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Loyalty and Rebellion: Irish soldiers in the British military during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars

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ABSTRACT
Irish participation in the British Army has a long and complex history. The tradition firmly took hold during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars where Irish soldiers and sailors may have represented roughly one third of Britain's armed forces. This article examines how this tradition developed from one of Irish emigration to European armies to enlistment in the British military. It explores how internal pressures including Catholic Relief and rising Protestant loyalism, external pressures including the French Revolution and the demands of Britain's war effort, combined to accelerate Irish enlistment, despite the threat of emerging nationalism, and even separatism, republicanism, and rebellion.

Introduction

From the late eighteenth to the early twentieth century, Irish troops represented roughly one third of British military manpower, forging an Irish identity within a wider British military structure. How did this tradition come about and why? This article explores the history of the Irish soldier in the eighteenth century, and how the Irish military tradition evolved from one focused on France and other European countries to one focused on Britain. The political context of Dublin-Westminster relations, the social context of class and the religious context of Catholic-Protestant relations is also addressed. The professional military tradition, and the growing amateur military traditions, are considered. Reasons of space preclude a comprehensive analysis of all aspects of Irish military history, but rather this is intended as a springboard for further

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research and investigate why Irishmen chose to enlist and how they were used as part of the British war effort against France, from 1793 to 1815.

Research on the Irish soldier in the Age of Revolutions

While Irishmen had fought for Britain for centuries, the eighteenth century's 'Age of Revolutions' was the period where this tradition truly took hold. The French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars have been the subject of intensive research, although in most cases Ireland is only mentioned briefly; the failed French invasion in 1796, the United Irishmen's Rebellion in 1798, and a few lines about recruits from Ireland.[1] This is understandable given the broad scope of these works. Despite the numbers involved, public awareness of the Irish in the British service during the Napoleonic Wars has not yet reached the same level as awareness of Irish involvement in the First World War.[2] The position of the army in society has been considered in recent studies, although most of these focus on Britain rather than Ireland.[3] Not everyone has included Ireland; in Colley's study of how the people of the United Kingdom developed a 'British' identity, Ireland was deemed to be too different, too Catholic and too pro-French to play a part in the invention of Britishness.[4] This assessment will be re-examined in this article, in particular in relation to Anglo-Irish officers. Many works have examined Ireland in the eighteenth century, but generally with a focus on the radicalisation of Irish society, the 1798 rebellion and evolution of loyalism, rather than the role of Irishmen in the wider British military.[5] The Irish Militia

[1]Charles Esdaile, *Napoleon's wars: an international history, 1803-1815,* (London: Penguin, 2007), p. 49, p.104; Roger Knight, *Britain against Napoleon: the organization of victory, 1793-1815,* (London: Penguin, 2014), pp. 85-87, pp. 90-91; Alexander Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars: a Global History,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), pp. 70-72; J. E. Cookson, *The British armed nation, 1793-1815,* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 153-181. Cookson's work is an exception in that it has an entire chapter dedicated to Ireland.

[2]An exception to this lack of awareness in popular culture is the fictional character of Sergeant Patrick Harper from Donegal, in the *Sharpe* novels by Bernard Cornwell and subsequent TV series.

[3]Catriona Kennedy, 'True Brittons and Real Irish: Irish Catholic soldiers in the British army during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars' in Catriona Kennedy and Matthew McCormack (eds), *Soldiering in Britain and Ireland, 1750-1850,* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 37-56; Catriona Kennedy, *Narratives of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars: military and civilian experience in Britain and Ireland* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Kevin Linch and Matthew McCormack, 'Defining Soldiers: Britain's military, c.1740-1815', *War in History* 20, 144 (April, 2013), pp. 144-159.

[4]Linda Colley, *Britons: forging the nation, 1707-1837,* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992, 5th ed., 2012), p. 7.

[5]Thomas Bartlett, 'Defence, counter-insurgency and rebellion: Ireland, 1793-1803' in Thomas Bartlett and Keith Jeffery (eds), *A military history of Ireland,* (Cambridge:

has also been reassessed, and Irishmen do make an appearance in the extensive research into Wellington's army in the Peninsular War.[6] More recently, scholarship has begun to specifically examine the Irish soldiers under Wellington in the Peninsula, as well as the Irish at Waterloo.[7] Irish recruits also feature in recent work on revolutionary warfare in Ireland and America, and the Irish garrison in the 1770s.[8] Yet an overarching examination of the Irish soldier, at home and abroad, during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars remains elusive.[9]

Eighteenth-century Irish society

Ireland's role in a wider British military history is intrinsically linked to the social, religious and political situation on both islands during the late eighteenth century. Ireland was very much a 'divided kingdom', with a minority Protestant Anglican (Church of Ireland) upper class, known as the Ascendancy, ruling over the Catholic majority. The Ascendancy owed their position to the Protestant victory in the Williamite Wars of the late seventeenth-century, whilst the Catholic majority had

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Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 247-93; Thomas Bartlett, 'The Emergence of the Irish Catholic Nation, 1750-1850' in Alvin Jackson (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Irish History,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 517-543; S. J. Connolly, *Divided kingdom: Ireland 1630-1800,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), Ian McBride, *Eighteenth-Century Ireland: The Isle of Slaves,* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 2009).

[6]I. F. Nelson, *The Irish militia 1793-1803: Ireland's forgotten army,* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2007); Ciarán McDonnell, "Zeal and Patriotism': Forging Identity in the Irish Militia, 1793-1802', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 42, 2 (June, 2019), pp. 211– 228; Edward J. Coss. *All for the King's Shilling: The British Soldier under Wellington, 1808–1814,* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2010); Kevin Linch, *Britain and Wellington's Army: recruitment, society and tradition, 1807-15,* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

[7]James Deery, 'The contribution of the Irish soldier to the British Army during the Peninsula campaign 1808 – 1814', *Journal of Military History and Defence Studies*, 1, 1 (January 2020), pp. 4-68; Peter Molloy, 'Ireland and the Waterloo Campaign of 1815', *Journal of Military History and Defence Studies*, 1, 1 (January 2020), pp. 69-119.

[8]Matthew P. Dziennik, 'Peasants, Soldiers, and Revolutionaries: Interpreting Irish Manpower in the Age of Revolutions' in Frank Cogliano and Patrick Griffin (eds), *Ireland and America: Empire, Revolution, and Sovereignty,* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2021), pp. 105-25; Andrew Dorman, '"Fit for immediate service": Reassessing the Irish Military Establishment of the Eighteenth Century through the 1770 Townshend Augmentation', *British Journal for Military History*, 7, 2 (2021), pp. 42-63.

[9]For more see Ciarán McDonnell, 'Irishmen in the British Service During the French Revolutionary Wars, 1793-180' (PhD thesis, Maynooth University, 2013).

their rights restricted by the Penal Laws that followed the defeat of the Jacobite cause. Protestant Dissenters, most notably Presbyterians who formed a sizeable minority on the island, especially in the northeast, also had their rights restricted. Demographics were not absolutes; there were Anglicans and Dissenters in the middle and lower classes, and as will be seen, Catholics in the middle and upper classes. Ireland had aspects of both kingdom and colony; Irish Protestants sat in a House of Commons and House of Lords in Dublin (and later London), yet executive power was held by the Westminster-appointed Lord Lieutenant and his government based in Dublin Castle, as well as the Commander of the Forces based in the Royal Hospital Kilmainham.

The Ascendancy had a complicated if not conflicted identity; some were descendants of Protestant settlers of the seventeenth century whilst others descended from the families that had arrived with the Norman conquest of the late twelfth century (many of whom had later converted to Protestantism), and most still saw themselves as English as well as Irish.[10] They did not automatically disdain the land which their forebears had colonised,[11] and many of these 'Anglo-Irish' desired that Ireland be put on a par, politically, with Britain.[12] The Ascendancy also dominated the military sphere in Ireland and the army was preoccupied with keeping the peace during the century, and was an important 'prop' to the Ascendancy.[13] Many Ascendancy families maintained a strong tradition of military service to the British crown.[14] They believed they needed to maintain their monopoly of the military lest it become infiltrated by Catholics, who were officially barred from enlistment. Until 1745 even Irish Protestants were excluded from the ordinary ranks of the British Army, for fear of Catholic infiltration.[15] Some have even compared the Anglo-Irish families, with their military interests and large country estates, to the Junkers of Prussia.[16] It must be remembered however that variations existed in regards religion, politics and social

[10]R. F. Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972,* (London: Penguin, 1988), p. 248; J. L. McCracken, 'Ch. II: The social structure and social life, 1714-60' in T. W. Moody and W. E. Vaughan (eds), *A new history of Ireland: vol. IV Eighteenth century Ireland 1691-1800,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 31-56, at p. 35.

[11]Thomas Bartlett, '"A people made rather for copies than originals": the Anglo-Irish, 1760-1800', *The International History Review*, 12, 1 (April 1990), pp. 11-25, at pp. 12-14.

[12]E. M. Johnson-Liik, *History of the Irish parliament: 1692-1800, 6 volumes,* (Belfast: Ulster Historical Foundation, 2002), i, p. 41.

[13]J. L. McCracken, 'The political structure, 1714-60' in Moody and Vaughan, *A new history of Ireland: vol. IV*, pp. 57-83, at p. 82.

[14]Peter Karsten, 'Irish soldiers in the British army, 1792-1922: suborned or subordinate?', *Journal of Social History*, 17, 1 (Autumn, 1983), pp. 31-64, at pp. 35-6.

[15]Bartlett, *Ireland*, p. 170.

[16]Correlli Barnett, *Britain and Her Army, 1509–1970: A Military, Political and Social Survey,* (London: Penguin, 1970), pp. 314–15.

class and we cannot treat the Ascendancy, or by extension Irish Protestants, as a single entity.[17]

Despite the Penal Laws, the situation of Irish Catholics had improved significantly in the latter half of the eighteenth century; Catholics were still allowed to participate in certain trades, such as commerce and medicine,[18] or as farmers whose wealth increased as agriculture improved.[19] There was also a 'semi-gentry', consisting of a small minority of Catholic noblemen and gentry who had managed to retain (or reclaim) their lands and titles with oaths of loyalty to the crown.[20] An 'underground gentry' of Catholic middlemen often handled the affairs of Protestant landlords.[21] The emergence of this middle class paved the way for the campaign for Catholic relief. The Catholic Committee, led by members of the surviving Catholic gentry and also wealthy Dublin businessmen, spearheaded the movement for relief.[22]

While officially banned from enlisting in the British military, many Catholics continued to do so covertly.[23] Others emigrated to the Catholic armies of Europe, in particular those of France and Spain. These Irish Brigades, along with priests and merchants, formed the 'Wild Geese', the romantic name given to the network of Irish migrants in Europe. Others joined the armies of Portugal, Austria and Russia, and many rose to high rank.[24] As the Jacobite cause waned, it ceased to be a potential rallying-point for Irish Catholics, and the Jacobite links were effectively severed in 1766 when the Vatican ended its recognition of the Stuart claim to the British throne.[25] Irish Catholic migration had lessened, although it did not stop completely after 1766, showing that the migration could be economic as well as political. As the French connection waned, the British connection began to grow.

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[17]Nicholas Perry, 'The Irish Landed Class and the British Army, 1850-1950', *War in History*, 18, 3 (July 2011), pp 304–32, at p. 318.
[18]Jacqueline Hill, 'Convergence and Conflict in Eighteenth-Century Ireland', *Historical Journal*., 44, 4 (Dec 2001), pp. 1039-63, at p. 1041.
[19]Allan Blackstock, *An Ascendancy army: the Irish yeomanry, 1796-1834,* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1998), p. 25.
[20]Ibid.
[21]Kevin Whelan, 'An underground gentry? Catholic middlemen in eighteenth-Century Ireland', *Eighteenth-Century Ireland / Iris an dá chultúr*, 10 (1995), pp. 7-68, at p. 13.
[22]R. B McDowell., 'The age of the United Irishmen: reform and reaction, 1789-94.' in Moody and Vaughan, *A new history of Ireland: vol. IV*, pp. 289-338, at p. 303.
[23]Cookson, *The British armed nation*, p. 153
[24]Harman Murtagh, 'Irish soldiers abroad, 1600-1800' in Bartlett and Jeffery (eds), *A military history of Ireland*, pp.294-314; Christopher Duffy, *The Wild Goose and the Eagle: A Life of Marshal von Browne 1705-1757,* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1964).
[25]Bartlett, *Ireland*, p. 169.

Use of Catholics in the military

Britain's rising military demands during the century resulted in the gradual acceptance of Irish Protestant, and later Catholic contribution to the armed forces.[26] The demand for more troops during the Seven Years War necessitated a 'blind eye' being turned to Catholic enlistment.[27] This was more likely to happen when the regiment was destined for overseas service.[28] Sometimes Irish Catholics were even sent to Scotland by colonels so as to be recruited there as Scots, and so circumvent the ban.[29] Furthermore, by 1760 Catholics were permitted to join the Royal Marines and the Royal Irish Artillery, while the Royal Navy unofficially took in Catholic sailors.[30] The East India Company also admitted Catholics into its armed forces and provided employment for many Irish throughout its existence.[31] In fact the pay was better than the regular army, and during the later years of the Company, from 1825 to 1850, 'the Bengal Army drew 47.9 per cent of its European recruits from Ireland.'[32] Captain Robert Brooke of the Bengal Army, an Irishman and collector of revenues, claimed in 1778 that by recruiting Irish soldiers for the Company, 'Idle and dissolute Mechanics will find that Employment of which they were deprived at Home… the Kingdom will no longer wear a face of poverty.. and Ireland will be purged of a riotous Peasantry, that often pass their Lives in beggary, and generally conclude them in Jail'.[33] The

[26]Ibid., pp. 169-70.

[27]Alan J. Guy, 'The Irish military establishment, 1660-1776' in Bartlett and Jeffery, *A military history of Ireland*, pp 211-30, at p. 219; Karsten, 'Irish soldiers in the British army', p. 56, n. 20.

[28]Bartlett, *Ireland*, pp 170-2.

[29]Thomas Bartlett, '"A weapon of war yet untried": Irish Catholics and the armed forces of the Crown, 1760-1830' in Fraser, T. G., Jeffery, Keith (eds), *Men, women and war: papers read before the XXth Irish Conference of Historians, University of Ulster, 6-8 June 1991,* (Dublin: The Lilliput Press, 1993), pp. 66-85, at p.69.

[30]Bartlett, *Ireland*, p. 172; Patrick Walsh, 'Ireland and the Royal Navy in the Eighteenth Century', in John McAleer and Christer Petley (eds), *The Royal Navy and the Atlantic World in the Eighteenth Century,* (Basingstoke: Palgrave-MacMillan, 2016), pp. 51-76, at p. 66.

[31]Karsten, 'Irish soldiers in the British army', pp 56-7, n. 20; Charles Benson, 'Nabobs, soldiers and imperial service: the Irish in India', *History Ireland*, 18, 4 (July/Aug 2010), pp. 6–7; Alexander Bubb, 'The Life of the Irish Soldier in India: Representations and Self-Representations, 1857–1922', *Modern Asian Studies*, 46, no. 4 (July, 2012), pp. 769-813, at p. 773

[32] Bubb, 'The Life of the Irish Soldier in India', pp. 773-74.

[33]Margaret Makepeace, "Lads of true spirit' – recruiting for the East India Company in Ireland', British Library Untold Lives Blog, 3 October 2018

economic necessity of the recruits combined with the desire of the authorities to relocate potential rebels. Many senior officials and officers were Anglo-Irish, including Richard and Arthur Wellesley, and Sir Eyre Coote.[34] Given these avenues for employment, the Irish contribution to the British military was not as restricted as it first seems.

The American War of Independence heralded significant changes for the role of Irishmen in the British military. Permission was granted in 1775 to recruit Irishmen for regiments (English or Irish) stationed in Ireland and it was tacitly understood that some recruits would be Catholics.[35] Ireland also faced the threat of an invasion by France, who had allied with the American colonists. The Irish government was unwilling to finance a militia to augment the garrison, and the Irish Volunteers, a private militia of mostly middle and upper-class Protestants, was formed to guard against invasion and assist the local magistrates.[36] The movement proved very popular, with numbers rising to almost 89,000 members in 1782.[37] Volunteers wore their uniforms at every opportunity, eager to emulate a heroic ideal of both masculinity and Irishness.[38] Defence of the Protestant military tradition was very important; some of the more conservative corps actively excluded Catholics from joining, although others did enlist Catholics, sometimes after taking an oath of allegiance.[39]

However, the Volunteers quickly became an armed lobby group for the Patriot Party in the Irish House of Commons who pushed for economic and political reforms in favour of Ireland. Marches and demonstrations threatened violence if their demands were not met, and concessions were granted, including Free Trade and the legislative independence of the Irish parliament. This rise of armed Protestant patriotism, and the militarisation of Irish society, alarmed the authorities in Dublin Castle and Westminster and would have a bearing in the wars of the 1790s.

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https://blogs.bl.uk/untoldlives/2018/10/lads-of-true-spirit-recruiting-for-the-east-india-company-in-ireland.html. Accessed 24 January 2022.

[34]Neville Craig, 'The Irish and the East India Company', *History Ireland*, 18, 4 (July/Aug, 2010), pp 13–13. The Franco-Irish also took part in colonial operations, most notably Thomas Arthur, Comte de Lally-Tollendal, who served as governor-general of French India.

[35]Vincent Morley, *Irish opinion and the American Revolution, 1760-178,3* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 137.

[36]Padraig Higgins, *A nation of politicians: gender, patriotism and political culture in late eighteenth Ireland,* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2010), p. 129.

[37]Blackstock, *An Ascendancy army*, p. 44.

[38]Higgins, *A nation of politicians*, pp 166-7.

[39]Ibid, pp 147-9.

The demand for manpower and threat of invasion prompted the British government to consider concessions for Catholics, which would appease the clergy and Catholic nobility, who would both in turn encourage enlistment.[40] Irish Catholics were described as 'a weapon of war untried'.[41] In 1778 a Catholic Relief Act was passed that relaxed some of the penal laws.[42] The first draft had contained sweeping changes but the final act was truncated due to Ascendancy opposition.[43] Irish Catholics were still officially barred from bearing arms and enlisting in the military, although other concessions were passed to maintain Catholic loyalty in this and a subsequent Relief Act of 1782.[44] The precedent for concessions to Irish Catholics in a time of war had been set, and would emerge again in the early 1790s.

The French Revolution

The French Revolution brought a significant change to the dynamic of Irish military migration by blocking a traditional route for many prospective Irish Catholic soldiers. This was not a sudden rupture; as the century had progressed the number of Irish-born soldiers in France's Irish Brigade had decreased steadily among the rank-and-file. However, the officer corps had mostly remained either Irish-born or the French-born sons of Irish parents. Their Catholic, foreign, and often aristocratic status made their position in the revolutionary army very dangerous. Many took part in the mass emigration of some 66% of French army officers that took place in the early years of the revolution. They joined the royalist émigré armies in exile, and some even offered their services to Britain.[45] For Britain, Ireland was considered both an asset (in terms of recruits and supplies) but also a weakness (as a potential backdoor for a French invasion of Britain and as a place for internal rebellion). In 1791 a pro-French group of radicals known as the United Irishmen were formed to unite Protestants, Catholics, and Dissenters for the common cause of Ireland, although not yet as a separatist republican movement.[46]

Catholic Relief and military service at home

The Catholic Committee had also summoned a convention in Dublin in 1792, where more than 230 delegates, supported by the Irish Catholic clergy, had drawn up

[40]Robert Kent Donovan, 'The military origins of the Roman Catholic relief programme of 1778', *Historical Journal*, 28, 1 (March 1985), pp 79-102, at p. 89.
[41]Ibid, p. 93.
[42]Ibid, pp. 83-4.
[43]Foster, *Modern Ireland*, p. 245.
[44]Cookson, *The British armed nation*, p. 154.
[45]Ciarán McDonnell, 'A 'fair chance'? The Catholic Irish Brigade in the British service, 1793-98', *War in History*, 23, 2 (April 2016), pp. 155-168.
[46]Theobald Wolfe Tone, *An Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland,* (Belfast, 1791).

demands for further concessions for Catholics.[47] In an effort to maintain Catholic loyalty the British authorities sought to introduce a new Catholic Relief Act, with a short 1792 act and a more substantial one in 1793. As well as giving the vote back to forty-shilling freeholding Catholic men, the 1793 Catholic Relief Act also included the right to bear arms; Irish Catholics could now officially take part in the defence of Ireland.

At the outset of the war the Irish garrison, also known as the Irish Establishment, was augmented from 15,000 men to 19,000.[48] Ireland needed to be guarded but Dublin Castle did not want a repeat of the unregulated Volunteers of the 1780s. As a result of the Catholic Relief Act, Catholics could now be openly recruited, and an Irish Militia was established in 1793 to defend Ireland and to free up regular troops for overseas service.[49] The militia reflected Irish society, Protestant officers commanded Catholic, Protestant and Presbyterian rank-and-file, with Catholics making up the majority of recruits. Regimental identity was fostered through the use of Irish cultural symbols (visual symbols defining Irishness such as the colour green, the shamrock or crowned harp, and traditional Irish airs and ballads) in the uniforms, music, regimental colours and other aspects of the unit, as well as linking to a wider Irish identity within the British military.[50]

Demand for recruits continued to increase and the Establishment was expanded in 1794 by fencible regiments, which were also raised for home defence duties.[51] Internal disaffection continued, in particular after the United Irishmen were outlawed in 1794.[52] Driven underground, the movement allied with the Defenders, a pro-Catholic secret society that had mostly acted as agrarian activists rather than revolutionaries before this point. Now the two movements sought to overturn British rule in Ireland, and they fervently hoped that Catholics in the militia would flock to their cause in the event of rebellion. The United Irishmen also established links with the new French Republic; Theobald Wolfe Tone, a Protestant Dublin lawyer-turned-revolutionary, travelled to Paris where he persuaded the Revolution's Directory to start organising a large-scale expedition to Ireland. Tone's success is impressive; the force consisted

[47]Bartlett, 'The emergence of the Irish Catholic nation,' p. 522.
[48]National Library of Ireland, Dublin (hereinafter NLI), Kilmainham Papers (KP) 1002/86, Dundas to Westmorland, 24 Mar. 1793; NLI KP 1002/127, Dundas to Westmorland, 25 Nov. 1793.
[49]McDonnell, "Zeal and Patriotism", p. 211.
[50]Ibid., pp. 215-216.
[51]Bartlett, 'Defence, counter-insurgency and rebellion', p. 257.
[52]Bartlett, *Ireland*, p. 211.

of around 14,000 troops commanded by the talented general Lazare Hoche.[53] However, Tone's assurances that the militiamen were ready to desert *en masse* was overly optimistic.[54]

By 1796 the authorities also feared that mass desertions could take place in the militia and a new, mostly-Protestant and decidedly loyalist Irish Yeomanry was formed to guard Ireland. Many yeomanry corps evolved from earlier Volunteer corps, such as the Doneraile Yeomanry that included many former Doneraile Volunteer Rangers.[55] The yeomanry embodied the Protestant defence tradition, perceiving themselves to be under siege within a hostile population. They were tasked with localised counter-insurgency duties, while the militia were rotated around Ireland, guarding it from invasion.

Rebellion and Union

These invasion fears were confirmed when a fleet of French ships almost succeeded in landing a force at Bantry Bay in Cork in December 1796, but bad weather thwarted the plans of the United Irishmen and their French allies. The near-miss of Bantry Bay spurred the Irish government into increased security spending and galvanised the growth of loyalism and in particular numbers for the yeomanry. 1797 saw a purge of disaffection in the militia, with some 20 soldiers executed and many more flogged.[56] This was mirrored by a widespread campaign of disarming and military terror in Ulster, heartland of the United Irishmen. Houses were searched and burned, people flogged, and many mass-arrests and executions were carried out by the military to suppress any disaffection.[57] Politicians and officers justified these measures as necessary to fight terror with terror and drew direct comparisons with the recent brutal suppression of a royalist rebellion in the Vendée region in France.[58]

Despite the attempts to crush them, the United Irishmen (bolstered with the Defenders) eventually rose in rebellion in the summer of 1798. Initial and localised gains were lost as the determined British counterattack struck. French reinforcements

[53]French military archives, Paris (Service Historique de la Défense), 'l'Expédition d'Irlande' files, B 11/1, Hoche au directoire exécutif, 6 August 1796.
[54]Sylvie Kleinman, 'Tone and the French expeditions to Ireland, 1796-1798: Total war or Liberation?', in P. Serna, A. de Francesco & J. A. Miller (eds.), *Republics at War, 1776-1840 Revolutions, Conflicts and Geopolitics in Europe and the Atlantic World,* (Basingstoke: Palgrave-MacMillan, 2013), pp. 83-103, at p. 93.
[55]N.L.I. Doneraile Papers Ms 12155, Minutes of a meeting of the Doneraile Yeomanry, 16 Oct. 1796.
[56]Bartlett, *Ireland*, p. 219.
[57]Bartlett, 'Defence, counter-insurgency and rebellion', p. 270.
[58]Ibid.

that arrived in August were too little and too late. Notwithstanding the misgivings of the professional army, the Irish Militia proved reasonably reliable; they not only withstood but in fact defeated the rebels largely by themselves before reinforcements arrived from Britain.[59] Even rudimentary training in musketry and drill was enough to defeat a largely untrained insurgent army armed mostly with pikes. While the militia performed reasonably well in 1798, the same cannot be said for the yeomanry. Their localised nature and lack of training meant that, in the words of newly-appointed Commander in Chief, and Lord Lieutenant, Marquis Cornwallis, the yeomanry might have been effective at fighting, but they had taken 'the lead in rapine and murder.'[60] However due to its overwhelmingly loyalist identity, the yeomanry was favoured by the authorities in Dublin and Westminster as the main tool at quelling disaffection in Ireland in the years after 1798. It wasn't just the militia and yeomanry that had a mixed performance; a number of British regiments earned a reputation for brutality towards insurgents and civilians alike, such as the Ancient Britons fencible regiment from north Wales.[61]

In the wake of the defeat of the rebellion, Westminster and Dublin Castle pushed forward plans for a legislative union between the British and Irish parliaments. Many of the Ascendancy opposed the loss of their independent parliament and had to be bribed with money or titles to help the Act of Union pass.[62] In one notable incident, Lord Downshire wrote to his militia regiment to encourage their opposition to union, but this mixing of politics and the military was so outrageous that Cornwallis was forced to relieve Downshire of his command.[63] After the Union the Protestant position (whether Anglican or Dissenter) was strengthened and entrenched, and the Catholic population, following the violence of 1798, were reluctant to offer much resistance.[64] Catholic Emancipation was expected to follow the Union, but when George III refused to allow this Pitt was forced to resign as prime minister.

Loyalty had been secured, sometimes at the point of a bayonet, and the focus of the British authorities shifted from internal security in Ireland to overseas military campaigns. Irish recruits would prove very useful in these campaigns as the Napoleonic

[59]McDonnell, "Zeal and Patriotism", p. 219-20.
[60]*Correspondence of Charles, first Marquis Cornwallis,* ed. Charles Ross, 2nd ed., 3 vols, (London: John Murray, 1859), ii, 371.
[61]Nicholas Dunne-Lynch, 'Catholic 'Hessians'?', *History Ireland*, 27, 5 (Sept./Oct. 2019), pp. 24–26, at p. 24.
[62]Patrick Geoghegan, *The Act of Union, a study in high politics, 1798-1801,* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1999), viii-ix.
[63]*Correspondence of Cornwallis*, iii, 178.
[64]James Kelly, 'The failure of opposition' in Brown, Geoghegan and Kelly (eds), *The Irish Act of Union,* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2003), pp. 108-28, at p. 128.

Wars began in earnest in 1803. In particular the militia had demonstrated how Irish loyalism and identity could be brought within a British military context, and the militia would provide a gateway into the regular army after the Union.[65] Irish airs, and symbols such as the shamrock or harp, became more popular, whether in the military or in new institutions such as the chivalric Order of St. Patrick, which was introduced to reward loyal members of the nobility and foster an Irish aspect of British identity.

Recruitment to the regular army

When war was declared between the new French Republic and Britain on 1 February 1793, the British military found itself in need of manpower. Over the next two decades the British Army expanded from about 40,000 men in 1793 to about 250,000 men in 1813, while the Royal Navy reached a height of about 140,000 men during the wars.[66] Of this, roughly one third of the army (and navy) were Irish, although the exact proportions varied over time.[67] It has been estimated that at least 150,000 Irishmen enlisted in the British armed forces between 1793 and 1815, although exact numbers are difficult to determine.[68] Ireland's population during the late eighteenth century was growing from four to five million, and represented a third of the overall population of Britain and Ireland; by the time of the Peninsular War, Irish troops made up thirty per cent of the army, with variations over the branches of infantry, cavalry and artillery.[69] Sixteen new Irish regiments were established in the early 1790s, in addition to existing Irish regiments.[70] Rapid militarisation in Ireland reflected growing militarisation in Britain and across Europe. Irishmen enlisted in the regulars in large numbers, as they did in the militia and yeomanry. Why did they do this? Economic necessity certainly played a significant part.[71] As in Britain, the benefits of regular pay (in theory), food and accommodation, and also the prospect of plunder, attracted many.[72] They were

[65]McDonnell, "Zeal and Patriotism", p. 223. In 1811 a Militia Interchange Act allowed Irish Militia regiments to serve in Britain, and for British militia regiments to serve in Ireland.

[66]David Gates, 'The transformation of the army, 1783-1815' in David Chandler and Ian Beckett (eds), *The Oxford history of the British army,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp 132-60, at p. 132.

[67]Bartlett, 'Total War', pp. 256-7.

[68]D. A. Chart, 'The Irish levies during the Great French War', *English Historical Review*, 32, 128 (Oct. 1917), pp. 497-516, at p. 516.

[69]Deery, 'The contribution of the Irish soldier', p. 9.

[70]Murphy, *The Irish Brigades*, pp 106-63.

[71]Keith Jeffery, 'The Irish military tradition and the British Empire' in Keith Jeffery (ed.), *An Irish empire?: aspects of Ireland and the British Empire,* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), pp. 94-122, at p. 94; Coss, *The King's Shilling*, p. 85.

[72]Linch, *Britain and Wellington's Army*, p. 90.

mostly Catholics of low income, typically farm labourers or poor artisans.[73] Many, especially in Ulster, were weavers, and in 1797 concern was expressed that local industry was suffering due to the number of Ulster Protestants enlisting.[74] However, army pay was low compared with skilled labour, and a cash bounty (£15) had to be offered to encourage enlistment. Recruitment posters, some even in Irish, advertised higher pay and attractive conditions of service for the regular army, and even plunder in the form of 'Spanish gold and dollars' for service in the West Indies. [75]

Economic necessity was not the only factor, as young men, whether Irish, English or other, displayed a desire for adventure and freedom from domestic responsibilities.[76] The military spectacle of uniforms and pomp attracted the public's attention and prompted enlistment.[77] Recruiting officers appealed to men's sense of patriotism and loyalty to the king.[78] Folk songs such as 'Johnny Has Gone for a Soldier' or 'The Rocks of Bawn' described the adventure of being a soldier in the British army.[79] Adverts were also placed in the local press; in 1793 the *Connaught Journal* announced the raising of the 88th (Connaught Rangers) Regiment which sought 'young men of good character, who wish to serve our beloved monarch.'[80] Family tradition among the Ascendancy and Protestant middle classes played a part too, glorifying the deeds of their ancestors and incentives were not just applied to the rank-and-file. Officers were offered 'a speedy prospect of preferment' if they hurried recruitment.'[81] Family connections also facilitated the appointment of officers; in the 88th Regiment many were related to the

[73]Karsten, 'Irish Soldiers in the British army', p. 37.

[74]National Archives of Ireland (hereinafter NAI), State of the Country Papers (SOC) 1016/5, Bisset to Pelham, 2 July 1797.

[75]Denman, Terence, 'Hibernia officina militum: Irish recruitment to the British regular army, 1660-1815', *Irish Sword*, 20 (1996), pp. 148-66, at p. 165; Karsten, 'Irish soldiers in the British army', p. 38; 'British War Office army recruiting poster in the Irish language, 1806', Whyte's Irish Art & Collectables Auctioneers, 16 April 2011 https://www.whytes.ie/art/1806-1-november-napoloeonic-wars-an-extremely-rare-british-war-office-army-recruiting-poster-in-the-irish-language/134526/. Accessed 22 February 2022.

[76]Linch, *Britain and Wellington's Army*, pp. 92-93.

[77]John Morrissey, 'A lost heritage: the Connaught Rangers and multivocal Irishness' in Mark McCarthy (ed.), *Ireland's heritages: critical perspectives on memory and identity,* (Aldershot: Routledge, 2005), pp. 71-87, at p. 77.

[78]Alan Forrest, *Napoleon's men: the soldiers of the Revolution and Empire,* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2002), pp. 134-5.

[79]Karsten, 'Irish soldiers in the British army', p. 38.

[80]G. A. Hayes-McCoy, 'The raising of the Connaught Rangers, 1793', *Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society*, 21, 3/4 (1945), pp. 133-139, at p. 135

[81]NLI KP 1002/130, Circular from War Office to infantry colonels, 1 Nov 1793.

colonel, John Thomas de Burgh.[82] Like the recruits, the gentlemen would have also recognised the social prestige of a smart uniform, and military service as an officer offered an avenue to display one's loyalty, whilst also enjoying the trappings of military life.

Regiments did not exclusively recruit from their assigned districts; they sought men from wherever they were stationed, and this affected the national composition of each battalion of the regiment. The 89th Regiment began its recruitment in Ireland and finished it in Bristol.[83] Its second battalion spent a number of years rotating around England and so had a large proportion of English recruits; out of 504 men, 374 were Irish, twenty-seven were Scottish, eight were 'foreign' and the remaining 95 were English.[84] On the other hand, the 88th completed their numbers almost entirely from Connaught before departure, and therefore were predominantly Irish and Catholic.[85] While some regiments were mostly Catholic, this was not by design. The recruitment strategy employed generally allowed diversity of national identity within the British military. A united British identity was regarded as a great advantage by some commanders; Sir John Moore believed the best regiments were one third English, one third Irish and one third Scottish.[86] The large resource of manpower that Ireland offered meant that many English and Scottish regiments were also recruiting in Ireland.[87] In fact, more Irish served in these regiments than in the 'Irish' regiments, in particular as manpower demands increased during the Peninsular campaign.[88] English regiments also recruited Irishmen resident in Britain; the 57th (West Middlesex) Regiment included about 34% Irish in 1809, recruited from the London area.[89] Recruitment to the army was highest in the southwest and the interior of Ireland, and lower in Ulster, where many remained to work in the linen industry.[90]

[82]Hayes-McCoy, 'The raising of the Connaught Rangers', p. 135.
[83]Chart, 'The Irish levies during the Great French War', p. 499.
[84]Henry Harris, *The Royal Irish Fusiliers* (London: Cooper, 1972), p.43.
[85]Hayes-McCoy, 'The raising of the Connaught Rangers', p. 135.
[86]Denman, '*Hibernia officina militum*', p. 166.
[87]Bartlett, 'Defence, counter-insurgency and rebellion', p. 257.
[88]Deery, 'The contribution of the Irish soldier', pp. 4-5.
[89]Nicholas Dunne-Lynch, 'Humour and defiance: Irish troops and their humour in the Peninsular War', *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, 85, 341 (Spring, 2007), pp. 62-78, at p. 63.
[90]Karsten, 'Irish soldiers in the British army', p. 38.

Overseas service

Desertion rates were high in the regular army, as well as in the militia.[91] In 1794, 2,000 recruits deserted the Irish Establishment of 22,525.[92] Bounty jumping was common, where a recruit took the enlistment money and promptly deserted, only to enlist in another regiment and claim another bounty. Rewards were offered to catch bounty jumpers and regiments were sent out of Ireland as soon as they were completed, to avoid excessive desertion.[93] While enlisting was usually a voluntary decision, after 1798 many captured rebels were given the option of either standing trial or enlisting in a regiment that was destined for overseas service.[94] Many of the men who enlisted in the 88th in 1800 were former rebels, as were recruits to the 89th.[95] English regiments such as the 30th Foot also took in pardoned Irish rebels.[96] One officer claimed that his best men were six Irishmen who had been captured at Vinegar Hill in 1798.[97] Former rebels could rise high; Sergeant Major Adams of the 95th Rifles had been a rebel who later enlisted in the Irish Militia and from there the regulars.[98] One officer described former rebels who were drafted into the army, and by shedding their old clothes and old way of life, emerged as new men, part of the transformative effect of service in the British Army.[99] Despite the alleged large numbers of former rebels, as well as former militiamen who had volunteered for the line, the Irish contribution to the regular army was generally seen as positive, with no examples of major disaffection. The one exception was the 5th Irish Light Dragoons, where several men were found to be United Irishmen in 1798 and the regiment was subsequently disbanded for sixty years.[100] Overall, the Irish in the regular army remained loyal throughout 1798 and did not desert as Tone and the United Irishmen had hoped. About sixty Irishmen were court-martialled for treasonable conduct, but when compared with the thousands serving on the Establishment, and in the rest of the Army, this remains a very small proportion.[101]

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[91]Denman, '*Hibernia officina militum*', p. 163.

[92]Ilya Berkovich, *Motivation in War: the experience of common soldiers in old-regime Europe,* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 91.

[93]Cookson, *The British armed nation*, p. 155.

[94]Chart, 'The Irish levies during the Great French War', p. 509.

[95]Hayes-McCoy, 'The raising of the Connaught Rangers, 1793', p. 138; John Fortescue, *History of the British army*, 13 vols (London: Macmillan, 1915), iv, part two, 622.

[96]Fortescue, *History of the British army*, iv, part two, 622.

[97]Ibid., 701-2.

[98]Deery, 'The contribution of the Irish soldier', p. 13.

[99]Kennedy, "True Brittons and Real Irish", p. 41.

[100]Murphy, *Irish Brigades*, p. 140.

[101]Karsten, 'Irish soldiers in the British army', p. 42.

New Irish regiments were usually quickly trained and then sent for overseas garrison duty, allowing experienced regiments to undertake offensive operations.[102] Some senior regiments were still assigned garrison duties; the 18th Royal Irish Regiment took part in the Toulon and Egyptian expeditions, but spent the rest of the wars on garrison duties on the Channel Islands and in the West Indies.[103] The 8th Royal Irish Light Dragoons took part in the Flanders campaign before garrison duty in South Africa.[104] Garrison duty did not mean inactivity; the 1st battalion of the 83rd (County of Dublin) Regiment took part in suppression of the Maroon Rebellion of former enslaved people in Jamaica.[105] Ireland itself became an important dépôt; in addition to being an extremely important Royal Navy station, most of the supplies sent to Wellington in the Peninsula came from Cork.[106] The exports were not just for the military; Ireland was busy feeding a hungry Britain during the wars.[107]

Fourteen Irish regiments were sent to the Peninsula to serve under Wellington.[108] These Irish soldiers achieved a reputation for ability, if not necessarily discipline; Irish regiments had a high number of courts martial.[109] Wellington even threatened to dismount the 18th Irish Hussars and send them home after they looted Joseph Bonaparte's royal baggage train in Spain.[110] However, this indiscipline was countered by a reputation for Irish humour and hardiness.[111] The Irish were seen as good soldiers due to their tough peasant upbringing and potato-rich diet.[112] Humour as a means of enduring hardship whilst on campaign is a common theme for many armies, and not restricted to Irish troops, and this 'positive stereotype' was one that some Irish soldiers were happy to accept.[113] This is understandable, considering the mistrust or even vilification of Catholics that had been commonplace in Britain and Ireland during the eighteenth century. Despite discipline issues in some regiments, overall Irish regiments performed well in the field; the 88th Connaught Rangers were noted for their courage and tenacity, especially on the charge, and were often used for the difficult task of storming defences, while the 87th Prince of Wales's Own Irish was the

[102]Chart, 'The Irish levies during the Great French War', p. 503.
[103]Murphy, *Irish Brigades*, pp 110-1.
[104]Ibid., p. 147.
[105]Ibid., p. 166.
[106]Bartlett, 'Total War', p. 259.
[107]Knight, *The organization of victory*, p. 160.
[108]Bartlett, 'Defence, counter-insurgency and rebellion', p. 257.
[109]Fortescue, *History of the British army*, vii, 192-3; Charles Oman, *A history of the Peninsular* War, 7 vols, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930), vii, 149.
[110]Murphy, *Irish Brigades*, pp 164-5.
[111]Dunne-Lynch, 'Humour and defiance', p. 62, p. 76.
[112]Denman, '*Hibernia officina militum*', p. 166.
[113]Dunne-Lynch, 'Humour and defiance', pp 64-6.

first British regiment to capture a French regimental eagle standard.[114] At Waterloo the 27th Inniskilling endured a murderous cannon bombardment; Lieutenant John Kincaid of the 95th Rifles described how, 'the 27th regiment were lying literally dead, in square.'[115]

The Irish regiments were used like any other English, Welsh or Scottish regiment; battalions were sent wherever they were needed. The 1st battalion of the 27th fought in Flanders in the 1790s, performed garrison duties in the West Indies, and then served in the Egyptian and Waterloo campaigns, while the 2nd and 3rd battalions took part in the Peninsular campaign and the 1812 war in North America.[116] The 1st battalion of the 87th took part in the expedition to the Low Countries and then garrison duties in the West Indies, while the 2nd battalion saw garrison duty in Ireland and the Channel Islands, before it was sent to the Peninsula.[117] The contribution of the Ascendancy to the regular army was also significant.[118] Arthur Wellesley, the future Duke of Wellington, was the most famous of the Anglo-Irish officers that served during the French Revolutionary wars, but many of his most notable subordinates were also Anglo-Irish, including William Carr Beresford who was a general in both the British and Portuguese armies, Galbraith Lowry Cole, colonel of the 27th and commander of the 4th division, and Robert William 'Light Bob' O'Callaghan, commander of the 39th regiment.[119] Major-General Denis Pack, son of the Dean of Ossory (Kilkenny) served in numerous campaigns including Flanders, South America, the Peninsular War and Waterloo. The Irish regiments did not have a monopoly on fame and reputation; many English and Scottish regiments also gained, or built upon, reputations in the wars. While Henry Dundas believed the Scottish Highlands were an excellent recruiting ground, Scotland contributed less than what he believed, about 15.7% of the recruits and 25% of the officers.[120] Despite this the image of the Scottish Highlander would go

[114]Richard Holmes, *Redcoat: The British soldier in the age of horse and musket,* (London: HarperCollins, 2001), p. 59; Mike Chappell, *Wellington's Peninsula regiments (1): the Irish,* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2003), p. 33.
[115]John Kincaid, *Adventures with the Rifle Brigade*: *in the Peninsula, France and the Netherlands from 1809 to 1815,* (London, 1830), p. 342.
[116]Murphy, *Irish Brigades*, pp 130-1.
[117]Ibid, pp 176-7.
[118]Karsten, 'Irish soldiers in the British army', p. 35.
[119]C. T. Atkinson, 'The Irish regiments of the line in the British army', *Irish Sword*, 1, 1 (1949-53), pp. 20-3.
[120]Charles Esdaile, 'The French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, 1793-1815' in E. M. Spiers, J. A. Crang and M. J. Strickland (eds), *A military history of Scotland,* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), pp. 407-35, at pp. 409-10, 412-3.

on to become one of the iconic images of the British Army and by extension the British Empire.[121]

Irish identity in the British Army

The creation of an Irish identity within the British military was key to the integration of Irishmen in the armed forces. Visual manifestations of Irish identity included regimental colours and badges; older regiments bore numerous battle honours and newer regiments quickly gained honours of their own. Popular regimental songs like 'Garryowen' and 'St. Patrick's Day', and the wearing of shamrock on 17 March, also helped foster a sense of Irish identity within the British military.[122] While there were many Protestants and Dissenters serving in the ranks, and the officer corps was mostly Protestant, the majority of the rank-and-file were Catholic. This did not mean that their religion was their defining characteristic; Wellington dryly observed that any overt display of piety by Irish soldiers were usually reserved for eliciting wine from the Spanish and Portuguese civilians, as fellow Catholics.[123] Mass-going was not necessarily a common practice back in Ireland, and for many Irishmen, regular attendance may only have begun when they enlisted.[124]

When anti-Catholic feelings did occur, they appear to have been mostly restricted to certain Irish Protestant officers.[125] This is unsurprising, given the domestic oppression of Catholics by the Ascendancy. However, such views were now being countered by growing support for Catholic relief. The British Army also actively sought to avoid sectarian problems (such as by attempting to halt the spread of pro-Protestant Orange Order lodges in the regiments), recognising the threat to both regimental and army-wide cohesion.[126] Discrimination by British officers did still exist however; in 1810 Lt. Gen. Sir James Craig, Governor-General of Canada, blamed the widespread desertion and indiscipline of the 100th (County of Dublin) Foot at their posting in Upper Canada on the fact that they were badly officered and 'nearly to a man Papists'.[127] Despite the moves towards Catholic Relief, the officer corps remained almost exclusively Protestant. Even after the Union, Catholic officers could only hold their commissions in the regular army within Ireland and had to give them up if they left the country. As a result, many did not disclose their religion.[128] Others converted for advancement

[121]Kennedy, "True Brittons and Real Irish", pp. 38-39.
[122]Cookson, *The British armed nation*, p. 178.
[123]Holmes, *Redcoat*, p. 355.
[124]Kennedy, "True Brittons and Real Irish", pp 47-8.
[125]Ibid, p. 48.
[126]Linch, *Britain and Wellington's Army*, p. 146.
[127]TNA WO 1/644, ff 499-500, Craig to the Adjunct-General, Quebec 8 June 1810.
[128]Bartlett, "'A weapon of war untried'", pp. 76-7.

purposes. In 1817 Catholics were finally granted the right to hold commissions.[129] Discrimination would continue until 1829, when Catholic Emancipation was finally passed, but overall, the British military was willing to place practicality over prejudice, utilising the Irish Catholics in the war against France.

Irish soldiers made a significant contribution to the British war effort during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, representing roughly one third of the army. As the preceding sections demonstrate, they did this for a wide variety of reasons, ranging from economic necessity through to family tradition and a sense of patriotism. Whether this was a strictly Irish patriotism or a wider and more fluid 'British' patriotism, especially post-Union, it is difficult to say for certain; although it is clear that Irish service in the British military is not as much a paradox as first seems. While many in Ireland, Catholic or Protestant, sought a break from Britain and the establishment of a republic, there were also many Irish Catholics and Protestants who embraced the British link with Ireland, or at least tolerated British control of Ireland, and military service was an avenue open to them. Colley has highlighted the ways in which warfare and the 'nation-in-arms' had a profound effect on forging a British national identity.[130] However, Kennedy argues that Colley's focus on domestic troops like the militia, and domestic matters of mobilisation, neglects the 'attitudes and experiences within the armed forces', namely the experiences of those who enlisted in the regular army and served overseas.[131] The same point is made by Linch and McCormack.[132] Kennedy highlights the importance of the army, which 'can be viewed as a crucial arena in which national identities were formed and articulated.'[133] As a result the decision by Colley to omit Ireland from a study of the creation of a British national (and martial) identity seems less straightforward than first seems, and further considerations of these complexities will be of great use to researchers of this period. The military offered a space where multiple (military) identities could come together and serve together.[134] It did not necessarily impose a single 'British' identity, and a regimental form of Irishness developed within the army.[135] The regimental system itself offers a paradox; regimental traditions might have been localised but as has been seen the battalions took their recruits from wherever they could get them. As a result, the British Army was a complex and complicated formation during this period. As mentioned already Sir John Moore believed the best regiments were mixed ones,

[129]Kennedy, 'True Brittons and Real Irish', p. 42.
[130]Colley, Britons, pp. 289-325
[131]Kennedy, 'True Brittons and Real Irish'.
[132]Kevin Linch and Matthew McCormack, 'Wellington's Men: The British Soldier of the Napoleonic Wars', *History Compass*, 13, 6 (2015), pp. 288–296, at p. 292.
[133]Ibid.
[134]Kennedy, *Narratives of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars*, p. 4.
[135]Kennedy, 'True Brittons and Real Irish', p. 51.

whilst Rifleman Kincaid also approved of mixed corps formations.[136] The Royal Navy was similarly a multinational and multi-ethnic force.[137] The Irish contribution to the navy was significant, but reasons of space preclude an examination here.[138] The army offered opportunities many Irish would otherwise not have had access to, and both Catholic ranker and Anglo-Irish officer took advantage of these opportunities.[139] It also offered a relatively tolerant space for Catholics, at least usually more tolerant than at home.[140] An Irish recruit would have found much more in common with his fellow English, Scottish or Welsh working-class recruits than any major differences.[141] In the heat of battle, it was for their brothers-in-arms that the redcoats fought.[142]

Conclusions

As this brief survey has demonstrated Ireland was indeed 'a vital participant in the British "armed nation".'[143] The French Revolution had severely damaged the Franco-Irish military tradition, and the British government was there to take advantage of the situation by diverting the flow of would-be recruits into their own armed forces; army, navy, and numerous amateur defence formations.[144] Britain was determined to both secure a potentially unstable flank and to take full advantage of what Ireland offered. Fears of religious differences were set aside against the threat of a radical and secular French republic. In the wake of the Act of Union many more Irish soldiers were brought into an expanded army, in Irish regiments as well as the many more Irish recruits distributed right across the British Army.[145] Motivations for enlistment varied; some Irish recruits, in particular the Anglo-Irish officer class, would have seen themselves as loyal British patriots, others were former republican rebels forced into

[136]Denman, '*Hibernia officina militum*', p. 166; Kennedy, 'True Brittons and Real Irish', p. 54.
[137]Sara Caputo, 'Alien Seamen in the British Navy, British Law, and the British State, c.1793 - c.1815', *Historical Journal*, 62, 3 (2019), pp. 685-707.
[138]Walsh, 'Ireland and the Royal Navy in the Eighteenth Century', pp. 51-76.
[139]Deery, 'The contribution of the Irish soldier', p. 36.
[140]Kennedy, 'True Brittons and Real Irish', p. 51.
[141]Deery, 'The contribution of the Irish soldier', pp. 35-36.
[142]Coss, *The King's Shilling*, p. 238.
[143]Kennedy, *Narratives of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars*, p. 4.
[144]Franco-Irish military connections were not completely severed during this period. An Irish Legion was later formed by Napoleon Bonaparte, with former United Irishmen officers and a mix of nationalities in the rank-and-file, but this bears little resemblance to the royalist Irish Brigade that preceded it.
[145]Kennedy, 'True Brittons and Real Irish', p. 37; Deery, 'The contribution of the Irish soldier', pp. 4-5.

military service by their oppressor.[146] Most recruits probably fell somewhere in between these two contrasting positions, a reminder that Irish history is full of complexity and nuance, rather than stark binaries.

Loyalty was paramount; to serve in the armed forces demonstrated loyalty to the crown. However, within Ireland a less even approach was taken, favouring Protestant loyalism in the form of the yeomanry and Orange Order as an expedient for political and domestic stability. However, the Irish contribution to the British military did not result in the same strengthening of Union connections as had happened in Scotland.[147] Despite their contribution to victory, Irish Catholics did not reap the rewards after 1815. Emancipation would not come until 1829, although this was not unique to Ireland; the ruling elites across Europe were tightening their grip on power after the shock of the French Revolution.[148] Nevertheless Irish enlistment continued throughout the nineteenth century, despite famine, political agitation, and rebellion. More work is needed to unravel the complexities of how Irish identity (or indeed identities), were incorporated into the British military, and how these fit in with ideas of the British nation and/or Irish nation, and those who fought against British rule. This will complement growing work on Ireland's role in colonialism and the rise of the British Empire.[149] Continued research on the experiences of Irish soldiers in the British military will also prove fruitful, especially when taking into account wider society and topics including class, gender and race. The history of Irish soldiers in the British military is complicated and complex, much like the wider histories of the two islands.

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[146]While nationalism is a nineteenth-century phenomenon, the origins of Irish separatist republicanism can be found in the events of the 1790s.

[147]Cookson, *The British armed nation*, pp. 181-2; Kennedy, "True Brittons and Real Irish", pp. 38-39.

[148]Bartlett, 'Total War', p. 260-1.

[149]Kevin Kenny (ed.), *Ireland and the British Empire,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Nini Rogers*, Ireland, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: 1612-1865,* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Timothy McMahon, Michael de Nie and Paul Townend (eds.), *Ireland in an Imperial World: Citizenship, Opportunism, and Subversion,* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017); Loughlin Sweeny, *Irish Military Elites, Nation and Empire, 1870–1925,* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019); Daniel Sanjiv Roberts and Jonathan Jeffrey Wright (eds.), *Ireland's Imperial Connections, 1775–1947,* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019); Colin Barr, *Ireland's Empire: The Roman Catholic Church in the English-Speaking World, 1829–1914,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019); Caoimhe Nic Dháibhéid, Shahmima Akhtar, Dónal Hassett, Kevin Kenny, Laura McAtackney, Ian McBride. Timothy G. McMahon and Jane Ohlmeyer, 'Round table: Decolonising Irish history? Possibilities, challenges, practices', *Irish Historical Studies*, 45, 168 (2021), pp. 303–32.

It is hoped that this short paper, and the other works cited therein, will prompt further work on this important aspect of Irish and British history.