

# The Junior OTC: Playing at Soldiers or Nation in Arms?<sup>1</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

*This article explores the development of the Junior OTC in the years before the Great War. It argues that the Junior OTC was not the failure that it is sometimes portrayed to be and that it provided effective and integrated training for the boys who went on to be Junior Officers between 1914 and 1918.*

In 1908 the formation of the Officer Training Corps (OTC) marked a ‘complete and absolute change’ in the way the individual schools’ cadet corps were run.<sup>2</sup> It was set up with a Senior Division for the university corps and a Junior Division for schools. The OTC had come into being following the report of the Ward Committee which was set up to address the shortage of officers in the army.<sup>3</sup> From its formation in 1908, the Junior Division expanded from 85 contingents to 166 by the end of 1914 and, by the March 1915, it had provided 24,720 cadets for the army.<sup>4</sup> Despite this, its effectiveness in producing potential officers has been questioned. However there has been no detailed examination of whether the Junior OTC was effective in training potential officers before the war as opposed to merely being a group of schoolboys playing at soldiers. In general, analysis of the Haldane reforms has leaned towards the latter view. It will be argued that the Junior OTC produced men that the army was able to put in positions of leadership as Kitchener rapidly expanded it in 1914 and 1915 and that this was possible because the reforms which introduced the OTC

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<sup>2</sup> Captain Alan R. Haig-Brown, *The O.T.C. and The Great War*, (London: Country Life, 1915) p.15.

<sup>3</sup> *Interim Report of the War Office Committee on the Provision of Officers (a) For Service with the Regular Army in War and (b) for the Auxiliary Forces (Hereinafter Ward Committee)*, Cd. 3204, (London: HMSO, 1907).

<sup>4</sup> Based on the analysis of Haig-Brown, *The O.T.C. and The Great War*, pp. 97-106.

created a body which integrated the training of cadets into that of the army as a whole. In the early period of the war the army was able to draw on a pool of young men who already had some of the basic knowledge required and could speedily be placed in units when there was little infrastructure to support its growth. This will be done by examining the reasons for the OTC's formation, how it worked, and conclude with a case study of Uppingham School to illustrate how an OTC contingent contributed to the development of the army between August 1914 and March 1915.

Uppingham School in 1914 was a middle ranking public school which had rapidly expanded in the Victorian era under Edward Thring. Public schools drew their pupils from different groups of society and those at Uppingham were mainly the sons of businessmen and professionals as opposed to, for example, Eton, which drew its pupils mainly from the aristocracy and plutocrats, or Haileybury, where they were often the sons of army officers. It was not one of the ten schools from which the army primarily drew its officers; these were Charterhouse, Cheltenham, Clifton, Eton, Haileybury, Harrow, Marlborough, Rugby, Wellington College and Winchester. At Uppingham the OTC was considered to be less important than games.<sup>5</sup> Membership of it was not compulsory and many of the top athletes did not enrol, preferring to spend the time training.<sup>6</sup> Alongside games and the OTC, music played a central part in the school's life. The building of a combined gymnasium and concert hall, opened in 1905, was as much a memorial to those who had lost their life in the Boer War as it was a celebration of the cultural activity of the school.<sup>7</sup> The OTC's predecessor, the Rifle Corps, was formed in 1889 and by the end of its first term had enrolled 106 members, about a third of the school. It was a relatively amateur organisation until the appointment of C. H. Jones in 1898 as the commanding officer and the master in charge of the Army class. Malcolm Tozer describes Jones as having been a bad teacher, a poor housemaster but 'an outstanding corps commander'.<sup>8</sup> Under his command the corps was expanded and from 1899 would participate in the Public Schools Camp at Aldershot.<sup>9</sup> Jones was the epitome of the part-time soldier and would serve as an officer in the Boer War with the Volunteers and with the Territorial Force in the First World War. He was one of the seven school corps

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<sup>5</sup> Malcolm Tozer, "Physical Education at Thring's Uppingham.", (MEd diss., University of Leicester 1974), p.228.

<sup>6</sup> Bryan Matthews, *By God's Grace: A history of Uppingham School*, (London: Whitehall Press 1984), p.246.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.124-6 and *Uppingham School Magazine (hereinafter USM)*, December 1903, pp.286-9.

<sup>8</sup> Tozer, "Physical Education", p.228.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p.229.

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Commanding Officers who gave evidence to the Ward Committee and appears to have been a leading figure in the formation of the OTC.<sup>10</sup>

In recent years, the publication of *The Edwardian Army* by Timothy Bowman and Mark Connelly and *From Boer War to Great War* by Spencer Jones has increased understanding of the development of the British Army between 1902 and 1914.<sup>11</sup> Despite this, relatively little has been written about the development of the OTC during this period. To date, very limited work has been done to examine the evidence available at a national level and at individual schools such as Uppingham to gain a better understanding.<sup>12</sup> Correlli Barnett and Gary Sheffield have both written about why the ethos of the public schools made their old boys attractive to the army as potential officers.<sup>13</sup> These writers focus on the patriotic values impressed upon the boys by their education and observe that it was a system which was designed to produce gentlemen. At the time it was a widely held view that to be an officer and an effective leader of men one had to be a gentleman. However, while these studies touch on the attractiveness of the public school boy to the army they do not consider in detail the value and nature of the OTC's contribution.

There is only one contemporary account of the pre-First World War OTC written by Alan R. Haig-Brown, which was published in 1915; he has no doubt about the importance of the Junior OTC.<sup>14</sup> The book's value lies in its description of the activities of the OTC including the training provided, its origins and the way it was run. It also gives statistics on the deployment of OTC cadets in the early stages of the First World War. However, the book is a celebration of the OTC rather than an objective analysis of it. The academic literature about the Junior OTC in the period from 1908 to 1914 is also relatively limited. Spencer Jones's book concentrates on

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<sup>10</sup> *Interim Report of the War Office Committee on the Provision of Officers (a) For Service with the Regular Army in War and (b) for the Auxillary Forces Minutes of Evidence (Hereinafter Ward Committee Evidence)*, Cd. 3205, (London: HMSO, 1907), pp.3-4.

<sup>11</sup> Timothy Bowman and Mark Connelly, *The Edwardian Army: Recruiting, Training, and Deploying the British Army, 1902-1914*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) and Spencer Jones, *From Boer War to Great War: Tactical Reform of the British Army 1902-1914* (Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press 2012).

<sup>12</sup> For example, Bowman and Connelly in their analysis draw on papers in the University of London Special Collections.

<sup>13</sup> Correlli Barnett, *The Collapse of British Power*, (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1984[1972]). pp.24-5 and Gary Sheffield, *Leadership in the Trenches, Officer-Man Relations, Morale and Discipline in the British Army in the era of the First World War*, (London: Macmillan, 2000) pp.38-39.

<sup>14</sup> Haig-Brown, *The O.T.C. and The Great War*.

the development of British Army tactics and does not consider training in the OTC during this period. Bowman and Connelly do devote six pages to both the Senior and Junior OTC, judging it to be a failure in providing recruits to auxiliary units.<sup>15</sup> A more comprehensive analysis of the development of both branches of the OTC is provided by Ian Worthington but this focuses on the relationship between the army and public schools in general rather than analysing in detail whether the Junior OTC can be considered a success.<sup>16</sup> At a higher level, Edward Spiers provides what is regarded by many as the most valuable account of Haldane's army reforms and explains how the OTC fitted into them.<sup>17</sup>

### **Formation of the OTC**

The formation of the OTC was a response to the problem of a shortage of officers which the Ward Committee identified as being 4,419 in the Regular Army and 3,914 in the Auxiliaries.<sup>18</sup> The subsequent creation of the OTC formed part of Haldane's vision of 'a nation in arms'. The term 'a nation in arms' lacks precision and varies in meaning from nation to nation. For example, in 1793 the French idea of 'a nation in arms' was one of mass conscription, the *levee en masse*.<sup>19</sup> In Britain, where in the years before the outbreak of the First World War the idea of conscription was politically unacceptable, 'a nation in arms', in Haldane's eyes, meant something completely different. To him, it was welding together the army and nation with the regulars backed up by a second line (the Special Reserve) and a broader base below that to provide expansion and support. Part of this broader volunteer base to provide expansion and support in times of war would be provided by the OTC.<sup>20</sup> As Simon Higgins has argued, Haldane needs to be seen not as an innovator but as someone whose reforms were shaped by the ideas of others 'which he actively

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<sup>15</sup> Bowman and Connelly, *The Edwardian Army*, p.144.

<sup>16</sup> Ian Worthington, "Antecedent Education and Officer Recruitment: An Analysis of the Public School-Army Nexus, 1849-1908", (PhD diss, University of Lancaster, 1982).

<sup>17</sup> Edward M. Spiers, *Haldane: An Army Reformer*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1980).

<sup>18</sup> *Ward Committee*, p.5.

<sup>19</sup> Ian Beckett, "The Nation in Arms, 1914-18," in Ian F.W. Beckett and Keith Simpson (Ed), *A Nation in Arms: A Social Study of the British Army in the First World War*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), p.2.

<sup>20</sup> Edward M Spiers, "The Regular Army in 1914," in Beckett and Simpson, *A Nation in Arms*, p.38.

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solicited.<sup>21</sup> Haldane's achievement was to integrate the public school volunteer corps which preceded the Junior OTC into a more efficient, centrally co-ordinated body as part of a nation in arms.

The genesis of the formation of the OTC was part of the national response to the Black Week of the Boer War between 10 and 17 December 1899. This had led the British government to boost its efforts to win the war and as part of it had called for volunteers.<sup>22</sup> The call for volunteers had been strong and had given the impetus for a wider national response. At Uppingham this response had been almost immediate. In February 1900 the Headmaster introduced a compulsory shooting test and ruled that no boy would be allowed to participate in inter-house competition or be eligible for a school prize until he had passed.<sup>23</sup> Matthews claims in his history of the school that Uppingham was one of the first schools to do this.<sup>24</sup> The committee of the Headmasters' Conference (HMC), made up of the heads of public schools, had been equally prompt in its response when, also in February 1900, it had agreed that boys over 15 should be enrolled for basic military training.<sup>25</sup>

This was at the initiative of Dr Edward Warre, Headmaster of Eton, who followed this up with proposals for a voluntary scheme where public schools would become a training and recruiting ground for army officers.<sup>26</sup> The scheme met with resistance from the government but, as the army addressed the problem of how to build up the supply of army reserve officers, a committee was set up in 1906 to consider the proposal. Chaired by Sir Edward Ward, it included a representative from the HMC, the Reverend A. David, Headmaster of Clifton.<sup>27</sup> The committee's report commented on how Russia, Germany, France and Japan addressed the problem of getting enough officers for the reserve. It identified that officers in the reserves received a commission after a year's compulsory service and successfully passing an examination. The report recognised that, in the absence of conscription and a requirement for compulsory service in Britain, this system would not work and so

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<sup>21</sup> Simon Giles Higgins, "How was Richard Haldane able to reform the British Army? An Historical Assessment using a Contemporary Change Management Model", (MPhil diss., University of Birmingham, 2010), p.76.

<sup>22</sup> Jones, *From Boer War to Great War*, pp.28-9.

<sup>23</sup> Malcolm Tozer, "Manliness: The Evolution of a Victorian Ideal", (PhD diss., University of Leicester 1978), p.408; Don Farr, *None That Go Return: Leighton, Brittain and Friends and the Lost Generation 1914-18*, (Solihull: Helion, 2010), p.43.

<sup>24</sup> Matthews, *By God's Grace*, p.244.

<sup>25</sup> Worthington, "Antecedent Education", p.242

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p.243.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p.256.

proposed a variation on this scheme.<sup>28</sup> The scheme which emerged proposed an important role for universities and public schools in developing potential officers as suggested by Warre and Lord Lovat.<sup>29</sup> By February 1907 a sufficient level of agreement had been reached with the HMC for Haldane to present it to Parliament.<sup>30</sup> Those seeking commissions in the reserves and territorial forces would be required to undergo an initial period of training and, to be part of what would become the Special Reserves, it was proposed that candidates would be attached to a unit for a year with periodic training after that.<sup>31</sup> Part of this year-long attachment could be completed at university and/or public school through membership of their cadets and volunteer corps.<sup>32</sup>

To demonstrate suitability for a commission, the Ward Committee proposed the corps would provide certificates (Certificate A for schools and Certificate B for universities) after exams had been passed which 'would be so worded as to show the holder was generally, and apart from his military qualifications, a person in all respects fitted to hold His Majesty's Commission'.<sup>33</sup> In other words, not only did the cadet have the basic military skills but he could be considered a gentleman, an essential quality for anyone who aspired to be an officer. Haldane's aspiration was to provide officers for the Special Reserve of Officers and the Territorial Force.<sup>34</sup> Possession of a Certificate A would give a cadet an exemption from four of the twelve months he needed to serve with a regular unit to gain a commission in the Special Reserves while attaining a Certificate B would provide a further four month's exemption.<sup>35</sup> It would make membership of the Special Reserves more attractive to young men also trying to build careers.

Haldane recognised that there was an element of uncertainty in this as he set out to the House of Commons in February 1907 what it was hoped the OTC would produce:

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<sup>28</sup> *Ward Committee*, pp.5-6.

<sup>29</sup> Worthington, "Antecedent Education", p.257. Lord Lovat was an aristocrat, landowner and former soldier who had raised, served in and commanded the Lovat Scouts during the Boer War. Following the war he had suggested a similar scheme to that of Warre for university undergraduates.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p.259.

<sup>31</sup> *Ward Committee*, p.6.

<sup>32</sup> Worthington, "Antecedent Education", pp.261-2

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p262.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p266.

<sup>35</sup> Richard Haldane, Speech to the House of Commons, 25 February 1907, *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*. Vol. 169, col. 1323.

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‘We hope to get some 12,500 boys from the cadet corps to work with, and from the Universities we should be able to get 2,000 or 3,000. From these we might hope to get, in course of time, if the scheme were working at full strength, over 800 officers a year for the Special Reserve. Here again I wish to guard myself. We are setting this machinery going, but I do not wish to be taken at all as confidently predicting the success of the scheme. It is an experiment, but it is only by experiment that it is possible to make any progress.’<sup>36</sup>

He argued that the Japanese experience in the Russo-Japanese War had demonstrated it was possible to produce effective officers from the reserves even with the proposed relatively short period of training. The key, he claimed, was the Japanese had fed the officers in one by one and not as units. The Japanese experience, he asserted, was that they had been able to use men who trained for six months which was adequate when it was supplemented by further training during the campaign.<sup>37</sup>

For the first time there would be a structured approach to developing corps cadets so that they could provide a supply of officers in the event of war. This was something which had been lacking during the Boer War. For the scheme to work there needed to be an integrated approach to training. In the past boys who were members of a university corps often found that they had to repeat training they had undergone in a school corps. The detailed regulations were designed to reflect the army’s approach to training while integrating the training already provided in the corps.

### **Operation of the OTC**

The initial regulations issued in July 1908 were provisional to cover the transitional period while the cadets in the OTC’s predecessor bodies went through ‘the required training and obtained certificates’.<sup>38</sup> Revised sets of regulations followed in October 1909 and April 1912, by which time the transition to the OTC had been completed.<sup>39</sup> A key consideration in all Haldane’s reforms was that he wished to limit army expenditure to £28 million per annum. His idea of ‘a nation in arms’ was important in

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<sup>36</sup> Richard Haldane, Speech to the House of Commons, 4 March 1908, Parliamentary Debates, Commons. Vol. 185, col. 718.

<sup>37</sup> Richard Haldane, Speech to the House of Commons, 12 March 1908, Parliamentary Debates, Commons. Vol. 185, col. 1862.

<sup>38</sup> The National Archive (TNA), WO 92/9034. See 13 of the final regulations.

<sup>39</sup> J. D. Sainsbury, *Hertfordshire’s Army Cadets*, (Welwyn: Hart Books, 2010), p.246.

controlling expenditure as it aimed to harness volunteerism to make enough officers available in the event of war. The OTC was one way of providing the means to achieve this in an efficient and effective manner by drawing from as wide a pool of boys as possible.<sup>40</sup>

It is important to note that not only public schools had OTC contingents. For the purposes of this paper a wide definition of a public school has been adopted as one which was a member of the Headmasters' Conference (HMC) in 1914. The HMC was established in 1869, at the instigation of Edward Thring, the then Headmaster at Uppingham. It represented the top rank of fee-paying schools open to the general public, that were not restricted by religious denomination or geographical area. The majority of these public schools were boarding schools. Membership of the HMC and acceptance as a "public school" by the other members was a mark of recognition and status. At the outbreak of the war, there were 160 OTC units of which 96 were at schools that were members of the HMC.<sup>41</sup> The schools with OTC units outside the HMC were generally lesser private schools and grammar schools who drew their pupils from the middle and less wealthy classes but embraced the same values as the more prestigious and selective public schools. The army was prepared to be more flexible than it is sometimes given credit for about the pool of boys it was willing to draw potential officers from. In other words, the army gave itself room for manoeuvre when it was looking for schools who would produce boys who were gentlemen and therefore suitable to be an officer.

The OTC was given a formal role of preparing its members for a commission through the combination of the individual school and university corps into a single body.<sup>42</sup> This was reinforced by placing it under the direct control of the War Office with standardised operating procedures set out in the regulations.<sup>43</sup> The reputation of the predecessor corps had been damaged by a lack of 'systemisation and continuity' in the training provided by them. The syllabi for Certificate A and Certificate B integrated the training provided by corps into the army's training scheme and justified the four-month exemptions from service with a regular unit for successful candidates.

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<sup>40</sup> Spiers, *Haldane*, pp.191-2.

<sup>41</sup> Based on the analysis of Haig-Brown, *The O.T.C. and The Great War*, p.7, pp.97-106 and Anthony Seldon and David Walsh, *Public Schools and The Great War: The Generation Lost* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword Military, 2013), pp.255-60.

<sup>42</sup> Worthington, "Antecedent Education", p.272.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.266-7.



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To ensure the OTCs met army requirements, the War Office laid out in the *Regulations for the Officers Training Corps* the details of how each contingent was to be run, including the training to be given. The object of OTC training was set out in them as:

[...] to bring the largest possible number of cadets up to the standard of proficiency indicated by the syllabus laid down for the examinations for Certificates A and B.<sup>44</sup>

The standard for Certificate A was that a section commander was expected to have an idea of how the section fitted in with the requirements of a company commander as well as understanding of how the battalion worked and the role of the other arms.<sup>45</sup> By 1912 the examination consisted of two written papers, the first one being common to all arms, the second was arm specific, while the last test was an oral examination. The first written paper was based on the *Field Service Regulations, 1909* and for the infantry (as in Uppingham's case) the second paper was based on *Infantry Training, 1911*. The oral test covered drill, the tactical handling of a section, musketry regulations where the cadet was also required to be familiar with his rifle 'as a weapon', military law and tactics.<sup>46</sup>

The Ward Committee hoped that the introduction of the OTC would standardise and develop the way in which the public school and university corps developed officers for the army. Part of this would be achieved by making the training 'progressive and interesting'. The introduction of Certificate A and B would mean that any Junior OTC cadet who had attained the former qualification would not need to go over old ground before moving on to Certificate B.<sup>47</sup> The transition from a volunteer corps to the OTC would, in the words of a report on the Cadet Corps in the *Uppingham School Magazine*, 'lead to a recognition of the school's work in military training'. The effect would be that those who served in the cadets would be registered as 'fit to be called upon in time of dire emergency.' The name 'Officers' Training Corps' made it quite clear what it was intended the cadets would ultimately be fit for.<sup>48</sup> This was a significant change from the old approach as the training would now be designed to prepare the cadets to be suitable to be officers and not just for military service.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> *Regulations for the Officers Training Corps*, (London: HMSO, 1912), p.17.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p.41.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.41-7.

<sup>47</sup> Worthington, "Antecedent Education", pp.273-4.

<sup>48</sup> *USM*, April 1908, 52.

<sup>49</sup> Worthington, "Antecedent Education", p.276.

On top of an integrated approach to training the rules set out to provide incentives for each contingent to provide training to the required standard. This funding for each OTC unit was governed by the number of 'efficient' cadets it had: for each efficient cadet an annual payment of £1 would be made. In addition, there would be a grant of £10 for every cadet who passed Certificate A. However, to receive the annual payment the whole unit had to be passed efficient at its annual inspection and at least 50 percent of the efficient cadets had to have attended camp of at least eight days in the year being claimed for.<sup>50</sup> To be deemed efficient individual cadets had to be over fifteen years old, physically fit, to have attended at least 30 parades during the year (in their first year they were required to attend 40) which were of no less than 45 minutes long, undergone musketry training and attended the annual inspection.<sup>51</sup> However, these grants would not cover the whole cost of running an OTC unit and parents were usually required to pay an entrance fee. In addition there was a fee for each camp attended as well as a subscription each term.<sup>52</sup> Nonetheless, the system for funding the OTC was designed to encourage its units to produce officer material.

This was reinforced by the system of annual inspections for the OTC contingents nearly always carried out by a staff officer. The inspection was wide ranging and not only covered drill and manoeuvre but also involved scrutiny of the unit's records and a tour of its armoury and ranges.<sup>53</sup> An unsatisfactory inspection could lead to the loss of the unit's grant. Among the records which needed to be completed was *Army Book 214* which set out the attendance record for each cadet together with his performance in exams such as musketry and Certificate A. All this would be included in the discharge certificate (*Army Form B 2075*) given to the cadet when he left the unit and would provide a record of his military service to date.<sup>54</sup> R. C. Sherriff ultimately accepted his failure to be given a commission in 1914 on the grounds that his school did not have an OTC; describing it as a 'rough method of selection' but as the only way given the 'desperate emergency' and observing that it had worked.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> *Regulations for the Officers Training Corps*, p.29.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*, pp.19-20.

<sup>52</sup> Haig-Brown, *The O.T.C. and The Great War*, p.33.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p.64.

<sup>54</sup> Haig-Brown, *The O.T.C. and The Great War*, p.35 and *Regulations for the Officers Training Corps*, p.35.

<sup>55</sup> Sherriff in George Andrew Panichas, *Promise of Greatness: the war of 1914-18*, (London: Cassell, 1968), p.137; also quoted in John Lewis-Stempel, *Six Weeks: The Short and Gallant Life of the British Officer in the First World War*, (London: Orion Books Ltd 2010 [2011]), pp.37-8.

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However, the existence of the B 2075 form suggests that the decision to give priority to former members of the OTC was not quite as rough an approach as Sherriff believed it to be. A copy of the form was also sent to the War Office so the army already had a good idea about the training undertaken by the cadets.<sup>56</sup>

The training was time consuming and every week involved two parades for the whole contingent which, as we have seen, had to be at least 45 minutes long. In addition, those undertaking Certificate A would need to attend extra lectures and parades. All cadets would also need to participate in musketry exercises with 20 per cent of the cadets receiving additional coaching; the best of this shooting elite would also be prepared for the annual public schools shooting competition at Bisley. Away from the weekly activity every school would usually participate in three Field Days every year, with three or four schools participating in each one.<sup>57</sup> Haig-Brown claimed this was an improvement on the pre-OTC approach where Field Days could involve 40 to 50 schools participating with chaos ensuing.<sup>58</sup> But in the case of Uppingham it would appear that this was not the case and its pre-OTC Field Days involved working with a small number of schools. At the Field Day held on 6 November 1906 there were four participants; Uppingham, Rugby, Repton and Oundle.<sup>59</sup> Five years later the school's OTC Field Day also included Rugby, Repton, and Oundle with the addition of Trent to the exercise.<sup>60</sup> The significant change was in the way the days were run as a result of the closer War Office involvement. All arrangements for a Field Day had to be agreed with the General Staff of the command where the exercise was taking place.<sup>61</sup> In contrast to the previous arrangement, where the exercises were often designed by officers from the regiment to which the corps was attached, the War Office would now be directly involved in setting the scheme. At the November 1911 Field Day the scheme had been set by Major A Percival of the General Staff who had also been one of the five umpires.<sup>62</sup> Not only was the overall quality of Field Days greatly improved but also the quality of those who participated in them. Reporting on the Field Day of 27 May 1913 the *Uppingham School Magazine* noted that no longer did Field Days 'resemble the old game of Prisoner's Base.' Umpires were hardly necessary, it claimed, as the Corps

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<sup>56</sup> *Regulations for the Officers Training Corps*, p.35.

<sup>57</sup> Haig-Brown, *The O.T.C. and The Great War*, pp.63-64.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p.9

<sup>59</sup> *USM*, November 1906, p.240.

<sup>60</sup> *USM*, November 1911, p.201.

<sup>61</sup> *Regulations for the Officers Training Corps*, pp.17-8.

<sup>62</sup> *USM*, November 1911, pp.171-3.

knew how to manoeuvre without rulings. The report had to content itself with criticising details of the way some responsibilities were carried out.<sup>63</sup>

In the view of Haig-Brown it was the annual camp which was the most important part of the OTC's year.<sup>64</sup> Camps for the junior contingents lasted at least eight days and were under the command of a regular army officer with, where possible, other regular officers provided to command battalions.<sup>65</sup> It was a substantial exercise with three training centres in England attended at each location by 40 to 50 contingents. In total, the English camps were attended by about 400 officers (from the various contingents) and 8,000 to 9,000 cadets. The Scottish camp was attended by a further 1,000 cadets but, not surprisingly the camp in Ireland was a relatively insignificant event.<sup>66</sup> As with other aspects of the OTC the activities of the camp were co-ordinated by the War Office with its Staff designing the training and the regular officer commanding the camp overseeing it.<sup>67</sup> Training consisted of a variety of activities including field work, lectures on tactics to the NCOs and night operations on at least one occasion. The carefully planned nature of the training is reflected in the way it developed with cadets working together initially at a company level and progressing ultimately to exercises at a brigade level.<sup>68</sup> The commitment of the army to the OTC camp can be seen in the report on the Uppingham OTC's participation in the 1913 camp. It recounted that:

Our battalion commander was Major G C Shakerly, DSO, of the King's Royal Rifles, with Major Shea (CO Uppingham), who was also organising officer of the battalion, as second in command, and Captain H W M Watson, also of the King's Royal Rifles, as adjutant. All these officers took the greatest trouble to make the work of the battalion and companies as interesting and instructive as possible.

The first few days were for the most part taken up with battalion and company drill, and short tactical exercises, varied by an excellent outpost scheme on Thursday night...The remaining days were all occupied with field operations under the direction of the Brigadier, Colonel F A Fortescue C.B. and the

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<sup>63</sup> *USM*, July 1913, pp.171-3.

<sup>64</sup> Haig-Brown, *The O.T.C. and The Great War*, p.38.

<sup>65</sup> *Regulations for the Officers Training Corps*, p.18.

<sup>66</sup> Haig-Brown, *The O.T.C. and The Great War*, p.39.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, *The O.T.C. and The Great War*, p.43.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, *The O.T.C. and The Great War*, p.41.

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varied nature of the work in which the contingents were engaged spoke much of this officer's ingenuity.<sup>69</sup>

With each cadet being given hourly duties, including night guard duty, the aims of the camp went beyond providing valuable training to a wider one of introducing them to what army life was like. It appears that all activities were taken seriously and that the annual camp, as with other OTC activities, was much more than playing at soldiers.

General Langlois, of the French Army, was impressed with the OTC after observing British Army manoeuvres in August 1909, comparing the OTC favourably with its French equivalent. He stated that in addition to being trained in drill movements and the handling of arms the training also included field work which was taken seriously and done well.<sup>70</sup> This was not simply the politeness of a foreign dignitary, Langlois was critical of the manoeuvres in other respects. In his report, he also noted that the army had recognised the need to recruit officers from a wider social base. He recounted the views of an unnamed officer who remarked that those drawn from the 'upper and wealthier classes' had been shown by the Boer War to need to 'give more time and attention to their work'. Consequently, some of these officers had resigned rather than accept change. It also appeared to have discouraged others from applying for a commission and, as a result, it was necessary to 'open the gates wider' to candidates from the middle and un-moneyed classes (that is, from the wider group of public schools such as Uppingham and others schools such as grammars with OTCs).<sup>71</sup> By 1910 the army itself had recognised that the traditional sources of officer recruits were starting to dry up. The existence of the OTCs, at public schools and at other schools espousing the public school ethos, would, it was believed, provide a supply of officers without disturbing the social status quo; making boys from schools such as Uppingham more attractive to the army.<sup>72</sup>

Spiers is critical of the OTC, described its development as being tardy and cites the figures given to the Lords by Haldane in March 1912. Haldane had conceded that the OTC had never provided officers in sufficient quantity to the Special Reserve. Of the nearly 18,000 who had left the OTC (schools and university) only 283 had passed Certificate A and Certificate B and taken commissions in the Special Reserve with a further 500 having passed their Certificate A and Certificate B examinations but not

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<sup>69</sup> *USM*, October 1913, pp.279-80.

<sup>70</sup> General H. Langlois, *The British Army in a European War*, (London: Hugh Rees Ltd, 1910), p.14.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p.59.

<sup>72</sup> Sheffield, "Officer-man Relations", pp.97-8.

taken a commission.<sup>73</sup> Haldane had admitted that as a piece of machinery for recruiting officers the OTC was working slowly. However, he maintained that it was a vast improvement on what had gone before in the Boer War where he implied the lack of machinery had led to a haphazard approach to recruiting the extra officers required for the war. Most regular armies had sufficient officers for peacetime but war would require many more officers. Mobilisation for war would be a 'ragged process' but the existence of the OTC as a source of officers would make this a great deal easier. He pointed out that while the figures for the Special Reserve were relatively small the OTC had not been in existence for long and that year on year the number of Special Reserve officers being provided by the OTC was increasing substantially. Further, he maintained that he had never expected the OTC to be effective before 1914.<sup>74</sup> There is some support for this statement; when war broke out in August 1914 the number of officers in the Special Reserve was 2,557.<sup>75</sup>

The contribution of the OTC also needs to be assessed by looking at its effectiveness in meeting the need for extra officers when war came in August 1914. On a national level, Haig-Brown provides an analysis of the contribution of the OTC to March 1915. In Appendix A of *The O.T.C. and The Great War* he analyses the contribution of each contingent.<sup>76</sup> He concedes that the figures are approximate but by comparing his figures with the figures for Uppingham (drawn from its archives) and those published for Wellington College in Somerset they appear to be reliable.<sup>77</sup> It is likely they are understated as six school contingents were not able to provide any information and other schools have provided incomplete information.<sup>78</sup> The table below summarises the total contribution of the Junior OTC to March 1915 based on Haig-Brown's figures.

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<sup>73</sup> Spiers, *Haldane*, pp.140-1.

<sup>74</sup> Viscount Haldane, Speech to the House of Lords, 13 May 1912, Parliamentary Debates, Lords. Vol. 11, cols. 984-6.

<sup>75</sup> *Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire During the Great War*, (London: HMSO 1922), p.234.

<sup>76</sup> Haig-Brown, *The O.T.C. and The Great War*, pp.97-106.

<sup>77</sup> Asher Pirt, *WSS Old Boys and the Great War 1914-1918*, (Watchet: Self Published 2013).

<sup>78</sup> Haig-Brown, *The O.T.C. and The Great War*, p.97. These included Christ's Hospital, Merchant Taylors' and Sherborne who were all significant schools.

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Officers Gazetted From Formation to August 1914	Officers Gazetted From 4 <sup>th</sup> August to March 1915	Serving in the Ranks for the War	Total
4,094	11,602	9,024	24,720

*Table 1: Junior OTC Contribution to Armed Forces to March 1915<sup>79</sup>*

The table shows that by March 1915 24,720 boys who had served in the Junior OTC were serving of which 15,696 (63.5%) were officers. It does not demonstrate the quality of the recruits but it does show that it provided a significant initial source of officers as Kitchener expanded the army.

This brief description of the OTC demonstrates how it was integrated into the needs of the army with the required amount of training clearly stated.<sup>80</sup> In addition, the syllabus for Certificate A was rigorous and passing it was not guaranteed. As already noted, in 1912 Haldane had reported that only 500 cadets had passed their Certificate A and Certificate B examinations (but not taken a commission) so it is possible to argue that the training had failed to produce adequately trained boys. As the figures from Haig-Brown have shown, OTC training brought former cadets up to a sufficient standard that 63.5% would receive commissions by March 1915. There do not appear to be any central statistics for the number of cadets who had passed their Certificate A or gained commissions in the Special Reserve or Territorials by the outbreak of war in 1914 so conclusions cannot be easily drawn about the quality of officers provided by the Junior OTC.

### **The OTC at Uppingham School**

By examining the Uppingham archives a fuller picture for one OTC unit can be gained from the documents available; similar examinations of the archives of other schools will make it possible to make a better assessment of whether the Junior OTC can be considered to have been a success. It is worth looking now at the performance of Uppingham's OTC in the years leading up to the war and its contribution during the First World War itself.

In the first years of the Junior OTC many of the contingents suffered from a lack of adequate training. The War Office addressed this problem by arranging for public school corps officers, who were teachers and often deficient in military knowledge,

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<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.101-6.

<sup>80</sup> *Regulations for the Officers Training Corps*, p.17.

to be attached to regular army battalions for training during the school holidays. In addition, regular army officers were attached to the contingents to assist with military training.<sup>81</sup> Uppingham with Jones in command does not appear to have suffered from these problems with training. On the other hand, it was not one of the leading providers of army officers. For example, Simon Robbins in his analysis of the leadership of the British Expeditionary Force on the Western Front shows that, in his sample of 700, when compared to schools such as Eton (96 officers), Wellington (44) and Harrow (38), together making up 25.5% of the sample, Uppingham, which provided seven officers, 1% of the sample, made a relatively small contribution.<sup>82</sup>

The school archives contain a number of useful sources. These include the school magazines containing accounts of OTC activity and commissions gained, the roll of honour produced in 1919 listing all those known to have served, the *School Roll* listing all pupils since 1853 and providing some information on their subsequent careers, the *OTC Register*, a booklet listing all former OTC members who had gained commissions by June 1915 and other files including the papers of R. Sterndale-Bennett who commanded the school's OTC during the war. From this it is possible to gain a more detailed understanding of the OTC including details of those who passed the Certificate A, the number of OTC cadets who became officers during the war and the number of entrants into Sandhurst and Woolwich.

Analysis of the *School Roll* demonstrates that with the advent of the OTC the numbers going on to serve in the regular army increased substantially. The entrants of 1903 have been selected as the first year of the table because it is the last one in which boys could have entered the school and not served in the OTC; 1909 has been selected as the final year because it is the last possible one a boy would have entered and left before the war broke out.

Academic Year of Entry	Served in the Regular Army
1903-1904	1
1904-1905	3
1905-1906	4
1906-1907	5
1907-1908	12
1908-1909	13
1909-1910	10

*Table 2: Analysis of Regular Army Officers Produced by Uppingham School 1903-1909*

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<sup>81</sup> Worthington, "Antecedent Education", pp.278-9.

<sup>82</sup> Simon Robbins, "British Generalship in the First World War, 1914-1918", (PhD diss., University of London, 2001), pp.510-1.



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These figures suggest that the introduction of the OTC led to an increase in the number of entrants into Woolwich and Sandhurst and offers support for the idea that after 1910 the army was actively seeking to widen the pool of young men it drew its officers from. Since the introduction of the OTC in 1909 the regulations had offered, to those with Certificate A, 200 marks in the entrance examinations for Woolwich and Sandhurst and this partly explains the increased entry.<sup>83</sup>

A more comprehensive picture of the contribution of the OTC can be gained from an analysis of the Junior Division Officers Training Corps Uppingham School Contingent *Register*.

Number of Cadets enrolled	499
Passed Certificate A	68
Passed at Certificate A & gained regular commission	16
Did not pass Certificate A & gained regular commission	13

Table 3: Analysis of OTC Enrolment October 1908 to January 1912<sup>84</sup>

The final enrolment date of January 1912 is chosen as this is the latest date that a boy could have joined the corps and gained a Certificate A. From studying the *OTC Register*, it is clear that no Certificate A examinations were taken after the outbreak of the war as the regular army officers and other ranks who had been providing training were withdrawn to carry out war related duties.<sup>85</sup> The regulations required that a cadet must have served in the contingent for at least two years and the exams were held in March and November, thus the last cadets to sit Certificate A would have done so in March 1914 having joined in January 1912.<sup>86</sup>

It is likely that the figures for those who gained commissions are conservative but they indicate that 6% of OTC cadets eligible to sit Certificate A gained a regular commission with 24% of those passing it going on to gain regular commissions. On the surface this does not indicate spectacular success but, as Table 2 shows, it did represent significant progress; from 1907-1908 there was a doubling in the number of successful Woolwich and Sandhurst candidates. This progress was also reinforced by the existence of an army class and compulsory shooting tests. There was also the option of attending a crammer for those determined to become officers.

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<sup>83</sup> *Regulations for the OTC*, p.22 and TNA, WO 92/9034.

<sup>84</sup> Analysis based on Uppingham School Archives (UpSA), Junior Division Officers Training Corps Uppingham School Contingent.

<sup>85</sup> *Regulations for the OTC*, p.20; USM, October 1914, p.203.

<sup>86</sup> *Regulations for the OTC*, p.20.

Despite the figures suggesting the supply of regular army officers increased, the 13.6% success rate for passing Certificate A is disappointing. This should not be a surprise because, as already discussed, the syllabus was demanding and passing the examination was not guaranteed. In addition, to be eligible a cadet had to be deemed to be 'efficient', the conditions for which were substantial.<sup>87</sup> He also had to have completed the musketry training and been passed physically fit. Within a busy school life these requirements would not necessarily have been easy to achieve. Haig-Brown comments that those involved in the OTC at school had 'been watched with a jealous eye to see that they did not encroach an inch upon the claims of work or the necessities of games.'<sup>88</sup>

The success of the Junior OTC also needs to be assessed in terms of the basic training and motivation it provided. Life for boys at all public schools was busy with the competing demands of academic work, games and the OTC and at Uppingham there were also the demands of music; part of a deliberate attempt to stop them getting into mischief.<sup>89</sup> Edward Brittain was a talented musician and part of the Uppingham School Orchestra which is likely to have kept him busy and limited the opportunities he had to study for Certificate A.<sup>90</sup> Many of the top athletes did not join the OTC because of the time commitments involved. George Horridge, at Uppingham from September 1908 to July 1912, did not join the OTC because he was too busy with games but despite that he joined the Territorials in 1913 and in 1914 volunteered to serve overseas.<sup>91</sup>

Despite the low 13.6% pass rate the training was more effective than it has been given credit for. Gaining a Certificate should not be seen as an adequate measure on its own and the pass rate at Uppingham was, in any event, higher than the overall pass rates reported by Haldane. It suggests that by 1914, as Haldane had predicted, the pass rates were improving. Even if Certificate A was not passed all boys were gaining the basic skills to become officers. This is supported by personal accounts, official statements and data from the school archives. For Uppingham; by June 1915 over 80% of past OTC members eligible were serving in some capacity. Of those not

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<sup>87</sup> *Regulations for the OTC*, pp.19-20.

<sup>88</sup> Haig-Brown, *The O.T.C. and The Great War*, p.62.

<sup>89</sup> Seldon and Walsh, *Public Schools and The Great War*, p.18.

<sup>90</sup> Farr, *None That Go Return*, p.49.

<sup>91</sup> Imperial War Museum Archive (IWM), Sound 7498, taped interview with G. Horridge, produced 1984. <http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/80007300> (Accessed 16 September 2012).

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servicing some were applying for a commission while others were 'debarred physically from serving' and others were under age.<sup>92</sup>

Total OTC cadets commissioned	286
Having served in Special Reserve (SR)	31
Having served in Territorial Force (TF)	59
Total Prior Service SR & TF	90
% with SR or TF Service	31.5%

*Table 4: Analysis of Past Uppingham OTC Cadets Commissioned in the Army to June 1915*

It is likely that several of those recorded as TF or SR enlisted after war broke out but it indicates that OTC membership was attractive to these bodies in urgent need of officers as the army rapidly expanded – in a somewhat haphazard manner – in 1914 and early 1915. The importance of OTC membership to the army is demonstrated by it being specifically mentioned in the announcements of commissions for a number of old boys. The most extreme example of this was when Herbert Edward Boucher's commission was announced as being given on 1 March 1915 although he did not leave school until April 1915.<sup>93</sup> It was a sign that the army placed a premium on OTC service. Further evidence of the advantage former OTC cadets enjoyed is found in the comments of Hugh Graham Peachey who was 42 when war broke out but had gained a commission in the Army Service Corps (ASC). Writing from Aldershot in October 1914 he spoke of the demanding training and exams for a commission. He remarked that not one man over 30 had passed yet but 'schoolboys and Sandhurst cadets have it at their fingertips' when it came to passing the necessary exams.<sup>94</sup> The training given to OTC cadets made it easier to prepare them as they already had a good knowledge of the main subjects. At the end of the war, the army indicated the importance it attached to the OTC when in April 1919 the school magazine reported that the War Office had written to express its appreciation of the 'great work' carried out. In particular it said:

In the early months of the war the number of vacancies filled in the commissioned ranks of the Army by ex-cadets of the Officers Training Corps fully justified the formation of the Corps in 1908 and afforded an able

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<sup>92</sup> UpSA, Officers Training Corps Record of Commissions gained by Uppingham School Contingent to June 1915.

<sup>93</sup> The London Gazette, 2 April 1915, 3257.

<sup>94</sup> London Metropolitan Archives, *Peachey Papers*, F/PEY 261.

testimony of the standard of training and powers of leadership which had been inculcated.<sup>95</sup>

After war broke out the Army Council continued to direct the nature of the training it wished OTC units to carry out. In March 1915 the school magazine reported a reorganisation of OTC meetings to enable an entire afternoon to be made available for 'Field work' to provide a more efficient use of time. The Army Council's activities were mainly concerned with the development of training and concentrated on the lessons of trench warfare and equipping officers to instruct soldiers. The integrated approach to training was continued and this was demonstrated by several OTC cadets from the school spending Christmas with mobilised units.<sup>96</sup>

Despite the apparent failure to provide officers for the Special Reserve and the Territorial Force before the war the integrated nature of the training provided through the OTC meant that when war broke out the War Office could draw on a large pool of young men who it knew had had a basic training which gave them skills to lead men into battle. This was a significant achievement for a nation which had no national service and sought to tightly control expenditure on the army. It was a 'nations in arms' approach which sought to draw on OTC members to provide a ready source of officers in the event of war. The training provided was more than a gesture which involved playing at soldiers. More research is required, particularly of different school OTC contingents, to gain a wider understanding of the provision of officers for the reserves and the regular army. Nonetheless this paper has shown that the OTC was not quite the failure it is made out to be in the existing literature and it played an important role in preparing cadets for the experiences they would face when war broke out in 1914.

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<sup>95</sup> *USM*, April 1919, 94.

<sup>96</sup> *USM*, March 1915, 55-56.