were scientific but in this field the state could have been more active. The military revolution had triggered a degree of state involvement in medicine and Prussia took a lead in this field as early as 1713, when the Berlin Anatomical Theatre was established by the state to train surgeons, and in 1723 when a College of Medicine and Surgery was set-up. Regulations were also passed requiring all surgeons to graduate from the institution and serve one year as regimental surgeons.⁷²⁷ In some respects British practices, including inoculation, were as advanced, but still lagged behind Prussia in relation to fundamental issues such as amputation.

Despite such shortcomings it is necessary to note that the medical service provided by the army was one of the most comprehensive of its kind in the period and was unrivalled by that offered to many civilians in Britain. The army demonstrated a willingness to adopt new developments such as inoculation, utilising an integrated system of hospitals that were located progressively further from the frontline, and introducing regulations to encourage good practice such as cleanliness. These regulations were often inadequate but through them the army demonstrated that it possessed some understanding of what was required from a modern medical system.

The motivation for reforms relating to women following the army and pension provision were as clear cut as those for the medical services, being concerned with enlistment. Pensions in particular increased the appeal of the army as a career, as did

⁷²⁷ M. Duffy, 'The Military Revolution and State', in M. Duffy (ed), *The Military Revolution and State, 1500 to 1800* (Exeter University, 1980), p.5.

the inclusion of soldiers' families in army welfare, although this was also one of the more altruistic policies adopted. While policies concerning religion maintained at least a pretence of the force as a Protestant bulwark and medicine maintained the army's strength, the system concerning families could have continued for several more years without significant reform, as did many aspects of the army in the period – including the medical system. Reforms relating to families reflected the influence of the state on soldiers' lives at its most benign, while the attempts to enforce Protestantism in the force (albeit half-heartedly) reflected the negative impact of the relationship.

The state gave the army the features that principally characterised its maintenance, specifically the bureaucratic systems and departments that have formed the core of this study. Despite this there existed a group of institutions that lay outside the military sphere and, to a limited degree, the state, but were to play an important role in maintenance of the army. These organisations form the focus of the following and final chapter, a chapter concerned with neither the armed forces in the field nor bureaucrats and administrators but rather the bodies that governed the counties of Britain.

Chapter 6

English county governance and the British army

Maintaining the British army was very much an affair of central government, executed through governmental and military departments such as the Ordnance Board, the Commissariat and Royal Wagon Train. There remained, however, a small but significant role for the organisations and individuals more often associated with the governance of counties. Parish councils, churchwardens, justices of the peace and Lords Lieutenant would undertake a variety of important tasks directly related to maintaining the army. Prior to 1802 these tasks primarily consisted of supervising the movement of troops and ensuring adequate numbers of recruits were raised in the county. The threat of French invasion would increase the importance of these tasks and create new responsibilities for the organisations that governed the counties. From 1802 the role of these bodies would change from one of merely supporting the standing army to raising and maintaining new auxiliary forces in the form of the Volunteers.

Due to the efforts of the Royal Navy the invasion was not to occur but the contingency plans designed to counter a French landing reveal much about British military thinking in the period, and the difficulties that could be encountered when raising and maintaining armed forces.⁷²⁸ More significant is that the invasion preparations demonstrate the criteria under which the state would be willing to remove the checks and balances imposed to restrict the army and safeguard civil liberties, issues that lay at the heart of the army's relationship with the state and thus the level of support it enjoyed. The army would have been raised to the status of a

⁷²⁸ Some of this research has been previously published. C. Chilcott, 'English counties and defensive planning, 1803 to 1805', in *Bulletin of the Military Historical Society*, vol. 54, no.215, February 2004, pp.149-154.

force that was central to policies for national survival, rather than the third placed pillar (behind the fleet and continental allies) of Britain's approach to strategy. Indeed, if the army had been called on to repel an invader, these other elements of British policy would have already failed. The invasion preparations were the most radical aspect of defence policy in the period, and it will become apparent that if the plans had been implemented they had the potential to alter many of the issues discussed in preceding chapters, not least being the relationship between the army and state.

Traditionally the principal link between county government and the army had been the Lord Lieutenant, whose role had been to raise and maintain the county militia battalions. While carrying out this task the Lords Lieutenant fulfilled many of the functions that in regular regiments were the responsibility of military departments, including annual inspections and returns that were similar to those conducted by the Adjutant General.⁷²⁹ These annual inspections were frequently conducted when the militia battalions mustered for their fourteen days of annual training, occasions that were accompanied by some excitement in the neighbourhood and announced in the local press.⁷³⁰ The outbreak of war in 1793 increased the importance of the Lords Lieutenant role in regard to the militia but his role remained confined to the mustering of auxiliary forces.

The county officials that most frequently came into contact with elements of the regular army were local magistrates, whose task included the supervision of troop movements through their areas.⁷³¹ This practice was one of the few through which the institutions of county governance became involved in the operational affairs of the army, although they were also to have a significant role in the administration of the

⁷²⁹ See PRO WO 27/92, Office of Commander in Chief and War Office: Adjutant General and Army Council Inspections, 1808; WSRO A1/545, Navy Acts, 1794 to 1795: Books and Papers; WSRO, A1/550, Army and Navy Acts, 1796 to 97: Books and Papers.

⁷³⁰ New recruits mustered for twenty-one days. *Salisbury Journal*, 17th August 1812, p.4.

⁷³¹ See above p.133

militia ballot.⁷³² This task involved many elements of a county's administrative structure, the overseers of the poor in individual parishes who paid the expenses of those selected by the ballot, the Lord Lieutenant who co-ordinated the county militia and magistrates who enforced the quotas. The involvement of county institutions in the ballot militia ballot was effectively a blurring between the role of the centre and periphery in defence policy, the periphery ultimately possessing not only the power to raise troops but also a role in their employment.⁷³³ Joanna Innes describes this blurring as evidence of a close relationship between the centre and periphery in Britain, but this could also be described as resulting from an anachronism.⁷³⁴ During the eighteenth century the militia had been viewed as a force for local defence so its administration at county level was logical.⁷³⁵ By the end of the eighteenth century, however, the militia had become an instrument of national defence, with regiments operating outside the boundaries of the home county and, importantly, as a source of recruits for the regular army.⁷³⁶ In these circumstances, the wisdom of administering the militia at county level was questionable. Clearly, the relationship between the periphery and centre in British politics had evolved at a slower pace than military developments.

Despite the fact that the elevation of the militia to a national defence force rendered the role of the county in its administration an anachronism, other evidence exists supporting Innes' description of the close relationship between the centre and periphery. Perhaps the most significant evidence can be found in the intended role of the bodies associated with county government in the event of a French invasion.

⁷³² To see how the ballot operated at a county level, see PRO PC 1/13/160. Militia Returns for Lincolnshire and PRO PC 1/13/155, East Riding of Yorkshire. See also Hall, *British Strategy*, p.2.

⁷³³ See below p.252.

⁷³⁴ Innes, 'The Domestic Face of the Fiscal-Military State', p.118.

⁷³⁵ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.33.

⁷³⁶ Fletcher, *Wellington's Regiments*, pp.15-16; P. Karsten, 'Irish soldiers in the British Army, 1792 - 1922: Suborned or Subordinated?', in *Journal of Social History*, (Autumn 1983), p.35..

While this never occurred, the plans drawn up by the government to counter a full-scale invasion warrant some consideration. This is because the preparations not only relate to the role of county government, which was to be significant, but also reflect many of the themes considered elsewhere in this work, by revealing how the resisting forces were to be maintained and in some cases raised, while also shedding light on some less well-known operational procedures in the regular army. The need to educate civilian bakers in military procedures quickly, for example, resulted in discussions concerning how the army produced its own bread, the best recipes for yeast and the preferred size of loaf.⁷³⁷ Above all the plans demonstrate the principles that the state was prepared to sacrifice in order to aid national defence.⁷³⁸

During the invasion scares that haunted Britain during the first decade of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars period, plans were drawn up regarding the capability of each county to help maintain a defending army. A document entitled 'Proposals for Rendering the Body of the People Instrumental in the General Defence' formed the blueprint for these plans, which were disseminated to the counties via the Lords Lieutenant.⁷³⁹ Much emphasis was to be placed on the protection of property during invasion and an announcement by the Lord Lieutenant of Hampshire stated the plans were intended to guarantee 'the particular protection and security of persons and property of the inhabitants of this country... and the indemnifying persons who may suffer in their property by such measures for that purpose'.⁷⁴⁰ Despite such noble sentiments, however, the protection of property (which was arguably the cornerstone of the British political system) was only a minor concern. At the heart of the scheme lay logistics, for both the defending and invading armies, and it was envisaged that the

⁷³⁷ PRO WO 30/141, pp.22-30.

⁷³⁸ Just as the state had shown willing to disregard the rights and beliefs of Anglicans serving in the Jersey militia. p.233.

⁷³⁹ PRO WO 30/141, passim.

⁷⁴⁰ *Salisbury Journal*, 11th July 1803, p.3.

whole population of a county would be mobilised to defeat any invader.

The preparations for invasion required careful planning, a process that began in 1803 when questionnaires were distributed to each county under the Defence of the Realm Act.⁷⁴¹ The bureaucratic practices of the period – including pre-printed forms and tabulated data – were used with considerable effect in an attempt to determine the manpower resources available in each county.⁷⁴² These, and other preparations, utilised the structure of county government. Parishes would report to subdivisions, in turn these would report back to the Deputy Lords Lieutenant, with the Lord Lieutenant having ultimate responsibility for a county's invasion preparations. The utilisation of existing bodies allowed the Lords Lieutenant to use their authority to full effect, while also allowing a rapid implementation of the required preparations: this was a vital factor given that a French landing could have occurred within months or even weeks if conditions were favourable. Thus, the Lord Lieutenant of Hampshire was able to impose a tight schedule for the initial phase of preparations. On 24th June 1803 he had received his instructions; these were discussed at a public meeting on 8th July at Winchester, meetings were held within each Parish nine days later (17th July), and the subdivisions met on 25th July, with the required returns from parishes also completed by this date.⁷⁴³ The dates selected for each meeting were not arbitrary and the selection of the 17th is of note as it was a Sunday. This day was selected deliberately to allow the parish meetings to be held immediately after morning or evening services, it being believed that scheduling meetings after Sunday service would ensure good attendance.⁷⁴⁴

The bodies responsible for governing a county did not continue unhindered by

⁷⁴¹ Colley, *Britons*, pp.306-307.

⁷⁴² Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, pp.222-225.

⁷⁴³ This system was effectively a military one imposed on civilians and is similar to that utilised by organisations such as the Commissariat, p.49.

⁷⁴⁴ *Salisbury Journal*, 11th July 1803, p.3.

the threat of invasion. Two to three magistrates oversaw each of the subdivisions within a county, and such men often held commissions in the auxiliary forces. To limit the impact of such persons being called to active service, Lord Hawkesbury advised the Lords Lieutenant 'it is essential that the magistrates who are thus employed should if possible be persons not holding commissions as volunteer officers, nor liable on any other account to be called away from the county'.⁷⁴⁵ The number of individuals who had roles in both the auxiliary forces and county government was considerable. In Wiltshire the commander of the militia, Colonel Henry Herbert, Earl of Caernarvon (sic), was also a Deputy Lieutenant, an office that entailed separate duties in the event of invasion. The following officers also held considerable property or responsibilities outside of Wiltshire and may have fulfilled roles in these counties: Lieutenant Colonel George Montagu, Captain Awdry Ambrose and Captain Robert Maundrell⁷⁴⁶. This says much about the nature of such forces, it being interesting to note that the situation in rural Wiltshire was similar to urban Oldham, where prominent local men also provided the officers of auxiliary units.⁷⁴⁷ For the invasion preparations, however, the significance of prominent local figures serving in the auxiliary forces was that the allocation of magistrates to oversee subdivisions in the event of invasion itself required special planning, in addition to the multitude of tasks already facing counties as they prepared to resist an invasion.

The preparations undertaken by each county were to be based on a series of reports from each parish, the most important of which were designated schedules one through to nine. The information recorded in these reports reveals much about the parishes concerned and, most importantly, the invasion preparations themselves. In

⁷⁴⁵ Circular from Lord Hawksbury, Whitehall, 20th August 1804, PRO WO 55/1548/17, Regulations for each county, in case of Invasion.

⁷⁴⁶ WSRO A1/752/19, Return of the Qualifications of Deputy Lieutenants and Commissioned Officers [of Wiltshire Militia], 29th January 1796.

⁷⁴⁷ Foster, *Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution*, p.13.

particular it is apparent that the schedules represented forward planning, in contrast to the reflex doctrine normally utilised to maintain the army.⁷⁴⁸ The purpose of each schedule is summarised in figure 34.

Schedule 1	Available Manpower
Schedule 2	Food
Schedule 3	Overseers
Schedule 4	Men willing to arm themselves
Schedule 5	Men willing to act as labourers
Schedule 6	Men willing to carry supplies
Schedule 7	Millers willing to mill flour
Schedule 8	Bakers
Schedule 9	Waterborne transport

Figure 34: Preparations for invasion, schedules one to nine.⁷⁴⁹

Had they been fully completed, the schedules would have amounted to a miniature doomsday book of England during the years 1803 to 1804. Schedule 1 was concerned with available manpower, those unfit for service (labelled 'infirm'), the number of aliens and the number of Quakers. No other denomination of dissenters was singled out in these reports, the Quakers being singled out as a consequence of their belief in pacifism.⁷⁵⁰

Schedule 2 was a survey of available livestock and 'deadstock' (otherwise known as crops). This encompassed the following categories: numbers of oxen, cows, young cattle and colts, sheep and goats, pigs, riding and draft horses, wagons and carts; quarters of wheat, oats, barley, beans and peas, potatoes and malt; loads of straw and hay; while flour 'and other meal' was given special attention with counts of both quarts and sacks. Schedules 7 and 8 built on this by listing millers and bakers respectively who promised to supply goods in the event of an invasion. Similarly

⁷⁴⁸ Compare this to the system utilised by the Commissariat. See chapter 2.

⁷⁴⁹ WSRO 1719/30, Wiltshire Lieutenancy Papers Dealing with the Parish [of Box's] Preparation to Raise a Volunteer Force to Meet the Anticipated French Invasion, schedules 1 to 9.

⁷⁵⁰ Voluntary Contributions, Anonymous pamphlet, 1798, WSRO 1719/30.

schedule 6 revealed the number of wagons, categorised by the number of draught animals they required, that the parish would supply, in addition to associated personnel such as drivers.⁷⁵¹ Emphasis was to be placed upon four-horse wagons, which were vehicles seen as sufficient to carry up to either fifty hundredweight of flour, grain, wood or coal, or twenty hundredweight of bread, biscuit or straw.⁷⁵² The vehicles recorded in schedule 6 were to be supplemented by those described in schedule 9, which sought to determine the waterborne transport available in a parish.⁷⁵³ Of note is that throughout these plans the role of the vehicles, whether wheeled or waterborne, was to be the transport of supplies rather than other tasks such as evacuation of wounded personnel. Indeed the lack of consideration for medical purposes was to be one of the most glaring deficiencies amongst the forces established in 1803.

Schedule 3 was particularly important as it determined who in the parish would be overseers for the various items outlined in other schedules. These individuals were to be responsible for implementing the key component of a county's invasion preparations, specifically the uprooting of whole communities in the path of an advancing enemy army. The village of Box had six such individuals appointed: William Brown, William Roger, John Lee, Joseph (surname illegible), Charles James and George Malling.⁷⁵⁴ On 19th November 1803 the Lord Lieutenant of Wiltshire advised that:

the superintendents of parishes... are to convene a meeting of the inhabitants as soon as possible, to fix upon some place of rendezvous where all the horses, cattle, sheep, wagons and carriages (not wanted for the service and supply of the King's Troops) that can be convened away... in order to be removed... upon the order of the Lord Lieutenant.⁷⁵⁵

⁷⁵¹ WSRO 1719/30, schedule 6.

⁷⁵² PRO WO 30/141, p.16.

⁷⁵³ WSRO 1719/30, schedule 9.

⁷⁵⁴ Minutes of Meeting 25th December 1803 held Parish of Box, WSRO 1719/30.

⁷⁵⁵ Brackets in original. General Meeting of the Lieutenancy, Sarum, 19th November 1803, WSRO 1719/30.

The purpose of listing the infirm in schedule 1 was to ensure means to remove them had been arranged prior to invasion and an overseer was also appointed for this task. Livestock, wagons, money and account books were all to be moved with the population, while bakers and millers were instructed how best to render their equipment unusable by an invader (by breaking crowns of ovens and upper mill stones respectively).⁷⁵⁶ Such destruction demonstrated that the policy of evacuation was designed to prevent resources from falling into enemy hands as much as it was a means of civil defence. Although a common practice in response to any invasion great importance was attached to denying the French invader resources because it was envisaged that the enemy would be forced to exist solely on supplies drawn from the immediate vicinity.⁷⁵⁷

If the invader was to be so easily contained, why was a landlocked county such as Wiltshire included in the plan? Certainly plans had to be made for a worst-case scenario, i.e. an enemy breaking out of the beachhead. Wiltshire itself, however, had historically been considered vulnerable to invasion despite having no coastline.⁷⁵⁸ Wiltshire's borders were only 30 miles from major ports such as Bristol and Southampton. This demonstrates that administrative areas such as county boundaries were not always compatible with military realities. Yet these boundaries were to be the basis of the anti-invasion plan.

By its nature the plan had to prepare for a number of contingencies, a French advance inland being one of them. This, however, was not the sole reason for the continued evacuation of communities in the event of invasion. Besides denying the

⁷⁵⁶ General Meeting of the Lieutenancy, Sarum, 19th November 1803, WSRO 1719/30. Wiltshire Lieutenancy Papers Dealing with the Parish [of Box's] Preparation to Raise a Volunteer Force to Meet the Anticipated French Invasion; PRO WO 30/141, p.5n.

⁷⁵⁷ PRO WO 30/141, p.3.

⁷⁵⁸ Colley, *Britons*, p.308.

invader resources, the scheme was also intended to maximise those available to defending forces. This aim is demonstrated in orders issued by the Lord Lieutenant of Wiltshire regarding livestock:

If the enemy should advance into the county... His Majesty has given express orders... that all horses or draft cattle, that are in evident danger of falling into the hands of the enemy, should be shot or hamstrung, provided they are not wanted for the service of the army... and axle trees or wheels of all carriages in the same predicament, should be smashed or broken as much as possible.⁷⁵⁹

It is apparent that the policy was not merely a genteel version of scorched earth (achieved through depriving the enemy of resources by a policy that emphasised removal rather than destruction) because, throughout the movement of these communities, the overriding concern was to ensure that as much as possible was preserved for the defending forces, who would get first pick of items scheduled to be destroyed.⁷⁶⁰ Fully implemented, the invasion preparations were to have enabled the army to utilise the resources not only of the counties targeted by invasion but also those adjacent or further from the enemy lodgement. For the duration of the invasion at least the army would be given free rein to requisition the resources it required to drive the French back into the sea. This would have undermined a notion central to the relationship between the British state and its population in the period, namely the sanctity of private property.⁷⁶¹ As for the resources not required by the army, some would have been removed but the rest sacrificed for national defence.

The rights of private ownership were seemingly protected in orders issued to county lieutenants, which stated that 'the first principle is an indemnification from the communities at large... for the value of all stock which may be removed in

⁷⁵⁹ Underlining added. Orders, General Meeting of the Lieutenancy, Sarum, 19th November 1803. WSRO 1719/30.

⁷⁶⁰ A similar scheme was proposed for the defence of Prussia in 1813, but in that case it was the intention that the population would disperse to wage a guerrilla war on the occupying army. Fuller, *The Conduct of War*, p.58.

⁷⁶¹ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.49.

consequence of invasion'.⁷⁶² In this respect, it appeared that the policy was little different to that which already existed regarding procurement and was operated by organisations such as the Commissariat.⁷⁶³ When the practice is considered in the context of the anti-invasion scheme, however, the assault on the rights of ownership becomes apparent. This was particularly so regarding livestock, which would have effectively ceased to be the property of the owner, despite instructions to brand each animal with the mark of the parish before moving them. In many cases such marks did not exist and their importance is highlighted by the fact that the design for that of Box (a BX contained within a capital O) was the first item on the agenda at a meeting convened to consider the invasion preparations of the village.⁷⁶⁴

Livestock were to be effectively little more than a mobile source of food for the army under the supervision of selected citizens (specifically the overseers named in schedule 3).⁷⁶⁵ These personnel were to 'remain in charge of the same [cattle], unless it shall be appropriated for the consumption of our own troops, or to be sold... at markets, in the rear of the army'.⁷⁶⁶ Orders to the overseers of the livestock from each parish regarding ownership were only a façade, as the livestock would have effectively been placed under army control at the moment of evacuation. The movement of cattle would have required co-operation with the army, and the generals commanding in each district were ordered 'to give every assistance and accommodation in [their] power, for the protection and subsistence of the cattle, and of persons attending the same'.⁷⁶⁷

Once livestock and other supplies arrived at a depot or market it would be purchased by commissaries and receipts issued. Of note is that even if items were not

⁷⁶² PRO WO 30/141, p.3.

⁷⁶³ For this in operation see chapter 2.

⁷⁶⁴ Minutes of Meeting held on 25th December 1803, WSRO 1719/30.

⁷⁶⁵ It is apparent that if Britain had been invaded the diet of defending soldiers may have been similar to that in Spain and Portugal, pp.72-76.

⁷⁶⁶ Orders, General Meeting of the Lieutenancy, Sarum, 19th November 1803, WSRO 1719/30.

⁷⁶⁷ PRO WO 30/141, p.4.

purchased, their owners required permission from a commissary to sell them, an important right of ownership that would have been taken over by the military.⁷⁶⁸ Once purchased by a commissary the normal procedures of the army would have been applied and the items would have eventually filtered through the various stages of the logistics system until they reached the intended recipients. While the rights of ownership were not to be totally suspended in the event of invasion, it is clear that they were to be significantly restricted. The prices at which cattle and commodities such as flour were to be sold to the army were to be decided by magistrates.⁷⁶⁹ Evidently these prices would have been regularly assessed and considered, giving rise to the possibility of price fluctuations and varying prices between localities. This would have been a new way of operating for the army in Britain as it was normally maintained through long-term contracts that provided both low and stable prices.⁷⁷⁰

While livestock were mobile, it was acknowledged that some items too bulky to be moved to depots would have been required by the army. Consider the village of Box alone, which contained amongst other items 346 quarters of wheat, 63 quarters of oats and 1059 loads of hay, but only three wagons allocated to the task of moving these goods.⁷⁷¹ The result was a plan to convert the villages left vacant following their evacuation into supply depots themselves, from which supplies such as grain and flour could be distributed. Of note is that this actually contradicted a central concept in 'Proposals for Rendering the Body of the People Instrumental in the General Defence', that 'the [English] county abounds in supplies of all kinds to such a degree which renders the laying in of extensive magazines unnecessary'.⁷⁷² By using villages as distribution centres they would have effectively become magazines, with the

⁷⁶⁸ PRO WO 30/141, p.5.

⁷⁶⁹ PRO WO 30/141, pp.17, 22.

⁷⁷⁰ For a consideration of the benefits of contracts see pp.89-91.

⁷⁷¹ WSRO 1719/30, schedules 2 and 6.

⁷⁷² PRO WO 30/141, p.15.

additional advantage that many already lay on a road and canal network.

Parishes were instructed to appoint 'several and discreet trusty persons' for the task of remaining behind in the village after its evacuation, until the enemy approached or they were surrounded (how this latter situation was to be escaped was not made clear). Their role was to safeguard the remaining goods and 'facilitate the means of supplying our army with what must otherwise be destroyed'.⁷⁷³ It is likely, but not explicit in the orders, that a number of millers and bakers may also have remained in the villages. Such individuals would have co-operated closely with the Commissariat, which would have both purchased the goods they produced and arranged the delivery of necessary supplies (such as flour for bakers if none was available locally).⁷⁷⁴ Furthermore commissaries may have been required to advise civilians about how best to bake their bread, giving an insight into how this activity was conducted in the military. Many civilian bakers believed that ovens could only be used to produce four batches of bread per day, although in the military six was standard practice. It was anticipated that yeast would be in particularly short supply and bakers were advised to produce either unleavened bread, or manufacture their own yeast. The latter was to be achieved through using a recipe written for the Dunbar garrison in 1796, rather than experimentation, as it was the belief of the authorities that 'it is highly necessary to caution everyman concerned in supplying an army, against placing any confidence in schemes not perfectly and satisfactorily tried himself'.⁷⁷⁵ The optimum loaf size was to be between three to four and a half pounds, with a thick crust, as such bread stayed fresher longer. Guidance was also to be given how best to stack bread on wagons (preferably when cold) and the duration of any storage prior to its consumption.⁷⁷⁶ This advice is notable not merely because it

⁷⁷³ PRO WO 30/141, p.5.

⁷⁷⁴ PRO WO 30/141, pp.22-3.

⁷⁷⁵ PRO WO 30/141, p.30.

⁷⁷⁶ PRO WO 30/141, pp.24-30.

reveals how the army stored bread but also because similar written instructions to commissaries in other theatres of war do not appear to have existed.

The movement of entire populations, while envisaged as a means to aid the supply of the army, would have been a remarkable feat of logistics itself. The scale of the task facing the county authorities cannot be underestimated: the livestock that was to be moved from the village of Box alone would have included 242 cattle and oxen, 298 pigs and total of 2,971 sheep and goats.⁷⁷⁷ Preparations were required to sustain animals and humans alike. For livestock, orders advised that the route taken included 'such places that afforded good water and plenty of pasture', while civilians ordered to leave their homes were advised to take with them 'a small quantity of salted or dried provisions, not being cumbersome for... temporary sustenance'.⁷⁷⁸ Those responsible for livestock were not expected to fend for themselves, although no allocation was made for them from military stores. Instead it was recommended that 'the proprietors [of cattle removed] should furnish them [those overseeing the cattle] with means to provide themselves and the cattle under their care with necessary subsistence'.⁷⁷⁹ Only wagon drivers and associated personnel were to receive supplies from stores, rations consisting of one and a half pounds of bread per day for each man and either ten pounds of oats or fourteen pounds of hay per horse.⁷⁸⁰ This ration was comparable to that prescribed for horses in the Peninsular campaign, reflecting the importance of the civilians wagons to the anti-invasion plan.⁷⁸¹ It also highlights a particular inefficiency of animal drawn convoys, specifically a tendency to consume much of the supplies that they carried. This problem would remain until the introduction of railways, when railheads could be established near the front to reduce the time animals spent away

⁷⁷⁷ WSRO 1719/30, schedule 2.

⁷⁷⁸ PRO WO 30/141, p.4; Orders, General Meeting of the Lieutenancy, Sarum, 19th November 1803, WSRO 1719/30.

⁷⁷⁹ Orders, General Meeting of the Lieutenancy, Sarum, 19th November 1803, WSRO 1719/30.

⁷⁸⁰ PRO WO 30/141, p.17.

⁷⁸¹ See above p.78.

from stables.⁷⁸²

The movement of large numbers of civilians and livestock would have placed a heavy burden on the transport infrastructure. When moving large bodies of civilians the Lords Lieutenant were instructed that:

proper march routes should be fixed upon for driving them away to certain places of security in the interior of the country, taking care to chuse [sic] bye roads for that purpose; that the Great Turn Pike Roads may remain entirely free for the marching of troops... and where it may be unavoidable to pass one or more of the great roads, it should be done in such a manner, that they may only be crossed and occupied during the shortest time possible.⁷⁸³

It was further recommended that, to avoid congestion, the movement of civilians be approved by the general commanding that district. The large herds of sheep present on the South Downs were a particular source of concern in Wiltshire because, due to their proximity to the English Channel, it was likely they would be removed soon after an invasion. It was stated that 'the greater part of this county is highly favourable for the removal, not only of inhabitants, but of large flocks of sheep requiring space; they must therefore take their route over the downs'.⁷⁸⁴

The evacuation of herds would have caused considerable disruption not only to the transport infrastructure but also to the regional economy. If the French had driven inland then such herds would have been lost in any case but given that the envisaged scenario was of an invading army being confined to the coast such disruption would have been unnecessary. John Brewer states that the principal object of any invader would probably have been to cause financial panic rather than capture territory.⁷⁸⁵ Thus the policy of evacuating herds as soon as invasion occurred would in fact have aided the enemy. It is necessary to note that while Brewer believed an

⁷⁸² Schechter and Sander. *Delivering the Goods*, p.45.

⁷⁸³ PRO WO 30/141, p.4.

⁷⁸⁴ General Meeting of the Lieutenancy, Sarum, 19th November 1803, WSRO 1719/30.

⁷⁸⁵ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.191.

invasion with such objectives would have been best aimed at southeastern England, an invasion at any point in southern England would most likely have caused severe economic disruption due to the anti-invasion measures. This supports Linda Colley's claim that Wiltshire was a county likely to be threatened by an invasion, even though it was landlocked.⁷⁸⁶ Wiltshire might have been affected by a French invasion primarily because of its wider repercussions, not actual military action or an advance inland.

Clearly sheep and civilians on foot could make the journey cross-country but this would have been more difficult for the wheeled conveyances that would have been used to move the infirm, food, personal possessions and those unwilling to walk. The village of Box had promised to supply three carts for conveying supplies to defending forces, each with four animals (a total of twelve). Schedule 2, however, reveals that the village contained no fewer than ninety-two draft horses, leaving a total of eighty animals available to pull the carts and wagons of the population. It is likely that, despite orders to the contrary, many of the population would have taken to the roads, particularly in a village such as Box that sat astride the London to Bristol road (the modern day A4).⁷⁸⁷

The wagons allocated for the transport of supplies were to be ready to move at twenty four's notice. It was expected that they would travel twenty-five to thirty miles per day, depending on load but such a figure may have been excessively optimistic.⁷⁸⁸ These vehicles occupied an ambiguous position within the command structure and it is unclear whether they were to be given the same rights on the roads as the military. This was crucial because if the vehicles were to be regarded as military, civilians were expected to give way, but if this was not the case wagons, and the supplies on them,

⁷⁸⁶ Colley, *Britons*, p.308.

⁷⁸⁷ WSRO 1719/30, schedule 2.

⁷⁸⁸ PRO WO 30/141, p.16.

would have been expected to travel cross-country as much as possible. Such vehicles had only limited cross-country mobility and, while wagons earmarked for military service were instructed to be equipped with at least one tool such as a shovel in case of becoming stuck, movement would have been slow.⁷⁸⁹

It is likely that bureaucracy and regulations may have further slowed the movement of the civilian wagons impressed into military service. The rights of the individuals manning the wagons was made clear to them when opting for this duty, and it is apparent that in the anti-invasion scheme the rights of the individual were to be eroded less than those of private ownership. Each vehicle was to be given a certificate identifying the owner, driver, number of horses and, most significantly the date at which it was to be discharged from duty, along with the number of days spent marching. Drivers were to be paid for each day of service, according to rates set by magistrates and lieutenants in each county. Every wagon was also to have a conductor of stores, responsible for ensuring that receipts were received for all goods transferred and rations received.⁷⁹⁰ The system was bureaucratic and had the potential to be a recipe for disaster if enacted, with drivers unwilling to move without the appropriate paperwork or because their period of service had expired. The Royal Wagon Train had been formed to avoid such situations and the utilisation of civilian transport for general military service would have thus been a step backwards for the army.⁷⁹¹

Living off requisitioned cattle and its advance probably slowed by columns of refugees and evacuees, the British army would have sought to drive back the invader. The regular army would have been supported in this task not only by the militia but also by other formations created to resist invasion.⁷⁹² A scheme to raise a corps of

⁷⁸⁹ WSRO 1719/30, schedule 6.

⁷⁹⁰ PRO WO 30/141, pp.16-17.

⁷⁹¹ See chapter 4.

⁷⁹² For a consideration of how they were raised see C. Chilcott, 'English counties and defensive planning, 1803 to 1805', in *Bulletin of the Military Historical Society*, vol. 54, no.215, February 2004, pp.149-154.

mounted scouts and guides from local populations was never implemented but new Volunteer units were to be raised.⁷⁹³ Besides infantry and cavalry formations, the Volunteers included pioneer corps that were to be raised from each parish. Their role was described in 'Proposals for Rendering the Body of the People Instrumental in the General Defence' as follows:

The duty of the pioneers will generally consist in repairing and opening such roads, bridges and communications as may facilitate the movement of our own army, and in breaking up and obstructing such as it may be necessary to render impassable to the enemy.⁷⁹⁴

The inclusion of a corps of pioneers in the invasion preparations is notable for several reasons. Not least is the fact that it demonstrates an understanding and appreciation of the need for supporting arms in an army. In addition the pioneers represented a natural progression of the doctrine adopted in British defence plans, one that sought to both deprive the enemy and support British forces (in this case through opening and closing lines of communication as required).

The pioneers were to have operated in companies of twenty-five to fifty men, commanded by a lieutenant or captain respectively (schedule 5). In the event that the minimum number of twenty-five could not be attained companies from different parishes would have been combined, this was a contrast to policy in the regular army, in which even seriously under strength formations were rarely amalgamated.⁷⁹⁵ Equipment would have varied between units as personnel were required to provide their own and the following was a recommended list of items for a unit of twenty-five men: six each of pickaxes, spades and shovels, three billhooks and four felling axes.⁷⁹⁶ In addition it was also noted that 'a proportion of wheelbarrows will also be very

⁷⁹³ PRO WO 30/141, p.6.

⁷⁹⁴ PRO WO 30/141, p.6.

⁷⁹⁵ Orders, General Meeting of the Lieutenancy, Sarum, 19th November 1803, WSRO 1719/30.

⁷⁹⁶ PRO WO 30/141, p.6.

serviceable'.⁷⁹⁷ The fact that the pioneers had to provide their own tools was evidence that the state lacked the means to meet adequately the needs of defending forces itself, and raises doubts about their effectiveness if such tools could not be supplied.

An insight into the volunteer units formed to counter a French invasion can be gained by the fact that the ability of each parish to supply personnel for military purposes (as summarised in schedule 4) was initially based on the number of individuals able to arm themselves. It was anticipated that each parish would be able to supply contingents of both horse and foot, while the armaments each was to provide reveals much about the force and its potential effectiveness on the battlefield. Cavalry were requested to supply a pistol or a sword (preferable both), while those on foot would provide either a 'firelock' (musket) or pitchfork⁷⁹⁸. The reason for this was laid out in a letter from the Lord Lieutenant to the parish of Box in August 1803:

There will be difficulty in issuing arms from his majesty's stores for the extensive training and exercise required in this period, without material injury to the other essential branches of the military, I am directed to resort to the zeal and public spirit of the inhabitants of this county for procuring a return of arms in their possession, in order that, with their consent, they may for a time be applied to the service of this country.⁷⁹⁹

In short, there were insufficient armaments to go around and the use of civilian weapons alleviated the need to supply firearms to volunteer formations.⁸⁰⁰ Of note is that the Lord Lieutenant stated that a ratio of one musket between four men was initially sufficient, to allow for adequate training and drill.⁸⁰¹ There was thus a very real possibility that volunteer units resisting a French invader in 1803 could expect to engage the French with a ratio of one musket to three close combat weapons (one

⁷⁹⁷ PRO WO 30/141, p.6n.

⁷⁹⁸ WSRO 1719/30, schedule 4.

⁷⁹⁹ To the Minister, Churchwardens, Overseers of the Poor, and Principal Inhabitants of Box in the County of Wilts, from the Lord Lieutenant, Wilton House, 2nd August 1803, WSRO 1719/30.

⁸⁰⁰ This is further evidence that the supply of munitions to coalition partners occurred at the expense of British forces, p. 105.

⁸⁰¹ To the Minister, Churchwardens, Overseers of the Poor, and Principal Inhabitants of Box in the County of Wilts, from the Lord Lieutenant, Wilton House, 2nd August 1803, WSRO 1719/30.

hundred and fifty years previously, during the civil war, the ideal ratio of shot to pike had been approximately two to one).

Interestingly there appears to have been no attempt to emulate the tactics of Irish rebels in producing large numbers of pikes. Easily produced by village blacksmiths, these had proved to be effective weapons against cavalry in close terrain during the rebellion of 1798.⁸⁰² This would have been of great value to the volunteer units given the questionable utility of their own cavalry, an arm that requires extensive training for both its personnel and animals.⁸⁰³ Furthermore, volunteer cavalry lacked carbines, which were weapons not generally available to private citizens, but of some value on the battlefield.⁸⁰⁴ This would have put them at a major disadvantage against other cavalry even if problems associated with insufficient training and drill could have been overcome. Giving the proven value of the pike in the hands of trained or willing civilians, as in 1798, the failure to adopt the weapons for the volunteers appears inexplicable. Conservative military thinking no doubt influenced the decision but the most likely explanation is that, fearful of unrest, the government was reluctant to promote the manufacture of such a weapon in the English provinces. This was understandable given that even a relatively quiet county in the period, such as Wiltshire, showed signs of growing unrest during 1802, the year in which the anti-invasion plans were introduced.⁸⁰⁵ That August, for example, a Samuel Baker was convicted:

on a violent suspicion of having unlawfully, riotously, and tumultuously assembled, and having feloniously by firing of arms, and using other offensive weapons, attempted to destroy the dwelling-house [sic.] and mills, belonging to John Jones, Esq., of Staverton.⁸⁰⁶

⁸⁰² See T. Pakenham, *The Year of Liberty: The History of the Great Irish Rebellion of 1798* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1992), p.77; A. T. Q. Stewart, *The Summer Soldiers: The 1798 Rebellion in Antrim and Down* (Belfast, Blackstaff Press, 1995), passim.

⁸⁰³ MacDonald, *Instructions for the Conduct of Infantry*, pp.lx-lxi.

⁸⁰⁴ Haythornthwaite, *The Napoleonic Source Book*, p.80.

⁸⁰⁵ Charlesworth (ed), *Rural Protest*, passim.

Only four days earlier, a Thomas Hilliker and ‘divers other persons not yet taken’ had been convicted of destroying a mill, while three Trowbridge cloth workers had been found guilty of attempting to form an illegal combination (trade union).⁸⁰⁷ For further proof that insurrection remained a concern of the government, the historian needs to look no further than the role of the volunteers in the event of invasion, which was to include suppression of disorder in rear areas.⁸⁰⁸

Significant difficulties would have been encountered in supplying the volunteer units due to the variety of firearms that would have been found in their ranks. As individuals were encouraged to supply their own firearms it is likely that everything from duelling pistols to fowling pieces, in a variety of calibres, would have been employed. The authorities were well aware of the potential difficulties that such diversity could cause and special provision was to be made for these firearms:

It is earnestly recommended to all who voluntarily offer to appear with arms, to provide a bullet mould for the calibre of their gun or pistol, a small bag for bullets, and a powder horn, lest the bore of their arms, being smaller than those of the army, should prevent their using the ammunition made up for the King’s Troops, in which case a delivery of lead and powder will be made to them.⁸⁰⁹

The request for accoutrements such as powder horns and the like, while unusual, was not unreasonable giving that those possessing firearms would already own some or all such items. Most surprising is the offer to deliver lead and powder to individuals for the manufacture of their own munitions. Such a decision was not taken lightly in a period of revolutions and demonstrates the seriousness of the French invasion threat.

A valid question is that if the government was willing to supply shot and

⁸⁰⁶ Devizes Session, 10th January 1802, WSRO A1/125/46W , Calendar of Prisoners in the County Gaol at Fisherton Anger and Devizes and Marlborough Bridewells, 1803, p.6.

⁸⁰⁷ Devizes Session, 10th January 1802, WSRO A1/125/46W, pp.6-8.

⁸⁰⁸ To the Minister, Churchwardens, Overseers of the Poor, and Principal Inhabitants of Box in the County of Wilts, from the Lord Lieutenant, Wilton House, 2nd August 1803, WSRO 1719/30.

⁸⁰⁹ WSRO 1719/30, schedule 4.

powder, why did it not authorise the widespread manufacture of pikes? Linda Colley describes the decision as a calculated risk on the government's part.⁸¹⁰ It was also a limited risk, however, as those receiving the lead and powder already possessed firearms so the potential threat already existed, unlike a horde of rebels armed with pikes recently produced by a local blacksmith. In addition, allowing part-time soldiers to maintain possession of their firearms even when not on duty was not a new concept but an existing policy. This was demonstrated by the following appeal, placed in the *Salisbury Journal* by the commanding officer of the Dorset Yeomanry: 'All persons that formerly belonged to my regiment... and do not intend to renew their services in that corps, are requested to give in their arms and accoutrements to their respective captains'.⁸¹¹ Those weapons that were not returned may well have found their way into the ranks of the volunteers.

Many contemporaries believed the forces raised in the counties would have been an effective force due to their structure, organisation and the fact that they drew their manpower from a single locality. Lieutenant Colonel Wilson wrote of land-holding officers that 'a feudal attachment [of his tenants] would, in a great degree, supersede the necessity for any martial control'; while the Lord Lieutenant of Wiltshire stated in August 1808 that 'it can scarcely require a moment's consideration to determine how preferable it must be for the volunteers to be formed into distinct corps, officered by gentlemen of respectability in their own neighbourhoods'.⁸¹² Such ideas may appear to be a desperate attempt to justify the concept of the Volunteers: given their diverse armament and initially poor training it is difficult to imagine the volunteers achieving little more than being hacked down by French cavalry,

⁸¹⁰ Colley, *Britons*, p.328.

⁸¹¹ *Salisbury Journal*, 11th July 1803, p.1.

⁸¹² Wilson, *An Enquiry into the state of the Forces of the British Empire*, p12; To the Minister, Churchwardens, Overseers of the Poor, and Principal Inhabitants of Box in the County of Wilts, from the Lord Lieutenant, Wilton House, 2nd August 1803, WSRO 1719/30.

presuming they stood to fight or even turned out at all. Despite this the Irish rebels of 1798 proved what could be achieved and it is possible that the volunteers, fully integrated with the regulars, may have achieved some success on the battlefield. At worst they could have relieved frontline troops of tasks such as convoy or prisoner escort in the rear areas, or provided a means through which potentially serious disorder could be contained.⁸¹³

It is appropriate to conclude this chapter with a brief consideration of county governance in the aftermath on invasion. Even though the volunteers were mobilised, livestock on the move and villages serving as depots, the magistrates of the county bench and lieutenants were to have continued to play a role in maintaining the defending forces. Due to the movement of the population away from their homes, continuing the militia ballot would not have been possible, although justices could have continued to supervise the passage of troops. In August 1804 regulations were published concerning 'the preservation of good order, to be adopted in case of invasion, in each county in Great Britain'. If these regulations had been implemented it is apparent that the civil power, while officially supported by the military, would have effectively become subordinated to its requirements. Such a course would have been anathema to many libertarians in Britain, and surely would have been used as vindication for the views of those who had long warned of the dangers posed by the ever-growing power of the state.⁸¹⁴ It was a situation that may have been inevitable for national survival but one that could have lasted indefinitely as legislation existed for enacting the regulations but not repealing them.

The regulations required that the magistrates sit daily, along with an officer of the volunteers and chief superintendent of constables. The primary task of these

⁸¹³ Regulations for the preservation of good order, to be adopted in case of invasion, in each county in Great Britain, 12th August 1804, PRO WO 55/1548/17, Regulations for each county, in case of Invasion.

⁸¹⁴ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.63.

bodies would have been suppressing disorder in the army's rear areas, the regulations stating that they were 'to receive and execute the orders of the magistrates, in preventing and quelling disturbances, in taking up and conveying offenders to prison, in supplying escorts for all military purposes... and furnishing a guard for the county gaol... if wanted'.⁸¹⁵ It was anticipated that the 'military purposes' described above may have included the maintenance of supply lines:

If, contrary to expectation any impediment should occur in the regular supply of the different markets every assistance is to be afforded to the persons who are accustomed, or who offer to supply them; and escorts to be granted in cases where it may be necessary for the secure passage and conveyance of cattle and provisions.⁸¹⁶

Such duties could have only been fulfilled if the volunteers were present in the county. It is, however, questionable if such formations would have turned out at all, many militiamen in Ireland opting to remain with their families when called upon to act against Irish rebels in 1798.⁸¹⁷

If deprived of a military force to deploy at the request of the army, the role of the magistrates would have been confined to determining the rates of pay for wagon drivers employed in support of the military, and the price at which items such as flour and bread were to be sold to commissaries.⁸¹⁸ How long this situation existed would have been decided by the efforts of the British armed forces, aided in no small part by the invasion preparations implemented by the magistrates, Lords Lieutenant and parish officials of counties across Britain. In the meantime the army, providing the regulations had been fully enacted, would have been able to break many of the bonds

⁸¹⁵ Regulations for the preservation of good order, to be adopted in case of invasion, in each county in Great Britain, 12th August 1804, PRO WO 55/1548/17, Regulations for each county, in case of Invasion.

⁸¹⁶ Regulations for the preservation of good order, to be adopted in case of invasion, in each county in Great Britain, 12th August 1804, PRO WO 55/1548/17.

⁸¹⁷ B. Cleary, 'The Battle of Oulart Hill: Context and Strategy', in D. Keogh and N. Furlong (eds), *The Mighty Wave: the 1798 Rebellion in Wexford* (Dublin, Four Courts Press, 1996), p82.

⁸¹⁸ PRO WO 30/141, pp.17, 22.

that bound it within the British state, particularly regulations that governed the requisitioning of property. It remains to be seen, however, if the breaking of these bonds would have been only a temporary suspension of practices or a permanent fracturing of the balance between state, society and army created in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The relationship between army and state had been profoundly changed by the traumatic events of the seventeenth century and invasion in the early nineteenth century may have been no less traumatic, having the potential to create political repercussions of a similar magnitude. Thus, plans to maintain the army in the event of invasion may have proved as damaging to Britain's economic and political stability as military action itself. The extent to which this would have benefited the army is unclear, and would to a large extent have depended on the degree to which it was able to break free of the constraints previously imposed upon it by the pre-invasion British state.

Conclusion

The relationship between the state and the army defined how the force was to be maintained. Because of this it would have a significant influence upon the function, structure, capability and effectiveness force itself. This was to have important consequences, both advantageous and otherwise. It is these consequences that demonstrate the importance of understanding the relationship between a state and its armed forces, as they have implications for the effectiveness of those forces and thus the military affairs of states.

The consequences when an army gains dominance over a state, which occurred in mid-seventeenth century Britain or Nazis Germany, are well known. When the role is reversed, with the state the dominant half of the partnership, however, this too has consequences. In particular, states have a stranglehold on the resources available to its military. Eighteenth century Britain is acknowledged to have possessed an economic and industrial strength unrivalled by its competitors but, as this work demonstrates, those resources available to the army were barely sufficient to meet the force's needs. A particularly important resource for the army was manpower and it was continually lacking a reserve of this.⁸¹⁹ Traditionally historians have focused on deficiencies in the fighting arms. This may be because it can be inferred that, as the combat arms were under strength, their supporting organizations could function while themselves under strength. It is apparent, however, that historians are in general apathetic to the organizations tasked with maintaining the army, almost entirely ignoring those such as the Royal Wagon Train and Medical Department. More importantly, it is apparent that such an inference is incorrect.

⁸¹⁹ Hall, *British Strategy*, pp.6-7.

The consequences of the manpower shortage were apparent in regard to the Chaplain General's Department. This was far too small for its task and unable to influence the religious affairs of soldiers significantly.⁸²⁰ The Royal Wagon Train also had to contend with a shortage of manpower and could have achieved considerably more had it been enlarged.⁸²¹ This could have been of significant benefit for the Commissariat, which was often compelled to rely upon local transport overseas. The employment of Spanish and Portuguese muleteers was not a major problem for the army but could nevertheless hinder efficiency.⁸²² Economics was a decisive factor in determining the quantity of manpower available but was not the only one. Much has been written about Britain's economic strength and its beneficial consequences, but this strength could only be maintained through depriving the military of vital resources, the most important of which was manpower.⁸²³ Almost as important as manpower was materiel, as this too cost money and was required to sustain Britain's economic growth. The commercialisation of industry dictated that production was geared towards profit rather than meeting the needs of the armed forces. The two could be compatible but this was not always the case.

Finance permeated every aspect of logistics. To prevent the abuse of liberty the army was required to pay for the supplies it required, a system that relied on cash or credit, the availability to the army of both being controlled by the state. Required to pay its way with barely sufficient means the army frequently found itself living a hand to mouth existence and unable to construct a significant logistical reserve. Historians have frequently written about the small size of the army and its inability to survive defeat but manpower could have been raised through conscription if the need arose. What is overlooked is that it was a capability to arm and maintain these new forces

⁸²⁰ See above p.220.

⁸²¹ See above p.175.

⁸²² See above p.65.

⁸²³ See above pp.88-89.

that did not exist. There was simply too little slack in the system to rectify any deficiencies. Manufacturers were already cutting corners to meet contracts, and even prior to the Peninsula War deficiencies of items such as clothing were being rectified through using equipment acknowledged to be substandard.⁸²⁴

It would be incorrect to view the army as completely starved of resources by the state. Surprisingly the one organization that was clear evidence of the beneficial consequences of the relationship between army and state is the one most often overlooked by historians – the Royal Wagon Train. The organization was a bright spot in the system used to maintain the army. The concepts underpinning it were modern, perhaps even progressive, and its creation was evidence that the influence of the state over the army was not entirely detrimental. The organization was relatively efficient and flexible, utilising technology created as a result of the industrial and agricultural revolutions, and benefited directly through the growth. (both political and geographical) of the British state due to the absorption of the Irish Wagon Train. The Royal Wagon Train represented a new doctrine as it was relatively self-contained and provided a transport capability maintained through its own artificers. This allowed the Royal Wagon Train to exhibit a degree of structural fluidity, the organization being able to restructure itself in response to the strategic situation. This manifested itself not only in an ability to create or demobilise troops but also develop new operational practices, leading to the creation of the depot troops.⁸²⁵

The flexibility of the Royal Wagon Train made the organization ideally suited to the pragmatic policies adopted towards logistics as it was created to meet the needs of the army at the time. The Royal Wagon Train represented a modern approach to warfare; by comparison the quasi-military Commissariat was an evolutionary dead-

⁸²⁴ See above p.114.

⁸²⁵ See above p.142.

end for the army. The Commissariat is often criticised for its failings yet historians have shied away from addressing this, its most fundamental difficulty.

Creveld writes that nineteenth century warfare began, and eighteenth century warfare ended with Napoleon's campaign of 1805, when movement replaced sieges as the central component of strategy.⁸²⁶ By establishing the Royal Wagon Train in the 1790s, therefore, the British army was already, if inadvertently, preparing for this new form of warfare. Neither the Royal Wagon Train nor Commissariat would survive the nineteenth century, their roles ultimately being amalgamated in the Royal Army Service Corp.⁸²⁷ As a purely military force, employing its own specialist personnel, it was, however, the Royal Wagon Train that most closely paralleled the R.A.S.C. and later organizations. Intriguingly, the relationship between the British state and its military in the twenty first century is again becoming heavily influenced by economic concerns, rather than military effectiveness, and civilian contractors have once more become an integral part of the army's supporting services.

The Royal Wagon Train demonstrated that despite drawbacks the relationship between army and state was not necessarily detrimental for the former. It is the case that factors that caused difficulties could also bring benefits. For example, financial considerations frequently ensured economy rather than military effectiveness was a priority but also improved efficiency.⁸²⁸ Administrative practice in the army was significantly influenced by the state and there is a tendency to equate bureaucracy with inefficiency. As the army of the period demonstrated, however, this was not always the case as regulations limited corruption in the logistics system. More importantly,

⁸²⁶ Creveld, *Supplying War*, p.40.

⁸²⁷ Indeed, this was the fate of almost the entire system utilised to maintain the force in the period. the multitude of departments with often over lapping jurisdictions slowly being amalgamated into larger, more efficient organizations. The most significant of these advances was the absorption of the Ordnance Department by the War Office in 1855. This united the arms of the army into one command, although it is necessary to note that this did not necessarily improve efficiency and improve co-operation between the arms. As late as the 1960s there were power struggles within the army concerning the responsibilities and roles of the Royal Artillery.

⁸²⁸ See above p.41.

and frequently overlooked, is that increased regulation created standards for soldiers' welfare even after their period of service. Regular inspections ensured that barracks, schools and hospitals met the required criteria. Considering the conditions in the latter this is contentious but nevertheless regulations existed that defined standards in hospitals, and these regulations were enforced on occasion. Regulations created additional costs and administration for the army but it is apparent that in this period there was a trend towards increasing investment in soldiers' welfare, a situation seen to benefit the army. This was most apparent in regard to the treatment of soldiers' families.

The state provided the resources and impetus for many of the factors that gave the British army its strength but this strength was fragile. The army lacked strategic depth, a policy that suited a state conscious to avoid disruption and control expenditure but one that was also a dangerous gambit. Potentially the army could have been a one shot weapon, defeat in one campaign spelling the end of the force, such a fate effectively befalling Napoleon's Grande Armée in Russia, a debacle from which it never recovered.⁸²⁹ There was a genuine fear amongst contemporaries that such a fate would befall the British army if committed on the continent, and it has been estimated that the loss of one brigade may have been sufficient to cause the collapse of the Peninsular army.⁸³⁰ If such an event had occurred it may well have resulted in the loss of the Royal Wagon Train's most effective elements and many Commissariat personnel, besides the loss of equipment and frontline troops.

Considering the above scenario, how realistic was the possibility of a significant British military defeat? Given the nature of this study, such a question could be turned to that of how effectively was the army maintained. Yet, as stated by

⁸²⁹ Mackesy, *British Victory in Egypt*, p.4.

⁸³⁰ Wilson, *An Enquiry into the state of the Forces of the British Empire*, p.51; Weller, *Wellington in the Peninsula*, p.372.

Schechter and Sander, the effective maintenance of a force is not itself a sound indicator of that force's success. Successful maintenance may make a force more effective but is not a guarantee of victory.⁸³¹ The example they cite is that of McClellan's Peninsula Campaign of 1862, in which poorly supplied Confederate forces consistently beat better maintained Union formations, but examples relevant to this study could include Spanish victories during Napoleon's initial invasion of Spain and the success of Irish Rebels in 1798.

When considering the possible fallibility of British arms in the period, a common stumbling block is the perception of the Napoleonic Wars as a British victory. This ranges from the outrageously jingoistic and populist version of events portrayed in the work of Richard Holmes, who describes the British army as possessing 'a certain something that flickers out across two centuries like an electric current', to the Anglo-centric works of historians such as Ian Fletcher, who describes the Peninsula War as 'Britain's greatest military contribution to the downfall of Napoleon Bonaparte'.⁸³² The former statement in particular represents a throw back to the views of the early to mid twentieth century, held by historians such as Charles Oman and Jac Weller.

Piers Mackesy writes that prior to 1800 the British army had known little but failure, examples including defeat in North America, a fiasco in the Low Countries and the devastation of garrisons in the West Indies by disease.⁸³³ Following 1800 the force was to emerge victorious but not unbeaten, with famous victories such as Salamanca and Vittoria sitting alongside fiascos and disasters such as Buenos Aires

⁸³¹ Schechter and Sander, *Delivering the Goods*, p.22.

⁸³² R. Holmes, *Red Coat: The British Soldier in the Age of the Horse and Musket* (London, Harper Collins, 2001), pxvi; I. Fletcher (ed), *Voices from the Peninsula: Eye Witness Accounts by Soldiers of Wellington's Army, 1808-14* (London, Greenhill, 2001), p.5. As a contrast to the work of Fletcher see Esdaile, *The Peninsular War*, passim.

⁸³³ Mackesy, *British Victory in Egypt*, p.3. Added to this could well be the army's performance in the Irish Rebellion of 1798.

and Walcheren. As noted by Peter Hofschorer even the most famous victory of all, Waterloo, would have been a disaster had it not been for the intervention of the Prussians. In fact the often forgotten campaign that followed the battle was militarily an overwhelming Prussian victory, with only British political influence in Paris keeping Blucher in check, depriving Prussia of well deserved glory in the process.⁸³⁴ Perhaps Holmes' most pertinent point about the British army is that it was capable of victory and not immune to defeat.⁸³⁵

The concept of the British army as a success can to a great extent be attributed to a Euro-centric perception of the Napoleonic Wars. It was within the borders of Europe that many decisive battles were fought, while some of the greatest fiascos were to occur elsewhere, including the disastrous expedition to Argentina, defeat at New Orleans and the devastation of garrisons in the West Indies by disease (although the success of British arms in Europe were not universal – the Corunna campaign being a case in point). As David Chandler stated, no battle or indeed campaign should be seen in isolation but rather as the sum of many parts, so the Napoleonic Wars should be no exception.⁸³⁶ Despite being a struggle between European powers the conflict was fought across the globe, to a lesser extent than that of the Seven Years War maybe, but it was still a global war.⁸³⁷

Another important factor is that the British army was to participate in conflicts that were not always part of the Napoleonic Wars or had only a tenuous link to that conflict, against colonial enemies in Africa, Asia, the Americas and the United States of America.⁸³⁸ Philip Haythornthwaite effectively divides the British army into two during this period, that part of the force engaged in colonial actions and that arrayed

⁸³⁴ P. Hofschoer, *1815: The Waterloo Campaign The German Victory*, Volume I (London, Greenhill, 1999), pp.116-129, 271.

⁸³⁵ Holmes, *Red Coat*, p.xvi.

⁸³⁶ D. Chandler, *Waterloo: The Hundred Days* (London, Osprey, 1980), p.11.

⁸³⁷ See Black, *Britain as a Military Power*, pp.115-154, 241-266.

⁸³⁸ Haythornthwaite, *Napoleon's Military Machine*, p.78; P. Mackesy, *British Victory in Egypt*, p.5.

against the French threat.⁸³⁹ Yet, to understand the army the two spheres cannot be separated as one could influence the other and, as noted by Jeremy Black, conflict was closely linked to concepts of Empire in the period.⁸⁴⁰ As demonstrated in this work garrisons in all theatres competed with each other (and allied armies) for the sometimes scarce resources that they needed, including uniforms, munitions and manpower (as demonstrated in the global distribution of chaplains in particular). The global deployment of the army was also one of the most subtle but significant consequences of its relationship with the state, creating a situation that not only hindered the army but also influenced its composition.⁸⁴¹ Thus, in the context of a force deployed around the world, the failures of the army beyond Europe cannot be ignored.⁸⁴²

If it is accepted that the British army was not an overwhelming success, and a major defeat was possible, it must be asked how far the state was willing to alter its relationship with the army in order to aid the recovery of the force? The state demonstrated that certain principles would be sacrificed to aid national defence, such as the right of practising Anglicans to worship when they wished if in the auxiliary forces. More far reaching concessions may have been made in the event of a French invasion, a situation that had the potential to trigger the implementation of military control over large parts of southern Britain, not to mention massive economic and social disruption.

⁸³⁹ See Haythornthwaite, *The Napoleonic Source Book; The Colonial Wars Source Book* (London, Arms and Armour, 1997).

⁸⁴⁰ Black, *Sea Borne Empire*, pp.113-114.

⁸⁴¹ In particular colonial commitments influenced the creation of light infantry tactics and formations in the army. A. Harman, 'They decide not, nor are they chiefly relied upon in battle': British Rifles and Light Infantry in the Peninsular War', in P Griffiths (ed), *A History of the Peninsular War Vol IX: Modern Studies of the War in Spain and Portugal, 1808 - 1814* (London, Greenhill Books, 1999), pp.265-298.

⁸⁴² Imperialism could and did continue separately from military affairs. Examples include the Mungo Park's expeditions in West Africa (1795-97, 1805-06) and Flinder's circumnavigation of Tasmania (1802-03), the latter in particular being concerned with trade. Black, *Sea Borne Empire*, pp.165-166.

It must be assumed that if the invasion had occurred the scheme would have been implemented. Not only had the necessary (and detailed) regulations been introduced but the army had already demonstrated that in a war zone peacetime regulations governing it could be eroded. At the most basic level administrative practices introduced due to the relationship with the state were circumvented by military necessities, while more significant were the ruthless activities of Commissariat personnel and purchasing agents in the hunt for the items they required. There is no reason to believe the activities of Commissaries on the front line in England would have been any different to those in Spain and Portugal, particularly in an area already devastated by French occupation.⁸⁴³ Whether this would have left the relationship between state and army in tatters is less certain, this being dependent on how long the situation lasted and the extent to which the old rules were broken. What is apparent was the willingness of the state to consider sacrificing central principles in aid of national defence, thereby redefining the relationship between army and state.

The repercussions of any change in the relationship between the state and army in response to an invasion might have been significant. The maintenance of an armed force is as much a political or economic issue as it is a military one. As a consideration of how the army was maintained in the period demonstrates, a state can both facilitate and hinder the growth and maintenance of an armed force. After determining how an armed force is to be used, one of the most important tasks facing policy makers is how it should be maintained. This will define the relationship between an army and state, as well as the effectiveness of the force. In turn this will determine the military options available to a state and the ability of an armed force to protect the state itself.

⁸⁴³ Throughout the period of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars there was little difference between the practices of occupying and friendly armies when gathering supplies. Corvisier, *Armies and Societies*, pp.66-67.

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Abbreviations used

ADM	Admiralty
AG	Adjutant General
BMHS	Bulletin of the Military Historical Society
CG	Commissary General
CO	Colonial Office
CUP	Cambridge University Press
HO	Home Office
HMSO	His/Her Majesty's Stationery Office
IHR	Institute of Historical Research
JSAHR	Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research
JSH	Journal of Social History
KGL	King's German Legion
NAM	National Army Museum
OUP	Oxford University Press
PC	Privy Council
PRO	Public Records Office
QMG	Quarter Master General
RA	Royal Artillery
RAMC	Royal Army Medical Corps
RASC	Royal Army Service Corps
RHS	Royal Historical Society
T	Treasury
UCL	University College London

WO War Office
WSRO Wiltshire and Swindon Records Office
YUP Yale University Press

Introduction

The maintenance of armed forces is an under researched subject. This can create a significant gap in our understanding of history as it is a subject concerned with a variety of issues, not merely the effectiveness of armed forces. The existence of a gap in our knowledge is demonstrated by the maintenance of the British army at the end of the eighteenth century. It is incorrect to believe that the subject of how the army was maintained in the period is concerned solely with wagon counting. It was entwined with economics, politics, stability and military power, and remains an under considered area. This has arisen due to a polarisation in the canon of literature relating to Britain's military in the period. Historians including Clive Emsley, Jeremy Black and Lawrence Stone have written extensively on how the British state sought to support the army. Other historians, including Paddy Griffiths, Ian Fletcher and Philip Haythornthwaite, have described the army in the field. The gap in our knowledge of the period exists because there is little consideration of how the resources provided by the state were translated into a form that could be utilised by the army in the field. It is through this process that an army is maintained, and it is also through this process that the consequences of the relationship between an army and state become apparent.

In his influential study of the subject, Martin van Creveld has described military logistics as being 'the practical art of moving armies and keeping them supplied'.¹ He notes that this was a key element of strategy that relates not only to requirements such as food but also organisation, administration and transportation. An important refinement of this argument has been made by Damon Schechter and Gordon Sander, who highlight that military logistics has since the Age of Enlightenment ceased to be 'just a uniformed matter', that is to say one concerned

¹ M. van Creveld, *Supplying War: Logistics from Wallenstein to Patton* (CUP, 2004), p.1.

exclusively with the military.² They argue instead that military logistics are often based on the ability of a nation, including its manufacturing base and infrastructure, to support its armed forces. There is thus a close relationship between the state and military logistics, as demonstrated by the relationship between the British army and the state during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

The implications of the close relationship between state and army in the period could be significant. The force was contained by the state, which imposed political and economic boundaries on the army that restricted its influence and size. This was achieved through the intermeshing of the military structure with that of civilian government, the army being unable to act without the support of the latter. This intermeshing occurred not only at the higher levels, with half of the army controlled by a civilian (the Master of the Ordnance), but also in the field, where commissaries working alongside the army were employed by the Treasury. The consequences of the intermeshing of military and civil were to have an impact at a variety of levels, the extent of which has yet to be fully considered by historians.

The relationship between the state and army had considerable implications for both defence policy and the nature of the military power that stemmed from it. Jeremy Black states that the keystones of British military power in the period were four fundamental capabilities: suppression of revolt, a small but effective army, naval dominance and an ability to wage trans-oceanic warfare.³ This study, however, takes the view that British military power was instead based on three pillars: the navy, subsidy of foreign allies and the army. That this policy existed has often been used by historians as evidence of Britain's industrial strength. This study demonstrates that this

² D. Schechter and G. Sander, *Delivering the Goods: The Art of Managing Your Supply Chain* (New Jersey, John Wiley & Sons, 2002), p.21.

³ J. Black, *The British Sea Borne Empire*, (London, YUP, 2004), p.170.

strength was fragile, and that the three tier policy was only practical because the army was given a low priority.

The lower priority given to the army did not prevent the state from at times ruthlessly utilising the force to pursue its own aims, a fact particularly apparent in regard to Empire. The global deployment of the army arose as a direct consequence of it being a tool of an Imperial power and it was expected to police the Empire, a keystone of the British state in the period, despite itself occupying the third tier of British defence policy. Thus the state frequently expected a return in excess of its sometimes-miserly investment in the army, and the disparity between resources and expected function was to continually hinder the army.

The relationship between army and state not only influenced the force's deployment and resources available but also had a significant impact on its structure. Through the intermeshing of civil and military, and the dominance of the former, the army adopted many of the characteristics of civilian administration in the period, including bureaucratic practices and departmentalisation, along with the benefits and drawbacks of each. The organizations tasked with maintaining the army exhibited such traits to a high degree and they were heavily departmentalised, various bodies having specific roles, albeit on occasion overlapping jurisdictions. The advantage of the departmentalisation for the historian is that the administrative structures provide a framework around which a study of how the army was maintained can be structured. This study differs from many works relating to the maintenance of the army as it does not focus on a single department but instead focuses on several.⁴

In some cases the organizations upon which this study is based were large and their role significant, so they are considered in their own chapters. The first to be

⁴See for example J. Sutton (ed.), *Wait for the Wagon* (Barnsley, Leo Cooper, 1998); Lieutenant Colonel J. H. Plumridge, *Hospital Ships and Ambulance Trains* (London, Seeley, 1975).

considered will be Commissariat (chapter 2). This department is one of the few involved in maintaining the army that receives any attention of note from historians, who are often critical of the organization. The Commissariat had various roles, including storekeeper, supplying food and book keeping. It was a civil-military hybrid and a study of this organization is effectively a study of the relationship between army and state in the field, while its bureaucratic practices ensure it is also a case study of military administration in the period. As this study will demonstrate it was neither the complete failure that it is often portrayed, nor wholly responsible for many of the failings in the logistics system. The only other organization to be allocated its own chapter is Royal Wagon Train (chapter 4). This organization is almost entirely ignored by historians but warrants a much a higher profile than it is commonly given. Through an extensive consideration of the Royal Wagon Train's structure and evolution, this study demonstrates how the army was able to display some structural autonomy and had an ability to adapt to new challenges, despite the constraints placed on it by the state.

Organizations that fulfilled less important roles are grouped on a thematic basis. The first group to be considered form the basis of chapter 3, and are organizations tasked with procurement for the army. This group includes the Barrack Master General and Quarter Master General, the role of which was providing accommodation; the Clothing Board, that co-ordinated uniform provision; and the Ordnance Board, that supplied munitions. The attitude of historians towards these organizations and the items that they supplied has often been apathetic. Furthermore, when these issues have been considered it has tended to be from a limited perspective. Often little consideration has been given to how these items were supplied. Much has be written, for example, about the appearance of uniform and regulations concerning

it but not how it was regulated. The situation regarding accommodation is particularly interesting as historians have tended to focus on the political significance of barracks, rather than their importance for soldiers. As chapter 3 will demonstrate, there is much to be learned by examining these organizations in a wider context. In particular it will challenge common perceptions of Britain's industrial strength through illustrating fundamental shortcomings in production.

Traditionally, studies concerned with the maintenance of the army have focused on the consequences of production, that is to say physical items such as guns. The view taken in this study, however, is that not everything required by an army can be carried on a wagon. To be maintained an armed force requires a diverse range of services. Thus chapter 5 is concerned with the second group of organizations, specifically the Medical and Chaplain General's Departments, as well as various policies adopted by the army. The final group of organizations to be considered are those that were tasked with county governance and defence. This group forms the basis of chapter 6, a chapter that demonstrates the involvement of civilian bodies in the maintenance of the army. This is arguably the most important chapter in the entire work. Through utilising rarely used sources chapter 6 highlights the willingness of the state to drastically alter its relationship with the army to aid national defence.

The objective of the above chapters is not to provide a complete overview of how the army was maintained in the period, but rather to examine key features in the context of the relationship between state and army and the consequences of this. One aspect that could warrant consideration in a study of this nature is soldiers' pay. While an important consideration, however, it is apparent that it was something that soldiers could and, importantly, did do with out for many months and this study instead

focuses on more necessary items.⁵ Other important aspects that could have warranted consideration include cartography and intelligence gathering. The two issues could be closely linked but data concerning them tends to be either scarce or fragmentary. Another issue absent from this work is how foreign armies were maintained. This is because frequently the system utilised by Britain was by far the most comprehensive, the organizations utilised by other nations being smaller, not so well organised, crippled by corruption or even non-existent. There is also the question of doctrine: that of living off the land as used by the French compared to that of supplying items from markets at home and abroad as used by the British. The distinction between these two doctrines, however, was not always clear. In 1805, for example, French forces marching through neutral Hesse-Kassel were expected to exist on rations rather than plunder.⁶ There is also the difficulty of comparing the military capability of states due to their diverse circumstances and practices.⁷

Although using the departmentalisation of the force as a structure, the study is not solely concerned with how individual departments operated. Instead it demonstrates that while the army is traditionally seen as a conservative institution, it could be innovative and flexible. Although confined within certain boundaries by its relationship with the state the army had some autonomy and utilised this to good effect. The force not only modified its structure and practices to better suit its requirements but also implemented policies concerned with aspects such as welfare and regulations to limit corruption. The army was not unique in addressing such issues

⁵ For a consideration of the difficulties of supplying the monetary requirements of the Peninsular army, see C.D. Hall, *Wellington's Navy: Sea Power and the Peninsular War 1807 to 1814* (London, Chatham, 2004), pp.129-136. André Corvisier stated that following the military revolution armies without pay had a tendency to mutiny but the British army demonstrated this was not always the case. A. Corvisier (trans. A. T. Siddall), *Armies and Societies in Europe 1494 – 1789* (London, Indiana University Press, 1979), p.61.

⁶ Creveld, *Supplying War*, p.45.

⁷ For a consideration of systems utilised by other armies see Corvisier, *Armies and Societies*; J. R. Elting, *Swords Around the Throne: Napoleon's Grande Armée* (London, Phoenix Grant, 1998); Creveld, *Supplying War*.

and in many cases, particularly welfare, the army lagged behind the Royal Navy.⁸ Yet this does not detract from the fact that many of the policies adopted by or in regard to the army would not be implemented outside of the British military for several decades, by which time many would become important social issues.

The factor that made the army distinct from the navy was its relationship to the state as it was often the third pillar of national defence, after the Royal Navy and subsidy of foreign allies. Because of this for much of the period the army would remain under funded and thus under resourced. How the army contended with this situation, which for the most part originated in the system of safeguards intended to limit the power of the army in the seventeenth century, is also reflected in a study of the organisations tasked with maintaining the force.

The organizations tasked with maintaining the British army in the period are frequently been overlooked by historians, who are often critical of the systems used to maintain the army. Yet these organizations faced many difficulties that hindered their activities. Some difficulties were the result of problems created by the practices of these organizations, some were attributable to the limits of contemporary knowledge, while factors as diverse as sleepy muleteers or heavy snowfalls could also have a significant impact. One of the most fundamental difficulties, however, was the relationship between the state and army in the period, and it is the nature and origins of this relationship that is the focus of the chapter 1.

⁸ The personnel of the Royal Navy enjoyed benefits such as more efficient medical provision, a subsidised postal service and a system of pension some years ahead of that in the army. C. Emsley, *British Society and the French Wars 1793 - 1815* (London, Macmillan, 1979), p.55; M. Duffy, 'The Foundations of British Naval Power', in M. Duffy (ed), *The Military Revolution and State, 1500 to 1800* (Exeter University, 1980), pp.49–84.

Chapter 1

The relationship between state and army

It is generally accepted that the changes that occurred in British politics and society due to the political turmoil of the seventeenth century brought with them many advantages for the nation's armed forces. It is a commonly held view that the administrative and financial revolutions enabled the state to channel to its military the resources provided by Britain's industrialisation. This chapter challenges this somewhat cosy picture by demonstrating how the state inhibited the army as much as it facilitated the army's success and expansion. Andre Corvisier wrote that the military revolution created obstacles for states to overcome.⁹ A study of eighteenth-century Britain demonstrates how a state contended with these obstacles. This was to be achieved through the maintenance of the army becoming driven by political and economic concerns rather than military ones.

John Brewer has described the relationship between the British state and its army in the period as the fiscal-military state.¹⁰ This somewhat over-simplifies the situation through accommodating diverse strands within one neat theory. In particular it downplays the importance of the military revolution as a distinct event, even though this revolution was in some ways a pre-requisite for the creation of the fiscal-military state.¹¹ While the concept of 'the fiscal-military state' maybe flawed, it is apparent that a fiscal-military state existed. That is to say a state in which fiscal policy and the military were closely linked, with implications for aspects such as defence and taxation policies. In any case, the fiscal-military state is a useful term to describe the British state at the end of the eighteenth century.

⁹ Corvisier, *Armies and Societies*, p.61.

¹⁰ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, passim.

¹¹ M. Duffy, 'The Military Revolution and State', in Duffy (ed), *The Military Revolution and State*, p.1.

Since the publication of *Sinews of Power*, historians such as Lawrence Stone have discussed and expanded Brewer's arguments and theories.¹² In both *Sinews* and subsequent works historians have tended to shy away from defining the boundaries of the fiscal-military state and the implications such boundaries may have had. Brewer touched on the subject in his consideration of British sensibilities regarding enforced service in the military, but the boundaries still remain an under-considered area.¹³ A concept central to Brewer's model of the fiscal-military state is that the nation underwent significant political, economic and social modifications to accommodate the needs of its armed forces. Taken to a logical conclusion this dictates that the armed forces would be able to expand perpetually to meet operational requirements but this was not to occur. During the eighteenth century the demands of Britain's growing military power had been met through the expansion of central government's ability to raise finances (and the willingness of British subjects to fund this through paying their taxes). By the end of the century it was apparent that this expansion could not continue indefinitely and the ability of the state to raise revenue was stretched to the limit by the Napoleonic Wars. This arose because there are limits to the concessions a state is able or willing to make to meet the needs of its armed forces. Once these limits are reached, the needs of the armed forces can no longer shape the state. In such a situation the armed forces are contained by the boundaries imposed by the state. Thus the military is tailored to the needs of the state, not the state modified to meet the needs of the military.¹⁴

Historians generally agree that the power of the state was confined within certain boundaries but have failed to address a fundamental issue: the state could have ridden roughshod over the sensibilities of British citizens. Asking why the state did

¹² See L. Stone (ed), *An Imperial State At War: Britain From 1689 – 1815* (London, Routledge, 1994).

¹³ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.63.

¹⁴ This was the situation in a civilian state. In a military state, such as Prussia, the state was more likely to adapt to meet the needs of the military. Corvisier, *Armies and Societies*, p.61.

not do so is important as the answer addresses important issues that are central to understanding Britain in the period. The first issue was that the state could only operate through a consensus across the various socio-economic and political groups and could ill afford to upset the proverbial apple cart. The system of tax collection, for example, would have been redundant if citizens had refused to pay their taxes en masse.¹⁵ The second reason for the inability (or failure, depending on perspective) of the British state to ignore the concerns of its citizenry in favour of the armed forces was that those in power often shared similar concerns to those same citizens, thereby lacking the will or, for that matter, any interest in disturbing the status quo. The acquisition of wealth was a common goal across most sections of British society, from the landed gentry to the newly emerging industrialists and the growing ranks of the 'middling sort', and growing militarism would threaten this activity.¹⁶ As Julian Hoppit states, the economic consequences of larger armies – higher taxes, diversion of resources, disruption to markets and reductions in available labour - were far-ranging and, most importantly, had already been experienced in Britain to varying degrees during the early eighteenth century.¹⁷

The existence of a large army would have struck at the key element of British economic growth, specifically the existence of a large pool of labour that was readily available to be transferred between economic sectors and industries (an oft-quoted example being from agriculture to weaving).¹⁸ The relatively high productivity levels of the British workforce, particularly in agriculture, worsened the problem because each individual removed from industry or agriculture resulted in a greater drop in

¹⁵ While there is no reason to believe such a move was mooted, it was feasible. The rise of the anti-corn law movement could be seen as evidence of a national protest movement.

¹⁶ B. Harris, 'Praising the Middling Sort: Social Identity in Eighteenth Century British Newspapers', in A. Kidd and D. Nicols (eds.), *The Making of the British Middle Classes* (Stroud, Sutton, 1998), p6; F. M. L. Thompson, *English Landed Society in the Nineteenth Century* (London, Routledge and Kegan, 1963), p.7.

¹⁷ J. Hoppit, *A Land of Liberty? England 1689 – 1782* (Oxford, Clarendon, 2000), pp.128-9.

¹⁸ N.F.R. Crafts, *British Economic Growth during the Industrial Revolution* (Oxford, Clarendon, 1985), pp.115-116.

production. Wrigley estimates, for example, that British agricultural labourers produced enough food for three families (including their own), compared to those in France who produced sufficient to support only one and a half families.¹⁹

Historians have overlooked the irony of a situation whereby Britain's military expansion in the eighteenth century was financed by and utilised institutions that were originally envisaged as means to limit the armed forces in general, and the army in particular. To appreciate this argument it is necessary to consider when a fiscal-military state began to emerge in Britain. One of the main weaknesses of Brewer's hypothesis on the existence of the fiscal-military state is that its origin is not clearly defined. Brewer's argument is that the fiscal-military state was created in the aftermath of the Glorious Revolution, as the relationship between monarch, parliament and the nation was redefined following decades of political turmoil.²⁰ It is clear, however, that the processes involved commenced much earlier than this. Lawrence Stone cites the mid-seventeenth century (approximately 1640 to 1660) as the starting point.²¹ During this era Britain experienced several traumatic events, including the civil wars, the rise and fall of a republic, dictatorship, restoration of the monarchy and foreign invasion in the form of William III's accession to the throne in 1689.²² These events had a significant impact on the psyche of many Britons that persisted into the nineteenth century, creating an aversion to military power in the country that no amount of administrative reform could counter. This was to have significant implications for the army in the eighteenth century and helped define the boundaries within which its growth was contained.

¹⁹ E. A. Wrigley, 'Society and the economy in the eighteenth century', in L. Stone (ed), *An Imperial State At War: Britain From 1689 – 1815* (London, Routledge, 1994), pp.76-77.

²⁰ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.xiii.

²¹ L. Stone, 'Introduction', in Stone (ed), *An Imperial State At War.*, p.46.

²² While William III's arrival was generally welcomed as a liberation, it was effectively an invasion.

To state that there was a fear of a powerful army in Britain is an oversimplification of an important issue that went deeper than questions relating to the armed forces alone. Certainly the dictatorship of Cromwell's generals in the 1650s had created a fear and distrust of the army, a fear so deep rooted that it shocked many soldiers into eventually supporting the restoration of the Stuart dynasty in 1660.²³ The hatred of soldiers and the army in which they served was, however, only part of the equation, just as military rule was only a part of the widespread and longer-lasting upheaval in seventeenth-century Britain. Significantly, it was not the existence of a powerful standing army that had triggered the events that led to the eventual collapse of the Commonwealth, but rather the role of the army in politics. Thus, in 1660 efforts were made to depoliticise the army and in 1661 a new type of standing army was created, described by John Childs as being 'a non-political body, concerned solely with the execution of the civil authority's wishes regarding national defence and preservation of internal law and order'.²⁴ This enabled the army to undo some of the damage done to its reputation by its actions in the aftermath of the civil war but its standing was further damaged by events in the reigns of Charles II and James II, events that created a fear of the army being used as a tool, rather than an instigator, of tyranny. Such fears had appeared to gain most credibility in the reign of James II, when the perceived threat was not only of an army used as an instrument of power but also as a Catholic and even foreign one (troops being introduced from Ireland was a persistent fear of James' opponents).²⁵

To counter the threat posed by the army, two policies were adopted that were to become keystones of British military policy during the eighteenth century. The first was the maintenance of only a small standing army, which during the reign of Charles

²³ R. Hainsworth, *The Swordsmen in Power* (Stroud, Sutton, 1997), pp.250-269.

²⁴ J. Childs, *The Army of Charles II* (London, Routledge, 1976), p.1.

²⁵ P. Seward, *The Restoration, 1660-1688* (London, Macmillan, 1991), pp.127-130.

It was restricted to six regiments and a garrison in the North African port of Tangier.²⁶ Such was the mistrust of the army that this policy was to persist even when it was clearly detrimental to Britain's security, such as when Jacobite unrest was at its height during the early eighteenth century.²⁷ The second policy to contain the power of the army was that the force was to swear an oath to the monarch but be funded through parliament.²⁸ Both policies were refined and developed during the reign of William III, the Bill of Rights in 1689 establishing that a standing army required the consent of parliament, while the Disbanding Act of 1699 established the number of troops that could be maintained.²⁹

Of the two policies adopted to contain the army the most significant was that its relationship with the state was a dual one: with the crown and parliament, the former commanding and the latter paying for its upkeep. This concept was introduced in the Militia Act of 1661 and then reinforced in the 1689 Bill of Rights.³⁰ This relationship between army and state was unusual, as armed forces in Europe tended to be appendages of the crown.³¹ The dual relationship was to have an impact on the structure, organisation and effectiveness of the army. It was also crucial to the financial and administrative revolutions that occurred during the eighteenth century, as the state would seek to expand and improve its ability to raise the revenue required to support the army. To finance the wars fought in the 1690s a system based on taxation was adopted, while from the Wars of the Spanish Succession the precedent was set of funding wars through credit.³² These practices remained keystones of

²⁶ Childs, *The Army of Charles II*, p.30

²⁷ G.C. Gibbs, 'The Revolution in Foreign Policy', in G. Holmes (ed), *Britain After the Glorious Revolution* (London, Macmillan, 1980), p.66.

²⁸ Childs, *The Army of Charles II*, pp.30 and 218.

²⁹ J. Carter, 'The Revolution and the Constitution', in G. Holmes (ed), *Britain After the Glorious Revolution* (London, Macmillan, 1980), pp.43 to 44.

³⁰ Childs, *The Army of Charles II*, p.218; Carter, 'The Revolution and the Constitution', p.43.

³¹ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, pp.43-4.

³² Carter, 'The Revolution and the Constitution', p.48; W.A. Speck, 'Conflict in Society', in Holmes (ed), *Britain After the Glorious Revolution*, p.142.

Britain's wartime finance until the end of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars.³³ These policies were to have two main impacts. The first was that the system of procurement utilised by the army was also to become based on credit.³⁴ The second consequence was more indirect but arose as a result of the growing number of government departments such as the excise, departments created to raise or allocate taxation.³⁵ The creation of such departments had implications for administrative practices throughout the state, eventually influencing the way in which the army itself was administered.

Although the dual-relationship continued to exist by the end of the eighteenth century its role had changed. Fears concerning militarism persisted, it being a subject frequently addressed by the cartoonists, caricaturists and pamphleteers.³⁶ Militarism was seen to threaten the relationship between the centre and periphery in British politics, opening the way for the former to attain more power at the expense of individuals. Because of this, fear of militarism was also linked to the notion of liberty that existed in Britain, which was based on the preservation of parliamentary democracy and rights of subjects.³⁷ It is apparent, however, that fear of militarism was not the only factor that sustained the dual-relationship: the tendency to applaud the success and capability of the fleet was, after all, militarism.

By the late eighteenth century the real fear of military expansion was as much economic as political; a large army would have tied down resources seen by many to be better spent on industrial expansion at home and imperial expansion overseas.

³³ E.L. Ellis, 'William III and the Politicians', in Holmes (ed), *Britain After the Glorious Revolution*, p.126.

³⁴ See below p.40

³⁵ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, pp.67, 102-112.

³⁶ R. J. White, *Waterloo to Peterloo* (London, Mercury Books, 1963), pp.7-8. See also J. Brewer, *The English Satirical Print, 1600-1832: The Common People and Politics, 1750 – 1790s* (Cambridge, Chadwyck, 1986).

³⁷ S. Caunce, 'Not Sprang from Princes: Middling Society in Eighteenth Century West Yorkshire', in Kidd and Nicolls (eds.), *The Making of the British Middle Classes*. pp.26-29. True liberty was seen to be as dangerous as militarism. E. Royle, *Revolutionary Britannia: Reflections on the Threat of Revolution in Britain, 1789 to 1848* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2000), p.14.

Conversely, through safeguarding mercantile interests, the Royal Navy was seen to contribute directly to British economic growth, while the exploits of explorers such as Cook had further focused public attention on the importance of maritime affairs.³⁸ Although such reasoning does not give due credit the part played by the army in the growth and maintenance of the Empire in this and the preceding period, it is fair to say that the importance of the army to British ambitions was considerably less than in the late nineteenth century. Crucially, the protection of India was not the responsibility of the British army but rather the army of the Honourable East India Company, and remained so until the mutiny of 1857.³⁹

Besides economic and colonial concerns (the two could become inseparable during this period) there were sound strategic reasons for successive governments to support the navy over the army. As an island nation it made more sense for Britain to maintain a strong fleet to prevent an invasion, rather than a strong army to repulse one, and there was what Jeremy Black describes as a belief in Britain's 'maritime destiny'.⁴⁰ In this regard the policy of the government was a success, and through an unequal allocation of resources the navy was able to take a lead over its rivals in the fields of armament and hull design, while through installations such as rope works and government dockyards the navy had considerably more control over production of its own material than did the army (including facilities overseas such as the rope works in Malta).⁴¹ Even when the latter maintained its own facilities, such as the Woolwich arsenal, a certain proportion of output would be allocated to the navy.⁴² The infrastructure allocated to support the navy was far greater than that allocated to the

³⁸ D. A. Baugh, 'The Maritime State and Atlantic Commerce', in Stone (ed), *An Imperial State At War*, pp.185-223; Black, *Sea Borne Empire*, p.127.

³⁹ Partridge and Oliver, *The British Army and Her Allies*, pp.88-90. The company's army was of further importance to Britain's military power as, through acting in conjunction with other British forces, it was able to seize and garrison enemy colonies in the Indian Ocean region (notably Java and Madagascar) and supplied troops for the Egyptian campaign during the wars with France.

⁴⁰ Black, *Sea Borne Empire*, p.125.

⁴¹ Black, *Sea Borne Empire*, p.161.

⁴² Baugh, 'The Maritime State and Atlantic Commerce', p.186.

army, and John Brewer estimates the cost of supporting a sailor was double that for a soldier.⁴³ Part of this cost included certain benefits for sailors that were not enjoyed by soldiers, a particularly contentious one being the availability of wine to naval officers free of duty, while army officers had to pay all such charges.⁴⁴

The difficulty that faced the government by the time of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars was the success of the policy that gave priority to the navy over the army. It is apparent that this led to a situation in which the expansion of the navy continued to be tolerated while the army was allowed to stagnate.⁴⁵ The success of the Royal Navy, which, it must be stated, came about as a result of a defence policy that enabled the fleet to take a qualitative and quantitative lead over its rivals, was a fragile one. The crucial issue to appreciate is that despite the emphasis placed on the Royal Navy in British defence policy it also lacked sufficient resources. While politicians may have approved funding for the fleet to expand, in practice the effects of this were limited. Manpower, in particular, was in short supply, despite the use of enforced service through the press gang.⁴⁶ Press gangs were selective and not a significant benefit for recruitment to the navy. In 1808 and 1809, for example, recruitment to the navy suffered a shortfall of 16,000 men and even as early as 1800, failure to meet recruitment targets was hampering operations. By the time of the Battle of Trafalgar British warships regularly sailed undermanned, Nelson's flagship *Victory* sailing with only 703 of her 837-man crew in 1805. Added to the Royal Navy's recruitment shortfall should also be that of the marines, who were 7,000 below establishment by 1803.⁴⁷ By 1812 the fleet was even showing signs of problems in quality, when U.S.

⁴³ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.31.

⁴⁴ See Lieutenant Fairman, *A Letter on the Expediency of Allowing Wine to the Army Free of Duty as in the Navy* (London, Carpenter, 1803).

⁴⁵ C. Emsley, *British Society*, p.52.

⁴⁶ P. Woodfine, 'Proper Objects of the Press': Naval Impressment and Habeas Corpus in the French Revolutionary Wars', in K. Dockray and K. Laybourn (eds), *The Representation and Reality of War: the British Experience* (Stroud, Sutton, 1999), pp.39-60.

⁴⁷ Hall, *British Strategy*, pp.11-13. For a full consideration of the navy in this period see N. Rodger, *The Wooden World: An Anatomy of the Georgian Navy* (London, Collins, 1986).

warships of a similar size outgunned British frigates.⁴⁸

The impact of the policy favouring the navy over the army was not entirely detrimental to the force. Sea power was utilised to significant effect to maintain the army, being used to move supplies and protect lines of communication. Traditionally historians considering the latter, such as Christopher Hall and Piers Mackesy, have focused on sea borne lines of communication but the importance of sea power to the protection of those on land should not be overlooked. Piers Mackesy notes that Britain's naval power enabled her to harass the enemy's coasts but this argument should be extended to include the fact that Britain's own coastal flanks were secure, preventing similar raids on British supply lines.⁴⁹ Disadvantages of the policy placing the navy first not only included inevitable budget deficiencies for the land based force but also influenced its deployment. The Royal Navy could only project its power with secure bases and in consequence large garrisons were deployed for the defence of locations that included Sicily, Minorca, Greece and Alexandria.⁵⁰

Whatever its impact on the army, the policy favouring the Royal Navy continued, allowing it to continue to defend the home nation, expand the Empire and safeguard commerce. This preference for the navy existed not just in government but also society in general, despite the fact that the navy could be as disruptive as the army. The presence of large dockyards and fleets, for example, inflated food prices in the locality and in 1795 this led to riots in certain regions.⁵¹ The unfavourable attitude of the population exasperated soldiers such as Ensign John Aitchinson, serving in the 3rd Regiment of Guards, who complained that until late in the Napoleonic Wars, when success in the Peninsular War finally elevated the prestige of the army, 'the navy had been the darling of the people, the likes of Nelson and Hood having looked down on

⁴⁸ P. J. Haythornthwaite, *Napoleon's Military Machine* (Staplehurst, Spellmont, 1988), pp.186-187.

⁴⁹ P. Mackesy, *The War in the Mediterranean, 1803 to 1810* (London, Longmans, 1957), p.7.

⁵⁰ Mackesy, *The War in the Mediterranean, 1803 to 1810*, p.16.

⁵¹ Black, *Sea Borne Empire*, p.162.

the army'.⁵² There are a variety of reasons why Britons continued to have an aversion to the army. As suggested above fear of overt militarism was not necessarily a factor as it existed in regard to the navy and, furthermore, was eventually fully embraced during the Peninsular War as the nation celebrated victories such as Salamanca and Vittoria with peals of church bells, special edition newspapers and other revelry.⁵³ Neither were economic arguments concerning the value of the fleet as opposed to the army necessarily significant, this being a concern primarily of the wealthy or those educated enough to read about the markets and other financial affairs in newspapers, an activity that was increasingly popular amongst the middling sort in the provinces but less so among poorly educated labourers.⁵⁴

The factor that united many elements of society against the army was the disruption it could cause at a local level. directly affecting the lives of individuals. Fights between soldiers, which were often fuelled by alcohol, were a feature of life in garrison towns, and particular those that contained depots at which new recruits would arrive. This was the situation facing Private William Wheeler of the 51st Regiment of Foot when he arrived at Maidstone in April 1809, when he described scenes of 'drunkenness and riot' amongst the newly arrived troops in the town.⁵⁵ Such disorder could be dangerous to inhabitants and on occasion required the deployment of other military forces to restore order. The memoirist Benjamin Harris recorded such an incident, which occurred while he was travelling from Ireland to depots in southeastern England and accompanied by fellow recruits to the 95th Rifles. Trouble

⁵² W. F. K. Thompson (ed), *An Ensign in the Peninsular War: The Letters of John Aitchinson* (London, Michael Joseph, 1981), p.230.

⁵³ Hugh Marendes to Privy Council, Edinburgh, 25th July 1813, PRO PC 1/4011, Privy Council Miscellaneous Unbound Papers, July 1813; *Salisbury Journal*, 24th August 1812, p.4.

⁵⁴ Harris, 'Praising the Middling Sort', p5; J. Brewer, 'Commercialisation and Politics', in N.McKendrick, J Brewer and J.H. Plumb (eds.), *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialisation of Eighteenth Century England* (London, Europa, 1982), p.216.

⁵⁵ B. H. Liddell – Hart (ed), *The Letters of Private Wheeler 1809 - 1828* (London, Michael Joseph, 1951), pp.17-18. Such disorder could involve sailors but they tended to spend more time isolated from the population aboard ship.

began shortly after the party left Ireland, when fights broke out between Irish Roman Catholics and Protestants in the group. Harris noted how the recruits, drawn mainly from rural backgrounds, were too overawed by the cities of Bristol (the port at which they disembarked) and Bath to cause more trouble. This situation continued until the group reached Salisbury Plain, at which point a sectarian fight broke out and violence continued when the group reached the town of Andover. At this point the local Volunteers were called out to restore order with loaded muskets and calm was restored.⁵⁶

A more serious outbreak of disorder occurred amongst troops billeted in Cork during September 1795. Troops of the 105th and 113th Regiments of Foot, en route to the West Indies, mutinied, marching through the city with bayonets fixed and releasing prisoners from the jail.⁵⁷ Needless to say the scenes caused considerable concern amongst the inhabitants of the city, although control was restored relatively bloodlessly following the imposition of a curfew and arrival of troops from the 7th Dragoon Guards.⁵⁸ In this case the disorder had gone beyond drunken or rowdy troops and was a mutiny but, while one of the more extreme examples of what could happen in a garrison town or city, it was a realistic threat and ample reason for civilians to oppose the presence of soldiers in a locality, even if they were not opposed to the army as an institution of the state.

Mutinies and drunken brawls were not the only reasons for hostility between citizens and soldiers. Indeed, while instances such as those noted above could potentially create conflict between soldiers and civilians, it was often the use of the army to restore control that caused hostility (a role that determined the locations of

⁵⁶ E. Hathaway (ed), *A Dorset Rifleman: The Recollections of Benjamin Harris* (Swanage, Shinglepicker, 1995), pp.20-21.

⁵⁷ Deployment to the West Indies also initiated a mutiny amongst sailors in 1801. Black, *Sea Borne Empire*, p.161.

⁵⁸ John Travers to Lord Lismore, Cork, 4th September 1795, NAM 6807/370/44; Notices Announcing a Curfew in Cork, 4th September 1795, NAM 6807/370/43.

their peace time deployments).⁵⁹ It is apparent, therefore, that for civilians contact with soldiers could be disruptive, unpleasant and dangerous. Appreciating that citizens were sometimes opposed to the army at a local level, whether it was due to disruption to markets, drunken brawls or its role as a police force, but not opposed to the army as an institution per se is vital for understanding the relationship of the army with the state and the continued existence of the dual relationship with crown and parliament. The attitude of the population in general is perhaps best described as 'not in my back yard': the army was necessary but citizens preferred it not to disrupt their lives.⁶⁰ The fear essentially was of disruption (be it social, political or economic), not of the force being used as an instrument of tyranny. Even when fears of mutiny and revolution were at their height following the French Revolution and Irish Rebellion of 1798 fears related not to the army itself but the actions of individual soldiers. By the time of the unrest in the post-war period the army was seen as reliable and called on by the government to suppress disorder in the capital.⁶¹ Thus, in regard to the situation at the time of the outbreak of the Revolutionary Wars, it is an oversimplification to state that the dual relationship the army had with crown and parliament existed as a means to control the force. Such a concept no doubt provided comfort to liberty minded liberals but more importantly the dual relationship had shaped and become embedded in the British state. It was the dual relationship that provided the driving force for the administrative and financial reforms of the eighteenth century, creating the need for parliament to expand and even create its own financial apparatus so that it, rather than the monarch, could support the armed forces.⁶² Safeguards that restricted and

⁵⁹ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.51.

⁶⁰ Hoppit, *A Land of Liberty?*, p.157.

⁶¹ Mr. Wood, Mayor of London, to Major Elington of the Tower Garrison, Mansion House, December 1816 (undated), PRO WO 94/15, Tower of London Constables Office: Letters and Orders 1816-31, f.4; M.I. Thomis and P. Holt, *Threats of Revolution in Britain 1789 – 1848* (Archon Books, 1977), pp.39-75.

⁶² Carter, 'The Revolution and the Constitution', p.48.

controlled the army were in some respects redundant by the end of the eighteenth century but were nevertheless an integral part of the state, one example being the policy that placed the Royal Navy before the army. Effectively the dual relationship continued to exist not for its original purpose – that of controlling the army – but because it enabled Britain to sustain its economic growth and social stability. A key factor in the relative stability enjoyed by Britain compared to other nations in the period of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars was that this suited both the government and large sections of the population alike.

Although the reasons for the dual relationship had changed from that initially envisaged (as a means of controlling the army and preventing it from becoming involved in politics), its impact on the army remained and should not be underestimated as it characterised the organisation of the force into the nineteenth century. Because of the dual relationship, civilian authorities governed Britain's armed forces to an unprecedented degree when compared to the situation elsewhere in Europe, particularly in Prussia, Russia and Austria.⁶³ This created an increasingly significant role for government, with the result that the army was administered through what can be considered a combination of old and new departments. The old departments predated the reign of William III and in the eighteenth century existed in forms quite different to those originally envisaged, in terms of both role and structure. Some, such as the Ordnance Board, had evolved over centuries while others, such as the War Office, had began to emerge in the 1640s.⁶⁴ Conversely, the new departments were created during or after the reign of William III, and included the Home Office. Another group of departments of note were those that predated the reign of William III but lost significance in relation to the army, an example being the Privy Council,

⁶³ Corvisier, *Armies and Societies*, pp.76, 116-122.

⁶⁴ For the various stages in the evolution of the Ordnance Board from its creation in the fifteenth century to its decline in the nineteenth, see F. Duncan, *History of the Royal Artillery* (2 vols, London, John Murray, 1879), passim.

the roles of which in the affairs of the army were largely absorbed by the Cabinet during the eighteenth century.⁶⁵

The dual relationship and subsequent administrative revolution created changes at the heart of civilian administration that, while not directly affecting the army, were to influence indirectly its own administration and effectiveness. The rise in the number of new departments and increasing prestige of existing ones served in part to undermine traditional patterns of patronage. The patronage of royalty and the aristocracy continued to dominate most departments, especially those that pre-dated the reign of William III, but the creation of newer departments opened the door for new elites, those whose power stemmed from politics and administration, to exercise their own patronage. It would be incorrect to assume that these appointments were free of the patronage of either royalty or the aristocracy as the new breed of politicians and administrators frequently owed their own positions to such patronage networks, but by the end of the eighteenth century there was evidence that the traditional patterns of patronage were beginning to break down, with the influence of traditional families being exercised rather more indirectly. This was to have implications for administration in both the military and civilian spheres, and enabled the gradual rise of professional administrators.⁶⁶

As the army swore an oath to the Crown the ultimate authority in the army was, in theory, the monarch. This was the case during the reign of William III but royal influence declined thereafter, as did the role of bodies such as the Privy Council, the role of which gradually became one of gathering information for enquiries, such those conducted regarding outbreaks of disease in the West Indies garrisons.⁶⁷ The

⁶⁵ J. Innes, 'The Domestic Face of the Fiscal-Military State: Government and Society in Eighteenth Century Britain', in L. Stone (ed), *An Imperial State At War: Britain From 1689 – 1815* (London, Routledge, 1994), p103.

⁶⁶ Brewer, *The English Satirical Print*, p.74-87.

⁶⁷ Carter, 'The Revolution and the Constitution', p.52; Innes, 'The Domestic Face of the Fiscal-Military State', p105; for an example of such an inquiry see PRO PC 1/13/149, *Sickness in the West Indies*

result of these changes was that by the time of the outbreak of the Revolutionary Wars, the army was, in practice, a tool of parliament or, more specifically, whatever government was in power as it was this body that decided where and when the army would deploy. Thus, in some respects, the army was subordinated to the civilian administration, which had the Prime Minister at its head.⁶⁸ The power of this office over the army was limited due to the nature of British politics. In particular, the Prime Minister did not necessarily lead the largest political group in parliament, or even draw members of the government from his party. As a consequence the role of the Prime Minister more often became one of performing a political balancing act rather than direct involvement in every aspect of policy. Of the Prime Ministers in the early nineteenth century, only Pitt and Grenville became seriously involved in the affairs of the army. Pitt was one of the instigators of the army's involvement in operations against enemy colonies and reformed the national command structure through creating the post of Secretary for War and the Colonies, while Grenville's Foxite Ministry of Talents fell following attempts to reform the army.⁶⁹

The principal means through which a Prime Minister was able to influence the actions and structure of the army was through the appointment of his Cabinet, a body that had risen to prominence during the reign of William III to meet the need for wartime planning.⁷⁰ Although attempts were made to run the affairs of government through consensus the personality of those individuals appointed to lead ministries and departments could be significant. It has been suggested, for example, that

Raised at Privy Council.

⁶⁸ For a consideration of the relevant departments and how they operated in regard to the armed forces, see Partridge and Oliver, *The British Army and Her Allies*, pp.5-9; Haythornthwaite, *The Napoleonic Source Book*, pp.195-6.

⁶⁹ Emsley *British Society*, pp128-9. For a consideration of how the varying domestic political situation could have an impact on a military campaign and the army, see R. Muir, 'Britain and the Peninsular War', in P. Griffiths (ed), *A History of the Peninsular War Vol IX: Modern Studies of the War in Spain and Portugal 1808 - 1814* (London, Greenhill Books, 1999), pp.335-372.

⁷⁰ Carter, 'The Revolution and the Constitution', p.50; Innes, 'The Domestic Face of the Fiscal-Military State', p.103.

differing preferences expressed in Cabinet concerning who should lead the British army dispatched to Portugal in 1808 caused the confused situation that resulted in the Convention of Cintra and subsequent recall of the officers concerned (Sir Arthur Wellesley, Sir Hew Dalrymple and Sir Harry Burrard).⁷¹ Of particular importance to the army were the following government departments and their heads: the Foreign Office, the policies of which could dictate where and when the army was deployed; the Home Office, which had jurisdiction over militia, fencible and volunteer forces; and the Treasury. The latter was possibly one of the largest and most important government departments and, amongst other roles, was responsible for the Commissariat.⁷² This organisation was effectively part of the army and the principal organisation tasked with supplying the force.

Two Cabinet posts had more direct control of the army. These were the Master General of the Ordnance and the Secretary of State for War and the Colonies. The former was head of the Ordnance Board, which had responsibility for the engineers and artillery, but had only an advisory role in Cabinet. Conversely, the Secretary of State for War and the Colonies was a government post and had more influence over policy. This post was a development of the Council of War, formed in 1620, and the office the Secretary of War, which had emerged in the reign of Charles II. John Brewer describes this latter post as being only a minor one and suggests that its holders were generally unimportant government officials who only rarely sat in Cabinet and thus had little impact on policy.⁷³ While such a view is to an extent true, it is excessively dismissive of a post that was to evolve into an important government department. The office of the Secretary of War rose to prominence largely due to the efforts and ability of the first holder of the post in the reign of Charles, Sir William

⁷¹ C. J. Esdaile, *The Peninsular War*, (London, Allen Lane, 2002), p.95.

⁷² Innes, 'The Domestic Face of the Fiscal-Military State', p.103. For a consideration of the Commissariat, see chapter 2.

⁷³ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.44.

Clarke, and his close co-operation with the Commander-in-Chief, General Monck. The next significant stage in the evolution of the office of the Secretary at War occurred in 1678 when parliament declared that it, rather than the Secretary of State, was to sign commissions. From 1683, following the appointment of William Bluthwayt as Secretary of War (first from 1683 to 1688 and then from 1690 to 1704), further powers were gained and the office began to maintain its own copies of warrants, entry books and letters, thereby creating a War Office and junior ministry.⁷⁴ By 1685 the duties of the War Office included the issuing of marching orders, deciding regimental seniority and creating military codes of conduct.⁷⁵

The importance of the War Office continued to increase during the eighteenth century and in 1798 it was merged with the Colonial Office, to form the office of the Secretary of State for War and the Colonies. Appointments to this post operated through traditional patronage networks and it changed hands seven times in the period 1800 to 1815. Amongst the six holders of the post (Castlereagh being in office twice), there were no fewer than four lords and one viscount. These were Lord Hobart (1801 to 1804), Lord Camden (1804 to 1805), Viscount Castlereagh (1805 to 1806, 1807 to 1809), Lord Liverpool (1809 to 1812) and Lord Bathurst (1812 to the end of the war). The only non-titled holder of the position in the period was William Windham (1806 to 1807).⁷⁶ That the post frequently changed hands was a consequence of its being a political appointment and thus vulnerable to fluctuations in political fortunes and changing ministries. Another characteristic of this post was that, being a civilian, the Secretary of State for War and the Colonies had only a directional and administrative role in the structure of the army. The office was perhaps best utilised to co-ordinate the activities of the various departments concerned with the operation and

⁷⁴ Carter, 'The Revolution and the Constitution', p.53.

⁷⁵ Childs, *The Army of Charles II*, pp.92-100.

⁷⁶ Partridge and Oliver, *The British Army and Her Allies*, p.9.

maintenance of the army. It was rarely fully effective in fulfilling even this limited task, however, and could be so ineffective that Richard Partridge and Michael Oliver describe its creation as being little more than a 'political fudge' by Pitt the Younger to strengthen his control over government.⁷⁷

Despite the powers over the army granted to it by the Act of Settlement, parliament, through the Cabinet and then the Secretary of War, could do little more than order the army into a theatre of war and issue guidance, such as on the need to avoid casualties or to aid an allied nation. On occasion politicians did intervene more directly, as in the case of the Walcheren fiasco, but in such circumstances the army rarely met with success. It is important to note, however, that the support and guidance of politicians was not without value to the army. One of the few occasions when the army did act largely on its own initiative was the expedition to Buenos Aires in 1806, which proved a complete military disaster and resulted in the surrender of the force involved.⁷⁸ This event was also to have political repercussions as it gave the Spanish colonists a new self belief and increased their determination to achieve independence from Spanish colonial rule, an event British foreign policy makers sought to avoid or delay for as long as possible.

Below the Secretary of State for War and the Colonies the national command structure of the army became more complex, leading André Corvisier to state that one characteristic of the system was confusion, although this is perhaps excessively harsh about administrative practices that could prove effective.⁷⁹ The combat elements of the army were divided between those of Horse Guards (regular infantry and cavalry), the Ordnance Board (regular artillery and engineers) and the Home Office (militia, yeomanry, fencibles and volunteers). It is apparent that there was no single military

⁷⁷ Partridge and Oliver, *The British Army and Her Allies*, p.8.

⁷⁸ Black, *Sea Borne Empire*, p.163.

⁷⁹ Corvisier, *Armies and Societies*, p.76.

department with responsibility for the entire army, and of the three departments, Horse Guards was unique in having a military man in charge, known as the Commander-in-Chief.⁸⁰ The control exercised by the Home Office over auxiliary forces was only nominal with the result that the British army was effectively divided into two departments. A similar situation existed in the French army but differed in that the separation was based on function rather than type of arm.⁸¹

Although only having direct control over the cavalry and infantry, the Commander-in-Chief was the senior military figure in the British army. Furthermore, the importance of the arms under Horse Guards enabled the Commander-in-Chief to exercise a degree of operational control over the army as whole. The Ordnance Board may have collated the returns of its own forces and maintained them, but it was with the forces under Horse Guards that they marched and relied on for their protection. It would be incorrect to view the importance of the infantry and cavalry arms as enabling the Commander-in-Chief to circumvent the national command structure and the checks in place to curb the power of the army, although they did permit him more influence than was allowed on paper. Despite this the Commander-in-Chief remained powerless without the co-operation of certain civilian-led departments.

The office of Commander-in-Chief for much of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars was held by Frederick, Duke of York, George III's second son. York temporarily left office in 1809 due to his affair with Mary Clarke and, although cleared by Parliament of any wrongdoing, he resigned as a matter of honour. York returned in 1811 and it has been argued that during his brief time out of office he was still effectively in control, as interim Commander-in-Chief General David Dundas

⁸⁰ S. J. Park and G. F. Nafziger, *The British Military: Its System and Organisation 1803 - 1815* (Cambridge (Canada), Rafm, 1983), pp.5 - 11.

⁸¹ In the French army the combat arms were under the chief of staff while the general staff tended to fulfil logistical duties. J.F.C. Fuller, *The Conduct of War 1789 - 1961* (London, Methuen, 1961), p.53.

continued his policies.⁸² That York held the post of Commander-in-Chief almost continually from 1796 to 1827 would suggest a stagnant and conservative administration, in an era that would begin to require a gradually more educated rank and file, along with increasingly complex equipment. Fortunately for the army York, while a poor field general, was unafraid of innovation and was a first class administrator. Reforms implemented during his time in office included regimental schools, a staff college, published rules and regulations for non-commissioned officers and a subsidised mail service.⁸³ Such reforms helped drag the army from its nadir of the previous decade, thereby directly improving morale. This was noted by fighting soldiers and in 1805 Captain Thomas Browne of the 23rd Foot wrote of 'a rejuvenated British army, whose spirit had been rejuvenated by internal reform and improvements'.⁸⁴

Under the Commander-in-Chief was a secretary, who enabled him to communicate with other departments. Initially this was a civilian post but from 1811 became a military appointment, a demonstration of increasing professionalism within the military hierarchy.⁸⁵ Besides this secretary, infantry and cavalry, Horse Guards contained two departments. These were the Quartermaster General, who was responsible for troop movements, information gathering and the supply of camping equipment, and the Adjutant-General, who was responsible for drill and discipline.

The combat arms not under Horse Guards – the artillery and engineers – were the responsibility of the Ordnance Board. The two organisations had developed along markedly different lines, this being apparent by the fact that while the Horse Guards

⁸² Partridge and Oliver, *The British Army and Her Allies*, p.6.

⁸³ Such a mail service already existed for the sailors of the Royal Navy. J. Bartlett, *The Development of the British Army During the Wars with France 1793 - 1815* (unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of Durham, 1997), p.184; Partridge and Oliver *Army Handbook* p.7.

⁸⁴ R. N. Buckley (ed), *The Napoleonic War Journal of Captain Thomas Henry Browne 1807 - 1816* (London, Army Records Society, 1987), p.xi.

⁸⁵ Partridge and Oliver, *The British Army and Her Allies*, p.7.

had at its head a soldier and, until 1811, a civilian secretary, the situation in the Ordnance was reversed. The head of the Ordnance was a civilian with a seat in the Cabinet but below him was an army officer, known as the Deputy Adjutant General. The Deputy Adjutant General's department was created to rectify a peculiarity of the Royal Artillery, specifically that despite being granted the title of 'regiment' it lacked many of the administrative organs associated with such a formation. Prior to the creation of the department it had been the responsibility of the individual company and battalion officers deployed around the globe to transmit inspection returns to the Ordnance Board and make requests concerning supplies. It is possible to draw parallels between the creation of the Deputy Adjutant General's department and the administrative revolution in general, particularly in the field of data collection and compilation of statistics, activities that saw the growth of government departments to achieve this.⁸⁶ How far the formation of the Deputy Adjutant General's department was linked to this trend is, however, questionable. Far more influential was the poor performance of the army in North America, which triggered several reforms of the army in its aftermath.

When the Deputy Adjutant General's department was formed in 1783 the post carried the rank of Brigadier General, although in 1795 this was elevated to the status of a staff appointment.⁸⁷ The department was to fulfil many of the administrative roles of the Commissariat but in relation to the artillery and engineers.⁸⁸ Significantly, despite its name, the Deputy Adjutant General's department was a quite separate entity from the Adjutant General's department under the Commander-in-Chief at Horse Guards, the role of that organisation being primarily to ensure discipline and

⁸⁶ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.222-225.

⁸⁷ Deputy Adjutant General, 8th April 1795, PRO WO 55/3045, Board of Ordnance Orders and Regulations foot Artillery Order Book c1790 to c1846, p.73.

⁸⁸ See Chapter 3.

the movement of troops.⁸⁹ The first holder of the office was Brigadier General Macleod, who remained in the post throughout the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. As stated by John Brewer, the systems of patronage utilised to fill positions such as the Deputy Adjutant General's department did not necessarily result in poor administrators and Macleod is proof of this.⁹⁰ On several occasions Macleod demonstrated that he possessed a good understanding of the difficulties experienced by the artillery in the field, and not only gathered data on these difficulties but also proposed effective solutions.⁹¹

An important factor that contributed to the persistent inefficiency within the departments under the Board of Ordnance was the nature and structure of the board itself. Many of the departments responsible for the administration of the army had been created during the seventeenth century. In contrast the Ordnance Board had existed in various forms for several centuries and despite reforms was a product of a previous period, a situation that had implications for its structure and efficiency. Although the role of the Ordnance had changed over the centuries it continued to have at its head the Master General of the Ordnance, a post perceived as being one of the most important and prestigious in the United Kingdom. Its responsibilities included supplying the Royal Navy and army with munitions, although it was the latter that virtually monopolised the board's time, and, unlike the post of Commander-in-Chief, the post of Master General also entitled its holder to a seat in the Cabinet.⁹² The individuals who held the office during the period of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars were the Duke of Richmond (1784 to 1795), Marquis Cornwallis (1795 to

⁸⁹ Park and Nafziger, *The British Military*, p.5.

⁹⁰ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, pp.75-81.

⁹¹ For his efforts relating to straw yards see Brigadier General Macleod to R.H. Crew, Woolwich, 3rd April 1807, PRO WO 55/1314, Letters to Board of Ordnance from Adjutant General, February 1807 to July 1809.

⁹² Duncan, *History of the Royal Artillery*, Volume 2, p14; Park and Nafziger, *The British Military*, pp.7-8.

1801), the Earl of Chatham (1801 to 1806 and again from 1807 to 1810), Lord Moira (1806 to 1807) and Lord Mulgrave (1810 to 1819).⁹³ John Brewer notes that the armed forces were well represented in parliament but that the politicians concerned only rarely promoted the interests of the armed forces (or even safeguarded them).⁹⁴ Examples of such individuals include the Masters General of the Ordnance.

It was common for the Masters General to hold other posts and they were frequently active in the House of Lords, but their activities tended to focus not on their duties in regard to the Ordnance but rather their own careers and interests. This was particularly so in the case of Lord Mulgrave, whose activities and other commitments interfered with the efficient running of the Ordnance Board to such an extent that Brigadier-General Macleod at times found it almost impossible to arrange meetings. On occasion important decisions were delayed because Lord Mulgrave was unavailable; for example, in 1811 an urgent decision concerning the deployment of draught animals to the artillery in Portugal was delayed due to his being in parliament.⁹⁵ The situation so frustrated Brigadier-General Macleod that he remarked in one letter to Lord Mulgrave 'I shall be in town today, if your Lordship happens to be at the Ordnance'.⁹⁶

The difficulties caused by Mulgrave's absence from the Ordnance at crucial times was an example of how practices that were deemed acceptable could prove detrimental to the efficiency of the army. In this case difficulties arose due to the close relationship between the civilian and military spheres in the British state. This relationship was to significantly influence the structure of another department, the Commissariat, the organization that is the focus of the following chapter.

⁹³ Duncan, *History of the Royal Artillery*, Vol. 2, p.34.

⁹⁴ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.44.

⁹⁵ MacLeod to Major Chapman, Woolwich, 8th June 1811, PRO WO55/1369, Adjutant General's Confidential Letters (Outward), September 1810 to February 1816.

⁹⁶ MacLeod to Lord Mulgrave, Woolwich, 17th February 1812, PRO WO55/1369.

Chapter 2

The Commissariat and associated organizations

Of the organizations associated with the maintenance of the British army in the period of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, the Commissariat was the most significant. It was an organization that has attained a degree of notoriety for its failings, being described by Mark Adkin in his analysis of the 1815 Waterloo campaign as ‘a much maligned body’.⁹⁷ As this chapter will demonstrate, however, it was also an organization that achieved a rarely credited degree of success through the adoption of new policies. This success was notable as it was achieved despite the constraints placed upon the organization by the practices of the period and policies of British governments, such as an at times labyrinthine bureaucracy, the need to manage finance carefully and the need to operate throughout the Empire. Through the latter the Commissariat would also demonstrate that many of the advantages supposedly provided by the fiscal-military state were only effective within certain geographical boundaries.

The Commissariat exemplified many aspects of administration and government that had developed in the eighteenth century, although the whole logistics network of the British army (and navy) demonstrated one characteristic in particular, a multitude of departments and organizations with overlapping jurisdictions, many of which were created in the turmoil and administrative reforms of the later Stuarts.⁹⁸ None of these departments matched the Commissariat in terms of either size or capability. For example, logistics in the Alexandria garrison in 1807 were the responsibility of four organizations. The smallest to maintain stores was the Royal

⁹⁷M. Adkin, *The Waterloo Companion* (London, Aurum, 2001), p.325.

⁹⁸ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.67; Childs, *The Army of Charles II*, pp.96-105. For a consideration of the similar system that operated in the navy see Duffy, ‘The Foundations of British Naval Power’, pp.49–84; Black, *Sea Borne Empire*, pp.171-208.

Corps of Engineers, which employed only one clerk in the garrison. Marginally larger was the stores organization of the Royal Artillery, which employed a clerk and two keepers of stores, and the Quartermaster General's Department, which employed a deputy quartermaster, and assistant quartermaster and one servant. The Commissariat overshadowed these organizations, the department employing a deputy commissary general, an assistant commissary, fourteen storekeepers and clerks, nine labourers and seven servants, almost five times the size of the other organizations in Alexandria combined.⁹⁹ Of note is the fact that the personnel of the Commissariat were not only employed on administrative tasks, demonstrating that the size of the organization was not merely the result of the need to meet the demands of increasing bureaucracy, unlike the situation regarding certain governmental departments.¹⁰⁰ The high proportion of storekeepers and clerks indicates that bureaucracy was a feature in the growth of the organization in the period but, to use a physiological analogy, labourers represented muscle rather than the mere fat that administrators represented. The Commissariat was not just an administrative body, but also one capable of performing functions such as moving and storing supplies.

In Alexandria the organization that most closely replicated the function and role of the Commissariat was the Quartermaster General. The primary role of the latter organization was the distribution of items designated camping equipment, which, in addition to items such as tents, included corn sacks for the cavalry, associated forage, entrenching tools for the infantry and slack lime to dispose of animal carcasses.¹⁰¹ It is apparent that in Alexandria the ability of the Quartermaster

⁹⁹ PRO WO 164/525, Royal Hospital Chelsea Prize Records, Alexandria Garrison 1807.

¹⁰⁰ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.102.

¹⁰¹ General Order No. 188, by Order of the Commander of the Forces; 'Rules and Regulations Under Which the Foraging of the Horses of the Cavalry in Ireland is to be Conducted', PRO WO 63/91, Entry Book of Letters Received at Commissariat Headquarters, Dublin, 1810 – 1812, p.49; Extracts from General Orders, Quinta, 16th June 1811, Porta Legre, 28th July 1811, NAM 6807/221, Books of Commissary General N. Jackson, c1814, pp.16 and 22.

General to distribute such items was limited and to a large degree depended upon the infrastructure of the Commissariat. Thus the definition of many items as being the responsibility of the Quartermaster General rather than the Commissariat was administrative and had little bearing on practice. In effect, the Quartermaster General was required to ensure an adequate supply of certain items, while the Commissariat would distribute them. Such anomalies in regard to corn sacks and forage would persist until 1810, when the Commissariat was finally made responsible for their provision.¹⁰²

Another organization that duplicated some of the Commissariat's duties was the office of the Store Master General, which was created in 1808. Primarily based in Britain, and not present in Alexandria, its tasks included making accounts of all goods held in depots and the packing of military stores (prior to 1808 this had been carried out by civilians). The organization maintained a small number of personnel and in 1808 its entire staff consisted of fewer than forty personnel, including ten porters, nineteen clerks, an accountant, a storekeeper and his deputy. The Store Master General's department did not have a role in the field but due to its specialist function the significance of the department was greater than its size alone would suggest.¹⁰³ The Store Master General's department reflected a trend towards greater professionalism that was occurring in both the armed forces and administration, because specialist organizations were created to meet specific needs. Despite the existence of such departments the Commissariat remained the premier organization involved in the maintenance of the army. It was a cog in the logistical machine without which the others could not turn, not least because other departments were to rely on the Commissariat, whether as a store keeper, distributor or administrator.

¹⁰² General Order No. 188, PRO WO 63/91, p.49.

¹⁰³ *Eighth Report of Military Enquiry* (London, Office of the Secretary at War, 1809), pp.161-2.

Reasons for the Commissariat's rise to prominence can be traced back to the military revolution. This had created a need for accurate pay and muster records, a task allocated to the Commissary General by the reforms of Charles II.¹⁰⁴ This function would later devolve to other departments but the organization had become an important part of military administration, although even at this early stage it was an organization characterised by its shortcomings, particularly corruption.¹⁰⁵ The Commissariat was a civil-military hybrid as its personnel wore military uniforms and held commissions but were employed by the Treasury and addressed as 'Mister'.¹⁰⁶

The Commissariat was the principal logistical organisation in the army and to a degree this enabled it to cut the across boundaries created by the division of the force into those arms under Horse Guards and those under the Board of Ordnance.¹⁰⁷ The Ordnance maintained its own stores and supply organizations such as the Field Train of the Ordnance, that included the Ordnance Commissary. The logistical organizations of the ordnance, however, had only limited capabilities compared to the Commissariat or Royal Wagon Train due to the smaller scale of their task, the majority of the army being concentrated in the arms under Horse Guards.¹⁰⁸ Procurement for the arms under the Ordnance was the responsibility of the Surveyor General's Department, in conjunction with the Clerk of Deliveries and Store Keeper.¹⁰⁹ Another department of the Ordnance that possessed capabilities similar to the Commissariat was the office of the Deputy Adjutant General, which conducted administrative tasks such as the collation of returns and co-ordination of requests for supplies.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁴ Corvisier, *Armies and Societies*, p.65; Childs, *The Army of Charles II*, pp.104-105.

¹⁰⁵ J. Kinross, *The Boyne and Aughrim: the War of the Two Kings* (Gloucester, Windrush Press, 1998), p.34.

¹⁰⁶ See PRO T1/1061, Instructions to His Majesty's Deputy Commissary of Accounts; PRO WO 63/43-49, Letters to Commissariat Officers 1808-1815.

¹⁰⁷ See above p.24.

¹⁰⁸ See Chapter 4.

¹⁰⁹ Duncan, *History of the Royal Artillery*, Vol. 2, pp.14 - 17.

¹¹⁰ See PRO WO 55/1314.

Generally, whether forces were administered from Horse Guards or by the Board of Ordnance was of little consequence for logistical operations, and while slight variation in procedures existed the organizations concerned tended to work along similar lines. That the officers of the artillery and engineers were recruited from the Royal Military College at Woolwich, for example, made little difference; neither did the alternative system of bounty payments in the artillery nor the fact that rules governing women accompanying the regiments were more relaxed.¹¹¹ Gunners and artillery drivers required munitions, food and uniform just as infantry and cavalymen did. Even if uniform was of a different colour, or ammunition larger, such items were generally purchased from similar sources, requiring similar standards of transportation, storage and distribution.

The role of the Commissariat can best be described as logistics in its broadest sense. Frequently the term logistics is used purely in relation to the movement of supplies, although in the case of the Commissariat this included the procurement, storage and distribution of such items. The numerous aspects of the Commissariat's task become apparent through a study of Commissariat accounts from the period. Figure 1 illustrates the diverse roles of the Commissariat through the thirty-three different accounting categories, along with their relevant codes, to be found in the Commissariat ledgers used in the Peninsular War. Figure 1 demonstrates that ultimately every individual employed by the army, from the common soldiers to chief surgeons, would in some way rely on the Commissariat, while there was even special provision in its administrative practices for temporary organizations such as recruiting parties.¹¹²

¹¹¹ Macleod et al to Mulgrave, Woolwich, 2nd January 1811, PRO WO55/1369, Adjutant General's Confidential Letters, Out letters, September 1810 to February 1816; Macleod to R.H. Crew, Woolwich, 17th June 1807, Macleod to Crew, Woolwich, 25th July 1807, PRO WO 55/1314.

¹¹² Wellesley-Pole to Commissary General Handfield, Dublin Castle, 2nd October 1810, PRO WO 63/91, p.159.

A	Imprests	T	Portuguese Government
B	Bat and Forage	U	Spanish Government
C	Staff Payment	V	Loss on Bills Negotiated
D	Military Contingencies	W	Property Tax
E	Secret Service	X	Pay of Commissariat Department
F	Clothing and Field Equipment	Y	Treasury Bills
G	Ordnance Department	Z	Sums received from accounts
H	Engineer Department	AA	Stores and Provisions Sold by Authority
I	Supplies	BB	Property Tax Charged Upon Incomes
J	Purchase of Horses, Mules	CC	Bills from the Ordnance Commissary and Paymaster
K	Labourers	DD	Sums received, no particular abstract allocated
L	Transport by Land	EE	Balance Paid
M	transport by Water	FF	Bill received upon Paymaster in England
N	Indemnifications		
O	POWs		
P	Stationery and Printing		
Q	Commissariat Contingencies		
R	Medical Department		
S	Deputy Paymaster General		

Figure 1: Commissariat Accounting Categories.¹¹³

While the information in figure 1 is evidence of the diversity of the Commissariat's responsibilities, it reveals little about the organization's activities at the various stages of the supply chain. Indeed, when considered in isolation, there is little in the above to suggest that the Commissariat was in fact the army's premier logistical organization, and such accounting practices may appear to be little more than an example of bureaucracy run amok in the military. Of particular note in figure 1 is the fact that supplies are referred to in a single category, although it will become apparent that the significance of the other categories to logistics are masked by the language of administration in the period.

A more detailed and revealing overview of the activities actually conducted by the Commissariat in relation to logistics can be found in the account books of Assistant Commissary General George Grellier. Grellier was responsible for maintaining the accounts of the Commissariat in Sicily, which was one of the larger overseas deployments of the organization and as a result serves as a useful case study. The accounts for the months of September to November 1813 are summarised below:

¹¹³ Detailed Instructions to Commissariat Accountants, Cash Accounts, NAM 6807/221, p12.

Date	Service	Payment		
16 September	Hire of 153 pairs of bullocks	£40	0s	10d
25 September	Artificers and labourers employed for making gun carriages	£5	18s	
9 October	For shoeing the mules of the train	£1	4s	
	Arrears of pay to Corporals and Muleteers	£15	9s	11d
	Labourers employed in loading wheat	£1	12s	9d
24 October	Pay to coopers and labourers	£12	18s	9d
	Hire of magazine to contain forage	£12	13s	4d
	Pay of Corporals and Muleteers	£15	9s	11d
27 October	Balance of hospital stoppages due 75 th regiment	£22	8s	10d
	For hire of boats, labourers and 100 planks for use by the King's bakery		£12	8s
8d	Sundry articles furnished to the Ordnance department	£28	13s	7d
28 October	Grinding wheat to make biscuit	£75	15s	6d
29 October	Pay of artificers and labourers employed by the engineers department	£7	10s	1d
30 October	Ditto	£7	1s	3d
31 October	Pay of officers and labourers in service of the Barrack Department	£1	3s	11d
5 November	Pay of Capo Master of the engineer works	£5	14s	4d
6 November	Pay of artificers and labourers employed by the engineers department	£5	18s	9d
	Hire of boats labour	£2	2s	8d
7 November	Allowance for hired servants	£13	11s	1d

Figure 2: The account books of Assistant Commissary General George Grellier, September – November 1813.¹¹⁴

In the three months covered by figure 2 the Commissariat was involved in the activities of procurement (the hire of 153 pairs of bullocks on 16 September), manufacturing (the grinding of wheat to make biscuit on 28 October), storage (the hire of a magazine to contain forage on 24 October), and transport (the hire of boats on 27 October).¹¹⁵ Besides demonstrating the extent of Commissariat involvement in the full range of activities associated with logistics, both figures 1 and 2 are of note as they illustrate the wide range of tasks associated with maintaining an army, from simple accountancy to construction projects.

¹¹⁴ NAM 7902/36, Account Book of Assistant Commissary General George Grellier.

¹¹⁵ All are key components of logistics. Schechter and Sander, *Delivering the Goods*, p.22.

The involvement of the Commissariat in the supply chain often began at the point at which items were procured. In Britain and Ireland this involvement primarily took the form of administering and awarding contracts to civilians.¹¹⁶ It was, however, on campaign that the Commissariat's activities had the most impact. When there was no existing infrastructure of barracks and stores, a situation that faced the army when it first arrived on the continent in 1808 but also as it advanced across the Iberian Peninsula, the purchasing agents of the Commissariat, frequently supported by British diplomats, would precede the army, roaming the country for supplies and sites for depots.¹¹⁷ The importance of this activity was such that it featured in the planning of campaigns, as was demonstrated by the fact that upon his arrival in northern Spain in 1808 Sir John Moore was informed that 'it will be necessary to concert with the Commissary General, W. Erskine, who will be attached to your army, the best means of assembling an adequate supply of horses and mules for rendering your army mobile'. At the same time a group of agents was travelling to Asturias to procure 'such horses and mules as that country can furnish'.¹¹⁸ Such activities frequently required close co-operation between commissaries, especially when newly arrived commissaries liaised with their more established colleagues, the latter possessing useful knowledge of the local economy and practices. As a result, Arthur Wellesley in 1808 informed General Burrard that 'I will desire the commissary to let your commissary know, the price of the hire of carts and mules, and of other items purchased by him'.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ See below p.87.

¹¹⁷ Lord Elgin, the British Ambassador at Constantinople, was particularly active in preparing the army for the campaign in Egypt. P. Mackesy, *British Victory in Egypt, 1801* (London, Routledge, 1995), p.18.

¹¹⁸ To Lieutenant-General Sir John Moore, Downing Street, 26th September 1808, PRO WO 1/236, War Department in Letters: Sir John Moore and General Baird, September 1808 to January 1809, p.9. For a further discussion of this mission, see p.164.

¹¹⁹ A. Wellesley to Sir Harry Burrard, Aeyria, 11th August 1808, PRO WO 1/228, War Department in Letters and Papers, June to August 1808, p.191.

The goods acquired by the roving commissaries would be purchased with either cash or credit. The former was most preferred by the vendors but was not always available, particularly during the prolonged campaign in Spain and Portugal when shortages of specie were common.¹²⁰ In 1810, for example, £5,382,166 in treasury notes was shipped to the Peninsula, as well £679,069 in hard cash, but the Commissariat was to be only one recipient for this, along with army wages and cash earmarked for foreign governments and other political goals.¹²¹ As a result of the shortage of specie items were frequently purchased using promissory notes at home and abroad. The use of credit to support the army became an increasingly common practice from the 1690s.¹²² As well as credit raised by government from institutions, the system of credit in Britain operated through the issuing of bills drawn on a third party, a system frequently utilised by the Commissariat to fund its own transactions.¹²³

Whether supplied by contractors or procured locally, paid for with credit or cash, goods were commonly stored in depots overseen by Commissariat storekeepers (the principal exceptions being those stores manned by organizations under the Ordnance). Depots could be separated by many miles, or concentrated in small areas, depending on the items stored in them and the requirements of the locality concerned. In Dublin, for example, there initially existed no fewer than four depots located at various buildings, all of which were rented by the Commissariat. Figure 3 shows the locations and costs of annual rental for these depots.

Address	Rent per annum	Address	Rent per annum
Queen Street	£391 5s	Rogerson's Quay	£120
Lime Street	£200	Cardiff Street	£120
	Total		£831 5s

Figure 3: Commissariat depots in Dublin, 1806.¹²⁴

¹²⁰ Muir, 'Britain and the Peninsular War', p.350.

¹²¹ Hall, *Wellington's Navy*, p.131.

¹²² Speck, 'Conflict in Society', p.142.

¹²³ Brewer, 'Commercialisation and Politics', p. 205.

¹²⁴ W. Elliot to Commissary General Handfield, Dublin Castle, 27th July 1806, PRO WO 63/88, Entry Book of Letters Received at Commissariat Headquarters, Dublin, 1805 – 1806.

In 1806 it was the possibility of relocating the four Dublin depots into a single, specially constructed building was considered. This was to cost £6,713 for five storeys but it was discovered that if reduced to four storeys the cost would amount to only £5,609. Besides saving £831 paid for rent each year, the single depot would require only one assistant storekeeper rather than the four then employed. This represented a total saving (in rent and wages) of £1037 17s per annum. The scheme proved successful and the policy of amalgamating depots was implemented across Ireland. By 1811, of the sixteen towns and cities in which Commissariat depots were located, only one, Enniskillen, was listed as having two.¹²⁵

The amalgamation of the depots in Ireland demonstrated that financial administration in the Commissariat during the period was not concerned solely with allocating revenue, and that an element of economy was involved. This reflected a boundary imposed by the state, a boundary created by the need to monitor expenditure. It was economics that restricted the number of depots available and although the amalgamations ultimately proved beneficial by increasing efficiency, the situation may have been different if the fear of large-scale unrest in Ireland had been proved true. In such a scenario single depots may have been unable to cope with demands for various supplies, while the loss of a single amalgamated depot would have caused greater disruption than if the stores it contained had been split between several sites.

Much of the pressure for economies in the Commissariat was due to parliamentary scrutiny. The cost of supplying the army (as opposed to paying soldiers' wages) had traditionally been a contentious issue for parliament and it was not until 1691 that parliament was willing to provide a single annual budget for supply. Prior to this a distinction had been made between ordinary (peace time) supply and

¹²⁵ Elliot to Handfield, Dublin Castle, 27th July 1806, PRO WO 63/88.

extraordinary supply (that required in wartime), a situation that had enabled an army to be maintained while having its activities curtailed.¹²⁶ During the eighteenth century, the Committee for Public Accounts ensured that expenditure remained under scrutiny, while detailed investigations were conducted for Reports of Military Enquiry.¹²⁷ Such scrutiny encouraged efficiency but potentially made finance, rather than capability, a priority.

While at a depot the primary role of Commissariat personnel was ensuring the distribution of supplies, monitoring stock levels and keeping accounts. To assist this task a number of special aids, including branding irons and stamps, were employed by storekeepers to identify Commissariat property. Various weights and measures were also utilised. A typical Commissariat store, for example, contained scales and weights for candles ranging from ten ounces to eight pounds and coal measures in quarter, half and whole bushels.¹²⁸ In addition to keeping records and monitoring stores commissaries were also authorised to sell certain items. Generally these items were damaged and judged too costly to repair but in some cases were simply no longer required. The nature of these sales, and the commissaries' role in them, is demonstrated in the clear instructions given to Commissary Healy of Cork concerning the selling of camping equipment in December 1805:

The list of camping equipment in the Cork store now being recorded you will please to advertise and sell by public auction the entire of that under the head unserviceable be particularly careful that nothing is disposed of but what truly comes under that description and that nothing is preserved under the head of serviceable adverting to repair the doing of which may almost amount to the original value of the article. Your particular attention will be required during the sale to this point – the unserviceable camp equipage in those stores are at present selling and to much advantage which I trust will be the case at Cork and that every publicity will be given which may tend to ensure it.¹²⁹

¹²⁶ Carter, 'The Revolution and the Constitution', p.47.

¹²⁷ *Eighth Report of Military Enquiry*, passim; Hoppit, *A Land of Liberty?*, p.147.

¹²⁸ *Letter from Barrak [sic] Master General to Barrak Masters* (Barracks Office, 1797), appendix.

¹²⁹ Punctuation as in original. P. Singer to Mr Healy, Commissary General's Office, 30th December 1805, PRO WO 63/40, Letters to Commissariat Officers 1803 – 1807.

Items sold did not merely include camping equipment but also ammunition pouches and bayonet holders.¹³⁰ That the latter items were sold to civilians is somewhat surprising, particularly in Ireland where fears of rebellion persisted. Other items that could be sold included unwanted mules and horses, along with the offal and hides of cattle slaughtered while on campaign.¹³¹ Items sold by commissaries included those required by soldiers to replace lost or damaged uniforms and equipment (although this was not strictly selling, as costs were deducted from soldiers' pay). The sums of money involved could be considerable and, following regulations introduced in 1810, cavalymen were expected to pay 7s 6½d for new water decks and 4s 2d for corn sacks. Of note is the fact that soldiers would only be expected to pay for repairs if the object was slightly damaged, at a rate 3s 9¼d and 2s 1d for decks and sacks respectively, giving some indication of the condition equipment had to be in for the army to consider it unserviceable.¹³²

The storage of items was not without difficulty as many required special consideration. A seemingly obvious example is meat, although extensive cold stores were not utilised as livestock would be slaughtered as required or meat preserved by salting, smoking or similar methods. The storage of fodder was surprisingly complex and caused difficulties: old straw, for example, could not be mixed with new but new and old hay could be mixed freely.¹³³ Such difficulties were often resolved through the use of various containers, barrels being a common type of storage vessel used for certain liquids, fodder, food and gunpowder. Several Commissariat stations – including Heligoland and New South Wales - employed coopers permanently, while

¹³⁰ Major B. Woodward to Major Ramsey, Royal Barracks, 17th September 1810, PRO WO 63/91, p.148.

¹³¹ Standing Orders, Order No. 17, NAM 6807/221, p.3.

¹³² General Order No. 188, PRO WO 63/91, p.49.

¹³³ Commissary General Handfield to Sir W. Berdett, Commissary General's Office, 31st August 1810, PRO WO 63/45, Letters to Commissariat Officers 1810 – 1811.

others – such as Malta and Sicily - employed them on a regular basis as required.¹³⁴ The storage of bread required more consideration than that of many other items, as there were optimal ways to store bread depending on how fresh it was.¹³⁵ As a result two vessels were employed specifically for this purpose – a wooden basket and a more robust version braced by iron. The former was intended for distribution to units in the field, while the more costly braced version was intended for use solely in Commissariat stores. There were strict rules concerning the proper use of each type and a misallocation of bread containers during 1811 resulted in a severe reprimand for a Commissary Dunne.¹³⁶

In addition to various tools and items required to administer maintenance, the Commissariat's personnel were responsible for considerable sums of money that were either held in pay chests or used to pay for goods and services. Such money was paid out using a system open to fraud, in which payments were made (as either cash, cheques or promissory notes) and subsequent expenses claimed by the commissary concerned. That fraud occurred was well known and Captain Thomas Browne of the 23rd Foot complained that commissaries could make considerable sums of money from illegal activity, a situation that damaged the reputation of the Commissariat irreparably in the eyes of contemporaries and historians alike.¹³⁷ Common examples of fraud included claiming the pay of deserted muleteers, buying bills at half face value from illiterate soldiers and fraudulently drawing expenses for cheques that were never issued or should have been destroyed.¹³⁸

¹³⁴ PRO WO 61/25, Commissariat Department 1816 – 17; NAM 7902/36, Account Book of Assistant Commissary General George Grellier.

¹³⁵ PRO WO 30/141, Proposals for Rendering the Body of the People Instrumental in the General Defence, saving their property, and distressing the enemy, by removing the means of subsistence, from threatened parts of the country. Published by authority, p.30.

¹³⁶ N. Malissis to Mr. Dunne, Commissary General's Office, 12th January 1810, PRO WO 63/45.

¹³⁷ Buckley (ed), *Journal of Captain Thomas Henry Browne*, p.203.

¹³⁸ Court Martial, Cartaxo, 30th January 1811, Extracts from General Orders, NAM 6807/221.

The existence of fraud in the Commissariat can be attributed to a variety of factors. Administration in the period is generally perceived to have been corrupt and the Commissariat frequently sought to recruit personnel from occupations that were particularly associated with the practice, including professionals such as lawyers and estate agents.¹³⁹ Despite these factors it is incorrect to dismiss corruption in the Commissariat as being solely a symptom of administration in the period, as such organizations have traditionally attracted corruption throughout the world. In 1835, for example, the logistical organization of the Mexican army in Texas was rendered ineffective by corruption, despite the fact that Mexico exhibited few characteristics that we would associate with Britain at the end of eighteenth century.¹⁴⁰

Pressure to limit fraud within the Commissariat appears to have originated internally as much as from pressure from parliament, and it was clearly in the organization's interests to optimise its financial resources by reducing fraud. The Commissariat's method of achieving this, through introducing new procedures, was in some respects typical of a trend towards increased regulation in the period. Regulation was not, however, the traditional approach to combating corruption. In the Excise, for example, corruption in the 1780s had been controlled through the introduction of new personnel to supervise tax collectors, thereby adding a new tier of administration rather than extra regulation.¹⁴¹ Thus, the Commissariat was utilising its own approach to resolving problems and not necessarily following trends in administrative practice. Indeed, the Commissariat was prevented from introducing a new tier of administration due to restrictions on manpower, either though none being available or unwillingness on the part of the state to fund it.

¹³⁹ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, pp.72-73, 211; G.E. Mingey, 'The Eighteenth Century Land Steward', in E.C. Jones and G.E. Mingay (eds.), *Land, Labour and Population in the Industrial Revolution* (London, Edward Arnold, 1987), p.8.

¹⁴⁰ A.A. Nofi, *The Alamo and the Texas War of Independence* (New York, Da Capo, 1994), p.195.

¹⁴¹ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, pp.102-110.

The regulations introduced by the Commissariat to limit corruption (which primarily took the form of fraud) were mainly directed at those responsible for stores. Instructions were issued in July 1812, intended to prevent the ‘losses which have in some instances been occasioned to the department, in consequence of the store keepers on foreign stations obtaining more monies on account of the ordnance military corps than the services required’.¹⁴² Measures included requirements for receipts, a second signature on bills and monthly reports. Shortfalls in the delivery of supplies to units, whether due to shortages in the depot or their not being required, were to be regularly reported to prevent them being sold on illegally. Additional instructions, issued in July 1815, prevented commissaries claiming funds on behalf of other departments, such as the artillery and engineers.¹⁴³ Equipment could only be removed from stores at the request of authorised personnel and a commissary in Ireland was reminded of the rules in 1811 following the removal of items by the Royal Wagon Train: ‘the Commissary General directs that you should be appraised that so far from granting such articles on the requisition of the officer in command at your station you ought not to grant them at all without special permission from headquarters’.¹⁴⁴ Thus, rank alone was not sufficient to authorise the removal of stores. The reforms introduced in the late war period reveal that, prior to this period, great trust was placed in the integrity of individual personnel.

To reduce fraud further Commissariat accounts were carefully controlled and administered, with the result that the organization became increasingly bureaucratic. There were, for example, 23 separate articles, which required seven different forms

¹⁴² PRO WO 55/635, Miscellaneous Orders to Commissariat.

¹⁴³ June 1808, PRO T1/1061, Instructions to His Majesty’s Deputy Commissary of Accounts; Standing Orders, Order No. 19, NAM 6807/221, p4; Circular of July 1815 Issued to all Commissaries, PRO WO 55/635, Miscellaneous Orders to Commissariat.

¹⁴⁴ H. Webb to J. Jones, Commissary General’s Office, 23rd February 1811, PRO WO 63/45.

that governed expenditure on forage for cavalry units in Ireland.¹⁴⁵ Such bureaucracy was not without difficulties and at times it appears completing paperwork threatened to surpass logistics as the primary aim of the organization. This was demonstrated in 1811 when Commissary Hagan faced disciplinary action for incorrectly listing shirts after shoes in a list of expenses, the reprimand being more severe than that received by a fellow commissary known to have ‘misplaced’ militia stores (including ordnance) but who was not guilty of filling out forms incorrectly.¹⁴⁶ The most significant consequence of increasing bureaucracy was its impact on the structure of the Commissariat itself. The organization was effectively split into two branches, designated stores and accounts, with the latter becoming so large that it accounted for half of Commissariat personnel employed in garrisons such as that of Gibraltar in December 1816.¹⁴⁷ Thus the organization had evolved administratively, an evolution that went hand-in-hand with increased professionalism created by the need for skilled accountants and administrators.

There was a trend in the period towards the gathering of precise information, whether it was statistical, tabular or mathematical.¹⁴⁸ This was apparent in Commissariat practices and perhaps the most important elements in its bureaucracy were the ledgers and account books. The information contained within them ultimately formed the basis of returns utilised by the Commissariat to maintain the army, by generals to formulate strategy, by government to formulate policy and by parliamentary and Privy Council enquiries to draw conclusions on the efficiency of the armed forces. Commissariat accountants were issued four ledgers and instructed to

¹⁴⁵ ‘Rules and Regulations Under Which the Foraging of the Horses of the Cavalry in Ireland is to be Conducted’, PRO WO 63/91.

¹⁴⁶ Commissary General to Mr Hagan, Cork, 17th April 1811, PRO WO 63/46, letters to Commissariat Officers 1811-1812.

¹⁴⁷ See below p.58.

¹⁴⁸ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.222.

carry them at all times, 'on every march and change of station'.¹⁴⁹ To aid efficiency each ledger was colour coded according to its intended use – brown for income and expenditures, green for provisions, blue for transfers of stores and red for provisions issued to troops. Returns were to reach the Commissary General by a given day of each month or week:

Date in Month	
1	Pay estimates
11	Abstract of bills to the Portuguese
15	Costs of hired vessels
24	Beginning of monthly cash and store accounts for month
25	Return of provisions supplied to regiments
	Abstract of bills to the Spanish
	Returns of forage
	Reports of shortfalls in delivery of supplies

Figure 4: Schedule for Commissariat reports and returns in Spain.¹⁵⁰

Weekly returns were normally expected to have arrived by Monday morning (or in some cases, Thursday). Serviceable and unserviceable items were only distinguished in the monthly, rather than weekly, returns.¹⁵¹ Practices such as these failed to eradicate fraud completely, although the regular monitoring of accounts ensured that perpetrators were more likely to be apprehended and that damage done by inefficient administrators limited.

Fraud was not the only problem faced by the Commissariat. Many of its personnel were guilty of inefficiency rather than corruption and practices intended to detect fraud also served to highlight irregularities caused by errors on the part of commissaries. During the winter of 1810, for example, it was noted that although no deceit was involved certain regiments were still waiting to pay for uniforms six months after being issued them.¹⁵² Occasionally, commissaries were guilty of neither

¹⁴⁹ Cartaxo, 16th January 1811, from Extracts of General Orders, NAM 6807/221, p.1.

¹⁵⁰ Detailed Instructions to Commissariat Accountants, Cash Accounts, NAM 6807/221, Books of Commissary General N. Jackson, c1814, *passim*.

¹⁵¹ 4th Article of the 9th Section of General Instructions to Resident Store Keepers, PRO WO 63/45.

¹⁵² 16th January 1811, Extracts from General Orders, NAM 6807/221, p.1.

fraud nor error but outright incompetence. Personnel found guilty of this could be dismissed, although a written warning or reprimand was more common and was frequently sufficient to resolve the situation. A typical example of a warning was that issued to Commissary O. Timms in March 1806. The following extract reflects the way in which such matters were approached, the practices that could cause disciplinary action and what constituted ‘incompetence’:

complaints having been made by Mr Heathy, which also he has been under the necessity of repeating of the extreme inconvenience to which he is constantly subjected by the irregular transmissal [sic] and altogether inadmissible form in which your vouchers are made up, I beg in the first instance to put you on your guard against a repetition of errors which they can (thus persisted in) be accounted for on the ground of incompetence for the situation of a public accountant... must end if the matter is brought before the Commissary General as it quickly must – in the summary measure of removing you from your present station.¹⁵³

Of particular note in the above extract is the structure of the disciplinary process: a complaint was made by a fellow commissary, which was handled by the office of the Commissary General and then only passed to the Commissary General himself if the situation remained unresolved. Furthermore, the complaint only arose after Timms persistently failed to complete and return paperwork satisfactorily, indicating that the Commissariat tolerated a degree of incompetence amongst its personnel. Finally, it must be noted that the warning worked as Timms evidently continued in his post. Just as advances in administration enabled efficient administrators to rise to prominence, so too did they allow less competent individuals to remain in post.¹⁵⁴

As noted previously, not all cases of inefficiency could be attributed to the incompetence described above. Genuine mistakes were made, which was inevitable when the sheer scale of the task facing the organization is considered: the

¹⁵³ Punctuation as in original. W. Webb to O. Timms, Commissary General’s Office, 25th March 1806, PRO WO 63/40.

¹⁵⁴ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.77.

Commissariat was a global organization. Our perception of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars is often Eurocentric, shaped by the writings of historians such as John Keegan, David Chandler and Charles Esdaile, all of whom emphasise conflict in the European theatre. Thus, there is a tendency to overlook the extent of Britain's imperial commitments in the period. Even when these are considered they usually involve the expeditions sent against French colonies or rebellious Indian princes. For the Commissariat, the reality was quite different to this Eurocentric perception and the organization found itself attempting to supply garrisons dispersed across the empire and beyond, which often included remote and militarily quiet regions of Africa or Asia, proving Daniel Baugh's assertion that despite their economic advantages colonies could be a strategic burden.¹⁵⁵ Supplying the more isolated outposts could be amongst the most difficult tasks faced by the Commissariat and the situation was such that Charles Greenwood estimated it could take as long as two years for items arriving in a colony to reach the most distant outposts. The isolation of certain garrisons also hampered communications, which disrupted the normal pattern of Commissariat activities and therefore disrupted the delivery and monitoring of stores. Greenwood wrote of regiments in foreign stations that they 'may be, and frequently, are so divided and dispersed as to make it extremely difficult to ascertain the quantity of clothing delivered [or required]'.¹⁵⁶

The numbers of items to be supplied posed further problems for the Commissariat, the scale of the task being demonstrated by the request of the Duke of Wellington in 1811 for the delivery of 150,000 pairs of shoes to the River Tagus by

¹⁵⁵ Baugh, 'The Maritime State', p.186. Historians including Jeremy Black have argued the converse: that colonial expansion contributed to success in warfare. Such views, however, are often based solely on the economic contribution of colonies, with little reference to their strategic consequences. Black, *Sea Borne Empire*, p.170.

¹⁵⁶ C. Greenwood to Lieutenant-Colonel Torrens, Craig's Court, 30th March 1811, PRO WO 377/2, Various Papers, 1809 upon the System of Clothing and Off Reckonings for the Army.

sea.¹⁵⁷ Added to the burden of the Commissariat in each locality was the requirement to procure supplies for forces in other regions. Ireland, for example, was to become a significant source of food and clothing for the Peninsula army.¹⁵⁸ Sicily fulfilled a similar role, and is described by Piers Mackesy as being ‘the granary’ for the large British military presence in the central Mediterranean.¹⁵⁹

Corruption, incompetence and the scale of its task were not the only factors that served to undermine the effectiveness of the Commissariat and efforts to increase the organization’s efficiency. As is often the case in any situation involving military organizations there was competition for resources and like the Royal Wagon Train, the Commissariat found itself in competition with the artillery for draught animals.¹⁶⁰ In 1811, for example, it was proposed that the Royal Artillery acquire mules from the Commissariat to transport mobile forges.¹⁶¹ In addition there was a myriad of other difficulties with which the Commissariat had to contend. These included clashes of jurisdiction with other organizations and the practice of employing civilians in overseas postings. The latter caused difficulties due to the requirement that payments be made in their local currency: in Sicily, for example, the pay chest included pounds sterling, Spanish dollars and Sicilian dollars.¹⁶² The need to make payments in foreign currency was one of the greatest challenges faced by an army due to the need not only to acquire but also exchange specie.¹⁶³

Organizations upon which the Commissariat relied made errors that compounded its own inefficiency. The transfer of horses required record keeping by both the receiving and transferring organization, and it was frequently the case that the

¹⁵⁷ Wellington to Liverpool, Cartaxo, 31st March 1811, PRO WO 1/248, War Department in Letters: Wellington, January to March 1811.

¹⁵⁸ Treasury Minute, 8th January 1811, PRO WO 63/91, p.256.

¹⁵⁹ P. Mackesy, *The War in the Mediterranean*, pp.14-15.

¹⁶⁰ See below pp.156-157.

¹⁶¹ PRO WO 37/10/26, Papers Relating to Provision of Portable Forges, 1810-12, paragraph 17,

¹⁶² Statement of Money Remaining in the Military Chest, 1st January 1814, NAM 7902/36/

¹⁶³ Corvisier, *Armies and Societies*, p.67.

parent formation rather than the Commissariat made mistakes. Horses were identified by name, distinguishing marks and a code (consisting of a letter and number) but in July 1806, for example, two horses transferred from the Dragoon Guards were wrongly reported as being E31 and F77 by the regiment. The numbers should have actually been G31 and G77, and for a time it appeared that the correct horses were not present.¹⁶⁴ This was only a minor administrative error as the correct number of animals was received, although this was not always the case. In April 1810, for example, fifteen horses were supposed to be transferred from the 2nd German Heavy Dragoons, but thirty-six were delivered.¹⁶⁵

Despite a growing dependency on, not to mention an apparent obsession with, data collection and related paperwork in the administrative organizations during the period, bureaucracy alone could not guarantee the availability of supplies. Improvements in administrative efficiency, measures to reduce fraud in the Commissariat and even the economic strength of the British state were futile if the required goods could not be procured. Frequently the efforts of the Commissariat were hindered, if not thwarted, by the simple fact that the supplies it required did not exist. During the Peninsular War providing grain proved to be particularly problematic due to the scarcity of that commodity in the theatre. Due to the Continental System this could only be rectified by importing great quantities directly from the United States, Canada and Brazil.¹⁶⁶

Of the difficulties encountered regarding the supply of grain to the Peninsular army Arthur Wellesley noted that:

in the present season of the year [summer] you cannot depend upon the country for bread. Portugal never fed itself during more than seven months out of twelve, the common consumption of the country is Indian corn; and the

¹⁶⁴ Return of the Horses of 7th Dragoon Guard to be Transferred to the Commissariat in Half Yearly Inspection in July 1806, Major General Affleck, 1st August 1806, PRO WO 63/88.

¹⁶⁵ Adjutant General's Office to Commissary General, Dublin, 9th April 1810, PRO WO 63/91, p.63.

¹⁶⁶ Hall, *Wellington's Navy*, p.6; Mackesy, *The War in the Mediterranean*, p.10.

little wheat there is in the country cannot be ground at this season of the year as the mills are generally turned by water and there is now no water in the mill ponds.¹⁶⁷

Wellesley's comments not only highlight the difficulties of procuring sufficient supplies but also the difficulties that could be encountered when processing them (in this case, milling). Added to these problems was the difficulty of transporting the required items, whether in raw (such as harvested crops) or refined (such as flour) forms. The Commissariat was hampered in this activity by the inefficient tasking and utilisation of the wheeled conveyances operated by the army. Not only were these vehicles split between various organizations, including the Royal Wagon Train and Commissariat, there were also pools of vehicles held by individual regiments.¹⁶⁸ As a result the only means through which a deficiency of transport could be rectified was by utilising assets otherwise allotted to other duties, thus Commissariat carts that could have been moving supplies were frequently used to move wounded personnel between hospitals (the situation could of course be reversed, with serious consequences for the medical services).¹⁶⁹ Significantly, even if these duties were conducted on return journeys, that is to say after carts had delivered supplies and were empty en route to the depot, their journey was still slowed.

Even if available, many of the carts operated by the Commissariat were often unsuited to the task, and a report on wagons was sceptical about their use over the rough terrain encountered in Spain and Portugal, a region noted for its poor roads. In Spain there existed Royal Roads, constructed using the latest building techniques and 30 to 60 feet wide but these were few in number, linked only major cities and were badly maintained. The most common types of roads were known as caminos and

¹⁶⁷ Wellesley to Burrard, Aeyria, 11th August 1808, PRO WO 1/228, p.191.

¹⁶⁸ See below pp.133-134.

¹⁶⁹ Thomar, 8th March 1811, Extracts from General Orders, NAM 6807/221, p.8.

carrils, both types being essentially dirt tracks, although the latter had two rows of paving stones that, only in theory, eased the passage of wheeled vehicles.¹⁷⁰ As a result travel could be treacherous and it was noted that ‘accidents are continuously occurring... carts seldom make a march without the occurrence of such accidents... no wheeled carriage can, with any degree of security, travel over mountains’.¹⁷¹ Significantly, wagons were easily hindered by bad weather, a shortcoming that was apparent during the winter of 1810 – 1811, when parts of the United Kingdom experienced heavy snowfalls that closed many roads and caused chaos for logistical organizations such as the Commissariat. Despite the mobilisation of the nation’s resources, nature could not be overcome.

In a letter to Commissary James Gilchrist, who was located in a badly affected area, the Commissary General in Ireland stated ‘I presume the roads are so much injured from the late fall of snow, that you will have suspended drawing oats from [your usual source] or any other distant quarter’.¹⁷² Of note is the fact that no attempt was made by the Commissary General to ascertain the situation regarding roads as it was assumed they were impassable to wagons. Interestingly, it appears that in such circumstances it was not common practice for Commissariat personnel to determine which roads, if any, were passable. This was demonstrated in another letter from the Commissary General’s office, this time to Commissary Colvill, who was instructed that:

as the very heavy fall of snow may have rendered the roads in a certain degree impassable... the Commissary General wishes you would carefully ascertain and report on the state of the road leading from Fermoy to Clonell [sic] and Cork, it would not be inadvisable also to inquire as to the other... roads branching from your station.¹⁷³

¹⁷⁰ Hall, *Wellington’s Navy*, p.4.

¹⁷¹ PRO WO 37/10/26, Paragraphs 7 and 9.

¹⁷² Charles Handfield to James Gilchrist, Commissary General’s Office, 4th February 1811, PRO WO 63/45.

¹⁷³ P. Singer to R. Colvill [sic], Commissary General’s Office, 31st January 1811, PRO WO 63/88.

That it was not standard practice for commissaries to inspect roads automatically in such circumstances is somewhat surprising when it is considered that the organization relied on the movement of wagons by road to undertake its duties. In part this could be explained by the structure of the British army, specifically that the movement of troops was the responsibility of the Quartermaster General, although this applied mainly at a strategic level and responsibility inevitably devolved to local officers.¹⁷⁴ Even if local roads were found to be open, however, there was then the problem of snow in other areas forcing significant detours. The drivers of one group of wagons were instructed that ‘the weather and state of the roads must govern the departure of the detachment; and it will march through Limerick (the crossroads at Cashel being reported impassable) and Birr, where fresh horses will be supplied’.¹⁷⁵

The snowfalls experienced in the United Kingdom that winter were unusually heavy, but, while accompanying a wagon train to Almeida during the winter of 1812, Conductor of Stores W. Morris recorded in his diary the difficulties that could be encountered when moving convoys even in relatively good weather:

Wednesday 18 November 1812

We were very unfortunate this day with our mules falling down particularly in passing over the water... some of them fell with our boxes but nothing of very serious consequence... the road [to Almeida] was wholly lined with sick and convalescing troops – marching for different villages in the neighbourhood of Almeida.

Friday 20 November 1812

We could scarcely make any way in consequence of the road being crowded with bullock cars conveying the sick and wounded baggage.

Added to Morris’ problems was that on Sunday 22 November the column did not move at all because it was still awaiting orders concerning the route that it was to

¹⁷⁴ Park and Nafziger, *The British Military*, p6; see also Macleod to Crew, Woolwich, 17th June 1807, PRO WO 55/1314..

¹⁷⁵ Brackets in original. N. Malasses to Robert Colvill [sic], Commissary General’s Office, 4th February 1811, PRO WO 63/45.

take.¹⁷⁶ This is significant as it demonstrates that the routes of supply columns were not planned in advance. As highlighted by Morris, however, this could prove detrimental and delay the delivery of supplies. In contrast the French army operated with sometimes-strict traffic regulations, with certain bridges open to only specific traffic, such as troops, wounded or supplies.¹⁷⁷

Another factor that hindered the activities of the Commissariat was the allocation of its personnel, which could at times appear to be chaotic. This was particularly apparent in 1808 when elements of the army were deployed for action in Spain, Portugal and Gibraltar. Lieutenant-General Sir David Baird, for example, was instructed to lead to the Peninsula a sizeable contingent of reinforcements that consisted of seven infantry battalions and two companies of artillery. The force was to travel from Cork to Falmouth but was delayed for three weeks by the late arrival of transport vessels. Eventually arriving in Falmouth and already several weeks late, Baird discovered that several key personnel were not awaiting his arrival. This was reported to the War Office, the general informing Castlereagh that 'I think it necessary to appraise your Lordship also that I have not as yet heard of any paymaster or commissary being appointed to this army'.¹⁷⁸ Thus, even after a three-week delay, the commissary (and paymaster) had not arrived. Two days later there was some confusion when an officer from the Commissariat reported to the general, who promptly informed the War Office that he would take matters into his own hands if the situation was not resolved soon:

I beg leave to state that an assistant Commissary of accounts, I. Dickson Esq. – has just reported to me his arrival from Portsmouth, but does not appear to know whether he should consider himself part of the army, as he has received no instructions upon the subject. I understand some under Commissaries are

¹⁷⁶ NAM 7508/24, Notebook of W. Morris, Conductor of Stores, 1812.

¹⁷⁷ Crevelde, *Supplying War*, p.53.

¹⁷⁸ Lieutenant-General Baird, to Castlereagh, Falmouth, 1st October 1808, PRO WO 1/236, War Department in Letters: Sir John Moore and General Baird, September 1808 to January 1809, p.337.

also here in similar circumstances – I intend taking the whole with me, unless I should receive any particular instructions respecting them.¹⁷⁹

The force left Falmouth on 9 October, over a month late, but with its full complement of Commissariat personnel. That the force embarked late was bad enough, but that a general had been forced to consider acting on his own accord to ensure a commissary sailed with him says much about the system through which commissaries were assigned to individual forces. The concern expressed by Baird at the absence of a commissary is also significant, as it reflects the importance attached to the Commissariat, although much more may perhaps be inferred by the placing of the missing paymaster before the commissary in his letter of 1st October. More significant is how the episode highlights that, despite improvements in administration, the system struggled to co-ordinate the various departments and organizations that had been created, even for a small force such as that commanded by Baird.¹⁸⁰

Despite its obvious importance to the operational capability of the army, the Commissariat took second place to the manpower requirements of the front line formations. This was inevitable when it is considered that a fully manned Commissariat would have been of no value to an under-strength army (although that neither the army nor the Commissariat were ever at full strength is evidence of the state's inability to sustain the army). Some manpower could be made available through centralising depots but, while the centralisation of depots in a city such as Dublin was feasible, the policy could not be implemented across an organization operating in war zones or far-flung colonial outposts.¹⁸¹ This was one of the features of the Commissariat that set it apart from other supporting organizations, as its

¹⁷⁹ Lieutenant-General Baird, to Castlereagh, Falmouth, 3rd October September 1808, PRO WO 1/236, p.340.

¹⁸⁰ Baird's force would face further delays due to lack of shipping and chaotic Spanish organisation before disembarking in Galicia. Hall, *Wellington's Navy*, p.66.

¹⁸¹ See W. Elliot to Handfield, Dublin Castle, 27th July 1806, PRO WO 63/88.

deployment was truly global; other organizations deployed personnel overseas but none to the extent of the Commissariat.¹⁸² Of the organizations that comprised the British army only the fighting arms were as widely dispersed as the Commissariat. The global deployment of Commissariat personnel in December 1816 is illustrated in figure 5. The postings cited in the table are based on the definitions used in Commissariat documents and, although seemingly straightforward, they require some explanation. Such names were not universal in the army, different departments and organizations using various names to describe the same geographical area. Interestingly, it seems that there existed standardised forms for submitting returns of strength, but not standard terminology for describing Britain's colonial possessions.

Region	Number	Region	Number
Africa		Europe	
Cape Colony	30	France	150
Mauritius	24	Gibraltar	21
Africa	15	Mediterranean	97
Total	69	Portugal	79
Caribbean		UK	52
Bahamas	5	Heligoland	3
Bermuda	12	Total	402
Honduras	2	North America	
West Indies	10	Canada	137
Windward &		Newfoundland	16
Leeward Is.	98	Nova Scotia	46
Total	127	Total	199
		Australia (New S. Wales)	44

Figure 5: The Global Deployment of the Commissariat, December 1816.¹⁸³

In the above table the term Mediterranean refers to garrisons in Sicily, Malta, Corfu and the Ionian Islands. 'Africa' is a reference to the various colonies scattered across this continent, sometimes referred to as West Africa or Gorre in general army returns.¹⁸⁴ Of note is the absence of Commissariat personnel in regions such as the

¹⁸² See chapter 4 and chapter 5.

¹⁸³ PRO WO 61/25.

¹⁸⁴ See PRO WO 17/2814, Monthly Returns of the Army at Home and Abroad.

Indian subcontinent, a region that was the responsibility of the Honourable East India Company.

Figure 5 reveals little about the roles of personnel and in some respects the data in the original source is fragmentary. This is especially so in regard to the respective branches of the Commissariat in which individuals were employed. Some regions were defined as having distinct stores and accounts departments (such as Canada) while others did not (such as Africa) or were listed as having stores only (such as Heligoland). Figure 6 illustrates how personnel were divided between stores and accounts in the relevant countries or regions:

Posting	Stores	Accounts	% Employed in Accounts	
Canada	125	12	8.7%	
Cape Good Hope	26	4	13.3%	
Gibraltar	11	10	47.6%	
Mauritius	18	6	25%	
Mediterranean	85	12	12.4%	
Nova Scotia	41	5	10.9%	
Portugal	60	19	24.1%	

Figure 6: Commissariat stores and accounts departments, December 1816.¹⁸⁵

Where the two branches of stores and accounts were listed separately, it is apparent that the latter could account for 30% of the personnel.

Administration was not solely the domain of the accounts branch, and stores employed a considerable number of administrators. Of the 125 personnel employed in stores in Canada, fifty-three were clerks, which, along with the two office runners, amounted to approximately 42% of the branch's manpower. In Britain the manpower of the Commissariat at this point appears to have been almost entirely administrative and among its fifty-two personnel there were four chief clerks, thirty-eight clerks, three messengers and one office keeper. Unusually on the strength in Britain there were also five domestic staff consisting of two housekeepers and three housemaids.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁵ PRO WO 61/25, Commissariat Department 1816 – 17.

¹⁸⁶ PRO WO 61/25.

The system utilised to support the Commissariat was cumbersome but it was in some respects efficient and in particular it appears that its administrative apparatus would have been able to cope with a significantly expanded organization without itself expanding. Returns and finances were handled efficiently and there were few signs of strain in an administrative system co-ordinating a globally deployed organization, evidence that Commissariat administration could have shouldered an additional burden with the resources that already existed.

There was no typical structure of a Commissariat station and there was much variation due to individual circumstances and the nature of certain postings. Personnel were employed to fulfil a wide range of tasks depending on local requirements, while it is apparent that there was also some variation in which the role of personnel was recorded. In Bermuda and Malta, for example, boatmen were employed, the Commissariat in New South Wales was unusual in having a bookbinder on its strength, Nova Scotia was the only station to record the specific roles of its issuers (either fuel or food) and in 1816 Mauritius was the sole location in which a store serjeant (sic.) was present.¹⁸⁷ Figure 7 is based on a single and relatively small Commissariat station (in this case Calais) in February 1816. Of note is its very conventional structure, with only storekeepers and clerks employed, and neither labourers nor specialists, such as coopers and boatmen.

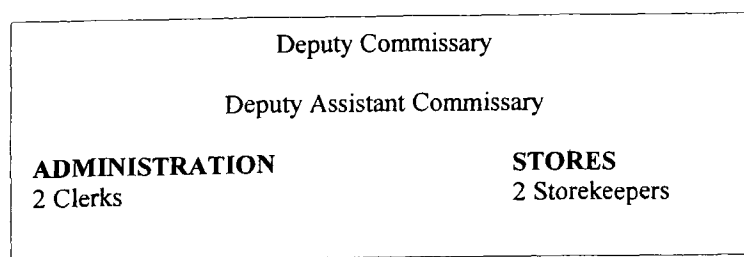


Figure 7: Personnel of the Commissariat serving in Calais, February 1816.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁷ PRO WO 61/25.

¹⁸⁸ Commissary General J. Drummond to Quarter Master General Murray, Paris, 1st February 1816, PRO WO 28/14, Letters from Quarter Master General's Department, 1816 January to June.

During 1816 the senior Commissariat officer in France (with 150 personnel), Portugal (with 79) and Canada (with 137) was a Commissary General. Although larger than the department in Portugal, that in the Windward and Leeward Islands, along with the Mediterranean, were split between several locations and in consequence three Assistant Commissaries General in each region shared command. In Honduras the senior Commissariat officer was only a temporary clerk, the affairs of the department being overseen by a committee that was collectively granted the rank of Deputy Assistant Commissary General, demonstrating that the Commissariat was on occasion able to modify its practices to accommodate certain local situations.¹⁸⁹

As the Napoleonic Wars progressed the Commissariat frequently found itself hamstrung by global deployments and the need to expand despite already having insufficient manpower. As a result the organization employed a large number of foreigners, particularly locals in Italy, Spain and Portugal. The contribution of foreign personnel to the British armed forces as mercenaries has long been recognised, E.A. Wrigley citing them as a tangible way in which the financial strength of a state could be applied to its army.¹⁹⁰ By the time of the Napoleonic Wars the use of true mercenaries in the British army had declined and foreign troops tended to be either exiles from occupied countries, prisoners of war, or motivated by ideology or patriotism rather than financial gain, examples being the forces of the Duke of Brunswick and the King's German Legion.¹⁹¹ More significant to the British army in this period were the foreigners employed in organizations to support the army, of which the Commissariat was perhaps the largest employer.

¹⁸⁹ PRO WO 61/25.

¹⁹⁰ Wrigley, 'Society and the economy in the eighteenth century', p.73. The Royal Navy also used a considerable number of foreigners and it is estimated that in 1812, 9% of trained seamen serving in the royal Navy were not of British origin. Duffy, 'British Naval Power', p.9.

¹⁹¹ Partridge and Oliver, *The British Army and Her Allies*, pp.86-88.

The Commissariat's reliance on foreign personnel in certain stations was reflected in the garrison of Sicily in 1813, the returns for which note that the personnel employed by the organisation consisted of eight Italians, five Sicilians, four English (with no reference to Scots, Irish or Welsh) and one Swiss.¹⁹² The differing nationalities present were concentrated in certain occupations and, significantly, Englishmen did not hold all of the senior positions. This says much about the structure of the Commissariat overseas, as British personnel would be expected to dominate by rank, if not numerically. This was the case in the Sicilian garrison itself, which was supported by British troops and advisors. Those listed as English were concentrated in the bakery, occupying three of the four positions there: they were the master baker John Henderson and the two head bakers Robert Witlaw [sic] and Thomas Richardson, while the overseer of bakery was a Swiss named François Solincy. The remaining Englishman, John Mitchel, was the senior Commissariat administrator in Sicily and held the post of clerk. Mitchel's office also consisted of five under clerks, all of whom were listed as Italians: Dominico Agedo, Parlo Averia, Antonio Grosso, Fransico Scullina, Giuseppe Bruno. Of the remaining posts, Italians also occupied those of storekeeper and under storekeeper, these being held by Pasquale de Gaelano and Puolo Chilleme respectively, while the Sicilian Andrea Caravello oversaw the officers' mess. All three posts were positions of responsibility and required trustworthy individuals as they involved the handling of money and management of stores. Finally the labourers and craftsmen were all Sicilian. These were the coopers Alberto Castelli and Antonio Caiopardo, along with Gioachine Crisalli and Antonio Pioro, both of whom were labourers. It is apparent that other than Andrea Caravello in the officers' mess, Sicilians held few positions of trust.

¹⁹² Monthly returns of those employed in the Commissariat Department under the control of Assistant Commissary General Grellier at Milazzo, 25th October 1813 to 24th November 1813, NAM 7902/36.

The example of the Sicilian garrison demonstrates that personnel from various nations occupied the ranks of the Commissariat and overseas it could be a cosmopolitan organization. If the financial power of the state did provide the British army an advantage by giving it a capability to employ foreigners it was these personnel, rather than mercenaries, that proved most crucial to the war effort. The role of foreign personnel in the Commissariat is highlighted by the fact that, due to the publication of his memoirs, the German A.L.F. Schauman is arguably the most famous commissary of the period.¹⁹³ As a serving officer, however, Schauman was not a typical example of the majority of foreigners employed by the Commissariat. More common were the local civilians employed under contract to support the army overseas, the most significant group of such persons being the Spanish and Portuguese muleteers who transported supplies in the Peninsula.

Initially, little thought was given to the utilisation of drivers indigenous to the nation in which the army was operating, despite the fact that such a policy had proved successful for Napoleon during his campaign of 1805.¹⁹⁴ It was believed that the vehicles and personnel of the Royal Wagon Train, in conjunction with the logistical organizations of allied armies, would be sufficient to meet the logistical needs of the army.¹⁹⁵ This was reflected in the orders issued when the army first arrived in the Peninsula, where the only mention of the region's indigenous transport capability is in relation to the purchase of mules, horses and oxen.¹⁹⁶ John Brewer writes that a major advantage provided by the fiscal-military state was one of the most advanced transport infrastructures of the era.¹⁹⁷ This infrastructure, however, terminated at Britain's borders and was of little relevance to the army operating overseas. The initial

¹⁹³ See A. L. F. Schauman, *On the Road with Wellington* (London, William Heinemann, 1924).

¹⁹⁴ Schechter and Sander, *Delivering the Goods*, p.38.

¹⁹⁵ See chapter 4.

¹⁹⁶ To Lieutenant-General Sir John Moore, Downing Street, 26th September 1808, PRO WO 1/236, p.9.

¹⁹⁷ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.183.

experiences of the army soon proved that its existing transport capability was inadequate and in a letter dated 11 August 1808, Arthur Wellesley informed General Burrard that 'you must therefore depend on the carriage of the country drawn by bullocks... each of these [animals] will carry about 600lbs and travel in a day about 12 miles'.¹⁹⁸

It was fitting that a significant number of these locally procured oxen found themselves drawing local carts. These carts did not benefit from the advances made in transport technology in Britain and were poorly produced using square axles. This gave them a distinctive sound which Grenville-Eliot of the Royal Artillery, writing to his wife in August 1808, described as a 'voice that could be heard a mile off'.¹⁹⁹ Those who drove these carts were Portuguese and Spanish muleteers, individuals who performed a vital role but who have been virtually written out of the history of the British army. At no point in the works of P.L. Isemonger or I. Fletcher, which examine the personnel of the British army, are the muleteers mentioned.²⁰⁰ They have fallen victim to both the general apathy shown by historians towards the logistical elements of the army and the unwillingness to acknowledge the contribution of the Spanish and Portuguese to the successful outcome of the Peninsula War, an attitude criticised in the works of Charles Esdaile.²⁰¹ As Christopher Hall states, their existence was fortunate for the Peninsula army as it is likely that without them the British transport system would not have been able to achieve the success that it did.²⁰²

¹⁹⁸ Wellesley to Burrard, Aeyria, 11th August 1808, PRO WO 1/228, p.191.

¹⁹⁹ Grenville Eliot to Wife, Llavos, 7th August 1808, NAM 5903/127/6, letters of William Grenville Eliot, R.A.

²⁰⁰ See P. L. Isemonger, *Wellington's War: A Living History* (Stroud, Sutton, 1998); I. Fletcher, *Wellington's Regiments* (Staplehurst, Spellmont, 1994).

²⁰¹ C. Esdaile, 'The Peninsular War: a Review of Recent Literature', in *The Historian*, No.6, (Winter 1999), pp.9-13; Esdaile, *The Peninsular War*, passim.

²⁰² Hall, *Wellington's Navy*, pp.130-131.

The existence of the muleteers rests uneasily with John Brewer's model of the fiscal-military state, discussions about which tend to be Anglocentric.²⁰³ The emphasis of historians has, to date, been on the domestic implications of the fiscal-military state, particularly in the fields of politics and economics, rather than a broader consideration of its impact on the army and the reach of the fiscal-military state overseas. This has led to a somewhat over-optimistic appraisal of the situation regarding logistics, it being assumed that as the fiscal-military state successfully encouraged the development of an efficient domestic transport infrastructure a similar situation also existed in the army. Improvements to the road and canal network in Britain, however, were in many respects irrelevant to the army serving in Spain and Portugal. The cornerstone of the fiscal-military state was control, whether it was of state apparatus or resources, but this control was effectively limited to geographical boundaries (Britain's borders and certain parts of the Empire) and was seriously weakened beyond them.²⁰⁴ Despite the backing of the British Empire and state, military strategy could start to fall apart due to the tendency of Portuguese drivers to take siestas at awkward times, due to the use of out dated wagons or because narrow Spanish roads were easily congested.

Spanish and Portuguese muleteers could be as important to the success of the British army in the field as the soldiers themselves and, by implication, the success of the state in supporting the army. The initial impression of the muleteers was often less than favourable and they soon gained a reputation for laziness and desertion. After only a few weeks of employing these individuals Arthur Wellesley informed General Burrard that 'I don't believe any power you exert over them... would induce the

²⁰³ See for example Wrigley, 'Society and the economy', pp.72-95; Innes, 'The Domestic Face of the Fiscal-Military State', pp.96-127.

²⁰⁴ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.251.

owners of the carts to go from their horses a greater distance, than to the nearest place you could get carts to relieve them'.²⁰⁵

Despite the obvious failings of the muleteers many contemporaries sympathised with their plight. W. Morris, leading a wagon train through Spain in November 1812, regarded them as equals and the officers of Morris' unit shared accommodation with them while in the field.²⁰⁶ Time was also spent attending to the needs of the muleteers and concerning preparations for a march Morris wrote: 'this morning was all bustle and confusion. In looking after the stores [and] muleteers we had no time to get any refreshment ourselves'.²⁰⁷ At times even Arthur Wellesley sympathised with the difficulties faced by the muleteers, and once tempered his criticism of them by explaining that they were exhausted after having 'made an exertion against the enemy by the assistance which they have given to me'.²⁰⁸ Perhaps most significant was the attitude of the army to the muleteers, as they were allowed relative autonomy and normal military protocols relating to rank were followed. They were not second-class personnel and a muleteer occupied the same position in the military hierarchy as an English fighting soldier of that rank. Muleteers were divided into sections under their own corporals (known as capatrases) who were responsible for distributing rations, while orders issued in 1811 instructed that soldiers escorting mules to the rear were there purely as escorts (it being advised to select 'one steady man' for each column) and were told to 'not force them to march faster or further than the capatraz is inclined to go'.²⁰⁹

The reputation of muleteers rapidly improved following 1808 and they came to be acknowledged as an important element of the logistics system. A report on forge

²⁰⁵ Wellesley to Burrard, Aeyria, 11th August 1808, PRO WO 1/228, p.191.

²⁰⁶ Wednesday 4th November 1812, NAM 7508/24, Notebook of W. Morris, Conductor of Stores, 1812.

²⁰⁷ Saturday 7th November 1812, NAM 7508/24.

²⁰⁸ Wellesley to Burrard, Aeyria, 11th August 1808, PRO WO 1/228, p.191.

²⁰⁹ Standing Orders, Order No. 37, NAM 6807/221, p.8; Villa Formosa, 10th December 1811, Extracts from General Orders, NAM 6807/221, pp.12-13.

wagons in 1811 highlighted the advantages of using muleteers, although it also stressed the differences between the army's official practices and the opinions of an individual experienced in their successful employment. The report stated that a significant advantage of employing local drivers, besides releasing military personnel for other duties, was that 'by this means you place the beasts... under the charge of people of the country, who are more capable of doing it well'.²¹⁰ It was advised that the ideal ratio of muleteers to mules should be one to four, rather than the standard practice in the army of one to three. This suggests the report's anonymous author had greater faith in the abilities of muleteers than did his superiors.²¹¹ His most surprising recommendation, however, was the following as it was concerned with the ownership of the mules:

it is most strongly to be recommended however that these mules be the property of the muleteer, and not of the government for from the circumstance of it being proposed to place them entirely under the charge of the muleteer himself, not allowing the farriers to interfere with them at all, they are most likely to be well treated, and kept in readiness to march if the private property of the individual.²¹²

This would have been a considerable departure from previous policy, in which the mule occupied an ambiguous position, being the property of the army but only for the duration of the muleteer's employment.²¹³

An important element in the relationship between the British army and state was the legislation that prevented the army from requisitioning civilian property. Issues relating to the relationship between the British army and civilians tend to be seen in the context of England, but this policy was to have implications not only

²¹⁰ PRO WO 37/10/26, paragraph 14.

²¹¹ Standing Orders, Order No. 37, NAM 6807/221, p.8.

²¹² PRO WO 37/10/26, paragraph 17.

²¹³ Standing Orders, Order No. 36, NAM 6807/22, p.7.

throughout the British Isles but also overseas.²¹⁴ One way this manifested itself in the Peninsular War was through an ambiguous approach regarding the employment and, indeed, ownership of the mules utilised by the respective logistical organizations of Horse Guards and Ordnance Board. Those employed by each arm of service had a distinct brand (see figure 8) and Commissariat personnel were under strict instructions not to operate unmarked animals.

<u>Brand</u>	<u>Arm of Service</u>	<u>Branch</u>
A	Foot Artillery	Ordnance
C	Cavalry	Horse Guards
D	Infantry	Horse Guards
HA	Horse Artillery	Ordnance

Figure 8: Marks denoting the ownership of mules operated by each arm.²¹⁵

Despite such marks, however, mules hired by these organizations were not included in separate returns, but instead counted under a single heading. This suggests different policies existed regarding the operation of mules at strategic and operational levels.²¹⁶

The report of 1811 raised issues relating not only to the ownership of the mules themselves, but also items required for their effective operation. Its author recommended that ‘the pack saddle should be the property of the muleteer and the shoeing of the mules his own private concern’.²¹⁷ The proposals might appear to be an overwhelming vote of confidence in the muleteers, but their appeal to a budget-conscious military establishment should not be overlooked. By 1811 the financial position of the Peninsular Army was, to say the least, uncertain and if implemented

²¹⁴ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.49.

²¹⁵ Standing Orders, Order No. 39, NAM 6807/221, p.8.

²¹⁶ Standing Orders, Order No. 40, NAM 6807/221, p.9.

²¹⁷ PRO WO 37/10/26, paragraph 18.

the system would have removed almost all the expenses associated with the operation of mules. The Commissariat was the first organization to adopt a similar system for its muleteers and it soon discovered that muleteers were indeed more effective when employed in this way.²¹⁸

An organization with diverse personnel, with diverse roles fulfilled with mixed success is perhaps a suitable description of the Commissariat. Its scope, in terms of both brief and geographical area of operations, was indeed large but it has come to be most associated with one item in particular: food. When hungry, soldiers had little doubt upon whom to heap the blame. Private James Gunn of the Black Watch Regiment noted that ‘I never complained but when the Commissariat was at fault (and that was not seldom)’, while a Rifleman of the 95th Rifles declared to his colleagues ‘damme, boys, if the commissary don’t show his front we must find a potato field or have a killing a day’, this being a reference to the practice of looting dead French soldiers for food.²¹⁹ Criticisms concerning the role of the Commissariat in the supply of food were justified, as the organization was involved in the procurement and supply of this commodity to such an extent that it was almost solely responsible for its provision. This was unlike the situation regarding other items, such as uniform, which were frequently the responsibility of other departments and the role of the Commissariat in their provision tended to be one of distribution or storage rather than procurement.

Although food may simply be seen as the bread, meat and biscuit supplied to the troops, there is a broader definition, one that includes drinking water, alcohol and the fodder for the numerous animals utilised by the army. It is also important that the significance of regular supplies of food should not be underestimated. If the

²¹⁸ PRO WO 37/10/26, paragraph 17.

²¹⁹ Brackets in original. R. H. Roy (ed), ‘The Memoirs of Private James Gunn’, in *JSAHR*, Vol 49 (1971), p.119; A. Brett-James (ed), *Edward Costello: The Peninsular and Waterloo Campaigns* (London, Longmans, 1967), pp.122.

Commissariat failed to ensure adequate supplies of food troops would be required to spend more time foraging, while generals could not plan future operations with any certainty. The Duke of Wellington demonstrated an awareness of these difficulties and their importance throughout the Peninsular campaign, declaring in 1809 that ‘the foundation of all military plans is compounded of the situations of one’s own troops, those of the allies, and those of the enemy; but if I cannot be certain even of my own, it is impossible for me to form, much less execute, any military plan’.²²⁰ In the worst case scenario an army deprived of food may collapse into a starving rabble, looting friend and foe alike in an effort to survive. Park and Nafziger state that British soldiers were particularly susceptible to this weakness, noting that they ‘tended to fall apart faster than the French when deprived of regular rations [or] subjected to hardship’.²²¹ Such a conclusion is contentious considering the fate that befell Napoleon’s Grand Armée in 1812 but it clearly highlights the potential consequences of an army’s failure to provide food.²²²

An insight into the type and quantity of food supplied by the army to its troops can be gained from a return of the supplies available to the army in December 1813. Those available to three divisions are shown in figure 9:

Division	Days of Bread/Biscuit	Days of Meat	Days of Wine/Spirit
3 rd	5	13	2
4 th	1	13	2
7 th	None	11	3

Figure 9: Availability of supplies in the centre army corps, December 1813.²²³

²²⁰ Wellington to Rt. Hon. J. Villiers, 27 May 1809, L. C. Gurwood (ed), *Despatches and General Orders of the Duke of Wellington* (London, Murray, 1841), p.261.

²²¹ Park and Nafziger, *The British Military*, p.14.

²²² P. J. Haythornthwaite, *Napoleon’s Military Machine* (Staplehurst, Spellmont, 1988), pp.140-141. For a consideration of French discipline during adversity in general, see also Elting, *Swords Around the Throne*, passim.

²²³ NAM 7512/124, Supplies to the Divisions of the Centre Army Corps in the Peninsula, December 1813.

Despite occupying an approximately similar geographical position in the same time frame, it is apparent that the level of supply to the three divisions was somewhat inconsistent: the 3rd division possessed only two days of full supply and the 4th one, while the 7th did not have sufficient quantities of each commodity for a single day. The situation for the 3rd is improved significantly (to five days) by discarding alcohol. The importance of this commodity should not, however, be discounted, due to its influence on morale and discipline.

Perhaps the most notable feature of the data in figure 9 is the disparity between reserves of meat when compared to those of bread and biscuit. This situation was primarily due to the differences in how meat, bread and biscuit were supplied. Meat marched on the hoof with the army, was available regardless of season and could be slaughtered as required on the spot. Conversely bread and biscuits required some effort to produce and their manufacture was a relatively long process. To begin with, baking required wheat, which was not always available and also required processing.²²⁴ Another difficulty was procuring or manufacturing sufficient yeast for the baking process, great efforts being made by army bakers throughout the period to increase both the quality and cost effectiveness of this important ingredient.²²⁵ Finally, even if these difficulties could be overcome the baking of bread was time consuming.²²⁶ This affected strategy and planning at the highest levels and was apparent in the orders issued to Lieutenant General Sir John Moore concerning his expedition to northern Spain in 1808: 'a large proportion of biscuit has been sent in the victuallers [sic] that you may be relieved from the inconvenience of baking when the troops are in motion'.²²⁷

More easily stored and preserved, biscuit was generally seen as an emergency

²²⁴ p.54.

²²⁵ PRO WO 30/141, pp.30-32.

²²⁶ Wellesley to Burrard, Aeyria, 11th August 1808, PRO WO 1/228.

²²⁷ To Lieutenant-General Sir John Moore, Downing Street, 26th September 1808, PRO WO 1/236.

ration that could take the place of bread when required, but such characteristics also made it preferable for an army wishing to remain on the march, hence its inclusion in the same category as bread in returns. Despite the advantages of biscuit, however, bread was more easily digestible and thus popular with the troops, especially if consumed fresh. Regular stops to bake bread would have hindered an army on the march but there was no such difficulty when encamped. In consequence, units on occasion produced bread independently of the Commissariat. Following the Battle of Talavera, when supplies became short due to the large number of troops present in the region, Lieutenant Bingham of the 53rd Regiment of Foot wrote that ‘we were living at Talavera from hand to mouth, that is we were obliged to thrash the corn ourselves, grind the flour and make the bread’.²²⁸ The duty was clearly unpopular with the lieutenant and he was relieved to write in a letter home the following month that ‘we are, however, plentifully supplied, having an excellent market’.²²⁹ On other occasions the bread ration was issued as grain to speed up the supply process.²³⁰

Bingham’s account of bread production after Talavera reveals two important issues. Firstly it says something about the composition of his unit, which contained personnel able to harvest wheat, mill it and then bake bread. The personnel need not have been professional farmers, millers or bakers before enlisting but it is likely they had some experience in such backgrounds. More important than the composition of Bingham’s unit, however, is the fact that the situation after Talavera demonstrates the relationship between strategic and local supply. In 1809 stores of flour in Lisbon were so full that vessels allocated to transport the commodity were reassigned to other tasks, yet soldiers in the field, such as Bingham, had to find their own sources of

²²⁸ Bingham to mother, Delatosa, 10th August 1809, Vol. 1, NAM 6807/163, p.62.

²²⁹ Bingham to mother, Badajoz 13th September 1809, Vol. 1, NAM 6807/163, p.68.

²³⁰ G. Larpent (ed), *The Private Journal of F S Larpent: Judge Advocate General of British Forces in the Peninsula*, vol 3 (London, Richard Bentley, 1853), p.6.

flour.²³¹ The stocks held in Lisbon no doubt enabled markets to recover rapidly, but it remains apparent that the existence of such extensive stocks did not always benefit the army in the field. This gives rise to a situation in which there is a considerable disparity between anecdotal evidence and official records regarding the supply of food to troops in the field.

Whatever the type, the food supplied by the Commissariat was sometimes of questionable quality and its nutritional value was clearly in some doubt, indicating a preference for quantity rather than quality. In his melancholy 'Subaltern's Elegy' Ensign Meade described his pitiful rations thus: 'see in camp kettles all we have to dine, yielding soup meagre to frighten swine', and there was also a tinge of envy and longing for the comforts of Britain when he wrote of 'ye fat rich citizens of London... snug over claret... Blest be the land of rich turtle soup – glamorous venison haunches'.²³² The poor quality of rations was not merely a complaint of troops in the field. Judge Advocate Larpent, based at army headquarters, complained that ration beef 'cooked up like Indian rubber', while a letter written concerning the Commissariat depot in Longford described a sample of biscuits containing 'dust and dirt and bad bits'.²³³

The poor diet of the army was a source of some concern for several soldiers, although it is apparent that the food available to soldiers may have been of a superior quality and more plentiful than that available to civilians. A study based on scientific data such as the average calories consumed by civilians and soldiers would be of interest, although the lack of suitable information concerning their respective diets precludes an accurate comparison from being made. Despite the scarcity of data, general conclusions can be drawn concerning the diet of soldiers compared to that of

²³¹ Hall, *Wellington's Navy*, p.115.

²³² NAM 7505/10, J. R. Meade, 'The Subaltern's Elegy' (Spain, 1st July 1813).

²³³ P. Singer to Mr. Heathy, Commissary General's Office, 25th March 1806; G. Larpent (ed), *The Private Journal of F S Larpent*, Vol. 1, p.36.

civilians. The period from 1790 to 1820 was in general characterised by declining food consumption across much of the civilian population, a decline triggered by rising prices and falling wages, factors from which soldiers were relatively isolated due to the impact of long-term government contracts.²³⁴ The potential differences between the diets of soldiers and civilians were not only quantitative. Meat was only a small part of the diet for many labourers and when available tended to be lamb or bacon, while there was a growing reliance on potatoes.²³⁵ Conversely, for soldiers, approximately half of the diet consisted of meat, which was most commonly beef.²³⁶

Although a consideration of trends in the availability of food suggests that the diets of soldiers were indeed superior, it is necessary to appreciate that there existed a considerable difference between the prescribed diet of soldiers and that which they actually consumed. Furthermore, while superior in some respects to that of civilians, the diet of soldiers was not always adequate for their needs. William Dent, then serving as a hospital mate, attributed an outbreak of typhus amongst the Colchester garrison in April 1809 to the poor quality of rations. He believed that 'it was brought on from the soldiers being exposed to the cold and being weakened from not having sufficient quantity of nutritive food proportionable [sic] to the quantity of fatigue and exercise they had daily to undergo'.²³⁷ Whether or not poor diet did indeed significantly contribute to the spread of typhus at Colchester is unknown. More likely culprits included poor living conditions in barracks and cramped medical facilities but that Dent, a future surgeon, noted the poor state of army rations is noteworthy as it displays a level of competence rarely attributed to military surgeons in the period.²³⁸

²³⁴ Bartlett, *The Development of the British Army*, p.136; Crafts, *British Economic Growth*, pp.98-104

²³⁵ A.H. John, 'Farming in Wartime, 1793 to 1815', in E.C. Jones and G.E. Mingay (eds.), *Land, Labour and Population in the Industrial Revolution* (London, Edward Arnold, 1987), pp.39-40; E.W. Bovill, *English Country Life 1780 – 1830* (London, OUP, 1962), p.20; R. J. White, *Life in Regency England* (London, Batsford, 1963), p.26.

²³⁶ M. Glover (ed), *A Gentleman Volunteer: The Letters of George Hennell From the Peninsular War 1812-13* (London, Heinemann, 1979), p.79n.

²³⁷ Dent to Mother, London, 3rd April 1809, NAM 7008/11/2, Dent Letters.

²³⁸ See below pp.195-198.

A disease more easy to attribute to poor diet than typhus was dysentery, outbreaks of which were common. Lieutenant Bingham believed 'a total want of vegetables and salt, introduced dysentery amongst both officers and men to rather an alarming degree', although in many cases dysentery may well have been due to the poor quality of drinking water.²³⁹ Conductor of Stores W. Morris attributed a period of ill health to the effects of poor quality water, stating that 'I was taken vehemently ill this day with a pain in my bowels, accompanied by a flux. The water in this country is very bad'.²⁴⁰ The following particularly unpleasant event, recorded by Surgeon Henry, also relates to the safety of drinking water. A thirsty group of soldiers stopped to drink from an old fountain and subsequently 150 of them were rushed to hospital with leeches in their mouths, nostrils, throats, gullets and stomachs.²⁴¹

Concerns about the safety of drinking water led to the widespread consumption of alcohol, hence the inclusion in the return of food available in December 1813 a listing for wines and spirits but none for potable water. Such was the importance attached to ensuring supplies of good quality alcohol that brewers, unlike other contractors, were required to take an oath guaranteeing its quality.²⁴² Such measures, however, were seen by certain soldiers to be insufficient, and they requested that to ensure adequate supplies army officers be exempted from paying duties on alcohol so that they could purchase their own stocks more easily. Lieutenant Fairman was such an individual and he described wine as being among 'the heaviest, if not the most necessary, articles of expenditure', estimating that one-quarter of a subaltern's pay would be spent on alcohol.²⁴³ He went on to state that 'its moderate use proves

²³⁹ Bingham to mother, Badajoz 13th September 1809, Vol.1, NAM 6807/163, p.68.

²⁴⁰ Saturday 31st October 1812, NAM 7508/24.

²⁴¹ P. Hayward (ed), *Surgeon Henry's Trifles: Events of a Military Life* (London, Chatto & Windus, 1970), pp.53-4.

²⁴² *Letter from Barrak [sic] Master General to Barrak Masters* (Barraks Office, 1797), pp.22-23.

²⁴³ Fairman, *A Letter on the Expediency of Allowing Wine to the Army Free of Duty as in the Navy*, p.27.

very essential towards the preservation and recovery of health, and not infrequently operates as a preventative against epidemic disease'.²⁴⁴ Such views permeated the upper ranks of society and the army itself, General Wetherall recommending that regimental canteens be set up to guarantee the supply 'of good and wholesome liquor'.²⁴⁵ Considering that such policies and attitudes concerning alcohol existed it is perhaps unsurprising that, in the words of Lieutenant John Ford of 79th Cameron Highlanders, drunkenness became 'the bane of the British army'.²⁴⁶

Even if the Commissariat could have ensured adequate supplies of food there were numerous problems associated with its provision. As the army marched through the Pyrenees in 1813, for example, Rifleman Costello stated that his daily ration consisted of a single biscuit per day, while Private Howell of 71st Regiment of Foot confessed to stealing the dog biscuits that he was preparing for the Duke of Wellington's hounds to relieve his hunger.²⁴⁷ There was a variety of factors that could lead to such a desperate situation. Simply cooking the meat ration could be a problem due to either a shortage of cooking implements or lack of time caused by rapid marches, the latter being a significant cause of hunger on the retreat from Burgos.²⁴⁸ The problem of scarce cooking implements was partly rectified following the widespread issue of tents later in the war – a unit's mules being tasked to carry these, while utensils were carried by the men and thus available as soon as the unit encamped. Carriage by the unit, however, did not always ensure the safe and timely arrival of the required equipment, as troops carrying utensils could get delayed,

²⁴⁴ Fairman, *A Letter on the Expediency of Allowing Wine to the Army Free of Duty as in the Navy*, p.35.

²⁴⁵ Letter from General Wetherall to Governor General of Calcutta, the Earl of Moira, Bangalore (sic), 28th November 1813, NAM 6112/78, Wetherall Papers Inspection Returns and Correspondence of Major General F. A. Wetherall, p.230.

²⁴⁶ NAM 6807/71, Notebook of Lieutenant John Ford 1808 - 12, p.111.

²⁴⁷ Brett-James (ed), *Edward Costello*, p.122; C. Hibbert (ed), *A Soldier of the 71st* (London, Leo Cooper, 1976), pp.72-73.

²⁴⁸ H. F. N. Jourdain, *The Connaught Rangers*, Volume I (London, Royal United Service Institute, 1924), p.105.

redirected or even lost (another example of how factors outside of its control could bring the best efforts of a state to support its military grinding to a halt). Due to these risks, units tasked to carry items such as camp kettles received an armed escort, initially of mounted dragoons although this task was eventually allocated to soldiers on foot.²⁴⁹

No matter what escort was provided, utensils could only arrive if they had been issued. Although supplied with an adequate number of camp kettles in 1815 (157 – approximately one per four men), the 1st battalion of the 88th had an insufficient number of billy hooks (94) to support them over fires. In 1809 the ratios had been even worse, at one kettle per 6 men and one hook per 10 men.²⁵⁰ The actions of soldiers themselves also served to undermine the efforts of the Commissariat. Lieutenant Bingham was critical of the actions of fellow officers, noting that supplies went ‘but little way with young gentlemen who have been used to gorge themselves at a regimental mess’.²⁵¹ Judge Advocate Larpent’s criticisms were aimed at the actions of common soldiers upon receiving their rations. He wrote that:

the poor soldiers, having three days rations served out at once, consume all the drink on the first day, sell the meat to save carriage and the trouble of cooking it, and live upon bread and grapes and water, till their next supply comes.²⁵²

In consequence of such actions the Commissariat sought to issue rations only on a daily basis but this was rarely achieved and the policy could only ever be feasible if the units in question were in close proximity to permanent depots, a situation that rarely arose due to the centralisation of stores or the need to avoid their proximity to the enemy.²⁵³

²⁴⁹ Qunita, 2nd July 1811, NAM 6807/221, p.15.

²⁵⁰ NAM 6112/689, Field Equipment Return for the 1st Battalion 88th Foot, 9th June 1815.

²⁵¹ Bingham to mother, Almofala, 5th October 1813, Volume 4, NAM 6807/163, p.21.

²⁵² G. Larpent (ed), *The Private Journal of F S Larpent*, Vol. 1, pp.18-19.

²⁵³ Villa Formosa, 15th April 1811, NAM 6807/221, p.13.

Of the arms of service in the army the cavalry was to cause the most problems for the Commissariat - although the number of animals used by the infantry divisions should not be underestimated. In the 7th Infantry Division, serving in Spain in 1813 and consisting of 5,876 men, there were 244 horses, 268 mules operated by the regiments and 246 mules operated by the Commissariat, giving a total of 758 animals, which was the equivalent to a full-strength cavalry regiment.²⁵⁴ Added to the animals already consuming forage could be those that were not officially on the strength of the regiment or even in the army. General Cole, for example, maintained a menagerie consisting of ten goats, a cow and thirty-six sheep to supplement his rations, and even if the animals did not consume army fodder, their grazing would have consumed local supplies that could potentially have been utilised by the army.²⁵⁵

For units stationed in Britain a common difficulty relating to the maintenance of animals was not a shortage of fodder so much as an excess of this commodity. The seasonal production of forage inevitably resulted in gluts at certain times of year, the results of which were noted by P. Singer of the Commissary General's Office when he declared that 'the straw in Commissariat Depots throughout the kingdom is rather decayed' as it remained in storage too long.²⁵⁶ Storage was less of a problem in the case of hay, as old and new hay could be mixed, while different deliveries of straw had to be kept separately.²⁵⁷ Forces in Spain and Portugal faced the opposite problem to those in Britain, and the difficulty was procuring sufficient fodder to start with. The quantity required by the Peninsular army was considerable and in 1809 the cavalry ration was defined as being 14lb of hay, 12lb of oats or 10lb of barley per horse, while

²⁵⁴ NAM 7512/124, Supplies to the Divisions of the Centre Army Corps in the Peninsula, December 1813; Partridge and Oliver, *The British Army and Her Allies* (London, Constable, 1999), p.28.

²⁵⁵ G. Larpent (ed), *The Private Journal of F S Larpent*, Vol 2, (London, Richard Bentley, 1853), p.65.

²⁵⁶ Singer to Heathy, Commissary General's Office, 25th March 1806, PRO WO 63/40.

²⁵⁷ Handfield to Sir W. Berdett, Commissary General's Office, 31st August 1810, PRO WO 63/45.

that of mules employed on supply operations was 30lbs corn per week.²⁵⁸ Demand could in part be met by importing forage from Britain, 4.5 million pounds of straw and oats being requested in 1809.²⁵⁹ Other than this the Commissariat had little choice except to make do with what it could find in each region, often with serious consequences for the local economy and the cavalry itself. The latter was particularly true when the only fodder available was green corn and, due to the potential risks to horses, commissaries were instructed to use it only as a last resort.²⁶⁰ The difficulty of supplying the cavalry with fodder was a source of consternation for Commissary Schauman, who was critical of the practices employed by cavalrymen. In particular he complained that they preferred hay instead of straw to feed their horses, although it must be noted that in some cases this is a preferable food source for horses so Schauman may have been displaying a lack of knowledge regarding this. Schauman also complained that cavalrymen frequently swapped their forage ration for alcohol, but noted that following the introduction of regulations to prevent this British horses soon became fatter and those of the locals thinner.²⁶¹

Any failure by the Commissariat to supply food adequately for either man or beast is highly visible to the historian, such situations being enthusiastically recorded by letter writers, diarists and memoirists alike. Frequently these individuals aimed their criticisms directly at the organization. Rifleman Costello, for example, complained that throughout the Peninsular War ‘we suffered much from a deficiency of supplies from the Commissariat’, while Private Gunn wrote of the campaign that it was ‘not seldom’ at fault.²⁶² It is clear that criticisms of this nature were not unjustified, even though it is apparent that many of the difficulties encountered by the

²⁵⁸ Arthur Wellesley to Castlereagh, 31st May 1809, PRO WO 1/238; Standing Orders, Order No. 37, NAM 6807/221, p.8.

²⁵⁹ Arthur Wellesley to Castlereagh, 31st May 1809, PRO WO 1/238.

²⁶⁰ Villa Formosa, 13th April 1811, Extracts from General Orders, NAM 6807/221, p.13.

²⁶¹ Schauman, *On the Road with Wellington*, pp.219, 227.

²⁶² Brett-James, *Edward Costello*, p120; Roy (ed), ‘The Memoirs of Private James Gunn’, p119.

Commissariat were beyond its control, and a study of the organization's efforts to supply food highlights what was possibly its greatest weakness regarding operations in the field: specifically a reflexive doctrine that aimed to react to situations rather than prepare for them.

Crevelde states that the first requisite of any logistics system is an exact definition of requirements.²⁶³ This was clearly lacking in the Commissariat's doctrine and from the very start of a campaign the resulting limitations were apparent. As noted above, the first personnel from the organization to arrive in a region were purchasing agents. The task of these individuals was not one of ascertaining the ability of a province to sustain a force in the long term but rather to purchase the supplies required by army when it arrived. This was to be achieved regardless of long-term consequences for the local economy and, by implication, future procurement activities. This was demonstrated in August 1808, when commissaries in the force under the command of Arthur Wellesley procured so many mules that subsequent forces were compelled to purchase other draught animals.²⁶⁴ Further evidence is provided by the disastrous effect of procurement activities on local markets and commodity prices. Captain Bragge of the 3rd Dragoons noted of the vicinity of Belem in 1811 that 'the English have ruined this market as they do all others, and at this moment everything from a hen's egg to a mule is dearer than in England', while Judge Advocate Larpent complained in May 1813 that 'we cannot buy anything to eat except honey, sugar, bacon, bread and cheese'.²⁶⁵

The depletion of markets alone was not sufficient to end the activities of the Commissariat in a region and its personnel were expected to utilise any means

²⁶³ Crevelde, *Supplying War*, p.18.

²⁶⁴ Wellesley to Burrard, Aeyria, 11th August 1808, PRO WO 1/228, p.191.

²⁶⁵ S. A. C. Cassels (ed), *Peninsula Portrait 1811 - 1814: The Letters of Captain William Bragge 3rd (Kings Own) Dragoons* (London, OUP, 1963), p.13; G. Larpent (ed), *The Private Journal of F S Larpent*, Vol. 1, p.195.

necessary to acquire supplies. This was achieved through the employment of occasionally brutal tactics that could literally be those of an occupying army: to counter local attempts to conceal stores underground, for example, commissaries resorted to the French practice of pouring water on the ground to locate areas of recently disturbed soil (where it drained away quicker).²⁶⁶ Some of the other methods used by commissaries were little more than terrorism and in 1813 a commissary was found guilty of burning down a Spanish house.²⁶⁷ It is also interesting to note that commissaries co-operated with guerrillas, Lieutenant John Ford recording in his diary that 'the inhabitants of Amarez were very much alarmed by the arrival of a commissary and a company of guerrillas... to search the houses for provisions'.²⁶⁸

The plundering of supplies in this way was dramatically at odds with a concept that was crucial in defining the relationship between the British army and state, specifically that the army should cause as little disruption to civilians as possible.²⁶⁹ Although primarily a domestic policy, it would be incorrect to view the tactics utilised by the Commissariat overseas as evidence that the concept of limiting disruption to civilians was applied only in the home nation or its colonies. The British government was anxious not only to avoid upsetting its allies but also the population of France, therefore an extension of a policy that inflicted minimum disruption to civilians was thus required on the continent²⁷⁰. Ultimately, however, operational requirements would on occasion take precedence over political expediency and the practices normally utilised to placate civilians were ignored.²⁷¹ Thus the Commissariat continued to utilise all means at its disposal when the situation warranted.

²⁶⁶ Buckley (ed), *The Napoleonic War Journal of Captain Thomas Henry Browne*, p.181.

²⁶⁷ L C Gurwood (ed), *General Orders of the Duke of Wellington in the Campaigns of 1809-14* (London, Clowes and Son, 1837), p.14.

²⁶⁸ NAM 6807/71, p.53.

²⁶⁹ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.49.

²⁷⁰ Esdaile, *The Peninsular War*, passim.

²⁷¹ It is likely that such a situation would have existed in Britain also had the French invaded. See chapter 6.

The ruthlessness of commissaries in the field was to have implications for the organization. In a country already devastated and left, in the words of Henry Booth, ‘wretched in the extreme from the French occupation’, it was inevitable that the inhabitants of towns and villages would react with hostility to the arrival of a commissary intent on plundering what remained of local stocks.²⁷² On occasion this led to violence and in 1810 Spanish civilians set upon two members of a foraging party, one receiving seven gunshot wounds and the other being shot through the lung.²⁷³ This was a consequence of a policy that sought to provide supplies through legalised plunder; an unbalanced policy that, instead of maximising the potential of a region to sustain a force, could provide only a short-term solution to the problem of maintaining the army.

The plundering of supplies was a crucial element of the reflexive doctrine in the field, although this doctrine was also to have an influence on other aspects of the Commissariat, including its bureaucracy and administration. General J.F.C. Fuller cites planning as a key element of warfare in the period, noting that Napoleon himself said that ‘nothing is gained in war except by calculation’ and that ‘it is only when plans are deeply thought out that one succeeds in war’.²⁷⁴ Yet planning was noticeably absent in the Commissariat. The many volumes of paperwork tended to be concerned primarily with returns relating to the situation at the time of writing, rather than what was required in a week, a month or a year (data collection, rather than estimation and projection appears to have been the objective of such bureaucracy). Information of this nature was vital if shortages caused by the mismanagement of local resources were to be rectified through imports, yet it was rarely collated. There is little evidence that the Commissariat sought to understand what was required by a body of men such

²⁷² Henry Booth to wife, nr Vittoria, 20th June 1813, NAM 6702/33/102, Booth Letters.

²⁷³ W. Tomkinson, *The Diary of a Cavalry Officer 1809 - 1815* (Staplehurst, Spellmont, 1999), p.35.

²⁷⁴ Fuller, *The Conduct of War*, p.47.

as a regiment over a period of time and returns were rarely accompanied by estimates of how long the listed stores would last. Thus, the activities of the Commissariat were based on the supply situation as it had been up to a year earlier: estimates of the fodder required in the Peninsula, for example, were based on the previous year's consumption.²⁷⁵ Such practice was sound but only when force levels were stable; in particular, they did not take into account increases in the number of personnel and animals in the theatre. This doctrine of response rather than preparation was possibly the greatest failing of the Commissariat, although it was a doctrine forced on it by circumstance, not least being the limitations imposed on the army by the state's desire to limit its size and cost.

When considering the Commissariat it is necessary to note that it met many of the criteria stated by P.D. Foxton in the twentieth century to be essential for a sound logistical system. The five key elements were foresight, flexibility, simplicity, economy and co-operation. Only in the case of foresight (the ability to plan ahead) was the Commissariat lacking, its doctrine making up for this in flexibility, economy (forced upon it by the demands of the state) and co-operation (the utilisation of resources in the host nation, such as muleteers).²⁷⁶

When considering how the relationship between state and army influenced the Commissariat, it is apparent that it facilitated the creation of a relatively effective system to support the force, but it was a system constrained by geography. In the United Kingdom a policy based on purchase rather than plunder was feasible due to continuing improvements in the national transport network and proximity to both markets and sources.²⁷⁷ Overseas, however, this situation did not always exist and the

²⁷⁵ Arthur Wellesley to Castlereagh, 31st May 1809, PRO WO 1/238/

²⁷⁶ Schechter and Sander, *Delivering the Goods*, p.22.

²⁷⁷ Wrigley, 'Society and the economy in the eighteenth century', pp.76-77; Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.183.

flexibility of secure naval transport was only of benefit in proximity to the coast.²⁷⁸ Thus the Commissariat was forced to rely on the local infrastructure to carry out its task, a situation that hindered the distribution of supplies be they purchased or attained through plunder. The result was that troops in Britain were well maintained and provisioned but those overseas less so. The Commissariat therefore represents both the worst and the best aspects of British defence policy.

Besides the geographical boundaries of the state, the Commissariat also had to contend with an increasingly bureaucratic and regulated system. This proved to be a double-edged sword. On the one hand bureaucracy hampered activities and was not always as comprehensive as it could and should have been, a situation that contributed to the reflexive doctrine, but in other respects bureaucracy was beneficial. Regulations gave the Commissariat structure and a framework in which its personnel could act, a situation that did not exist to a significant degree in the French army until the bureaucratisation of its own logistics system from 1805.²⁷⁹ When the systems used to govern the Commissariat worked, the organization proved a success but outside of sometimes-limited boundaries and constrained by regulation it could prove a notable failure at worst and, at best, barely able to match the effectiveness of methods utilised to maintain the armies of continental states. The Commissariat, however, was not the only organization employed to achieve this aim and it is the organizations with which the Commissariat shared responsibility that form the basis of the following chapters, beginning with those involved at the start of the logistical process: procurement.

²⁷⁸ Hall, *Wellington's Navy*, p.6.

²⁷⁹ Creveld, *Supplying War*, p.44.

Chapter 3

Procurement for the British Army

Procurement for the British army in the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars relates in particular to one aspect of the relationship between the army and the state, this being the extent to which the force benefited from Britain's growing economic and industrial power. By the time of the Revolutionary Wars Britain's armed forces were to become not only a means to promote the nation's diplomatic ambitions but also economic, colonial, industrial and even technological growth. Initially a reason for the financial revolution, the armed forces had rapidly become a means to sustain it through their role in the economy, providing employment, possessing considerable purchasing power and safeguarding the Empire.²⁸⁰ Such was the importance of the armed forces that an increasingly broad section of society shared a common interest in their development and maintenance.

In coastal areas in particular the state had become the largest purchaser of food, clothing and metal ware, while also providing the biggest source of employment in the construction industry due to the building of dockyards and barracks.²⁸¹ Members of the public took an increasing interest in military affairs. During the eighteenth century it was to become ever more fashionable to read about the exploits of Britain's soldiers and sailors, while during the Nine Years War days of public thanks were introduced to celebrate important victories, a practice that persisted into the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars.²⁸² When these factors are added to Britain's expanding industrial and economic potential it would appear that the scene was set for the army to be supported to an unprecedented level.²⁸³

²⁸⁰ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, pp.27, 59.

²⁸¹ Duffy, 'British Naval Power', pp.51-60

²⁸² Harris, 'Praising the Middling Sort', p.5; Hoppit, *A Land of Liberty?*, p.130.

²⁸³ Wrigley, 'Society and the Economy', p.72.

It is estimated that in 1811 Britain's expenditure on war amounted to sixteen percent of gross national product, the same as that expended in 1915.²⁸⁴ It would thus appear that the army had reaped the rewards from a financial revolution that it had helped to create, but this was not the case. Due to the policies implemented by successive British governments, figures concerning expenditure on the war are relatively meaningless in the context of the army. Indeed, figures of this nature in general should be avoided, as they can overawe as much as inform. Because of the army's bureaucratic practices the historian can learn, for example, that the cost of the army maintained in Britain and Ireland during 1803 amounted to £2,322,700. Compared to the figures for the previous year or peacetime, this impressive total would show an increase that, while improving the capability of the force, also masked its deficiencies.²⁸⁵ As Jeremy Black notes, a thriving economy and effective public finances were useful, but the war still had to be fought.²⁸⁶ The state would prove unable to maintain the army to its maximum potential, in part due to its own policies but also certain economic and industrial practices that developed alongside it, the allocation of labour being one of them.

The British economy dealt a double blow to the army because while it effectively limited the manpower available to the army by encouraging the concentration of human resources in key sectors, the extra output this allowed did not fully benefit the army either.²⁸⁷ Another difficulty was that a defining feature of the British state in the period was that economics and social stability were persistently given priority over military effectiveness.²⁸⁸ Because of these factors the armed forces would remain unable to capitalise fully on the benefits offered by Britain's growing

²⁸⁴ A.D. Harvey, *Britain in the Early Nineteenth Century* (London, Batsford, 1978), p.334.

²⁸⁵ Journals of the House of Commons, vol 58, 1802 to 1803, p.323.

²⁸⁶ Black, *Sea Borne Empire*, p.170.

²⁸⁷ Emsley, *British Society*, pp.83-84, 110-111.

²⁸⁸ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.49.

manufacturing capability. It is incorrect to dismiss the role of Britain's growing economic strength in aiding the procurement activities of the army, however, and it will become apparent during this chapter that the army was able to exploit certain advantages but not to utilize them to their full potential.

Almost all of the numerous organisations and departments in the army would be involved at various stages of procurement, whether it was through actually purchasing goods or issuing a specification for requirements. In addition to the Commissariat, four departments in particular stand out and form the focus of this chapter, as they were concerned with specialised items. These were the Quarter Master General (one concern of which was the supply of camping equipment), the Barrack Master General (who oversaw barracks), the Clothing board (which set the standards for uniform and oversaw its supply) and Ordnance Board (munitions production). A fifth department with specialist requirements was that concerned with medical provision but this is considered in the subsequent chapter. Of the aforementioned organisations, only the Ordnance Board possessed its own production facilities, and in most cases procurement was conducted through civilian contractors.

The utilisation of contractors intermeshed military organisations with private companies, making the army an important element in the British economy, while contracts also enabled the army to exist without the need maintain its own extensive production facilities. The terms of individual contracts could vary, but generally contractors would produce goods, which were then transported to army depots by either themselves or a different contractor. Distribution to the troops would then be conducted through the appropriate army organisation. Local laws could have an impact on how contracts could work, and this was particularly so in Portugal where a royal warrant was required to sell soap, tobacco and snuff. So as not to contravene

these regulations the army itself was unable to supply these items to its troops and fourteen suppliers were contracted to supply the divisions of the British army in Portugal. As supplying these items without a contract was effectively a breach of Portuguese law, the Provost Marshal was given responsibility for enforcing and monitoring the relevant contracts.²⁸⁹ Through the involvement of an organisation that had little else to do with procurement other than through monitoring its own logistical requirements, the situation regarding the supply of soap and tobacco in Portugal highlighted how the structures and procedures put in place by the state could have little relevance outside of the United Kingdom. This was a significant limitation that was to have implications for the effectiveness of the army and its supply organisation.

The details of contracts varied according to the nature of the items supplied, although an example of how a contract may have operated can be found in that for supplying fodder to the Norwich garrison in 1797. The terms of the contract were explained to the commanding officer of the garrison in a letter from the Barrack Office:

Sir,

It has been found expedient to enter into a contract for the supply of forage to the troops stationed in the barracks at Norwich, from the 1st day of October 1797, to the 30th day of September 1798, a copy where of is in the hands of the Barrack Master, who is directed to communicate its contents to you as well as my instructions with regard to the receipt and delivery of the forage, to which I am to desire you will confirm whatever is required from you as commanding the troops in the said barracks; and that a regular succession in the supply of forage may be kept up, you will be pleased to make a requisition in writing, fourteen days before the quantity to be delivered is wanted, to the Barrack Master, who will call upon the contractor to furnish it accordingly; and you will, on each delivery, give a receipt for the quantity, for which you are to remain accountable: and that at such periods as the contractor, in conformity to the terms of his agreement, is entitled to be paid for the quantity of forage issued, you will give him a draft upon the agent of your regiment, at ten days sight, for the amount of the stoppages; and for the amount exceeding the stoppages, you will give him a draft upon me, at ten days sight; and as the General Return and Certificate required by the 18th article of His Majesty's Regulations for the Government of Barracks, is the only voucher money can

²⁸⁹ Extracts from General Orders, Cartaxo 28th February 1811, NAM 6807/221, pp.5-7.

be paid for the purchase of forage, you will be pleased, when you give the draft to the contractor, to furnish to the Barrack Master / who is responsible for the due transmission thereof / a General Return and Certificate of the quantities of each species of forage that have been issued in conformity to the before mentioned article of the King's regulations: to which necessary forms are annexed. And you are also, in compliance with the said article, to give the Barrack Master every Monday morning, the customary return of the horses belonging to the officers, Quarter Masters, and soldiers, which have been foraged the preceding seven days, specifying the names of the said officers and quartermasters.²⁹⁰

The letter reveals several key points about the operation of such contracts. They were of twelve months' duration (in this case September to August inclusive), responsibility for administering the contract locally rested not with personnel from the Commissariat or Barrack Master General's office but the commanding officer, requests for supply were made through the Barrack Master's Department, a degree of estimation was required on the part of the officer – requests having to be made fourteen days in advance of forage being required, bills were to be paid within ten days, and anti-fraud measures (including receipts, returns of horses on the unit's strength and payment of excess bills by Barrack Master's department) were in place.

There was some flexibility in contracts, which could work to the advantage of either the contractor or the army. Those supplying forage, as in the above example, were sometimes able to negotiate clauses that allowed them to buy back, borrow or otherwise acquire excess fodder from the army.²⁹¹ The terms of such an agreement, operating in 1806, were explained as follows:

it has been considered an object of advantage to permit the forage contractors to have the use of a part of it [excess forage] under the personal responsibility of the Assistant Commissary of the District, you will therefore please on the requisition of Mr. Joseph Webb forage contractor... to cause such a proportion to be issued to him as may he may want under stipulation of his returning it into store when called on for that purpose.²⁹²

²⁹⁰ Punctuation as in original, NAM 7211/58/1, Barrack Office to Officer Commanding in Barracks at Norwich, 20th September 1797.

²⁹¹ This situation was particularly common at harvest time. p.80.

²⁹² Singer to Heathy, Commissary General's office, 25th March 1806, PRO WO 63/45.

Such arrangements were only temporary (effectively only while there was excess forage available) and by June 1810 the situation was such that personnel were informed 'it is not expedient just now to part with the hay and straw in any depot.'²⁹³ While the clause had operated, however, Mr. Webb the forage merchant had effectively been allowed to use the forage store as an extension of his own at no extra cost. Furthermore the arrangement had benefited the army, the Commissary being informed that it was 'an object of advantage'. The reasons for this were not explained in the letter, although difficulties were frequently experienced regarding the storage of excess fodder.²⁹⁴

Contracts were monitored and would be lost if the contractor was found to be in breach of the terms. Particularly large contracts came under the scrutiny of Parliament itself, and in 1809 a contractor named John Trotter was called to give evidence to a parliamentary enquiry. Mr. Trotter had a contract to supply camping equipment to the army and was the nephew of the individual (also called John Trotter) awarded the same contract in 1775. While the inquiry lasted several days, and the minutes are therefore too long to reproduce in their entirety, it is of value to consider some of the questions and responses as they reflect how such a contract operated. Of particular interest were the following extracts:

Question 13: In what manner have you made your charges on the current articles?

Answer: The charge to government is made on the same principles in both; the cost of the materials is brought to the money price, as I have before stated, to which we add the price of labour, and these two form the net ready money cost on which all other percentages are calculated.

Question 14: What expenses and outgoings are covered by the ten percent charge?

²⁹³ Malisses to G. Bimiy, Commissary General's Office, 9th June 1810, PRO WO 63/45.

²⁹⁴ See above p.78.

Answer: It is intended to be a clear profit for the services we perform, which are not confined to the provision of the articles simply, but include excessive labour and anxiety in the subsequent management.

It is apparent that there was some confusion concerning the charges made by the contractor. After total costs including labour and raw materials were calculated an additional ten percent was added and the commissioners clearly believed this was intended to cover additional costs. Conversely Mr. Trotter, despite a somewhat vague answer to the second question, primarily viewed it as profit. The second issue raised in the above extract is that of how contracts could encourage inefficiency. In this case, for example, the contractor's profits effectively increased with costs: whether or not the ten percent was wholly profit, the percentage was of more value when costs were higher. Thus, a contractor seeking to increase profits could potentially benefit from inefficiency and would have made false reporting of costs particularly lucrative, such practices being relatively common in the period.²⁹⁵ The enquiry convened and on the following day questioned Mr. Trotter about who authorised him to deliver items:

Question 19: On what requisitions or authority do you issue the supplies of the articles?

Answer: The camp necessities are issued by authority of the Quartermaster General, and hospital stores by that of the Surgeon General; occasionally they are issued by order of the Commander-in-Chief [or] the Secretary at War.

It is apparent that orders for the items produced by Mr. Trotter could come from no fewer than four separate departments, one of which was the civilian War Office. Utilising a single manufacturer maximised the potential economic benefits of such a contract and ensured that the equipment used by the various organisations was compatible. Both advantages, however, would have been greatly enhanced had a central store of camping equipment existed in the British army. This would have allowed a rationalisation of the stores held by each department, improving efficiency,

²⁹⁵ Brewer, 'Commercialisation and Politics', p.197.

while fully exploiting the compatibility of equipment derived from a single source.

The next question concerned the delivery of items:

Question 20: Are you responsible for the safe delivery of the articles at the places in Great Britain to which they are ordered?

Answer: Certainly not. At the same time permit me to add, that I know not of any instance of loss by miscarriage, one alone excepted.

At the point of leaving the source of production, therefore, the items concerned ceased to be the responsibility of that particular contractor, a different contract being awarded for their transportation. Evidently Mr. Trotter satisfied the enquiry as he continued to supply camping equipment to the army following his interview.²⁹⁶

Contracts were of benefit to the military for a variety of reasons. Not least was the fact that they could fix prices for a length of time that could not be guaranteed in a wartime economy. Furthermore, the already limited manpower of organisations such as the Royal Wagon Train and Commissariat muleteers was not employed in transporting large quantities of goods from their source but more usefully in supplying the troops. The contractors themselves, however, also benefited and this went beyond merely earning a steady income and reliable payments. Dealing with the military allowed them to operate under special rules, exempt from certain regulations. In 1805, for example, it was ruled that the Russian, Danish and Swedish vessels chartered by Turnball, Forbes & Co. to deliver wine to the garrison in Gibraltar could not be seized by the Royal Navy, which was the common practice regarding vessels of this type.²⁹⁷ Similarly exports of arms to Africa were exempt from certain customs inspections to avoid 'an unnecessary delay in carrying on this trade'.²⁹⁸

Despite contracts to supply the army being put out to tender, the system had

²⁹⁶ *Eighth Report of Military Enquiry*, pp.227-8.

²⁹⁷ Draft of Instructions to the High Court of Admiralty Respecting Vessels Belonging to Russia, Denmark or Sweden, 2nd February, 1805, PRO PC 1/3643, Privy Council Miscellaneous Unbound Papers, February 1805.

²⁹⁸ Privy Council to (Illegible), 17th August 1813, PRO PC 1/4013, Privy Council Miscellaneous Unbound Papers, August 1813.

only a façade of fair competition, a characteristic of contracts in general during the period.²⁹⁹ Consider, for example, the tender put out by the Barracks Department in 1802 for the supply of coal to certain barracks. Adverts were placed in the relevant local press and on 5th April 1802 it was announced that the contract would run for twelve months, from 25th June that year. Proposals for the contract were to be delivered in sealed envelopes to the Barrack Master General on or before 12th April (seven days after the announcement). The terms of the contract were not advertised at this time but were available from either local barrack masters or the barrack office itself. An insight into early-nineteenth century British bureaucracy is provided by the fact that the latter was open for such enquiries only between 12pm and 3pm each day, except for Sundays. Proposals were required to specify the pits from which the coal was to originate, to be supported by 'adequate security' and to include the names of two referees willing to confirm these details. Clearly the requirement for securities gave some protection to the army but the time period of seven days was too short for many potential contractors to respond, particularly considering that little would happen on the Sunday and that the terms of the contract first needed to be acquired.³⁰⁰ In short, only a supplier aware of the contract in advance would have been able to meet the terms of the tender, and this could only have been achieved through inside knowledge.

The utilisation of contractors by the army was to be both beneficial and detrimental. The state benefited as contracts, if properly managed were economical and prevented the need for the army to acquire its own manufacturing capability, a situation that would have undermined the state as it would have enabled the army to obtain a greater degree of autonomy. John Bartlett states that the greatest advantage,

²⁹⁹ Brewer, 'Commercialisation and Politics', p.199.

³⁰⁰ *Salisbury Journal*, 5th April 1802, p.3.

however, was that contracts isolated the army, and consequently its troops from the price rises and fluctuations of the wartime economy.³⁰¹ Such a statement overlooks more fundamental benefits of contracts, specifically that they prevented the need for the army to maintain its own extensive production facilities and therefore freed manpower for military duties. This itself brought disadvantages, especially that of the army being dependent on outside agencies.

By their nature contracts were inflexible and it was one thing to maintain a garrison in this way as it represented a military presence that would remain in a single location for a long period, even though its constituent military units may have changed, but it was quite a different matter for specific formations as they could potentially be redeployed within a short period of time. An unexpected movement could take place before supplies were delivered, and while a unit may have taken several days to reach a port of embarkation, the logistical system and communications also moved at a slow speed. Such a situation, involving several companies of artillery from the King's German Legion, arose in 1807. Initially concern was expressed that the contractor had failed to supply the units in question with feathers, but a subsequent investigation by Brigadier General Macleod revealed that the contract had had another eight weeks to run when the units had embarked and the contractor had intended fulfilling the contract in this final period. Of note is the fact that Macleod warned that several other companies would leave Britain without this item, indicating that no attempt would be made to rectify the situation and that any deficiencies would only be remedied at their eventual destination.³⁰²

It is important to note that the army's controlling of production may not have resolved the problems caused by relying on civilian producers. Evidence of this may

³⁰¹ Bartlett, *The Development of the British Army*, p.136.

³⁰² Macleod to Crew, Woolwich, 1st May 1807, PRO WO 55/1314.

be found in the manufacture and supply of munitions, which was primarily the responsibility of the Ordnance Board. The organisation controlled several locations concerned with the production of armaments, the most important being the Woolwich Arsenal in London. This site included a sizeable garrison to provide both defence and a workforce, while non-military personnel were also employed.³⁰³ Despite such facilities, however, the army enjoyed only limited success in meeting demand for munitions. During the summer of 1810, for example, the Duke of Wellington was compelled to request ordnance from Portuguese stores, including 2,000 barrels of powder, 1,000 rounds of canister and 1,000 rounds of howitzer ammunition, to rectify deficiencies of British arms.³⁰⁴ Significantly, these stores were ammunition rather than actual weapons, items with which British formations on the continent were normally adequately supplied, unlike their counterparts dispersed across the Empire.

It is apparent that the success of the British army in the campaigns on the European continent may have masked deficiencies in other theatres. Even units deployed in the defence of Britain and Ireland suffered from shortages of munitions, and auxiliary units raised specifically for home defence could be particularly deficient.³⁰⁵ The armament returns for three regular regiments stationed in Britain during 1808 are shown in figure 10.

Unit	Date	Location	Weapon	Required	Short-fall	Deficit as % of Requirement
4 th Dragoons	7 th May	Canterbury	Carbine	844	56	7%
20 th Light Drg.	4 th May	Chichester	Carbine	513	146	28%
51 st Foot	23 rd April	Unknown	Musket	624	57	9%

Figure 10: Weapon deficiencies amongst three units deployed in Britain, 1808.³⁰⁶

³⁰³ Council Chamber, Whitehall, 2nd March 1816, PRO PC 1/4087, Privy Council Miscellaneous Unbound Papers, March 1816; J MacLeod to Mulgrave, Woolwich, 17th February 1812, PRO WO55/1369.

³⁰⁴ Wellington to Liverpool, Alvera, 22nd August 1810, PRO WO 1/245.

³⁰⁵ See below p.247.

³⁰⁶ PRO WO 27/92/1, Office of Commander in Chief and War Office: Adjutant General and Army Council Inspections, 1808.

The above data has certain characteristics that warrant consideration before discussing its implications for the regiments concerned. Of particular note is the fact that, unlike returns of available stores of food submitted by the Commissariat, inspection reports made by the department of the Adjutant-General highlight deficiencies as well as what was available.³⁰⁷ This allowed the army to estimate what items were required to bring units to strength, a crucial element that was lacking in Commissariat record keeping.³⁰⁸ Secondly, it is apparent that deficiencies are based on the actual strength of the units concerned, not their authorised or paper strength. John Brewer states that the collection of such comprehensive data was characteristic of administration in the period, especially in the tabular form utilised in inspection returns.³⁰⁹ Such practices, however, were not typical in the army because departments such as the Commissariat could be less meticulous in their collation of data. Pressures caused by operational requirements and the breakdown of peacetime practices in wartime overrode, or at least eroded, advances in administrative practice.

That the data was based on actual strength rather than paper strength is demonstrated by the disparity between the requirements of the 4th Dragoons and 20th Light Dragoons, the theoretical strengths of the two units being the same (approximately 900 to 1,000 men). Thus, a considerable number of personnel (over one quarter of the 20th Dragoons) did not possess a firearm or, in the case of the cavalry who carried a mixture of swords, carbines and pistols, a full complement of such items. This is clear evidence that the army was unable to supply its troops with the small arms they required, whether through its own output or contractors, and that this applied to even under strength regiments. That the regiments concerned were

³⁰⁷ The original listed the number of items that the regiments were deficient, while the percentages were calculated for comparative purposes in this study.

³⁰⁸ See above p.80.

³⁰⁹ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, pp.222-225.

deployed in Britain, however, raises the question of whether such shortages were significant if troops were not deployed in war zones.

As these units were not in the frontline equipment shortages maybe considered to be insignificant, but there was a realistic possibility of them becoming involved in action. Britain appeared to be enjoying a period of stability, the threat of revolution having declined considerably since the 1790s and early 1800s.³¹⁰ This stability, however, was fragile as there was continuous unrest across Britain during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, including food riots, enclosure protests and industrial unrest.³¹¹ 1812 was a particularly turbulent year as large numbers of troops were deployed to suppress disorder in northern England, more troops in fact than were sent to Portugal in 1808, while Prime Minister Spencer Perceival was assassinated in the lobby of the House of Commons.³¹² The unrest continued into the post-war period and included the Spa Fields Rally (1816), the March of the Blanketeers (1817) and the Cato Street Conspiracy (1820).³¹³ There is little reason to doubt that if the economic conditions that forced the Luddites onto the streets in 1811 had taken hold a few years earlier, perhaps due to a premature outbreak of war with the United States of America or successful French occupation of Portugal, similar unrest could have occurred in 1808 and the army may have been called upon to suppress disorder. As it was the army did on occasion become involved in suppressing disorder in 1808, but only on a small scale.

While it is apparent that there was a realistic possibility of widespread disorder at any point of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, a successful landing by

³¹⁰ E. Royle, *Revolutionary Britannia: Reflections on the Threat of Revolution in Britain. 1789 to 1848* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2000), passim.

³¹¹ A. Charlesworth (ed), *An Atlas of Rural Protest in Britain, 1548 – 1900* (London, Croom Helm), pp.51,97,104.

³¹² Emsley, *British Society*, p.158; D. Read, *The English Provinces c.1760 – 1960: a Study in Influence* (London, Edward Arnold, 1964), p.63.

³¹³ Thomis and Holt, *Threats of Revolution*, pp.39-75; Read, *The English Provinces*, p.70.

enemy forces appears to have been so unlikely that it was almost fantastical. By 1808, the year in which these inspections occurred, the threat of French invasion was virtually non-existent, due to a combination of Britain's almost insurmountable naval supremacy and Napoleon's own strategic aims, the latter ensuring that French attention would be focused almost exclusively on the continent (and increasingly on the Iberian Peninsular).³¹⁴ Yet, there was a threat, albeit slight, and that the government recognised this is demonstrated by the continued existence of coastal artillery and similar defences against amphibious attack. As Jeremy Black highlights, the importance of British naval success after 1805 was just as important as Trafalgar if French ambitions were to remain contained.³¹⁵ Since 1796 and 1798, when French forces had reached Ireland, French naval power had been substantially reduced but it still remained capable of conducting operations. Of note is that the French fleet had been blockaded in 1798, just as it was in 1811 and 1812 when the Toulon fleet sortied.³¹⁶ In short, it was not beyond possibility that the French could have made a landing of some form on the British coast, particularly in an area such as the South East; an area, which, according to John Brewer, would have been a tempting target for a raid designed to cause maximum panic and economic disruption.³¹⁷ That the French never attempted such a raid, choosing instead to attack the peripheries of British power, brings this assumption into doubt but considering its proximity to French ports and those of the Low Countries, it would have been a viable option in the event of a plan based on a rapid dash across the Channel.

There clearly existed the potential for units on home defence to become embroiled in action so the effectiveness of such units must be considered. Regarding

³¹⁴ N. Tracy, *Nelson's Battles* (London, Caxton, 2001), p.217; C. J. Esdaile, *The Wars of Napoleon* (Addison Wesley, 1995), passim.

³¹⁵ Black, *Sea Borne Empire*, p.157.

³¹⁶ Tracy, *Nelson's Battles*, pp.36-37, 215-216; Black, *Sea Borne Empire*, p.159.

³¹⁷ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.191.

civil disorder it appears that cavalry armed merely with sabres would be sufficient, as demonstrated bloodily at Peterloo. An insurrection or landing would, however, have been a different matter and the experiences of the army in suppressing the Irish rebellion demonstrates that enthusiastic rebels could, in the right circumstances, inflict a reverse on an ill-prepared force of regulars, as could a small force of regular troops landed to either support such a rebellion or act independently.³¹⁸ Despite the relative security of Britain, therefore, it is apparent that a deficiency of munitions could have had potentially serious consequences for units deployed on home defence duties. Added to this should also be the fact that insufficiently armed units could not be sent to fight on the continent and thus had only limited utility until deficiencies could be rectified. Depriving units on home defence was thus a way of maximising the potential of the field army but was nonetheless a dangerous gambit.

Shortages of weapons could be serious enough, but the effective strength of units may have been even lower when other factors are considered. In particular it is important to appreciate the ergonomic aspects of infantry weapons, as equipment of this nature required items such as rifle straps, pistol holsters and sword scabbards to be properly utilised. That the army acknowledged the significance of such items was demonstrated by their inclusion in the section of inspection returns concerned not with aesthetics (such as uniform) but armaments. This was illustrated by a return of the weapons present in the 4th battalion, Royal Artillery in Canada, during May 1808, the following items being listed: muskets, bayonets, rammers, musket slings and ammunition pouches. Besides indicating the items required to utilise a musket fully, the return is of further note because it was made as part of the 'demand of arms and accoutrements for four companies of the 4th Battalion, Royal Artillery in Canada, in

³¹⁸ T. Pakenham, *The Year of Liberty: The History of the Great Irish Rebellion of 1798* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1992), pp.95-105.

lieu of those in possessions [sic] of the companies, being rendered totally unfit for any further service, having been in use for twenty-two years'.³¹⁹

It is apparent that the small arms of the 4th battalion were in desperate need of replacement. Even though they were not technologically obsolete (as few advances had been made in musketry technology during the intervening decades) they would have been subjected to considerable wear and weathering.³²⁰ Black powder weapons employed only basic mechanisms but were susceptible to both factors and even a heavy shower of rain could degrade effectiveness. During 1798 Captain Jennings of the 14th Regiment recorded that following a march in such weather 'the 14th were mostly employed repairing the injury done to our arms and ammunition'.³²¹ That the 4th battalion had to wait so long for replacements may be attributed to its deployment in a colonial garrison, as British units deployed on the continent tended to receive the pick of equipment. As demonstrated by the Canadian garrison in 1808, however, formations deployed to relatively quiet postings could soon find themselves in a war zone, with Canada becoming a front line in the war against the United States four years later.

Weaknesses in the infantry and cavalry could have been rectified through artillery but this was an arm in which the British army was notoriously weak. Again the forces deployed in defence of Britain suffered from deficiencies, the situation regarding coastal artillery in the county of Dorset during 1798 being shown below in figure 11.

³¹⁹ Major-General Stead to Crew, Woolwich, 9th May 1808. PRO WO 55/1314.

³²⁰ A. Harman, 'They decide not, nor are they chiefly relied upon in battle': British Rifles and Light Infantry in the Peninsular War', in P Griffiths (ed), *A History of the Peninsular War Vol IX: Modern Studies of the War in Spain and Portugal, 1808 - 1814* (London, Greenhill Books, 1999), p.273.

³²¹ NAM 8301/102, Memoirs of Captain Peter Jennings, p.7.

Serviceability	Calibre					Total
	6lb	9lb	12lb	18lb	24lb	
Serviceable	2	18	-	11	12	43
Unserviceable	12	4	-	7	-	23
Deficient	-	14	2	3	-	19
Total	14	36	2	21	12	85

Figure 11: Artillery allocated to coastal defence in the county of Dorset, 1798.³²²

Taking into account guns that were unserviceable (not useable) and deficient (not present) the county lacked almost half of the artillery required for defence against French landings. This was a shocking situation considering that the survey was conducted five years after the start of hostilities and, most significantly, when there existed a real threat of French invasion: the French fleet was still strong in northern waters, while Dorset's geographical position made it vulnerable to French amphibious operations be they full-scale invasions or large-scale raids.

It is often said that the devil is in the detail and the state of coastal artillery was no exception. As noted by the survey's author, many of the guns available were too small a calibre for the task of coastal defence, indicating that deficiencies existed in terms of both quantity and quality. 6-pound artillery pieces in particular were of questionable value and they were to be slowly replaced by 9-pound calibres in the field artillery units of the British army, their use largely being confined to the horse artillery where weight and thus speed of movement were as important as lethality. The trend towards 9-pounders in the field artillery is in part reflected by the limited availability of this calibre for coastal defence, while the large number of unserviceable 6-pounders reflects pieces of this calibre being removed from field duties and

³²² PRO WO 30/116, Report on the Coast of Dorsetshire, 1798, p.17.

reallocated to other roles. The reason for the scarcity of 12-pounders was similar to that for 9-pounders, 12-pounder artillery being considered the highest practical calibre for field artillery. Of all the calibres, only the 18- and 24-pounders approached authorised strength. These calibres were too large for field use and classed as either siege or garrison artillery (the latter being their role in coastal defence).³²³

The army failed to meet the demand for munitions due to a variety of reasons. One factor was the constant attrition to which weapons were subjected in the field: during 1808 the Royal Artillery alone in Spain lost or had rendered unusable 355 swords, along with 375 items of associated equipment.³²⁴ Such attrition, however, should have been easily absorbed by an industrialising nation such as Britain.³²⁵ That this was the case was demonstrated by the fact that, for the most part, the level of munitions supplied to the army remained relatively consistent throughout the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. There is no evidence that soldiers serving in Flanders in the 1790s, for example, were significantly less well armed than those serving in the Low Countries in 1815.³²⁶

More significant than attrition in limiting the nation's ability to supply the army with munitions were factors that underpinned the British state itself. These were the guiding principles of foreign policy, specifically the pre-eminence of the Royal Navy and the subsidising of Britain's continental allies.³²⁷ There existed, for example, a fundamental imbalance in British artillery production that favoured the Royal Navy in terms of quantity and quality that was to have a direct influence on the composition of the field army and its operational capability.³²⁸ It is of note that during the siege

³²³ Partridge and Oliver, *The British Army and Her Allies*, pp.28-9.

³²⁴ Macleod to Crew, Woolwich, 22nd May 1809, PRO WO 55/1314.

³²⁵ Crafts, *British Economic Growth*, passim.

³²⁶ Although the latter forces were better maintained in other ways. See M. Adkin, *The Waterloo Companion* (London, Aurum, 2001).

³²⁷ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.178.

³²⁸ The Board of Ordnance supplied both the army and navy. Duffy, 'British Naval Power', p. 78.

actions of 1812 the army was compelled to rely on ordnance temporarily transferred from the fleet, and captured Russian pieces, to provide guns of the necessary calibre to pound enemy fortifications.³²⁹ Piers Mackesy states that often this arose not due to a shortage of army guns (a contentious point) but due to a preference for the greater mobility of naval guns. This, however, further highlights the technological lead enjoyed by the navy.³³⁰ More significant than the navy in drawing munitions away from the army (not least because the former had its own production facilities such as those at Carron) was the policy of supporting allied nations. This was a policy that both exploited and maximised Britain's economic potential. The former was achieved through supplies of cash and material to allied nations, while the latter was facilitated by Britain maintaining a small army and letting its proxies do the fighting.³³¹

The extent of Britain's military contribution to the successive coalitions created to counter French power during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars is open to some doubt and it was perhaps Austria that deserved the title of Napoleon's most resolute enemy. There can be little question, however, regarding the important role played by Britain as both financier and arsenal for the major European nations.³³² In the first three years of the Peninsular War, British vessels alone delivered 200,000 muskets and 155 artillery pieces to Spanish and Portuguese forces, and initially individual ships captains in the Royal Navy were given free reign as to who they supplied muskets too, often several hundred at a time, in an attempt to raise bands of guerrillas.³³³ Historians such as Christopher Hall see this in the context of Britain's contribution to the Allied war effort and evidence of Britain's industrial strength, yet

³²⁹ Partridge and Oliver, *The British Army and Her Allies*, p.49; C. W. C. Oman, *A History of the Peninsular War*, (Oxford, Clarendon, 1930), V, pp.257-61.

³³⁰ P. Mackesy, *British Victory in Egypt, 1801* (London, Routledge, 1995), p.27.

³³¹ And the supply of munitions to allied forces was not always cost effective. By 1808 many of Sicily's fortresses remained unarmed and the army was ill equipped. P. Mackesy, *The War in the Mediterranean*, p.108.

³³² See R. Muir, *Britain and the Defeat of Napoleon* (Yale, YUP, 1996).

³³³ Hall, *Wellington's Navy*, p.137.

this was only achieved at the expense of the British army. In 1810, for example, a consignment consisting of 20,000 stands of arms (a stand consisting of a musket and associated equipment such as ammunition pouches) was despatched to Portugal. 16,000 of these, and other 'corresponding equipment', were subsequently sent to Cadiz for allocation to Spanish forces, with only 4,000 held in reserve for British, or other allied forces, at the Tagus.³³⁴ This is significant because within months the Duke of Wellington would be requesting the transfer of munitions from Portuguese stores, demonstrating that items supplied to allied armies were also required by British forces.³³⁵ It appears that the shortages rectified by the transfer of Portuguese stores in August 1810 may in part have been caused by their allocation to Portugal to begin with.

The supply of arms to allied nations was evidence of the army's role as one of three elements of British defence policy, along with the Royal Navy and support of coalition partners. It is apparent that in some cases, due to the supply of munitions to foreign powers, the army was third place in this relationship, although that the army was not adequately supplied may also indicate the limitations of British manufacturing output. There is a tendency to focus on the achievements and capabilities of British manufacturing, although the fact that the army was not adequately supplied may indicate an inability on the part of British industry to produce sufficient munitions for both the army and foreign powers. The question is not merely one of manufacturing capacity and relates to the fact that industry operates in sectors and that deficiencies in one sector may not always be rectified up by reallocating capacity from another.³³⁶

While a consideration of munitions is fundamental to any study concerning the effectiveness and capability of an armed force, it is a subject that, on occasion, has

³³⁴ Wellington to Liverpool, Cartaxo, 12th January 1811. PRO WO 1/248.

³³⁵ Wellington to Liverpool, Alvera, 22nd August 1810, PRO WO 1/245.

³³⁶ P. Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (London, Fontanna, 1988), passim.

been given too much attention by historians. The most famous example of this is Charles Oman's theory on the role of British firepower in countering French infantry tactics. This theory is now discredited due to the work of historians such as Brent Nosworthy, who have sought to consider how various factors, including firepower and discipline, combined to cause events on the battlefield.³³⁷ While the significance of munitions has been overemphasised, the converse is true regarding uniform in debates concerning the army in the period. It is often overlooked, for example, that soldiers in many allied armies were clothed as well as armed by British manufacturers.³³⁸

When considering uniform it is necessary to appreciate that, while the canon of literature concerned with the subject is of both considerable quantity and quality, it has traditionally been confined within relatively restricted boundaries. In particular studies related to uniform have tended to focus on uniform as defined in the regulations laid down by Horse Guards, with little consideration of the actual state of uniform. While common sense compelled historians to consider that dress was not always immaculate and often patched or torn, the image portrayed by them (and artists) was still at times far removed from that of reality. Recently there has been a trend towards a more realistic appraisal of uniform, a trend apparent in the illustrations accompanying Mark Adkin's work regarding the Battle of Waterloo, illustrations that show how soldiers would probably have appeared on campaign, not how regulations instructed them to dress.³³⁹ There remains, however, a gulf between how the uniform worn in the field is portrayed by historians and by contemporaries.

³³⁷ B. Nosworthy, 'Charles Oman on Line versus Column', in P Griffiths (ed), *A History of the Peninsular War Vol IX: Modern Studies of the War in Spain and Portugal 1808 - 1814* (London, Greenhill Books, 1999), pp.231-264.

³³⁸ Hall, *Wellington's Navy*, p.137.

³³⁹ Adkin, *The Waterloo Companion*, plates 1 – 16.

Interestingly there is some evidence that, regarding uniform, twentieth century popular culture may have overtaken historians in terms of accuracy.³⁴⁰

Historians may have struggled to address fully issues relating to uniform, as military dress is rarely seen outside its role as a means of battlefield identity. Besides preventing a full understanding of the significance of uniform to soldiers and the army, this can also limit attempts to understand its provision and issues surrounding this. In consequence a certain degree of complacency has risen regarding uniform, leading to a tendency to accept the regulations laid down by Horse Guards at face value and assume that this was how soldiers appeared on campaign.³⁴¹ Only by fully appreciating the importance of an item such as uniform, however, can there be a consideration of the wider issues that surround it.

Central to a broader perception of uniform is its relationship to British society and perceptions of the army in the period. Military uniform came to symbolise many things; masculinity in portraits, military glory in art and national pride in propaganda.³⁴² Dress and appearance very much represented the public face of the army and its condition was seen as a measure of how tough fighting had been during a specific campaign. This was apparent in a newspaper article that recorded the return of troops from the Mediterranean to Southampton during February 1802. It reported that 'different detachments of the 10th and 22nd Light Dragoons have... lately landed

³⁴⁰ Although largely derided by Charles Esdaile in his survey of Peninsular War literature, the television series *Sharpe* is to be commended for promoting the image of vagabond soldiers. The main protagonist has a French pack and sword, his sergeant carries a non-regulation firearm and his other troops wear a mixture of headgear. While precise details may indeed be of dubious accuracy it is an image concurrent with that given by memoirists such as Private Wheeler and Lieutenant Grattan. C. Esdaile, 'The Peninsular War: a Review of Recent Literature', in *The Historian*, No. 6, (Winter 1999), p.9; B. H. Liddell – Hart (ed), *The Letters of Private Wheeler 1809 - 1828* (London, Michael Joseph, 1951), p.74; W. Grattan, *Adventures with the Connaught Rangers, 1809 - 1814* (London, Greenhill, 1989), p.135. The issue of captured equipment is well highlighted in the episode entitled *Sharpe's Gold*, Carlton DVD, 2002.

³⁴¹ See for example Park and Nafziger, *The British Military*, passim; R. M. Barnes, *A History of the Regiments and Uniforms of the British Army* (London, Seeley Service & Co), passim; P. J. Haythornthwaite, *Uniforms of Waterloo* (London, Arms and Armour, 1974), passim.

³⁴² L. Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (London, Vintage, 1996), p.303; J. Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, (Cambridge, C.U.P., 1989), p.58.

from Egypt, and their appearance testifies the hardships and fatigue they have undergone since they embarked at this port nearly 18 months ago'.³⁴³ The state of a uniform could also be used to signify military effectiveness, or lack thereof. The latter was apparent in the sometimes-comical depiction of Irish rebels and French soldiers by caricaturists, who frequently over-emphasised their patched and battered clothing or mixture of badly fitting civilian and military apparel.³⁴⁴

One of the most intriguing aspects of British uniform in the period is the ambiguous attitude of the population towards it. As well as being a symbol of national pride military uniform also made the population uneasy, being associated with overt militarism.³⁴⁵ The Duke of Wellington wrote that 'we are not naturally a military people; the whole business of an army upon service is foreign to our habits', and it is interesting to note that a suspicion of those in uniform not only existed in civilians.³⁴⁶ Many Auxiliary units did not always muster in uniform, and the dress code for a particular event was posted along with its announcement in the local press. In 1803, for example, troopers of the Hampshire and Fawley Light Dragoons were informed that 'the corps will meet out of uniform' for a meeting to discuss new recruits.³⁴⁷ It is thus apparent that there existed two divergent perceptions of military uniform in Britain. They would appear to be diametrically opposed but coexisted in the British mindset because, as John Brewer notes, 'they [the British] wanted military glory without what they saw as European militarism'.³⁴⁸ The two views of uniform demonstrated this notion in practice.

³⁴³ *Salisbury Journal*, 15th February 1802, p.2.

³⁴⁴ Brewer, *The English Satirical Print*, passim; A. M. Broadley, *Napoleon in Caricature*, 2 volumes. (London, John Lane, 1911), passim.

³⁴⁵ p.9.

³⁴⁶ Wellington to Right Honourable J. Villiers, 30 May 1809, Gurwood (ed), *Despatches and General Orders*, p.263.

³⁴⁷ *Salisbury Journal*, 11th July 1803, p1.

³⁴⁸ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.60.

When considering both contemporary and modern attitudes towards the uniform of the British army in the period, it is apparent that ambiguity existed. This ambivalence, however, existed not only in attitudes but also the administration of uniform. There existed over 100 volumes relating to the regulation and administration of uniform, while being improperly dressed on parade was a court-martial offence, yet on campaign certain officers appeared to be particularly lax.³⁴⁹ Of the Duke of Wellington, an individual known for conservatism, Lieutenant Grattan noted that:

[he] was a most indulgent commander... provided we brought our men into the field, well appointed, and with sixty rounds of good ammunition each, he never looked to see whether their trousers were black, blue or grey; and as ourselves, we might be rigged out in all the colours of the rainbow if we fancied it.³⁵⁰

The provision of uniform was unusual, as, unlike many other items required by the army, it was overseen not by a single department but various sub-organisations. This was unusual because the trend in the period was for increasing regulation, and in many respects the regulation and provision of uniform had changed little since the late seventeenth century despite the administrative revolution. Although the reasons for this are unclear, and may possibly be found in the structure and interdepartmental power struggles of the eighteenth century, a logical answer is simply that uniform had changed relatively little in the era other than to conform to fashion and thus its administration remained relatively unaltered. The bodies responsible for regulating the provision of uniform, including the style and material to be used, were the Clothing Board, commissions of military enquiry and various 'Boards of General Officers'. The latter were created to consider specific matters, such as proposals to modify items of uniform or appropriate regulations. These boards were primarily drawn from a single

³⁴⁹ Draft Warrant, 1816, PRO WO43/296, Amalgamation of Boards of General Officers with Inspectorate of Clothing to form the Consolidated Board; PRO WO 90/1, General Courts Martial Abroad, 1796 - 1825.

³⁵⁰ Grattan, *Adventures with the Connaught Rangers*, p.50.

body, which consisted of seven generals, ten lieutenant generals and two major generals.³⁵¹ Such boards were not always well attended and during one such meeting only two generals and three lieutenant generals were present, the absentees including the chairman, General Grenville.³⁵² Following the Napoleonic Wars the various boards were merged into a single body known as 'the Consolidated Board of General Officers', a study of which reveals much about the functions and procedures of both itself and predecessors. Its role was described as 'the inspection and sealing of pattern articles of clothing and appointments for the army', a task for which it inherited a vast number of associated records.³⁵³ The records included:

- 44 Assignment books.
- 14 General Officers' Letter Books.
- 8 General Officers' Minute Books.
- 8 Computations of Off Reckonings.
- 2 Books of General Entries.
- 3 Establishment Books.
- 3 Warrant Books.
- 1 Computation of Musters.
- 1 Regulations of Clothing Appointments for Regiments of Cavalry and Infantry, 1st July 1751.
- 1 Regimental Memoranda.
- 2 Agents' Accounts.
- 2 Abstracts of Assignments.
- 1 Regulations for Clothing Appointments for Regiments of Cavalry and Infantry, 19th December 1768.
- 6 Books of Pattern Looping for Regiments of Infantry of the Line from 1st Foot to 101st.
- 2 Books of Pattern Looping for Regiments of Cavalry.
- 6 Books of Pattern Looping for English and Scottish Militia, Lettered A to Y.
- 2 Books of Pattern Looping for Foreign Corps, and others on the British Establishment.
- 1 Invalid Clothing.
- 1 The book now in use for entering abstracts of assignments on an improved plan.

³⁵¹ Minutes of the Proceedings of the Board of General Officers, 13th March 1811, PRO WO 377/2. Various Papers, 1809 upon the System of Clothing and Off Reckonings for the Army.

³⁵² Minutes of the Proceedings of the Board of General Officers, Great George Street, Westminster, 15th April 1811, PRO WO 377/2.

³⁵³ Draft Warrant, 1816, PRO WO43/296.

This was a total of 108 books and these volumes say much about the administration of the provision of clothing: books relating to regulations in 1751 and 1768 were superfluous considering that more up to date books existed from 1798, while the reference to invalid clothing serves as a useful reminder that uniform was not only issued to fighting soldiers.

The ten pattern books reflect the scale of the task facing the Consolidated Board and its predecessors; while the existence of books concerned with particulars as specific as looping demonstrates the level of detail involved in the regulation of uniform.³⁵⁴ The image is of a highly regulated and bureaucratic system, both of which were characteristics of administration in the period. Yet the extent of the bureaucracy surrounding uniform should not be entirely attributed to contemporary administrative practices. Of note is the fact that, through relying not on a major department but minor organisations, the system of uniform provision was not typical of military administration. There is also the issue of military uniform itself, which has traditionally been a complex subject requiring its own administration. In the French army of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, for example, uniform was dictated by convention, particularly following the reforms of the Marquis de Louvois.³⁵⁵

It would be incorrect to infer that uniform provision operated entirely outside of normal administrative practices. Rather it functioned within the system to a lesser degree than was the case regarding munitions and similar items, due to the way in which responsibility was shared amongst various boards. In December 1816 this situation changed when the Consolidated Board of General Officers came into being. It consisted of eighteen Generals, twenty Lieutenant Generals and seventeen Major Generals, the senior officer being the Earl of Harcourt, while R. Barry was appointed

³⁵⁴ R. Barry, Secretary Consolidated Board of General Officers, to Secretary at War, Office of Military Board, 23rd January 1817, PRO WO43/296.

³⁵⁵ C. S. Grant, *From Pike to Shot, 1685-1720: Armies and Battles of Western Europe* (Devizes, Wargames Research Group, 1986), p.59.

secretary.³⁵⁶ This new board was to work in close co-operation with the Inspectors of Army Clothing while it could, in addition, call upon other organisations, as made clear in its instructions:

His Royal Highness thinks it highly necessary that the committee shall, in addition be allowed at their discretion the occasional assistance of two quarter masters, or other persons experienced in the nature and quality of army clothing, to inspect and examine materials in the presence, and under the personal direction of the committee... the two quarter masters or other persons... should receive an allowance of 5s for every day their attendance is required [and officers] the staff pay of their respective ranks.³⁵⁷

The recommendation that the board call upon the services of experts was significant, being tacit acknowledgement that a group of such high-ranking officers may not themselves have possessed sufficient knowledge to conduct their duties. The pride of these officers was preserved by instructions that the experts could only 'examine materials in the presence, and under the personal direction of the committee'. Despite this clause, the introduction of experts was evidence that the provision of clothing was adopting more characteristics of administration in the period, in this case the use of professionals or specialists.³⁵⁸

Despite the efforts of the various boards and commissions that existed to set the standards of army uniform, it is apparent that the dress of soldiers in the field was frequently far removed from that laid down in regulations. As Piers Mackesy writes, regulations were only relevant if they were enforced, and it is apparent that those relating to uniform were frequently not.³⁵⁹ Lieutenant Ford, for example, wrote that in the 79th the coats of its officers were 'black or blue of various forms', not the

³⁵⁶ 'Warrant for consolidating into one establishment from 25th December 1816 inclusive, the Clothing Board and all other boards of General Officers usually held in London'; Heylehurst to Secretary of State for War, Horse Guards, 2nd October 1816, PRO WO43/296.

³⁵⁷ Illegible to Secretary of State for War, Horse Guards, 21st June 1816, PRO WO43/296.

³⁵⁸ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.67; Childs, *The Army of Charles II*, p.81; Mingey, 'The Eighteenth Century Land Steward', p.8.

³⁵⁹ P. Mackesy, *British Victory in Egypt*, p.30.

regulation red, while top hats became popular with officers serving in Egypt due to the greater protection they offered against the sun.³⁶⁰ That such dress was the norm, and not merely a practice in the field or on informal occasions, was demonstrated in Major General Cartwright's report on the uniform of the 4th Queen's Own Dragoons. He concluded that the standard of uniform in the regiment was good even though many of the pairs of breeches worn were not regulation issue and were purchased from several sources.³⁶¹ This last point is significant as the state was clearly unable to provide the items of clothing that officers required, which led to individuals purchasing their own items. Besides being more colourful than often thought (and allowed in Kings Regulations) uniform may in some cases have been torn, patched or even ragged. Lieutenant Meade, complaining as usual, wrote of his uniform: 'see the crimson coat bespattered with stitches. The torn degenerate regimental breeches'; Captain Tomkinson described the cavalry helmets issued to his unit as 'completely worn out, and so warped... that the men could scarcely wear them'; and Private Wheeler wrote of his unit: 'it was difficult to tell to what regiment we belonged, for each man's coat was like Joseph's "a coat of many colours"'.³⁶²

The sometimes-shocking state of soldiers' clothing could be attributed to a variety of factors. Uniforms were subjected to constant attrition caused by weathering and other wear and tear on campaign. Both Wheeler and Tomkinson attributed their complaints to this but the situation was worsened by the provision of poor quality items. Particular difficulties were encountered in regard to equipment and clothing made from leather. From 1807, for example, the spur leathers of artillery drivers were to be replaced annually, rather than every two years, due to 'many [spurs] being lost

³⁶⁰ NAM 6807/71, p. 133; P. Mackesy, *British Victory in Egypt, 1801*, p.29.

³⁶¹ Major General Cartwright's confidential report on the actual state of the 4th Queen's Own Dragoons, 7th May 1808, PRO WO 27/92/1, Office of Commander in Chief and War Office: Adjutant General and Army Council Inspections, 1808.

³⁶² NAM 7505/10; Tomkinson, *The Diary of a Cavalry Officer*, p.34; Liddell – Hart (ed), *The Letters of Private Wheeler*, p.74.

due to the spur leather perishing'.³⁶³ More significant were the doubts expressed concerning the durability of footwear. Of that issued to cavalry it was noted the contractor 'instead of jacking them by boiling them and beating them in the proper methods, barely stiffens them by means of some gummy substance'.³⁶⁴ Similarly Captain Jennings noted of infantry boots issued to his unit that 'the shoes finished by the contractors were so bad that in twenty four hours they were useless, the soles were very little thicker than the uppers and had paper between the soles to make them stronger. Most of the men carried their shoes in their hands'.³⁶⁵ It is interesting to note that both of the above criticisms extended not from flaws inherent in the design of the specified items, but the fact that contractors sought to limit costs. This is evidence of competition for contracts, with consequences for troops in the field and, by implication, the effectiveness of the army itself. Through encouraging such practices the system was contributing to the army's problems rather than resolving them: when supplying the army in this way the imperative was economics as much as effectiveness.

Supplies of good quality footwear were important both aesthetically and for speed during marches, although these were not the only issues. The Duke of Wellington, for example, believed that 'as the soldiers pay for the shoes they receive, it is but fair towards them that they should be of the best quality for their purpose and should fit them' (this is also further evidence of the inability of the state to supply soldiers as their footwear was only subsidised, not purchased for them).³⁶⁶ Good quality boots were required both to improve the effectiveness of troops and for safety. This was particularly true of the cavalry arm, which, while not requiring boots

³⁶³ Macleod to Crew, Woolwich, 19th July 1807, PRO WO 55/1314.

³⁶⁴ Duke of Northumberland to Lieutenant Colonel Hill, Alnwick Castle 4th February 1812. NAM 6309/138, Various Letters from the Duke of Northumberland.

³⁶⁵ NAM 8301/102, no page number or other reference and the passage is included on a separate, undated, sheet.

³⁶⁶ Wellington to Liverpool, 31st March, 1811, PRO WO 1/248.

designed for long marches, had other requirements. Thus in 1812 the Duke of Northumberland felt compelled to complain about the standard of boots supplied to the cavalry. In particular he highlighted that:

Jack boots properly made are the most advantageous to troopers under service, they not only save the man's legs and knees from that most severe pressure, occasioned by such horses in a charge, which I have known attended by various injurious consequences but in case of the horse falling upon his side, they are certain to save the trooper's leg being broken.³⁶⁷

Considering the potential implications of poor quality uniform, it is surprising that when defective or poor quality items were returned to the depot they were not destroyed but merely re-issued, often without modification. In 1807, for example, a consignment of greatcoats intended to be issued to the Royal Artillery in Malta were returned as defective, but were then re-issued to new recruits in Britain. This situation was seen as unsatisfactory by Brigadier-General Macleod, and his subsequent communication with the Board of Ordnance on the subject demonstrated that the defects were not minor: 'I am sorry to add, that it would have been better if they had been destroyed at Malta, as they are so bad, that battalions will not be able to profit by any of them'.³⁶⁸ Issuing clothing already acknowledged to be defective was further evidence that the state lacked the ability to supply the army adequately. This was despite the fact that the British armed forces were, in 1807, below strength and that the challenges of the Peninsular War had yet to be faced.

Even if the clothing available was of sufficient quality there were other factors. Some deficiencies could be attributed to the actions of soldiers themselves, who discarded clothing to make their packs lighter or during sieges threw shakos into the

³⁶⁷ Duke of Northumberland to Lieutenant Colonel Hill, Alnwick Castle 4th February 1812. NAM 6309/138.

³⁶⁸ Macleod to Crew, Woolwich, 5th March 1807, PRO WO 55/1314.

air to give the defenders a target and waste ammunition.³⁶⁹ Soldiers, however, had ample incentive to respect their uniform: being improperly dressed on parade was potentially punishable by court-martial and they were charged for replacement clothing, soldiers in the Peninsula paying 6d for a pair of boots and 6d 7s for shirts.³⁷⁰ In many cases uniform deficiencies were caused not by destruction of the item (be it through wear, weathering or misuse) but rather the fact that items were not available, as noted by General Wetherall in his report concerning the 83rd Foot. Describing the regiment's great coats as 'entirely worn out', he blamed not misuse by the men but the poor provision of replacement clothing.³⁷¹ Brigadier-General Macleod noted a similar situation existed in relation to the state of the artillery of the King's German Legion in May 1807, informing the Board of Ordnance that:

I also take this opportunity of observing, that a very small portion for the King's German Artillery has as yet been delivered into store and that consisting of incomplete suits; I have directed a survey to be immediately held upon what has been delivered in.

As the German artillery are now under orders for foreign service, I am very apprehensive that they will not be supplied with their clothing (of which they are in extreme want).³⁷²

Even the 4th Dragoons (850 all ranks), a unit noted as being well attired, was deficient of 154 pairs of breeches, 46 pairs of gloves, 46 hats, 3 cloaks and 32 saddles and bridles.³⁷³

A significant reason for the shortages experienced by units newly arrived or awaiting deployment overseas was that the provision of uniform in such cases depended on an at times confusing combination of items received upon arrival and

³⁶⁹ Grattan, *Adventures with the Connaught Rangers*, pp.87, 104; J. Green, *The Vicissitudes of a Soldier's Life* (Cambridge, Ken Trotman, 1996), p.p.80, 149.

³⁷⁰ Standing Orders, Order No 27, NAM 6807/221, p.5.

³⁷¹ Half Yearly Report of 83rd Regiment, Cape of Good Hope, NAM 6112/78, p.15.

³⁷² Under lining and brackets as in original. Macleod to Crew, Woolwich, 1st May 1807, PRO WO 55/1314.

³⁷³ Returns of clothing and accoutrements of the 4th Queen's Own Dragoons, 7th May 1808, PRO WO 27/92/1, Office of Commander in Chief and War Office: Adjutant General and Army Council Inspections, 1808.

items taken with them. This was demonstrated by the orders issued concerning the embarkation of several militia units in August 1811:

the commander of the forces for the time being having been pleased to direct that the several regiments of Irish militia under orders for embarkation should take with them their canteens and haversacks, I have the honour to inform you that the necessary directions have been given to officers commanding the several corps to retain these articles in their possession, delivering in the remaining articles of field equipment into store as at first intended.³⁷⁴

The practice of militia units taking some items of equipment and uniform with them was to prove a double-edged sword. It was often the case that the militia concerned were not merely redeploying but joining a different regiment. This meant the parent formation would need to be brought back to strength, requiring the replacement of items taken by those personnel deploying overseas (in the case of the units in the above example this meant canteens and haversacks). The extent of losses is illustrated by those incurred during 1805, 2,927 watch coats being lost from a total of twenty-five Irish militia regiments due to deployments overseas. Of these units six (Carlow, Kings County, Louth, Tipperary, Tyrone and Westmeath) each lost more than 150 such coats.³⁷⁵

Inconsistencies in what units took with them when deploying overseas could not always be put right from stores at the destination and in consequence newly arrived units often lacked even basic equipment. For example, in November 1808 Brigadier Taylor complained that the 2nd battalion of the 72nd Foot arrived in South Africa fresh from the Isle of Wight depot 'with a short compliment of necessities'.³⁷⁶ While the arrival of a unit in such a state in a distant colony may be excused due to

³⁷⁴ Assistant Quarter Master General to Lieutenant Colonel John French, Quarter Master General's Office, 4th August 1811, PRO WO 63/91.

³⁷⁵ E.B. Littlehales to Commissary General Hanfield, Dublin Castle, 13th September, 1805, PRO WO 63/88.

³⁷⁶ Letter from Brigadier General J. Taylor to Adjutant General Horse Guards, Isle of Wight Army Depot, 8th November 1808, NAM 6112/78, p.76.

more pressing needs in Europe, even units deploying to this theatre did not always arrive correctly attired. In a complaint forwarded to the Earl of Liverpool by the Duke of Wellington, General Peacock expressed concern at 'the improper state in which some detachments sent from England'.³⁷⁷ This was not a new occurrence and in the previous October Wellington himself had written to the War Office concerning '3,500 accoutrements of those lately arrived from England... which it appears are not new [and] too small'.³⁷⁸

While regulations concerning the clothing of units deploying overseas could be confusing enough, there were other factors that complicated the issuing of uniform. Not least in this regard was that the attire of some units could be modified by the whim of commanding officers. This was a practice that primarily occurred in the auxiliary forces, and was demonstrated by the request made in September 1810 by Major B. Woodward of the Cavan Militia for 150 bayonet belts to be supplied to the unit. This purchase was to be made at Woodward's own expense (Woodward offering to pay 5d per belt) 'for the purpose of fastening by the accoutrements in the quick movements of the light infantry'.³⁷⁹ The request was refused because according to Commissary General Handfield 'only an order from the Lord Lieutenant [can allow] any article of store to be disposed of'.³⁸⁰ This did not end the matter, however, and Handfield advised Woodward that he could purchase the items he requested at the next sale of surplus equipment. It is necessary to note that Woodward's initial request was denied not on grounds of military regulations relating to uniform conventions but rather due to regulations concerning stock control as the items could not be supplied directly from army stores. That Woodward sought to improve the effectiveness of the

³⁷⁷ Wellington to Earl of Liverpool, Cartaxo, 19th January 1811, PRO WO 1/248.

³⁷⁸ Wellington to Earl of Liverpool, Alvera, 9th July 1810, PRO WO 1/245.

³⁷⁹ Major B. Woodward to Major Ramsey, Royal Barracks, 17th September 1810, PRO WO 63/91, Entry Book of Letters Received at Commissariat Headquarters, Dublin, 1810 – 12.

³⁸⁰ Commissary General Charles Handfield to Major B. Woodward, Commissary General's Office, 19th September 1810, PRO WO 63/91.

unit is commendable, and it must be noted that the only factor hindering the implementation of the scheme was bureaucratic regulation. A unit of the British army could not obtain equipment from stores, but through the auction of surplus equipment such items were available to civilians in Ireland, a country in which armed insurrection was perceived as a near constant threat.

There existed other conventions and rules governing uniform to hinder its effective supply. Although items were referred to with catchall terms, such as tunics, those required by various units or personnel were not always the same and there were variations in style and colour stipulated in regulations.³⁸¹ A company's designation as line, light or grenadier dictated the arrangement of its lace and shoulder decoration. Tunic colours were broadly divided into red for the infantry, blue or red for cavalry and blue for the supporting arms, although there were variations (most famously the green of the Rifle Brigade) and the facing colour of regiments also varied (basically this was the colouring of the cuffs and collar). Furthermore, details concerning colours could be confused and in the 4th Dragoons, for example, the commanding officer was unsure whether the holsters should have been black or bearskin.³⁸²

Uniforms were expensive, a parliamentary report of 1807 revealing that of 319 articles waiting to be settled, approximately one-third (98) related to uniform or similar items including horse furniture.³⁸³ An average price for uniforms being £1 17s 10d for a private soldier's, £3 12s 10d for a drummer's and £5 1s 3d for a sergeant's.³⁸⁴ Interestingly David Dundas (the Commander-in-Chief in 1809) believed that there was little variation in these costs when uniforms were purchased overseas, noting that

³⁸¹ See for example E. Littlehales to Commissary General, Dublin Castle, 1st March 1811, PRO WO 63/91.

³⁸² Major General Cartwright's confidential report on the actual state of the 4th Queen's Own Dragoons, 7th May 1808, PRO WO 27/92/1.

³⁸³ Statement of the Number of Unsettled Accounts in The Miscellaneous Department, in *Eighth Report of Military Enquiry*.

³⁸⁴ *A Treatise on Military Finance* (Whitehall, Egerton, 1796), pp.113-5.

'the expense of clothing in Europe, Africa and America is nearly the same'.³⁸⁵ A more significant factor than cost was the scale of the task required to guarantee an adequate supply of replacement clothing, the Peninsular army requiring 30,000 pairs of shoes in 1809, rising to 150,000 in 1810.³⁸⁶ The problem of supplying new uniform was only partly rectified by recycling old ones – such as cutting down the previous year's tunics to make waistcoats.

In the case of munitions the army was involved in procurement through issuing specifications and production orders (the War Office) and manufacture (arsenals), while the production of uniforms was merely directed by the army. The situation regarding accommodation and shelter was decidedly different and the organisations concerned not only issued specifications (be they for the construction of structures or supply of associated items) but were also actively involved in both maintenance and administration: it was the task of the Adjutant-General's department and commanding officers, rather than the clothing boards, to compile returns of uniform, while barrack masters themselves reported on the condition of barracks maintained by the Barrack Master General's department.

Accommodation and shelter in the army during the period can be divided in to the categories of permanent (barracks), temporary (tents and shelter provided by the army) and field (any shelter considered expedient). Responsibility for providing the latter frequently rested with commissaries, individuals who were expected to be familiar with all the resources required by the army in their area. Troops, however, also relied on their own ingenuity for such shelter and Captain Bragge wrote how his unit had resided in 'very indifferent huts built of boughs and open at each end, without

³⁸⁵ Memo from David Dundas, Commander in Chief, PRO WO 377/2, Various Papers, 1809 upon the System of Clothing and Off Reckonings for the Army, paragraphs 1 to 2 and 9.

³⁸⁶ Wellington to Castlereagh, 31st May 1809, PRO WO 1/238; Wellington to Liverpool, 31st March, 1811, PRO WO 1/248.

any straw, palliasses or things of that nature to lie on' for several days.³⁸⁷ To construct such shelters units were compelled to utilise whatever building materials were at hand, with the result that frequently whole villages could be stripped to provide building materials for makeshift shelters and, more commonly, fuel. The practice was to become so widespread that in 1811 general orders were issued in an attempt to limit such activity:

The commander of the forces requests the general officer commanding divisions will place safeguards in the villages in the neighbourhood of encampments to prevent the soldiers from carrying off furniture, poles of the vines, and other property of the inhabitants.³⁸⁸

Away from the frontline, when troops tended to be less mobile, the allocation of shelter and associated items, such as fuel, could be better controlled. Indeed, troops were less likely to be given a crude shelter and instead find themselves billeted in the home of a local civilian (a policy that was in theory the responsibility of the Quarter Master General but practicalities in the field dictated that it was executed by the Commissariat).

In Spain and Portugal the practice was popular amongst many locals as those most commonly accommodated in this way were officers, the presence of whom were believed to deter looting. The validity of such a belief was seemingly demonstrated during the storming of Badajoz. Lieutenant Grattan was invited to dine in a house at this time and he wrote, 'all outside was noise and pillage [but] affairs within went on agreeably enough'.³⁸⁹ Despite protection from looting, however, the arrival of an officer was not always welcome and they could prove to be less than gracious guests. Captain Browne, for example, instructed his servant to steal clothing from his Spanish

³⁸⁷ Cassels (ed), *The Letters of Captain William Bragge*, p.75.

³⁸⁸ Poimbera, 18th March 1811, Extracts of General Orders, NAM 6807/221, pp.8-9.

³⁸⁹ Grattan, *Adventures with the Connaught Rangers*, p161.

host.³⁹⁰ The rank and file rarely had the luxury of being billeted with a family, although Private Thomas Howell of the 71st Regiment of Foot experienced this during the winter of 1812-13. This was a learning experience for both parties and demonstrated the ignorance each had of the other's culture – Howell was surprised to find Spanish children so well treated and the local priest amazed to discover the 'heretical' English knew the Lord's Prayer.³⁹¹ Despite the example of Howell, for most of the rank and file local accommodation tended to be a crowded barn or peasant dwelling. This could be an unpleasant experience for owner and occupier alike, as demonstrated by the fact that Commissary Schauman deliberately billeted troops in the properties of locals he disliked.³⁹²

The billeting of troops in local properties was not unique to overseas deployments, and during the early stages of the Revolutionary Wars it had been common practice in Britain to billet troops at local inns and even in local homes. This latter practice went against a concept central to British policy in the period: that the existence of the army should cause minimum inconvenience to civilians.³⁹³ The billeting of troops in homes continued as a result of a loophole in seventeenth century legislation that had allowed the practice to continue in certain parts of Edinburgh. Furthermore the owners were only eligible for compensation if the property was located in certain suburbs of the city, going against another concept that characterised the relationship between the army and society: that the army had to pay its way and not requisition items.³⁹⁴ This did not stop officers from renting rooms but merely prevented them from being forced on homeowners, although even the leasing of rooms could be unpopular. This was particularly so in 1809, when large numbers of

³⁹⁰ Buckley (ed), *The Napoleonic War Journal of Captain Thomas Henry Browne*, p.181.

³⁹¹ Hibbert (ed), *A Soldier of the 71st*, pp.80-2.

³⁹² Schauman, *On the Road with Wellington*, p.76. See also Hibbert (ed), *A Soldier of the*, p.57.

³⁹³ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.49.

³⁹⁴ Anon, *A Treatise on Military Finance*, p.66; Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.36.

officers suffering from fever contracted in Walcheren were understandably but cold-heartedly refused accommodation by the citizens of Harwich.³⁹⁵ The billeting of troops at inns was another unpopular practice, drunkenness amongst soldiers being common.³⁹⁶ The blow to innkeepers was partly softened by the payment of generous financial compensation, which amounted to 12d to 16d per cavalryman with horse, 6d if without a horse, 10s 6d per chaplain and his horse and 4d per infantryman.³⁹⁷ In addition to these payments for accommodation, innkeepers also received money described as being 'in lieu of beer' directly from the War Office.³⁹⁸

It was one thing for soldiers to participate in an occasional fracas while drunk, but the billeting of troops in inns also significantly increased the danger of them becoming involved in more serious politically motivated, even revolutionary, disorder. Partly in response to this threat, but also in response to the growth of the army during the period of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, the government of Prime Minister William Pitt instigated a barrack-building programme.³⁹⁹ The concept of barracks was not new, but rather their widespread introduction to Britain was. Barracks had long existed in Britain and overseas, frequently earning a reputation for poor conditions. Captain Jennings, for instance, described the Picket Yard barracks of Gibraltar as 'this cursed garrison' during a brief visit in 1799.⁴⁰⁰

The expansion of available barracks brought with it significant improvements to living conditions, including schools and hospitals.⁴⁰¹ As was usual in the period this

³⁹⁵ Dent to Mother, Colchester, 12th September 1809, NAM 7008/11/2. The fact that they had to seek accommodation of this nature is further evidence of the limitations of the barrack-building programme discussed below.

³⁹⁶ NAM 6807/71, p.111.

³⁹⁷ PRO WO 55/3045, , p44; Anon, *A Treatise on Military Finance*, pp.66-9.

³⁹⁸ PRO WO 12/1522, Royal Wagon Train 1799 – 1801.

³⁹⁹ C. Emsley, 'The Military and Popular Disorder in England 1790-1801' Part 1, in *Journal of Army Historical Research*, Volume LXI, (Spring 1983), pp10-21 and Part 2, (Summer 1983), pp106-112.

⁴⁰⁰ NAM 8301/102, p.14.

⁴⁰¹ Few historians consider barracks beyond their role in isolating soldiers from the population. For an exception see C. Jones, 'The Military Revolution and the Professionalism of the French Army under the Ancien Regime', in Duffy (ed), *The Military Revolution and State* , p.42.

also created extra regulation but this bureaucracy generally benefited soldiers by going some way to ensure their barrack accommodation was of a reasonable standard. Barracks were the responsibility of the Barrack Department, which in 1812 consisted of three inspectors general; twelve assistant inspectors general and one hundred and fifty barrack masters (approximately one for each barrack, although some postings had two). Other personnel employed included varying numbers of artificers (for example six in 1806, none in 1812)⁴⁰². Barrack masters oversaw individual barracks and their role was to ensure the blocks were properly equipped, maintained and run in accordance with a bureaucratic system of regular returns, including monthly, four-monthly and six-monthly reports.⁴⁰³

In barracks the rooms of officers were equipped almost solely as a place to sleep, containing few items other than those for bedding, washing and heating, a desk and a chair (with a variety of ‘luxury’ options, including rosewood inlays). Even these basics were not always available, however, as Judge Advocate Larpent complained that he lacked even a stool.⁴⁰⁴ Captains were allocated individual rooms, while two subalterns or staff officers shared a single room. An inventory of the differing items in the rooms of officers and the other ranks, compiled from a list of requirements written in 1797, is shown in figure 12. It can be seen that one of the primary differences between the rooms of officers and other ranks was the provision of cooking implements, including a wide variety of pots and pans. Conspicuous by its absence from the list of officers’ furniture is bedding, although other sources indicate its presence. The rooms of the other ranks were clearly intended for use by far greater numbers of men, and the rooms also contained lower-quality bedding materials – primarily straw and sacking.

⁴⁰² Army List, 1806 to 1812 (London, War Office, 1806), *passim*.

⁴⁰³ See *Letter from Barrak [sic] Master General to Barrak Masters* (Barraks Office, 1797).

⁴⁰⁴ Larpent (ed), *The Private Journal of F S Larpent*, Vol. I (London, Richard Bentley, 1853), p.66.

Officers	Other Ranks	
Tables	Fire Irons	Wooden Ladles
Chairs	Fenders	Large Bowls
Fire Irons	Iron Pots	Large Platters
Fenders	Iron Boilers	Small Bowls
Coal Scuttles	Pot Covers	Trenchers
Bellows	Boiler Covers	Spoons
Coal Trays	Iron Work	Tin Beer Cans
Mops	Pot Hooks	Tin Drinking Cups
Hair Brooms	Hand Hooks	Candle Sticks
Earthen Salting Pans	Coppers	Water Buckets
Urine Tubs	Trivets	Blankets
Chamber Pots	Flesh Forks	Sacking
Coal Baskets	Frying Pans	Cordial
	Grid Irons	Round Towels
	Iron Ladles	

Figure 12: An inventory of furniture and utensils in a barracks, c1797.⁴⁰⁵

There was little variation between the barracks of the cavalry and infantry other than extra candles for the stables of the former.

Despite the increased number of barracks and the benefits that they brought, the success of the barrack-building programme in the period is easy to overestimate. The pace of construction was slowed by the outbreak of peace in 1802, during which period certain barracks were sold-off at public auctions, one example being the almost new 900 man barrack block near the Backwater at Weymouth.⁴⁰⁶ As a result, even as the Napoleonic Wars reached their final stages, there was less barrack accommodation available in Britain than required. This was demonstrated in the following letter, written in 1812 and concerning the militia billeted at Woolwich artillery barracks:

for tho' [sic] the number of our recruits in the country exceed the space we have left the space we have left for their accommodation... we are always more or less, but particularly at this time sending off drilled parties to fill deficiencies abroad.⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰⁵ Letter from Barrak [sic] Master General to Barrak Masters (Barraks Office, 1797), Appendix.

⁴⁰⁶ *Salisbury Journal*, 15th February 1802, p.2.

⁴⁰⁷ Underlining in original. MacLeod to Mulgrave, Woolwich, 17th February 1812, PRO WO55/1369.

In effect, there was only sufficient barracks space for the artillery while large numbers of its personnel were deployed abroad. The experience of the Royal Artillery at Woolwich suggests, therefore, that the success of the barrack-building programme in terms of accommodating troops may not have been due to an impressive rate of construction so much as extensive commitments on the continent and in the colonies.

Barracks were to play an increasingly important role in accommodating the army. It was apparent, however, that the needs of the force could not be met through the utilisation of barracks and civilian properties alone; in particular the army needed to expand its capability to house troops in the field. The solution was to make greater use of camping equipment. As demonstrated by the contract awarded to the uncle of John Trotter in 1775, the concept itself was not new, although its use to accommodate troops grew during the course of the Napoleonic Wars. The provision of camping equipment was theoretically the responsibility of the Quarter Master General's department, although as noted in the previous chapter some of its tasks were in practice conducted by the Commissariat.

Initially the provision of camping equipment was such that, according to Lieutenant Grattan, the only cover for many troops was 'the canopy of heaven'.⁴⁰⁸ Sleeping in the open in this way could be particularly ruinous to health and Private Howell wrote of awaking one morning that 'we were up, an hour before day, and wrung out our blankets, emptied our shoes of the water, each man trembling like the leaf of a tree'.⁴⁰⁹ The first (and on occasion only) line of defence for a soldier against the elements was his blanket. This could be used either conventionally or as part of a crude shelter, supported by muskets. The latter role was facilitated by the introduction of a reinforced ring in the corner of army blankets.⁴¹⁰ Not all soldiers, however,

⁴⁰⁸ Grattan, *Adventures with the Connaught Rangers*, p.292.

⁴⁰⁹ Hibbert (ed), *A Soldier of the 71st*, pp.79,22.

⁴¹⁰ L. C. Gurwood (ed), *General Orders of the Duke of Wellington in the Campaigns of 1809-14* (London, Clowes and Son, 1837), p.35.

enjoyed even this basic protection from the elements: until 1810 only half to three quarters of infantry serving in the Peninsula had been issued with these special blankets, and of those received many were lost or, as in the case of Private Wheeler's, illegally sold or traded by soldiers for food, alcohol or clothing.⁴¹¹ In addition, the erection of the makeshift shelter was noted as being unpopular by Quarter Master Surtees because it provided little protection during cold nights.⁴¹² A more substantial solution than the blanket shelter was the round tent, which was initially developed for use in Flanders but officially issued to all British forces from 1811.⁴¹³ In practice many units received them much later than this or not at all, and Judge Advocate Larpent noted that there were sufficient tents available only if absentees, servants and sentries were discounted.⁴¹⁴

The procurement of tents, like other items, for the British army reflects an important factor in the relationship between the force and the state – the extent to which the state was willing to allocate resources to sustain the force. When considering the procurement activities of the army it is clear that Britain's economic and industrial capability was not fully exploited. This was because the machinery of the British state was created not to pander to the needs of the army but to contain its power. There is no evidence that there was a concerted policy to keep the army in check through deliberately failing to meet its needs. Rather it was a question of priority. The first hurdle confronting the army was the attitude of both the state and society towards the military and war, conflict being seen as disruptive to the economy. The proportion of output allocated to fighting the Napoleonic Wars, however, demonstrates a willingness on the part of the state to meet the challenge of war. The difficulty facing the army was thus not one of resources committed to the war in

⁴¹¹ Liddell – Hart (ed), *The Letters of Private Wheeler*, p.70.

⁴¹² W. Surtees. *Twenty Five Years in the Rifle Brigade* (London, Greenhill, 1996), p.189.

⁴¹³ Bartlett, *The Development of the British Army*, p.136.

⁴¹⁴ Larpent (ed), *The Private Journal of F S Larpent*, Vol. 2, p.63.

general, but the proportion of these resources that it would receive. Regarding this the force faced not only competition with the Royal Navy but also the armies of other countries. Therefore, the army did not necessarily receive a fair share of the resources allocated to the national war effort and it was often hampered in utilising those that it did receive by the policies of the state. The use of contractors, for example, was not always an efficient way to meet the needs of the force, while the need to comply with regulations was not necessarily compatible with operational necessity. These regulations could be overridden when required but the rise of the professional administrator in the period, at the expense of less able but more military minded counterparts, ensured that administrative concerns would increasingly take precedence over military issues.

Regulation and bureaucracy were to have an increasing (and often detrimental) influence on the army but the force remained able to maintain a certain amount of autonomy in its structure if not its administration and prove able to adapt despite the limitations imposed on it due to the nature its relationship with the state. This is demonstrated in the following chapter, which is concerned with the Royal Wagon Train.

Chapter 4

Transport in the British Army⁴¹⁵

Transport is a central but often overlooked part of logistics.⁴¹⁶ One might assume that the British army was almost certain to possess a sound transport infrastructure due to the support of the state yet as in the case of manufacturing this support was neither total nor adequate. By the time of the Napoleonic Wars Britain lay between the end of the canal building boom and on the brink of railway mania, possessing national canal and road networks that were unrivalled. The significance of such advances for the army, however, was far less than that for industry and, as noted in the previous chapter, the resulting industrial and economic benefits of canals and roads could not be fully exploited by the army. The simple fact was that while operating in its home country the British army had internal lines of communication unlike any other force in Europe but, while this may have been a factor if an invasion had occurred, in the event had little significant impact in the main theatres of war. Roads and turnpikes may have enhanced the mobility of British forces travelling to and from ports of embarkation but this then depended on shipping schedules to be of value.

For the army, shipping was to be the most reliable aspect of Britain's transport infrastructure. Between 1808 and 1814 404 convoys sailed from Britain to the Iberian Peninsular, a total of 13,427 voyages in a system that proved secure from any action.⁴¹⁷ British naval supremacy was such that its merchant ships no longer had to be designed with defensive armament in mind, allowing increases in cargo capacity and

⁴¹⁵ Some of this research has been published. C. Chilcott, 'The Royal Wagon Train (notes and documents)', in *JSAHR*, volume 82, number 330, Summer 2004, pp.175-177.

⁴¹⁶ Creveld, *Supplying War*, p.1.

⁴¹⁷ Hall, *Wellington's Navy*, p.113.

stowage capability.⁴¹⁸ Such naval transport was not infallible, as demonstrated in 1808 when delays relating to shipping impeded the embarkation of units bound for Spain and Portugal, but was nonetheless a significant factor in the successes of the army.⁴¹⁹ The land-based infrastructure of Britain was too remote from the battlefields of Europe to influence the army's operational capability significantly, and its significance to the force even in Britain was limited by regulations. These regulations related to a concept that characterised the relationship between army and state in the period – that the force should cause as little inconvenience to the population as possible.

The goal of minimal inconvenience was to be achieved through several means. One of the most fundamental was that when arriving in a new area, troops were to present a warrant authorising their entry, which was then to be signed by a magistrate who would subsequently direct them along the quickest route to their next destination or billet.⁴²⁰ The system ensured troops arriving in unfamiliar territory would receive the benefit of local knowledge, as well as minimising the time spent transiting an area and ensuring that military forces remained under the close supervision of the civil power, in this case magistrates. The weakness of the system was that it could only operate if the correct papers were presented. If this did not occur magistrates were able to refuse a force entry to their area, as was the case in June 1807 when a column of wagons carrying supplies for the artillery arrived unexpectedly at the Sussex town of Winchelsea. As he had not been informed of their pending arrival the local magistrate refused them passage and sent the column on a detour around the town, resulting in a four hour delay.⁴²¹ Such incidents were rare but highlighted the problems

⁴¹⁸ Black, *Sea Borne Empire*, (London, YUP, 2004), p.155.

⁴¹⁹ Baird, to Castlereagh, Falmouth, 1st October 1808, PRO WO 1/236, p.337.

⁴²⁰ Minutes of 2nd February 1808, WSRO B18/100/7, Salisbury Division, Justices Minute Books, January 1808 to January 1809.

⁴²¹ Macleod to Crew, Woolwich, 17th June 1807, PRO WO 55/1314.

that could potentially occur when the army was required to co-operate with the local authorities.

The concept of minimal inconvenience further restricted the mobility of the army by limiting the manpower and vehicles that were available for general transport duties. Until 1795 the army had little integral transport capability of note and instead relied on civilian contractors. This practice had come to the fore in Europe during the Thirty Years War and has been defined as effectively marking the start of modern logistics.⁴²² Yet it was a system with drawbacks and such contractors were not always reliable. This was illustrated by the case of James Maton, who was called before Wiltshire magistrates in November 1808 ‘for not attending with a wagon and five horses in the market place [of] Sarum to receive the arms, clothes and accoutrements of the 5th Dragoon Guards and then convey the same to Stockbridge’, despite being contracted to do so.⁴²³ Another feature of the employment of civilian drivers, and one not typical of British politics in the period, was a lack of regulation from central government regarding their employment.⁴²⁴ Instead these contracts were administered at county level, and local magistrates were allowed to determine payments to be made based on mileage and transport supplied. In October 1803, for example, it was agreed that contractors in Wiltshire would receive 1s per mile for wagons, with an additional 3d if towed by four horses or six oxen, while payments for carts were to be 9d per mile, with an additional 2d for four horses or oxen.⁴²⁵ It is apparent, therefore, that due to their role as guides, allowing entry to convoys and establishing rates for contractors, magistrates fulfilled a vital role in military transport within Britain.

Considering the inefficiency of a transport system utilising only civilian drivers, the reluctance of the state to allow the army control of civilian property and a

⁴²² Schechter and Sander, *Delivering the Goods*, p.35.

⁴²³ Minutes of meeting held at Fisherton Anger, 8 November 1808, WSRO B18/100/7.

⁴²⁴ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.102.

⁴²⁵ *Salisbury Journal*, 31 October 1803, p.1.

growing tendency towards professionalism and specialisation in society in general, it is surprising that no dedicated corps dedicated to transport in the army existed until 1795. Known as the Corps of Royal Waggoners, this formation soon proved inadequate and was disbanded.⁴²⁶ Subsequently, in 1799 the Royal Wagon Train was formed from a cadre of cavalry personnel to meet the transport requirements of the British army in the Netherlands.⁴²⁷ Like its predecessor, the Royal Wagon Train would prove incapable of carrying out its task and the Commissariat would be forced to rely upon civilian drivers to maintain the majority of the supply network. Despite its shortcomings, however, the train provided a professional core around which the transport network could operate, reflecting the increasing professionalism of the army in general during the period.

The employment of military drivers rather than civilians gave the Royal Wagon Train flexibility, as it was not hindered through operational constraints imposed by contracts. Military drivers could be called on to deliver supplies under fire, for example, and were thus more effectively utilised if assigned to such tasks, rather than transporting manure from barracks, a role, amongst others, for which civilian contractors continued to be employed.⁴²⁸ The employment of military personnel as drivers also enabled the army to resolve difficulties more rapidly as its personnel could be subject to action far sooner than civilians could through the courts. Besides being able to use military discipline officers on occasion resorted to their own initiative to get convoys moving, as was the case when Major Dickson found six of his drivers drunk. He noted that ‘previous to moving from Torquemada I ducked [in a water barrel] drivers Henderson, Mitchell, Ash, Farmer, O’Neal... and driver Doran

⁴²⁶ Even prior to its employment in Flanders senior British officers had expressed doubts about its effectiveness. P. Mackesy, *British Victory in Egypt*, p. 10.

⁴²⁷ The designation of this organization from 1799 to 1802 was the Royal Wagon Corps, but for clarity the later designation of Royal Wagon Train is adhered to in this work.

⁴²⁸ Singer to Boyes, Commissary General’s office, 24 March 1806, PRO WO 63/45.

was so completely inebriated that he was left behind'.⁴²⁹ Inevitably there were difficulties involved in employing civilian or military drivers, but it is the consequences for the individuals involved that underline the value of the latter. Dickson was able to resort to instant (not to mention dramatic) measures to resolve his difficulties, while in the case of civilians such as James Maton (above) there were few sanctions beyond any penalty clauses, revoking the contract and a fine (in this case 40s) imposed by a civilian court days or weeks after the event.⁴³⁰ A footnote to Dickson's actions, and one that puts the issues into perspective, is that if he had ducked contractors he would have effectively been guilty of assault as British soldiers were bound by civil law even when carrying out their duty.⁴³¹

Besides illustrating the benefits offered by the employment of military personnel, the Royal Wagon Train is important to a study concerned with the maintenance of the British army for a variety of reasons. One of the most fundamental is that it was an organization that played a significant role in logistics but a detailed study of the train also reveals much about the relationship between state and the army. The Royal Wagon Train perhaps reflects this relationship more than any other formation because it was a product of the contemporary state. The train had no real roots in an earlier period, unlike the Commissariat, which had slowly evolved, with each new development or practice, be it administrative, social, military or technological, being added to and eventually absorbed by the organization (as was to occur in many institutions in the period).⁴³² Conversely the Royal Wagon Train was created at the end of the eighteenth century, when many of these developments had occurred or were underway and were incorporated into the organization from its conception. Thus the Royal Wagon Train warrants a detailed consideration, not only

⁴²⁹ Leslie, *The Dickson Manuscripts*, Vol. 4, p.712.

⁴³⁰ Minutes of meeting held at Fisherton Anger, 8 November 1808, WSRO B18/100/7.

⁴³¹ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.48.

⁴³² Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.69.

to reveal the relationship between the state and army but also to demonstrate a product of this system. In addition a study of the Royal Wagon Train will bring together issues previously raised in this study, particularly in regard to the reflexive or pragmatic policies that characterised the methods used to maintain the army.

The Royal Wagon Train performed a crucial role for the army but is one of the least studied units of the British army. The train is frequently overlooked in works by informed contemporaries such as Lieutenant Colonel Wilson, J. MacDonald and the anonymous writer of *A Treatise on Military Finance*, all of whom paid scant attention to the organization and its role in logistics.⁴³³ The train was a relatively anonymous organization in the Napoleonic British army, a situation that has often worked to its advantage as criticism is deflected to the much more prominent Commissariat. This was apparent in Arthur Wellesley's letter of 16 August 1808, in which he informed Castlereagh that 'I have found the British Commissariat to be so ill composed as to be incapable of distributing even to the British troops the ample supplies which have been procured for them'.⁴³⁴ Wellesley made no mention of the pathetically small, and totally inadequate detachment of the train then operating in the theatre.⁴³⁵ This was despite the fact that Wellesley was well aware of the limitations of the Royal Wagon Train, believing that no effective wagon train had existed in the British army until the absorption of the Irish Wagon Train.⁴³⁶

The operation of wagons in the army was not exclusive to the Royal Wagon Train and regiments held a limited number. These were utilised for duties including the distributing supplies from regimental depots, carrying wounded and administrative tasks. Commissaries accompanying units used a wagon for the carriage of ledgers,

⁴³³ See L. T. Wilson, *An Enquiry into the state of the Forces of the British Empire* (London, 1804); J. MacDonald, *Instructions for the Conduct of Infantry in Actual Service* (London, 1807); Anon, *A Treatise on Military Finance*.

⁴³⁴ Arthur Wellesley to Castlereagh, 16 August 1808, PRO WO 1/228.

⁴³⁵ Monthly return of the Royal Wagon Train, August 1808, PRO WO 17/54/1, Wagon Train 1805 – 12.

⁴³⁶ Arthur Wellesley to Castlereagh, 8 August 1808, PRO WO 1/228.

while Paymasters often commandeered vehicles against regulations to ease the carriage of pay books.⁴³⁷ This latter practice frequently utilised wagons that were otherwise allocated for medical duties (an extreme example of bureaucracy interfering in military operations!) and prompted the Duke of Wellington to condemn the practice in a general order of 11 September 1809.⁴³⁸

The difference between the train and other wagon using organisations was not so much the ability to operate wagons but a capability to maintain them. Organisations such as the Quartermaster's Department and Commissariat hired civilians, on contracts of varying length, to maintain their wagons; the train employed its own specialist personnel.⁴³⁹ Personnel employed by the Royal Wagon Train on maintenance duties included blacksmiths, cotton weavers, wheelwrights, collar-makers and farriers. An interesting feature of administration in this period is that, while in many respects comprehensive, its lexicon could vary and these individuals were variously referred to using either the blanket term of artificers or identified by their speciality.⁴⁴⁰ The importance of such personnel was highlighted in a report of October 1811, which outlined the difficulties encountered when untrained personnel, specifically cavalry farriers, attempted to repair carts and wagons:

[they] are able to perform the smallest repair on the cart but in clumsiest manner, and are wholly ignorant how to refit it, in case of serious accident – the very repairs thus made by [them], from being so clumsily performed, prove a means of tearing to pieces and ultimately demolishing a cart... in the event of a wheel being broken, these carts remain totally unserviceable unless a wheel man can be obtained.⁴⁴¹

⁴³⁷ Standing orders, order number 2, NAM 6807/221, Books of Commissary General N. Jackson, 1814.

⁴³⁸ Gurwood (ed), *General Orders of the Duke of Wellington*, p.49. Logisticians refer to the practice of improperly holding on to utilising resources in this way as 'hoarding', a practice that continues into the twenty-first century and remains a drain on resources in any combat zone. Schechter and Sander, *Delivering the Goods*, p.84.

⁴³⁹ Monthly returns of those employed in the Commissariat department under the control of assistant Commissary General George Grellier at Milazzo, NAM 7902/36.

⁴⁴⁰ See PRO WO 12/1522, Royal Wagon Train 1799 – 1801.

⁴⁴¹ PRO WO 37/10/26, paragraphs 5 to 6.

It is necessary to appreciate that employing specialist personnel was not itself unusual as the cavalry employed farriers, but employing them to maintain wagons was. Furthermore those employed by the train covered a range of trades.

An additional specialist appointment, although not one unique to the Royal Wagon Train, was the post of Veterinary Surgeon (who was, in theory, also assigned a deputy). Interestingly, the train went for three years (1803 – 1806) without a veterinary surgeon and the deputy filled the role, although this occurred during a relatively quiet period for the army and does not appear to have unduly affected the operational capabilities of the organization.⁴⁴² Finally, the skills of the drivers themselves should not be underestimated. The report of October 1811 stated that ‘no wheeled carriage can be securely drawn over an [sic] hilly country for even one march, especially when drawn by horses little accustomed to draught, and under the charge of men wholly ignorant of governing horses’.⁴⁴³

The specialisation of the Royal Wagon Train was significant as it demonstrated the future of military logistics and maintenance. The organization would evolve throughout the nineteenth century, leading to the formation of the Army Service Corps in 1889, and the Royal Army Service Corps (R.A.S.C.) in 1918.⁴⁴⁴ As a predecessor of the R.A.S.C., the Royal Wagon Train must thus be considered as representing the British army at its most progressive. It is incorrect to view the Royal Wagon Train as merely an ancestor of the R.A.S.C., in the way in which, for example, the guards regiments raised during the Restoration were forerunners of modern formations bearing the same name.⁴⁴⁵ The concepts that lay at the heart of the Royal Wagon Train – specialist military personnel and the concentration of assets (in this

⁴⁴² PRO WO 17/54/1, Monthly returns of the Royal Wagon Train.

⁴⁴³ PRO WO 37/10/26, paragraph 9.

⁴⁴⁴ J. Sutton (ed.), *Wait for the Wagon* (Barnsley, Leo Cooper, 1998), pp.33-37; R.H. Beadon, *The Royal Army Service Corp*, (Cambridge, CUP, 1931), passim.

⁴⁴⁵ Childs, *The Army of Charles II*, p.233.

case transportation) – represented a new way of maintaining the army and ultimately waging war.

The employment of specialists also reflected the trend towards professionalism that was occurring in both the army and society. While that of society increasingly relied on education through the use of examinations, however, the army was adopting both an academic approach and one emphasising practical skills.⁴⁴⁶ The latter is important as it demonstrates that the army was starting to appreciate the importance of experience, a crucial step towards undermining the worst aspects of the purchase system. This is apparent when it is considered that in the period increasing numbers of officers were indeed promoted based on this principle, rather than through purchase, patronage or other privileges.⁴⁴⁷

Despite the fact that the concept of the Royal Wagon Train was progressive, its structure reveals origins rooted in contemporary military thinking. At the heart of train's organization lay the troops, which approximately equated to companies or squadrons in the regiments of the combat arms, and reflected the fact that the organization shared many of its administrative practices with the cavalry. The number and composition of these troops were not constant, as shown in figure 13. The number of troops on the strength of the train fluctuated due to a variety of factors. These include the absorption of the Irish Wagon Train following the Act of Union (reflected by the increase from three troops in September 1799 to eight by 1801); the reductions in defence expenditure caused by the Peace of Amiens; the restructuring of the troops in 1804; the invasion scare of 1805 which promoted an increase in Britain's military readiness; the peak of the organization's efficiency in 1813-14; and the dispersal of

⁴⁴⁶ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.88.

⁴⁴⁷ P. J. Haythornthwaite, 'The British Army, Wellington and Moore: Some Aspects of Service in the Peninsular War' in P. Griffiths (ed) *A History of the Peninsular War Vol. IX: Modern Studies of the War in Spain and Portugal 1808 - 1814* (London, Greenhill Books, 1999) pp.90-100. For a wider consideration of purchase and its demise see also A. Bruce, *The Purchase System in the British Army 1660 - 1871* (London, RHS, 1980), passim.

the force in 1814 – 15 to maintain forces in Britain, France, Spain, the Netherlands and Hanover. Figure 13, therefore, reveals how decisions made at state level could directly influence the composition and thus capabilities of an organization such as the Royal Wagon Train.

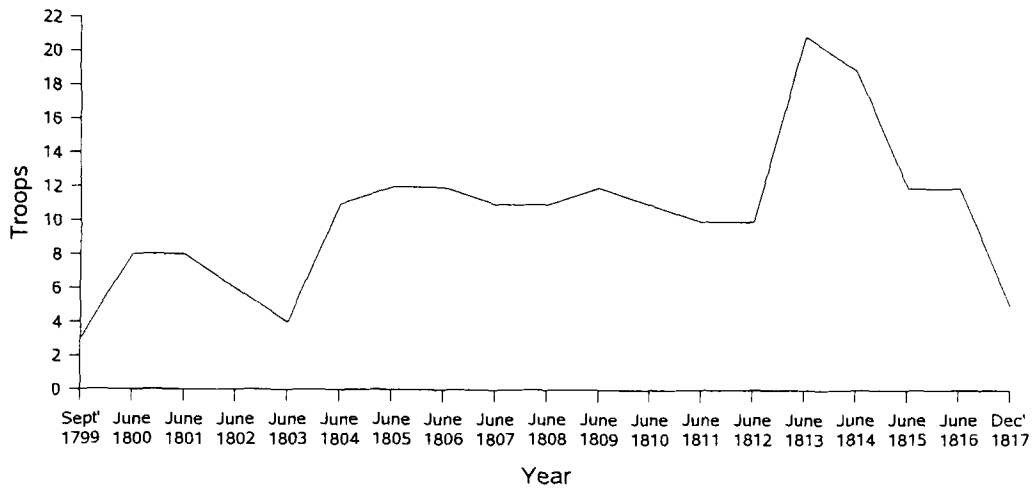


Figure 13: Active Troops in the Royal Wagon Train 1799 – 1817.⁴⁴⁸

Upon its formation in 1799 the train was based at Canterbury and consisted of six troops. Officially, no 1st Troop existed and its place in the returns of the Royal Wagon Train was filled by a list of staff appointments. In August 1799 this consisted primarily of the regiment's commanding officer, Colonel Digby Hamilton (who would remain in command of the regiment for the duration of the war), Surgeon John Oxley, Assistant Surgeon John Geddes, Veterinary Surgeon John Burke and Pay Master William Pettigrew. The remaining troops were numbered two to six although they were sometimes identified by the name of their commanding officer, a practice that had been discontinued in the combat arms during the early eighteenth century. That this practice occurred in the Royal Wagon Train is intriguing as it was a new

⁴⁴⁸ Royal Wagon Train monthly pay lists, PRO WO 12/1522 to WO 12/1526, Royal Wagon Train 1799 – 1809.

formation in the British army, with no real roots in an earlier period (although it could claim some cavalry heritage). Only three of the six troops (3rd, 4th and 5th) conformed to a normal structure, the second was in the process of forming, while the 1st and 6th each had a special function and organization. Of note is that, while the structure of the Royal Wagon Train was, due to its role, unconventional it remained a recognizable part of the British army. Commanded by a colonel, and with each troop commanded by a major or captain, in terms of organization it was effectively a six-company regiment. For comparison purposes, infantry regiments had ten companies and cavalry had ten troops.

The 2nd Troop was building up its strength during 1799 and contained only a small cadre of essential personnel. Consequentially it had no wagons on strength but had a headquarters that consisted of a captain, a lieutenant, a cornet and a quartermaster, all of whom were unpaid until the troop became active. The 6th Troop contained personnel categorised as reduced troops and was principally a reserve of manpower. The 3rd, 4th and 5th troops followed a standard model and were commanded by either a major (the 3rd) or captain (the 4th and 5th). The officers commanding each troop of the train in August 1799 are illustrated in figure 14:

Commanding Officer, Royal Wagon Train	Colonel Hamilton
2 nd Troop	Captain J. W. Whittle
3 rd Troop	Major W. Langley
4 th Troop	Captain Steele
5 th Troop	Captain Cunningham
6 th Troop	Lieutenant Wishens

Figure 14: Troop commanders of the Royal Wagon Train, August 1799.⁴⁴⁹

Other personnel in each troop typically consisted of two lieutenants, three sergeants, two corporals, three artificers and 55 privates. Occasionally a trumpeter may have

⁴⁴⁹ PRO WO 12/1522.

been present in a troop although this was an exception rather than the rule. The artificers included a mixture of wheelwrights, farriers, blacksmiths and collar-makers.⁴⁵⁰

This was the organization of the Royal Wagon Train that went to war in the Netherlands. The logistical services were singled out for harsh criticism after this war but the performance of the army in general was unsatisfactory, it being in this campaign that Wellington famously learned 'what one ought not to do' in war.⁴⁵¹ Following the campaign in Flanders the train avoided the fate of its predecessor and instead of disbanding was restructured. By June 1800 the headquarters formation, renamed the Commandant's Troop, was brought up to the strength of a troop, a process that had began the previous December with the addition of four non-commissioned officers. The following personnel were employed in the troop at this time: Lieutenant Colonel Hamilton, Adjutant Walford, Surgeon Oxley, Assistant Surgeon Geddes, Veterinary Surgeon Burke, Paymaster Pettigrew, four sergeants, three corporals, two artificers and forty-five privates.⁴⁵² The Commandant's troop would remain active until April 1804, when it was again removed from the list of troops. The troop was reduced to a command formation and consisted of the following officers: Colonel Hamilton, Lieutenant Colonel Langley, Adjutant Purvis, Surgeon Oxley, Veterinary Surgeon Baker and Paymaster Pettigrew. Of note is that the regiment was still commanded by Digby Hamilton but he had now been promoted to a full colonel, while a new officer, Lieutenant Colonel Langley, had arrived to fill the vacancy created by Hamilton's promotion. The newly awarded colonelcy, therefore, was not merely a sop to the vanity of the Royal Wagon Train's commanding officer, but a reflection of the train's increasing status and importance to the army.⁴⁵³ The

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁵¹ C. Hibbert, *Wellington: A Personnel History* (London, Harper Collins, 1997), p.14.

⁴⁵² PRO WO 12/1522.

⁴⁵³ Royal wagon train monthly pay list, April 1804, PRO WO 12/1524.

addition of a lieutenant colonel was also to prove of considerable value operationally and ensured that a senior officer was available to remain with the units of the Royal Wagon Train that were deployed to Spain and Portugal.⁴⁵⁴

By 1800 the Royal Wagon Train had expanded to five full troops and one of reduced personnel. Its manpower and capabilities were further increased by the absorption of the Irish Wagon Train as a result of the 1801 Act of Union. The consequences of this are noteworthy for two primary reasons. The first is that it was the only major logistical organization of the Irish army to be fully absorbed into the British army immediately after the union, unlike the Irish Commissariat and barracks departments, both of which retained a degree of independence until 1822 (although in practice the Commissariat was unified).⁴⁵⁵ The second fact of note is that the absorption of the Irish Wagon Train resulted in a seemingly dramatic increase in the manpower of the train, and the number of active troops more than doubled from three to eight. Arthur Wellesley noted the importance of Irish wagons in a letter to Castlereagh as late as 1808, while historians such as Jac Weller and A.E.C. Bredin have highlighted the significant role played by the personnel transferred to the Royal Wagon Train following the act the Act of Union.⁴⁵⁶ It is apparent that the Royal Wagon Train may only have become effective because of the absorption of the Irish train.

As noted in the previous chapter the state proved unable to meet fully the demands of the army regarding procurement and so its capability to support the Royal Wagon Train should also be considered. Put another way, did the Royal Wagon Train achieve what it was later to do because of the absorption of the Irish train or the

⁴⁵⁴ PRO WO 17/54/2, Return of the Royal Wagon Train in Spain and Portugal, March 1810.

⁴⁵⁵ R. B. McDowell, *Irish Administration 1801 - 1914* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964), pp16-19.

⁴⁵⁶ Wellesley to Castlereagh, 8th August 1808, Gurwood (ed), *Despatches and General Orders*, p.204; Weller, *Wellington in the Peninsula*, p.29; A. E. C. Bredin, *History of the Irish Soldier* (Belfast, Century Books, 1987), p.234.

support of the state? While the number of personnel involved was considerable, approximately 300, the long-term significance of the absorption of the Irish Wagon Train may be overestimated. Not least is the fact that by 1803 the personnel of the Royal Wagon Train had been drastically cut back and in effect a new force, based on a cadre of former personnel, was raised to support the army in the Peninsular War. The importance attached to the Irish train has no doubt arose in part from the timing of its absorption – between the failure of the Royal Wagon Train in Flanders and its success (or rather improved performance) in the Peninsular War. Based on this it would appear that the Irish train had indeed been a catalyst for the success of the train in the Peninsula but other factors should also be considered. In particular the Royal Wagon Train had been in its infancy in 1799 and had gone to war below strength and in the process of forming. It will also become apparent that by 1808 the lessons of the first campaign had been learned and that the organisation, structure and composition of the train were significantly modified in the based on this. Crucially the organization would also receive more resources, a factor that can be attributed solely to the economic strength of the British state.

On 1 July 1802 the Wagon Train was organised as follows: commanding officer Colonel Digby Hamilton, the 1st Troop under Major William Langley, the 2nd Troop under Captain A. Robuy, the 3rd Troop under Captain Charles Tudor, the 4th Troop under Captain William Horton, the 5th Troop under Captain Thomas Shields, and the 6th Troop, which had no permanent commander assigned. The typical strength of the troops numbered 1 through to 5 was as follows: one captain (a major in the 1st troop), one lieutenant, one cornet, one quartermaster, three sergeants, three corporals, one trumpeter, one wheelwright, one collar maker, one blacksmith, two farriers and forty-nine privates.⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵⁷ Monthly return of the Royal Wagon Train, July 1802, PRO WO 17/53/2.

The Wagon Train was to remain based at Canterbury until 1803, when its headquarters were moved to Croydon Barracks.⁴⁵⁸ The 1802 Peace of Amiens was to cause a dramatic reduction in the personnel employed in the Royal Wagon Train, which was reduced to four troops, each with an average strength of 65 non-commissioned officers, privates and artificers. The command structure of the Royal Wagon Train in the aftermath of this restructuring, is illustrated in figure 15:

Troop	Commanding Officer
Commandant's Troop	Colonel Digby Hamilton
2 nd Troop	Captain Tudor
3 rd Troop	Captain Hart
4 th Troop	Captain Aird

Figure 15: The structure of the Royal Wagon Train after the Peace of Amiens.⁴⁵⁹

Following the resumption of hostilities in 1803 the number of active troops was increased from four to the pre-1802 strength of eight. This was later increased to twelve in consequence of a modification to the structure of the Royal Wagon Train, specifically the introduction in 1804 of Depot Troops.

The formation of Depot Troops was an indication of the flexibility of the Royal Wagon Train, a trait that could rarely be attributed to other formations in the British army of the period. The Depot Troops not only represented a reallocation of resources but a new approach to a situation, demonstrating the organization was capable of adapting its structure to meet new challenges. The creation of the Depot Troops allowed the Royal Wagon Train to deploy smaller, self-contained troops to support units and garrisons, rather than the system of detachments that had characterised the earlier deployments. This was significant as it maintained the integrity of formations, a practice perceived to be vital for both morale and efficiency.⁴⁶⁰

⁴⁵⁸ See monthly returns of the Royal Wagon Train, PRO WO 17/53/2.

⁴⁵⁹ Royal Wagon Train monthly pay list, July 1803, PRO WO 12/1522.

⁴⁶⁰ Tomkinson, *The Diary of a Cavalry Officer*, p.143.

The Depot Troops first formed as cadres in December 1803 and, while starting as under strength formations, they were soon to expand. This ability to expand (and contract) was a notable feature of the Royal Wagon Train and demonstrated that it could benefit from and utilise additional resources more rapidly than other organizations. Clearly there is a question of scale as it was easier to raise the manpower required for a troop for train consisting of approximately 60 personnel rather than a 100 strong infantry company, yet taking into account the equipment and animals required this was still a considerable achievement and one that gave the formation flexibility.

While the organization was relatively flexible, it is necessary to appreciate that any significant expansion of the Royal Wagon Train (one that involved the creation of new troops) would take time and could not necessarily occur as an immediate response to a crisis. The processes involved in the forming of new troops were demonstrated by the raising of the Depot Troops in 1803. In December of that year there existed four such troops, all of which were assigned a skeleton staff, as shown in figure 16:

1 st Depot Troop	Captain Turner, one Quarter Master, one sergeant and three corporals.
2 nd Depot Troop	Captain Green, one Quarter Master and two corporals.
3 rd Depot Troop	Captain Ewing, one Quarter Master and two corporals.
4 th Depot Troop	Captain Ravenscroft, one Quarter Master and two corporals

Figure 16: The Depot Troops of the Royal Wagon Train, December 1803.⁴⁶¹

In the months of January to March 1804 the process of enlarging the troops began but they remained well below operational strength (as shown in figure 17). Even the full complement of trumpeters (one per troop) was not attained until March.

⁴⁶¹ Royal Wagon Train monthly pay list, December 1803, PRO WO 12/1523.

	Officers	Non-commissioned Officers	Other Ranks
1 st Troop	4	5	9
2 nd Troop	4	5	8
3 rd Troop	3	6	7
4 th Troop	4	4	9

Figure 17: The Depot Troops of the Royal Wagon Train, March 1804.⁴⁶²

In addition to the above personnel there were eleven artificers shared between the troops. The 1st to 3rd Depot Troops each had a blacksmith, collar maker and wheelwright on strength, the 4th Depot Troop having only a blacksmith and wheelwright. The three artificers were temporarily removed from the 1st Depot Troop in March 1804 but returned the following month.⁴⁶³ In the subsequent twelve months the Depot Troops slowly increased their strength and Captain Green's troop was included in the returns as a regular troop, while Captain Turner's troop was approaching full strength. The number of privates in the 3rd and 4th Depot Troops languished at seventeen and eighteen respectively, although it is interesting to note that all four troops maintained a complement of four artificers.⁴⁶⁴

The employment of full complements of artificers and officers (both commissioned and non-commissioned) in otherwise under strength troops was important as it enabled them to form the core around which a new active troop could be raised. This reflected forward planning in the organization and structure of the Royal Wagon Train, a feature that set it apart not only from the Commissariat but also eighteenth-century administrative practices in general. The Commissariat utilised a

⁴⁶² Royal Wagon Train monthly pay list, March 1804, PRO WO 12/1524.

⁴⁶³ Royal Wagon Train monthly pay lists, April to March 1804, PRO WO 12/1524.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid.

reflexive policy and this in many ways was a characteristic of the British way of waging war in the period, as demonstrated by the raising of credit to finance conflict rather than maintaining a large cash reserve.⁴⁶⁵ Pragmatism in this field had existed in the financing of war since the seventeenth century, with annual budgets tending to be set according to the tempo of current, rather than anticipated, operations.⁴⁶⁶

Another factor that increased the flexibility of the train was the addition in 1804 of a Lieutenant Colonel.⁴⁶⁷ This was to prove vital because, in response to the Peninsular War, the organization would effectively be split into two – the Royal Wagon Train at Croydon and the Royal Wagon Train in the Peninsula.⁴⁶⁸ This administrative division was significant and set a precedent for the future overseas deployments of the organization. Despite being split between Britain and Flanders during the campaigns of 1793 to 1799, the train had functioned as an administrative whole: there was one headquarters (at Canterbury) that collated the returns of all the troops. This practice continued when the detachments of the Royal Wagon Train first arrived in Spain and Portugal during the course of 1808 and the returns of the relevant units were listed as footnotes in returns of total strength. By 1809, however, the force had grown from a number of detachments to complete troops and returns for the Royal Wagon Train in the Iberian Peninsula were collated by a headquarters established at Lisbon. This practice continued and the Royal Wagon Train would eventually be administered through what amounted to theatre commands, even though the forces concerned continued to be referred to as detachments. The most important overseas detachments of the organization in the period were located in the Peninsula, France (including the army of occupation) and Hanover.

⁴⁶⁵ Speck, 'Conflict in Society', p.142.

⁴⁶⁶ Carter, 'The Revolution and the Constitution', pp.41, 47.

⁴⁶⁷ Royal wagon train monthly pay list, April 1804, PRO WO 12/1524.

⁴⁶⁸ Monthly return of the Royal Wagon Train, September 1809, PRO WO 17/54/2.

Initially the deployment to the Peninsula was regarded as only a minor one, so the officers assigned were listed as a footnote at the bottom of the main return. This deployment included only two troops, each led by a captain, lieutenant and two sergeants in April 1809.⁴⁶⁹ The force despatched soon proved inadequate for the task and in 1808 Arthur Wellesley complained to Castlereagh that he was forced to leave behind heavy equipment at the beach after landing.⁴⁷⁰ Wellesley also noted that the inadequate provision of transport was worsened due to the poor Spanish logistical system.⁴⁷¹ The situation had arisen as a direct result of British policy because initially the force despatched to the Peninsula was seen as only expeditionary in nature and upgraded to 'the theatre of Spain, Portugal and the Mediterranean' only in 1809. The initial reluctance to commit Britain fully to the Peninsula venture can be attributed to a variety of factors. Charles Esdaile cites instability in British domestic politics as the major reason although involvement in the Peninsular War would also have conflicted with what John Brewer states to have been an element central to British attitudes towards war and foreign policy, specifically a reluctance to become embroiled in prolonged military operations on the continent.⁴⁷² In the event it seems that Esdaile's theory was correct as the initial objections were soon overcome and the British commitment to the Peninsula accelerated, a situation that would not have arisen if such a campaign had indeed conflicted with ideas fundamental to the British state.

The increase in the status of the force operating in Spain and Portugal that occurred during 1809 was reflected in the introduction of separate returns for the troops of the Royal Wagon Train deployed to the Iberian Peninsula in this period.⁴⁷³ It was an example, however, of how bureaucracy and terminology could have little

⁴⁶⁹ Monthly return of the Royal Wagon Train, April 1809, PRO WO 17/54/2.

⁴⁷⁰ Wellesley to Castlereagh, 8th August 1808, PRO WO 1/228.

⁴⁷¹ Wellesley to Marquis Wellesley KP, 30th October 1809, Gurwood (ed.), *Despatches and General Orders*, p.308.

⁴⁷² Esdaile, *The Peninsular War*, pp.87-91; Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.178.

⁴⁷³ Orders for June and August, PRO T1/1061.

bearing on the actual situation, and it was not until March 1810 that the Royal Wagon Train deployed a significant amount of manpower to the theatre: of the organization's nine troops, five were deployed to the Iberian Peninsula. The manpower of the force in that theatre consisted of the following: one colonel, one major, three captains, seven lieutenants, four cornets, one paymaster, one adjutant, one assistant surgeon, two quartermasters, six sergeant majors, twenty sergeants, four trumpeters and 293 rank and file. The presence of only four troop commanders (one major and three captains) indicates that one troop of reduced personnel operated in the Peninsula. Of the troops, four were based at Leira and one at Rio Mayor, while a small detachment was deployed to Belem. The number of officers was subject to some fluctuation and both Colonel Hamilton and Major Tudor, among others, were in the theatre for varying periods of time.

In September 1810 the 'Detachment of the Royal Wagon Train in Spain and Portugal', as the force became known, reached the peak at which it was to remain until 1814. Its principal officers were Lieutenant Colonel W. Langley, Quartermaster C. Carter, Quartermaster W. Newman, Adjutant J. Backer, Assistant Surgeon T. Noye, Paymaster J. Harrison, Major T. Aird, Captain F. Bloeme, Captain B. Jaimy, Captain G. Lenon, Captain S. Watson and Captain J. Whittle. Of note is the presence of the two quartermasters with the organization in the Peninsula, as typically only one such officer had been on the strength of the Royal Wagon Train in Britain. The presence of two with the organization in the Peninsula is perhaps indicative of that detachment's greater mobility and dispersal across the theatre.⁴⁷⁴ Additionally, this force provided the core of the 'Detachment Royal Wagon Train in France' that served in that country during 1814, where it was then commanded by Major Aird.⁴⁷⁵ That the strength of the

⁴⁷⁴ Royal Wagon Train monthly pay list, Leira, March 1810, PRO WO 12/1527, Royal Wagon Train 1810 - 11.

⁴⁷⁵ Royal Wagon Train monthly pay list, France, April 1814, PRO WO 12/1529, Royal Wagon Train 1814 - 15.

Royal Wagon Train in Spain and Portugal effectively peaked in 1810 should not be taken as evidence that optimum capability had been reached. Transport shortages continued, demonstrating that like other military organizations the Royal Wagon Train did not benefit from the full extent of the state's capabilities even when operating in a major theatre of war.⁴⁷⁶

By necessity the elements of the Royal Wagon Train based in Britain were seen as being of secondary importance to the force deployed in the Peninsula, and their capability reflected this. The Royal Wagon Train in Britain during this period was split between depots in Hythe, Canterbury, the Isle of White and Portsmouth. This deployment is interesting as none was based at Croydon, which remained the headquarters, demonstrating a split had occurred between operations and administration. By this stage of the conflict the majority of the organization's formations operating in Britain were Depot Troops, as opposed to the better-equipped and more mobile marching troops deployed to the Peninsula.⁴⁷⁷ Manpower present in Britain consisted of one colonel, three captains, six lieutenants, three cornets, one paymaster, one veterinary surgeon, one adjutant, one assistant surgeon, one quartermaster, twenty-one sergeants, three trumpeters and 186 rank and file. As in Spain, the number of captains (three) and the lack of a major indicates that one of the four troops was a battalion of reduced personnel.⁴⁷⁸ Thus, taking into consideration the number of Depot Troops deployed in Britain, it is apparent that the force deployed to Spain and Portugal represented the cream of the organization in terms of both quantity and quality. In March 1810 the organization was effectively at full stretch, with its main operational elements serving in the Iberian Peninsula and only a reserve existing

⁴⁷⁶ For a consideration of transport capabilities in the later phases of the Peninsular War, see Weller, *Wellington in the Peninsula*, passim.

⁴⁷⁷ Return of officers, non-commissioned officers, men and horses detached from headquarters of the Royal Wagon Train, Croydon, March 1810, PRO WO 17/54/1.

⁴⁷⁸ Monthly return of the Royal Wagon Train, Croydon, March 1810, PRO WO 17/54/2.

in Britain. If necessary the Depot Troops could have formed a core around which additional troops could be raised in an emergency, but not without weakening the units deployed at home. This is significant because it must be borne in mind that the Royal Wagon Train based in Britain, while maintaining a similar number of troops, was actually weaker than during the peace of Amiens when it had been drastically reduced (a strength of approximately 200 in 1810 compared to 250 in 1802).

There were several differences between the Royal Wagon Train as it deployed to Spain in 1809 and the Netherlands in 1799. By the time of the Peninsular War command and control in the train had improved dramatically and reflected trends elsewhere in the army due to the addition of an extra sergeant, sergeant major and lieutenant to each troop, while trumpeters were also more common.⁴⁷⁹ The introduction of such personnel related not only to discipline, however, but also reflected changes intended to improve the attractiveness of the army as a career through increasing opportunity for promotion.⁴⁸⁰ More significant for improving the operational capability of the Royal Wagon Train than the introduction of additional personnel was a slight increase in the number of wagons available in each troop (rising from 27 to 30). Besides a marginal increase in strength the Royal Wagon Train also benefited from improvements to transport technology in the period. This was an indirect consequence of the agricultural and industrial revolutions and arose due to improvements in agricultural practices.⁴⁸¹ The three types of wagon employed by the train during the Napoleonic Wars were designated as bread, sprung and forage wagons respectively. The regulation number of wagons per troop in April 1805 is shown in figure 18. Of note is the smaller number of wagons employed by the Depot Troops.

⁴⁷⁹ The addition of non-commissioned and lower ranked commissioned officers being an important reform of the British army operationally. Muir, *Tactics and the Experience of Battle*, p.55.

⁴⁸⁰ Bartlett, *The Development of the British Army*, p.137; Haythornthwaite, 'The British Army, Wellington and Moore', p.91.

⁴⁸¹ John, 'Farming in Wartime, 1793 to 1815', p.35; Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.183.

	Type of Wagon:		
	<u>Bread</u>	<u>Sprung</u>	<u>Forage</u>
Depot troops	15	3	-
Marching troops	21	3	6

Figure 18: Wagon allocation by type in 1805.⁴⁸²

By December 1812 wagons consisted almost entirely of the superior sprung type, with only four bread wagons and none of the forage type being on the strength of the train in either Spain or Britain.⁴⁸³ This demonstrates that the expansion of the Royal Wagon Train in the period occurred in conjunction with a corresponding upgrading of equipment. Thus improvements to the organization were both qualitative and quantitative, meaning that its capabilities increased further than the growing number of troops alone would suggest. This progressive upgrading of equipment was unusual in the army as for most of the period the technology remained relatively static, particularly regarding firearms, and even uniform, other than headwear, changed little. The existence of superior technology, and an ability to upgrade its assets correspondingly, was a direct benefit of the financial power of the British state enjoyed by the Royal Wagon Train and enabled the small organization to maintain a capability unmatched by continental counterparts.⁴⁸⁴

The increase in the number of wagons brought with it greater demand for draught animals. Traditionally these had been horses and such was the Royal Wagon Train's reliance on this animal that its administration shared much in common with the cavalry. This was to have surprising implications for the bureaucracy of the organization because, despite increasing professionalism and standardisation in bureaucratic practices in the period, the Royal Wagon Train was forced to adopt a

⁴⁸² Monthly return of the Royal Wagon Train, April 1805, PRO WO 17/54/1.

⁴⁸³ Monthly return of the Royal Wagon Train, December 1812, PRO WO 17/54/2.

⁴⁸⁴ Haythornthwaite, *The Napoleonic Source Book*, pp.109-110, 199-209.

relatively inefficient administrative system.⁴⁸⁵ Ironically, while the operational capability of the Royal Wagon Train in the field was characterised by specialisation, the converse was true of its administration. An important consequence of the administrative revolution had been the increasing use of specialised stationery for administrative purposes, such as pre-printed forms designed for specific purposes. Despite its unusual role and composition, however, the Royal Wagon Train possessed little pro-forma designed specifically for the organisations and instead relied upon documentation intended for use by the cavalry. The impact of the failure to give the Royal Wagon Train its own pro-forma was only minor, creating headaches for administrators rather than full-blown administrative problems. Yet the situation is worthy of consideration as it highlights an often under considered aspect of maintaining the army in the period: paperwork, the tool of a bureaucratic system.

The administrative practices of organisations followed a standard pattern, with slight variations in the format of paper work. The pre-printed forms upon which the organization supplied returns to Horse Guards were the same as those used by the cavalry, often being titled 'for the Regiments of Cavalry at Home', while its returns were sometimes grouped with those of cavalry regiments (such as returns of the 15th to 25th Dragoons, Brunswick Hussars and Wagon Train in 1814).⁴⁸⁶ A similar situation existed regarding pre-printed forms submitted to the paymaster. An example of such a form is the affidavit signed by the paymaster, sworn before a local justice of the peace and witnessed by the adjutant and commanding officer of the regiment in accordance with standard army practice:

I _____ do swear, that on _____ of _____ I mustered His Majesty's _____ Regiment of _____ at which time I saw such Commissioned Officers, Non Commissioned Officers and Private Men, as are borne on the foregoing Muster Roll

⁴⁸⁵ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.67; Childs, *The Army of Charles II*, pp.77-81.

⁴⁸⁶ For examples, see monthly pay lists of the Royal Wagon Train, PRO WO 17/53/ 1 and WO 17/53/2.

and Paylist (sic), excepting those for whom Certificates signed by the Commanding Officer and Adjutant of the said Regiment as given above, specifying the respective Reasons for their Absence, and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, the same are the true and the actual reasons thereof.

I likewise saw _____ Troop Horses, and believe the Number stated and certified as absent to be just, and their absence truly accounted for.

I do further swear, that all the sums set down in the said Roll, have been paid by me to the respective persons, and for the respective persons, and for the respective services therein specified, in strict conformity to the King's regulations.⁴⁸⁷

It is immediately apparent that the form is designed to record the pay of a regiment, not an organization such as the Royal Wagon Train. This is also of note as it is indicative of the Royal Wagon Train's status relative to other units, the organization being seen as the equivalent of a regimental formation. The fact that it had no regimental number would, however, place it at the bottom of the British army's list of regimental seniority (it was designated as being one of the 'Miscellaneous Regiments' and placed between the West Indies regiments and the overseas garrison battalions).⁴⁸⁸ Secondly, although not so apparent, is the reference to troop horses. This was intended for cavalry regiments but served the Royal Wagon Train just as well.

Two other forms were also submitted with the paymaster's affidavit, a certificate from the commanding officer of the regiment and a similar document from the adjutant, both confirming the authenticity of the paymaster's statements:

I do hereby Certify, upon my Word and Honour, as an Officer and a Gentleman, that I have carefully examined the particulars of the foregoing Muster Roll and Accounts of Sums paid by the Pay Master within the period commencing the 25th of _____ and ending the 24th of _____ following, and that to the best of my Knowledge, Information and Belief, I find, and declare them to be truly and justly stated, as to Names, Returns, Times and Payments.

I do further certify in like manner, that to the best of my Knowledge, Information and Belief, all those, who were not present, have the true Reasons of their Absence assigned against their names on the said Muster roll.

Commanding Officer
of the _____ Regiment

⁴⁸⁷ Affidavit of Regimental Paymaster Pettigrew, April 1800, PRO WO 12/1522.

⁴⁸⁸ *War Office, Army List*, (London, 1814), table of contents.

At first glance there is little to suggest that the intended user of the certificate was not the Royal Wagon Train. The location intended for the signature of the commanding officer, however, betrays the document as being intended for the fighting regiments of the army. In the case of a cavalry regiment, for example, this was intended to read:

Commanding Officer
of the 16th Regiment
of *Light Dragoons*.

For the Royal Wagon Train, however, this section of the form was amended by hand, with the appropriate wording crossed out or added, to read (italics indicating added text):

Commanding Officer
of the ~~_____~~ Regiment
of ~~_____~~ *the Royal Wagon Train*.

The forms used by the army were supplied from a variety of sources. Government printers working on behalf of His Majesty's Stationery Office provided those intended for the summaries of the organization's strength that were returned to Whitehall. These included printers T. Egerton of the Military Library Whitehall, Teape of Tower Hill, London, and W. Cloves of Northumberland Court, The Strand. Local suppliers such as J. Simms of Canterbury typically supplied the forms upon which more detailed returns were recorded. An example of such a form is the 'Return of the

⁴⁸⁹ Certificate of Commanding Officer Lieutenant Colonel Digby Hamilton, April 1802, PRO WO 12/1523.

Officers, Non Commissioned Officers, men, horses and wagons detached from the Headquarters of the Royal Wagon train', printed at Canterbury in 1803.⁴⁹⁰

It is interesting to note that a solitary contractor did not supply stationery, and that contracts were negotiated at both national and local level. This did not prevent the pre-printed paper work used by the army from following a standard format, an important characteristic of administration in the period.⁴⁹¹ Due to their widespread use these forms were printed in large quantities and as a result could be found in circulation years later. The strength of the Royal Wagon Train in Britain in December 1812, for example, was returned on a form printed on 6 February 1809.⁴⁹² Although there was a large reserve of forms, those available were sometimes available in insufficient quantities to satisfy the administrative requirements of the organization. In the returns for the Royal Wagon Train in France March 1814 two privates were recorded per line instead of one due to a shortage of forms, while no pre-printed form was available for Paymaster Pettigrew in April 1813, therefore his affidavit was written by hand.⁴⁹³ Manpower, uniforms, food and stationery – the state failed to provide them all in sufficient quantities.

The format used by the army for recording returns changed during the period. Until the summer of 1807 returns had been recorded on individual forms each month, army months being from the 'period commencing the 25th of [the month] and ending the 24th of following'.⁴⁹⁴ Under the new system, instead of returns being recorded on a different form each month, they were to be listed by quarter and the relevant part of the quarter (1st, 2nd or 3rd).⁴⁹⁵ To illustrate this change consider the period of 25

⁴⁹⁰ Monthly return of the Royal Wagon Train, April 1803, PRO WO 17/53/2.

⁴⁹¹ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.67; Childs, *The Army of Charles II*, pp.222-225.

⁴⁹² Monthly return of the Royal Wagon Train, December 1812, PRO WO 17/54/2.

⁴⁹³ Royal Wagon Train monthly pay list, France, March 1814, PRO WO 12/1529; Affidavit of Regimental Paymaster Pettigrew, April 1800, PRO WO 12/1528, Royal Wagon Train 1812 - 13.

⁴⁹⁴ Certificate of Commanding Officer Lieutenant Colonel Digby Hamilton, April 1802, PRO WO 12/1523.

⁴⁹⁵ Detailed instructions to Commissariat accountants, cash accounts, NAM 6807/221, pp.1-3.

December to 24 of March in a given year. Under the original system a unit's strength for the period would have been recorded on three separate returns: 25 December to 24 January, 25 January to 24 February and 25 February to 24 March. When a new system, based on quarterly returns, was adopted the strength of the unit was returned on the same sheet, with columns for the 1st, 2nd and 3rd periods (25th December to 24 January, 25 January to 24 February and 25 February to 24 March).⁴⁹⁶ Although perhaps only a minor modification to administration it did have some implications, especially for the Royal Wagon Train, as the forms were more compact and had marginally less space. The same categories existed on the forms (such as columns for sergeants, corporals, privates) but the Royal Wagon Train had traditionally inserted a section for artificers at the top of the return for privates, and modified the accompanying numbering system accordingly (each row on forms used for returns being numbered to ease the task of calculating strength. These numbers commenced from 1 at the start of each section. The column concerning sergeants, for example would include columns numbered one to eight and trumpeters one to six). With less space available on the new format of returns it is apparent that the artificers were included in the alphabetical returns for privates, with a brief note added to distinguish them (one such system being 'cm' for collar maker, 'bs' for blacksmith and 'ww' for wheelwright). Eventually the administrators of the Royal Wagon Train found a way to modify the forms to accommodate the artificers better, making the differences between them and privates clearer, although this is evidence of the difficulties that could be encountered when the specialist needs of an organization such as the Royal Wagon Train were not accommodated in general administrative practice.⁴⁹⁷

⁴⁹⁶ For an example of both systems in operation, PRO WO 12/1526, Royal Wagon Train 1807 - 09.

⁴⁹⁷ See monthly returns of Royal Wagon Train, 1816 - 17, PRO WO 12/1530.

The use of the administrative methods of the cavalry was to a large extent due to similarities between this arm and the Royal Wagon Train (specifically their use of large numbers of horses).⁴⁹⁸ At times the needs of the train would even be met by transferring animals from fighting units, a practice that was particularly desirable given that the cost of purchasing horses in Britain increased continually during the period.⁴⁹⁹ The number of animals transferred could be considerable. For example: 150 draught animals intended for General Spencer's artillery brigade in Portugal in August 1808 were reallocated to General Burrard for logistical tasks after their late arrival, while a total of 14 animals were transferred from the 16th Light Dragoons to the Royal Wagon Train in March 1810.⁵⁰⁰ Appreciating that the army possessed the capability to transfer horses in this way is important to this study not only because the practice increased the strength of the Royal Wagon Train but also because it is one of the few examples of different departments and organizations sharing resources in the period. It must be highlighted that the transfer of horses need not have occurred at the expense of a cavalry unit's strength, and the animals concerned tended to be unsuitable for cavalry service. This was made clear in Major General Mahon's report on horses to be transferred from the 7th Light Dragoons during 1810, in which he stated 'I certify that I have examined the above horses minutely and from the reasons there stated find them totally unfit for the service of the regiment and recommend them to be transferred'.⁵⁰¹ The case of horses being unfit for cavalry service but not draught duties was not unusual, and when arriving in a new region the army often fell victim to dishonest horse dealers.⁵⁰² Major General Cartwright noted that some horses employed by the 4th

⁴⁹⁸ Chilcott, 'The Royal Wagon Train', pp.175-177.

⁴⁹⁹ John, 'Farming in Wartime', p.28

⁵⁰⁰ A. Wellesley to Sir Harry Burrard, Aeyria, 11 August 1808, PRO WO 1/228; Return of horses received by the Royal Wagon Train, March 1810, PRO WO 17/54/2.

⁵⁰¹ Return of horses of the 7th Light Dragoons cast by Honourable Major General S. Mahon, Dublin, 16 September 1810, PRO WO 63/91.

⁵⁰² P. Mackesy, *British Victory in Egypt*, p.19.

(Queen's Own) Dragoons were too big for cavalry duties (being more suited to pulling wagons), while in April 1809 Arthur Wellesley had written to Castlereagh expressing concern that even the regiments of guards had on their strength horses that were unsuitable for combat duty.⁵⁰³

It is apparent that the Royal Wagon Train on occasion received the cast-offs of the cavalry. This says something about the pecking order in the British military establishment and, importantly, reveals that many of the animals it employed were not carthorses, but breeds more suited to cavalry use had it not been for their condition. Surprisingly this could be an advantage because while carthorses were ideally suited to the task of pulling wagons and carts, they were more costly both to purchase and maintain, while they also took up more room on naval transport vessels.⁵⁰⁴ Often there was barely sufficient transportation for the cavalry horses, let alone the animals required by the Royal Wagon Train, further evidence that the advances in British transportation capacity that occurred during the period were of little significance to the army on campaign.⁵⁰⁵ The difficulties encountered when moving horses to war zones was demonstrated by the instructions given to General Sir John Moore upon his arrival in Spain during 1808:

the cavalry you will... direct to move by land and if the horses for the artillery can take the same route so as to admit the whole of the horse transports being returned to England, it will tend much to accelerate the arrival of the cavalry from home.⁵⁰⁶

The orders make no mention of the animals of the train, indicating that they were either not present or too few in numbers to affect the planning of the operation. It is

⁵⁰³ Major General Cartwright's confidential report on the actual state of the 4th Queen's Own Dragoons, 7 May 1808, PRO WO 27/92/1; Wellesley to Castlereagh, Lisbon, 29 April 1809, PRO WO 1/238.

⁵⁰⁴ John, 'Farming in Wartime' p.28; Weller, *Wellington in the Peninsula*, p.29.

⁵⁰⁵ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.183. Advances in transport technology directly improved the effectiveness of the Royal Wagon Train but due to the small size of the organization and other factors the army gained only minor benefits from these advances.

⁵⁰⁶ To Moore, Downing Street, 26 September 1808, PRO WO 1/236.

interesting to note that during the months of July and August 1808 reinforcements from Britain were indeed delayed by the shortage of horse transports. Lieutenant-General Baird was due to leave Cork for Spain with a force of seven battalions and two artillery companies but was delayed for over three weeks due to the non-arrival of horse transports.⁵⁰⁷ Even by 1810, with the army established in the Peninsula, the situation had not been resolved: Colonel Bambury wrote that there were a number of 'horses waiting for a conveyance to Portugal' and that 'as soon as cavalry transports are at our disposal, sufficient tonnage will be allotted to the horses in question; but their embarkation has been delayed by the total want of the means of transporting them'.⁵⁰⁸ The Duke of Wellington also complained of transport vessels being requisitioned for other duties by the transport board.⁵⁰⁹ The simple fact of the matter was that with three organizations competing for space aboard horse transports (the regiments of cavalry, Royal Artillery and Royal Wagon Train) none of them would ever have adequate space allocated, but the needs of the cavalry would always be met first as it was one of the primary combat arms.

With the provision of horse transports so erratic it was inevitable the animals required by the Royal Wagon Train would not travel with them but would be procured at their destination. In some respects this is further evidence of a reflexive or pragmatic doctrine in the British army but it was due as much to strategic limitations as a lack of forward planning or reserves. In a letter intended to brief Sir Harry Burrard upon his arrival in August 1808, Arthur Wellesley stated:

I conclude that you will have come equipped with horses to draw your artillery; you will want therefore mules to draw the carriages of your reserve musket ammunition, and some to carry provisions for a few days to march with the troops.⁵¹⁰

⁵⁰⁷ Baird, to Castlereagh, Cork, 8 September 1808; Baird, to Castlereagh, Cork, 1st October September 1808, PRO WO 1/236.

⁵⁰⁸ Colonel Bambury to MacLeod, Downing Street, 6 February 1810, PRO WO55/1369.

⁵⁰⁹ Wellington to Liverpool, Celario, 18 August 1810, PRO WO 1/245.

⁵¹⁰ A. Wellesley to Sir Harry Burrard, Aeyria, 11 August 1808, PRO WO 1/228.

Prior to the full-scale deployment of the British army in a region of a friendly country such as Spain or Portugal, agents would be despatched to ensure an adequate number of animals were found. In 1808 the agents for Sir John Moore's expedition to Northern Spain were Deputy Commissary Azziotte and Colonel Hamilton of the Royal Wagon Train (recognition that a majority of animals purchased would be employed by these organizations). Their role was described in a letter from the Prime Minister to the General:

Deputy Commissary Azziotte has been despatched with Colonel Hamilton of the Wagon Train into the Asturias to procure such horses and mules as that country can furnish and he is directed to report the progress of his purchases to you – when ascertained the numbers of cattle of different descriptions, that you will require for rendering your army movable, which you will feel it important to restrict within the narrowest compass consistent with the efficiency of your Corps, you will be enabled to regulate the purchases made by the several agents, and should you deem it necessary to procure the support of His Majesty's Minister... who is now proceeding to the central Government to facilitate these purchases - you will address yourself to him on the subject or to any of His Majesty's Servants Civil or Military now employed in the respective provinces of Spain.⁵¹¹

This part of Sir John's orders reveals much about the Royal Wagon Train and the British army's system for the purchase of draught animals in the period. Immediately apparent is the fact that while the duties of the Royal Wagon Train included procurement, Colonel Hamilton was subordinated to a Deputy Commissary while undertaking this role. The importance of this mission is demonstrated by the potential involvement of a government minister and that every effort was to be made to ensure the required animals were purchased.

The letter is of further importance as it reveals that even at this very early stage of the peninsular war, the army was utilising mules and oxen for its mobility. This

⁵¹¹ Prime Minister Lord Portland to Moore, Downing Street, 26 September 1808, PRO WO 1/236.

contradicts the popularly held view that credits the Duke of Wellington with the widespread introduction of oxen as draught animals to the British army, such animals clearly being in use before the then Arthur Wellesley had any influence of note over policy.⁵¹² Significantly, in his detailed appraisal of the logistical situation facing General Burrard in 1808, Wellesley, the supposed instigator of the use of oxen by the British army in Spain and Portugal made little mention of draught animals except for horses and mules, other than to describe the limitations of oxen. They were certainly not Wellesley's draught animal of choice, and he stated:

as for mules for carriage I believe you will find none, for I believe my corps has swept the country very handsomely of this animal you must therefore depend for the carriage of the country drawn by bullocks.⁵¹³

Clearly Wellesley had gone to great lengths to ensure an adequate supply of mules for his force, leaving Burrard with what he believed to be animals of limited utility. Furthermore, even as Wellington came to appreciate the qualities of oxen as draught animals, he remained aware of their limitations. When he requested that a pontoon bridge be despatched to Spain, Wellington stated that bullocks would be used as draught animals but also requested that horse harness be sent in case the bridge needed to be moved more rapidly.⁵¹⁴ The Duke of Wellington's supposed faith in the value of bullocks as draught animals is often stated to extend from his service in India, years that are often seen as his most formative.⁵¹⁵ If the Duke did not in fact possess as much faith in these creatures as is often thought, many other aspects of the

⁵¹² For an example of this view see Schechter and Sander, *Delivering the Goods*, p.41.

⁵¹³ A. Wellesley to Burrard, Aeyria, 11 August 1808, PRO WO 1/228.

⁵¹⁴ Wellington to Liverpool, Cartaxo, 31 March 1811, PRO WO 1/248.

⁵¹⁵ Hibbert, *Wellington*, passim; E. Longford, *Wellington: the Years of the Sword* (London, Weidenfield & Nicolson, 1969), passim.

historiography (and mythology) surrounding Wellington may be brought into question.⁵¹⁶

In some respects the Royal Wagon Train managed its manpower as it maintained its animals. This is not a reference to harsh conditions but rather the way in which its strength was expanded or contracted to meet operational requirements. The variable strength of the Royal Wagon Train emphasises the pragmatic approach towards maintaining the army in the period. Peace in 1802, for example, triggered contraction, while operations in Spain during 1810 caused expansion. In essence, the methods employed by the Royal Wagon Train to recruit personnel were little different to those of other organizations in the British army, including the combat arms, although there were some differences between the practices employed by these organizations and the Royal Wagon Train. The focus of recruitment were the recruiting parties but it is apparent that officers played a lesser role in those of the Royal Wagon Train. Even during the period of expansion following the Peace of Amiens no officers were assigned to this task, but eight sergeants were.⁵¹⁷ The bounty offered to recruits by these parties was also different as it was much lower than that of these other arms. In 1802 recruits to the Royal Wagon Train would receive only £6 2s, compared to £13 5s for infantrymen (a difference of £7 3s), while infantrymen were also eligible for an extra bounty if transferring from the militia or volunteers (amounting to £7 12s 6d).⁵¹⁸ As the war progressed recruitment bounties for the train were significantly reduced, with the result that by January 1814 the Royal Wagon Train bounty payment amounted to only £4 4s, while in 1816 it fell to £3 14s.⁵¹⁹

⁵¹⁶ See N. Gash, *Wellington Anecdotes: a Critical Survey* (Southampton, University of Southampton, 1992).

⁵¹⁷ Monthly returns of the Royal Wagon Train, June 1803 and October 1804, PRO WO 17/53/2.

⁵¹⁸ Bounty payments, 1802, PRO WO 17/2813, Monthly returns of the British army at home and abroad, Jan 1803 - Aug 1805, with at front, scale of age and standards for recruits, 1802-1808, and scale of bounty, 1802-1823.

⁵¹⁹ Royal Wagon Train monthly pay list, January 1814 to January 1816, PRO WO 12/1529 and WO 12/1530.

Historians such as Ian Fletcher have cited recruitment bounties as being one of the most important elements of recruiting practices in the period, so it may thus be expected that a lower bounty would have had a detrimental impact on the quality and quantity of recruits.⁵²⁰ For those historians who have equated height to physical effectiveness there is ample evidence of this, as the height requirement for the Royal Wagon Train was lower than that of fighting arms.⁵²¹ In 1808 this was only five feet one inch for the train, compared to five feet five inches for the infantry and five feet seven inches for the cavalry.⁵²² It is contentious whether a link between height and effectiveness can be said to exist and a study of the Royal Wagon Train does little to aid the argument in either direction.⁵²³ In particular, it is interesting to note that despite their reduced height requirement the personnel of the Royal Wagon Train were generally fitter than those of other formations. At the headquarters of the Peninsular army in October 1810, for example, 276 personnel of the Royal Wagon Train were present, of which only 19 (approximately seven percent) were listed as sick, a figure that compares favourably with those for the infantry (1,191 sick out of 6,913 or 17%); the cavalry (1,451 sick out of 5,850 or 25%); and foot artillery (149 out of 637 or 24%).⁵²⁴ These other formations were, however, combat arms, the personnel of which were subjected to far more stresses and deprivations than those of the Royal Wagon Train, making any comparison of sickness rates in relation to general fitness unbalanced.

The strength of the Royal Wagon Train rarely fell below that required by regulations. This was particularly apparent regarding specialist personnel, who were

⁵²⁰ Fletcher, *Wellington's Regiments*, p.14.

⁵²¹ J. Mokyry and C. O'Grada, *The Heights of the British and Irish c1800-1815: Evidence from Recruits to the East India Company's Army* (unpublished research paper, University College Dublin, 1990), *passim*.

⁵²² Minimum height requirements, 1808, PRO WO 17/2813.

⁵²³ The Ghurkhas and Japanese are ample evidence to disprove the theory that shorter recruits do not necessarily equate to worse soldiers.

⁵²⁴ General return, WO1/246, War Department in Letters and Papers 1810, f.1.

vital for the successful operation of the train. In part this may be attributed to the pay structure of the organization, as special provision was made for such personnel. In 1799 artisans employed by the train were paid as follows: blacksmiths £4 13s per month, wheelwrights £3 9s and collar-makers £2 2s. For comparison privates received £1 10s 9d, corporals £2 3s 10 ½ d, sergeants £3 7s 2d and Quarter Masters £4 13s.⁵²⁵ During this period, however, a relatively unskilled London journeyman could earn at least £4 20d per month, and probably more.⁵²⁶ It is thus apparent that, despite being paid more than common soldiers, wages alone may not have been sufficient to attract artisans away from civilian occupations to serve in the Royal Wagon Train. Rather, it is likely that if such individuals had decided to serve in the army, they would then have been drawn to the Royal Wagon Train due to the extra money paid for their skills. The difference in pay between common soldiers and artisans was maintained despite successive wage increases and the ratios of pay remained approximately the same. By 1813 blacksmiths, wheelwrights and collar-makers were all included as artificers on returns and were in a single pay band (£11 7s 6d, compared to £3 8s and 3d for soldiers).⁵²⁷

Higher rates of pay for certain personnel were not the only factor that could attract recruits to the Royal Wagon Train. In fact, the overall manpower of the organization rarely fell below that of regulation strength, demonstrating that the Royal Wagon Train had a broad appeal. In some respects the train was something of a soft option compared to other organizations, its personnel being governed by the same regulations as those of the Commissariat.⁵²⁸ Despite this, service in the organization was not necessarily easy and its personnel could come under fire, even if not expected to take part in combat. Away from the front line, the role of the Royal Wagon Train

⁵²⁵ Royal Wagon Train monthly pay list, November 1799, PRO WO 12/1522.

⁵²⁶ Emsley, *British Society*, p.83.

⁵²⁷ Royal Wagon Train monthly pay list, January 1816, PRO WO 12/1530.

⁵²⁸ J. Burleigh, Circular letter to Commissaries, 18th February 1807, PRO WO 63/40.

dictated that it was continually active, and bad weather that forced fighting regiments to return to cantonments or remain in barracks was not allowed to hinder its activities. This was particularly apparent during the Peninsular War, a campaign in which the army pursued a strategy of fighting decisive battles and then withdrawing for long periods, a tactic exemplified by the retreat of the army to the lines of Torres Vedras in 1810.⁵²⁹ Captain Grenville-Eliot of the Royal Artillery believed such periods were ‘very much to the satisfaction of every individual in the army’ as they allowed the army to recuperate.⁵³⁰ This, however, could only be achieved if during such periods the activities of organizations such as the Royal Wagon Train continued; supplies were required not only to maintain forces but also to refit them following the previous campaign and prepare them for the next. The situation was worsened by the fact that the organization was required to transport not only essentials, such as food, fuel, clothing or munitions, but other items as well. In February 1811, for example, when Ireland was experiencing some of the worst snow in years, a troop of the Royal Wagon Train was still despatched to brave both blocked roads and the elements to move the belongings of Major General Beck to his new billet.⁵³¹ The result of such duties was that the personnel of the Royal Wagon Train were to become amongst the most mobile in the British army.

While on campaign the Royal Wagon Train followed the movements of the army, but even in Britain the troops of the train were redeployed to meet the requirements of the army on both a local and national basis. The latter is illustrated in figure 19.

⁵²⁹ W. F. P. Napier, *History of the War in the Peninsula*, Vol 3, (London, John Murray, 1890), pp.39-47.

⁵³⁰ Grenville Eliot to wife, Truxillo, 19th August 1809, NAM 5903/127/6.

⁵³¹ J. Malasses to J. Jones, Commissary General’s Office, 4th February 1811, PRO WO 63/45.

	November 1803	April 1805
Bexhill	None	One troop
Canterbury	Headquarters Four troops	Three troops
Chelmsford	Two troops	Four Troops
Croydon	None	Headquarters Four Depot Troops
Dover	Detachment	None
Dungness	Detachment	None
Isle of Wight	Detachment	None
Ramsgate	Detachment	None

Figure 19: The deployment of the Royal Wagon train, 1803 and 1805.⁵³²

While the movement of troops may appear unremarkable in a fifteen-month period, it demonstrates that the Royal Wagon Train was capable of both concentration and dispersal. The relocation of the organization's headquarters from Canterbury to Croydon was a significant event; while it is interesting to note that in 1805 the greatest concentration of assets was not at headquarters (or even Canterbury) as in 1803, but at Chelmsford (four troops were present at Croydon in 1805 but these were smaller Depot Troops). This is further evidence of the organization's ability to concentrate and disperse its assets as necessary, a policy made practical by the mobility and frequent movement of the troops, and one that enabled the train to support the pragmatic doctrines of the army.

The information in figure 19 demonstrates shifts in the location of troops, or rather their centre of gravity as personnel would be detached on various duties, using locations such as those listed above as a centre of operations. Due to the requirements

⁵³² Return of officers, non-commissioned officers, men and horses detached from headquarters of the Royal Wagon Train, November 1803, PRO WO 17/53/2; Return of officers, non-commissioned officers, men and horses detached from headquarters of the Royal Wagon Train, April 1805, PRO WO 17/54/1.

of the army at certain locations the workload of the Royal Wagon Train was not shared equally amongst troops, with the result that in a given period of time certain personnel would be more active than others. For example, between August 1799 and February 1800 the 2nd Troop of the Royal Wagon Train spent only nine days of the six months on the march, and the remainder in billet. In the same six-month period, the 3rd Troop (which was renumbered as the 5th Troop in January 1800) spent twenty-four days on the march, six aboard ship and the remainder in billet.⁵³³ Again, this data provides only a limited picture of the activities of the Royal Wagon Train's personnel. More informative is the data in figure 20. In addition to highlighting the varying level of activity in different troops, figure 20 gives some indication of distances involved, the 4th Troop having detachments en route from across England, including the southwest, midlands and northern England. Figure 20 also demonstrates the flexibility of the Royal Wagon Train, as it was capable of deploying assets en mass (as in the case of the 3rd Troop) or in small detachments (as in the case of the 4th Troop).

3rd Troop		
From	To	Number of Privates
Barnet	Enfield	70
Enfield	Barnet	70
4th Troop		
Penrith	Bromley	13
Newcastle	Bromley	5
Exeter	Bromley	17
Hull	Bromley	10
Sheffield	Bromley	9
Manchester	Bromley	6
Dover	Bromley	4
Bromley	Blackwall	6
5th Troop		
Newcastle	Bromley	27
Exeter	Bromley	4
Perth	Bromley	3

Figure 20: Marches of the Royal Wagon Train, August – September 1799.⁵³⁴

⁵³³ Royal Wagon Train monthly pay lists, August 1799 to February 1800, PRO WO 12/1522.

⁵³⁴ Monthly returns of the Royal Wagon Train, August to September 1799, PRO WO 12/1522.

Despite its flexibility, the size of Royal Wagon Train dictated that the organization was never adequate to meet the needs of the wartime British army fully. The force continued to rely on civilian transport, including muleteers and contractors, for much of its needs. Yet the organization was also too large for the peacetime establishment of the army. Combined with the fact that, as noted by Commissary Schauman, logistical organizations were traditionally amongst the first organizations affected by post-war defence reductions, it was inevitable that the Royal Wagon Train was significantly reduced in size at the end of the Napoleonic Wars.⁵³⁵ The process of demobilisation was rapid and serves as a useful case study not only of how logistical units were reduced after a war but also armies in general.

In January 1816 the number of troops in the Royal Wagon Train stood at fifteen, three of which were listed as foreign (primarily consisting of Germans).⁵³⁶ In April 1816 there remained three such troops in existence in the train, each led by a Captain (see figure 21):

	Troop			Total
	1	2	3	
Captains	1	1	1	3
Lieutenants	1	2	1	5
Cornet	0	2	2	4
Sergeant Major	1	1	1	3
Sergeants	7	7	8	22
Corporals	7	8	7	22
Privates	56	62	51	169
Trumpeters	4	0	1	5
Artificers	0	0	8	8
Total	77	83	80	240

Figure 21: Foreign units of the Royal Wagon Train, April 1816.⁵³⁷

⁵³⁵ Schauman, *On the Road with Wellington*, p.415.

⁵³⁶ Royal Wagon Train monthly pay list, April 1816, PRO WO 12/12017, Royal Wagon Train Foreign Corps, 1816.

⁵³⁷ Ibid.

In May 1816 these three troops were amalgamated into one. Of the forty-four non-commissioned officers employed in April, only sixteen remained, the number of privates was reduced from 169 to 70, and the artificers were removed from the strength of the remaining troop. As in earlier periods the trumpeters were among the first personnel removed from the strength of the troops when reductions were required, demonstrating the relative lack of importance attached to these individuals. Of note is the fact that after the contraction in numbers of May 1816, the overall strength of the troop increased following the amalgamation with the other troops. This is of note as it demonstrates that the process of demobilisation was not simply mobilisation in reverse. The latter had been achieved in the Royal Wagon Train through creating an administrative structure (containing a handful of personnel) and then progressively adding manpower. Demobilisation removed both manpower and administrative structures simultaneously; the same manpower could have been maintained in three separate troops but the policy of amalgamation was economical as it streamlined administration. This is further evidence of flexibility in the structure and administration of the Royal Wagon Train, but was a contrast to fighting formations, in which even heavily depleted companies and squadrons were maintained. An infantry battalion, for example, consisted of ten companies even if reduced to only 240 men from regulation battalion strength of 1,000, while in the train the practice was to concentrate strength.⁵³⁸

The changes in the number of personnel employed in the Royal Wagon Train during April and June 1816 are summarised below in figures 22 and 23:

⁵³⁸ Partridge and Oliver, *The British Army and Her Allies*, pp.27 to 28.

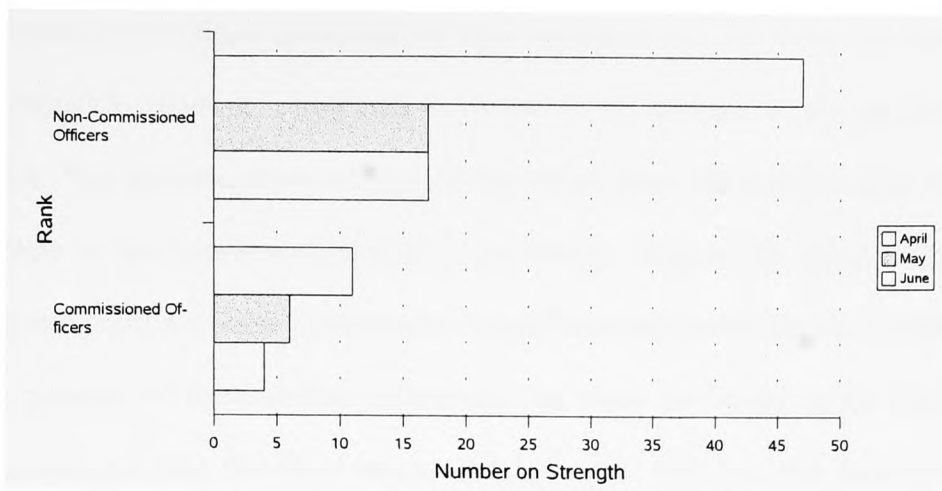


Figure 22: Officers serving in the foreign units of the Royal Wagon Train, April to June 1816.

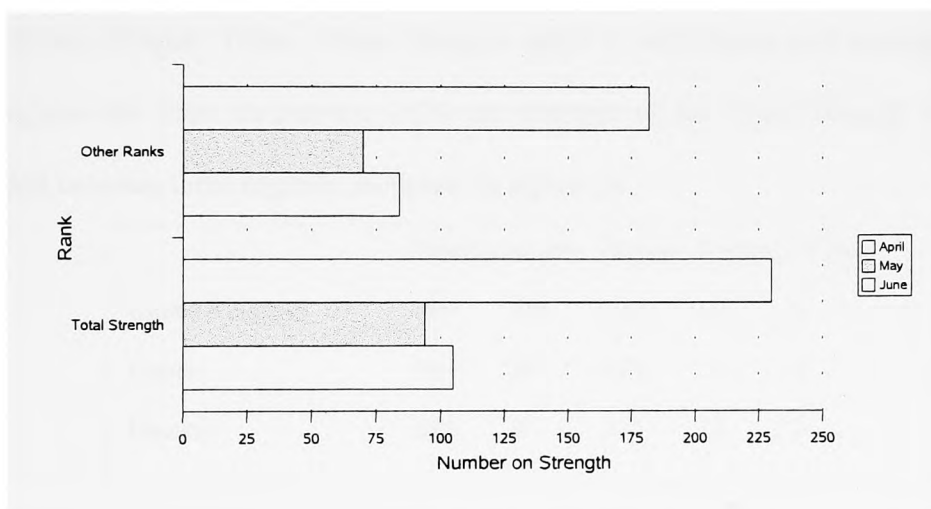


Figure 23: Other ranks and total strength of the foreign units of the Royal Wagon Train, April to June 1816.⁵³⁹

By June 1816 no captains remained on the strength of the foreign troop and the senior officer was a lieutenant, supported by an additional lieutenant, two cornets, a sergeant major, nine sergeants and seven corporals. Although the number of non-

⁵³⁹ Royal Wagon Train monthly pay list, April 1816, PRO WO 12/12017.

commissioned officers remained the same between May and June, one corporal was promoted to sergeant, a response no doubt to the increase in the number of other ranks. This increase, however, should not detract from the fact that there was a 55% decline in the numbers employed in the foreign units of the Royal Wagon Train between April and June. Furthermore no artificers remained with these units.⁵⁴⁰ It was the presence of these skilled individuals that made the troops of the Royal Wagon Train distinct from the other wagon-using units and their loss was indicative that the remaining foreign troops' days were numbered.

The hatchet of post-war reductions did not fall solely on the foreign units of the Royal Wagon Train. Peace brought with it reductions and re-organization throughout the train. In January 1816 the strength of the Royal Wagon Train was divided between three regions, as shown in figure 24:

	Privates	NCOs	Horses	Farriers	Troops
United Kingdom	989	115	310	68	6
France	444	56	561	24	4
Hanover	265	30	157	23	2

Figure 24: The distribution of the Royal Wagon Train, January 1816.⁵⁴¹

Confusingly, each region had evolved its own numbering system, demonstrating an emphasis on local rather than centralised administration. Those troops in France were numbered 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th, those in Hannover 4th and 6th, while the six in the United Kingdom consisted of the 2nd, 3rd, 6th, 7th, 8th and 12th. In September 1816 the Hanoverian force was disbanded and further reductions were made to the force in Britain, the strength of the Royal Wagon Train being concentrated in France. The

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁴¹ Royal Wagon Train monthly pay list, January 1816, PRO WO 12/1530.

reduction in the strength of the wagon train in Britain compared to that in France is shown in figure 25:

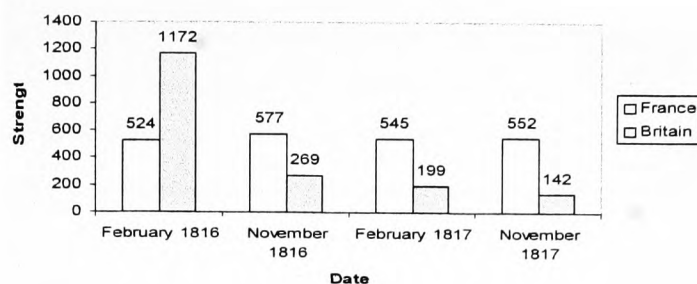


Figure 25: The deployment of the NCOs and other ranks of the Royal Wagon Train, 1816 – 17.⁵⁴²

It is apparent that following the reductions of 1816 the strength of the Royal Wagon Train became concentrated in the army of occupation serving in France. This was achieved not through significantly increasing the number of personnel in that country, but through reductions in the number of personnel deployed in Britain.⁵⁴³ In fact there would appear to have been little increase in the capability of the force operating in France with only a marginal increase in manpower between February 1816 and November 1817, an increase of only twenty-eight privates and NCOs.

The elements of the Royal Wagon Train deployed to support the army of occupation represented not only a concentration of manpower but also capability. This is an issue that cannot be ignored when considering the Royal Wagon Train because it was effectively the organization's capability to operate wagons that determined its effectiveness. Advances in wagon technology were important but the most significant factors remained the organization's artificers and draught animals. Figures 26 and 27 allow a comparison to be made between those assets deployed in Britain and France.

⁵⁴² Royal Wagon Train monthly pay list, February 1816 to November 1817, PRO WO 12/1530.

⁵⁴³ The force assigned to the army of occupation also included elements of the Royal Wagon Train despatched to support operations in the Netherlands during 1815.

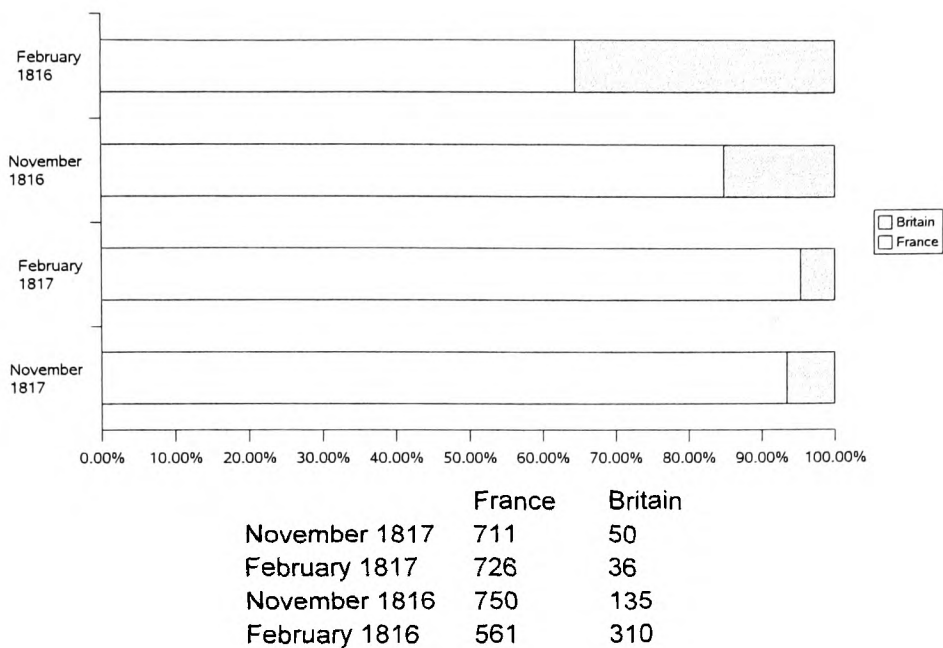


Figure 26: The allocation of the horses of the Royal Wagon Train, 1816 – 1817.⁵⁴⁴

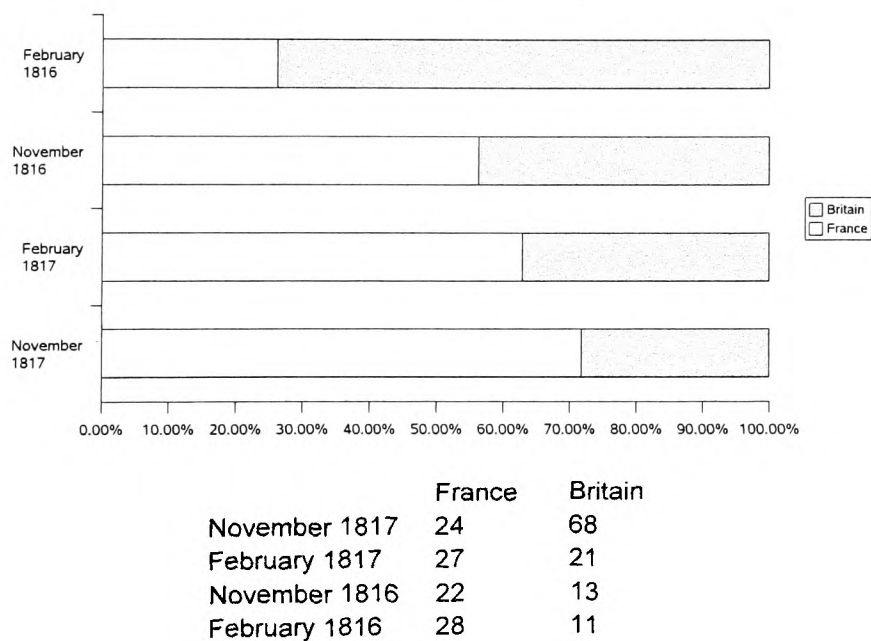


Figure 27: The allocation of the artificers of the Royal Wagon Train, 1816 – 1817.⁵⁴⁵

⁵⁴⁴ Royal Wagon Train monthly pay list, February 1816 to November 1817, PRO WO 12/1530.

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid.

By November 1816 there was clearly a concentration of capability as well as manpower in France. This was reflected in the number of active troops deployed, with four in France and only one in Britain. The solitary troop in Britain was, however, massively over strength compared to its predecessors earlier in the war. In terms of personnel this one troop, 166 strong, was approximately equivalent to the three active troops that accounted for the main element of the Royal Wagon Train in the summer of 1799, each of which had an average strength of approximately 60 privates. Furthermore, the number of artificers – eleven - was actually more than the total number employed by all of the troops in that same period. Thus, the operational capability of Royal Wagon Train in Britain was at least as good as, if not marginally better, than it had been at the turn of the century. That only one troop existed did not unduly influence its flexibility either. Although still based at Croydon Barracks, the Royal Wagon Train continued to maintain detachments at Hythe, Sandhurst and on the Isle of Wight.

The men of the Royal Wagon Train stationed in Britain in 1817 were administered differently to their comrades on the continent. Even the way in which Waterloo veterans were noted in returns was different, this practice being introduced in September 1817. In both cases the veterans were noted in muster rolls by a Union Flag symbol (specifically the cross of St. George and St. Patrick in red) next to their names.⁵⁴⁶ In Britain this was recorded in the column indicating length of service, whereas in France it was placed directly next to the individual's name. The most noticeable difference in the organization and structure of the two forces was the respective complements of their specialist sergeants. In Britain the train had on its strength a school master sergeant, an armourer sergeant, a saddler sergeant and a trumpet major sergeant, but no sergeant majors. In contrast the force in France

⁵⁴⁶ Royal Wagon Train monthly pay list, September 1816, PRO WO 12/1530.

deployed over a dozen of these latter individuals, indicating the emphasis placed on command and control over other aspects of army life. If there was no sergeant schoolmaster in France, then there was no regimental school, arguably one of the most significant additions to army barracks in the period.

The existence of the Royal Wagon Train into the post war period was an achievement for the organization and one that is often overlooked. Its survival was significant because the train had been created during the war, in response to a wartime situation, its continued existence in to peacetime evidence that it had become to be considered an essential element of the British army. The majority of transport duties for the army continued to be conducted by civilians but these duties tended to be the mundane, such as delivering produce from suppliers. It was in a war zone that the Royal Wagon Train came to the fore; delivering supplies at key moments in the heat of battle or ensuring troops at the very front line of an advance were maintained. The Royal Wagon train could easily have been disbanded in 1815, its forte being the support of large scale military operations, yet by maintaining the train the army demonstrated a reluctance to return to the rather ad hoc policy towards military logistics that had existed prior to the Revolutionary Wars. The army would eventually return to such a policy in 1833 following the disbandment of the Royal Wagon Train but this would be short lived.

The continued existence of the Royal Wagon Train reflected that an evolution had occurred in the army regarding logistics. Thus, the creation of the train could be considered progressive but it was restricted by the traditional shortcoming of all elements of the British military – lack of resources. There can be little doubt that a larger train would have achieved more even if it continued to focus on its main role, that of operating when civilians may have been less effective. The organization,

however, had a strength that allowed it in part to circumvent its small size, specifically an ability to evolve or adapt to a situation. In particular the train was able to restructure itself, contracting and expanding in response to peace and war time situations, creating new elements within its structure (the Depot Troops), splitting itself between different theatres and incorporating changes adopted by other elements of the army (such as new administrative practices). It is apparent that the Royal Wagon Train was the most flexible of the organizations tasked with maintaining the British army.

Although there were a variety of possible reasons for the flexibility of the train compared to other organisations, one of the most important is that it was a new organization and thus did not require extensive reform to remove outdated practices or to incorporate new ones. This was in contrast to the Commissariat, which was a lumbering behemoth compared to the leaner and more efficient Royal Wagon Train and was forced to expend its energies trying to improve practices rather than adapt to new situations.⁵⁴⁷ The Royal Wagon Train also had other advantages over the Commissariat and in particular it was one of the few organisations not to deploy assets outside of the European theatre in the period. Yet this factor should not be overestimated because there is little evidence to suggest that the Commissariat would have been significantly more efficient if its activities had been concentrated in Europe. The organisation would have been leaner but there is no reason to believe its systems would have been less cumbersome as a result.

Comparisons between the Royal Wagon Train and Commissariat are not always appropriate. The task of the latter was broad, while the focused on one aspect of logistics, transportation. When considering the Commissariat solely in regard to this, however, another advantage of the Royal Wagon Train over other organizations

⁵⁴⁷ See above pp.80 to 84.

becomes apparent. The Royal Wagon Train was able to benefit from the British state in an unusual way as it was able to utilise technology that was, in effect, transferred directly from the state and was a consequence of the agricultural and industrial revolutions. The period saw subtle but significant improvements to the technology of wheeled transport, including suspension and axle designs, and in many respects Britain led Europe in such fields. Using this technology made the wagons used by the train superior not only to those of continental armies but also superior to those hired by other British military organizations on the continent, particularly those utilised by muleteers, and upon which the Commissariat relied. The Royal Wagon Train was not unique in utilising the superior technology available in Britain during the period but that advances were made in its specialist field enabled it to benefit to a significant degree.

The state offered the train other advantages, the capability to expand in response to a situation being of note only when backed by the resources of the state. Yet the fact remains that, like other organisations, the train was constrained by the boundaries imposed by financial considerations and the resources that the state was willing to allocate. Thus, in many respects, the train reflected the best and worst aspects of the army's relationship with the state. The strength of the system was that resources (be it money, materiel or technology) could be made available quickly but these resources were limited due to the reluctance of the state to support the army to the extent that the force wished. Although important, it was not only lack of resources that limited the ability of Royal Wagon Train to maintain the army. Some commodities that the force required were less tangible than bread or guns and could not be carried on the back of a wagon. It is these commodities that are the focus of the following chapter.

Chapter 5

The provision of sundry necessities

The military revolution had created the need for a state to pay, train and equip its soldiers. In consequence military personnel represented an investment and, as noted by Colin Jones, one that had to be protected and nurtured, with states taking a growing interest in their welfare.⁵⁴⁸ Issues pertaining to welfare in the army can be divided into two categories: those related to specific departments and those that were more general issues, managed by either several departments or by government legislation. This chapter examines both, the former through the medical and chaplain's departments and the latter through a consideration of the army's policies to encourage men with families to enlist. In all three areas the army was to demonstrate both innovation and conservatism, with policies that had varying degrees of success. The common denominator, however, remained a concern for soldiers' welfare and while not logistics in a conventional sense this could be as vital to maintaining the army as guns or food.

One of the most innovative policies adopted by the army in the period was its encouragement of men with families to enlist. Through legislating for families the army was to increase its responsibilities, adding extra persons whose welfare the force had to consider. Despite such drawbacks, this policy was considered important not only to increase manpower but also because men with families were perceived to be of a higher standard and more reliable, the Duke of Wellington stating in a letter to Lieutenant-Colonel Torrens in 1811 that the army's failure to cater for their needs encouraged 'the worst description of men to enter the service'.⁵⁴⁹ Such a view was

⁵⁴⁸ Jones, 'The Military Revolution and the Professionalism of the French Army under the Ancien Regime', p.41.

⁵⁴⁹ Gurwood (ed), *Despatches and General Orders*, p.348.

progressive as the question of soldiers' families was a concept that led to the creation of married quarters in the mid-nineteenth century and has become something of an emotive subject and political issue in the twenty-first century due to media coverage concerned with the families of serving soldiers.⁵⁵⁰ The problem of soldiers' families is thus still a subject with which the state struggles to contend.

A potentially important reason for men with families not to enlist was economics. In civilian life women could make a substantial contribution to a family's income, earning an average of 6s per week in an industrial city such as Birmingham during the 1790s, which was almost equivalent to a soldier's pay of 1s per day.⁵⁵¹ In the Midlands during 1795 it was established that a family consisting of a husband, wife and two children should receive 15s per week, any shortfall in wages being rectified through poor relief.⁵⁵² Thus, for a man with a family to enlist there was a potential loss of income that could not be avoided if the husband was to serve in the army. The economic issues related to the recruitment of men with families, however, not only concerned incomes. While labourers and their families could earn more than soldiers their expenses could also be considerable. The terms 'labourer' and 'poor' have been described as being synonymous in this period and labouring families, particularly in rural areas, were not so well off as their incomes alone may suggest.⁵⁵³ It has been estimated, for example, that early in the nineteenth century a labouring married couple could spend £20 per year on food, £3 on rent and £8 on clothing.⁵⁵⁴ By enlisting at least these costs would be subsidised by the army, who would clothe, feed and provide accommodation for the soldier. Another consideration was the nature of

⁵⁵⁰ See for example, the media coverage concerning the 2004 Invasion of Iraq.

⁵⁵¹ I. R. Christie, *Stress and Stability in Late Eighteenth Century Britain* (Oxford, Clarendon, 1984), p.84.

⁵⁵² M. Blaug, 'The Myth of the Old Poor Law and the Making of the New', in M. W. Flinn and T. C. Smout (eds), *Essays in Social History* (Oxford, Clarendon, 1974), p.131.

⁵⁵³ R. J. White, *Life in Regency England* (London, Batsford, 1963), p.22.

⁵⁵⁴ E. W. Bovill, *English Country Life 1780 – 1830* (London, OUP, 1962), p.18.

the support offered through local poor rates, which was not always monetary. Authorities could be creative in how subsidies were paid, sometimes paying in kind through services such as clothing or laundry rather than with cash.⁵⁵⁵

Although the economic arguments against men enlisting were not as strong as they may first appear, there were other factors that could prevent men with families from enlisting. One difficulty was the family remaining together during the soldier's various redeployments and at the outbreak of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars the army made little provision for them to travel with soldiers. Regulations concerning this referred only to wives, it being assumed any children would also accompany them. It was relatively easy for wives to follow husbands serving in Britain and, despite the fact that married quarters and similar provision for wives did not exist until the mid-nineteenth century, families could remain together or at least in proximity due to the practice of billeting troops at inns (a practice that became less common as more barracks were constructed).⁵⁵⁶ When travelling overseas the army allowed a restricted number of wives (and their children) to follow each regiment. In such circumstances the army allowed for only six wives to travel with each infantry company or cavalry troop, while in the Royal Artillery the allocation was a more generous eight and ten for foot and horse batteries respectively.⁵⁵⁷ Rations were established as being half that of a man's for women and one third for children.⁵⁵⁸

Only the wives of privates and non-commissioned officers were permitted to travel with the regiments to foreign postings at the expense of the army, while

⁵⁵⁵ Christie, *Stress and Stability*, p.106.

⁵⁵⁶ M. Trustram, *Women of the Regiment: Marriage and the Victorian Army* (Cambridge, CUP, 1984), passim. Colonel N. T. St John Williams, *Tommy Atkins' Children: The Story of the Education of Army's Children* (London, HMSO, 1971), p.6.

⁵⁵⁷ H. Torrens to Duke of Wellington, Horse Guards, 5th November 1811, NAM 6807/221, p.40; Brigadier-General Macleod to R.H. Crew, Woolwich, 10th July 1809, PRO WO 55/1314. For the expedition to Egypt the permitted number of wives allowed to follow the force was reduced to three per company, a policy that adversely affected morale. P. Mackesy, *British Victory in Egypt, 1801* (London, Routledge, 1995), p.15.

⁵⁵⁸ Torrens Wellington, Horse Guards, 5th November 1811, NAM 6807/221, p.41.

commissioned officers frequently paid for their wives to travel with them. Grenville-Eliot of the Royal Artillery, for example, urged on several occasions that his wife travel with him so he could control her financial expenditure.⁵⁵⁹ Other men married local women while on service (despite the fact that since 1685 permission had been required from a soldier's commanding officer for him to marry), with the result that a large number of women and children followed regiments while they were deployed overseas.⁵⁶⁰ With the 25th Light Dragoon Regiment in India during the latter stages of the war, for example, there were no less than seventy-two women, forty-one of whom were European, the remainder being of local origin.⁵⁶¹

Whether widowed or married there was initially little provision made for the women who followed the army abroad. Left to fend for themselves they inevitably turned to looting, and in August 1812 the Duke of Wellington remarked that 'the followers of the army, the Portuguese women in particular, must be prevented by the provosts from plundering the gardens and fields of vegetables'.⁵⁶² Thus the army found itself on the horns of a dilemma in regard to women and children. They were seen to hamper the supply of the army by consuming food and taking up transport, and even those authorised to travel with the regiments required special permission to travel aboard ship.⁵⁶³ J. MacDonald, a former army officer writing proposals for reforms of the army in 1807, held such a view, stating that 'no woman, who is not by profession a washerwoman, will be permitted to follow the battalions'.⁵⁶⁴ Wives and children were, according to Mary Trustram, 'a millstone around the army's neck, affecting mobility, discipline and efficiency'.⁵⁶⁵ Despite the difficulties caused by their

⁵⁵⁹ NAM 5903/127/6.

⁵⁶⁰ The practice had been introduced into the regiments of guards in 1671. Trustram, *Women of the Regiment*, p.30.

⁵⁶¹ Half Yearly Report on 25th Light Dragoons, Bagalore, 15th February 1813, NAM 6112/78, p.184.

⁵⁶² Gurwood (ed), *General Orders*, p.32.

⁵⁶³ Macleod to Crew, Woolwich, 17th June 1807, PRO WO 55/1314.

⁵⁶⁴ MacDonald, *Instructions for the Conduct of Infantry*, p.7.

⁵⁶⁵ Trustram, *Women of the Regiment*, p.29

presence, however, women were not simply a burden on resources and performed useful duties such as nursing and foraging.⁵⁶⁶ Ultimately the army was forced to acknowledge that whatever their overall impact, wives would always follow the army and legislation was required to accommodate this fact of life.

In 1811 an act 'for enabling the wives and families of soldiers embarked on foreign service' was introduced. This effectively provided an allowance for families to return home, being extended to include widows in 1812 and regiments embarking in Ireland in 1818.⁵⁶⁷ Following the end of the Peninsular Campaign in 1814 it was the army's policy to encourage Spanish and Portuguese women to return to their own homes rather than follow their husbands back to Britain but this was not strictly enforced. In 1814 Adjutant General Edward Pakenham successfully argued that a limited number of foreign wives, selected with 'the greatest caution', be allowed back to Britain.⁵⁶⁸ Thus, during 1816 some 44 women and 27 children, who had been following the 88th Regiment on the continent, were allowed to return with their husbands.⁵⁶⁹ First proposed in 1811, wives, widows, children and orphans were eventually allowed to draw food from army stockpiles in 1818.⁵⁷⁰ Until 1846 many of these regulations continued to be applied even if the child was born out of wedlock.⁵⁷¹ Although rudimentary, the army operated a system of welfare for the families of its soldiers.

The legislation introduced to enable the army to provide for the families of its soldiers is an example of the force at its most innovative. From virtually ignoring the

⁵⁶⁶ Ensign Wheatley wrote of the of the benefits of women employed on such duties. C. Hibbert (ed), *The Wheatley Diary* (London, 1964), p18.

⁵⁶⁷ Letter from War Office to Regimental Colonels, 19th July 1811, PRO ADM 201/20, Discharges, Pay, Pensions and Allowances (Royal Marines).

⁵⁶⁸ Gurwood (ed), *General Orders*, p.323.

⁵⁶⁹ Illegible to Lord Bathurst, Paris, 19th March 1816, PRO WO 28/14, Letters from Quarter Master General's Department, 1816 January to June.

⁵⁷⁰ Torrens to Wellington, Horse Guards, 5th November 1811, NAM 6807/221, pp.41-42; Gurwood (ed), *General Orders*, p.324.

⁵⁷¹ Williams, *Tommy Atkins' Children*, p.11; Blaug, 'The Myth of the Old Poor Law', pp.123-53.

wives and children of its soldiers the army would adopt policies that were in some respects ahead of those in civilian society, as evident in regard to education. The availability of education, for soldiers and their children alike, was one of the more tangible advantages offered by a career in the army, the education of soldiers' children being an offshoot of programmes intended to educate the rank and file. The subject of educating soldiers was a source of some debate; one contemporary arguing that service in the army alone was sufficient, due to 'the beneficial influence of moderate instruction and impressing the mind with a due sense of moral and religious duty'.⁵⁷² Such a view, however, was not common and formal education in the British army had a history stretching as far back as 1675, when the first army school was created in the Tangiers garrison. The growth in the number of such establishments was not rapid but the barrack-building program enabled permanent schools to be established in most regiments by 1809. The purpose of these schools was to educate soldiers but it was common for their children to be taught in them when the regiment was away.⁵⁷³ Initially the provision of such education was at the whim of regimental colonels although a standard structure was soon adopted and General Wetherall noted that the school of the 80th Regiment in particular paid great attention to the children of the regiment.⁵⁷⁴

The Duke of York was a keen advocate of education in the army, for both soldiers and their children alike, and he considered that the cost of schools to be 'trifling compared to the benefits [of] attending such an establishment'.⁵⁷⁵ It is no coincidence that during York's tenure as commander-in-chief several notable advances in the field of army education were to occur. One of the most significant

⁵⁷² MacDonal, *Instructions for the Conduct of Infantry*, p.cl.

⁵⁷³ Williams, *Tommy Atkins' Children*, pp3-9.

⁵⁷⁴ NAM 6112/78, p155.

⁵⁷⁵ Duke of York to Viscount Palmerston, Horse Guards, 26th August 1811, Williams, *Tommy Atkins' Children*, Appendix B.

reforms implemented, and one typical of the period, was the formalisation of regimental school administration. This structure was explained to Lord Palmerston in 1811, by which time the scheme had been implemented. York wrote that:

a sergeant-school-master should be appointed to each battalion and... he should be paid according to the rate of pay now attached to the paymasters clerk. It will also be necessary that the commissioners for the affairs of barracks shall be authorised to appropriate one room in each barrack for the use of the school... and it will be essential to allow an extra charge upon the contingent account of each regiment, for the articles of stationery and books which be requisite for the use of the boys and children.⁵⁷⁶

The Royal Military Asylum at Chelsea and its sister institution at Dover were both clear indications of the army's commitment to a policy that emphasised education, at a time when it is estimated that only 15% of the population received any schooling.⁵⁷⁷

The establishment at Chelsea was funded by the state and in 1812 received a grant of £20,000, while civilian schools tended to be funded by charities and philanthropists, and did not receive significant state funding until 1831 in Ireland and 1833 in Britain.⁵⁷⁸ The army lagged behind the navy in education, as a similar institution for the navy had been established at Portsmouth in 1729. Despite this, the army was addressing what would later become an important social issue.⁵⁷⁹

Staff at the Chelsea establishment included a chaplain, reading and knitting mistresses, a sergeant-major instructor, sergeant master tailors and cobblers and nine sergeant assistants. Eighteen corporals and 36 lance corporals were recruited from senior pupils to assist the non-commissioned officers. Education was open to both genders - boys learning trades such as tailoring and cobbling, girls sewing and

⁵⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷⁷ E.G. West, *Education and the Industrial Revolution* (London, Batsford, 1975), p.75.

⁵⁷⁸ P. Horn, *Education in Rural England, 1800 to 1914* (London, Gill and MacMillan, 1978), pp.33-34;

J.H. Adamson, *English Education 1789 to 1902* (London, Cambridge University Press, 1964), p.20.

⁵⁷⁹ Although similar establishments had existed for the navy since 1729. Duffy, 'The Military Revolution and State', p.5.

laundry.⁵⁸⁰ This use of apprenticeships was not unique to the army and was similar to the system utilised in industrial schools, in which the child's labour contributed to running costs.⁵⁸¹ This should not detract from the fact, however, that the apprentice system was further evidence of a shift in army policy that improved the situation of soldiers' families. The majority of teaching was to have been conducted by senior pupils, this being a characteristic of the monitorial systems adopted in the eighteenth century.⁵⁸²

The education offered at institutions such as Chelsea, Dover and the regimental schools was in some respects innovative. Education available to civilians was dominated by Sunday schools of various denominations. These establishments had become increasingly secular during the 1790s with the result that by 1818 two thirds of children attending school in England did so at Sunday School.⁵⁸³ Secularisation in civilian education was such that it even interfered with learning, through preventing co-operation with similar establishments of different denominations or even by the fact that certain activities, such as writing, were not allowed on Sundays.⁵⁸⁴ Army schools differed as they were less concerned with religious matters and instead focused upon skills considered likely to be of use in adult life.⁵⁸⁵ In this respect the army occupied a middle ground in its education practices, ahead of such practices in the less progressive schools but lagging somewhat behind the ideas of educationalists inspired by the works of Rousseau, ideas that would remain on the fringes of education until the mid-nineteenth

⁵⁸⁰ Williams, *Tommy Atkins' Children*, p.12.

⁵⁸¹ W.A.C. Stewart, *Progressives and Radicals in English Education, 1750 to 1970* (London, MacMillan, 1972), p.92.

⁵⁸² Stewart, *Progressives and Radicals*, p.27.

⁵⁸³ Horn, *Education in Rural England*, pp.30-32..

⁵⁸⁴ A.P. Wadsworth, 'The First Manchester Sunday Schools', in M.W. Flinn and T.C. Smout (eds), *Essays in Social History* (Oxford, Clarendon, 1974), pp.110-114; Horn, *Education in Rural England*, p.31.

⁵⁸⁵ Williams, *Tommy Atkins' Children*, p.13.

century.⁵⁸⁶ This approach – the adopting of current but not necessarily established ideas – was to characterise army education and was reflected in the adoption of the Bell monitorial system prior to its use nation-wide.⁵⁸⁷

It is apparent that through policies such as those intended to support soldiers' families and, as discussed in previous chapters, soldiers themselves, the army was to become increasingly involved in welfare. The extent of and motivation for these policies is open to some interpretation but it is evident that the army was one of the few careers that fed, clothed, sheltered and even educated its employees. With the exception of the Royal Navy, other employers provided less comprehensive support, factory owners, for example, providing schools, and some farmers housing and feeding their labourers out of season.⁵⁸⁸ Another important area of welfare was the provision of pensions.

Initially perceived as a means to prevent disgruntled former soldiers becoming involved in unrest, pensions had, by the time of the Napoleonic Wars, become linked to the appeal of the army as a career and also related to the welfare of soldiers and their families.⁵⁸⁹ The army lagged behind the Royal Navy in the field of pensions and in 1806 William Windham, then Secretary of State for War and Colonies, proposed significant reforms of the system utilised by the army. If fully implemented, these reforms would have dramatically improved the status of the regular army as a possible career but they became entangled with politics and ultimately proved too ambitious.⁵⁹⁰ Windham recognised that for a career in the army to become viable, there was a need to improve pay and, most importantly, increase pensions. Following Windham's reforms every soldier was to receive a pension and in an effort to make some postings

⁵⁸⁶ Stewart, *Progressives and Radicals*, pp.21-22.

⁵⁸⁷ Stewart, *Progressives and Radicals*, pp.92-96; Williams, *Tommy Atkins' Children*, pp.24-26.

⁵⁸⁸ J. Foster, *Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution: Early Industrial Capitalism in Three English Towns* (London, Widenfield & Nicolson, 1974), p.215; Christie, *Stress and Stability*, p.209.

⁵⁸⁹ Jones, 'The Military Revolution', p.41; Corvisier, *Armies and Societies*, pp.83-83.

⁵⁹⁰ Emsley *British Society*, pp.128-9.

more acceptable, two years served in the West Indies were to count as three served elsewhere. Widows' payments were not increased by Windham, although they were raised in 1812. Details are provided in figure 28.

Rank	Pension	Rank	Pension	Rank	Pension
Colonel	£50	Lieutenant	£20	Chaplain	£16
Major	£30	Ensign	£16	Surgeon	£16
Captain	£26	Adjutant	£16	Q'Master	£16

Figure 28: Army pensions received by widows, c1796.⁵⁹¹

Windham's crucial pension reform was to ensure that they were available to every soldier, along with the widows, children, siblings and even the next of kin of those who died in service. Examples of such payments include that of £50 to a barrack master in Nova Scotia; £30 to each sister of a staff surgeon; £5 to William Marsden, whose three sons were all dead by 1813; and £150 to the widow of Captain William Wheatley.⁵⁹² To claim a pension a widow needed to take an oath and produce a certificate signed by an appropriate regimental colonel.⁵⁹³ To the credit of early bureaucracy in the period, cases in which the full pension was not received were resolved as swiftly as possible. Examples include the case of a Glasgow widow who was proved to be £4 short of her £9 entitlement, the matter being quickly resolved through Chelsea Hospital.⁵⁹⁴

Many of the pension reforms introduced by Windham would not benefit soldiers until later in the century. Sergeant Robert Edwards of the Wiltshire Militia was an example of an individual who entered the army during the Napoleonic Wars and, although it is pure conjecture as to whether or not his decision to enlist was influenced by the prospect of a pension, it is apparent that he did not receive such payments until 1834. Sergeant Edwards was typical of many soldiers and represents a

⁵⁹¹ *A Treatise on Military Finance* (Whitehall, Egerton, 1796), p.96.

⁵⁹² PRO WO 25/3995, Register of Annual Bounty Paid to Deceased Officers Widows.

⁵⁹³ *A Treatise on Military Finance* (Whitehall, Egerton, 1796), p.116.

⁵⁹⁴ PRO WO 245/134, W. Horton to Deputy Treasurer of Chelsea Hospital, Glasgow, 1816.

case study of how a soldier serving during the early nineteenth century benefited from his service in later years. Edwards enlisted in the militia, aged 28, in 1802, serving for 30 years and 1 month. Due to a condition described by doctors as ‘mental imbecility’ he became an outpatient of Chelsea Hospital at the age of 60, residing at Bishop's Canning's near Devizes. His annual pension was £17 6s 8¾d, paid at quarterly intervals as illustrated in figure 29.

	£	s	d
1 st January	4	5	6
1 st April	4	6	5¼
1 st July	4	7	4¾
1 st October	4	7	4¾

Figure 29: Quarterly pension payments to Sergeant Robert Edwards, 1834.⁵⁹⁵

To collect his pension Edwards, like all other pensioners, was required to prove his identity by producing two certificates signed by local magistrates – impersonating a Chelsea out-patient being an offence punishable by hanging until 1818.⁵⁹⁶ There were several ways in which he could have forfeited his pension, including refusal to serve again after less than twenty-four years in the cavalry or twenty-one years in the infantry; failing to claim in four successive quarters; fraud; and ‘violence or outrage towards persons employed in paying the pensioners’. Payments received in ‘countries not forming part of His Majesty’s dominions’ also required special permission from the authorities, but it is credit to the efficiency of nineteenth century bureaucracy that pensions could be paid overseas.⁵⁹⁷

Pensions, education and providing for the families of soldiers were tasks shared by numerous departments. Conversely other areas of soldiers’ welfare were

⁵⁹⁵ WSRO 632/134, Certificate(s) of Sergeant R. Edwards, Outpatient of Chelsea Hospital, 1834.

⁵⁹⁶ Affidavit of Magistrate, WSRO 632/134, Certificate(s) of Sergeant R. Edwards, Out Patient of Chelsea Hospital, 1834; E. L. Woodward, *The Age of Reform 1815-1870* (Oxford, Clarendon, 1938), p.431.

⁵⁹⁷ Rules Governing Payment of Pensions, WSRO 632/134.

almost the sole responsibility of certain departments, particularly in regard to the provision of medical care and religious services. Military medicine in the early nineteenth century was possibly most famous for its shortcomings. It is both an under-considered and under-appreciated aspect of army life in the period, while its availability was a tangible advantage enjoyed by soldiers over civilians. While facilities were often rudimentary and unsanitary they were regulated, and, in theory at least, staffed by trained personnel with access to up-to-date advances in medicine. At this juncture it is necessary to stress that military and battlefield medicine can be distinct and separate subjects. Battlefield medicine is concerned almost exclusively with wounds and other injuries sustained on the battlefield, in effect the occupational hazards of a career as a soldier, such as gunshot wounds. Conversely military medicine is much broader subject that encompasses not only battlefield medicine but also the provision of more general medical treatment, for those ailments and injuries that could be suffered by soldiers had they been civilians, such as fevers and broken legs caused by falls. Thus it is military medicine that forms the basis in this chapter as it covers the full range of activities conducted by the army's medical personnel.

The organisation with overall responsibility for the provision of medical services in the army was the medical board. This body consisted of the Surgeon General, Physician General, Inspector-General of Hospitals and a number of advisors, persons who were specialists in their fields but who only temporarily sat on the board. In 1816, for example, Surgeon James Fellows and Dr. Pym were consulted over the outbreak of fever amongst British troops in Spain.⁵⁹⁸ In his general overview of the army in the period, P.J. Haythornthwaite is critical of the board. In particular he states that the individuals who sat on the board possessed their own private practices in

⁵⁹⁸ Army Medical Board to Secretary at War, 28th March 1816, PRO PC 1/4087, Privy Council Miscellaneous Unbound Papers, March 1816.

civilian life and thus devoted little time to their military duties.⁵⁹⁹ While there can be little doubt that the board frequently failed to address issues with the required vigour, the potential benefits of its structure should not be underestimated. In one respect a part-time board of this nature went against the trend of increasing professionalism in the army during this period, but it was also concurrent with the trend as it utilised skilled specialists to meet the needs of the army. By allowing the members of the board to continue in their more profitable civilian careers the army gained the benefit of their expertise without the expense of paying their full wages. In consequence even advisors to the board were frequently individuals of some standing and held in high regard. Viscount Palmerston, the future Prime Minister, described Dr Pym as being 'an excellent man, [about which] I have heard a great deal in his favour'.⁶⁰⁰ Due to the advice of individuals such as Pym, medical provision for soldiers was more advanced than that available to many civilians.

The very existence of the Medical Board was itself evidence of the superior medical provision available to soldiers compared to civilians. A similar organisation for the civilian population was not proposed by the Royal College of Physicians until 1805 and, despite consisting of five rather than three permanent members, it was to have fewer responsibilities than its military counterpart, its primary role being to safeguard Britain from outbreaks of diseases such as the plague.⁶⁰¹ The advice of its own Medical Board led to the army adopting some of the most up to date medical practices available in the early nineteenth century.⁶⁰² In particular the army was at the forefront of inoculation and while soldiers were not necessarily inoculated as a matter

⁵⁹⁹ Haythornthwaite, *The Napoleonic Source Book*, p.209.

⁶⁰⁰ Palmerston to Mr. Wharton, 26th July 1813, PRO PC 1/4011, Privy Council Miscellaneous Unbound Papers, July 1813.

⁶⁰¹ Royal College of Physicians to Privy Council, 5th February 1805; Instructions to the Board of Health, 13th February 1805, PRO PC 1/3643, Privy Council Miscellaneous Unbound Papers, February 1805.

⁶⁰² With the exception of the treatment of battlefield wounds, the army was almost always several years behind the practices of the Royal Navy. M. Duffy, 'The Foundations of British Naval Power', in M. Duffy (ed), *The Military Revolution and State, 1500 to 1800* (Exeter University, 1980), pp.74-75.

of routine, the army invested considerable resources on the practice.⁶⁰³ In March 1801, for example, the army spent £115 inoculating slave labourers in Jamaica.⁶⁰⁴ Inoculation was one of the few fields in which the army did not lag significantly behind the Royal Navy, widespread inoculation not being introduced for sailors until 1798.⁶⁰⁵

Despite the expertise of those who sat on the Medical Board, the Board should not be perceived as an overwhelming success and it possessed several limitations. It is necessary to appreciate that while those who advised and sat on the board included some of the most eminent physicians in Britain, some of their ideas lagged behind those of their continental colleagues. This was a view expressed by Thomas Chevalier, a surgeon of some note who not only served as Surgeon to the Prince of Wales but also wrote a treatise on the treatment of musket wounds that was adopted by both the Irish and London Royal Colleges of Surgeons. In particular he urged a more modern approach be adopted towards amputation, a practice limited in the Prussian army from the mid-eighteenth century but one that remained common in the British army.⁶⁰⁶ Also apparent is that, even when the ideas of the Medical Board were in line with, or even in advance of, continental thinking the practice of medicine was further limited by nineteenth century opinions concerning anatomy, physiology and disease.⁶⁰⁷

An additional factor that inhibited the Medical Board was its role as an advisory body. Because of this the skills of its personnel were not directly available to

⁶⁰³ P.E. Razell, 'Population Growth and Economic change in Eighteenth century and Early Nineteenth Century England and Ireland', in E.C. Jones and G.E. Mingay (eds.), *Land, Labour and Population in the Industrial Revolution* (London, Edward Arnold, 1987), pp.263.

⁶⁰⁴ NAM 7508/55/2, Particular Account Number 2. Being for Monies Paid and Advanced by Matthew Atkinson, Agent General.

⁶⁰⁵ Duffy, 'The Foundations of British Naval Power', p.74.

⁶⁰⁶ T. Chevalier, *A Treatise on Gunshot Wounds* (London, Bagster, 1806), pp.104-122

⁶⁰⁷ Until the 1840s, for example, there were few advances made in the treatment of tropical diseases. P.D. Curtin, *Disease and Empire: the Health of European Troops in the Conquest of Africa* (CUP, 1998), pp.5-11.

troops in the field and it relied instead upon the personnel of other departments for this task. The day-to-day running of medical services in the army was the responsibility of the Medical Departments, one existing for each of the army's two branches (Horse Guards and the Ordnance). At the head of the Horse Guards Medical Department was a director-general and two principal inspectors, both of who were qualified doctors, and all three men had joint responsibility for employing personnel. The number of other personnel employed by the department was subject to some variation, and the following figures are based on those of 1812. The Inspectors of Hospitals and their deputies oversaw hospitals, a total of eight and twenty-three of these personnel respectively being on strength.

The Medical Department exhibited many of the traits of such organisations in the period, such as a bureaucratic administration, but differed from similar bodies as its structure, while conforming to conventional military practices of hierarchy, was not a pyramid.⁶⁰⁸ In 1812 the total number of staff employed in army hospitals were, in order of seniority, as follows: twenty-four physicians, one hundred and eighteen surgeons, ten assistant surgeons, five purveyors, twenty-five deputy purveyors and fifteen apothecaries. A total of thirteen personnel (an inspector, a deputy inspector, a deputy purveyor and ten surgeons) were noted as being foreign, although anecdotal evidence suggests that the number of foreigners employed to have been much greater.⁶⁰⁹ The discrepancy between sources such as surgeons' memoirs and returns concerning the number of foreign personnel employed in hospitals may be explained by the close co-operation that occurred between the medical services of the British army and those of other allied forces; certainly by the end of the peninsular war the forces of Britain, Spain and Portugal were co-operating so closely in military

⁶⁰⁸ NAM 6807/441, Appointment of John Webb as hospital mate. 24th December 1811.

⁶⁰⁹ Army List, 1812 (London, War Office, 1812), p. See P. Hayward (ed), *Surgeon Henry's Trifles: Events of a Military Life* (London, Chatto & Windus, 1970).

operations it was inevitable that supporting services were shared. A feature of medical staff was the relatively large number of servants allocated compared to other departments, including large Commissariat stations.⁶¹⁰ Physicians, surgeons, apothecaries, purveyors and some hospital mates each had a servant assigned, while inspectors were each allotted two. Curiously, however, funding for these servants was only to be received if they were recruited from amongst the local population.⁶¹¹ This policy placated medical personnel who wished to have servants, but also prevented the employment of soldiers as servants, which was to prove a contentious issue in the army.⁶¹²

Inevitably the composition and number of staff present at each hospital varied according to the requirements of the army in each region. Those employed at the hospital of the Alexandria garrison and their rates of pay are shown below in figure 30. A notable absence from figure 30 is a purveyor, who would have been present at a larger establishment but, as rarely more than half a dozen such persons were employed at any one time, the Alexandria hospital remains a typical example of such an establishment in the British army.

Rank Pay	Number Present	Daily Rate of		
		£	s	d
Deputy Inspector	1	1	5	-
Physician	1	1	-	-
Staff Surgeon	3	-	15	-
Apothecary	1	-	10	-
Deputy Purveyor	1	-	10	-
Hospital Mate	6	-	7	6
Hospital Clerk	2	-	7	6

Figure 30: The staff of the British army hospital in Alexandria, 1807.⁶¹³

Some idea of wages relative to expenses can be found in the costs incurred by

⁶¹⁰ See NAM 7902/36, Account Book of Assistant Commissary General George Grellier.

⁶¹¹ Quinto de Banos, 8th July 1811, NAM 6807/221, pp.17-18.

⁶¹² In 1811 orders were issued demanding that soldiers of the Peninsula army employed as servants without authorisation be returned to their units as the use of soldiers in this role was having a detrimental impact on manpower. NAM 6807/221, pp.14 -18.

⁶¹³ NAM 8010/19, Hospital Staff at Alexandria.

William Dent while serving as a hospital mate at Colchester: lodgings 5s per week, an additional charge for the use of sheets at his lodgings (Dent not citing how much this cost), a servant from the ranks 2s per week and meals at officers mess: breakfast 1s, dinner 2s 6d, supper 9d.⁶¹⁴ Subtracted from this should also be other expenses including the cost of clothing: in October 1810, for example, he spent £1 14s on new boots and a coat.⁶¹⁵

Due to their role surgeons, who comprised almost half the personnel of medical departments, were perhaps the most important medical personnel. The status of surgeons in the army was ambiguous and somewhat similar to that of commissaries. Surgeons wore a uniform (that of the infantry but with a black plume) and held a commission, but were not combat soldiers. Despite on occasion serving in hospitals that were within earshot of battle, it was not anticipated that surgeons would become involved in combat. This was demonstrated by the case of Surgeon Shakelton, who was refused compensation for a wound received because, as a surgeon, he was not expected to be in the line of fire (although in this case the wound had been caused by a stray bullet some distance from the battle).⁶¹⁶ It was not only surgeons serving in war zones, however, who had reason to feel aggrieved about their perceived low standing in the army: militia surgeons were amongst the lowest paid and in 1804 a group serving in Ireland petitioned the Duke of York for an increase in pay.⁶¹⁷ Despite such instances it would be incorrect to assume that the army failed to acknowledge the contribution of surgeons to the war effort and the sacrifices they could make. An interesting example is that of Surgeon Dr. William Irvine, who died of a fever contracted whilst treating prisoners of war: his widow received £60 in compensation

⁶¹⁴ Dent to Mother, Colchester, 5th March 1809, NAM 7008/11/2.

⁶¹⁵ Dent to Mother, London, 30th October 1808, NAM 7008/11/2.

⁶¹⁶ Sometimes referred to as Shekelton. PRO WO 43/366, Wound gratuity refused to army surgeon Robert Shakelton.

⁶¹⁷ NAM 6801/43, Letter from Irish Militia Surgeons to the Duke of York Expressing Concerns about Pay, c1804.

for her husband's death as it was considered to have been in the line of duty.⁶¹⁸

The cases of Shakelton and Irvine demonstrate that the life of an army surgeon could be dangerous; while their skills ensured that they would be moved between regiments, garrisons or theatres of war as required. Thus, unlike fighting soldiers who may well have remained with the same regiment for the duration of their career, surgeons had little regimental loyalty. Consider, for example, the career of William Dent. His first encounter with military medicine occurred in February 1809 while he was still a medical student and continued for several months at Colchester Barracks.⁶¹⁹ In May 1810 he qualified as a surgeon but continued to serve as a hospital mate at Hilsea Barracks. In August 1810 he arrived at Gibraltar to take up the post of Assistant Surgeon to the 9th Regiment but, due to the delay in receiving mail, did not receive confirmation of his new role until September. Dent then stayed at Gibraltar until March 1811, spending three months treating French prisoners of war at Cadiz. Until May he served as acting surgeon at Tarifa and then spent the winter in Portugal. In October 1814 he arrived in Canada, returned to England the following August and then served in the army of occupation. In 1819 he returned to England before being posted to St. Vincents in April. He was subsequently posted to Dominica in October 1820 and Trinidad in April 1823, after which he was promoted to surgeon.⁶²⁰

Except for those employed as veterinaries (which was in any case a separate department), all army surgeons were expected to hold an appropriate qualification.⁶²¹ Thus these individuals comprised a group of qualified persons, a situation reflected in a growing professionalism amongst army surgeons. This was evident in a petition made by militia surgeons in 1804, which in addition to improved pay, called for staff appointments to be made available and the allowances of militia surgeons to be

⁶¹⁸ PRO WO 25/3995, Register of Annual Bounty Paid to Deceased Officers' Widows.

⁶¹⁹ See below p.200

⁶²⁰ See NAM 7008/11, Dent Letters.

⁶²¹ *Eighth Report of Military Enquiry* (London, Office of the Secretary at War, 1809), p.150.

brought into line with those of the regulars (militia surgeons had to serve for fifteen years before gaining the same rights as their counterparts in the regulars). Most significantly the petition highlighted the fact that a majority of these surgeons already had successful careers in civilian life, to which they would return if their situation did not improve.⁶²² Yet, despite possessing qualifications and demonstrating growing professionalism, there remained a number of surgeons who were of questionable competence.

Surgeon Henry was highly critical of his superior, a German surgeon, and noted that he was 'much fonder of schnapps than of surgery; and from keeping late hours, not particularly punctual in his morning visits at the hospital; in fact, sometimes staying away altogether three or four days'.⁶²³ Interestingly, similar comments were made in regard to another surgeon in 1825, who was subsequently court-martialled. While falling just outside of the period covered by this work, the case of Surgeon Inglis is of significance as it reveals what the army expected of competent surgeons and their responsibilities. Inglis faced three charges in relation to his conduct at the army hospital on Corfu and it is interesting to note that while ostensibly a surgeon of the Ordnance Medical Department, the surgeon operated alongside those of Horse Guards.⁶²⁴ The first charge was of:

Great irregularity in his attendance on Sergeant Reavil of the Royal Artillery while in hospital having proscribed for him irregularly, and not having paid that attention to his case which it appears to have demanded... [and also] conduct tending to aggravate the complaint.⁶²⁵

Surgeons were expected to attend their patients at least twice a day 'to keep regular

⁶²² NAM 6801/43, Letter from Irish Militia Surgeons to the Duke of York Expressing Concerns about Pay, c1804.

⁶²³ Hayward (ed), *Surgeon Henry's Trifles*, p.29.

⁶²⁴ PRO WO 71/114, General Courts Martial of Assistant Surgeon Charles Inglis.

⁶²⁵ Charges Preferred Against Assistant Surgeon Charles Inglis of the Ordnance Medical Department, Office of Ordnance, Corfu 10th November 1825, PRO WO 71/114, General Courts Martial of Assistant Surgeon Charles Inglis.

books of diseases, medicines, diet tables and hospital funds'.⁶²⁶ Inglis' failure to keep adequate records of either the treatment or progress of his patients was raised in the second charge:

Negligence as a medical officer in not having regularly recorded or detailed the symptoms of Sergeant Reavil's case, nor the cases of other patients in his diary journal or register.⁶²⁷

The third charge was basically an addition to the first and would no doubt have seemed familiar to Surgeon Henry, specifically 'general irregularity in hours of visiting his patients in hospital, and for general inattention to those entitled to his attendance out of hospital'.⁶²⁸

The charges demonstrate that surgeons were expected to attend their patients regularly and keep records. This is hardly surprising, although the second part of the third charge, relating to patients outside of hospital, is revealing. During the hearing it was to emerge that Inglis failed to attend at the quarters of a sick officer, and it was the opinion of the court that it was the duty of an army surgeon to make house calls of this nature. Indeed, this was perceived as being of equal importance to his work in hospital. Another important issue raised in the case was the failure of Inglis to treat a civilian employed as the servant of an officer. Again the court ruled against the surgeon, indicating that servants and non-military personnel were regarded as part of the military establishment in regard to eligibility for medical treatment, even though they may not have been eligible to draw rations or clothing from the army.⁶²⁹

Non-military personnel were referred to in regulations as 'inferior persons' and the procedures for the treatment of such persons employed by the Commissariat were outlined in the following order:

⁶²⁶ NAM 6807/370/29, Orders For Regimental Hospitals, 1804.

⁶²⁷ PRO WO 71/114, Charges Preferred Against Assistant Surgeon Charles Inglis.

⁶²⁸ PRO WO 71/114.

⁶²⁹ Office of Ordnance, Corfu, 8th November 1825, PRO WO 71/114.

Whenever any of the inferior persons of the Commissariat department may require admission into any field or general hospitals application for that purpose must be made by the Commissariat officer under whom such inferior person or persons may be serving, to the senior medical officer of the hospital. And the Commissariat officer will send the sick person to the hospital with a ticket, specifying his name, trade and place of birth.⁶³⁰

Of note is that admission of 'inferior persons' to hospital, unlike cases involving military personnel, required authorisation from both the commanding officer and the senior medical officer, not just a sick certificate. The order also addresses the difficulty of identifying the large number of persons employed by the Commissariat, as the commanding officer was to provide proof of identity. This would have been of additional importance overseas, given that the personnel may have been locals unable to speak English.⁶³¹

The trial of Surgeon Inglis demonstrated that the army would not tolerate incompetent surgeons. In addition to doubts about their abilities, however, surgeons were also vulnerable to accusations of fraud and embezzlement due to their responsibility for medical stores including medicine but also items such as food for patients. Such charges were not always correct and in 1815, for example, Surgeon Barker, then serving with the 11th Regiment of foot at Gibraltar, was cleared of charges relating to embezzlement and failure to carry out his duty, although it was the opinion of the court that he had made some 'dubious decisions'.⁶³²

As a group surgeons were open to criticism but it is important to highlight in their defence that their effectiveness could be influenced by other factors. The daily running of hospitals effectively rested not with themselves but the sergeants allocated to each ward. Possessing at best a rudimentary knowledge of medicine, these individuals were expected to fulfil a variety of diverse duties within hospitals on a

⁶³⁰ Standing Orders, Order No. 52, NAM 6807/221, p.11.

⁶³¹ See above p.63.

⁶³² PRO WO 17/113, Proceedings Against Surgeon Barker, 1815.

daily basis. These included ensuring rooms were ventilated and cleaned, that 'no man able to sit up is to lie upon his bed during the day', taking responsibility for patients' possessions, washing patients, and administering medicine.⁶³³ Thus the success of treatments prescribed or administered by surgeons depended to a degree upon the abilities of the non-commissioned officers who ran each ward. If, for example, a surgeon correctly prescribed a medicine, this could only be effective if the sergeant ensured that it was administered.

Besides specialist knowledge to be effective the sergeants appointed to run wards also required integrity but this was a trait not always apparent in either themselves or their staff. Theft from patients was common, and of his time spent in hospital at Wlachern Private Thomas Howell of the 71st Regiment of Foot noted that:

All the time I was in hospital, my soul was oppressed by the distress of my fellow-sufferers, and shocked at the conduct of the hospital men. Often I have seen them fighting over the expiring bodies of the patients, their eyes not yet closed in death, for articles of apparel that two had seized at once; cursing and oaths mingling with the dying groans and prayers of the poor sufferers.⁶³⁴

Besides the limitations of those responsible for the daily running of hospitals, another factor that could hinder surgeons was that the system could be stretched beyond capacity by a large number of casualties sustained during a single military operation, a problem not only in war zones but also Britain itself. This was demonstrated during the Walcheren operation, which saw wounded conveyed directly from the war zone to hospitals in southern and eastern Britain, and the opening phases of the peninsular war, when the required infrastructure to handle large numbers of casualties was not in place locally. In such circumstances there was often an insufficient number of surgeons available, as the hospitals were prepared to cope with the sick and,

⁶³³ NAM 6807/370/29, Orders For Regimental Hospitals, 1804.

⁶³⁴ Hibbert (ed), *A Soldier of the 71st*, p.45.

occasionally, wounded soldiers encountered in a garrison, not battlefield casualties, while under normal conditions the ratio of the sick to medical personnel in garrison hospitals could be as low as eight to one.⁶³⁵ This resulted in medical students being sent into the hospitals at times of crisis and for William Dent this was to be his first experience of military medicine. The situation was such that he wrote 'the wounded are so numerous and the assistant surgeons so scarce, that the poor men are actually lost for want of surgical aid'.⁶³⁶ Besides being practical training for his future career (and enabling him to attain the rank of hospital mate before qualifying as a surgeon) it is interesting to note that service in the hospitals at this time gave Dent opportunities rarely encountered as he civilian. He recorded that 'I am glad that I came here [Colchester Barracks] for besides attending the sick and wounded we have the privilege of dissecting those who die, and in London we could not get a dead body under three guineas'.⁶³⁷

When a soldier was injured on the battlefield the first stage of his treatment was conveyance to a medical post or field hospital. The process of transporting wounded away from the field of battle was beset with difficulties. Essential for the rapid removal of wounded was the provision of sufficient transport but this was not always achieved. Captain John Aitchinson of the 3rd Regiment of Foot Guards highlighted this, when he noted that in the aftermath of the Battle of Salamanca there was sufficient transport in the 1st Division to transport only 42 wounded, despite the fact that the formation suffered 300 such casualties.⁶³⁸ The small number of wagons available to remove wounded after a battle was noted by the Duke of Wellington. He believed, however, the cause of the problem was not a poor allocation of wagons per

⁶³⁵ Dent to his Mother, Hilsea Barracks, 24th June 1810, NAM 7008/11/2.

⁶³⁶ Dent to his Mother, London, 17th February 1809, NAM 7008/11/2.

⁶³⁷ Dent to his Mother, Colchester, 5th March 1809, NAM 7008/11/2.

⁶³⁸ Thompson (ed), *An Ensign in the Peninsular War*, p.220; Smith, *Napoleonic Wars Data Book*, p.381.

se but rather the utilisation of those allocated to transport items such as regimental account books. As a result general orders were issued restricting the practice but this did little to improve the process of casualty removal from the battlefield.⁶³⁹

It is necessary to note that it was not practical for a division to possess a number of wagons sufficient to remove all its casualties at the same time, not least because casualty rates could vary from battle to battle. At Talavera, for example, Aitchinson's division suffered over 1,800 wounded, six times the number sustained at Salamanca in the following year.⁶⁴⁰ As a result it was inevitable that a number of movements would be required to clear casualties but this was hindered by other shortcomings. Of major importance was the absence of an effective triage system at any point in the process of casualty removal or treatment, with casualties being removed from the field as encountered and not according to the seriousness of their injuries.

A factor that aggravated the difficulties caused by insufficient transport was lack of discipline. Looting would invariably follow victory, while in the aftermath of a defeat the wounded would be left to fend for themselves as the army left the field. Himself wounded during the Battle of Salamanca, the anonymous author of *Life in the 38th Foot* wrote that 'I was so weak that I could not get in [the sick wagon] of myself so I was left laying on the ground and was taken prisoner'.⁶⁴¹ Those taken prisoner were perhaps fortunate as they were spared the fate of many other injured comrades, who, due to the lack of attention paid to the wounded in the aftermath of a battle, fell victim to looters, succumbed to their injuries or died of exposure as they lay on the battlefield. Immediately after a battle swarms of looters would descend, primarily locals but also soldiers and their wives. Captain Browne noted soldiers' wives were

⁶³⁹ Gurwood (ed), *General Orders*, p.49.

⁶⁴⁰ Smith, *Napoleonic Wars Data Book*, p.327.

⁶⁴¹ NAM 7912/21, Anon, *Life in the 38th Foot*, p.52.

particularly vicious looters, writing that:

They covered in number the ground of the field of battle when the action was over, and were seen stripping and plundering friend and foe alike. It is not doubted that they gave the finishing blow, to many an officer who was struggling with a mortal wound; Major Offley of the 23rd Regiment, who lay on the ground, unable to move, but not dead, is said to have fallen victim to this unheard of barbarity.⁶⁴²

After this looting many bodies were simply left to decompose and following a battle the dead were often left on the field in great numbers. During the days following the storming of Badajoz Ensign Hennell complained of ‘constantly treading on feet or heads’.⁶⁴³ The aftermath of Salamanca was particularly grim, Private Wheeler complaining that following the battle ‘the smell from a few dead bodies was very offensive’ and Captain Browne understandably found ‘the sight of unburied comrades, undergoing the different changes and progress towards putrefaction’ particularly distressing.⁶⁴⁴ Arriving in October 1812, three months after the battle, Conductor of Stores W. Morris wrote of the battlefield that ‘it still presents a shocking spectacle, great numbers remain on the ground, some partly buried with their bones scattered about, skulls [sic] and teeth. The effluence arising from it is very offensive’.⁶⁴⁵ Interestingly, barely a generation later in the late nineteenth-century, the failure to bury the dead of either side after a battle would be seen by Europeans as a characteristic of so called ‘primitive’ cultures such as the Zulu.⁶⁴⁶

A wounded soldier fortunate enough to be conveyed away from the battlefield then had to await treatment in a field hospital, which was often a makeshift

⁶⁴² R. N. Buckley (ed), *The Napoleonic War Journal of Captain Thomas Henry Browne 1807 - 1816* (London, Army Records Society, 1987), p174.

⁶⁴³ M. Glover (ed), *A Gentleman Volunteer: The Letters of George Hennell From the Peninsular War 1812-13* (London, Heinemann, 1979), p18;

⁶⁴⁴ Liddell – Hart (ed), *The Letters of Private Wheeler*, p89; Buckley (ed), *Journal of Captain Thomas Henry Browne*, p232.

⁶⁴⁵ 4th October 1812, NAM 7508/24, Notebook of W. Morris, Conductor of Stores. 1812.

⁶⁴⁶ During his second invasion of Zululand, Lord Chelmsford avoided the battlefield of Isandlwana due to the remains of British soldiers that lay on the ground months after the engagement. D. Rattray, *Anglo-Zulu War Battlefields* (Barnsley, Leo Cooper, 2003), p.135.

establishment in a hastily acquired local building such as a farmhouse. Here, despite the best efforts of surgeons, large numbers of casualties would result in a backlog that could take days to clear. In 1811 Dent was given the task of caring for wounded French prisoners of war, during which time he witnessed the consequences of a medical system without triage, and a situation where certain individuals were inevitably given a low priority:

We found these unfortunate creatures in a most wretched condition; I think without exception the ugliest wounds I ever saw, numbers of them having fractured limbs from grape shot, and not being dressed for three days after the action (on account of our own wounded being so numerous) they really had a frightful appearance, and to crown all, they were laying on the floor, it being impossible to procure hospital bedsteads in sufficient numbers.⁶⁴⁷

One positive consequence of the lack of triage was that there was little respect of rank regarding the treatment of the wounded in hospital. In such situations Surgeon Henry claimed to have worked on the principle of ‘first come, first served; without respect of persons [or their rank]’.⁶⁴⁸

Facilities with resources stretched beyond capacity, poor medical practice and a limited understanding of human physiology were not the only factors that restricted the effectiveness of surgeons in the British army. The failure of the army to supply hospitals adequately with basic medicines and equipment hampered surgeons. The Duke of Wellington complained to Lord Castlereagh that even a relatively small battle, such as Talavera, would deplete hospital stores.⁶⁴⁹ Perhaps the most significant difficulty facing surgeons, however, was that one of the most common lethal wounds, and therefore the most frequently treated, were those inflicted by musket balls. This was unfortunate as musket balls were capable of inflicting horrific and potentially life-

⁶⁴⁷ Dent to his Mother, Gibraltar, 21st August 1811, NAM 7008/11/2.

⁶⁴⁸ Hayward (ed), *Surgeon Henry's Trifles*, p82.

⁶⁴⁹ Wellington to Castlereagh, Talavera, 21st August 1809, PRO WO 1/228, War Department in Letters and Papers, 1808 - 1820.

threatening injuries. Of such injuries Chevalier wrote that:

a wound of this description must... produce more or less contusion and laceration of the wounded parts; will often be accompanied with haemorrhage; the fracture of a bone; and, in many instances, with the lodgement of extraneous substances.⁶⁵⁰

Frequently the velocity of gunshots was sufficient to allow a musket ball to strip muscle from bone after entering the body, further adding to the trauma caused by the injury.⁶⁵¹

Despite the severe damage inflicted by gunshots even serious wounds could be survived. In 1813, for example, Lieutenant Bingham noted how a soldier of his regiment survived being shot through both his nose and the roof of his mouth.⁶⁵² This is remarkable considering that, prior to Chevalier's treatise, the accepted medical practice in regard to gunshot wounds was, quite literally, hit and miss. In his treatise Chevalier urged surgeons to open wounds prior to operating. This was because such practice was perceived to be:

generally safer and better, and often gives much less pain, than poking into a narrow and inadequate aperture, or making a random plunge, which may include parts that had better be avoided, and perhaps even miss the vessel it was intended to secure.⁶⁵³

While primitive by twenty-first-century standards, the advice contained within Chevalier's work was a step forwards. Thus, the Royal Colleges of Surgeons adopted Chevalier's treatise in 1806 but until this information was disseminated to surgeons the wounded continued to suffer the 'random plunge' of medical instruments.

After leaving the field hospital the casualty, depending on the seriousness or nature of the injuries sustained, could return straight to his unit, begin a period of

⁶⁵⁰ T. Chevalier, *A Treatise on Gunshot Wounds* (London, Bagster, 1806), p.2.

⁶⁵¹ Chevalier, *A Treatise on Gunshot Wounds*, p.97.

⁶⁵² Bingham to his mother, nr Echelar, 3rd April 1813, NAM 6807/163, p.59.

⁶⁵³ Chevalier, *A Treatise on Gunshot Wounds*, p.75.

convalescence or be sent to a permanent hospital, such establishments tending to be located around six to ten leagues from the lead elements of the army.⁶⁵⁴ If transferred to another hospital those able to walk made their journey on foot while the others were conveyed in wagons or upon mules. Compared to the situation regarding transport assigned to remove casualties, transportation for those moving between hospitals was relatively well organised: a wagon was assigned to transport the packs of the wounded, while mules were allotted to carry either specified personnel or medicine.⁶⁵⁵ A column of such troops was placed in the charge of either a surgeon or an assistant surgeon and given rations for the required number of days, pre-cooked if possible.⁶⁵⁶ Containing large numbers of personnel and slow moving, these columns frequently caused heavy congestion on routes used for the transport of supplies and other military purposes. In November 1812, for example, Conductor of Stores W. Morris noted that 'the road [to Almeida] was wholly lined with sick and convalescing troops', making the movement of his supply column impossible.⁶⁵⁷

Some personnel did not survive these journeys and William Dent noted of casualties arriving in Britain that 'several [officers] have died and the men were buried by dozens... the landing at Harwich was truly an awful sight, several men died in the landing on the beach'.⁶⁵⁸ For those that did survive, however, the eventual destinations varied. Convalescing personnel generally remained at the rear of the army, although officers could be allowed to return home. In such cases the period of absence was strictly defined and contact was to be made with the appropriate headquarters as soon as it ended (commissaries, for example, were expected to report to the office of the Commissary General).⁶⁵⁹ For the remaining sick and wounded the

⁶⁵⁴ Quinta, 23rd June 1811, NAM 6807/221, p.16.

⁶⁵⁵ Porta Legre, 23rd July 1811, NAM 6807/221, p.21.

⁶⁵⁶ Thomar, 8th March 1811, NAM 6807/221, p.8.

⁶⁵⁷ Wednesday 18th November 1812, NAM 7508/24.

⁶⁵⁸ Dent to Mother, Colchester, 12th September 1809, NAM 7008/11/2.

⁶⁵⁹ Standing Orders, Order No. 52, NAM 6807/221, p.11.

likely destination would have been either a permanent hospital or hospital ship, either of which could have been in the same region as their posting or Britain.

Twenty-six hospital ships were active during the course of the Napoleonic and Revolutionary Wars, although the highest number active in a single year was nine in 1799. The navy had used hospital ships since Tudor times but the army had made little use of them and initially viewed such vessels as being little more than transports for the sick and wounded, although from 1808 limited use was made of them as floating hospitals (such as HMS Charon). Prior to this soldiers had been treated aboard similar vessels in colonies, such as HMS Seraphis in Jamaica, where shore-based medical facilities were limited. Some craft were designated as stationary hospital ships and permanently moored at a single location. Such vessels were not always well placed and one was moored a league off the coast of Cornwall, where it was noted that for at least one week per year poor weather made it 'almost impossible for a boat to have any intercourse [with the shore]'.⁶⁶⁰ Hospital ships were often no more than regular naval or merchant vessels, converted through the addition of extra bedding, and often retained a secondary role as store ships (such as HMS Magnificent). They were described as being cramped, dirty and airless.⁶⁶¹

Those soldiers sent to a regimental hospital were in theory better off than their comrades afloat. Regimental hospitals were governed by numerous regulations concerning ventilation, hygiene and diet but these were frequently circumvented or just ignored due to circumstance, lethargy or confusion. Much emphasis, for example, was placed on cleanliness but instructions regarding this could be vague. Consider the following order, which relates to the cleaning of wards: 'occasionally, in fine weather, the rugs and blankets [are] to be hung out and well aired, and the bedsteads and

⁶⁶⁰ Secretary of Customs, Extract on the Report on the Collector and Comptroller of the Customs at Scilly Relative to the Stationary Hospital Ships', 2nd February 1805. PRO PC 1/3643.

⁶⁶¹ PRO ADM 102/1, Hospital Ship Musters; Lieutenant Colonel J. H. Plumridge, *Hospital Ships and Ambulance Trains* (London, Seeley, 1975), pp.16-26.

canvas to be washed with soap and water, and the plastered walls to be frequently whitewashed⁶⁶². Although the requirement for regular cleaning is note worthy there was little real guidance in regard to the frequency of this activity. Is occasionally weekly, monthly, six monthly or bi-annually? And what of ‘frequently whitewashed’? Clearly there was a need for the frequencies to be stipulated, although even when this occurred it raised further questions: windows, for example, were to be opened daily but there is no indication whether this order was rescinded in winter. Often the regulations, even if the hospital staff wished to adhere to them, were simply impractical or even impossible. It is apparent that the orders were written with ideal conditions (such as those encountered in Britain) in mind. It was stated, for example, that each man was to be allocated a bed, the linen of which was to be changed fortnightly, and 5 feet of space. In practice hospital overcrowding, particularly following a large battle or in regions prone to high rates of sickness prevented such luxuries. At times the only available bedding was straw on the floor and space, especially in the wards of the West Indies, could be as little as 22 inches.⁶⁶³

There can be little doubt that conditions in military hospitals could be unpleasant and even hazardous to health, with death rates ranging from one in sixty-seven in Britain to one in twenty-four in the Caribbean.⁶⁶⁴ For patients this state of affairs was readily, and depressingly, apparent: Private Wheeler of the 51st Regiment of Foot spent five weeks in hospital with a fever and noted that during this time, in a bed adjacent to his own, five men died and another left in ‘a hopeless state’, while the anonymous writer of *Life in the 38th* was convinced he would not survive a prolonged stay in hospital⁶⁶⁵.

⁶⁶² NAM 6807/370/29, Orders For Regimental Hospitals, 1804.

⁶⁶³ *Statistical Report on the Sickness Mortality and Invaliding Among the Troops of the West Indies* (London, HMSO, 1838), p.4.

⁶⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶⁵ Liddell – Hart (ed), *The Letters of Private Wheeler*, p.153; NAM 7912/21, *Anon Life in the 38th Foot*, p.24.

The experience of a period spent in hospital would have been worsened for many soldiers by the strict regulations governing them. It is interesting to note that these regulations were to be posted in each hospital on a large notice and read out to new patients, in a manner similar to modern day health and safety regulations. A hospital uniform consisting of white long coat, flannel waist coat, shirt, trousers and cap was to be worn at all times and entry to hospitals was strictly controlled so visits from colleagues were rare. To ensure these rules were adhered to sentinels were appointed:

to prevent all persons from entering the hospital, the staff, or officers in uniform, patients and servants of the hospital excepted; to be particularly careful in preventing liquor, or anything improper from being carried into the hospital. No patients to be allowed to go out without a ticket of leave from the surgeon.⁶⁶⁶

Ward sergeants were responsible for imposing further restrictions and were instructed to 'prevent patients from spitting on the floor, irregularities, gaming [and] swearing', as well as preventing the defacing of hospital property. Although perhaps not common activities while in the ranks on the parade ground, these would have been common amongst soldiers at rest or even on the march, in regimental hospitals, however, soldiers were continually under the watchful gaze of the sergeants, who were to report any disobedience (although there is little evidence that sergeants did so). In addition to these restrictions normal military conventions, such as morning roll call, continued to be applied. Then, adding to the misery of a soldier wounded in service of his country, was the fact that he was also deducted nine pence per day for the duration of his stay in hospital!⁶⁶⁷

After several weeks or months in hospital patients would be either sent back to their units or allowed a period of convalescing. Some, such as Lieutenant Anderson of

⁶⁶⁶ Standing Orders, Order No. 52, NAM 6807/221, p.11.

⁶⁶⁷ Standing Orders, Order No. 52, NAM 6807/221, p.11.

the 78th Regiment of Foot, who was wounded at the Battle of Fuentes d'Onoro, were granted permission to return home for the period of convalescence.⁶⁶⁸ While popular with those concerned it was less so with senior army officers, who resented the loss of manpower: although required to maintain contact with the army, the personnel could still take days or weeks to return to a war zone depending on the movement of shipping.⁶⁶⁹ The Duke of Wellington in particular was known to be critical of the policy allowing troops to return to Britain and Lieutenant Bingham noted 'Lord Wellington is very adverse to sparing a man; and the two words "return home" puts him into a fury'.⁶⁷⁰ Other than officers, however, few soldiers enjoyed the privilege of being allowed permission to return home to convalesce. Private Green of the 68th Regiment of Foot was typical of soldiers allowed to convalesce by being given light duties. Billeted in a makeshift prefabricated hut along with fellow convalescing soldiers, he spent his time sweeping the streets of Lisbon until considered able to return to his regiment.⁶⁷¹ Even more common than the light duties in which Green was engaged while convalescing was an immediate return to the soldier's unit. This policy was popular with senior officers as it released manpower but frequently troops returned to active duty too early, a situation which brought with it implications for their health. Many officers were unsympathetic to the difficulties experienced by such men and Major Dickson of the artillery complained that 'our sick increase again, for the soldiers that have been cured of agues, from the imprudence in exposing themselves unnecessarily to the sun, have had many relapses'.⁶⁷²

Besides demonstrating a considerable lack of humanity (or, perhaps, a failure to understand the processes involved in recovery from an illness), Dickson's

⁶⁶⁸ J. Anderson, *Recollections of a Peninsula Veteran* (London, Edward Arnold, 1913), p.70.

⁶⁶⁹ Standing Orders, Order No. 51, NAM 6807/221, p.11.

⁶⁷⁰ Bingham to his mother, Burgos, 3rd October 1812, NAM 6807/163, p.98.

⁶⁷¹ J. Green, *The Vicissitudes of a Soldier's Life* (Cambridge, Ken Trotman, 1996), pp.201-202.

⁶⁷² J. H. Leslie. *The Dickson Manuscripts*, vol I, (Woolwich, Royal Artillery Institution, 1905), p.103.

complaint demonstrates that, in addition to wounds sustained during battle, patients were admitted to hospital with other complaints and conditions (in this case described as 'agues'). It is important to appreciate that military hospitals were not only filled with the wounded as soldiers could find themselves requiring medical attention for a variety of reasons. In such instances admittance to hospital was achieved through presentation for a sick certificate, applications for which were made through the office of the Adjutant-General or, in the case of Commissariat personnel, the Commissary General.⁶⁷³ These applications were assessed by medical boards, which met at selected hospitals on the fifth, twelfth and twentieth days of each month.⁶⁷⁴

Admittance to hospital for treatment of various ailments was an advantage enjoyed by soldiers over civilians because, despite their failings, military establishments were relatively well regulated and, while not free, incurred only a minor cost. Despite these advantages, however, disease and rigours of service took a toll on many soldiers. On 31st May 1808 Captain Jennings' of the 28th Regiment made his decision to retire from the army, stating that:

at this time my health having suffered considerably and finding myself no longer fit to encounter the hardship of actual service I resolve to retire... after eighteen years service chiefly foreign in which period I completed several hard campaigns without ever having experienced any wounds or other corporal injury, the usual consequence of field service.⁶⁷⁵

During service he had suffered from an occasional liver complaint, in addition to 'violent and alarming' bleeding from his head towards the end of his career.⁶⁷⁶ It is interesting to note that Jennings, despite the failing health that he attributed to military service, regarded himself as fortunate not to have sustained any wounds. Considering that Jennings avoided the fiercest fighting of the Napoleonic Wars this may at first

⁶⁷³ Standing Orders, Order No. 51, NAM 6807/221, p.11.

⁶⁷⁴ Cartaxo, 5th December 1810, NAM 6807/221, pp.3-4.

⁶⁷⁵ NAM 8301/102, Memoirs of Captain Peter Jennings, pp.133-4.

⁶⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p.134.

appear unremarkable, although the intensity of the fighting prior to the Peninsular War should not be underestimated. The significance of Jennings's case is that it demonstrates a soldier's health could suffer despite avoiding the trauma of injury on the battlefield.

Due to a combination of factors such as the limitations of nineteenth-century science, poor living conditions encountered by soldiers on campaign and the seriousness of wounds inflicted on the battlefield, death was a feature of military medicine during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. Many soldiers doubted they would survive time in hospital and in such situations turned to religion for comfort. Clergy, however, were often notable by their absence and Private Wheeler complained that there was 'no minister of religion to cheer the dying sinner' while in hospital.⁶⁷⁷ This was despite the fact that the army had a commitment to provide clergy, and associated facilities, to enable religious observance amongst its troops, including those in hospital.

The organisation responsible for providing soldiers with access to religion was the Chaplain General's Department, whose personnel operated at divisional level.⁶⁷⁸ Chaplains were exclusively Anglican in this period, and it was not until much later in the nineteenth century that those from other faiths were introduced.⁶⁷⁹ This was a direct result of the relationship between the army and state in the period, and the role of religion in the latter. Church and state in Britain were closely linked, the monarch being both head of state and head of the Church of England. Ideologically the maintenance of Protestantism was perceived as vital to concepts of cultural identity, parliamentary democracy and the British way of life.⁶⁸⁰ Non-Anglicans were viewed

⁶⁷⁷ Liddell – Hart, *The Letters of Private Wheeler*, p.153.

⁶⁷⁸ Adjutant General Harry Calvert to Duke of Wellington, Horse Guards, 8th November 1811, NAM 6807/221, pp.39-40.

⁶⁷⁹ G. Harries-Jenkins, *The Army in Victorian Society* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977), passim; J. Keegan, *The Face of Battle* (London, Johnathan Cape, 1973), p.137.

⁶⁸⁰ Colley, *Britons*, p.382.

with suspicion or hostility and Catholicism in particular was perceived as being particularly dangerous, with the fear of 'Popery' sometimes reaching hysteria. This manifested itself during the general election of 1807, described by Clive Emsley as being one of the most sectarian in British history, and saw Lord Grenville's government defeated by the Duke of Portland running on an anti-Popery ticket.⁶⁸¹ Another faith singled out as the target of suspicion was Methodism, a faith seen as subversive as it was non-hierarchical.⁶⁸² The prejudices inherent in the state were transferred directly to the army through regulations that limited the employment of non-Anglicans, imposing a glass ceiling on their advancement by restricting them to the rank of Captain or lower.⁶⁸³

Regulations limiting the advancement of non-Anglicans were based on the fear of subversion and rebellion, yet it is important to note that even the Anglican faith could at times be disruptive and not conducive to good military order. An example of a potentially serious conflict between the religious beliefs of an individual and military duty arose in 1808, when Private Philip Arthurs of the militia was 'imprisoned in the gaol of St. Helens for refusing to attend the regimental drills and military reviews on Sundays, from scruples of conscience and praying belief'.⁶⁸⁴ Arthurs was not a Dissenter but an Anglican, evidence that even adherents of the state religion could come into conflict with military authorities. Arthurs appealed against his imprisonment, stating that he would be willing to attend on a weekday. The military authorities stated that allowing the militia to choose their own day of drill would undermine discipline, although the appeal was dismissed by the Privy Council

⁶⁸¹ Emsley, *British Society*, p.129.

⁶⁸² Royle, *Revolutionary Britannia*, p.14.

⁶⁸³ Cookson, *The British Armed Nation*, p.156.

⁶⁸⁴ PRO PC 1/3866, Petition Brought by Philip Arthurs, Private of the South West Regiment of the Jersey militia, 11th April 1809.

on the grounds that Sunday morning drill was the least disruptive for those employed as labourers, farmers and fishermen.⁶⁸⁵

The case of the Philip Arthurs was a clear example of how religious beliefs could undermine discipline as they resulted in imprisonment. Less apparent, however, were the views of soldiers that, while rarely resulting in overt opposition to military practices, could potentially undermine discipline and morale. While serving on a court martial in 1813, for example, George Hennell wrote that he disapproved of the system because ‘I am accountable to a superior tribunal whose judge has said “Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy”’.⁶⁸⁶ Another soldier whose views were shaped by his religious beliefs was Quarter Master William Surtees, who served with the Rifle Brigade and underwent a profound religious conversion while serving in Spain, after which he became highly critical of his fellow officers.⁶⁸⁷ Soldiers who sought to convert their comrades to their views often met with abuse and even threats of violence, as discovered by the anonymous author of *Life in the 38th Foot* who admitted his constant preaching made him unpopular.⁶⁸⁸

It is apparent that in regard to religion the army was perceived as a bulwark of the Protestant state, yet was itself was not excessively Protestant.⁶⁸⁹ Regulations such as the Mutiny Act served to limit the role of non-Anglicans, and Catholics in particular, but did not prevent them from serving and pursuing a worthwhile career.⁶⁹⁰ Not only did the ranks contain non-Anglicans but also the army co-operated with large numbers of such personnel. Examples include the personnel employed by the Commissariat in regions such as Spain and Italy, and the armies of Allied nations that

⁶⁸⁵ PRO PC 1/3866, Response of John de Veulle Griffith, Jersey, 16th August 1809.

⁶⁸⁶ Glover (ed), *A Gentleman Volunteer*, p.113.

⁶⁸⁷ Surtees, *Twenty Five Years in the Rifle Brigade*, p.314.

⁶⁸⁸ NAM 7912/21, pp.33-34.

⁶⁸⁹ Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation*, p.382.

⁶⁹⁰ Captain Jennings was a Catholic. NAM 8301/102.

were predominantly Catholic.⁶⁹¹ Protestantism was a principle that the state was willing to sacrifice in the face of military necessity, whether it was overriding the rights of an individual to worship on a Sunday or accepting Catholics and Dissenters into its ranks if not the hierarchy. The latter in particular was to be significant, leading to reforms that had implications for society in general.⁶⁹²

Despite high-minded principles such as defending the Church of England, the actual policy towards religion in the army can be best described as lethargic. This was apparent at the most basic level, specifically the allocation of chaplains. While divisional chaplains were, in theory at least, present in regular formations, there was no such provision in the auxiliary formations. This was caused by the structure of militia, volunteer and fencible units, formations that were often administered outside of a divisional structure and thus unable to benefit from the existence of associated personnel. In consequence chaplains were assigned to certain auxiliary formations, but were rarely on the active strength of such units. This was demonstrated by the case of Reverend Samuel Wells, who was appointed as chaplain to the Coleridge Volunteer Artillery in 1804. Despite the formation conducting drills and meeting on a regular basis, he was instructed not take up the full responsibilities of his post and 'not to take rank in the army except during the time of the said corps being called out into actual service'.⁶⁹³

By failing to integrate chaplains fully into the structure of auxiliary formations, the effectiveness of such individuals could have been undermined by lack of familiarity with those under their care. In part this could have been avoided due to the nature of auxiliary units, which tended to be drawn from a single locality, but it is possible that such a chaplain would have known few individuals originating from

⁶⁹¹ See above p.62.

⁶⁹² Cookson, *The British Armed Nation*, p.156.

⁶⁹³ NAM 6807/405, Commission from Lord Lieutenant of Devon appointing Samuel Wells Chaplain to the Coleridge Corps of Royal Volunteer Artillery, 24th October 1804.

outside of his own parish. Even chaplains in regular formations, however, failed to make close bonds with troops in regular formations. This included even the overtly religious memoirists Quartermaster Surtees who evidently underwent a profound and painful religious conversion during his time in the army with little input from military clergy.⁶⁹⁴ Above all the army's policy towards chaplains in the auxiliary forces demonstrated that there was relatively little concern about the religious practices of British soldiers, and in consequence only a limited effort was made to force the Anglican faith upon them.

The Duke of Wellington wrote that he believed 'the meeting of soldiers in their cantonments to sing psalms, or hear a sermon read... is, in the abstract, perfectly innocent'.⁶⁹⁵ This was typical of the army's policy, which sought not to instil Anglicanism into its troops but facilitate its practice. In consequence, chaplains on active service were expected to conduct church services twice per week and divine service each Sunday. For such services chaplains were instructed that 'more men shall not be assembled for that purpose [a church service] at a time, than the voice can reach, a precaution very necessary to ensure the attention of the soldier... [to allow this] the chaplain shall perform the service successively to the different corps of his division'.⁶⁹⁶ The preferred location for such services was the open air as the army did little to provide buildings. This may be significant for understanding the attitude of soldiers towards religion while in the army because the decline of religious observance in urban areas during the period has been linked with lack of religious facilities.⁶⁹⁷

There is evidence that, due to a variety of factors, services occurred

⁶⁹⁴ See NAM 7912/21, Anon, *Life in the 38th Foot; Surtees, Twenty Five Years in the Rifle Brigade*, pp.300-314.

⁶⁹⁵ Gurwood (ed), *Despatches and General Orders*, p.429.

⁶⁹⁶ Adjutant General Harry Calvert to Duke of Wellington, Horse Guards, 8th November 1811. NAM 6807/22, pp.39-40.

⁶⁹⁷ Harvey, *Britain in the Early Nineteenth Century*, p.71.

significantly less frequently than was recommended. Private Wheeler, for example, noted that ‘in winter quarters [chaplains] once on a Sunday (weather permitting), perform divine service, but when the campaign opens, it is seldom, or ever, an opportunity offers’.⁶⁹⁸ Thus weather and the practicalities of military life could prevent religious observance. Many battles – including Waterloo – were fought on Sundays, limiting the time available for religious observance.⁶⁹⁹ In consequence Sundays were frequently perceived by soldiers on campaign to be like any other day. This was a significant departure from attitudes in civilian life as both pressure from ecclesiastical authorities and state regulations restricted the activities that could occur. Non-religious meetings, for example, could not be held on Sundays following the Sunday Observance Act (1781) and Seditious Meeting Act (1795).⁷⁰⁰ Soldiers on campaign were effectively exempt from such regulations and their relaxed attitude towards Sunday may be evidence of the general decline in religious practice across Britain during the period, as noted by Anthony Harvey.⁷⁰¹

The lack of respect shown by many soldiers towards Sundays shocked recruits from staunchly religious backgrounds. Private Thomas Howell of the 71st Regiment of Foot was such a soldier, although he soon adopted the practices of his colleagues, and admitted that he did not attend a church service while serving in Spain.⁷⁰² It may be that this is further evidence of a general decline in religious adherence amongst soldiers, reflecting trends in society itself. Through being removed from restrictive Sunday regulations and social pressures to conform to religious codes of conduct, it is possible that Howell was able to display his true feeling about religious observance while on campaign. There were, however, a variety of reasons why formerly devout

⁶⁹⁸ Brackets in original. Liddell – Hart (ed), *The Letters of Private Wheeler*, p.153.

⁶⁹⁹ Keegan, *The Face of Battle*, p.138.

⁷⁰⁰ Foster, *Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution*, p.32.

⁷⁰¹ See Harvey, *Britain in the Early Nineteenth Century*, passim.

⁷⁰² Hibbert, *A Soldier of the 71st*, pp.16-17.

individuals, such as Howell, would be reluctant to attend the religious services provided by the army.

It is possible that the nature and content of religious services offered by the army may have served to deter some soldiers. A sermon preached to the Queen's Regiment of Volunteers in 1804, with its references to the destruction of Jerusalem, demonstrated that an element of 'fire and brimstone' existed in the discourse of army chaplains.⁷⁰³ That preaching of this nature could be unsuitable was demonstrated in advice issued by the Adjutant-General, who recommended that services should 'close with a short practical sermon, suited to the habits and understanding of soldiers'.⁷⁰⁴ These instructions are of note not only because of the advice they contained, but also that they were one of the few instances in which the army as an institution acted to increase its troop's attendance at religious services. This occurred at a time when there was growing concern at the spread of Methodism in the army. Thus, John Keegan argues, attempts to increase the attendance of religious services directed by army chaplains was an attempt to combat the spread of Methodism.⁷⁰⁵ Such a theory explains the sudden interest displayed by the army in the content of sermons during the later phases of the Napoleonic Wars, the preceding years having been characterised by the army's relative indifference to the religious practices of its troops.

Fears relating to the spread of Methodism demonstrated that there existed in the army a significant number of troops who were not of the Anglican faith, although the precise numbers concerned cannot be determined as the religion of troops was not included on returns until 1861 (further evidence that there was little concern about the religious composition of the army and, perhaps, a lack of administrative efficiency).⁷⁰⁶

⁷⁰³ NAM 7404/58, A Sermon Preached At The Presentation Of Colours To The Queens Royal Regiment of Volunteers in 1804. pp.1-2.

⁷⁰⁴ Adjutant General Harry Calvert to Duke of Wellington, Horse Guards, 8th November 1811. NAM 6807/221, p.40.

⁷⁰⁵ Keegan, *The Face of Battle*, p.137.

⁷⁰⁶ Cookson, *The British Armed Nation*, p.177.

For soldiers of other faiths the Anglican religious services provided by the army would have had little relevance and, as a result, they either failed to attend or utilised local religious facilities such as convents.⁷⁰⁷ Such practices, however, could make non-Anglican soldiers a visible minority and subject to the prejudices of their colleagues, the word Methodist being used as derogatory term to describe a reserved individual.⁷⁰⁸ Interestingly non-Anglicans were not the only soldiers of overt religious faith to be victimised by comrades: the Anglican Lieutenant George Hennell, for example, complained that his comrades were profane and mocked the bible, evidence of a general decline in deference towards religion in the period.⁷⁰⁹

It is apparent that there were a considerable number of reasons why soldiers would be reluctant or, for that matter, unable, to attend a religious service. Yet, despite a relatively low demand for their services, there were an inadequate number of chaplains available to meet this demand. Again this parallels developments in British society: a lack of clergy being the factor highlighted by John Foster as the reason for declining religious observance in British cities during the period.⁷¹⁰ Lieutenant Bingham in particular was critical of the lack of chaplains and complained that the small number available was barely sufficient to do more than 'remind us that we are Protestants'; he also noted that he believed only by allocating chaplains to brigades rather than divisions could this shortfall in religious provision be avoided.⁷¹¹ Bingham's belief concerning the allocation of chaplains cut to the heart of the problems concerning the provision and attendance of religious services in the army. There is evidence that otherwise regular churchgoers, such as Judge Advocate Larpent, Captain Browne and Private John Green, were unable to attend religious

⁷⁰⁷ Green, *The Vicissitudes of a Soldier's Life*, p.21.

⁷⁰⁸ Hibbert (ed), *A Soldier of the 71st*, p.xiii.

⁷⁰⁹ Glover (ed), *A Gentleman Volunteer*, p.201.

⁷¹⁰ Foster, *Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution*, p.29.

⁷¹¹ Bingham to his mother, Galispendo 6th March 1813, NAM 6807/163, p.12.

services as frequently as they desired, and this inability could be attributed to deficiencies in the number of chaplains available.⁷¹²

The limited allocation of chaplains to divisions could significantly restrict the practice and observance of religion in the army (and it is important to note that there is little evidence the army failed to recruit the number of clergy it believed to be required - in this case the culprit was certainly policy, not manpower shortages). No doubt apathy towards such activities had to be overcome but it was also the role of chaplains to encourage faith as well as service the needs of those who possessed it, measures to combat the spread of Methodism being a case in point. As a result of this role, which was almost missionary in nature, the small numbers of chaplains available were overstretched, a fact demonstrated by the orders of 1811 which instructed them to deliver the Sunday sermon multiple times due to the size of their congregations.⁷¹³ When units were deployed in Christian countries this pressure on chaplains was in part relieved through the utilisation of local facilities by the troops, just as Catholic soldiers in Spain had used churches of their own religion. On occasion soldiers even proved willing to use other denominations' places of worship, the Protestant Private Green, for example, stating that he attended both 'churches and dissenting chapels' while in Ireland.⁷¹⁴ This, however, was not the situation in distant colonial garrisons, which often lacked access to local religious facilities of any Christian denomination.

While Bingham may have been justified to complain of a shortage of chaplains in the European theatre, such individuals were almost non-existent in the army overseas. The absence of chaplains in units deployed overseas can be attributed to a variety of factors. As previously stated, the army had a somewhat ambivalent attitude

⁷¹² Larpent (ed), *The Private Journal of F S Larpent*, vol II., pp.150-51; Buckley (ed), *The Napoleonic War Journal of Captain Thomas Henry Browne*, p.257; Green, *Vicissitudes*, p.185.

⁷¹³ Adjutant General Harry Calvert to Duke of Wellington, Horse Guards, 8th November 1811. NAM 6807/221, pp.39-40.

⁷¹⁴ Green, *Vicissitudes*, p.218.

to towards religion and it must be noted that, while many overseas garrisons possessed a sound supporting infrastructure of stores, hospitals and regimental schools, the same could not be said of the provision of chaplains.⁷¹⁵ This may, however, have been a consequence not of a deliberate policy (if chaplains were needed anywhere, it would be in garrisons isolated from Christianity in darkest Africa) but rather the practice of allotting chaplains to divisions. The majority of divisions existed in Europe so to ensure these formations were at strength, chaplains were also concentrated in this theatre. Conversely, units deployed on colonial duties tended to be deployed as regiments or even smaller formations and thus did not benefit from divisional level organisations as the provision of chaplains to garrisons at any level would have been contrary to established practice.

There is a more fundamental issue when considering the army's failure to allocate chaplains to colonial garrisons, which in part relates to the role of such individuals. Chaplains were a special case amongst the personnel who helped maintain the British army, as they required direct and, on occasion, one-to-one contact with the troops. Surgeons could claim such a role but chaplains were unique as to function with maximum efficiency their contact had to occur on certain days of the week (primarily Sunday) and at certain times of the year (such as Easter and Christmas). Achieving this proved a difficult enough task in the European theatre, where troops were heavily concentrated, and would surely have been almost impossible to achieve amongst the isolated outposts that controlled some of the more inhospitable parts of the British Empire. That concerns about the inability of chaplains to function adequately in dispersed garrisons persisted was demonstrated by their post war distribution. This saw chaplains primarily deployed not to the vast regions of Africa or Asia, which possessed scattered garrisons, but relatively self-contained areas

⁷¹⁵ NAM 6112/78, pp. 13-17, 115-18, 149-57.

such as the islands of the Caribbean (see below). In such locations the density of troops was higher (the garrison of Jamaica, for example, had a strength of 4,600, compared to approximately 1,000 defending scattered British outposts in western Africa) making it possible for chaplains to operate with some efficiency.⁷¹⁶

The end of the war in Europe brought with it changes that were to have an impact on the deployment of chaplains overseas. The divisions that had fought their way through Portugal, Spain and into southern France were, with the exception of the army of occupation, disbanded and the army began a transition away from a European field force back to one optimised for policing the Empire.⁷¹⁷ As the concentration of forces shifted away from Europe to the colonies, so too did the army's chaplains (it appears that in this regard reductions in the size of the army were less important than the relative concentration of forces in deciding the deployment of chaplains).

From 1812 to 1815 the only overseas garrison to have a chaplain assigned to it for any length of time had been Honduras (Chaplain J. Armstrong).⁷¹⁸ Between 1816 and 1820, however, there was to be a marked and steady growth in both the number of chaplains and the overseas garrisons to which they were deployed (see figure 31).

Year	Number of Chaplains	Garrisons Served
1816	6	2
1817	14	8
1818	19	8
1819	18	19
1820	29	19

Figure 31: Chaplains serving in overseas garrisons, 1816 – 20.⁷¹⁹

⁷¹⁶ PRO WO17/2814, Monthly Returns of the Army at Home and Abroad.

⁷¹⁷ I. Fletcher, *Wellington's Regiments* (Staplehurst, Spellmont, 1994), passim. This work contains extensive references to the pre-war, wartime and post-war activities of the British units that fought in the peninsular war, including their destinations after the armistices of 1814 and 1815.

⁷¹⁸ 'Particular sums Ordered in Repayment of Advances Made by the Commissariat Department Abroad, on Account of the Pay of Officiating Chaplains 1817', PRO WRO 25/254. Payments by the Commissariat 1812 – 30.

⁷¹⁹ 'Particular sums Ordered in Repayment of Advances Made by the Commissariat Department Abroad, on Account of the Pay of Officiating Chaplains 1817 to 1820', PRO WRO 25/254.

Of particular note is that besides serving an increased number of garrisons, in most years the number of chaplains actually exceeded the number of garrisons. This demonstrated chaplains were available to serve the more dispersed detachments.

While figure 31 clearly demonstrates that there was an increase in the availability of chaplains in overseas garrisons, it is important to note its limitations. First there is the question of garrisons and their definition. In this work overseas garrisons have generally been defined in accordance with the terminology used by the army to administer its forces deployed overseas. These could be somewhat arbitrary and of unequal size, Hanover, for example, counted as a single location, as did France, while Britain was divided into North (Scotland), South (including Wales and the Channel Islands) and Ireland.⁷²⁰ In the case of the deployment of chaplains to overseas garrisons, however, a different system was adopted. In the general army system, for example, modern day Canada was divided into Canada and New Foundland, while returns for chaplains added New Brunswick. It is this latter system that is used in figure 31, rather than that used elsewhere in the work, because, as discussed below, the information has implications for understanding how chaplains operated outside of Europe. This, however, makes it difficult to compare properly the deployment of chaplains to troop concentration. Both of the systems described above relied on vaguely defined areas of land, those relating to chaplains merely having the distinction of being slightly less general, and, as the more detailed data relating to garrisons in this area is incomplete, any comparisons must to a degree rely on estimation.

Another limitation of figure 31 is that it masks a significant imbalance in the way in which chaplains were allocated to serve overseas. Specifically, between the years 1816 to 1817 the number of chaplains serving overseas doubled from six to

⁷²⁰ PRO WO 17/2814, Monthly Returns of the Army at Home and Abroad.

fourteen, but of those fourteen no fewer than thirteen were deployed in the Caribbean region. The precise locations of these thirteen chaplains are shown in figure 32.

	Location(s) Served
Reverend A. Campbell	Jamaica
J. Morris	Jamaica
W. Hamilton	Jamaica
E. Marshal	Jamaica
J. King	Windward and Leeward Islands, Barbados
A. Stragham	Windward and Leeward Islands
J. MacMahon	Windward and Leeward Islands
J. Guilding	Windward and Leeward Islands, St. Vincents
W. Chaderton	Windward and Leeward Islands, Antuiga
A. Newman	Windward and Leeward Islands, Dominica
M. Wilson	Windward and Leeward Islands, Tobago
L. Berdhill	St. Kitts
J. Armstrong	Honduras

Figure 32: Chaplains serving in the Caribbean and Central America, 1817⁷²¹.

Besides demonstrating the concentration of chaplains in the Caribbean, figure 32 also explains a piece of seemingly anomalous data in figure 31. This is the fact that in 1819 there were eighteen chaplains serving overseas yet nineteen garrisons were served. The explanation for this is that chaplains were mobile. Chaplain Guilding, for example, was assigned to the Windward and Leeward Islands for two months (25th April to 24th June), St. Vincents for another two months (25th June to 24th August) and spent the remainder of the year at the Windward and Leeward Islands. Conversely, Chaplain Wilson began the year in Tobago, spent two months in the Windward and Leeward Islands and returned to Tobago that October. Others moved only once during the year: Chaplain Chaderton, for example, redeployed from Antigua to the Windward and Leeward Islands in June.

By 1819 the chaplains who were deployed abroad remained concentrated in the Caribbean, although deployments to Newfoundland and New Brunswick increased their number to sixteen.⁷²² The following year there was a more noticeable increase in the number of chaplains serving abroad, and they were to be found with garrisons

⁷²¹ 1817, Warrant Numbers 2777 to 2886. PRO WRO 25/254.

⁷²² 'Particular sums Ordered in Repayment of Advances Made by the Commissariat Department Abroad, on Account of the Pay of Officiating Chaplains in 1819', PRO WRO 25/254.

such as those in New South Wales, Cape Colony and West Africa. A consequence of these and previous deployments was a dramatic increase in the wage bill for chaplains serving outside of Europe. In 1815 this had amounted to only 7s a month, which was paid to Chaplain J. Armstrong in Honduras. By 1816, however, this bill had rocketed by a staggering 34,000%, to £120 2s 7d. It may be that the meaning of this seemingly outrageous figure is engulfed by its magnitude, serving as a lesson for historians to be wary of statistics, and especially those derived from a single source or limited sample. Yet, despite its gargantuan proportions, the increase emphasises the point that there was a dramatic increase in the number of chaplains serving abroad following the end of the war in Europe. This growth was sustained, as demonstrated by the wage bill of 1820, which stood at £416 13s 4d per month (a less impressive but still significant increase of 346%).⁷²³

Wage bills alone need not be evidence of expansion, merely higher wages. It must be noted, however, that the 346% increase of the wage bill was exceeded by a 500% increase in personnel during the years 1816 to 1820. This data is indicative of a slight decrease in the average wage of chaplains serving overseas, a conclusion supported by the fact that the average wage in 1816 was 7s, compared to 6s in the following year. It would be incorrect, however, to perceive this as evidence of chaplains' pay being reduced, rather it was indicative that a growing proportion of chaplains less-senior were present in overseas garrisons. As the number of chaplains deployed overseas grew, the organisational structures utilised in Europe for their administration were adopted.

The chaplains deployed to the Caribbean, circa 1817, are a useful case study of how chaplains operated. The senior, and thus highest paid, chaplains were among the

⁷²³ 'Particular sums Ordered in Repayment of Advances Made by the Commissariat Department Abroad, on Account of the Pay of Officiating Chaplains in 1816'; 'Particular sums Ordered in Repayment of Advances Made by the Commissariat Department Abroad, on Account of the Pay of Officiating Chaplains in 1820', PRO WRO 25/254.

first to arrive and were located on Jamaica and the Windward and Leeward Islands. New arrivals were of lesser rank and assigned to individual garrisons either in these island groups or elsewhere. Despite all holding the rank of major and being given the title of chaplain, there existed a separate hierarchy amongst chaplains, who received varying rates of pay according to their posting and responsibilities. In 1817 there existed six weekly rates of pay amongst the chaplains serving in the Caribbean region, as illustrated in figure 33:

Weekly Rate		Number of Personnel Receiving Rate
s	d	
2	6	5
7	6	1
9	6	3
10	6	0
11	5	3
14	3	2
Total		14

Figure 33: Rates of pay for Chaplains in the Caribbean, June 1817.⁷²⁴

This pay structure remained relatively unaltered until 1819, when an additional rate of pay (16s per week) was introduced for the senior chaplain on Jamaica in 1819, in this case Chaplain B. Harold.⁷²⁵ Although no chaplains received the rate of 10s 6d per week in June 1817, it was paid on occasion, reflecting the fact that rates varied according to posting or responsibility, a system that could only operate due to an efficient administration. While on the Windward and Leeward Islands, for example, Chaplain King was paid 10s 6d per week, but when serving in Barbados (where he was senior chaplain) he received 14s 3d. The pay of Chaplain Wilson switched between the 11s 5d and 7s 6d rate twice in 1817:

⁷²⁴ 'Particular sums Ordered in Repayment of Advances Made by the Commissariat Department Abroad, on Account of the Pay of Officiating Chaplains in 1817', PRO WRO 25/254.

⁷²⁵ 1819, Warrant Numbers 2802; 2804, PRO WRO 25/254.

25 th April to 24 th June (Tobago)	11s 5d
25 th June to 30 th July (Windward/Leeward)	7s 6d
31 st July to 24 th October (Windward/Leeward)	11s 5d
25 th October to 24 th December (Windward/Leeward)	7s 6d. ⁷²⁶

Besides highlighting the mobility of chaplains, these variations in wage also reveal that the hierarchy governing them was not necessarily as rigid as in other military organisations or, indeed, the Church of England itself. A colonel or a bishop, for example, remained just that even if not the senior officer or official following the arrival of a higher ranked individual, yet, as demonstrated by the wage variations experienced by chaplains this was not so regarding military clergy.

The success of the army's policies regarding the religious practices of its soldiers is difficult to measure. There were changes in religious practices in British society during the period and the army reflected these, including the growth of Methodism and a general decline in deference towards religion. It was inevitable that the army would reflect the situation in society, as the number of chaplains was too few to meet the needs of practicing Anglicans, let alone bring new believers to the faith. This was not necessary for the army to be effective, however, as the force demonstrated it could be a bulwark of the Protestant state without itself being Protestant. There were various motivations for the policies adopted in regard to religion in the army, these being military, political and social. Due to the status of non-Anglicans in Britain the army was largely dependent on state legislation to govern its own religious affairs. Whether as an institution it may have been significantly more tolerant is debateable, although the limited efforts made to provide chaplains and

⁷²⁶ 1817, Warrant Numbers 2777; to 2886, PRO WRO 25/254.

opportunity for Anglicans to worship is evidence of a more relaxed attitude, with Protestantism a feature rather than a principle.

The motivation for medical services were more clear-cut than those of religion in the army, the overriding concern being the maintenance of an effective fighting force. The limiting and defining factors of medicine were scientific but in this field the state could have been more active. The military revolution had triggered a degree of state involvement in medicine and Prussia took a lead in this field as early as 1713, when the Berlin Anatomical Theatre was established by the state to train surgeons, and in 1723 when a College of Medicine and Surgery was set-up. Regulations were also passed requiring all surgeons to graduate from the institution and serve one year as regimental surgeons.⁷²⁷ In some respects British practices, including inoculation, were as advanced, but still lagged behind Prussia in relation to fundamental issues such as amputation.

Despite such shortcomings it is necessary to note that the medical service provided by the army was one of the most comprehensive of its kind in the period and was unrivalled by that offered to many civilians in Britain. The army demonstrated a willingness to adopt new developments such as inoculation, utilising an integrated system of hospitals that were located progressively further from the frontline, and introducing regulations to encourage good practice such as cleanliness. These regulations were often inadequate but through them the army demonstrated that it possessed some understanding of what was required from a modern medical system.

The motivation for reforms relating to women following the army and pension provision were as clear cut as those for the medical services, being concerned with enlistment. Pensions in particular increased the appeal of the army as a career, as did

⁷²⁷ M. Duffy, 'The Military Revolution and State', in M. Duffy (ed), *The Military Revolution and State, 1500 to 1800* (Exeter University, 1980), p.5.

the inclusion of soldiers' families in army welfare, although this was also one of the more altruistic policies adopted. While policies concerning religion maintained at least a pretence of the force as a Protestant bulwark and medicine maintained the army's strength, the system concerning families could have continued for several more years without significant reform, as did many aspects of the army in the period – including the medical system. Reforms relating to families reflected the influence of the state on soldiers' lives at its most benign, while the attempts to enforce Protestantism in the force (albeit half-heartedly) reflected the negative impact of the relationship.

The state gave the army the features that principally characterised its maintenance, specifically the bureaucratic systems and departments that have formed the core of this study. Despite this there existed a group of institutions that lay outside the military sphere and, to a limited degree, the state, but were to play an important role in maintenance of the army. These organisations form the focus of the following and final chapter, a chapter concerned with neither the armed forces in the field nor bureaucrats and administrators but rather the bodies that governed the counties of Britain.

Chapter 6

English county governance and the British army

Maintaining the British army was very much an affair of central government, executed through governmental and military departments such as the Ordnance Board, the Commissariat and Royal Wagon Train. There remained, however, a small but significant role for the organisations and individuals more often associated with the governance of counties. Parish councils, churchwardens, justices of the peace and Lords Lieutenant would undertake a variety of important tasks directly related to maintaining the army. Prior to 1802 these tasks primarily consisted of supervising the movement of troops and ensuring adequate numbers of recruits were raised in the county. The threat of French invasion would increase the importance of these tasks and create new responsibilities for the organisations that governed the counties. From 1802 the role of these bodies would change from one of merely supporting the standing army to raising and maintaining new auxiliary forces in the form of the Volunteers.

Due to the efforts of the Royal Navy the invasion was not to occur but the contingency plans designed to counter a French landing reveal much about British military thinking in the period, and the difficulties that could be encountered when raising and maintaining armed forces.⁷²⁸ More significant is that the invasion preparations demonstrate the criteria under which the state would be willing to remove the checks and balances imposed to restrict the army and safeguard civil liberties, issues that lay at the heart of the army's relationship with the state and thus the level of support it enjoyed. The army would have been raised to the status of a

⁷²⁸ Some of this research has been previously published. C. Chilcott, 'English counties and defensive planning, 1803 to 1805', in *Bulletin of the Military Historical Society*, vol. 54, no.215, February 2004, pp.149-154.

force that was central to policies for national survival, rather than the third placed pillar (behind the fleet and continental allies) of Britain's approach to strategy. Indeed, if the army had been called on to repel an invader, these other elements of British policy would have already failed. The invasion preparations were the most radical aspect of defence policy in the period, and it will become apparent that if the plans had been implemented they had the potential to alter many of the issues discussed in preceding chapters, not least being the relationship between the army and state.

Traditionally the principal link between county government and the army had been the Lord Lieutenant, whose role had been to raise and maintain the county militia battalions. While carrying out this task the Lords Lieutenant fulfilled many of the functions that in regular regiments were the responsibility of military departments, including annual inspections and returns that were similar to those conducted by the Adjutant General.⁷²⁹ These annual inspections were frequently conducted when the militia battalions mustered for their fourteen days of annual training, occasions that were accompanied by some excitement in the neighbourhood and announced in the local press.⁷³⁰ The outbreak of war in 1793 increased the importance of the Lords Lieutenant role in regard to the militia but his role remained confined to the mustering of auxiliary forces.

The county officials that most frequently came into contact with elements of the regular army were local magistrates, whose task included the supervision of troop movements through their areas.⁷³¹ This practice was one of the few through which the institutions of county governance became involved in the operational affairs of the army, although they were also to have a significant role in the administration of the

⁷²⁹ See PRO WO 27/92, Office of Commander in Chief and War Office: Adjutant General and Army Council Inspections, 1808; WSRO A1/545, Navy Acts, 1794 to 1795: Books and Papers; WSRO, A1/550, Army and Navy Acts, 1796 to 97: Books and Papers.

⁷³⁰ New recruits mustered for twenty-one days. *Salisbury Journal*, 17th August 1812, p.4.

⁷³¹ See above p.133

militia ballot.⁷³² This task involved many elements of a county's administrative structure, the overseers of the poor in individual parishes who paid the expenses of those selected by the ballot, the Lord Lieutenant who co-ordinated the county militia and magistrates who enforced the quotas. The involvement of county institutions in the ballot militia ballot was effectively a blurring between the role of the centre and periphery in defence policy, the periphery ultimately possessing not only the power to raise troops but also a role in their employment.⁷³³ Joanna Innes describes this blurring as evidence of a close relationship between the centre and periphery in Britain, but this could also be described as resulting from an anachronism.⁷³⁴ During the eighteenth century the militia had been viewed as a force for local defence so its administration at county level was logical.⁷³⁵ By the end of the eighteenth century, however, the militia had become an instrument of national defence, with regiments operating outside the boundaries of the home county and, importantly, as a source of recruits for the regular army.⁷³⁶ In these circumstances, the wisdom of administering the militia at county level was questionable. Clearly, the relationship between the periphery and centre in British politics had evolved at a slower pace than military developments.

Despite the fact that the elevation of the militia to a national defence force rendered the role of the county in its administration an anachronism, other evidence exists supporting Innes' description of the close relationship between the centre and periphery. Perhaps the most significant evidence can be found in the intended role of the bodies associated with county government in the event of a French invasion.

⁷³² To see how the ballot operated at a county level, see PRO PC 1/13/160, Militia Returns for Lincolnshire and PRO PC 1/13/155, East Riding of Yorkshire. See also Hall, *British Strategy*, p.2.

⁷³³ See below p.252.

⁷³⁴ Innes, 'The Domestic Face of the Fiscal-Military State', p.118.

⁷³⁵ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.33.

⁷³⁶ Fletcher, *Wellington's Regiments*, pp.15-16; P. Karsten, 'Irish soldiers in the British Army, 1792 - 1922: Suborned or Subordinated?', in *Journal of Social History*, (Autumn 1983), p.35..

While this never occurred, the plans drawn up by the government to counter a full-scale invasion warrant some consideration. This is because the preparations not only relate to the role of county government, which was to be significant, but also reflect many of the themes considered elsewhere in this work, by revealing how the resisting forces were to be maintained and in some cases raised, while also shedding light on some less well-known operational procedures in the regular army. The need to educate civilian bakers in military procedures quickly, for example, resulted in discussions concerning how the army produced its own bread, the best recipes for yeast and the preferred size of loaf.⁷³⁷ Above all the plans demonstrate the principles that the state was prepared to sacrifice in order to aid national defence.⁷³⁸

During the invasion scares that haunted Britain during the first decade of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars period, plans were drawn up regarding the capability of each county to help maintain a defending army. A document entitled 'Proposals for Rendering the Body of the People Instrumental in the General Defence' formed the blueprint for these plans, which were disseminated to the counties via the Lords Lieutenant.⁷³⁹ Much emphasis was to be placed on the protection of property during invasion and an announcement by the Lord Lieutenant of Hampshire stated the plans were intended to guarantee 'the particular protection and security of persons and property of the inhabitants of this country... and the indemnifying persons who may suffer in their property by such measures for that purpose'.⁷⁴⁰ Despite such noble sentiments, however, the protection of property (which was arguably the cornerstone of the British political system) was only a minor concern. At the heart of the scheme lay logistics, for both the defending and invading armies, and it was envisaged that the

⁷³⁷ PRO WO 30/141, pp.22-30.

⁷³⁸ Just as the state had shown willing to disregard the rights and beliefs of Anglicans serving in the Jersey militia. p.233.

⁷³⁹ PRO WO 30/141, passim.

⁷⁴⁰ *Salisbury Journal*, 11th July 1803, p.3.

whole population of a county would be mobilised to defeat any invader.

The preparations for invasion required careful planning, a process that began in 1803 when questionnaires were distributed to each county under the Defence of the Realm Act.⁷⁴¹ The bureaucratic practices of the period – including pre-printed forms and tabulated data – were used with considerable effect in an attempt to determine the manpower resources available in each county.⁷⁴² These, and other preparations, utilised the structure of county government. Parishes would report to subdivisions, in turn these would report back to the Deputy Lords Lieutenant, with the Lord Lieutenant having ultimate responsibility for a county's invasion preparations. The utilisation of existing bodies allowed the Lords Lieutenant to use their authority to full effect, while also allowing a rapid implementation of the required preparations: this was a vital factor given that a French landing could have occurred within months or even weeks if conditions were favourable. Thus, the Lord Lieutenant of Hampshire was able to impose a tight schedule for the initial phase of preparations. On 24th June 1803 he had received his instructions; these were discussed at a public meeting on 8th July at Winchester, meetings were held within each Parish nine days later (17th July), and the subdivisions met on 25th July, with the required returns from parishes also completed by this date.⁷⁴³ The dates selected for each meeting were not arbitrary and the selection of the 17th is of note as it was a Sunday. This day was selected deliberately to allow the parish meetings to be held immediately after morning or evening services, it being believed that scheduling meetings after Sunday service would ensure good attendance.⁷⁴⁴

The bodies responsible for governing a county did not continue unhindered by

⁷⁴¹ Colley, *Britons*, pp.306-307.

⁷⁴² Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, pp.222-225.

⁷⁴³ This system was effectively a military one imposed on civilians and is similar to that utilised by organisations such as the Commissariat, p.49.

⁷⁴⁴ *Salisbury Journal*, 11th July 1803, p.3.

the threat of invasion. Two to three magistrates oversaw each of the subdivisions within a county, and such men often held commissions in the auxiliary forces. To limit the impact of such persons being called to active service, Lord Hawkesbury advised the Lords Lieutenant 'it is essential that the magistrates who are thus employed should if possible be persons not holding commissions as volunteer officers, nor liable on any other account to be called away from the county'.⁷⁴⁵ The number of individuals who had roles in both the auxiliary forces and county government was considerable. In Wiltshire the commander of the militia, Colonel Henry Herbert, Earl of Caernarvon (sic), was also a Deputy Lieutenant, an office that entailed separate duties in the event of invasion. The following officers also held considerable property or responsibilities outside of Wiltshire and may have fulfilled roles in these counties: Lieutenant Colonel George Montagu, Captain Awdry Ambrose and Captain Robert Maundrell⁷⁴⁶. This says much about the nature of such forces, it being interesting to note that the situation in rural Wiltshire was similar to urban Oldham, where prominent local men also provided the officers of auxiliary units.⁷⁴⁷ For the invasion preparations, however, the significance of prominent local figures serving in the auxiliary forces was that the allocation of magistrates to oversee subdivisions in the event of invasion itself required special planning, in addition to the multitude of tasks already facing counties as they prepared to resist an invasion.

The preparations undertaken by each county were to be based on a series of reports from each parish, the most important of which were designated schedules one through to nine. The information recorded in these reports reveals much about the parishes concerned and, most importantly, the invasion preparations themselves. In

⁷⁴⁵ Circular from Lord Hawksbury, Whitehall, 20th August 1804, PRO WO 55/1548/17, Regulations for each county, in case of Invasion.

⁷⁴⁶ WSRO A1/752/19, Return of the Qualifications of Deputy Lieutenants and Commissioned Officers [of Wiltshire Militia], 29th January 1796.

⁷⁴⁷ Foster, *Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution*, p.13.

particular it is apparent that the schedules represented forward planning, in contrast to the reflex doctrine normally utilised to maintain the army.⁷⁴⁸ The purpose of each schedule is summarised in figure 34.

Schedule 1	Available Manpower
Schedule 2	Food
Schedule 3	Overseers
Schedule 4	Men willing to arm themselves
Schedule 5	Men willing to act as labourers
Schedule 6	Men willing to carry supplies
Schedule 7	Millers willing to mill flour
Schedule 8	Bakers
Schedule 9	Waterborne transport

Figure 34: Preparations for invasion, schedules one to nine.⁷⁴⁹

Had they been fully completed, the schedules would have amounted to a miniature doomsday book of England during the years 1803 to 1804. Schedule 1 was concerned with available manpower, those unfit for service (labelled 'infirm'), the number of aliens and the number of Quakers. No other denomination of dissenters was singled out in these reports, the Quakers being singled out as a consequence of their belief in pacifism.⁷⁵⁰

Schedule 2 was a survey of available livestock and 'deadstock' (otherwise known as crops). This encompassed the following categories: numbers of oxen, cows, young cattle and colts, sheep and goats, pigs, riding and draft horses, wagons and carts; quarters of wheat, oats, barley, beans and peas, potatoes and malt; loads of straw and hay; while flour 'and other meal' was given special attention with counts of both quarts and sacks. Schedules 7 and 8 built on this by listing millers and bakers respectively who promised to supply goods in the event of an invasion. Similarly

⁷⁴⁸ Compare this to the system utilised by the Commissariat. See chapter 2.

⁷⁴⁹ WSRO 1719/30, Wiltshire Lieutenancy Papers Dealing with the Parish [of Box's] Preparation to Raise a Volunteer Force to Meet the Anticipated French Invasion, schedules 1 to 9.

⁷⁵⁰ Voluntary Contributions, Anonymous pamphlet, 1798, WSRO 1719/30.

schedule 6 revealed the number of wagons, categorised by the number of draught animals they required, that the parish would supply, in addition to associated personnel such as drivers.⁷⁵¹ Emphasis was to be placed upon four-horse wagons, which were vehicles seen as sufficient to carry up to either fifty hundredweight of flour, grain, wood or coal, or twenty hundredweight of bread, biscuit or straw.⁷⁵² The vehicles recorded in schedule 6 were to be supplemented by those described in schedule 9, which sought to determine the waterborne transport available in a parish.⁷⁵³ Of note is that throughout these plans the role of the vehicles, whether wheeled or waterborne, was to be the transport of supplies rather than other tasks such as evacuation of wounded personnel. Indeed the lack of consideration for medical purposes was to be one of the most glaring deficiencies amongst the forces established in 1803.

Schedule 3 was particularly important as it determined who in the parish would be overseers for the various items outlined in other schedules. These individuals were to be responsible for implementing the key component of a county's invasion preparations, specifically the uprooting of whole communities in the path of an advancing enemy army. The village of Box had six such individuals appointed: William Brown, William Roger, John Lee, Joseph (surname illegible), Charles James and George Malling.⁷⁵⁴ On 19th November 1803 the Lord Lieutenant of Wiltshire advised that:

the superintendents of parishes... are to convene a meeting of the inhabitants as soon as possible, to fix upon some place of rendezvous where all the horses, cattle, sheep, wagons and carriages (not wanted for the service and supply of the King's Troops) that can be convened away... in order to be removed... upon the order of the Lord Lieutenant.⁷⁵⁵

⁷⁵¹ WSRO 1719/30, schedule 6.

⁷⁵² PRO WO 30/141, p.16.

⁷⁵³ WSRO 1719/30, schedule 9.

⁷⁵⁴ Minutes of Meeting 25th December 1803 held Parish of Box, WSRO 1719/30.

⁷⁵⁵ Brackets in original. General Meeting of the Lieutenancy, Sarum, 19th November 1803, WSRO 1719/30.

The purpose of listing the infirm in schedule 1 was to ensure means to remove them had been arranged prior to invasion and an overseer was also appointed for this task. Livestock, wagons, money and account books were all to be moved with the population, while bakers and millers were instructed how best to render their equipment unusable by an invader (by breaking crowns of ovens and upper mill stones respectively).⁷⁵⁶ Such destruction demonstrated that the policy of evacuation was designed to prevent resources from falling into enemy hands as much as it was a means of civil defence. Although a common practice in response to any invasion great importance was attached to denying the French invader resources because it was envisaged that the enemy would be forced to exist solely on supplies drawn from the immediate vicinity.⁷⁵⁷

If the invader was to be so easily contained, why was a landlocked county such as Wiltshire included in the plan? Certainly plans had to be made for a worst-case scenario, i.e. an enemy breaking out of the beachhead. Wiltshire itself, however, had historically been considered vulnerable to invasion despite having no coastline.⁷⁵⁸ Wiltshire's borders were only 30 miles from major ports such as Bristol and Southampton. This demonstrates that administrative areas such as county boundaries were not always compatible with military realities. Yet these boundaries were to be the basis of the anti-invasion plan.

By its nature the plan had to prepare for a number of contingencies, a French advance inland being one of them. This, however, was not the sole reason for the continued evacuation of communities in the event of invasion. Besides denying the

⁷⁵⁶ General Meeting of the Lieutenancy, Sarum, 19th November 1803, WSRO 1719/30. Wiltshire Lieutenancy Papers Dealing with the Parish [of Box's] Preparation to Raise a Volunteer Force to Meet the Anticipated French Invasion; PRO WO 30/141, p.5n.

⁷⁵⁷ PRO WO 30/141, p.3.

⁷⁵⁸ Colley, *Britons*, p.308.

invader resources, the scheme was also intended to maximise those available to defending forces. This aim is demonstrated in orders issued by the Lord Lieutenant of Wiltshire regarding livestock:

If the enemy should advance into the county... His Majesty has given express orders... that all horses or draft cattle, that are in evident danger of falling into the hands of the enemy, should be shot or hamstrung, provided they are not wanted for the service of the army... and axle trees or wheels of all carriages in the same predicament, should be smashed or broken as much as possible.⁷⁵⁹

It is apparent that the policy was not merely a genteel version of scorched earth (achieved through depriving the enemy of resources by a policy that emphasised removal rather than destruction) because, throughout the movement of these communities, the overriding concern was to ensure that as much as possible was preserved for the defending forces, who would get first pick of items scheduled to be destroyed.⁷⁶⁰ Fully implemented, the invasion preparations were to have enabled the army to utilise the resources not only of the counties targeted by invasion but also those adjacent or further from the enemy lodgement. For the duration of the invasion at least the army would be given free rein to requisition the resources it required to drive the French back into the sea. This would have undermined a notion central to the relationship between the British state and its population in the period, namely the sanctity of private property.⁷⁶¹ As for the resources not required by the army, some would have been removed but the rest sacrificed for national defence.

The rights of private ownership were seemingly protected in orders issued to county lieutenants, which stated that 'the first principle is an indemnification from the communities at large... for the value of all stock which may be removed in

⁷⁵⁹ Underlining added. Orders, General Meeting of the Lieutenancy, Sarum, 19th November 1803. WSRO 1719/30.

⁷⁶⁰ A similar scheme was proposed for the defence of Prussia in 1813, but in that case it was the intention that the population would disperse to wage a guerrilla war on the occupying army. Fuller, *The Conduct of War*, p.58.

⁷⁶¹ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.49.

consequence of invasion'.⁷⁶² In this respect, it appeared that the policy was little different to that which already existed regarding procurement and was operated by organisations such as the Commissariat.⁷⁶³ When the practice is considered in the context of the anti-invasion scheme, however, the assault on the rights of ownership becomes apparent. This was particularly so regarding livestock, which would have effectively ceased to be the property of the owner, despite instructions to brand each animal with the mark of the parish before moving them. In many cases such marks did not exist and their importance is highlighted by the fact that the design for that of Box (a BX contained within a capital O) was the first item on the agenda at a meeting convened to consider the invasion preparations of the village.⁷⁶⁴

Livestock were to be effectively little more than a mobile source of food for the army under the supervision of selected citizens (specifically the overseers named in schedule 3).⁷⁶⁵ These personnel were to 'remain in charge of the same [cattle], unless it shall be appropriated for the consumption of our own troops, or to be sold... at markets, in the rear of the army'.⁷⁶⁶ Orders to the overseers of the livestock from each parish regarding ownership were only a façade, as the livestock would have effectively been placed under army control at the moment of evacuation. The movement of cattle would have required co-operation with the army, and the generals commanding in each district were ordered 'to give every assistance and accommodation in [their] power, for the protection and subsistence of the cattle, and of persons attending the same'.⁷⁶⁷

Once livestock and other supplies arrived at a depot or market it would be purchased by commissaries and receipts issued. Of note is that even if items were not

⁷⁶² PRO WO 30/141, p.3.

⁷⁶³ For this in operation see chapter 2.

⁷⁶⁴ Minutes of Meeting held on 25th December 1803, WSRO 1719/30.

⁷⁶⁵ It is apparent that if Britain had been invaded the diet of defending soldiers may have been similar to that in Spain and Portugal, pp.72-76.

⁷⁶⁶ Orders, General Meeting of the Lieutenancy, Sarum, 19th November 1803, WSRO 1719/30.

⁷⁶⁷ PRO WO 30/141, p.4.

purchased, their owners required permission from a commissary to sell them, an important right of ownership that would have been taken over by the military.⁷⁶⁸ Once purchased by a commissary the normal procedures of the army would have been applied and the items would have eventually filtered through the various stages of the logistics system until they reached the intended recipients. While the rights of ownership were not to be totally suspended in the event of invasion, it is clear that they were to be significantly restricted. The prices at which cattle and commodities such as flour were to be sold to the army were to be decided by magistrates.⁷⁶⁹ Evidently these prices would have been regularly assessed and considered, giving rise to the possibility of price fluctuations and varying prices between localities. This would have been a new way of operating for the army in Britain as it was normally maintained through long-term contracts that provided both low and stable prices.⁷⁷⁰

While livestock were mobile, it was acknowledged that some items too bulky to be moved to depots would have been required by the army. Consider the village of Box alone, which contained amongst other items 346 quarters of wheat, 63 quarters of oats and 1059 loads of hay, but only three wagons allocated to the task of moving these goods.⁷⁷¹ The result was a plan to convert the villages left vacant following their evacuation into supply depots themselves, from which supplies such as grain and flour could be distributed. Of note is that this actually contradicted a central concept in 'Proposals for Rendering the Body of the People Instrumental in the General Defence', that 'the [English] county abounds in supplies of all kinds to such a degree which renders the laying in of extensive magazines unnecessary'.⁷⁷² By using villages as distribution centres they would have effectively become magazines, with the

⁷⁶⁸ PRO WO 30/141, p.5.

⁷⁶⁹ PRO WO 30/141, pp.17, 22.

⁷⁷⁰ For a consideration of the benefits of contracts see pp.89-91.

⁷⁷¹ WSRO 1719/30, schedules 2 and 6.

⁷⁷² PRO WO 30/141, p.15.

additional advantage that many already lay on a road and canal network.

Parishes were instructed to appoint 'several and discreet trusty persons' for the task of remaining behind in the village after its evacuation, until the enemy approached or they were surrounded (how this latter situation was to be escaped was not made clear). Their role was to safeguard the remaining goods and 'facilitate the means of supplying our army with what must otherwise be destroyed'.⁷⁷³ It is likely, but not explicit in the orders, that a number of millers and bakers may also have remained in the villages. Such individuals would have co-operated closely with the Commissariat, which would have both purchased the goods they produced and arranged the delivery of necessary supplies (such as flour for bakers if none was available locally).⁷⁷⁴ Furthermore commissaries may have been required to advise civilians about how best to bake their bread, giving an insight into how this activity was conducted in the military. Many civilian bakers believed that ovens could only be used to produce four batches of bread per day, although in the military six was standard practice. It was anticipated that yeast would be in particularly short supply and bakers were advised to produce either unleavened bread, or manufacture their own yeast. The latter was to be achieved through using a recipe written for the Dunbar garrison in 1796, rather than experimentation, as it was the belief of the authorities that 'it is highly necessary to caution everyman concerned in supplying an army, against placing any confidence in schemes not perfectly and satisfactorily tried himself'.⁷⁷⁵ The optimum loaf size was to be between three to four and a half pounds, with a thick crust, as such bread stayed fresher longer. Guidance was also to be given how best to stack bread on wagons (preferably when cold) and the duration of any storage prior to its consumption.⁷⁷⁶ This advice is notable not merely because it

⁷⁷³ PRO WO 30/141, p.5.

⁷⁷⁴ PRO WO 30/141, pp.22-3.

⁷⁷⁵ PRO WO 30/141, p.30.

⁷⁷⁶ PRO WO 30/141, pp.24-30.

reveals how the army stored bread but also because similar written instructions to commissaries in other theatres of war do not appear to have existed.

The movement of entire populations, while envisaged as a means to aid the supply of the army, would have been a remarkable feat of logistics itself. The scale of the task facing the county authorities cannot be underestimated: the livestock that was to be moved from the village of Box alone would have included 242 cattle and oxen, 298 pigs and total of 2,971 sheep and goats.⁷⁷⁷ Preparations were required to sustain animals and humans alike. For livestock, orders advised that the route taken included 'such places that afforded good water and plenty of pasture', while civilians ordered to leave their homes were advised to take with them 'a small quantity of salted or dried provisions, not being cumbersome for... temporary sustenance'.⁷⁷⁸ Those responsible for livestock were not expected to fend for themselves, although no allocation was made for them from military stores. Instead it was recommended that 'the proprietors [of cattle removed] should furnish them [those overseeing the cattle] with means to provide themselves and the cattle under their care with necessary subsistence'.⁷⁷⁹ Only wagon drivers and associated personnel were to receive supplies from stores, rations consisting of one and a half pounds of bread per day for each man and either ten pounds of oats or fourteen pounds of hay per horse.⁷⁸⁰ This ration was comparable to that prescribed for horses in the Peninsular campaign, reflecting the importance of the civilians wagons to the anti-invasion plan.⁷⁸¹ It also highlights a particular inefficiency of animal drawn convoys, specifically a tendency to consume much of the supplies that they carried. This problem would remain until the introduction of railways, when railheads could be established near the front to reduce the time animals spent away

⁷⁷⁷ WSRO 1719/30, schedule 2.

⁷⁷⁸ PRO WO 30/141, p.4; Orders, General Meeting of the Lieutenancy, Sarum, 19th November 1803, WSRO 1719/30.

⁷⁷⁹ Orders, General Meeting of the Lieutenancy, Sarum, 19th November 1803, WSRO 1719/30.

⁷⁸⁰ PRO WO 30/141, p.17.

⁷⁸¹ See above p.78.

from stables.⁷⁸²

The movement of large numbers of civilians and livestock would have placed a heavy burden on the transport infrastructure. When moving large bodies of civilians the Lords Lieutenant were instructed that:

proper march routes should be fixed upon for driving them away to certain places of security in the interior of the country, taking care to chuse [sic] bye roads for that purpose; that the Great Turn Pike Roads may remain entirely free for the marching of troops... and where it may be unavoidable to pass one or more of the great roads, it should be done in such a manner, that they may only be crossed and occupied during the shortest time possible.⁷⁸³

It was further recommended that, to avoid congestion, the movement of civilians be approved by the general commanding that district. The large herds of sheep present on the South Downs were a particular source of concern in Wiltshire because, due to their proximity to the English Channel, it was likely they would be removed soon after an invasion. It was stated that 'the greater part of this county is highly favourable for the removal, not only of inhabitants, but of large flocks of sheep requiring space; they must therefore take their route over the downs'.⁷⁸⁴

The evacuation of herds would have caused considerable disruption not only to the transport infrastructure but also to the regional economy. If the French had driven inland then such herds would have been lost in any case but given that the envisaged scenario was of an invading army being confined to the coast such disruption would have been unnecessary. John Brewer states that the principal object of any invader would probably have been to cause financial panic rather than capture territory.⁷⁸⁵ Thus the policy of evacuating herds as soon as invasion occurred would in fact have aided the enemy. It is necessary to note that while Brewer believed an

⁷⁸² Schechter and Sander. *Delivering the Goods*, p.45.

⁷⁸³ PRO WO 30/141, p.4.

⁷⁸⁴ General Meeting of the Lieutenancy, Sarum, 19th November 1803, WSRO 1719/30.

⁷⁸⁵ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.191.

invasion with such objectives would have been best aimed at southeastern England, an invasion at any point in southern England would most likely have caused severe economic disruption due to the anti-invasion measures. This supports Linda Colley's claim that Wiltshire was a county likely to be threatened by an invasion, even though it was landlocked.⁷⁸⁶ Wiltshire might have been affected by a French invasion primarily because of its wider repercussions, not actual military action or an advance inland.

Clearly sheep and civilians on foot could make the journey cross-country but this would have been more difficult for the wheeled conveyances that would have been used to move the infirm, food, personal possessions and those unwilling to walk. The village of Box had promised to supply three carts for conveying supplies to defending forces, each with four animals (a total of twelve). Schedule 2, however, reveals that the village contained no fewer than ninety-two draft horses, leaving a total of eighty animals available to pull the carts and wagons of the population. It is likely that, despite orders to the contrary, many of the population would have taken to the roads, particularly in a village such as Box that sat astride the London to Bristol road (the modern day A4).⁷⁸⁷

The wagons allocated for the transport of supplies were to be ready to move at twenty four's notice. It was expected that they would travel twenty-five to thirty miles per day, depending on load but such a figure may have been excessively optimistic.⁷⁸⁸ These vehicles occupied an ambiguous position within the command structure and it is unclear whether they were to be given the same rights on the roads as the military. This was crucial because if the vehicles were to be regarded as military, civilians were expected to give way, but if this was not the case wagons, and the supplies on them,

⁷⁸⁶ Colley, *Britons*, p.308.

⁷⁸⁷ WSRO 1719/30, schedule 2.

⁷⁸⁸ PRO WO 30/141, p.16.

would have been expected to travel cross-country as much as possible. Such vehicles had only limited cross-country mobility and, while wagons earmarked for military service were instructed to be equipped with at least one tool such as a shovel in case of becoming stuck, movement would have been slow.⁷⁸⁹

It is likely that bureaucracy and regulations may have further slowed the movement of the civilian wagons impressed into military service. The rights of the individuals manning the wagons was made clear to them when opting for this duty, and it is apparent that in the anti-invasion scheme the rights of the individual were to be eroded less than those of private ownership. Each vehicle was to be given a certificate identifying the owner, driver, number of horses and, most significantly the date at which it was to be discharged from duty, along with the number of days spent marching. Drivers were to be paid for each day of service, according to rates set by magistrates and lieutenants in each county. Every wagon was also to have a conductor of stores, responsible for ensuring that receipts were received for all goods transferred and rations received.⁷⁹⁰ The system was bureaucratic and had the potential to be a recipe for disaster if enacted, with drivers unwilling to move without the appropriate paperwork or because their period of service had expired. The Royal Wagon Train had been formed to avoid such situations and the utilisation of civilian transport for general military service would have thus been a step backwards for the army.⁷⁹¹

Living off requisitioned cattle and its advance probably slowed by columns of refugees and evacuees, the British army would have sought to drive back the invader. The regular army would have been supported in this task not only by the militia but also by other formations created to resist invasion.⁷⁹² A scheme to raise a corps of

⁷⁸⁹ WSRO 1719/30, schedule 6.

⁷⁹⁰ PRO WO 30/141, pp.16-17.

⁷⁹¹ See chapter 4.

⁷⁹² For a consideration of how they were raised see C. Chilcott, 'English counties and defensive planning, 1803 to 1805', in *Bulletin of the Military Historical Society*, vol. 54, no.215, February 2004, pp.149-154.

mounted scouts and guides from local populations was never implemented but new Volunteer units were to be raised.⁷⁹³ Besides infantry and cavalry formations, the Volunteers included pioneer corps that were to be raised from each parish. Their role was described in 'Proposals for Rendering the Body of the People Instrumental in the General Defence' as follows:

The duty of the pioneers will generally consist in repairing and opening such roads, bridges and communications as may facilitate the movement of our own army, and in breaking up and obstructing such as it may be necessary to render impassable to the enemy.⁷⁹⁴

The inclusion of a corps of pioneers in the invasion preparations is notable for several reasons. Not least is the fact that it demonstrates an understanding and appreciation of the need for supporting arms in an army. In addition the pioneers represented a natural progression of the doctrine adopted in British defence plans, one that sought to both deprive the enemy and support British forces (in this case through opening and closing lines of communication as required).

The pioneers were to have operated in companies of twenty-five to fifty men, commanded by a lieutenant or captain respectively (schedule 5). In the event that the minimum number of twenty-five could not be attained companies from different parishes would have been combined, this was a contrast to policy in the regular army, in which even seriously under strength formations were rarely amalgamated.⁷⁹⁵ Equipment would have varied between units as personnel were required to provide their own and the following was a recommended list of items for a unit of twenty-five men: six each of pickaxes, spades and shovels, three billhooks and four felling axes.⁷⁹⁶ In addition it was also noted that 'a proportion of wheelbarrows will also be very

⁷⁹³ PRO WO 30/141, p.6.

⁷⁹⁴ PRO WO 30/141, p.6.

⁷⁹⁵ Orders, General Meeting of the Lieutenancy, Sarum, 19th November 1803, WSRO 1719/30.

⁷⁹⁶ PRO WO 30/141, p.6.

serviceable'.⁷⁹⁷ The fact that the pioneers had to provide their own tools was evidence that the state lacked the means to meet adequately the needs of defending forces itself, and raises doubts about their effectiveness if such tools could not be supplied.

An insight into the volunteer units formed to counter a French invasion can be gained by the fact that the ability of each parish to supply personnel for military purposes (as summarised in schedule 4) was initially based on the number of individuals able to arm themselves. It was anticipated that each parish would be able to supply contingents of both horse and foot, while the armaments each was to provide reveals much about the force and its potential effectiveness on the battlefield. Cavalry were requested to supply a pistol or a sword (preferable both), while those on foot would provide either a 'firelock' (musket) or pitchfork⁷⁹⁸. The reason for this was laid out in a letter from the Lord Lieutenant to the parish of Box in August 1803:

There will be difficulty in issuing arms from his majesty's stores for the extensive training and exercise required in this period, without material injury to the other essential branches of the military, I am directed to resort to the zeal and public spirit of the inhabitants of this county for procuring a return of arms in their possession, in order that, with their consent, they may for a time be applied to the service of this country.⁷⁹⁹

In short, there were insufficient armaments to go around and the use of civilian weapons alleviated the need to supply firearms to volunteer formations.⁸⁰⁰ Of note is that the Lord Lieutenant stated that a ratio of one musket between four men was initially sufficient, to allow for adequate training and drill.⁸⁰¹ There was thus a very real possibility that volunteer units resisting a French invader in 1803 could expect to engage the French with a ratio of one musket to three close combat weapons (one

⁷⁹⁷ PRO WO 30/141, p.6n.

⁷⁹⁸ WSRO 1719/30, schedule 4.

⁷⁹⁹ To the Minister, Churchwardens, Overseers of the Poor, and Principal Inhabitants of Box in the County of Wilts, from the Lord Lieutenant, Wilton House, 2nd August 1803, WSRO 1719/30.

⁸⁰⁰ This is further evidence that the supply of munitions to coalition partners occurred at the expense of British forces, p. 105.

⁸⁰¹ To the Minister, Churchwardens, Overseers of the Poor, and Principal Inhabitants of Box in the County of Wilts, from the Lord Lieutenant, Wilton House, 2nd August 1803, WSRO 1719/30.

hundred and fifty years previously, during the civil war, the ideal ratio of shot to pike had been approximately two to one).

Interestingly there appears to have been no attempt to emulate the tactics of Irish rebels in producing large numbers of pikes. Easily produced by village blacksmiths, these had proved to be effective weapons against cavalry in close terrain during the rebellion of 1798.⁸⁰² This would have been of great value to the volunteer units given the questionable utility of their own cavalry, an arm that requires extensive training for both its personnel and animals.⁸⁰³ Furthermore, volunteer cavalry lacked carbines, which were weapons not generally available to private citizens, but of some value on the battlefield.⁸⁰⁴ This would have put them at a major disadvantage against other cavalry even if problems associated with insufficient training and drill could have been overcome. Giving the proven value of the pike in the hands of trained or willing civilians, as in 1798, the failure to adopt the weapons for the volunteers appears inexplicable. Conservative military thinking no doubt influenced the decision but the most likely explanation is that, fearful of unrest, the government was reluctant to promote the manufacture of such a weapon in the English provinces. This was understandable given that even a relatively quiet county in the period, such as Wiltshire, showed signs of growing unrest during 1802, the year in which the anti-invasion plans were introduced.⁸⁰⁵ That August, for example, a Samuel Baker was convicted:

on a violent suspicion of having unlawfully, riotously, and tumultuously assembled, and having feloniously by firing of arms, and using other offensive weapons, attempted to destroy the dwelling-house [sic.] and mills, belonging to John Jones, Esq., of Staverton.⁸⁰⁶

⁸⁰² See T. Pakenham, *The Year of Liberty: The History of the Great Irish Rebellion of 1798* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1992), p.77; A. T. Q. Stewart, *The Summer Soldiers: The 1798 Rebellion in Antrim and Down* (Belfast, Blackstaff Press, 1995), passim.

⁸⁰³ MacDonald, *Instructions for the Conduct of Infantry*, pp.lx-lxi.

⁸⁰⁴ Haythornthwaite, *The Napoleonic Source Book*, p.80.

⁸⁰⁵ Charlesworth (ed), *Rural Protest*, passim.

Only four days earlier, a Thomas Hilliker and ‘divers other persons not yet taken’ had been convicted of destroying a mill, while three Trowbridge cloth workers had been found guilty of attempting to form an illegal combination (trade union).⁸⁰⁷ For further proof that insurrection remained a concern of the government, the historian needs to look no further than the role of the volunteers in the event of invasion, which was to include suppression of disorder in rear areas.⁸⁰⁸

Significant difficulties would have been encountered in supplying the volunteer units due to the variety of firearms that would have been found in their ranks. As individuals were encouraged to supply their own firearms it is likely that everything from duelling pistols to fowling pieces, in a variety of calibres, would have been employed. The authorities were well aware of the potential difficulties that such diversity could cause and special provision was to be made for these firearms:

It is earnestly recommended to all who voluntarily offer to appear with arms, to provide a bullet mould for the calibre of their gun or pistol, a small bag for bullets, and a powder horn, lest the bore of their arms, being smaller than those of the army, should prevent their using the ammunition made up for the King’s Troops, in which case a delivery of lead and powder will be made to them.⁸⁰⁹

The request for accoutrements such as powder horns and the like, while unusual, was not unreasonable giving that those possessing firearms would already own some or all such items. Most surprising is the offer to deliver lead and powder to individuals for the manufacture of their own munitions. Such a decision was not taken lightly in a period of revolutions and demonstrates the seriousness of the French invasion threat.

A valid question is that if the government was willing to supply shot and

⁸⁰⁶ Devizes Session, 10th January 1802, WSRO A1/125/46W , Calendar of Prisoners in the County Gaol at Fisherton Anger and Devizes and Marlborough Bridewells, 1803, p.6.

⁸⁰⁷ Devizes Session, 10th January 1802, WSRO A1/125/46W, pp.6-8.

⁸⁰⁸ To the Minister, Churchwardens, Overseers of the Poor, and Principal Inhabitants of Box in the County of Wilts, from the Lord Lieutenant, Wilton House, 2nd August 1803, WSRO 1719/30.

⁸⁰⁹ WSRO 1719/30, schedule 4.

powder, why did it not authorise the widespread manufacture of pikes? Linda Colley describes the decision as a calculated risk on the government's part.⁸¹⁰ It was also a limited risk, however, as those receiving the lead and powder already possessed firearms so the potential threat already existed, unlike a horde of rebels armed with pikes recently produced by a local blacksmith. In addition, allowing part-time soldiers to maintain possession of their firearms even when not on duty was not a new concept but an existing policy. This was demonstrated by the following appeal, placed in the *Salisbury Journal* by the commanding officer of the Dorset Yeomanry: 'All persons that formerly belonged to my regiment... and do not intend to renew their services in that corps, are requested to give in their arms and accoutrements to their respective captains'.⁸¹¹ Those weapons that were not returned may well have found their way into the ranks of the volunteers.

Many contemporaries believed the forces raised in the counties would have been an effective force due to their structure, organisation and the fact that they drew their manpower from a single locality. Lieutenant Colonel Wilson wrote of land-holding officers that 'a feudal attachment [of his tenants] would, in a great degree, supersede the necessity for any martial control'; while the Lord Lieutenant of Wiltshire stated in August 1808 that 'it can scarcely require a moment's consideration to determine how preferable it must be for the volunteers to be formed into distinct corps, officered by gentlemen of respectability in their own neighbourhoods'.⁸¹² Such ideas may appear to be a desperate attempt to justify the concept of the Volunteers: given their diverse armament and initially poor training it is difficult to imagine the volunteers achieving little more than being hacked down by French cavalry,

⁸¹⁰ Colley, *Britons*, p.328.

⁸¹¹ *Salisbury Journal*, 11th July 1803, p.1.

⁸¹² Wilson, *An Enquiry into the state of the Forces of the British Empire*, p12; To the Minister, Churchwardens, Overseers of the Poor, and Principal Inhabitants of Box in the County of Wilts, from the Lord Lieutenant, Wilton House, 2nd August 1803, WSRO 1719/30.

presuming they stood to fight or even turned out at all. Despite this the Irish rebels of 1798 proved what could be achieved and it is possible that the volunteers, fully integrated with the regulars, may have achieved some success on the battlefield. At worst they could have relieved frontline troops of tasks such as convoy or prisoner escort in the rear areas, or provided a means through which potentially serious disorder could be contained.⁸¹³

It is appropriate to conclude this chapter with a brief consideration of county governance in the aftermath on invasion. Even though the volunteers were mobilised, livestock on the move and villages serving as depots, the magistrates of the county bench and lieutenants were to have continued to play a role in maintaining the defending forces. Due to the movement of the population away from their homes, continuing the militia ballot would not have been possible, although justices could have continued to supervise the passage of troops. In August 1804 regulations were published concerning 'the preservation of good order, to be adopted in case of invasion, in each county in Great Britain'. If these regulations had been implemented it is apparent that the civil power, while officially supported by the military, would have effectively become subordinated to its requirements. Such a course would have been anathema to many libertarians in Britain, and surely would have been used as vindication for the views of those who had long warned of the dangers posed by the ever-growing power of the state.⁸¹⁴ It was a situation that may have been inevitable for national survival but one that could have lasted indefinitely as legislation existed for enacting the regulations but not repealing them.

The regulations required that the magistrates sit daily, along with an officer of the volunteers and chief superintendent of constables. The primary task of these

⁸¹³ Regulations for the preservation of good order, to be adopted in case of invasion, in each county in Great Britain, 12th August 1804, PRO WO 55/1548/17, Regulations for each county, in case of Invasion.

⁸¹⁴ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p.63.

bodies would have been suppressing disorder in the army's rear areas, the regulations stating that they were 'to receive and execute the orders of the magistrates, in preventing and quelling disturbances, in taking up and conveying offenders to prison, in supplying escorts for all military purposes... and furnishing a guard for the county gaol... if wanted'.⁸¹⁵ It was anticipated that the 'military purposes' described above may have included the maintenance of supply lines:

If, contrary to expectation any impediment should occur in the regular supply of the different markets every assistance is to be afforded to the persons who are accustomed, or who offer to supply them; and escorts to be granted in cases where it may be necessary for the secure passage and conveyance of cattle and provisions.⁸¹⁶

Such duties could have only been fulfilled if the volunteers were present in the county. It is, however, questionable if such formations would have turned out at all, many militiamen in Ireland opting to remain with their families when called upon to act against Irish rebels in 1798.⁸¹⁷

If deprived of a military force to deploy at the request of the army, the role of the magistrates would have been confined to determining the rates of pay for wagon drivers employed in support of the military, and the price at which items such as flour and bread were to be sold to commissaries.⁸¹⁸ How long this situation existed would have been decided by the efforts of the British armed forces, aided in no small part by the invasion preparations implemented by the magistrates, Lords Lieutenant and parish officials of counties across Britain. In the meantime the army, providing the regulations had been fully enacted, would have been able to break many of the bonds

⁸¹⁵ Regulations for the preservation of good order, to be adopted in case of invasion, in each county in Great Britain, 12th August 1804, PRO WO 55/1548/17, Regulations for each county, in case of Invasion.

⁸¹⁶ Regulations for the preservation of good order, to be adopted in case of invasion, in each county in Great Britain, 12th August 1804, PRO WO 55/1548/17.

⁸¹⁷ B. Cleary, 'The Battle of Oulart Hill: Context and Strategy', in D. Keogh and N. Furlong (eds), *The Mighty Wave: the 1798 Rebellion in Wexford* (Dublin, Four Courts Press, 1996), p82.

⁸¹⁸ PRO WO 30/141, pp.17, 22.

that bound it within the British state, particularly regulations that governed the requisitioning of property. It remains to be seen, however, if the breaking of these bonds would have been only a temporary suspension of practices or a permanent fracturing of the balance between state, society and army created in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The relationship between army and state had been profoundly changed by the traumatic events of the seventeenth century and invasion in the early nineteenth century may have been no less traumatic, having the potential to create political repercussions of a similar magnitude. Thus, plans to maintain the army in the event of invasion may have proved as damaging to Britain's economic and political stability as military action itself. The extent to which this would have benefited the army is unclear, and would to a large extent have depended on the degree to which it was able to break free of the constraints previously imposed upon it by the pre-invasion British state.

Conclusion

The relationship between the state and the army defined how the force was to be maintained. Because of this it would have a significant influence upon the function, structure, capability and effectiveness force itself. This was to have important consequences, both advantageous and otherwise. It is these consequences that demonstrate the importance of understanding the relationship between a state and its armed forces, as they have implications for the effectiveness of those forces and thus the military affairs of states.

The consequences when an army gains dominance over a state, which occurred in mid-seventeenth century Britain or Nazis Germany, are well known. When the role is reversed, with the state the dominant half of the partnership, however, this too has consequences. In particular, states have a stranglehold on the resources available to its military. Eighteenth century Britain is acknowledged to have possessed an economic and industrial strength unrivalled by its competitors but, as this work demonstrates, those resources available to the army were barely sufficient to meet the force's needs. A particularly important resource for the army was manpower and it was continually lacking a reserve of this.⁸¹⁹ Traditionally historians have focused on deficiencies in the fighting arms. This may be because it can be inferred that, as the combat arms were under strength, their supporting organizations could function while themselves under strength. It is apparent, however, that historians are in general apathetic to the organizations tasked with maintaining the army, almost entirely ignoring those such as the Royal Wagon Train and Medical Department. More importantly, it is apparent that such an inference is incorrect.

⁸¹⁹ Hall, *British Strategy*, pp.6-7.

The consequences of the manpower shortage were apparent in regard to the Chaplain General's Department. This was far too small for its task and unable to influence the religious affairs of soldiers significantly.⁸²⁰ The Royal Wagon Train also had to contend with a shortage of manpower and could have achieved considerably more had it been enlarged.⁸²¹ This could have been of significant benefit for the Commissariat, which was often compelled to rely upon local transport overseas. The employment of Spanish and Portuguese muleteers was not a major problem for the army but could nevertheless hinder efficiency.⁸²² Economics was a decisive factor in determining the quantity of manpower available but was not the only one. Much has been written about Britain's economic strength and its beneficial consequences, but this strength could only be maintained through depriving the military of vital resources, the most important of which was manpower.⁸²³ Almost as important as manpower was materiel, as this too cost money and was required to sustain Britain's economic growth. The commercialisation of industry dictated that production was geared towards profit rather than meeting the needs of the armed forces. The two could be compatible but this was not always the case.

Finance permeated every aspect of logistics. To prevent the abuse of liberty the army was required to pay for the supplies it required, a system that relied on cash or credit, the availability to the army of both being controlled by the state. Required to pay its way with barely sufficient means the army frequently found itself living a hand to mouth existence and unable to construct a significant logistical reserve. Historians have frequently written about the small size of the army and its inability to survive defeat but manpower could have been raised through conscription if the need arose. What is overlooked is that it was a capability to arm and maintain these new forces

⁸²⁰ See above p.220.

⁸²¹ See above p.175.

⁸²² See above p.65.

⁸²³ See above pp.88-89.

that did not exist. There was simply too little slack in the system to rectify any deficiencies. Manufacturers were already cutting corners to meet contracts, and even prior to the Peninsula War deficiencies of items such as clothing were being rectified through using equipment acknowledged to be substandard.⁸²⁴

It would be incorrect to view the army as completely starved of resources by the state. Surprisingly the one organization that was clear evidence of the beneficial consequences of the relationship between army and state is the one most often overlooked by historians – the Royal Wagon Train. The organization was a bright spot in the system used to maintain the army. The concepts underpinning it were modern, perhaps even progressive, and its creation was evidence that the influence of the state over the army was not entirely detrimental. The organization was relatively efficient and flexible, utilising technology created as a result of the industrial and agricultural revolutions, and benefited directly through the growth. (both political and geographical) of the British state due to the absorption of the Irish Wagon Train. The Royal Wagon Train represented a new doctrine as it was relatively self-contained and provided a transport capability maintained through its own artificers. This allowed the Royal Wagon Train to exhibit a degree of structural fluidity, the organization being able to restructure itself in response to the strategic situation. This manifested itself not only in an ability to create or demobilise troops but also develop new operational practices, leading to the creation of the depot troops.⁸²⁵

The flexibility of the Royal Wagon Train made the organization ideally suited to the pragmatic policies adopted towards logistics as it was created to meet the needs of the army at the time. The Royal Wagon Train represented a modern approach to warfare; by comparison the quasi-military Commissariat was an evolutionary dead-

⁸²⁴ See above p.114.

⁸²⁵ See above p.142.

end for the army. The Commissariat is often criticised for its failings yet historians have shied away from addressing this, its most fundamental difficulty.

Creveld writes that nineteenth century warfare began, and eighteenth century warfare ended with Napoleon's campaign of 1805, when movement replaced sieges as the central component of strategy.⁸²⁶ By establishing the Royal Wagon Train in the 1790s, therefore, the British army was already, if inadvertently, preparing for this new form of warfare. Neither the Royal Wagon Train nor Commissariat would survive the nineteenth century, their roles ultimately being amalgamated in the Royal Army Service Corp.⁸²⁷ As a purely military force, employing its own specialist personnel, it was, however, the Royal Wagon Train that most closely paralleled the R.A.S.C. and later organizations. Intriguingly, the relationship between the British state and its military in the twenty first century is again becoming heavily influenced by economic concerns, rather than military effectiveness, and civilian contractors have once more become an integral part of the army's supporting services.

The Royal Wagon Train demonstrated that despite drawbacks the relationship between army and state was not necessarily detrimental for the former. It is the case that factors that caused difficulties could also bring benefits. For example, financial considerations frequently ensured economy rather than military effectiveness was a priority but also improved efficiency.⁸²⁸ Administrative practice in the army was significantly influenced by the state and there is a tendency to equate bureaucracy with inefficiency. As the army of the period demonstrated, however, this was not always the case as regulations limited corruption in the logistics system. More importantly,

⁸²⁶ Creveld, *Supplying War*, p.40.

⁸²⁷ Indeed, this was the fate of almost the entire system utilised to maintain the force in the period. the multitude of departments with often overlapping jurisdictions slowly being amalgamated into larger, more efficient organizations. The most significant of these advances was the absorption of the Ordnance Department by the War Office in 1855. This united the arms of the army into one command, although it is necessary to note that this did not necessarily improve efficiency and improve co-operation between the arms. As late as the 1960s there were power struggles within the army concerning the responsibilities and roles of the Royal Artillery.

⁸²⁸ See above p.41.

and frequently overlooked, is that increased regulation created standards for soldiers' welfare even after their period of service. Regular inspections ensured that barracks, schools and hospitals met the required criteria. Considering the conditions in the latter this is contentious but nevertheless regulations existed that defined standards in hospitals, and these regulations were enforced on occasion. Regulations created additional costs and administration for the army but it is apparent that in this period there was a trend towards increasing investment in soldiers' welfare, a situation seen to benefit the army. This was most apparent in regard to the treatment of soldiers' families.

The state provided the resources and impetus for many of the factors that gave the British army its strength but this strength was fragile. The army lacked strategic depth, a policy that suited a state conscious to avoid disruption and control expenditure but one that was also a dangerous gambit. Potentially the army could have been a one shot weapon, defeat in one campaign spelling the end of the force, such a fate effectively befalling Napoleon's Grande Armée in Russia, a debacle from which it never recovered.⁸²⁹ There was a genuine fear amongst contemporaries that such a fate would befall the British army if committed on the continent, and it has been estimated that the loss of one brigade may have been sufficient to cause the collapse of the Peninsular army.⁸³⁰ If such an event had occurred it may well have resulted in the loss of the Royal Wagon Train's most effective elements and many Commissariat personnel, besides the loss of equipment and frontline troops.

Considering the above scenario, how realistic was the possibility of a significant British military defeat? Given the nature of this study, such a question could be turned to that of how effectively was the army maintained. Yet, as stated by

⁸²⁹ Mackesy, *British Victory in Egypt*, p.4.

⁸³⁰ Wilson, *An Enquiry into the state of the Forces of the British Empire*, p.51; Weller, *Wellington in the Peninsula*, p.372.

Schechter and Sander, the effective maintenance of a force is not itself a sound indicator of that force's success. Successful maintenance may make a force more effective but is not a guarantee of victory.⁸³¹ The example they cite is that of McClellan's Peninsula Campaign of 1862, in which poorly supplied Confederate forces consistently beat better maintained Union formations, but examples relevant to this study could include Spanish victories during Napoleon's initial invasion of Spain and the success of Irish Rebels in 1798.

When considering the possible fallibility of British arms in the period, a common stumbling block is the perception of the Napoleonic Wars as a British victory. This ranges from the outrageously jingoistic and populist version of events portrayed in the work of Richard Holmes, who describes the British army as possessing 'a certain something that flickers out across two centuries like an electric current', to the Anglo-centric works of historians such as Ian Fletcher, who describes the Peninsula War as 'Britain's greatest military contribution to the downfall of Napoleon Bonaparte'.⁸³² The former statement in particular represents a throw back to the views of the early to mid twentieth century, held by historians such as Charles Oman and Jac Weller.

Piers Mackesy writes that prior to 1800 the British army had known little but failure, examples including defeat in North America, a fiasco in the Low Countries and the devastation of garrisons in the West Indies by disease.⁸³³ Following 1800 the force was to emerge victorious but not unbeaten, with famous victories such as Salamanca and Vittoria sitting alongside fiascos and disasters such as Buenos Aires

⁸³¹ Schechter and Sander, *Delivering the Goods*, p.22.

⁸³² R. Holmes, *Red Coat: The British Soldier in the Age of the Horse and Musket* (London, Harper Collins, 2001), pxvi; I. Fletcher (ed), *Voices from the Peninsula: Eye Witness Accounts by Soldiers of Wellington's Army, 1808-14* (London, Greenhill, 2001), p.5. As a contrast to the work of Fletcher see Esdaile, *The Peninsular War*, passim.

⁸³³ Mackesy, *British Victory in Egypt*, p.3. Added to this could well be the army's performance in the Irish Rebellion of 1798.

and Walcheren. As noted by Peter Hofschorer even the most famous victory of all, Waterloo, would have been a disaster had it not been for the intervention of the Prussians. In fact the often forgotten campaign that followed the battle was militarily an overwhelming Prussian victory, with only British political influence in Paris keeping Blucher in check, depriving Prussia of well deserved glory in the process.⁸³⁴ Perhaps Holmes' most pertinent point about the British army is that it was capable of victory and not immune to defeat.⁸³⁵

The concept of the British army as a success can to a great extent be attributed to a Euro-centric perception of the Napoleonic Wars. It was within the borders of Europe that many decisive battles were fought, while some of the greatest fiascos were to occur elsewhere, including the disastrous expedition to Argentina, defeat at New Orleans and the devastation of garrisons in the West Indies by disease (although the success of British arms in Europe were not universal – the Corunna campaign being a case in point). As David Chandler stated, no battle or indeed campaign should be seen in isolation but rather as the sum of many parts, so the Napoleonic Wars should be no exception.⁸³⁶ Despite being a struggle between European powers the conflict was fought across the globe, to a lesser extent than that of the Seven Years War maybe, but it was still a global war.⁸³⁷

Another important factor is that the British army was to participate in conflicts that were not always part of the Napoleonic Wars or had only a tenuous link to that conflict, against colonial enemies in Africa, Asia, the Americas and the United States of America.⁸³⁸ Philip Haythornthwaite effectively divides the British army into two during this period, that part of the force engaged in colonial actions and that arrayed

⁸³⁴ P. Hofschoer, *1815: The Waterloo Campaign The German Victory*, Volume I (London, Greenhill, 1999), pp.116-129, 271.

⁸³⁵ Holmes, *Red Coat*, p.xvi.

⁸³⁶ D. Chandler, *Waterloo: The Hundred Days* (London, Osprey, 1980), p.11.

⁸³⁷ See Black, *Britain as a Military Power*, pp.115-154, 241-266.

⁸³⁸ Haythornthwaite, *Napoleon's Military Machine*, p.78; P. Mackesy, *British Victory in Egypt*, p.5.

against the French threat.⁸³⁹ Yet, to understand the army the two spheres cannot be separated as one could influence the other and, as noted by Jeremy Black, conflict was closely linked to concepts of Empire in the period.⁸⁴⁰ As demonstrated in this work garrisons in all theatres competed with each other (and allied armies) for the sometimes scarce resources that they needed, including uniforms, munitions and manpower (as demonstrated in the global distribution of chaplains in particular). The global deployment of the army was also one of the most subtle but significant consequences of its relationship with the state, creating a situation that not only hindered the army but also influenced its composition.⁸⁴¹ Thus, in the context of a force deployed around the world, the failures of the army beyond Europe cannot be ignored.⁸⁴²

If it is accepted that the British army was not an overwhelming success, and a major defeat was possible, it must be asked how far the state was willing to alter its relationship with the army in order to aid the recovery of the force? The state demonstrated that certain principles would be sacrificed to aid national defence, such as the right of practising Anglicans to worship when they wished if in the auxiliary forces. More far reaching concessions may have been made in the event of a French invasion, a situation that had the potential to trigger the implementation of military control over large parts of southern Britain, not to mention massive economic and social disruption.

⁸³⁹ See Haythornthwaite, *The Napoleonic Source Book; The Colonial Wars Source Book* (London, Arms and Armour, 1997).

⁸⁴⁰ Black, *Sea Borne Empire*, pp.113-114.

⁸⁴¹ In particular colonial commitments influenced the creation of light infantry tactics and formations in the army. A. Harman, 'They decide not, nor are they chiefly relied upon in battle': British Rifles and Light Infantry in the Peninsular War', in P Griffiths (ed), *A History of the Peninsular War Vol IX: Modern Studies of the War in Spain and Portugal, 1808 - 1814* (London, Greenhill Books, 1999), pp.265-298.

⁸⁴² Imperialism could and did continue separately from military affairs. Examples include the Mungo Park's expeditions in West Africa (1795-97, 1805-06) and Flinder's circumnavigation of Tasmania (1802-03), the latter in particular being concerned with trade. Black, *Sea Borne Empire*, pp.165-166.

It must be assumed that if the invasion had occurred the scheme would have been implemented. Not only had the necessary (and detailed) regulations been introduced but the army had already demonstrated that in a war zone peacetime regulations governing it could be eroded. At the most basic level administrative practices introduced due to the relationship with the state were circumvented by military necessities, while more significant were the ruthless activities of Commissariat personnel and purchasing agents in the hunt for the items they required. There is no reason to believe the activities of Commissaries on the front line in England would have been any different to those in Spain and Portugal, particularly in an area already devastated by French occupation.⁸⁴³ Whether this would have left the relationship between state and army in tatters is less certain, this being dependent on how long the situation lasted and the extent to which the old rules were broken. What is apparent was the willingness of the state to consider sacrificing central principles in aid of national defence, thereby redefining the relationship between army and state.

The repercussions of any change in the relationship between the state and army in response to an invasion might have been significant. The maintenance of an armed force is as much a political or economic issue as it is a military one. As a consideration of how the army was maintained in the period demonstrates, a state can both facilitate and hinder the growth and maintenance of an armed force. After determining how an armed force is to be used, one of the most important tasks facing policy makers is how it should be maintained. This will define the relationship between an army and state, as well as the effectiveness of the force. In turn this will determine the military options available to a state and the ability of an armed force to protect the state itself.

⁸⁴³ Throughout the period of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars there was little difference between the practices of occupying and friendly armies when gathering supplies. Corvisier, *Armies and Societies*, pp.66-67.

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