British Journal for Military History
Volume 12, Issue 3, November 2026

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Volume 12, Issue 3 November 2026



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British Journal for Military History – ISSN: 2057-0422
DOI: 10.25602/GOLD.bjmh.v12i3
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EDITORIAL*

This is our second issue since we took over as Interim Co-editors. Unfortunately, the process of replacing us is taking longer than was hoped for back in the spring. Shortly after a university based team been identified by the BCMH the academics there found themselves facing the threat of redundancy – a second search is now underway. As the editors of a military history journal we are very aware of the range and depth of individual scholarship across UK academia but we are also equally aware of the difficulties faced by those departments and groups having a focus on war studies and military history. We can only hope that in this electronically interconnected world today's threats to dedicated departments and groups does not become an existential threat to the study of military history in academia.

As though to demonstrate the vitality of the field and the ongoing scholarship both inside and outside the academy, not just in the UK but across the world, this is a bumper issue of the BJMH with no less than eleven articles and three research notes with the articles and notes covering an enormous range of topics and periods. In fact, the journal has had so many submissions recently we have had to place a stop on accepting new material until such time as we can clear the backlog. Sadly, we should also note that the journal remains without a Book Reviews Editor so we only have a single review this time.

Nigel Stanley's article gives makes a compelling case supporting the argument that Mancetter in Warwickshire was the location of the final battle between Boudicca's forces and the Romans and gives a plausible reconstruction of the course of the battle. At the other end of the time range Crispin Agnew explores – frequently as an active participant – Army Adventurous Training from 1960 to 2008. In counterpoint to his study of recent arrangements for non-soldiering activities, we have Louis Venter's article on the informal sports and pastimes of British forces in South Africa in 1899-1902. Also related to the pastoral care of soldiers – albeit in a very different sense – is James Haggerty's study of the Catholic Chaplains with the troops in the Second Afghan War.

We also have two articles and a research note on the darker side of war. Roxanne Vaillancourt looks at a single incident right at the end of the Allied advance into Germany in 1945 where the conduct of Canadian soldiers did not align with the accepted post-war Canadian Military historiography. In the same timeframe but on a much larger scale, Gregor Kranjc looks at the motives behind the British authorities' forcible repatriation of thousands of Yugoslav POWs to Tito's communist Yugoslavia

* DOI: 10.25602/GOLD.bjmh.v12i3.1992

in the knowledge of their likely fate. Also from the Second World War, Chris Murphy's research note looks in detail at the official investigation into the behaviour of a single senior officer who was a POW of the Japanese, an investigation that undermines the narrative that all Japanese POWs suffered equally, regardless of status and rank.

We have two articles looking at books. David Leeson uses Alan Clark's The Donkeys – a book many of our readers have strong views on! – as a case study in identifying 'pseudohistory'. In an important study of the genesis of Clausewitz's *On War*, Adrien Schu challenges the thesis put forward by Paul Donker (partly in this journal more than ten years ago – BJMH Vol. 3, Iss. 2) around the identification of the what may be the first draft of Clausewitz's seminal work. Also related to an author we have S P MacKenzie's article on the rise and fall of the submariner, and later author, Alistair Mars, who was court martialled in 1952 after refusing to take up an appointment he disliked. The research note by Tony Pratt looks at another, much earlier, naval controversy, the behaviour of James Montagu the captain of HMS Medea during and after a 1778 clash with the French ship-of-the-line Triton, his work is based on the correspondence of his uncle, Edward Montagu that is held by the Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre.

Finally, we have three pieces looking at very different aspects of supply and logistics. At first sight the French perfume industry is not an obvious topic for a military history journal but, as Gilles Pache ably demonstrates in his research note, the industry's response to the 1940 armistice and the subsequent German occupation was a fine example of logistic resilience. A more conventional question of military logistics is covered in Keith Lawrence and Ivor Carr's article on Sir Thomas Fairfax's march to the relief of Nantwich in the winter of 1643-1644. Last, but by no means least, the major article by Jamie Pringle, Jon Sneddon, Peter Doyle and Joe Brown reveals the health costs of the logistics of gas warfare in the First World War. Using a wide range of sources they make a convincing case that H M Cylinder Depot, Stoke on Trent, fully deserves the title of the 'Most Dangerous Factory in Britan'.

Despite our concerns for the study of military history in UK academia we hope you enjoy this issue!

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Mancetter: Boudicca's last battle site?

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ABSTRACT
Since the 1970s, Mancetter in Warwickshire has been the main location proposed as the site of Boudicca's last battle against the Roman army in around AD 61. This article provides a new translation of the description of the battle in the Annals of Tacitus and compares the Mancetter landscape with the battlefield as described by Tacitus and Dio Cassius. The article also offers a new interpretation of the potential significance of forts available to the Roman army at Mancetter. Based on the evidence discussed, a hypothetical battlefield at Mancetter is reconstructed and compared with reconstructions by previous authors. The conclusion reached is that, despite a lack of conclusive archaeological evidence, Mancetter still has the strongest claim to be the battlefield site, when compared with other proposed sites.[1]

Introduction

Tacitus describes in his *Annals* the campaign by Suetonius Paulinus, Roman governor of Britain, to crush the druids in Anglesey (*Mona*), using Legion XIV. Boudicca, queen of the Iceni tribe, seized the chance to revolt, destroying Colchester (*Camulodunum*) and annihilating an infantry unit of Legion IX.[2] Suetonius proceeded with a small force to London (*Londinium*), but fearing for his safety against the victorious Boudicca, left the town to its fate and marched away. Boudicca then attacked London and St Albans (*Verulamium*) in turn.[3] Various early twentieth-century scholars suggested a Midlands site for Boudicca's last battle against the Roman army, assuming that Suetonius retreated north-west from London along Watling Street, and that Boudicca and her

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DOI: 10.25602/GOLD.bjmh.v12i3.1993
[1]This article follows Kevin Carroll, 'The Date of Boudicca's Revolt', *Britannia*, Vol. 10, (1979), pp.197-202, in regarding AD 61 as the likely year of Boudicca's defeat, and follows Tacitus by using the spelling *Boudicca*, rather than *Boudica* as proposed by Kenneth Jackson, 'Queen Boudicca?', *Britannia*, Vol. 10, (1979), p.155.
[2]Peter Salway, *The Oxford Illustrated History of Roman Britain*, (London: Book Club Associates, 1993), p.82.
[3]Henry Furneaux, *The Annals of Tacitus, Vol. II, Books XI–XVI*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1907), pp.275-276. Subsequent references to the *Annals* are to the Furneaux edition.

army followed Suetonius in a bid to destroy the Roman forces.[4] A Midlands site might also be implied in the comment by Tacitus that Suetonius ordered Legion II, based at Exeter (*Isca Dumnoniorum*), to assist him.[5] Poenius Postumus, commander of Legion II, failed to leave Exeter, but an intended Midlands battlefield would have allowed Legion II to march up the Fosse Way and rendezvous with Suetonius and Legion XIV somewhere near High Cross (*Venonis*), now in Leicestershire, where the Fosse Way meets Watling Street (see Figure 1).

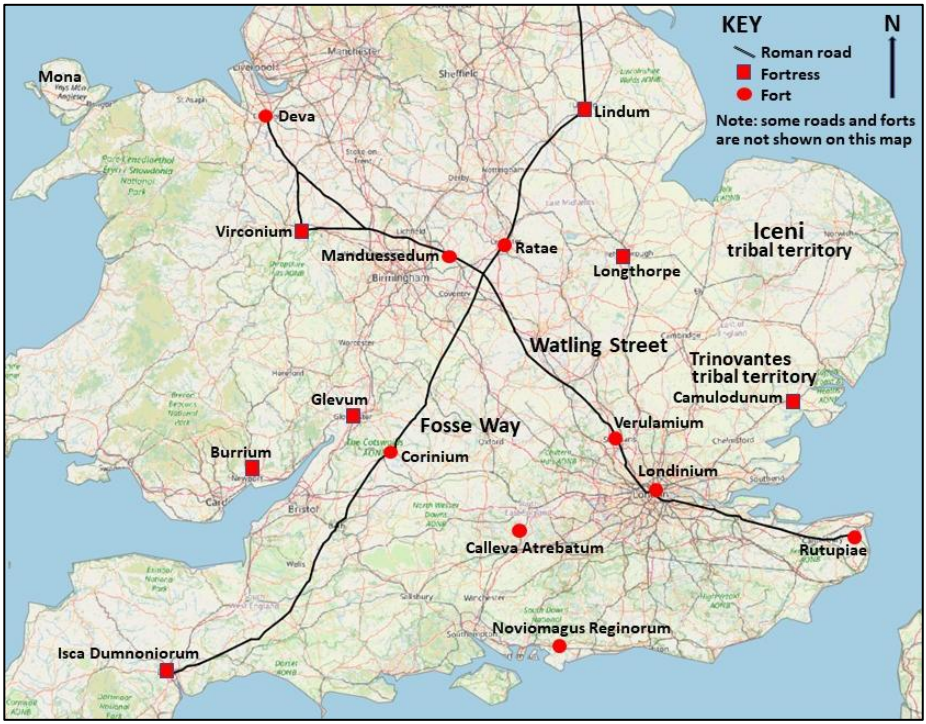


Figure 1: Roman Britain around AD 61on a modern landscape base[6]

[4]Bernard W. Henderson, *The Life and Principate of the Emperor Nero*, (London: Methuen & Co., 1903), pp.214-215; Furneaux, *The Annals*, p. 275; George Ramsay, *The Annals of Tacitus Books XI–XVI*, (London: John Murray, 1909), p.211.
[5]*Annals*, 14.37.6.
[6]Map by present author, using QGIS mapping, based on various sources.

MANCETTER: BOUDICCA'S LAST BATTLE SITE?

From the 1960s onwards, Mancetter (*Manduessedum*) in Warwickshire became the leading site proposed for Boudicca's last battle against the Roman army, as advocated by Donald Dudley and Graham Webster (1962) and later Webster individually (1978).[7] Numerous subsequent authors have followed Webster in regarding Mancetter as the battle's likely location.[8] Mancetter remains the leading candidate site for the battle.

However, Webster's claims and version of a battle at Mancetter have not been universally accepted. Following the suggestion by Carroll (1979) of an encounter somewhere near High Cross, John Waite has proposed High Cross itself as the battle's location.[9] Further south, the Cuttle Mill area of Paulerspury near Towcester is suggested by Martin Marix Evans, a theory adopted by Michael Rayner and by Peter and Dan Snow.[10] A location near Church Stowe, also in Northamptonshire, is proposed by John Pegg.[11] Barry Horne suggests a site just south of Dunstable in Bedfordshire.[12] Graham Appleby has claimed that the Iceni were returning to East Anglia when they met the Roman army near Arbury Bank in Hertfordshire, while Deryk Cundy suggests Chivery Top near Tring in Buckinghamshire, and Duncan

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[7]Donald Dudley and Graham Webster, *The Rebellion of Boudicca*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul,1962), pp.72-76; Graham Webster, *Boudica: The British Revolt against Rome AD 60*, (London: Batsford, 1978), pp.96-101, pp.111-112.

[8]Including Michael Wood, *In Search of the Dark Ages*, (London: BBC, 1981), pp.31-34; Plantagenet Somerset Fry, *Rebellion against Rome*, (Lavenham: Terence Dalton, 1982), pp.62-72; Meirion James Trow, *Boudicca The Warrior Queen*, (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2003), pp.12-31; Paul Sealey, *The Boudican Revolt against Rome*, (Princes Risborough: Shire Publications, 2004), pp.38-42; John Davies and Bruce Robinson, *Boudica: Her Life, Times and Legacy*, (Cromer: Poppyland Publishing, 2009), pp.62-71; Nic Fields, *The Roman Army of the Principate, 27 BC–AD 117*, (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2009), pp.75-76; Nic Fields, *Boudicca's Rebellion AD 60–61*, (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2011), pp.66-82; Margaret Hughes, *Boudica at Mancetter: The Latin, The Land, The Logistics*, (Atherstone: Atherstone Civic Society, 2020), pp.1-200.

[9]John Waite, *Boudica's Last Stand: Britain's Revolt against Rome AD 60–61*, (Stroud: The History Press, 2007), pp.167-197.

[10]Martin Marix Evans, *The Defeat of Boudicca's Rebellion*, (Towcester: Gemini Press, 2004), pp.i–xvi; Michael Rayner, *English Battlefields*, (Stroud 2004), pp.66-67; Peter and Dan Snow, *Battlefield Britain*, (London: BBC, 2004), pp.12–37.

[11]John Pegg, 'Landscape Analysis and Appraisal: Church Stowe, Northamptonshire, as a candidate site for the Battle of Watling Street' (www.academia.edu, 2010).

[12]Barry Horne, 'Did Boudica and Paulinus meet south of Dunstable?', (*South Midlands Archaeology* 44, 2014), pp.89–93.

Mackay proposes Windridge Farm, just west of St Albans (*Verulamium*).[13] Further afield, many other sites have also been suggested, such as Virginia Water in Surrey; somewhere near Box Hill in Surrey; Ogbourne St George in Wiltshire; and Heydon in Cambridgeshire.[14] Some authors remain more equivocal, such as Vanessa Collingridge, who accepts a location somewhere from St Albans to Mancetter, and Miranda Aldhouse-Green, who suggests Mancetter, Cuttle Mill or elsewhere.[15]

This article discusses evidence for the view that Mancetter was the battlefield site and explains why Mancetter may still have a stronger claim than the other proposed sites.

Part One: Historical texts in comparison with the Mancetter landscape

To determine the battle's likely location, we must first study closely the description of the battle in the text of the *Annals*, written in Latin by Tacitus over fifty years later, around AD 112-120.[16] While the sources used by Tacitus are uncertain, Suetonius Paulinus is known to have written his memoirs, and Tacitus possibly used these, or a source based on them, in his account of the battle.[17] The description of the battlefield landscape by Tacitus contains various topographical details which might suggest that the account is based on eye-witness information, perhaps from Suetonius himself.

The defensive deployment chosen by Suetonius is narrated by Tacitus in two stages, in *Annals* Book 14, chapters 34-37. These two extracts are separated by pre-battle speeches by Boudicca and Suetonius, scripted by Tacitus, but to translate the

[13]Grahame Appleby, 'The Boudican Revolt: Countdown to Defeat'*, Hertfordshire Archaeology and History* 16, 2009), pp.57–66; Deryk Cundy, *The Vengeful Queen* (Cambria Books, 2015), pp.325-377; Duncan Mackay, *Echolands: A Journey in Search of Boudica,* (Hodder and Stoughton, 2023), pp.260-270.

[14]Nic Fuentes, 'Boudicca re-visited', (*London Archaeologist* 4, 1984), pp.311-317; Richard Hunt, *Queen Boudicca's Battle of Britain*, (Staplehurst: Spellmount, 2003), pp.101-105; Steve Kaye, 'Can computerised terrain analysis find Boudica's last battlefield?', (*British Archaeology* 114, 2010), pp.30–33; Steve Kaye, 'Finding the site of Boudica's last battle: multi-attribute analysis of sites identified by template matching' (www.academia.edu, 2015); William Foot, 'AD 60, Boudica: Unlocated Battle', *British Archaeology* 165, 2019), pp.26-29.

[15]Vanessa Collingridge, *Boudica*, (London: Ebury Press, 2005), pp.231-232; Miranda Aldhouse-Green, *Boudica Britannia*, (Harlow: Pearson, 2006), pp.196-198.

[16]Herbert W. Bonario, 'The *Annals*', in Victoria Emma Pagán (ed.), *A Companion to Tacitus*, (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), p.104.

[17]Nicholas Reed, 'The Sources of Tacitus and Dio for the Boudiccan Revolt', *Latomus*, Vol. 33, No.4, (1974), p.927; David S. Potter, 'Tacitus' Sources', in Victoria Emma Pagán (ed.), *A Companion to Tacitus*, (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), p.135.

description of the battle, the extracts in chapters 34-37 should be considered holistically. The translation below, by the present author, omits the speeches.

Extracts from Tacitus' *Annals* Book 14: A new translation.

34. The Fourteenth Legion, along with detachments from the Twentieth Legion and auxiliary troops from nearby forts, in all around ten thousand armed men, were now with Suetonius, when he prepared to cease delay and to fight in battle-formation. And he chose a position enclosed by a narrow ravine and by woodland in the rear, having made sure that there could be no enemy forces except in front of him, and that the plain was open ground, without fear of an ambush. The legionary force therefore stood in close order, the light-armed troops around them, the cavalry massed together on the wings. The forces of the Britons, on the other hand, were running around at random amongst their war-bands and troops; at no other time was their number as great, and they were in such wild confidence that as witness of the victory, they had brought their wives along with them and positioned them in the wagons which they had parked on the outermost rim of the battlefield.

35. Boudicca, driving her daughters before her in a chariot, approached each tribe …

36. … Such enthusiasm followed the words of the general, and so well had his veteran force trained themselves in javelin-throwing, with much experience of hostilities, that Suetonius was able to give the signal for battle, sure of the outcome.

37. At first the legion was stationary and keeping the narrow confinement of the location for protection; after the legion had discharged its javelins with an accurate aim into the closely approaching ranks of the enemy, in wedge-formation it charged forward. The advance of the auxiliaries was the same; and with extended lances the cavalry broke through whatever strong opposition was in the way. The others turned their backs and fled, with escape being difficult, because the surrounding wagons had blocked the exits. Our troops did not spare even the women from death, and the packhorses which had been pierced with spears also increased the heap of bodies.[18]

Width of the Roman frontline

The *Epitome of Military Science* by Vegetius was written in the fifth century, but much of this work describes the training and tactics of the first-century Roman army and is

[18]Translation of the Latin text in Furneaux, *The Annals*, pp.277-280.

based on lost sources such as Cato's *de Re Militari*. Regarding the deployment of a Roman army in battle-formation, Vegetius explains in *Epitome* 3.15 that

> if you draw up six lines, an army of 10,000 men will take up 42 ft. in depth and a mile in breadth … They say that if the field is too narrow, or numbers are sufficient, the lines can be drawn up ten deep or more. For it is more useful that they should fight in close order than be too far separated.[19]

In the battle against Boudicca, Suetonius deployed his ten thousand troops *frequens ordinibus*, 'in close order' (*Annals*,14.34.3). Using the formula of Vegetius, with a depth of twelve ranks, the Roman frontline would have been around 800 metres in length, with auxiliaries and cavalry on the wings.[20]

Features of the Battlefield Described by Tacitus

The Roman position described by Tacitus was clearly a defensive one, aimed at drawing the British forces into an attack on a position with strong natural protection. The key sentence describing the battle's location is *Annals* 14.34.2, where the Latin text reads: *Deligitque locum artis faucibus et a tergo silva clausum*. The new translation above reads: 'And he chose a position enclosed by a narrow ravine and by woodland in the rear'. If we deconstruct this sentence, Suetonius chose (*Delegit*) a position (*locum*), enclosed (*clausum*) by a narrow ravine (*artis faucibus*) and by woodland (*et…silva*) in the rear (*a tergo*). Another defensive feature of the Roman position, described in *Annals* 14.37.1, was its *angustias* or 'narrow confinement'.

Viewed holistically, *Annals* chapters 34–37 depict the lay-out of the battlefield. To accommodate ten thousand troops in battle-formation in close order, with a frontline of around 800m, the Roman army was probably ensconced in an enclave or pocket of land, enclosed by a narrow ravine and by woodland in the rear. Suetonius thereby ensured that the British forces could not surround the Romans, and that the front lines of the two armies would be of similar length. This would cancel any numerical advantage of the British forces, reduce the effectiveness of British chariots, and hand the advantage to the Romans, with their superior weaponry, armour and training.

***Artis faucibus*: 'a narrow ravine'?**

In describing the battlefield, a key phrase used by Tacitus is *artis faucibus…clausum*.[21] In the translation above, in the context of defensive battlefield tactics, the Roman

[19]N. P. Milner, *Vegetius: Epitome of Military Science*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1996), pp.xiii-xxxi, p.97.
[20]For depiction and discussion of 'close order' formation, see Ross Cowan, *Roman Battle Tactics 109 BC–AD 313*, (Oxford: Osprey, 2007), p.33, p.59.
[21]*Annals*, 14.34.2.

position was 'enclosed by a narrow ravine'. No previous translation has suggested this description of the battlefield landscape chosen by Suetonius. However, *faucibus* can be translated in different ways, and its ambiguous usage here by Tacitus has produced various translations in recent centuries. To establish the likely meaning of *artis faucibus* we must analyse the use of these words in Latin literature.

The plural adjective *artīs,* with a long *ī*, means 'narrow', from the adjective *artus*. *Faucibus* comes from *fauces* (plural of *faux*), a feminine noun which can refer to openings of different kinds, and normally has meanings such as 'narrow pass', 'channel', 'defile' or 'ravine', when describing landscape.[22]

In some contexts, *fauces* can have meanings such as 'throat' or 'jaws', 'harbour-entrance', and 'approach' or 'entrance' in a building. Stanley Ireland translates the key phrase *locum…clausum* in *Annals* 14.34.2 as 'a site with a narrow approach and backed by a wood'; Cynthia Damon prefers 'a place narrow of approach, blocked behind by a forest', while Anthony Woodman chooses 'a place with narrow jaws and enclosed by a wood at the rear'.[23] However, in the present author's opinion, in the context of a defensive battlefield landscape the most likely sense of *faucibus* is 'ravine', rather than 'approach' or 'jaws'.

Several authors have translated *faucibus* in *Annals* 14.34.2 as 'defile' rather than 'ravine'.[24] Margaret Hughes offers a detailed discussion of Latin *fauces*, and regards *faucibus* here as meaning 'defile'.[25] A 'ravine' is 'a deep, narrow gorge with steep sides', and 'defile' is largely synonymous, meaning 'a steep-sided narrow gorge or passage (originally one requiring troops to march in single file)'.[26] However, 'defile' was borrowed into English from seventeenth-century French, and its meaning may be unclear to modern readers, therefore 'ravine' seems a safer translation of *faucibus*.

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[22]*Oxford Latin Dictionary*, (Oxford: OUP, 1968), pp.680-681; Douglas A. Kidd, *Collins Latin Gem Dictionary*, (London and Glasgow: Collins, 1957), p.576.

[23]Stanley Ireland, *Roman Britain: A Sourcebook* (2nd edn), (London and New York, 1996), p.61; Cynthia Damon, *Tacitus Annals*, (London and New York: Penguin, 2012), p.291; Anthony J. Woodman, *Tacitus: The Annals*, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2004), p.291.

[24]Alfred Church and William Brodribb, *The Annals of Tacitus*, (London: Macmillan and Co., 1884), p.271 (see also the edition by Moses Hadas, *The Annals and the Histories*, (New York: Random House, 2003), p.292); John Jackson, *Tacitus: The Annals, Books XIII–XVI*, (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1937), p.163; John C. Yardley, *Tacitus: The Annals*, (Oxford: OUP, 2008), p.321.

[25]Hughes, *Boudica at Mancetter*, pp.136-150.

[26]Maurice Waite (ed.), *Oxford Dictionary and Thesaurus*, (Oxford: OUP, 2007), pp.852, p.259.

In *Annals* 14.34.2, *artis faucibus* has no preposition, and *faucibus* could therefore be either the ablative or locative case of *fauces*. Some translators have considered *artis faucibus* as locative, and that the Roman army was deployed 'in a defile' or 'in a narrow defile'.[27] However, this seems highly unlikely from a military perspective, since the Roman army would thereby be trapped in a narrow ravine. The present author therefore regards *faucibus* as the ablative case of *fauces*, produced by the past participle *clausum*, 'enclosed'. Using a concise prose style in this instance, Tacitus may be avoiding repetition of *clausum*. The Roman position was 'enclosed by a narrow ravine and (enclosed) by woodland in the rear', a translation which makes sense from military, grammatical and stylistic perspectives.

By *artis faucibus*, Tacitus might perhaps mean 'narrow ravines' in the plural, since a defensive Roman position might be enclosed by narrow ravines to the left and right. Pliny the Elder, describing the Nile Delta, writes *multis quamvis faucibus in aegyptum mare se emovat*, 'and it belches out, by many mouths it is true, into the Egyptian Sea'.[28]

The Question of High Ground and Javelins

Vegetius declares that Roman forces strong in infantry should choose confined places, obstructed by ditches, marshes or trees, and that before combat, good generals should get help from the location by occupying high ground.[29] In *Stratagems* 2.2, written around AD 100, Sextus Julius Frontinus gives three examples of how high ground had assisted Roman commanders, adding weight to a downhill assault or allowing the effective discharge of javelins at barbarians charging from below.[30] Javelins were normally thrown when the enemy was around 15 metres (45 feet) from the Roman frontline.[31]

Annals 14.37.1 describes how javelins were released in the battle against Boudicca. Perhaps for this reason, Salway (1981), Smurthwaite (1984) and Collingridge (2005) propose that the Roman position against Boudicca was on a hillside.[32] This claim is

[27]For instance, Ramsay, *The Annals*, p.212; Michael Grant, *Tacitus: The Annals of Imperial Rome*, (London: Penguin, 1956), p.330; Donald Dudley, *The Annals of Tacitus*, (New York and Toronto: The New American Library, 1962), p.317.

[28]Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, *Volume Two, Books 3-7*, (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1937), pp.258-261.

[29]*Epitome* 3.9, 3.13; Milner, *Vegetius*, p.84, pp.92-93.

[30]Mary McElwain (ed.), *Frontinus: The Stratagems and the Aqueducts of Rome*, (London: Heinemann, 1925), pp.99-102.

[31]Fields, *The Roman Army*, p.28.

[32]Peter Salway, *Roman Britain*, (Oxford: OUP, 1981), p.120; David Smurthwaite, *The Complete Ordnance Survey Guide to the Battlefields of Britain*, (Exeter: Webb and Bower, 1984), p.22; Collingridge, *Boudica*, p.233, p.242.

based on assumption rather than textual evidence, since Tacitus does not mention a hill specifically, and the discharge of javelins was a standard battle tactic which did not require a hill. However, an elevated position may have allowed Suetonius to view the open plain extending before him. Moreover, if the battlefield landscape was enclosed by narrow ravines, a rise in altitude between the ravines would be inherently likely.

The Account of the Battle by Dio Cassius

A second account of Boudicca's last battle exists in the text of *Roman History* by Dio Cassius, composed in Greek around AD 200 and later edited by John Xiphilinus. Dio may have used as source material either the memoirs of Suetonius Paulinus or other sources.[33] The account of the battle's early stages in Dio 61.12.1-2 closely resembles the account in the *Annals*, stating that the Roman forces 'when the charge came, easily broke through the opposing ranks'. Dio's narrative then changes direction, giving a conflicting and generic account of a longer battle which lasted until late in the day, a version which Nic Fields describes as 'garbled'.[34] The surviving text of Dio contains only a single topographical detail in 62.12.5, where the Romans finally 'slaughtered many in battle beside the wagons and the forest'.[35] This implies that the British wagons were parked adjacent to woodland beside the battlefield.

Tacitus mentions the chariot driven by Boudicca, without mention of other British chariots. Dio, however, includes chariots in the battle, narrating in 61.12.3 that 'against the chariots of the barbarians the Roman archers contended. The barbarians would assail the Romans with a rush of their chariots … but, since they fought without breastplates, would themselves be repulsed by the arrows'.

Tacitus gives a figure, whose accuracy is unknown, of 70,000 Roman casualties during Boudicca's rebellion (*Annals* 14.33.5), while Dio says there were 80,000 (*Roman History* 62.1.1). In *Annals* 14.37.5, while applauding the Roman victory, Tacitus states that around 400 Roman soldiers were killed in the battle against Boudicca, with a similar number of wounded, but he gives no precise figure for British casualties, showing caution about the rumoured figure by saying 'there are some who report that scarcely fewer than eighty thousand Britons fell'. Dio gives no casualty figures for the battle; however, we should certainly envisage thousands of British casualties.

[33]Reed, *The Sources*, pp.926-933.
[34]Ernest Cary, *Dio Cassius, Roman History VIII, Books LXI–LXX*, (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1925), pp.96-97, pp.101-105; Fields, *Boudicca's Rebellion*, p.79.
[35]Cary, *Dio Cassius*, p.103.



Figure 2: The landscape south of Mancetter[36]

[36]Map by present author, using Digimap website and OS mapping (with permission).

The Mancetter Landscape

A principal reason for considering Mancetter as the likely battlefield site is the highly distinctive landscape around 1.5km south of the village (see Figure 2) and its close correspondence with the text of Tacitus. In the one-kilometre grid-square SP 31 95, Mancetter has an enclave of appropriate size to accommodate the defensive formation of ten thousand Roman troops in close order, as described by Tacitus, with an infantry frontline of around 800 metres. The enclave contains a hill, south of Quarry Farm, west of White Hall Farm, and south-west of the Coventry Canal, built in 1771.

Known as Broome Hills on the 1728 Oldbury estate map, this landscape was part of Mancetter Common before enclosure in 1811, and local historian Joan Allen describes this area as the Mancetter Hills.[37] Facing north-east, the hill has a downhill slope for around 500m, towards the flood-plain of the River Anker. Contours on Ordnance Survey (OS) mapping, LIDAR images, and visual observation of the landscape, show that the hill is enclosed to the left (north-west) and right (south-east) by conspicuous ravines, as noted by Michael Wood.[38]

For identification, the two main branches of ravine, both around 800m long, are called the 'western ravine' and 'eastern ravine' in this article. The western ravine, starting beside Quarry Farm, has steep slopes, resembling a deep railway cutting, today providing road access to Mancetter Quarry (see Figures 2 and 3). The eastern ravine starts beside the Coventry Canal and runs south-west past White Hall Farm, curling round to join the western ravine in a valley south-west of the hill. In a central position on the hillside slope facing north-east, around SP 315 953, is another small ravine or gulley around 200m long and 20m wide. The western and eastern ravines form an enclosed pocket of land just over one kilometre wide.

Woodland around Mancetter

Another potential factor supporting Mancetter as the possible battlefield is the woodland south of the village, surrounding the ravines. 2km south of Mancetter, the largest area of woodland is Hartshill Hayes (or The Hayes), with an area of 120 acres (see Figure 2). This is a residual patch of semi-natural ancient woodland, never cleared for agricultural use.[39]

[37]Warwick Record Office CR604: Rowland Okeover's estate map, 1728; Joan Allen, *Heardred's Hill: A history of Hartshill and Oldbury in North Warwickshire*, (Nuneaton: Bethany Enterprises, 1994), p.237.

[38]Wood, *In Search*, p.32.

[39]www.ourwarwickshire.org.uk/content/article/warwickshires-ancient-woodlands. Accessed 22 November 2024.



Figure 3: The Western Ravine, looking west from Quarry Farm[40]

A second woodland area, 2km south of Mancetter, is called The Belt. This was on a steep bank, running north-west for around one kilometre, on the north-eastern slope of Hartshill Ridge, providing a wooded backdrop to the Mancetter Hills. The Belt was around 100m from top to bottom, with a gradient of around 25 per cent or 1 in 4. This hillside bank was clear of woodland on the 1728 Oldbury estate map, but extensive re-planting took place around 1800.[41] Much of The Belt has been destroyed by twentieth-century stone-quarrying. Thirdly, south-west of Mancetter are several woodland areas including The Outwoods, Purley Park, Merevale Park and Monks Park Wood. Overall, the various woodland areas south of Mancetter might have been more contiguous in the early Roman era, as envisaged by Fields.[42] However, no dating of Mancetter's woodland, based on pollen cores, has been published, and without this it is risky to use today's woodland as a precise proxy for woodland in the Roman era.

[40]Photograph by present author.
[41]Warwick Record Office CR604; Allen, *Heardred's Hill*, pp.113-117.
[42]Fields, *The Roman Army*, p.76; Fields, *Boudicca's Rebellion*, p.76.

Part Two: Roman Forts and the place-name Mancetter

Roman forts at Mancetter

A major factor supporting the idea of a battlefield at Mancetter is the Roman fort there, around 600m south-west of Watling Street (see Figure 4). This was a half-legionary or vexillation fortress, occupied by Legion XIV from around AD 50-58.[43] By AD 60, Legion XIV had moved to Wroxeter (*Virconium*), taking the wooden buildings from the Mancetter site.[44] However, the earthwork ramparts at Mancetter would have been available for occupation by the tents of the Roman army around AD 61, and well-known to Legion XIV. Excavations from the 1950s to 1970s revealed the details of the fort, square in shape, around 300m along each side and 9 hectares (22 acres) in area, with four entrances. Pottery from around AD 60 was found, then three amphorae or wine-jars, along with a small hoard of coins from around AD 50, perhaps the contents of a soldier's purse. Excavation continued until 2006.[45] In 2014, a possible annexe to the main fort was found, potentially extending 100m north of the fort.[46] Two small items excavated at the fort might suggest a nearby battle against Boudicca. Two pieces of terret ring, part of a horse-harness dating from AD 50-70, have been found, whose style might resemble a type known in Norfolk, the heartland of Iceni territory.[47]

The fort's proximity to the River Anker was advantageous, since a legion's cavalry needed water and grazing. A further local advantage was the Hartshill Ridge, 2km south-west of Mancetter fort, where stone quarries were possibly first worked by the Roman army to provide building material for road construction.[48]

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[43]Colin Baddeley, *Roman Mancetter*, (Atherstone: Atherstone Civic Society, 2013), pp.20-36.
[44]Ibid., p.16, pp.24-25.
[45]Webster, *Boudica*, pp.111-112; Baddeley, *Roman Mancetter*, pp.20-36; Warwickshire HER MWA8267.
[46]Bryn Gethin and Stuart Palmer, 'An Annexe to Mancetter's Roman Fortress', *Archaeology Warwickshire*, Report 1419, (2014), Figure 1.
[47]Anna S. G. Lewis, *Iron Age and Roman-era vehicle terrets from western and central Britain: an interpretive study*, (University of Leicester PhD thesis, 2015), p.301.
[48]Geoffrey Templeman and Louis F. Salzman, 'Parishes: Mancetter', in *A History of the County of Warwick: Volume Four*, (Oxford: OUP, 1947), p.117; Allen, *Heardred's Hill*, p.28; Alan Cook, 'Roots of Atherstone: Geology and Early History', in Nat Alcock and Margaret Hughes (eds), *Atherstone A Pleasantly Placed Town*, (Chichester: Phillimore & Co., 2008), p.7.

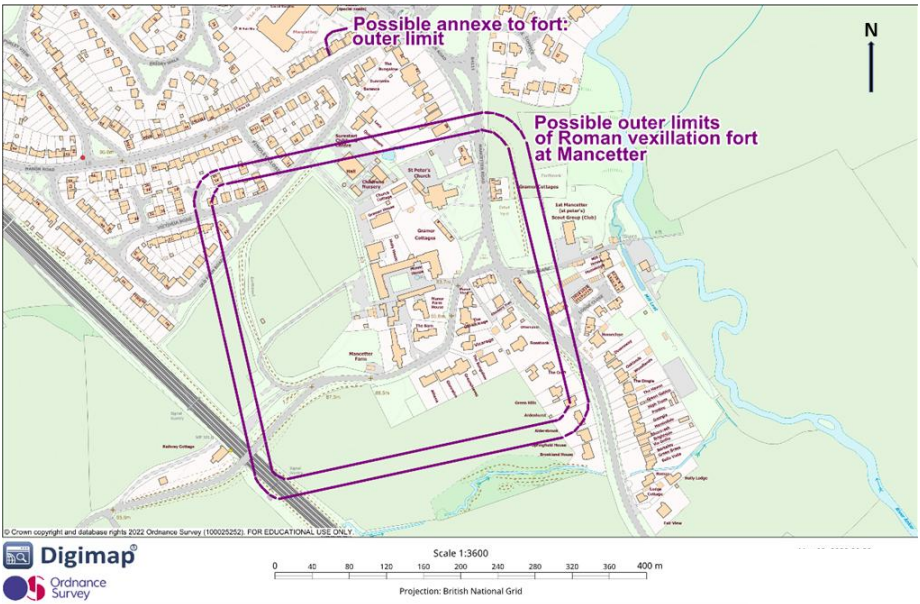


Figure 4: The Roman Vexillation fort at Mancetter[49]

A later Roman fort or *burgus* at Mancetter, dating from around AD 300, is situated on Watling Street, around SP 327 968. From the eighteenth to early twentieth centuries, when the earlier vexillation fort was unconfirmed, the Watling Street *burgus* was regarded as *Manduessedum* (see Figure 5). The *burgus* on Watling Street was excavated from the 1920s to 1960s.[50] This small and short-lived fort had an area of 220m by 160m. North-west of the *burgus*, Roman settlement included ribbon-development along Watling Street.[51] South-west of the *burgus* were numerous Roman pottery kilns, part of a large industrial area extending south-east towards Hartshill.[52]

[49]Map by present author using Digimap, adapted from Baddeley, *Roman Mancetter*, p.21.
[50]Baddeley, *Roman Mancetter*, p.103.
[51]Ibid., pp. 38-44; Historic England Scheduled Monument 1017585.
[52]Barry Burnham and John Wacher, *The 'Small Towns' of Roman Britain*, (London: Batsford, 1990), pp.255-260.

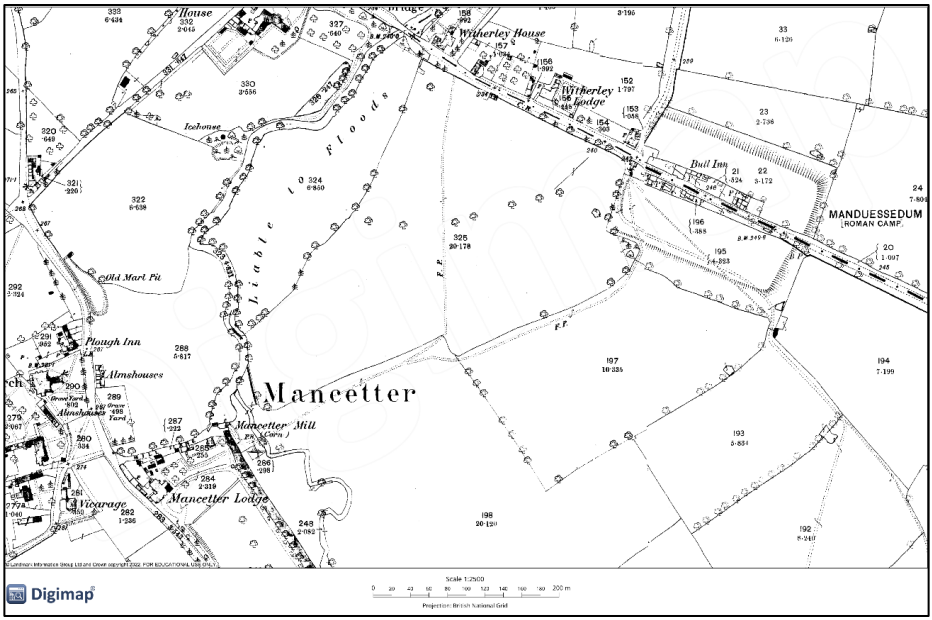


Figure 5: Mancetter and Watling Street *burgus* (top right) around 1880[53]

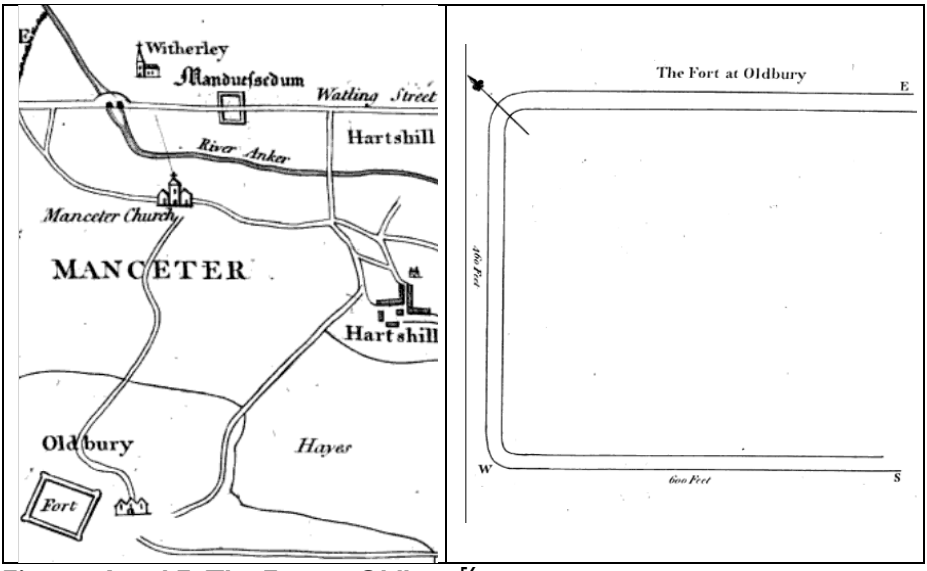
Oldbury Camp

Oldbury Camp is 2km south of Mancetter, on the plateau of Hartshill Ridge and in the medieval parish of Mancetter. This is a largely rectangular fort with rounded corners, whose south-eastern rampart was destroyed by later occupation. A relatively small fort, Oldbury Camp is 200m long and 150m wide, with an area of around 2.8 hectares (7 acres) and a single bank or *vallum* 6m wide, with an external ditch. Parts of the site were excavated in 1949, 1965, 1992 and 2017.[54] No entrances appear on Bartlett's 1777 plans of Oldbury (Figures 6 and 7), but the lost rampart perhaps had a single entrance, where the eleventh-century St Lawrence's nunnery was later sited.[55]

[53]Map by present author, from 1880 OS map, using Digimap.

[54]Iain Ferris and Jon Sterenberg, *An Archaeological Evaluation at Oldbury Camp, Near Nuneaton, Warwickshire*, (Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit Report 206, 1992), pp.1-8; James Fairbairn, *An archaeological evaluation at Oldbury Camp, Mancetter, Warwickshire*, (Cambridge: Oxford Archaeology East Report 2031, 2017), pp.3-15.

[55]Allen, *Heardred's Hill*, pp.50-51, pp.99-100, pp.118-120. Damaged by German bombing in 1942, the house was demolished by 1950 and replaced by an underground reservoir.



Figures 6 and 7: The Fort at Oldbury[56]

Oldbury Hall was built within the camp's ramparts in the sixteenth century and re-built in the eighteenth century. Landscaping may have destroyed the south-east rampart and perhaps produced openings in the north-west rampart (see Figure 8).

Before any excavations, various authors in 1904 suggested that Oldbury Camp was a prehistoric (Iron Age) hill-fort, an idea repeated more recently.[57] However, Oldbury Camp was regarded as a Roman fort by local antiquaries, including William Dugdale in the 1650s and Benjamin Bartlett FSA in 1777.[58] This idea gains some plausibility from excavations. The long north-eastern rampart, excavated in 1949, had a core of diorite or greenstone rubble, backed by heavy stone packing.[59] By comparison, full legionary fortresses of the first century AD, developed from the design of marching camps built on campaigns, had ramparts mainly of stacked turf, with some addition of stone and

[56]Bartlett, *Manduessedum Romanorum*, p. 4 and Plate V
[57]Francis Haverfield, 'Romano-British Remains', in *A History of Warwickshire Volume I*, (London: Archibald Constable & Co., 1904), p.234; Willoughby Gardner, 'Ancient Earthworks', Ibid., pp.376-377; Templeman and Salzman, 'Parishes: Mancetter', p.117. Ferris and Sterenberg, *Archaeological Evaluation*, p. 15; Warwickshire HER MWA255.
[58]William Dugdale, *The Antiquities of Warwickshire Illustrated*, (London: 1656), p.778; Benjamin Bartlett, *Manduessedum Romanorum*, (London: 1791), pp.8-9.
[59]Ferris and Sterenberg, *Archaeological Evaluation*, p. 2.

gravel.[60] The diorite rubble in the Oldbury rampart would have been available if Mancetter's stone-quarries, around 800m north-west of Oldbury, were worked by the Romans before Oldbury Camp's construction. Excavations have not yet produced stratified dating evidence, so the fort's date of construction is uncertain. However, the rampart's diorite core raises the possibility that Oldbury was a Roman marching camp. Roman *mortaria* (food-bowls) were excavated at Oldbury Camp in 1965.[61]

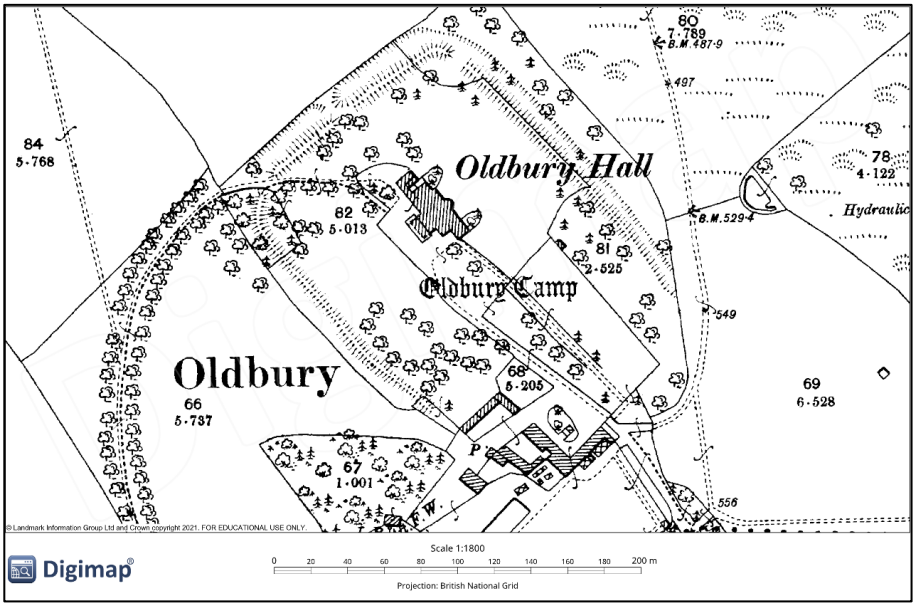


Figure 8: Oldbury Camp around 1900[62]

Why and how might the Roman army have built or used Oldbury Camp during the campaign against Boudicca? Firstly, Mancetter's vexillation fort could accommodate only around a quarter of the ten thousand men commanded by Suetonius, and the remainder, if camped in tents outside the fort, might have been vulnerable to attack by a large British force advancing north-west along Watling Street. Oldbury Camp might therefore have provided additional accommodation for the troops of Suetonius. Oldbury Camp was only one-third of the size of the Mancetter fort, but was more securely located, around 500 metres south of the Mancetter Hills. Oldbury Camp

[60]Duncan B. Campbell, *Roman Legionary Fortresses 27 BC–AD 378*, (Oxford: Osprey, 2006), p.36.
[61]Cook, *Roots of Atherstone*, p.4.
[62]Map by present author using Digimap.

might also have been a safe *praetorium* or battlefield headquarters for Suetonius, perhaps with a supply depot or field-hospital facilities for Roman army surgeons. In any event, Oldbury Camp should appear on modern maps of Roman Mancetter and should feature in discussions of Mancetter's Roman landscape.

Oldbury Camp was near fresh-water springs, and 70m south of the camp is a large rectangular pool, 43m by 11m, previously spring-fed. While not archaeologically investigated, the pool is described in nineteenth-century gazetteers as 'a Roman Bath in an excellent state of preservation'.[63] If Roman, the pool might have provided fresh water for troops or horses.

The place-name Mancetter

The name of Mancetter is potentially significant in a search for Boudicca's last battlefield. Mancetter was the site of the Roman settlement of *Manduessedum*, recorded in the Antonine Itinerary around AD 150, nearly a century after Boudicca's Rebellion. Kenneth Jackson, an expert in Celtic languages, concluded that in British Celtic, *Manduessedum* meant 'horse-chariot', deriving from **mandu* 'small horse' or 'pony' and **essedo* 'war-chariot'. We cannot be sure why this place-name was coined, but *Manduessedum* perhaps derived from a local legend or referred to a historical event.[64] In Roman Britain most place-names were Celtic, and Latin place-names were relatively rare. This has suggested to place-name scholars that Roman Britain remained predominantly a Celtic-speaking country.[65]

The original place-name *Manduessedum* later evolved in various ways. A compound name was formed by addition of the Old English generic element *-ceaster*, derived from Latin *castra*, meaning 'Roman fort'. The form *-cestre* typically appears in the Midlands around the twelfth century.[66] The name *Manduessedum* was contracted at some stage to *Man-*. Mancetter therefore means 'Manduessedum Roman fort'. Early recorded forms are *Manecestre* 1195-1313, *Maumecestre* 1196-1296, and *Mancestre* 1251-1610.[67]

[63]Allen, *Heardred's Hill*, pp. 36-37, p.240.
[64]Kenneth Jackson, 'Romano-British names in the Antonine Itinerary', *Britannia*, Vol. 1, (1970), p.76; A. L. F. Rivet and Colin Smith, *The Place-Names of Roman Britain*, (London: Book Club Associates, 1979), pp.411-412.
[65]Margaret Gelling, *Signposts to the Past: Place-Names and the History of England* (London: Dent, 1978), pp. 20-21, pp.30-38, p.63.
[66]Miriam Méar, 'De *castra* à *chester*', PhD thesis, (Paris 2008), pp.175-176, pp.207-259.
[67]J. E. B. Gover, Allen Mawer and Frank Stenton, *The Place-Names of Warwickshire*, (Cambridge: CUP, 1935), pp.85-86.

Part Three: A hypothetical reconstruction of a battle at Mancetter

Given the evidence explored above, of the likely meaning of the Latin text of the *Annals* relating to the battlefield, and of the landscape, Roman archaeology and place-name of Mancetter, a brief hypothetical reconstruction of a battle at Mancetter around AD 61 is possible. Many aspects of the location and events of the battle remain debatable, and any reconstruction inevitably involves some speculation. The following sequence of hypothetical maps, Figures 9-12, illustrates possible stages of a battle south of Mancetter, reconstructed in accordance with the texts by Tacitus and Dio.[68]

The Roman forces might have deployed onto the Mancetter Hills from the Mancetter vexillation fort, and possibly also from Oldbury Camp, as in Figure 9. Suetonius might have occupied a mobile position on the hill-top and perhaps placed Legion XIV and his other infantry cohorts on the brow of the hill, with a frontline around the 130m contour-line. Tacitus describes the auxiliary troops from nearby forts as stationed on the flanks, with the cavalry on each wing. In Figure 9, the cavalry on the right wing is positioned between the eastern ravine and the woodland.[69]

Annals 14.34.4 states that the British wagons formed a cordon around the battlefield and were parked so that British women could view the expected victory. The wagons in Figure 10 are therefore shown close to the modern-day Coventry Canal. However, historians should remain aware that in accounts of classical battles, the inclusion of women as spectators, in a supposedly secure location, may be a literary device called *teichoscopia*, or 'the view from the wall', which appears from Homer onwards.[70]

Reference by Tacitus to the British forces and woodland surrounding the Romans might also have ethnographic connotations, since he drew on a long tradition of ethnographic writing in which Roman authors stereotypically associated 'barbarian' people with particular landscapes, such as *Germani* in the forests east of the Rhine.[71]

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[68]The author wishes to thank James Stanley for assistance with illustrations.

[69]Fields, *The Roman Army*, p. 76, envisages a similar deployment; see also Chris McNab (ed.), *The Roman Army* (Oxford: Osprey, 2010), pp.177-178.

[70]Peter Toohey, *Reading Epic: An Introduction to the Ancient Narratives*, (London: Routledge, 1992), pp.26-27, p.30, p.193.

[71]James B. Rives, 'Germania', in Victoria Emma Pagán (ed.), *A Companion to Tacitus*, (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), pp.48-49.

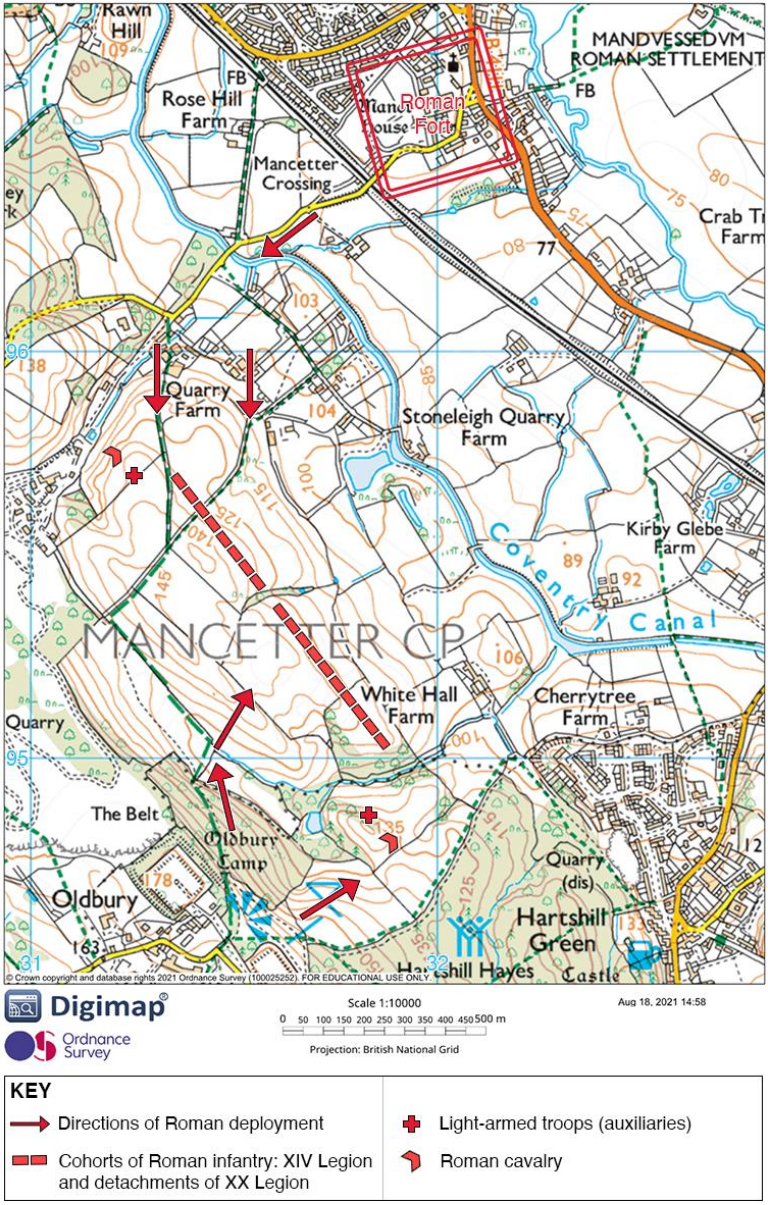


Figure 9: Hypothetical Map of Roman deployment at Mancetter[72]

[72]Map by present author using Digimap.

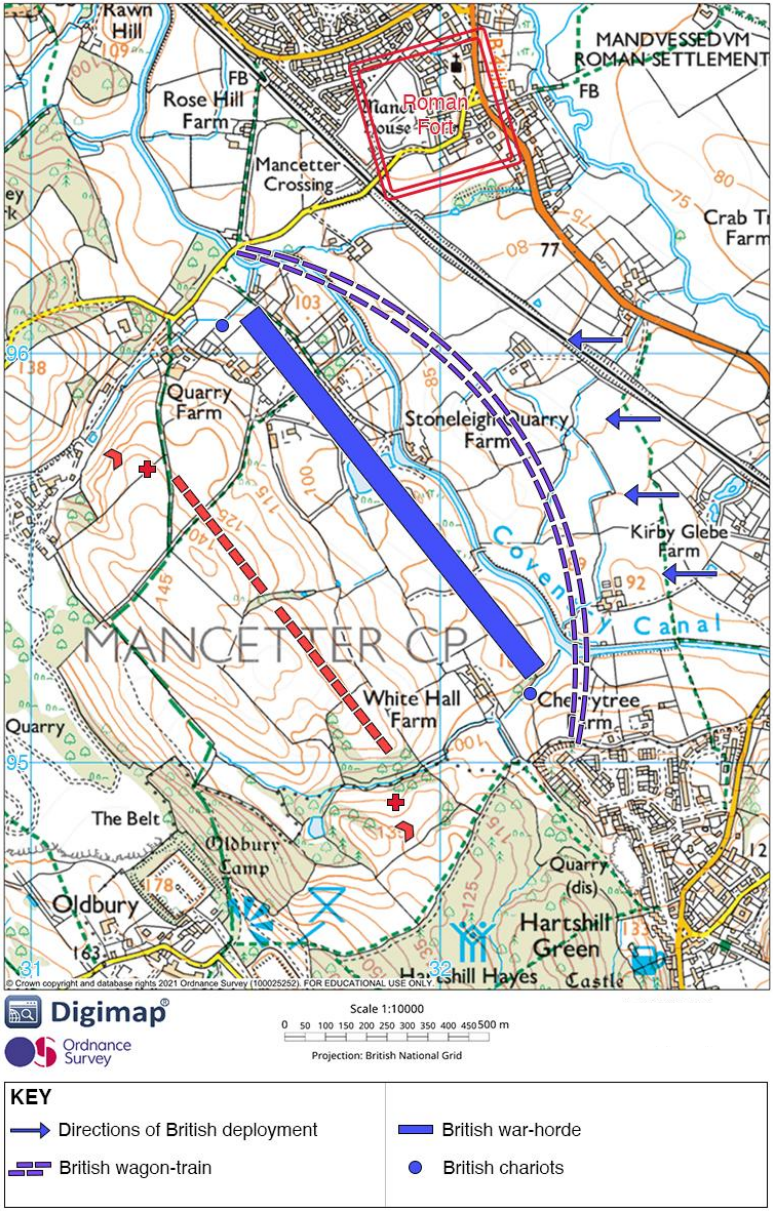


Figure 10: Hypothetical Map of British deployment at Mancetter[73]

[73]Map by present author using Digimap.

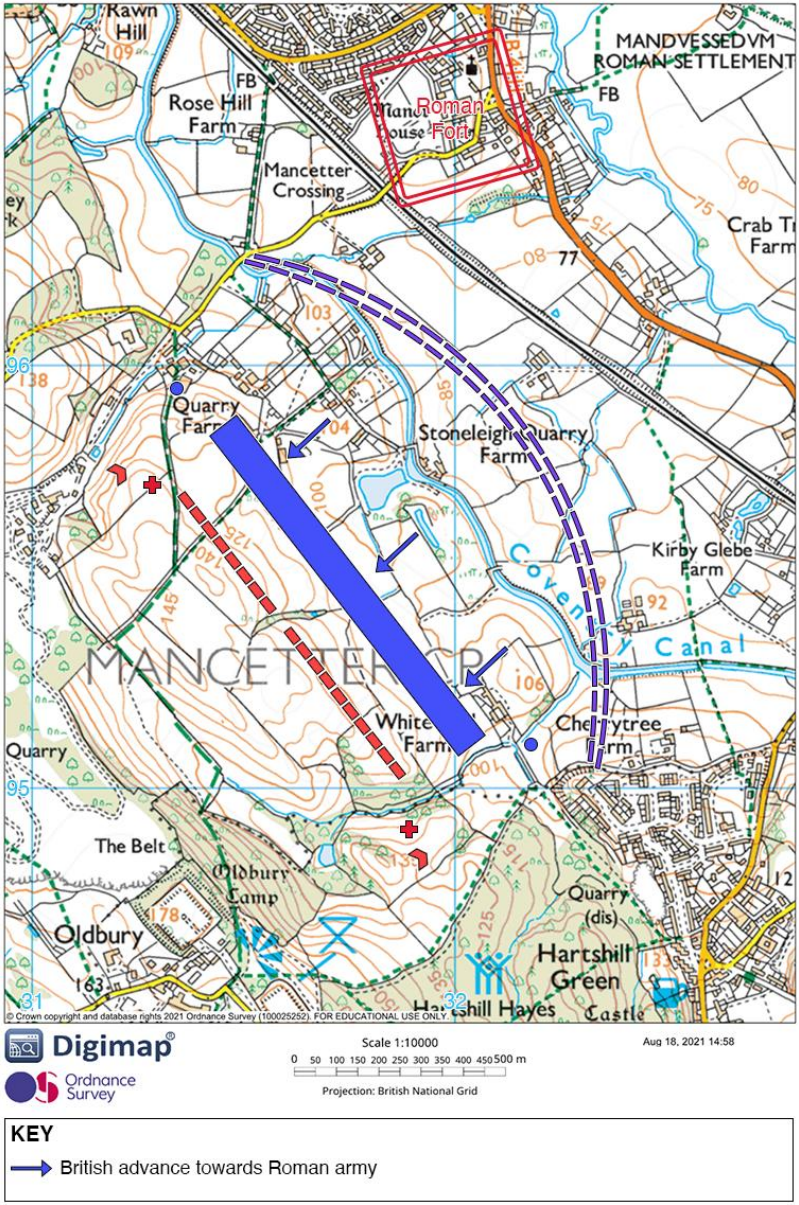


Figure 11: Hypothetical map of the British advance[74]

[74]Map by present author using Digimap.

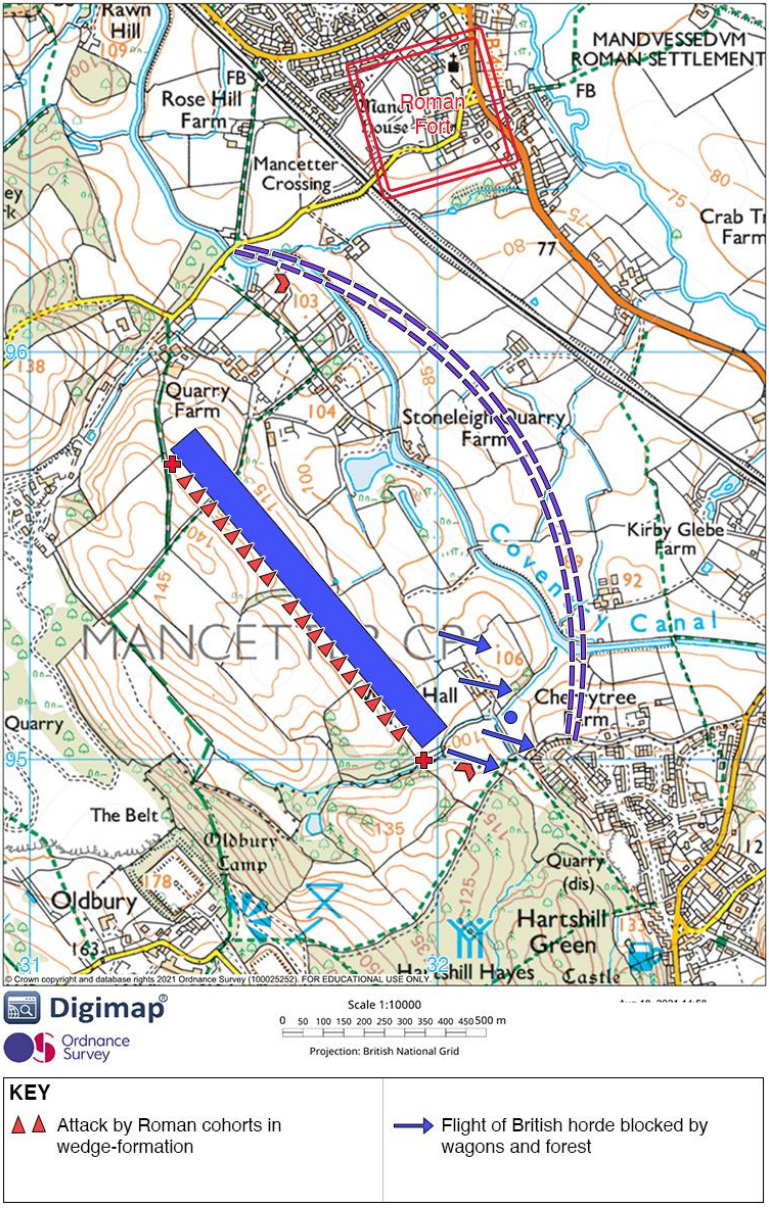


Figure 12: Hypothetical Map of the Roman attack and British flight[75]

[75]Map by present author using Digimap.

Figure 11 depicts the British forces as dismounted from the wagons and deployed as a horde, with a frontline of around 1km and a depth of around 100m, advancing uphill towards the Roman position. After the discharge of Roman javelins came the charge by the Roman infantry in wedge-like formation (Figure 12), either in cohorts of around 480 men or in centuries of around 100 men.[76] As Tacitus narrates in *Annals* 14.37.1, 'The advance of the auxiliaries was the same; and with extended lances the cavalry broke through whatever strong opposition was in the way.'

Tacitus portrays the battle as a short and easy Roman victory, adhering to his tendency in the *Annals*.[77] He narrates the end of the battle in *Annals* 14.37.3: 'The others turned their backs and fled, with escape being difficult, because the wagons had surrounded and blocked the exits.' In the hypothetical reconstruction in Figure 12, the final stages of the battle might have been around the eastern ravine at Mancetter, now near White Hall Farm and the Hartshill Hayes woodland. The British wagons, if parked densely here, might have hampered escape from the battlefield.

The deployments depicted above raise various issues. A decision by Suetonius for Roman forces to leave the defensible Mancetter fort, to fight Boudicca on the hillside to the south, would have exposed the Roman army to open attack. However, the landscape south of Mancetter offered strong natural defences in the form of ravines and surrounding woodland. Secondly, the envisaged deployments potentially allowed an assault by Roman reserve forces in the Mancetter fort, behind the British lines. Nonetheless, according to Tacitus, the British forces were keen for battle, and they might have rushed into battle positions without calculating the tactical risks involved.

Part Four: Previous Views of a Battle at Mancetter

The main early advocates of Mancetter as the battlefield site were Graham Webster and Donald Dudley (1962). Their battlefield plan showed the deployment of Roman forces beside woods somewhere west of Mancetter, based on Dudley's translation of *Annals* 14.34.2: 'He chose a position in a narrow defile, protected from behind by a

[76]Tacitus says *velut cuneo*, meaning 'like a wedge'. Cowan, *Roman Battle Tactics*, pp.46-48, discusses how different infantry formations could be described as *cuneus*.
[77]David S. Levene, 'Warfare in the *Annals*', in Anthony J. Woodman (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Tacitus*, (Cambridge: CUP, 2009), pp.227-231.

forest'.[78] In *Boudica* (1978), Webster produced a different version of a battle at Mancetter, with a plan based on OS mapping (see Figure 13).[79]

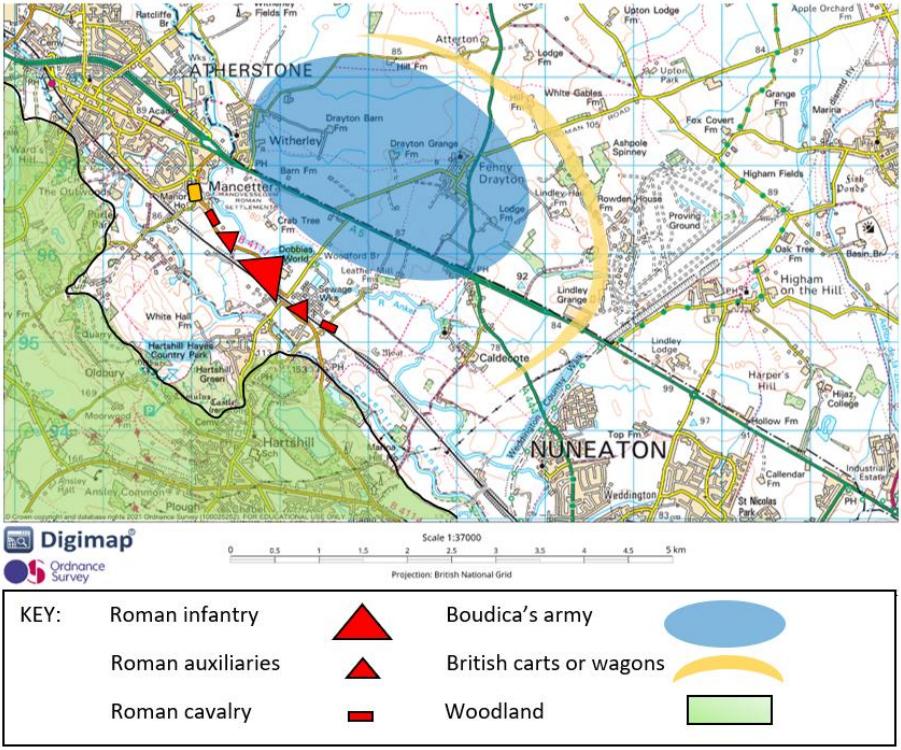


Figure 13: Webster's 1978 Version of a Mancetter Battlefield[80]

[78]Dudley and Webster, *The Rebellion*, p.73, p.140. Their 1962 battle-plan was adapted by Sealey, *The Boudican Revolt*, p. 39. For his full translation, see Donald Dudley, *The Annals of Tacitus* (New York and Toronto: The New American Library, 1966).
[79]Webster, *Boudica*, pp.96-101.
[80]The map by Webster, *Boudica*, p.98, Fig. 5 (©Taylor & Francis) is transposed here by the present author (with permission) onto a modern OS map-base using Digimap.

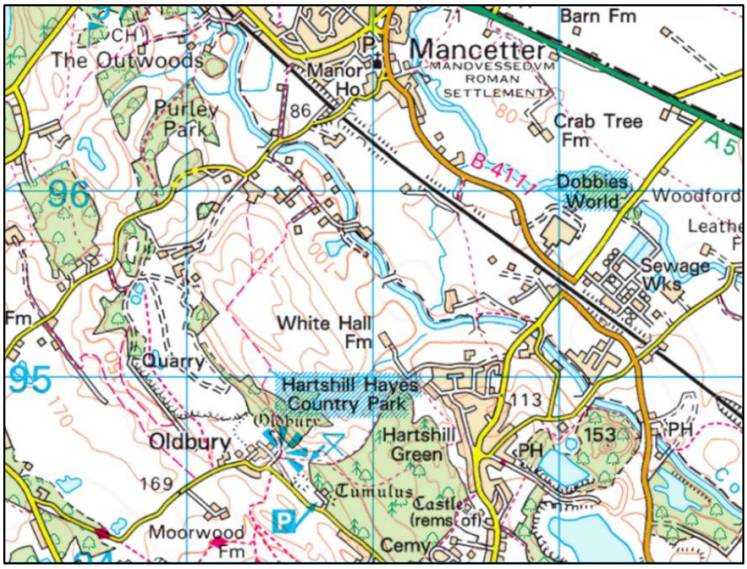


Figure 14: Mancetter landscape[81]

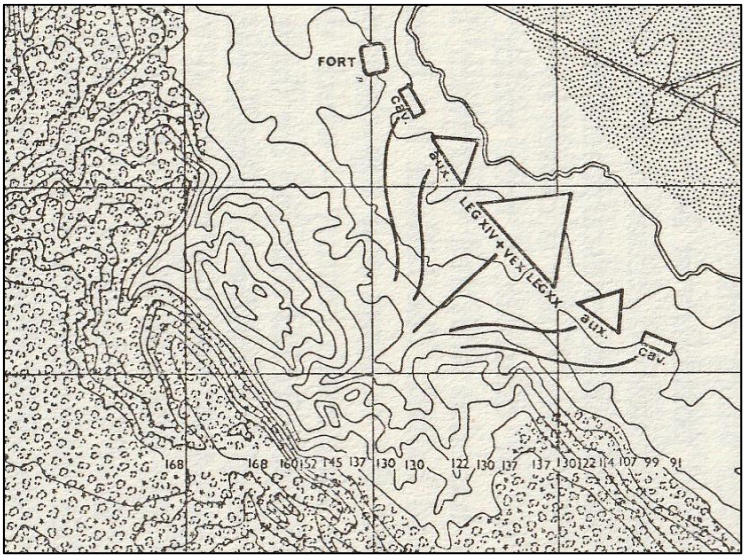


Figure 15: Detail from Webster's 1978 map of Mancetter[82]

[81]Extract from OS map using Digimap (with permission).

[82]Extract from Webster, *Boudica*, p.98, Fig. 5 ©Taylor & Francis (with permission).

Problems with Webster's 1978 Version of a Battle at Mancetter

Webster made several potential mistakes or adjustments to the landscape in his 1978 account and battlefield map (see Figures 13-15). Firstly, Webster replaced Oldbury Camp with woodland symbols (Figure 15), while carefully re-constructing the landscape's contours. Secondly, he deleted the Hartshill Hayes woodland, thereby depicting the Roman army as emerging from an enclave 2km wide.[83] Thirdly, *Annals* chapter 14 describes the Roman position as enclosed by woodland, with the British wagons positioned so that the women could witness the expected victory. Webster, however, placed the British wagons over 4km from the woodland (Figure 13), probably too distant for spectators to witness the events.

Fourthly, Webster's 1978 map portrayed a battlefield of around 12 square kilometres, with Boudicca's army occupying around 6 square kilometres (6 million square metres). At 4 square metres per man, this would require a British army of around 1.5 million men, approximately the entire adult male population of Roman Britain. Webster apparently incorporated Dio's longer version of the battle into his narrative and battlefield map, thereby extending the battle far beyond the confined location described by Tacitus. In Webster's version of events, the battle continued up to the British wagons, 3km from the River Anker, but no river-crossing is mentioned by Tacitus or Dio. Finally, Webster did not translate the text of *Annals* 14.34.2 describing the battle's location, but loosely paraphrased the text, perhaps using the translation by Church and Brodribb or by John Jackson, which both state that Suetonius 'chose a position approached by a narrow defile'.[84] This translation is potentially inaccurate grammatically, inserting a past participle 'approached', not found in the Latin text.

Other authors' views of a battle at Mancetter

Fry (1982) was perhaps the first author to locate the whole battle on the hillside slopes south of Mancetter. The Roman forces 'could have been drawn up on the northern slopes of the ridge, with the protecting woods behind…And in the plain Boudica's host could have been massed.' The British force moved into the clearing between the two 'prongs' of woodland, then up the slope; after the discharge of javelins, the Roman legionaries charged downhill.[85] Trow (2004) also believes that the Roman army fought 'on the slopes above the Anker that day in the summer of 61'. In Trow's opinion, the bodies would have been thickest at the base of the hill, and the British wagon-train where the women were slaughtered was south-west of the River Anker.[86]

[83]Webster, *Boudica*, p.98.
[84]Church and Brodribb, *The Annals*, p.271; Jackson, *Tacitus*, p.163.
[85]Fry, *Rebellion against Rome*, pp.65-70.
[86]Trow, *Boudicca*, pp.14-15, p.31, p,192.

Nic Fields has produced two different versions of a battle at Mancetter. Fields (2009) envisages a compact battlefield in the enclave surrounded by woodland, south of Mancetter. In his battlefield map, Fields omits Mancetter fort and Oldbury Camp and depicts the wagon-train behind the British forces, forming a cordon between the woodland's extremities.[87] In contrast, Fields (2011) mainly follows Webster's later (1978) theories, with a battlefield of around 12 square kilometres.[88] The Roman army's starting-position is again the hillside south of Mancetter, protected by the forest. Fields now includes Mancetter fort but omits Oldbury Camp and inserts woodland symbols instead. Fields shows the British wagon-train several kilometres from the woodland, stating that Boudicca's forces would have waded through the Anker at least twice during the battle, whose ending he envisages beside the distant British wagon-train. To Fields, the *gyrus* or horse-training ring at The Lunt, an early Roman fort 13km south of Mancetter, was perhaps for re-training horses captured from Boudicca's forces.

Various authors have criticised Webster's 1978 version of events. Evans (2004) objects to Webster's view of a battle on the Anker's flood-plain, as inconsistent with the text of Tacitus and with Roman military tactics.[89] Waite (2007) concurs, also considering Roman deployment for battle unlikely south of Mancetter, in an area of around a square kilometre surrounded by woodland, since the Roman army would have been tightly hemmed in, while accepting this idea as consistent with the text of Tacitus.[90]

Local authors have contributed to the debate, especially Margaret Hughes, whose book *Boudica at Mancetter: The Latin, The Land, The Logistics* (2020) makes a strong contribution towards identifying Mancetter as the battlefield site. Hughes proposes that *faucibus* in *Annals* 14.34.2 refers to the eastern ravine-system by Hartshill Hayes. Regarding Webster's 1978 battlefield map as a 'useful foundation', Hughes portrays a battle starting on the flood-plain beside Mancetter fort and extending several kilometres eastwards. Hughes includes Oldbury Camp in her discussion of Roman battle-preparations, but not in her battlefield map, regarding it as an Iron Age fort and as the Roman army's assembly-point rather than as pre-battle accommodation.[91]

[87]Fields, *The Roman Army*, pp. 75-76; McNab, *The Roman Army*, p.178.
[88]Fields, *Boudicca's Rebellion*, pp.76-77.
[89]Martin Marix Evans, *The defeat of Boudicca's rebellion*, (Towcester: Gemini Press, 2004), pp.32-33.
[90]John Waite, *Boudica's Last Stand: Britain's Revolt against Rome AD 60–61*, (Stroud: The History Press, 2007), pp.168-171.
[91]Hughes, *Boudica at Mancetter*, pp.136-150, p.179, p.186.

Conclusions: Was Mancetter Boudicca's last battle site?

So far, no large-scale archaeological evidence of a battle has been discovered at Mancetter, such as extensive finds of weaponry or burial pits containing British casualties of battle, and this is a potential objection to the proposal that Mancetter was the battle site. However, the same is true of many other locations proposed as the battlefield, and no proposed site should be dismissed if the archaeological evidence of a battle is currently inconclusive. Decisive archaeological evidence may still be awaiting discovery and excavation. Roman lead slingshots have been found at one proposed battlefield site, Windridge Farm, but these might not derive from a battle against Boudicca.[92]

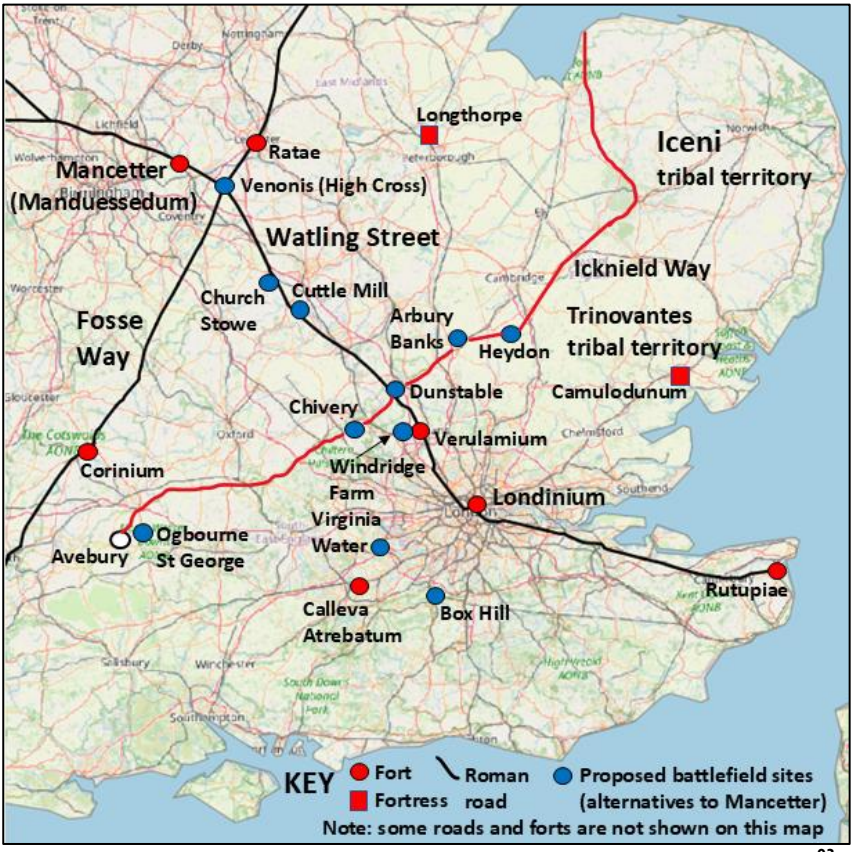


Figure 16: Mancetter and some alternative proposed battlefield sites[93]

[92]Mackay, *Echolands*, pp.260-268

[93]Map by present author, based on various sources, using QGIS mapping.

Many alternatives to Mancetter have been proposed as the battle's location. Eleven other candidate sites (mapped in Figure 16) were listed in the Introduction to this article, and many more have been suggested. In concluding this article, we should summarize the main factors supporting Mancetter's claim to be the battle's location, and why dissenting voices might be incorrect.

Despite the lack of major archaeological evidence of a battle, Mancetter has the strongest claim as the location of Boudicca's last battlefield, for three main reasons. Firstly, based on a detailed analysis of the Latin text of the *Annals*, the present article proposes that Suetonius chose a position enclosed by a narrow ravine, or by narrow ravines, and enclosed by woodland in the rear. This new translation may be an advance in our understanding of the battle's location, as it closely matches the landscape south of Mancetter. Some proponents of alternative battlefield sites have not concerned themselves sufficiently with analysing the Latin text of the *Annals*, which is a crucial task for a historian searching for Boudicca's last battlefield.

Secondly, Mancetter was the site of a Roman vexillation fort close to Watling Street, 1.5km north of the battlefield proposed in this article. The recently proposed Windridge Farm site also had a nearby Roman fort at *Verulamium*, but Boudicca had destroyed the fort. Archaeological finds at the Mancetter fort include two terret rings of native British horse-harness, resembling others found in Norfolk, the heartland of Boudicca's tribe. The military advantages of the Mancetter landscape south of the fort were perhaps already familiar to Legion XIV, which had occupied the fort around AD 50-58, only a few years before the battle. 2km south of Mancetter fort, Oldbury Camp might also have featured in Roman battle-preparations.

Thirdly, the Roman place-name *Manduessedum*, from which Mancetter derives, means 'horse-chariot'. The name *Manduessedum* may have been coined to commemorate a battle involving British war-chariots drawn by horses or ponies. Tacitus mentions Boudicca's chariot, and Dio Cassius mentions British chariots in the battle. While we cannot be certain why the name *Manduessedum* arose, no other proposed site has place-name evidence potentially supporting its identification as the battlefield.

Previous searches for archaeological evidence of a battle at Mancetter have closely followed Graham Webster's 1978 theory of a battle north-east of Mancetter but have failed to find the remains of a battle. If the present article is correct in identifying the landscape south of Mancetter as the likely battlefield, this might be a more productive area for future archaeological investigation. The eastern ravine-system near Oldbury Camp and Hartshill Hayes contains various small ravines and hollows, eminently suitable for the disposal of bodies. Through careful translation and excavation, remains of Boudicca's army might yet be found.

To Raise a Siege: Sir Thomas Fairfax and his journey to relieve Nantwich – December 1643 and January 1644

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ABSTRACT
On 25 January 1644 a series of confused skirmishes at Acton, near Nantwich, led to the rout of a recently formed Royalist army under John Lord Byron, 1st Baron of Rochdale. The 'Battle of Nantwich' only lasted a few hours but the journey of the victorious Parliamentary commander, Sir Thomas Fairfax, had taken nearly a month. The short-lived battle has been described in detail in articles and books but his journey has garnered little interest. This article reconstructs his route and the logistical challenges he faced, using officer accounts, parish loss records, and contemporary newsbooks.

Introduction
Nantwich controlled the Midland Gap, the key corridor between the Midlands and the Northwest. Its loss would have opened the route for English and Irish Royalist troops arriving at Chester to move into Central England. Parliament therefore valued Nantwich strategically and as a counterweight to Royalist Chester.

By late 1643 Royalist fortunes were at their height. Sir William Brereton had fortified Nantwich for Parliament early that year, but Lord Byron's December advance with four thousand foot and a thousand horse, including Irish veterans, rapidly overran Cheshire. By 4 January 1644, Nantwich was Parliament's last foothold in the county.[1]

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DOI: 10.25602/GOLD.bjmh.v12i3.1994
[1]John Lowe. The Campaign of the Irish Royalist Army in Cheshire, November 1643-1644. *Historical Society of Lancashire and Cheshire,* 111 (1959), pp.47-76, Joyce Lee Malcolm. All the King's Men: the Impact of the Crown's Irish soldiers on the English Civil War. *Irish Historical Studies.* 21 (1979), pp.239-264.

Brereton's field army had withdrawn to the northeast, unable to challenge Byron. Fairfax was summoned from Lincolnshire to relieve the besieged Nantwich; he re-equipped his cavalry and dragoons and then marched more than two hundred miles in severe winter weather on long neglected roads and having to rely on local guides.[2] His force, dispersed during the long march, only fully assembled during negotiations in Manchester before advancing to victory.

Parliament's options for a relief force were limited. The local forces in the surrounding counties were too weak and had problems of their own. Both Sir John Gell in Derbyshire and Thomas Mitton in Shropshire were reduced to little more than holding their main garrisons.[3] While the Lancashire and Staffordshire forces were pinned in their own counties by the threat of the Royalist forces under William Cavendish, the Marquess of Newcastle.[4] Lancashire was noted as being 'surrounded on every side', and its one attempt to send help to Cheshire had been badly beaten at Middlewich.[5] What should have been the regional army for the association of Warwickshire, Staffordshire and Shropshire had broken up on the death of its first commander, Lord Brooke, and its new general, William Fielding, the Earl of Denbigh, had yet to raise any substantial force of his own and was locked in a bitter dispute with the Warwickshire Committee who possessed the strongest local force.[6]

This left Parliament with no alternative but the cavalry brigade of Sir Thomas Fairfax, then trying to settle into winter quarters in south Lincolnshire. This brigade formed the main cavalry strength of Lord Fairfax's Yorkshire army. In October 1643 he was credited with seven hundred horses; although dragoons are not specifically noted, we know that he had at least some dragoon officers with him, so we can tentatively suggest his force at this stage was no more than seven hundred horse and one hundred dragoons. Between then and his setting out for Nantwich, and with no money and no fixed base, he managed to triple his strength, raising not only fifteen hundred men but

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Thomas Malbon and Edward Burghall. Memorials of the Civil War in Cheshire and the Adjacent Counties. (ed. James Hall). *The Record Society for the Publication of Original Documents Relating to Lancashire and Cheshire*. XIX (1889), pp.86-118.

[2]Charles Carlton. *Going to the Wars. The Experience of the English Civil Wars, 1638-1651,* (London: Routledge, 1992), p.90.

[3]Warwickshire Record Office. Denbigh Mss CR 2017/C9/36-37 A Continuation of certain Speciall and Remarkable Passages. No.2, Wed 3rd Jan to Wed 10th Jan 1644. E.81(15)

[4]Donald Henshaw Pennington and Ivan Roots. *The Committee at Stafford 1643-45,* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1957) pp.lxiv-lxv.

[5]Certain Informations. No. 51, 1st Jan to 8th Jan 1644. E.81(8)

[6]Ann Hughes. *Politics, Society and Civil War in Warwickshire. 1620-1660*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) pp.224-226.

also horses to mount them all. How the eleven hundred horse were armed and equipped is unknown. The new dragoons may have been armed from a convoy of two thousand muskets sent from London in late November, although these were apparently not received by Fairfax until late December.[7] This also means that the 'cloth to provide clothing for 1500 men' that Fairfax stated in his memoirs was provided on his own credit, and presumably went to new recruits rather than the re-equipping of his ragged veterans.[8]

Sir Thomas Fairfax now undertook two journeys: the first from Lincolnshire to Manchester; and the second from Manchester to Nantwich, and the battle that raised the siege and reduced the Royalist threat in Cheshire. In most descriptions of the leadup to the Battle of Nantwich on 25 January 1644 details of these marches are sparse, yet they are part of the overall story and deserve further exploration.

This article is an attempt to recreate the journey Sir Thomas Fairfax made between 29 December 1643 and 25 January 1644 from his winter quarters in Lincolnshire to raise the Siege of Nantwich. While it is easy to trace Fairfax's various skirmishes, battles and sieges during 1643 and 1644, there is little about the journeys between. In particular, Sir Thomas stated he left Lincolnshire and arrived in Manchester before gathering a combined force and marching to Nantwich. The journey information between the venues is minimal but it can be recreated as the regiments of horse he took with him to raise a siege in Cheshire did leave historical hoof prints behind. A combination of an individual officer's account, claims, parish loss accounts and an examination of contemporary newssheets allow a detailed investigation of the journey. These sources give us an insight into the logistics of a cavalry brigade on the move and allow a review of the effect of Royalist interference with Fairfax and Brereton's attempt at recruiting in Staffordshire. The sources needed careful assessment; for example, one of the earliest accounts of Sir Thomas Fairfax's journey is wrong on two counts – the date and the starting point. Clarendon wrote that: 'sir Thomas Fayrefax, upon his victory at Selby, out of Yorkshire brought a good body of horse to Manchester.' Fairfax's victory at Selby took place on 11 April 1644.[9] While the misinformation in Clarendon may not all have been deliberate but based on the 'treacherous foundation of his memory' the same cannot be said of the newssheets.[10]

[7]Parliament Scout 22 Dec to 29 Dec 1643. No. 27 p.229.
[8]Thomas Fairfax, Sir. *A Short Memorial of Thomas Lord Fairfax: A Short Memorial of the Northern Actions in which I was engaged during the War there, from the Year 1642 to the Year 1644,* (London: Richard Chiswell, 1699), p.70.
[9]Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon. *History of the Rebellion*, ed. W, Macray (6 vols), (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1888), p.iii, p.314 (book viii, para 403).
[10]Sir Charles Firth. Clarendon's History of the Rebellion. *English History Review.* 19, (1904). p.26.

There was a known 'credibility gap' at the time which needs to be taken into account in the development of the story of Fairfax's journey.[11] Even Fairfax's own 'Memorials' often lacked details of his campaigns and are described more as 'an attempt to restore his reputation and honour and rebalance his relationship with Cromwell'.[12] The parish loss accounts have been described as an imperfect source of historical fact due to 'the partisan origins of the enterprise and the suspiciously broad numbers deployed by informants, with much recourse to such qualifiers as 'about', 'at least' or 'as I conceive'.[13] However, this was primarily a reflection on the financial information, not the associated cause of the loss. Hughes does conclude that they offer a rewarding insight into the history of the Civil War.

The English Civil Wars generated itineraries, diaries and memoirs that give us access to the journeys made by the rival forces. The King's and Prince Rupert's marches are covered in detail.[14] Cromwell's itinerary has been constructed by Peter Gaunt and covers the period from the outbreak of the war in August 1642 to include all of his campaigns until August 1651.[15] While on campaign the armies were expected to live off the land and this obviously produced a conflict between moving forward and 'straggling' for food and forage. None of these sources tell us much about the disposition of the regiments or individual companies while on campaign or how widely they were dispersed while seeking food and fodder as well as accommodation. However, on all campaigns the widespread dispersion of troops must have had led

[11]Brownlees, Nicholas. 'He tells us that.' Strategies of reporting adversarial news in the English Civil War. *Journal of Historical Pragmatics.* 18 (2), (2017). p.238.

[12]Claire Gheeraert-Graffeuille. The 'grave of oblivion': Remembering the English Civil War in Sir Thomas Fairfax's Short Memorials (1699). *Mémoire et oubli dans le monde anglophone des XVIIe et XVIIIe siècle.* 81, (2024). p.3. https://journals.openedition.org/1718/13503. Accessed 24 January 2026.

[13]Ann, Hughes. 'The Accounts of the Kingdom': Memory, Community and the English Civil War. *Past & Present.* 230, Supplement 11. (2016). p.316.

[14]Edward Walker, Sir. *Iter Carolinum being a succinct relation of the necessitated marches, retreats, and sufferings, of His Majesty Charles the I from January 10, 1641, till the time of his death 1648*, (London: W. Godbid, 1660), Richard Symonds. (ed. Charles Edward Long). *Diary of the Marches of the Royal Army During the Great Civil War*, (London: The Camden Society, 1859), Firth, C.H. (1898). The Journal of Prince Rupert's Marches, 5 Sept. 1642 to 4 July 1646. *The English Historical Review*, 13 (52), (Oct., 1898), pp.729-741.

[15]Peter Gaunt. *The Cromwellian Gazetteer. An illustrated Guide to Britain in the Civil War and Commonwealth*, (Barton-under-Needwood: Wren Park Publishing, 2000). pp.224-227 – tables and pp.228-235 – maps.

them to converge regularly at assembly points. These are hinted at in the King's itinerary as some of the daily entries are prefaced with the term 'Rendezvous'.[16]

While a soldier can carry several days' supply of food in his snap sack and can march and even fight after irregular access to food and little rest, this cannot be said of a horse. The feeding of horses could have had a significant impact on the operations of armies. If horses were malnourished they became unserviceable and ultimately died. It is likely that poor nutrition, combined with overwork, contributed significantly to the wastage of horses, although Robinson noted that none of the available sources give enough information to quantify this.[17]

A horse had a daily requirement of fourteen pounds of hay, seven pounds of straw, one peck (8 lbs) of oats and half a peck (4 lbs) of peas.[18] In modern terms, an individual horse needed thirty to fifty litres of water, eight to twelve kilos of hay and up to a kilo of high-energy feed every day.[19] The water and hay could not be carried and had to be found daily from local sources. Fairfax's mounted force was made up of eighteen hundred horse and five hundred dragoons. The dragoons rode smaller and lighter horses and if we make an allowance by taking them at two-thirds the weight of a cavalry horse, the total daily needs of the regiments were 92,000 litres of water and between 17 and 25 metric tonnes per day of hay. It was this insatiable demand for the forage for horses that tended to restrict campaigning to the grass growing seasons. There would have already been a relentless demand for provender throughout 1643, as well as a disruption of farming and the damaging of standing crops. This would have created an unusually severe seasonal shortage of fodder for the horses and scarce stored foodstuffs. Therefore Fairfax's force would have been split into small units, often widely scattered.[20]

On campaign, cavalry and dragoons were usually quartered in villages, where individual householders would have to accommodate and feed a number of horses and men. Ideally, this was supposed to be paid for by the soldiers from their own pay. However, this was very rare in practice, particularly because pay was often far in arrears. The distribution of the men amongst the households of the hamlets and villages would have been dealt with by the quartermaster of the troop, who probably relied on the help

[16]Edward Walker, Sir. *Iter Carolinum.* pp.24-25
[17]Gavin Robinson. *Horse Supply in the English Civil War, 1642-1646*. PhD Thesis. (University of Reading, 2001) pp.208-210.
[18]Peter Edwards. Logistics and Supply, in John Kenyon and Jane Ohlmeyer (eds). *The Civil Wars. A Military History of England and Wales 1638-1660,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) p.257.
[19]All figures based on a 15.2 hands horse weighing between 450 and 500 kg.
[20]Carlton. *Going to the Wars*. p.90.

of local guides and officials. When resources were drawn from their parish for military use, whether food, money, fodder or other goods, the local constables often entered these into their account books. As such, surviving examples of these accounts can provide insight into the forms and types of resource drawn from localities. Worton discusses billeting and free quarter in Shropshire; and while he has not used them to assess how widely a regiment was dispersed in the local community he gives numerous examples of the effects on individuals.[21]

Campaigning in the winter of 1643–44 was particularly difficult.[22] The 1640s sat within the period known as the 'Little Ice Age', and contemporary accounts describe severe cold and snowstorms.[23] Fairfax wrote to Lady Fairfax on 28 January 1644,

> I have endured some hardship since I parted with you, being forced to march and watch night and day this frost and snowy weather. [24]

There must have been considerable snow in Cheshire as an overnight thaw on the eve of the Battle of Nantwich led the River Weaver to flood. The spate was enough to sweep away the temporary bridge erected by the Royalists.[25] Were other rivers also in flood? The route Fairfax chose meant crossing five rivers. Major rivers were bridged at Leicester, Tamworth, Stafford, Congleton and Leek.[26] Also, the state of the roads had deteriorated due to parishes being unable to maintain the highways, with rain and snow making the roads especially treacherous. As well as the weather and poor road conditions Fairfax would have had to avoid Royalist-dominated parts of the Midlands

[21]Jonathon Worton. *To Settle the Crown. Waging Civil War in Shropshire 1642-1648*. (Solihull: Helion and Company Limited, 2016). pp.163-166.
[22]Weather in History 1600 to 1649 AD. https://premium.weatherweb.net/weather-in-history-1600-to-1649-ad. Accessed 20 October 2024.
[23]Markus Stoffel, et al. Climatic, weather, and socio-economic conditions corresponding to the mid-17th-century eruption cluster. *Climate Past*, 18 (2022), pp.1083–1108.
[24]Robert Bell. *Memorials of the civil war: comprising the correspondence of the Fairfax family with the most distinguished personages engaged in that memorable contest,* (London: R. Bentley, Year), pp.74-75.
[25]Thomas Carte. *A Collection of Original Letters and Papers Concerning the Affairs of England. From the Year 1641 to 1660. Found among the Duke of Ormonde's Papers at the expense of the Society for the Encouragement of Learning*, (London: James Bettenham, 1746), p.38.
[26]Leicester – River Stour; Tamworth – River Tame; Stafford – River Sow; Congleton – River Dane, a tributary of the River Weaver; Leek – River Churnet, a tributary of the River Dove.

in the planning of his route. Indeed, in a dispatch to the Committee in Stafford he makes clear his need for intelligence,

> My desire is, that I may by your means receive information which way from thence I may most safely march; what your intelligence is concerning the interposition of the enemy's forces; where it is expected I should fall in with the forces of any of our friends… [27]

In November 1643 the Parliamentary garrison at Leicester reported that the Royalist garrisons at Belvoir and Ashby [de la Zouch] were confining traffic on the road to Nottingham, Derby and Manchester. Because of their 'small strength of horse' it meant that they could only provide support for convoys going north and south.[28] The situation had deteriorated by December with Sir George Gresley, Parliamentary Governor of Derby, stating that the Marquis of Newcastle had left 'to vex us his own garrison at Bolsover and six colonells of his own country, whereof five, namely Sir John Harpur [at Burton bridge], Mr. Fretcheville (Frenchville or Frescheville), [at Stavely in Scarsdale]. Mr. Eyre [at Chatsworth] and Mr Milward [at Bakewell].[29] Colonel James King had moved in to the High Peak in late December.[30] This activity

[27]Robert Bell. *Memorials.* pp.68-69. The dispatch is catalogued as being sent to Stansford which has been reported as Stamford. There is no settlement with the name of Stansford. This has been transcribed as Stamford in Lincolnshire but this seems unlikely as the town did not have a permanent garrison nor was it the seat of the County Committee. If the 'sf' in the title is actually a long 's' next to the 'f' then the name of the town would be Stanfford, with Stafford being the most likely interpretation. The original letter was sold in the 1993 sale of the Fairfax archive described as a letter to Stamford. It is now in private hands and unavailable for examination. The content of the letter makes no sense unless it was dispatched to the Committee at Stafford. Further support for the letter having been sent to the Committee at Stafford is that their replies were to be 'sent towards my quarters, and I doubt not but he will meet us on our march'. This could not refer to information coming from Stamford, many miles behind his march.

[28]Historical Manuscripts Commission. *The Manuscripts of his Grace the Duke of Portland, preserved at Welbeck Abbey.* Thirteenth Report, Appendix, Volume 1, Part 1 (London: Eyre and Spottiswood, 1891), p.160.

[29]Stephen Glover. *A true account of the raysing and employing of one foote regiment under Sir John Gell, from the beginning of October 1642*. The History and Gazetteer of the County of Derby. Volume II, part 1. (Where: Henry Derby: Mozley and Son, 1829), Appendix p.72, Major John Frecheville was a Royalist Commander with an estate at Staveley Hall near Chesterfield. Colonel Rowland Eyre of Hassop Hall in Derbyshire. Colonel John Milward of Snitterton Hall near Darley Dale, Derbyshire.

[30]Remarkable Passages. December 9-16 1643. No. 5. Note 20. Unpaginated.

is backed up by a remark made by Margaret Cavendish that her husband had left 'no visible enemy behind him in Derbyshire, save for an inconsiderable party in the Town of Derby'.[31] Along with Colonel Henry Hastings garrisons at Ashby in Leicestershire and Tutbury Castle in Staffordshire the Royalists had effectively cut off all these east to west routes for Fairfax. His only option was to travel south to Leicester before moving west hoping that the Royalist garrison at Lichfield would not intervene.

Daylight was also limited. On 29 December, sunrise was 08:20 and sunset 16:00, giving little more than seven hours of daylight. Thus, the first long march from Lincolnshire to Manchester was undertaken on horse, in freezing conditions, in poor light, and through snow-covered landscapes.

The route of the journey to Manchester

Fairfax's own description of his journey to Manchester is brief,

> The twenty-ninth of December we set forward from Falkingham, in Lincolnshire, with 1800 horse, and 500 dragoons, and power to call the regiments of foot in Lancashire and Cheshire to make up the body of the army.[32]

In an early biography of Sir Thomas Fairfax by Clements Markham the suggested route is 'Passing through Derbyshire and Staffordshire, he reached Manchester…' [33]

This reference has been taken by many later historians to indicate that Fairfax reached Manchester through Derbyshire and across the Pennines.[34] A totally different route for Fairfax's journey to Manchester is hinted at in the dispatch to the Committee at Stafford. The dispatch adds a little extra to Fairfax's brief description, suggesting that he was to travel via Leicester and that he would be there on Monday or Tuesday next. As the document is dated 27 December 1643, a Wednesday, the arrival date in Leicester would have been Monday, 1 or Tuesday, 2 January 1644.[35] The *Parliamentary Scout* newsbook for the week 5 to 12 January reported the defeat of Sir William

[31]Margaret Cavendish, duchess of Newcastle. *The Life of the thrice noble High and Puissant Prince, William Cavendish, Duke, Marquess, and Earl of Newcastle …,* (London: A. Maxwell, 1667) p.39.
[32]Fairfax. *A Short Memorial.* pp.69-70.
[33]Robert Markham Clement, Sir. *A life of the great Lord Fairfax, commander-in-chief of the Army of the Parliament of England*, (London: Macmillan and Co., 1870), pp.128-129.
[34]Nick Lipscombe, Colonel. *The English Civil War: An Atlas and Concise History of the Wars of the Three Kingdoms 1639–51*, Chapter 7. Nantwich and Newark. (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2020), p.154, Andrew Hopper *'Black Tom': Sir Thomas Fairfax and the English Revolution*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press. 2007), p.47.
[35]Robert Bell. *Memorials,* pp.68-69.

Brereton and suggested that Fairfax had gone to his aid and that he was currently in Leicester 'with my Lord Grey'.[36]

Can the southern route by Fairfax be supported by any other sources? The most complete route plan can be derived from the accounts submitted by Captain, later Major, George Gill of Fairfax's Yorkshire Horse. This included a list of all the quarters taken by his men. Unfortunately it contains very few dates but does specifically mention the battle. See Figure 1 for all places subsequently mentioned in this text.

To ffalkingham [Folkingham]
To Aslebie, [Aslackby] and from thence wee marched towards Nantwiche
To Post Witham [South Witham]
To Twiford in Leicestershire [Twyford]
To Evington [Leicester]
To Nelson [Nailstone]
To Ibstock
To Paulsworth in Warwickshire [Polesworth]
To Haywood in Staffordshire
To Newcastle-under-Lyme
To Asbury in Cheshire [Astbury]
To Ancoats in Lancashire
To Bowden in Cheshire
To Carington [Carrington]
To Tabley
To Aston [Aston by Sutton?]
To Tabley Hall
To Norwich [Northwich]
To Tilston Hall [Tilston Fearnall]
And the next day the battle at Nantwich [37]

A pamphlet proposes an alternate route beginning in Nottingham, with overnight stops at Hinkley, Bosworth, Tamworth, then Stafford.[38] Although much of the pamphlet is unreliable, its account of the Nottingham route is unique and may reflect local

[36]The Parliamentary Scout. From Friday the 5. of January to Friday the 12. of January 1644. No.29. p.250.
[37]The United Kingdom National Archives (hereinafter TNA) SP28/41/143-144, Accounts of Major George Gill.
[38]The Kings Letter Intercepted coming from Oxford with A Joyful Relation of the Happy Successe of the Parliaments Forces at Raising of the Siege from Nantwich (London: Robert Bostock, 1643).

knowledge. Should this source be dismissed, or does any evidence suggest Fairfax might have diverted to Nottingham?

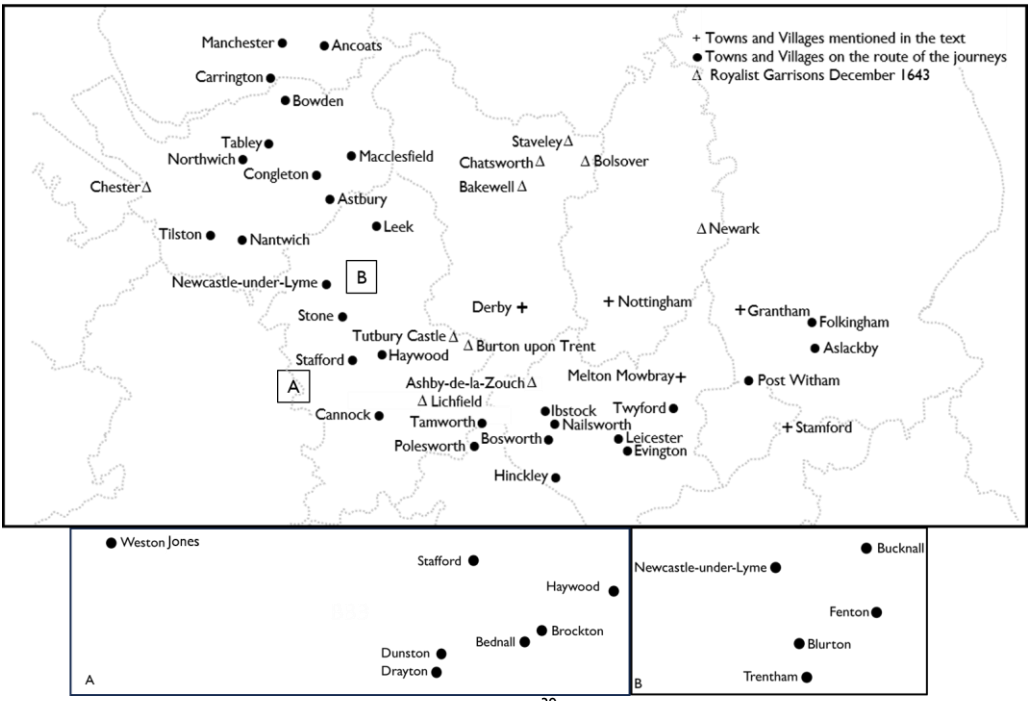


Figure 1: Places mentioned in the text.[39]

Those with a round marker lie on the direct route of the march, the triangles represents Royalist garrisons in December 1643, and other sites are marked with a cross.

There were reasons why Fairfax may have wanted to take part of the brigade and visit Nottingham. One could be suggested by an entry from Lucy Hutchinson, the governor's wife. Fairfax had ordered 'all the horse in the garrison' to join him but 'the horse would not obey Sir Thomas Fairfax.'[40] The entry is undated and there is no specific sign Fairfax visited the city. There remains a chance that, despite this refusal,

[39]Keith Lawrence

[40]Julius Hutchinson, Rev. *Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson, governor of Nottingham. By his widow Lucy,* edited and revised by Charles Harding Firth, (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1906), pp.163-164.

he may have hoped a final personal appeal would work. However, Hutchinson further states that a quantity of arms Fairfax stored in the town was sent by convoy to Leicester, which counts against Fairfax's presence. Overall, the diversion seems unlikely.

The two routes would have met near Tamworth. Parish loss accounts show troops were quartered in Polesworth, Austrey, Newton Regis, Wilnecote and Tamworth, with a horse taken in at Grendon. The rate was four pence per meal and four pence per day for a horse, totalling eight pence per trooper per night. Numbers recorded are: 136 in Austrey, 47 in Newton Regis, 98 in Polesworth, 97 in Wilnecote and 42 in Tamworth, a total of 420, though Fairfax claimed eighteen hundred horse and five hundred dragoons.[41] The force was dispersed across many communities, likely extending into Leicestershire, where records are missing. The need to avoid overburdening settlements influenced the choice of this more populated route over a sparser, more direct one through Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and North Staffordshire. One stray Warwickshire record which escaped the transcribing project is for Seckington between Newton Regis and Tamworth: 'Sr Tho ffairefax marching towards ye witch quartered one Troope wth us'. Unfortunately the amount of the loss is unclear so the size of the troop cannot be estimated.[42]

Moving into Staffordshire, there is also an entry for Cannock where the reference is quite specific and the expense would cover around 120 troopers,

> Cannock 'To Sr Thomas ffayrefax in prvision for his souldiers in theire march downe to releeve Namptwch [3 pounds] …
>
> … Paid more than I reced of the comander for quartering Sr Tho ffayrfax his men [3 pounds 11 shillings 4 pence].[43]

Troops were quartered around Stafford at Bednall, Billington, Brockton, Drayton, Dunston, Hayward and possibly Weston Jones. All the surviving quartering records in this grouping show a stay of two nights, the only ones found along the route that do

[41]These documents were generated in compliance with an ordinance of 27 June 1645. 'For the better taking and expediting he Accompts of the whole Kingdon', which led to the issuing of warrants to parishes to record the costs of the war associated with the Parliamentarian forces. The majority of those surviving for Warwickshire have been transcribed and are available online at https://heritage.warwickshire.gov.uk/catalogues-databases/warwickshire-civil-war-loss-accounts. Accessed 4 June 2026, Fairfax. *A Short Memorial.* p.69-70

[42]TNA SP28/37/78, Loss Accounts Seckington.

[43]TNA SP28/176/Cannock, Constable Accounts Cannock.

so.[44] Those housed around Newcastle-under-Lyme were in Blurton, Bucknall, Knutton and Trentham.[45] The entry for Bucknall and Trentham shows a significant number of troops and also records some loss of personal possessions, including a guide being deprived of his mount:

> ffree quartering 1643 in Trentham...A troope belonging to Sr Thomas ffairefax one night about 40 [2 pounds]' In the same parish in January 1643 [1644]'
>
> Blurton did quarter of Sr Thomas ffairfax his men one night 200 men & horse [10 pounds] …
>
> When Sir Thomas ffairefax came to raise the seige att Nampwitch some undr that comand did take from Thomas Stockdale a coat of his backe & tenn shillinge forth of his purse [1 pound 10 shillings] …
>
> At the same tyme did Thomas Lowe take a mare from Rich Craddocke to guide some of those troops to theire quarters, wch mare was then taken from him valew [4 pounds] … [46]

Having left Stafford for Manchester we know the initial route took part of Fairfax and Brereton's combined forces through Stone. This is because of the reaction to warrants issued by Fairfax in respect of carriages and horses. Stone is specifically mentioned in complaints set before the Stafford Committee by Leacroft and Atkins:

> 10 Feb 1644. Whereas the Constablewick of Walton juxta Stone was charged to fetch a wagon from Stafford to Stone to conveigh Sir Tho. Fairfax in his march. And whereas Thomas Leacroft and John Atkin two of the inhabitants of Walton aforesaid did not only fetch the said wagon from Stone aforesaid but was constrained to carry the same with six horses and two men to Manchester.[47]

And Colyer:

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[44]Ibid., Loss Accounts Acton Trusell & Bednall, TNA SP28/200/unfolliated, Loss Accounts Brockton, TNA SP28/176, Loss Accounts Dunston and Dreaton; Ibid., Loss Accounts Western Jones.

[45]Ibid., Controller Accounts Trentham (incudes Blurton): TNA SP28/197/Pt2/53-62, Bucknall Accounts (includes Bucknall) - the dating of the entries is suspect. Knutton is filed under Fenton.

[46]Ibid.

[47]Pennington and Roots. *The Committee.* p.52.

> Whereas Sir William Fairfax in his march from Stafford did take from James Colyer of Stone one bay nag ….
>
> Fairfax's dragoons under Major Thomas Morgan were identified marching from Stafford to Newcastle-under-Lyme. It was reported to the Stafford Committee on 17 January that they took a mare at Darleston [Darlestone], just to the north of Stone.[48]

The route continued towards Congleton with Nicholas Hobson's, the constable of Church Lawton), accounts showing Mr John Chantler,

> Plundered from him, by souldiers yt weare under Command of Sr William Farefaxe, Two flaxon sheets, five yards of woollen Cloath, two silke garters, one hatbande, sixe hand carchaffes, Two bands & one payre of stockinges [£1].[49]

It is not certain how large Fairfax's forces would have been after he left Stafford, as he had met Sir William Brereton and at least some elements of his Cheshire horse or dragoons. It would appear that a portion of these forces, including both Fairfax and Brereton, did not travel via Newcastle-under-Lyme and Congleton. Fairfax did not have a warrant to recruit in Staffordshire, so it is only after he joined with Brereton that we record any musters. For instance, they had remained at Stone to attend a muster of Moorlanders, probably those from Pirehill Hundred.[50] The next day they proceeded to Leek via Tittensor, just north of Stone, laying out for '9 horses and men wth them from Stone to Leeke wth Sr Thomas ffairefaxe [1 pound 10 shillings].' [51] The reason for this diversion was presumably an attempt to muster the men of Totmonslow Hundred.[52] There are many general references to quartering both Sir Thomas's and Sir William Fairfax's men in and around Leek that probably relate to the march. One that almost certainly did was that of William Jolley of Leek, an active member of the Committee at Stafford, who paid 'For qrtering Sr Tho ffairfax men Sr

[48]Ibid., *The Committee.* p.35.
[49]Guy Lawton. Church Lawton Court Rolls 1631-1860. *Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 147 (2013), p.165.
[50]The Moorlanders or the Moorland Dragoons were an irregular militia raised in the in the Leek area uplands of north-east Staffordshire, initially the only effective opposition to the Royalists. The Pirehill Hundred includes the boroughs of Stoke-upon-Trent and Newcastle-under-Lyme, and part of Stafford.
[51]TNA SP28/242/404.
[52]The Totmonslow Hundred contains four market towns, Leek, Longnor, Cheadle, and Uttoxeter, and about 70 townships.

Wm Brereton's men Sr William ffairfax men [30 pounds].'[53] Meanwhile John Dale paid 'for drawing Sr Tho ffairfax cariages to Manchester [6 shillings].[54]

Having established the routes taken to Manchester, a timeline can be created from other sources. The dispatch to Stafford suggests that Fairfax left Falkingham in Lincolnshire on Wednesday 29 December 1643, arriving in Leicester on either Monday, 1 or Tuesday 2, January 1644. A newsletter confirmed that 1 January was most likely in a mischievous quote dated Monday 22 January,

> Upon New-yeares-day last, Sir Thomas Fairfax his men coming to Leicester, and seeing the Captaines there so fine, their breeches being garded with six silver laces, very broad, said, they never saw the like before, and thought they were too fine to fight. [55]

It is also possible to fix his arrival in Stafford from newssheet reports as the evening of 7 January:

> Tuesday, January 16. - A Letter from the Town of Stafford dated the eight of this instant month of January, certifies that Sir William Brereton was then in that Towne, and that Sir Thomas Fairfax came thither the evening before.[56]

'By a Letter from Sir Wil. Brereton, dated the 9 of January, we are assured that he was then at Stafford, where he met with Sir Tho. Fairfax.' [57]

In a broadsheet, *Certaine Informations,* a news item dated 15 to 22 January reported 'that those two noble Chieftains, marched with their Army out of Stafford upon Wednesday last [10 January]'.[58] The entry for 17 January in the same broadsheet reported that Fairfax and Brereton had marched to Stone and then Leek, where they joined with the Moorlanders. A short march to Macclesfield seems to have been planned to meet the Lancashire forces. This meeting with the Lancashire forces may have been hinted at in a letter received by Alexander Rigby from Col. Ashton, Col.

[53]TNA SP28/176/Leek, f12r.
[54]Ibid., f16r.
[55]Certaine Informations From the 22 of January to the 29 of January 1644. No. 54. p.423
[56]Certaine Informations From the 15 of January, to the 22 of January 1644. No. 53. p.414.
[57]The Scotish Dove From Friday the 12 of January to the 19 of the same 1644. No. 14. p.110
[58]Certaine Informations From the 15 of January, to the 22 of January 1644. No. 53. p.414

Holland and Sir Thomas Fairfax. The comments from Rigby to Colonel Moore do much to confirm his localism and could explain the subsequent difficult discussions in Manchester:

> 13 December 1643, Preston. Lord Chief Baron Rigby to Colonel Moore. 'I this last night received letters from Sir Thomas Fairfax, Col. Ashton, and Col. Holland to prepare all my forces in readiness, and to expect a pressing call from them to join with them for a present expedition…' .[59]

The date of the arrival of Fairfax and Brereton in Manchester is somewhat confused with both 12 and 16 January being quoted. The earlier date is presented by John Rushworth who in 1645 would become Sir Thomas Fairfax's secretary and the latter date within a Parliamentary newssheet.[60] From Gill's itinerary it is likely that elements of Fairfax's forces could have arrived in Manchester between 12 and 14 January. There are no indications that the Royalists had hampered Fairfax's journey to Manchester despite Byron's claim to have intercepted the march at Newcastle-under-Lyme.[61] We know from a letter to his wife, Lady Fairfax, that the relations between Fairfax, Brereton and the 'Lancashire Gentlemen' were fractious.[62] This was confirmed in his later memorial of the actions between 1642-1644 when he related that he had problems using his,

> power to call the regiments of foot in Lancashire and Cheshire to make up the body of the army when I came to Manchester, for some were thirty, some forty miles distant, besides the dissatisfaction of some of their collonels, who went as their particular safety or interest swayed them.[63]

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[59]Historical Manuscripts Commission. *The manuscripts of the Earl of Westmorland, Captain Steward, Lord Stafford, Lord Muncaster, and others*. Tenth report : appendix. Part IV, (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 1885). pp.68-69. It appears possible that this item is mis-dated. On 12 December 1643 Fairfax was operating in Lincolnshire and in no position to be sending letters jointly with Lancashire Colonels. A date of 13 January makes much more sense of the contents.

[60]John Rushworth, *Historical Collections: Military action in 1643*, *Historical Collections of Private Passages of State: 1642-45,* (London: D. Browne, 1721), p,5, pp.263-309
A Perfect Diurnall, Munday the 22 of January, till Munday 29 January Anno. 1643. No. 27. p.212.

[61]Carte. *A Collection of Original Letters*. pp.36-37.

[62]Robert Bell. *Memorials.* pp.74-75.

[63]Somers Tracts. *A collection of scarce and valuable tracts, on the most interesting and entertaining subjects: but chiefly such as relate to the history and constitution of these kingdoms. Selected from an infinite number in print and manuscript, in the Royal, Cotton,*

Manchester to Nantwich

Their departure from Manchester appears to have been delayed by 'several days of humiliation' as they wrestled with God before the final decisions.[64] Sir Thomas Fairfax's army left Manchester on 21 January, spending the first night at Bowdon Heath near Altringham after a ten mile march. William Barrat's receipt book notes their stay at Bowdon, 'Item to a messenger which was sent to several places with warrants when the armie was at Bowden going to raise the siege at Nantwich 00li:01s:00d.' [65]

Fairfax's departure had not gone unnoticed by the Royalists, as a letter from Randolph Egerton to Lord Loughborough, dictated at 8pm on 21 January, reported: '… the enemy is still offering to advance upon us for the raising of the siege of Namptwich, they being now at Knutsford with seventeen colours of foot and ten of horse.' [66] This letter refers to a gathering of Yorkshire Parliamentary forces that had been dispersed at the defeat at Adwalton Moor who had been ordered to muster on Knutsford Heath ahead of the larger force.

Fairfax did not arrive at Knutsford Heath for a rendezvous with these Yorkshiremen until 22 January; he travelled only eight miles. This is confirmed by Captain Hodgson who recalls in his memoirs that: '… Sir Thomas sends an order for our companies to meet him at Knutsford-heath, near Manchester'.[67] The third night, 23-24 January, was spent near Northwich. The third day the newly merged forces had covered eight miles. It is possible that Fairfax had deliberately slowed the march, as on 23 December he had ordered ten barrels of gunpowder and two thousand pounds (weight) of match

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Sion, and other public, as well as private, libraries; particularly that of the late Lord Somers, (London: Cadell and Davies, 1811), p.5, p.387.

[64] Magnalia Dei. A Relation of some Remarkable Passages in Cheshire. (London: Robert Bostock, 1643/44) p.10. Scotish Dove. From Friday the 19. of January to the 26. of the same. No. 15. pp.116.

[65]Harleian Manuscripts. Accompt of William Barrett's Receipts & Disbursements, from the 9th of November 1643. to the 24th day of Julie 1645. MSS 2130 40 in *A catalogue of the Harleian manuscripts, in the British Museum. With indexes of persons, places, and matters,* (London: British Museum, 1808) p.521.

[66]Historical Manuscripts Commission. *Report on the manuscripts of the late Reginald Rawdon Hastings, Esq. of the Manor House, Ashby de la Zouch*. 2 Vols (London, 1928). p.117.

[67]John Hodgson. *Memoirs of Captain John Hodgson of Coally-Hall near Halifax, touching his conduct in the Civil War, and his troubles after the Restoration. In: Original Memoirs written during the Great Civil War being the life of Sir Henry Slingsby and the Memoirs of Capt. Hodgson with notes.* (Edinburgh: James Ballantyne & Co, for Archibald Constable, 1806.) pp.100-101.

from Manchester. The match was dispatched that day by William Sunderland.[68] On 24 January, while in Delamere Forest, the relief force clashed with a Royalist patrol. Egerton, in his letter to Loughborough, reported that a cavalry force had been dispatched to intercept Fairfax on 20 January. 'We have sent as yesterday a party of 500 horse to muse them and fight if they light of a fitting opportunity.'[69] After a 10-mile march the fourth night, 24-25 January, found the troops on Rhudall and Tilston Commons.[70] It is difficult to assess the amount of protection from the cold weather available at any of the sites, but all were exposed heathlands. Malbon suggested that Tilston Common offered 'but simple quarters'.[71] However, George Gill's accounts suggest that the officers were settled comfortably in Tabley Hall while at Knutsford and at Tilston Hall overnight on 24/25 January.[72] The Battle of Nantwich took place the next day, 25 January, after Fairfax's army had marched a further ten miles, with Colonel Morgan and his dragoons skirmishing with the Royalists at a mill near Barbridge.[73] The journey to the Battle of Nantwich came to an end on a ridge overlooking the battlefield where Fairfax and his commanders considered their strategy whilst awaiting the arrival of their makeshift army.

One question arises from an examination of the journey to Nantwich: why choose to approach the town from the west? The road via Middlewich was the faster route, probably saving at least a day's march. It has been suggested that this was based on intelligence that placed the bulk of the Royalist forces on the east side of the river Weaver.[74] There may well be another explanation. There is a suggestion that the strategies of both the Earl of Essex and Fairfax during 1643 had 'revolved around avoiding champion landscapes where the Royalists could unleash their superior cavalry.'[75] Indeed the Battle of Adwalton on 30 June 1643 was fought within small, enclosed fields and would have been seen as a major victory for Fairfax before a last

[68]James Malcolm Gratton, *The Parliamentarian and Royalist War Effort in Lancashire, 1642-1651* PhD thesis. (Manchester, 1998), p.501.
[69]HMC. *Reginald Rawdon Hastings.* 2 Vol. p.117.
[70]Lowe. Campaign. p.67.
[71]Malbon and Burghall. *Memorials.* p.113.
[72]TNA SP28/41/143-144, Accounts of Major George Gill.
[73]Thomas Fairfax, Sir. A Short Memorial of Northern Actions during the War there from the Year 1642 till 1644. *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*. 5 (1926), p.22, p.168.
[74]Robert Norman Dore and John Lowe, (1961). The Battle of Nantwich 25 January 1644. *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire.* 113 (1961), p.105
[75]Andrew Hopper, 'The Armies'. in Michael J. Braddick (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of the English Revolution,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). pp.260-274

ditch charge by the Royalist cavalry.[76] A 'champion landscape' referred to the large open fields common in the Midlands, which allowed the cavalry full rein in any conflict. Was the hard-learned lesson of Adwalton now used by Fairfax to his advantage at Nantwich? It would certainly support Byron's excuse for his defeat, 'The place of the battle was in an enclosed field, where horse could do little service.'[77]

When Fairfax reached Northwich en route to Nantwich, he could have taken the direct old Roman road via Middlewich, a distance of about seventeen miles, but instead moved west into Delamere Forest, then south to Rhuddall Heath near Tarporley, and finally east to Nantwich, about twenty one miles). However, was this really a significant difference in the distance travelled, even for a slow-moving army? Perhaps what was more important was the nature of the area into which they would arrive as they neared Nantwich. Via Middlewich they would have arrived on Beam Heath, which was then a large open heathland much like a 'champion landscape'. It stretched from Marshfield, near Wistaston, to the Beam Bridge on both sides of the road, then southwards to the walls around Nantwich. It was a large area that appears to have been used for hay and other crops, as there are descriptions of field barns being torn down and fodder being brought into the town by the townsfolk just before the battle.[78] Fairfax and Brereton may well have considered this to be cavalry country, putting them at a disadvantage. The alternative arrival point via Acton was a network of small fields – musketeer territory, effectively disabling any advantage held by the Royalist cavalry.

As a local landowner Sir William Brereton knew the heathlands and enclosed fields well, with significant holdings around Nantwich at Brindley, Faddiley, Burland and Stoke. Both Burland and Stoke are close to the battlefield at Acton.[79] The heathlands had also been used for mass gatherings, for example on 11 August 1642 when Royalists and Parliamentarians recruited in Nantwich. The Royalists held their muster on Ravensmoor to the west of Acton and the Parliamentarians on Beam Heath to the east. Between the two open heaths were the small, enclosed fields north-east of Acton that became the site of the Battle of Nantwich.

[76]David Johnson, *Adwalton Moor 1643: The Battle that Changed a War*, (Pickering: Blackthorn Press, 2003), David Cooke. 'Chapter VII. A wild and desperate man – the Battle of Adwalton'. in *The Civil War in Yorkshire: Fairfax Versus Newcastle.* (Barnsley: Casemate Publishers, 2004).
[77]John Roland Phillips, ed., *Memoirs of the Civil War in Wales and the Marches, 1642-1649*. Ii, (London: Longman, Green & Co., 1874), pp.129-31.
[78]Malbon and Burghall. *Memorials.* pp.111-112.
[79]George Ormerod. *The history of the county palatine and city of Chester,* (London: Lackington, Hughes, Harding, Mavor and Jones, 1819), p.639.

Conclusion

Unlike Edward Montagu, the Earl of Manchester, who refused to support the war effort in Cheshire later on in 1644 and provided a string of reasons to the Committee for Both Kingdoms, Sir Thomas Fairfax accepted his orders and rose to what must have seemed an enormous challenge.[80] From leaving Lincolnshire on 29 December 1643 to arriving at Nantwich on 25 January 1644, Fairfax had travelled over two hundred miles on horseback and in the freezing cold, with brief periods of recuperation at Leicester, Stafford and Manchester. The route was chosen to secure enough food for his men and fodder for the horses. The more direct route would have taken Fairfax through the relatively unpopulated high country of the Staffordshire Peaks and the Pennines. The siting of major river crossings at Leicester, Tamworth and Stafford may also have played their part in the planning. The journey was spread out over nearly a month, during which time Nantwich was in constant danger from the besieging Royalist forces, who must have been aware of his orders, even though it was initially reported in the press as a 'special service' destination unknown.[81] It was openly reported by *The True Informer,* including the size of his force.[82] It was only the exertions of Sir Thomas Fairfax in travelling across the country in bitter weather that reversed the Royalist attempts for dominance in Cheshire. From examining as many details of his journey as can be identified, it suggests that the long-held theory that Fairfax failed to recruit in Staffordshire is partly true.[83] As he had no warrant to recruit in Staffordshire, it was only after he joined with Brereton that any attempts to muster recruits were made. Parliamentary resources in Staffordshire and Lancashire were said to have only become available after the Scottish army crossed into England on 19 January 1644, causing Newcastle to retreat northwards to face a new enemy. Fairfax would have been in Manchester by this date, having missed his opportunity in Staffordshire. Broadsheets had recorded that when Sir William Brereton had met with Fairfax in Stafford they were awaiting a Company of Moorlanders,[84] A week later one of these broadsheets stated that whilst in Manchester Brereton and Fairfax had mustered their forces from 'Leyke [Leek], Ashburne [Ashbourne] and Ulcester

[80]John Bruce. 'The Quarrel Between the Earl of Manchester and Oliver Cromwell, an Episode of the English Civil War'. *The Camden Society* (1875) pp.9-12.

[81]The Parliament Scout, From Friday the 22. of December to Friday 29. of December 1643. No. 27. p.229.

[82]The true Informer. From Saturday January 6. to Saturday January 13. 1643. No. 17. p.129.

[83]Lowe. Campaign. p.67, Dore and Lowe, The Battle of Nantwich p.100, John Dixon, *The Business at Acton,* (Nottingham: Partizan Press, 2012). pp.74-75

[84]The Weekly accompt of Certain Special and Remarkable Passages From both Houses of Parliament and other Parts of the Kingdom From Wednesday the 15 January to the 22 January 1643/4. Unpaginated.

[Uttoxeter].[85] No Staffordshire troops are specifically identified as fighting at Nantwich. If any were at the Battle of Nantwich they may have been divided amongst other regiments to make up numbers or included as part of the 'rabble of cudgellers' travelling with Fairfax's army. [86]

The victory at the Battle of Nantwich was deemed significant enough by Parliament,

> that publicke thanks be given unto God in all the Churches of London, Westminster, suburbs and within the bills of Mortallity upon the next Lords Day for his great goodnesse … in giving so great and absolute victory unto the forces for the Parliament neere Nantwich in Cheshire.[87]

Sir William Brereton rode south with some of his prisoners from the battle and they were paraded in the streets of London in the manner of a Roman Triumph. Brereton himself was thanked by Parliament for his 'great and faithful' service.[88]

A detailed examination of Fairfax's journey from Lincolnshire to Cheshire via Manchester has answered some questions while raising others. The Battle of Nantwich was over within hours but the build-up involved Fairfax in weeks of travel, arranging the logistics of an army on the move, and negotiation. He was fortunate not to be intercepted by the Royalists, as this could have undermined the enterprise before the final march on Nantwich.

[85]The Weekly accompt. From Wednesday the 24 January to the first of February 1643/4 Unpaginated

[86]Peter Young and Richard Holmes. *The English Civil War: A Military History of the Three Civil Wars 1642-1651*, (Malton: Methuen Publishing, 1974), p.174.

[87]Mercurius Anglicus or, A Post from the North: From Wednesday the last of January till Wednesday the 7th of February. (1644) No 1. p.6.

[88]Robert Norman Dore. *The Civil Wars in Cheshire,* (Chester: Cheshire Community Council, 1966) p.38.

Debating the genesis of Clausewitz's *On War*

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ABSTRACT
Two different, albeit partial, versions of Carl von Clausewitz's masterpiece, On War*, have recently resurfaced, opening new avenues of research for those studying the genesis of* On War *and attempting to reconstruct the evolution of its author's theorising. Unfortunately, both texts are undated and the order in which they were written is not clear. This article therefore aims to discuss the chronology of the writing of these texts. In particular, we will examine the hypothesis put forward in the literature that one of these texts may in fact be the very first version of* On War *and argue that this is not the case.*

Introduction

Carl von Clausewitz's masterpiece, *On War*,[1] is a composite and unfinished work, incorporating texts written and rewritten over more than a decade. Its stratified character has long raised a fundamental question: does the book articulate a coherent theoretical vision, or does it juxtapose layers of thought from different stages of Clausewitz's intellectual development? Answering this question requires more than a close reading of the published text: it demands an understanding of how the work came into being. That is why scholars have long devoted significant attention to reconstructing its genealogy. For much of the twentieth century, however, they had to work with a remarkably thin documentary base. Beyond the published text itself, only a handful of primary sources shed light on the evolution of Clausewitz's

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DOI: 10.25602/GOLD.bjmh.v12i3.1995

[1]The standard translation of *Vom Kriege* in English was published by Michael Howard and Peter Paret in 1976 (Carl von Clausewitz, *On War,* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976)). We also used for this article the complete German edition that is available on the website https://clausewitzstudies.org/. Accessed 22 May 2026, (this edition, which is based on modern scholars' reconstruction of Clausewitz's original text, can be downloaded and submitted to automated text processing, which allowed us to compare it with the two other versions of *On War* examined in this article.

theorising: three short notes reproduced by Marie von Clausewitz at the beginning of the first volume of her husband's *Posthumous Works*; an undated author's preface; two prefaces by Marie for the first and third volumes; and scattered clues in Clausewitz's correspondence and other writings.[2] These fragments, often obscure and sometimes undated, long limited efforts to understand how *On War* took shape and how its author's thinking developed over time.

The recent rediscovery, by the Dutch scholar Paul Donker, of two distinct, albeit partial, versions of *On War* therefore represents a major development. These manuscripts capture the work at different stages of its composition and offer unprecedented material for reconstructing its evolution. Yet their potential is complicated by a crucial difficulty: neither manuscript is dated, and the sequence in which they were written remains uncertain.

Donker's role in bringing these manuscripts back to light is, in itself, a major contribution to Clausewitz studies. But he also advances an audacious – indeed revolutionary – thesis, which he has developed in several publications, including one in this journal.[3] He claims that one of the documents may well be the very first version of *On War*, dating from Clausewitz's years in Coblenz (1816-1818), when he first began working on a book about war. He further contends that the other document represents the state of the manuscript in 1827, at the precise moment when Clausewitz decided to undertake a sweeping revision of his work. If correct, these

[2]*On War* is only one among several works by Clausewitz that his widow edited and published after his death in 1831. In total, ten volumes appeared under the collective title '*Hinterlassene Werke des Generals Carl von Clausewitz über Krieg und Kriegführung*' ('Works left behind by General Carl von Clausewitz on war and warfare'). The first three volumes, published between 1832 and 1834, contain the eight books that make up *On War*. The subsequent volumes consist mostly of Clausewitz's historical writings. The final volume was published in 1837. Several other writings by Clausewitz, as well as parts of his correspondence, have been transcribed and published by German historian Werner Hahlweg in Werner Hahlweg (ed.), *Carl von Clausewitz, Schriften – Aufsätze – Studiën – Briefe II*, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990), 2 volumes.

[3]Paul Donker, '*Aphorismen über den Krieg und die Kriegführung* as the first version of Clausewitz's masterpiece', *Research Paper 108*, Publication of the Faculty of Military Sciences, Netherlands Defence Academy (May 2016); Paul Donker, 'The Genesis of Clausewitz's *On War* Reconsidered', *British Journal for Military History*, vol. 2, no. 3 (July 2016), pp.101-117; Paul Donker, 'The Evolution of Clausewitz's *Vom Kriege*: a reconstruction on the basis of the earlier versions of his masterpiece', *The Clausewitz Homepage*, 2019 https://clausewitzstudies.org/bibl/DonkerP-TheEvolutionOfClausewitzsVomKriege.pdf. Accessed 25 May 2026.

claims would compel us to reconsider almost everything we thought we knew about the composition of *On War* and the evolution of its author's theorising.

In this article, however, we argue that the available evidence does not support Donker's proposed dating. In our view, the manuscript he identifies as the first draft of *On War* was in fact written much later – possibly even after the publication of the first volume of *On War* in 1832, and perhaps by someone other than Clausewitz. There is also a strong, albeit not definitive, case to be made that the other manuscript is not the 1827 version of *On War*, but an earlier one. This article therefore seeks to reassess the place of these two manuscripts within the chronology of the composition of *On War* and examines what this revised chronology implies for understanding the evolution of Clausewitz's theorising.

Understanding *On War*: Why its genealogy matters

To understand what is at stake in this debate, it is first necessary to examine the composite nature of *On War* and the uncertainties surrounding its state of completion. *On War* was composed over a period of twelve to fourteen years.[4] Over that span, the project evolved from a 'small book' on war into a massive treatise that Clausewitz repeatedly took up, reworked, and expanded.[5] It was in the midst of a substantial new revision when its author died, in 1831, leaving the work unfinished. The surviving manuscript bears the imprint of this long and uneven process: rather than a single, continuous draft, it consists of materials produced at different moments – some retained unchanged across successive versions, others rewritten along the way. Yet we do not know which chapters belong to which stage, nor which ones Clausewitz regarded as finalised. This uncertainty raises a crucial question: does the manuscript's composite structure reflect a corresponding heterogeneity in Clausewitz's ideas, or merely a complex but coherent process of composition?

A central issue is whether Clausewitz's thinking remained stable throughout the long gestation of *On War*, or whether it evolved significantly over time. If he had, from the

[4]We cannot determine with certainty when Clausewitz began working on what would eventually become *On War*. His correspondence and Marie's testimony indicate that he started drafting a 'small book' about war in 1816. Yet Marie also writes, in her preface to the first volume, that her husband devoted 'the last twelve years of his life' to the project – an indication that would place the beginning of sustained work around 1818 or 1819, given Clausewitz's death in November 1831. What is clear, however, is that only after his move from Coblenz to Berlin in 1818 did the conditions become favourable for sustained work: his new position involved mainly routine administrative tasks, which afforded him far more time to concentrate on the manuscript.

[5]Letter to Gneisenau, dated 14 November 1816 (Werner Hahlweg (ed.), *Carl von Clausewitz, Schriften – Aufsätze – Studiën – Briefe II*)

outset, a firm grasp of the core ideas he wished to develop and remained consistently faithful to them, then the composite nature of the manuscript would have limited interpretive consequences: the book would still convey a broadly coherent argument. If, however, his thinking changed over the years, the unfinished and amalgamated state of the manuscript takes on a very different significance, suggesting that *On War* may juxtapose ideas formulated at different – and possibly contradictory – moments in his intellectual trajectory. Reconstructing the genealogy of the text is therefore not a marginal philological exercise but essential for assessing its coherence and determining how it should be read.

In fact, most scholars have long taken the view that Clausewitz's theorising did evolve in a fundamental way toward the end of his life. This opinion stems in large part from one of the three notes Marie transcribed at the beginning of *On War*. In this note, dated 10 July 1827, Clausewitz describes his manuscript – already comprising six of its eight books – as 'a rather formless mass that must be thoroughly reworked once more.'[6] The revision he envisaged was meant to help him integrate two key ideas: first, that there are two kinds of war – one in which peace is imposed after the enemy's defeat, and another in which a negotiated settlement can be reached without defeating the opponent; and second, the proposition that 'war is nothing but the continuation of [*Staatspolitik*] with other means'.[7] While some scholars have downplayed the importance of this note, most have interpreted it as evidence of a major intellectual shift that prompted Clausewitz to rewrite parts of his manuscript, giving the note a pivotal place in the standard narrative of his intellectual development.[8] According to this view, some of his most profound and enduring ideas were only formulated at a very late stage, after he had come to reject earlier positions.[9]

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[6]Carl von Clausewitz, 'Two notes by the author on his plans for revising *On War*' in Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, p.69

[7]*Ibid*., p.69

[8]Among the small number of authors who downplay the importance of this note are: Antulio J. Echevarria II, *Clausewitz & contemporary war,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Jon Sumida, *Decoding Clausewitz,* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2008)

[9]Raymond Aron, *Penser la guerre, Clausewitz,* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1976), t. I *L'âge* européen; Peter Paret, *Clausewitz and the State,* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976); Azar Gat, *The Origins of Military Thought from the Enlightenment to Clausewitz,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); Beatrice Heuser, *Reading Clausewitz,* (London: Pimlico, 2002); Hugh Smith, *On Clausewitz,* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Andreas Herberg-Rothe, *Clausewitz's Puzzle,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Hew Strachan, *Clausewitz's On War. A Biography,* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2007),

If the July 1827 note does indeed signal a rupture in Clausewitz's thinking, it only heightens the problem of coherence within *On War*. Clausewitz was unable to complete his magnum opus. In 1830, he left his position at the *Kriegsakademie* and returned to active duty. Anticipating that he would no longer have time to pursue his writing, he sorted his papers and placed them in sealed folders before his departure. He died the following year, on 16 November, without having been able to resume his work. *On War* was thus left doubly incomplete: not only are Books VII and VIII unfinished, but it is also widely believed that Clausewitz did not revise the entire first six books as he had planned in 1827.[10] To complicate matters further, the available sources are contradictory regarding which chapters and books he actually had time to revise.[11] As a result, we cannot say with certainty which parts of the text reflect pre-1827 thinking and which reflect later revisions.

This uncertainty is highly problematic. It means that *On War* likely contains ideas formulated before 1827 – some of which Clausewitz may later have abandoned – as well as ideas developed afterwards, reflecting what he believed at the end of his life. The book may thus present two layers of thought. This is why Beatrice Heuser argues that *On War* contains both the ideas of 'Clausewitz the idealist' and 'Clausewitz the realist', while Hugh Smith describes the work as an interlacing of an 'Old Testament' and a 'New Testament.'[12] Understanding the nature of the post-1827 revision is therefore crucial for determining whether *On War* should be read as a coherent whole or as the juxtaposition of two potentially contradictory layers, and for identifying which parts reflect Clausewitz's final views and which parts do not.

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[10]There is some controversy about the status of Books VII and VIII. In her preface to the third volume, Marie von Clausewitz states that both books 'unfortunately remained unfinished and existed only in the form of rough sketches and preliminary drafts' (Marie von Clausewitz, 'Vorrede zum Dritter Teil' in Carl von Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, https://clausewitzstudies.org/readings/VomKriege1832/Book7.htm#7-Vorrede. Accessed 25 May 2026). Several authors, however – most notably Hew Strachan and Azar Gat – have challenged this assessment (Hew Strachan, *Clausewitz's On War*; Azar Gat, 'Clausewitz's final notes'). We take the view that the two books were indeed left unfinished. One of the strongest arguments supporting this conclusion is that chapter 9 of Book VIII twice announces future chapters that do not exist – chapter 9 being the final chapter of Book VIII (Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, p.625 and p.633). There is broad consensus in the literature that the revision initiated in 1827 remained unfinished.

[11]Two opposing positions in this debate are represented by Raymond Aron and Azar Gat (Raymond Aron, *Penser la guerre, Clausewitz*; Azar Gat, *The Origins of Military Thought from the Enlightenment to Clausewitz*; Azar Gat, 'Clausewitz's final notes', *Militaergeschichtliche Zeitschrift*, vol. 45, no. 1 (1989)).

[12]Beatrice Heuser, *Reading Clausewitz*; Hugh Smith, *On Clausewitz*

It is against this background of uncertainty that the rediscovery of the two manuscripts takes on such importance. These documents offer new evidence that may help clarify long-standing debates about the genesis of *On War* and the evolution of its author's theorising.

Have we rediscovered the first draft of *on War*? Paul Donker's bold hypothesis

The first document, currently held at the State Library of Berlin, is without a doubt an earlier version of Books I and II of *On War*. Its proximity to the published version is unmistakable: the two books bear the same titles in both versions, and several paragraphs – and even some chapters – are almost identical. At the same time, the substantial differences that do exist clearly show that this text predates the published version and must have undergone significant reworking. However, because the manuscript is undated, we do not know when it was written. There is a plausible case that it reflects the state of *On War* around 1827, but we will return to this possible dating later, and argue that it is in fact probably older. This document had already been transcribed and published by the German historian Werner Hahlweg in a large volume devoted to Clausewitz's correspondence and writings, yet it somehow failed to attract the attention of Clausewitz scholars.[13]

The second document, by contrast, had been completely forgotten since its publication between 1833 and 1835 in a journal entitled *Zeitschrift für Kunst, Wissenschaft und Geschichte des Krieges* ('Journal for Art, Science, and History of War'). It consists of 177 aphorisms – short paragraphs each conveying one or two key ideas – and was published under the title *Aphorismen über den Krieg und die Kriegführung* ('Aphorisms on War and Warfare'). Here again, the proximity to the published version of *On War* is striking: almost all the aphorisms (171 out of 177) can be found in *On War*, some almost verbatim, others with minor modifications. Moreover, the aphorisms appear in the same order as the corresponding passages in *On War*, with only four deviating from the order found in the book. Finally, the aphorisms are divided into four parts, each bearing the same title as the first four books of *On War* – they cover only Books I to IV, with none corresponding to Books V to VIII. Although the aphorisms were published after the first four books of *On War*, we do not know whether they were written before or after them.

While the first document is clearly an intermediate version of *On War* that predates the published text by several years, determining when the second document was written – and where it should be placed within the chronology of the writing of *On*

[13]Carl von Clausewitz, 'Niederschriften des Werkes „Vom Kriege"' in Werner Hahlweg (ed.), *Carl von Clausewitz, Schriften – Aufsätze – Studiën – Briefe II*, pp.623-675

War – is far less straightforward. At first glance, it appears to be a condensed rendering of the published work, perhaps even a kind of anthology or collection of extracts from *On War*. This, however, is not Paul Donker's contention. According to him, *Aphorismen über den Krieg und die Kriegführung* probably constitutes the very first version of *On War*, drafted by Clausewitz during his Coblenz period (1816–1818) – that is, more than twelve years before his death in 1831 and the posthumous publication of his writings beginning in 1832. Donker advances two main arguments in support of this bold hypothesis.

The first argument rests on the undeniable similarity between the literary form of *Aphorismen über den Krieg und die Kriegführung* and the way both Carl and Marie describe, in several places, the earliest draft of *On War*. In her preface to the first volume, Marie explains that her husband initially 'developed his views in brief essays only loosely connected with each other.'[14] Carl himself, in one of the three notes reproduced by Marie, states that his 'original intention was to set down my conclusions on the principal elements of this topic in short, precise, compact statements' which he calls 'kernels' ('*körner*').[15] The same term appears again in his preface, where he claims that his aim was to 'present in compressed form, like small nuggets ['*körnern*'] of pure metal' the 'ideas and convictions' he had developed through 'years of thinking about war, much association with able men who knew war, and a good deal of personal experience with it'.[16] For Paul Donker, there is little doubt that the 'kernels' Clausewitz refers to are in fact the aphorisms of *Aphorismen ûber den Krieg und die Kriegführung*.

Donker's second argument derives from a comparison between the aphorisms and the text of *On War*. Donker notes that, despite the close proximity between the two texts, only 62 aphorisms, roughly a third, appear in exactly or almost exactly the same form in *On War*. In contrast, 76 aphorisms have been slightly rewritten, 8 have been significantly transformed, 3 rely on entirely different examples, 13 are partially or completely absent from *On War*, and 11 repeat passages from *On War* while omitting key concepts. For Donker, these discrepancies indicate that a certain amount of time must have elapsed between the composition of the two texts, and that one represents a reworked, more accomplished version of the other.

Three main reasons lead him to conclude that the aphorisms are the earliest version. First, as noted above, 11 aphorisms echo passages from *On War* while surprisingly

[14]Preface by Marie von Clausewitz, included in Howard and Paret's translation (Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, p.66).
[15]Carl von Clausewitz, 'Author's comment on the genesis of his early manuscript on the theory of war', in Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, p.63
[16]Carl von Clausewitz, 'Author's preface' in Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, p.62

omitting certain key notions. The clearest example is aphorism no. 22, which corresponds to Clausewitz's famous discussion of the 'paradoxical trinity' – made up of the 'primordial violence' of war, the 'play of chance and probability,' and 'its element of subordination, as [a political] instrument.'[17] The aphorism repeats this passage almost verbatim but leaves out three crucial elements. Missing from aphorism no. 22 are the reference to war as 'a true chameleon', the expression 'paradoxical trinity' itself, and the sentence linking each of the three 'tendencies' to a specific actor, the people, the commander and his army, and the government, respectively. These are among the most important contributions of this passage in *On War*, yet they are absent from the corresponding aphorism. For Donker, 'it is hard to believe that Clausewitz, or somebody else, would have left them out if he or she was extracting the aphorisms from *On War*. It is far more plausible that these three remarks were inserted by Clausewitz at a later date.'[18]

Second, following from this point, Donker observes that many important ideas from *On War* – especially from chapter 1 of Book I – are entirely absent from the aphorisms. This includes, for example, the definition of war as a duel on a larger scale and the characterization of war as a 'true political instrument'.[19] Donker finds it inconceivable that such foundational ideas could have been overlooked or deliberately omitted by Clausewitz, or by anyone else, when compiling an anthology of *On War*. He therefore considers it far more likely that these ideas are absent from *Aphorismen über den Krieg und die Kriegführung* because they were later additions.

Finally, Donker notes that 6 aphorisms have no corresponding passage in *On War*, and that 7 others appear only partially. For him, this again rules out the possibility that the aphorisms constitute an anthology of *On War*: If that were the case, all aphorisms should appear in some form in the published text. Donker therefore concludes that the 13 aphorisms that are partially or entirely absent from *On War* must have been written first and later discarded by Clausewitz.

Donker's theory has genuinely revolutionary potential for Clausewitz studies. If the aphorisms truly represent the first draft of *On War*, an entire line of scholarship would collapse – the one that claims Clausewitz acquired fundamentally new insights after 1827. Indeed, most of these supposedly 'new' ideas already appear in the aphorisms.

[17]Carl von Clausewitz, On War, p.89 where we have altered the end of the quotation from the Howard and Paret translation in order to avoid the term 'policy', which we do not believe accurately conveys the meaning Clausewitz assigns to his concept of '*politik*'.
[18]Paul Donker, '*Aphorismen über den Krieg und die Kriegführung* as the first version of Clausewitz's masterpiece', p.30
[19]Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, p.87

More striking still, the two concepts at the heart of the July 1827 note, that were to underpin the revision of the first six books, are not only already present in the aphorisms: they are included within the first two. As such, if Donker is right, it would mean that Clausewitz had formulated most – if not all – of the ideas for which he is now celebrated as early as 1816-1818, nearly a decade before the 1827 note and more than twelve years before he put the final touches on his manuscript.

Donker's theory would also raise new puzzles and open fresh avenues for research. His reconstruction of the genealogy of *On War* does not point to a linear progression. He himself notes that the manuscript held at the State Library in Berlin contains relatively few aphorisms compared to the published version, even though it would, in his chronology, represent an intermediate stage. To explain this anomaly, Donker suggests that Clausewitz first wrote the aphorisms but later drifted away from them. In 1827, dissatisfied with what he had written in the intervening period, he then decided to reincorporate them into his manuscript. On this view, the July 1827 note did indeed announce his intent to rewrite large parts of the text, but in order to go back to the first version of *On War*. In this scenario, the post-1827 revision would not reflect a conceptual breakthrough leading to new ideas, but an attempt to reinject ideas formulated a decade earlier, from which Clausewitz had deviated. Such a chronology raises further questions: why would Clausewitz have departed from the ideas laid down in his first draft of *On War*? And what prompted him to return to them in 1827?

Why Aphorismen ûber den Krieg und die Kriegführung is not the first version of On War

Paul Donker's hypothesis is elegant, but it encounters several difficulties when confronted with Clausewitz's own statements and with the textual evidence provided by the three surviving versions of *On War*.

The first problem arises from Clausewitz's description of his working method during the Coblenz years (1816–1818). Paul Donker is right to note that the aphorisms seem to match the form of the first version of *On War* as described by Carl and Marie. Yet he overlooks another crucial piece of information that Clausewitz himself provides about that early version. In a letter to his friend and mentor August Neidhardt von Gneisenau, dated 4 March 1817, Clausewitz explains that he has 'the unfortunate instinct of developing everything by [himself]', and that only when 'a discussion has become too long' does he 'incorporate the result into [his] little work', before 'throwing the preparatory work into the fire'.[20] In other words, Clausewitz's method

[20]The correspondence between Clausewitz and Gneisenau has been transcribed and published by Werner Hahlweg, (Werne Hahlweg, *Carl von Clausewitz, Schriften – Aufsätze – Studiën – Briefe II*, volume 1, pp.243-244)

at the time consisted in drafting relatively long texts from which he then extracted a few key ideas.

If *Aphorisms About War and Warfare* had been written between 1816 and 1818, as Donker contends, it would have had to be produced in precisely this way – through the condensation of much longer preparatory writings. But this scenario seems materially implausible, if not absurd. It would require that, between 1816 and 1818 – at a time when Clausewitz had very little opportunity to write – he somehow drafted extensive texts anticipating the structure and key ideas of the first four books of *On War*, condensed them into 177 aphorisms, destroyed all the underlying material, then went on to rewrite those same four books entirely after 1827.[21] Donker's thesis only makes sense if one assumes that the aphorisms were written almost spontaneously, without being derived from longer drafts. Yet this assumption is explicitly contradicted by Clausewitz's own description of his method in March 1817.

A second difficulty emerges from a systematic comparison of the three available texts – the Berlin manuscript, the aphorisms, and the published version of *On War*. To begin with, it must be noted that the aphorisms are markedly closer to the published version than to the pre-1827 manuscript. Only 18 aphorisms appear in the Berlin manuscript, whereas 98 are found in Book I and II of the published text. In total, 81 aphorisms (and all the concepts and ideas associated with them) present in the later version are absent from the earlier one.[22] That so many aphorisms are missing from the old version of Book I and II – i.e., from a text that Paul Donker considers is *posterior* to the aphorisms – is quite puzzling. If Donker were correct, it would mean that Clausewitz laid the foundations of his theory of war between 1816 and 1818 in the form of aphorisms, most of which he then dropped from his subsequent works – only to return to them after 1827, even restoring their initial order of exposition. Such a 'zigzag' in Clausewitz's intellectual trajectory is difficult to make sense of.

The case of Book II makes the point even more forcefully. Only 2 aphorisms appear in the Berlin version, whereas 46 are found in the published text. How, then, are we to account for Clausewitz setting aside 44 of the 46 aphorisms when drafting the old version of Book II? A modest departure from his initial intuitions would be understandable; the near-total abandonment of almost all of them – followed by their

[21]In her preface, Marie wrote that 'In Coblenz, where he had many duties, he could devote only a few hours now and then to his private studies. Not until 1818 when he was appointed Director of the General War College in Berlin did he acquire enough time to expand his work' (Marie von Clausewitz, 'preface', p.66)

[22]The difference is indeed 81 aphorisms rather than 80, because one aphorism that appears in chapter 2 of Book I in the old version is found again in chapter 1 of Book III in the published version.

subsequent reinstatement – stretches the notion of an intellectual 'zigzag' to its limits. A far more plausible explanation for the scarcity of aphorisms in the Berlin manuscript – especially in Book II – is simply that the aphorisms were written after that manuscript.

The distribution of the 18 aphorisms that do appear in the Berlin manuscript reinforces this conclusion. 12 of them are concentrated in just four chapters out of the nineteen that the two books comprise. These four chapters, chapters 3 to 6 of Book I, happen to be quite special: they were kept intact in the final version of *On War*, and therefore did not undergo revision post-1827 – only six chapters of the old version of Books I and II were retained unchanged; the two other chapters that Clausewitz preserved do not contain any corresponding aphorisms. Donker attempts to explain this strange correlation by suggesting that these chapters required no revision precisely because they had remained faithful to the supposed first version of *On War*. Yet this explanation raises a deeper inconsistency: why would Clausewitz have preserved fidelity to the alleged first version in four chapters while diverging radically from it in at least thirteen others? The overrepresentation of aphorisms in the few chapters Clausewitz left unchanged is far more naturally explained by their having been written after the Berlin manuscript, not before it.

Another line of evidence comes from the micro-variations between the three texts. Twelve passages appear almost verbatim in all three versions – Berlin manuscript, aphorisms, and published *On War*. These passages are clearly copied across the texts, but small variations – an added word here, a substitution there – can be detected. These variations follow a revealing pattern. In each case, the published version aligns perfectly with one of the two other texts, while the third text contains a small deviation. Crucially, no variation is shared exclusively by the Berlin manuscript and the aphorisms. Instead, the published version always serves as the point of reference: either the Berlin manuscript matches it and the aphorism diverges slightly, or the aphorism matches it and the Berlin manuscript diverges.[23] This pattern strongly suggests a chronological sequence in which the published version postdates the Berlin manuscript but predates the aphorisms. If the aphorisms were the earliest version, one would expect at least some passages to be identical between the aphorisms and the Berlin manuscript, with the published version introducing later modifications. This is not the case. Rather, the evidence indicates that certain passages were copied verbatim between the Berlin manuscript and the published version before being slightly altered in the aphorisms; and that others were modified between the Berlin manuscript and the published version before being reproduced unchanged in the aphorisms.

[23]The detailed results of this comparison are presented in Appendix 1.

From this perspective, the *Aphorismen über den Krieg und die Kriegführung* would appear not to be the first draft of *On War*, but rather an anthology of its final version, compiled either by Clausewitz himself or, more likely, by someone else after his death.

The aphorisms on war and warfare as an anthology of *On War*?

Treating the aphorisms as an anthology of *On War* provides the most coherent explanation for the evidence. It accounts for the extraordinary similarity between the published version of *On War* and the aphorisms: both develop, in the same order, 171 common propositions, almost all formulated in very similar terms – and, in roughly a third of cases, identically, aside from one or two minor variations. It also explains the limited presence of aphorisms in the earlier version of Books I and II, as well as the relative underdevelopment of that manuscript compared to the other two versions of *On War*. Finally, it allows us to posit a coherent progression in Clausewitz's intellectual development, rather than assuming an initial 'revelation' in which he discovered his entire theory, followed by a puzzling intellectual detour and then a return to the first version.

This author's assumption – admittedly speculative – is that *Aphorismen über den Krieg und die Kriegführung* is in fact an anthology of *On War* compiled after Clausewitz's death by someone else, and based on the version published in 1832. As noted above, the textual comparison of the three versions strongly suggests that the aphorisms were written after the published text. Another telling element is that the aphorisms cover only part of *On War, and* specifically Books I to IV, while omitting nearly two-thirds of the work, Books V to VIII. This apparent anomaly becomes less surprising once we recall that *On War* was published in three successive volumes, the first of which contained Books I to IV. It is therefore plausible that the aphorisms were extracted from this first volume. The chronology is consistent: the first volume appeared in 1832, while the publication of the aphorisms began only the following year, in 1833.

A further clue concerns aphorisms nos. 1 and 2. Both contain passages absent from either version of Books I and II, yet found almost verbatim in another text: the July 1827 note.[24] It is, to say the least, strange, that *Aphorismen über den Krieg und die Kriegführung* would incorporate extracts from a separate text by Clausewitz – and from a mere note at that. Their placement at the very beginning of the document is equally puzzling, as it does not correspond to the way Clausewitz structures his argument. Aphorism no. 1 would have been more naturally positioned alongside aphorisms nos. 12 and 13; similarly, the content of aphorism no. 2 echoes material

[24]The first half of aphorism no. 1 can be found in *On War*, but not the second half. Aphorism no. 2 is entirely absent from *On War*. These two passages are precisely those in which Clausewitz introduces the key ideas that were to guide his post-1827 revision of On War.

Clausewitz discusses toward the end of chapter 1, Book I. As they stand, both aphorisms appear to have been placed rather arbitrarily.

This becomes more intelligible once we recall that Marie von Clausewitz reproduced the July 1827 note at the beginning of the first volume of *On War*. The most obvious explanation, therefore, is that an unidentified compiler simply followed the order in which these passages appeared in the first posthumous volume of Clausewitz's works. A small but meaningful detail reinforces this hypothesis: both the July 1827 note and aphorism no. 1 use the term '*Staatspolitik*', instead of '*Politik*'. Nowhere else in *On War* does Clausewitz employ this specific expression. This strongly suggests that aphorism no. 1 was lifted directly from the July 1827 note and, as a consequence, that the aphorisms constitute an anthology compiled after Clausewitz's death and after the publication of the first volume of *On War*.

If the aphorisms were indeed compiled by someone other than Clausewitz, this would also explain why certain concepts that we consider central today do not appear in *Aphorismen über den Krieg und die Kriegführung*. Selecting passages for an anthology is a subjective exercise, and there is no reason to assume that the compiler shared our contemporary sense of which elements of Clausewitz's theory are most important. One example is particularly convincing in this regard: the treatment of Clausewitz's three 'reciprocal actions' in each of the three versions of *On War*. The most detailed discussion appears in chapter 1 of Book I of the published version, where Clausewitz argues that each 'reciprocal action' drives belligerents to abandon all restraint in their use of force and compels them to try to surpass their opponent's level of violence. Since these incentives apply to both sides, it follows that war is bound to escalate; the ensuring rise to the extremes cannot be stopped until one of the belligerents succeeds in defeating the other. Clausewitz devotes a separate subsection to each of the three 'reciprocal actions', presenting them in sequence.

These three 'reciprocal actions' are already present – though in a less developed form – in the earlier Berlin manuscript of Book I. Yet only one of them appears in *Aphorismen über den Krieg und die Kriegführung*: the first 'reciprocal action' is reproduced in aphorism no. 5; elements related to the third appear in aphorism no. 6, but without any explicit connection to the notion of 'reciprocal action'; the second is entirely absent. Given that the three 'reciprocal actions' form an inseparable conceptual triad in Clausewitz's theory, and that they were already present in the earlier manuscript, it is difficult to believe that Clausewitz himself would have omitted two of them when composing the aphorisms. It is far more plausible that the omission reflects the choices of a compiler less familiar with Clausewitz's text and conceptual architecture.

This interpretation is reinforced by the content of aphorism 6, which reproduces a secondary idea associated with the third 'reciprocal action' while omitting the crucial

point Clausewitz is trying to make. Aphorism 6 focuses on the claim that a belligerent's resistance depends on 'the extent of the means of resistance available and the strength of the will'. Yet this idea is not introduced in *On War* for its own sake, but for its implications on the behaviour of belligerents. Clausewitz's key point is that each side must proportion its effort to the opponent's resistance, but since the opponent does the same, both are driven to outdo one another, producing an endless escalation. Aphorism 6 does not address this part of the argument. The selection of a peripheral element while ignoring the core argument is difficult to reconcile with Clausewitz's authorship but entirely consistent with the work of a compiler extracting striking passages without fully grasping their theoretical function.

Taken together, these clues strongly support the hypothesis that the aphorisms are not an early draft of *On War* but a posthumous anthology derived from the first published volume. This interpretation aligns with the textual evidence, resolves the anomalies created by Donker's chronology, and provides a more coherent account of the evolution of Clausewitz's manuscript.

Revisiting the dating of the old version of Books I and II: A revision before the revision?

If *Aphorismen über den Krieg und die Kriegführung* is, as this author believes, merely an anthology of *On War*, compiled by another hand, then it is ultimately a text of minor significance. It cannot, in any case, help us gain a better understanding of Clausewitz's writing process. What, then, of the second manuscript that has recently resurfaced? Can the old version of Books I and II, held at the State Library of Berlin, shed new light on the genesis of Clausewitz's masterpiece?

Paul Donker is on firmer ground when he suggests that this manuscript may well be the version of *On War* that preceded the revision announced by Clausewitz in July 1827. During his research at the *Staatsbibliothek* in Berlin, Donker noted that the two books are written in a clear hand on high-quality paper.[25] This immediately recalls Clausewitz's remark in the July 1827 note that the first six books had already been transcribed in 'clean copy'.[26] This is a strong – though not definitive – indication that the Berlin manuscript may indeed be the version to which Clausewitz referred. If correct, this dating would be highly consequential: comparing this text with the published version of *On War* would allow us to identify the parts rewritten after 1827. It would be a genuine breakthrough for Clausewitz studies, clarifying both the nature

[25]Paul Donker, 'The Genesis of Clausewitz's *On War* Reconsidered'; Paul Donker, 'The Evolution of Clausewitz's *Vom Kriege*'

[26]Carl von Clausewitz, 'Two notes by the author on his plans for revising *On War*', p.69

and scope of the changes Clausewitz made and offering a better understanding of the evolution of his theorising at that time.

However, a close comparison of the two texts reveals several striking features that cast doubt on whether the Berlin manuscript is truly the 1827 version – or whether it might be an even earlier one.

As noted above, several chapters are reproduced almost unchanged between the two versions, with only minor modifications, such as spelling, small additions or deletions, etc. Of the seven chapters in the old version of Book I, five appear almost identically in the published version, the old chapters 3 to 7, which become chapters 4 to 8. By contrast, only one of the twelve chapters in the old version of Book II remains unchanged. the old chapter 9, now chapter 3. Moreover, the overall structure of both books has been altered – slightly in one case, radically in the other. Book I now contains eight chapters instead of seven. One chapter from the old version has been removed entirely, chapter 2, and two new chapters have been added: chapters 2 and 3, on 'purpose and means in war' and 'on military genius'. Chapter 1 has been partially retained and expanded, and now appears under a new title: originally 'The Purpose of War', it becomes 'What is War?' Book II has undergone an even more radical transformation: it has been reduced from twelve chapters to six. While fragments of chapters 1, 3, 4, 10, 11, and 12 survive in the new version, five chapters have disappeared completely (chapters 2, 5, 6, 7, and 8).

Although this might suggest a degree of continuity between the two versions of Book I, this impression is misleading. In terms of word count, the volume of Book I has more than tripled – from just over 7,000 words in the old version to more than 23,000 in the new one. This dramatic expansion is due both to the addition of chapters 2 and 3, which together account for roughly half of the new Book I, and to the extensive reworking of chapter 1, which grows from about 2,500 to over 7,000 words. Remarkably, chapter 1 of the new version is now as long as the entire old Book I. Book II has undergone a similar transformation: its length has more than doubled, even though most of the old text has been discarded. Only a few isolated paragraphs survive – aside from the old chapter 9, which is reproduced unchanged. The scale of the reworking is therefore substantial and cannot be described as mere fine-tuning or minor revision.

The difference in chapter length is equally revealing. In the old version, chapters are generally short, averaging around 900 words. In the new version, the chapters that have been added or radically transformed average over 5,000 words. None of the eight new chapters is under 2,000 words, whereas only one of the six retained chapters exceeds 1,000. Clausewitz clearly changed his compositional model between the two versions: from short, concise chapters to far more expansive ones.

The extent of these changes – especially the near-complete rewriting of Book II – raises questions about the dating of the Berlin manuscript. The July 1827 note does state that the first six books 'must be thoroughly reworked', but this reworking is justified primarily by the need to integrate two key ideas: the distinction between the two types of war and the political nature of war.[27] As such, the note gives the impression of a focused revision – certainly not of a plan to triple the length of Book I, double that of Book II, or rewrite the latter almost entirely. The transformation of Book II is particularly surprising, as it appears unrelated to the integration of the two key ideas from the July 1827 note. We must therefore consider the possibility that the changes observed between the old and new versions of Books I and II may not stem solely from the post-1827 revision, but also from an earlier one.

The idea that Clausewitz may already have rewritten part of his magnum opus before 1827 is consistent with what we know of his working habits. Clausewitz appears to have been perpetually dissatisfied with his own work, leading him to rewrite it again and again. As Bruno Colson notes in his richly documented biography, Clausewitz 'proceeded by successive drafts, rewriting the same text according to a different plan and giving free rein to his mind in order to reach the substance of things'.[28] Moreover, assuming that the old version of Books I and II had already been rewritten before 1827 aligns with another piece of evidence. In her preface to the first volume, Marie states that Book I had not been copied out neatly and that her brother, 'in the course of careful checking and sorting the material, […] found the beginnings of the revision' announced in July 1827. She explains that 'the revisions have been inserted in those parts of Book I for which they were intended', but adds a crucial detail: this editorial work concerned only Book I because the revision 'did not go further'.[29] If Marie is correct, Carl did not revise Book II, and the published version would therefore reflect the state of the text in 1827. In that case, the Berlin manuscript could not be the 1827 version of *On War*, but an earlier one. Marie's testimony is not definitive, however, as some of her other statements do not appear to be entirely reliable.[30]

[27]*Ibid*., p.69
[28]Bruno Colson, *Clausewitz* (Paris: Perrin, 2016), p.353
[29]Marie von Clausewitz, 'Preface', p.65
[30]For example, in her preface to the third volume, Marie von Clausewitz states that Clausewitz did not complete Books VII and VIII. She adds that they remained 'in the form of sketches and preparatory work,' a claim that is somewhat puzzling given that Book VIII is the third-longest book in *On War*. Both Strachan and Gat have questioned Marie's characterization of Books VII and VIII (Marie von Clausewitz, 'Vorrede zum Dritter Teil'; Hew Strachan, *Clausewitz's On War*; Azar Gat, 'Clausewitz's final notes').

One final piece of internal evidence deserves attention. Book VIII contains, on two occasions, explicit cross-references to chapters from Books I and II. In both cases, the references match the chapters as they appear in the published version, not in the Berlin manuscript. First, at the end of chapter 5 of Book VIII, Clausewitz refers back to what he had previously developed in chapter 2 of Book I and gives its title in parentheses: 'purpose and means in war.' This title is that of the later, published version. Second, in chapter 9 of Book VIII, Clausewitz refers to chapter 5 of Book II in a passage where he discusses the criteria on which it is reasonable to rely when judging or criticising an event. The reference here clearly points to the content of chapter 5 in the published version of Book II, 'Critical analysis', and not to chapter 5 of the earlier manuscript, 'Polarity of Reciprocal Intentions in War'.

It is possible that these correspondences were introduced by the editors at the time of publication. But they may also point to a plausible inference: that by the time Clausewitz drafted chapters 5 and 9 of Book VIII, the first two books of *On War* had already undergone the structural changes that distinguish the published version from the Berlin manuscript. Now, this would be significant because the available indications strongly suggest that Clausewitz began drafting Book VIII – without bringing it to completion - before he undertook his post-1827 revision of Book I. Indeed, Clausewitz himself writes, in the July 1827 note, that he intends to tackle the drafting of Book VIII before undertaking the revision of the first six. Moreover, Book I – and especially its opening chapter – reveals a more mature and fully developed intellectual framework than Book VIII, where one still observes Clausewitz's conceptual and theoretical groping.[31] This would imply that the Berlin manuscripts are not the 1827 version of *On War*, but an even earlier one, that had already undergone one, or perhaps several, rounds of revision prior to the one announced in that year.

Unfortunately, unless new evidence emerges – or another manuscript is discovered – uncertainty about the dating of the Berlin text is likely to persist. There is currently no way to determine whether this text is the one Clausewitz alludes to in his July 1827 note, or an older version that had already been revised at least once. This author's intuition – although highly speculative – is that the text is older: the sheer magnitude of the changes between this version and the published one, especially the tripling of Book I and the doubling of Book II, tips the scales in favour of this hypothesis. Whatever the case, this uncertainty limits the conclusions that can be drawn from the Berlin manuscript. As long as its precise dating remains unclear, it cannot serve as a reliable basis for reconstructing the post-1827 revision or for tracing the evolution of Clausewitz's thought during that crucial period.

[31] Raymond Aron, *Penser la guerre, Clausewitz*

Conclusion

The analysis developed in this article suggests a chronology that differs markedly from the one proposed by Paul Donker. *Aphorismen über den Krieg und die Kriegführung* is far more likely to be an anthology of *On War* than its first draft: its close alignment with the published text, the pattern of textual variants between the three versions, and the implausibility of a radical 'zigzag' in Clausewitz's theorising all point to a later origin and, in this author's view, to a compilation produced after Clausewitz's death and after the publication of the first volume of *On War*.

As for the Berlin manuscript, the available evidence does not allow for a definitive conclusion. However, the magnitude of the changes between this version and the published text tentatively suggests that it predates 1827 and had already undergone at least one revision before the one announced that year.

This revised chronology leads to a more restrained conclusion than the initial excitement surrounding the rediscovery of these documents seemed to promise. Neither text can serve as a reliable witness to Clausewitz's earliest theorising or to the state of his manuscript on the eve of the 1827 revision. Their contribution to our understanding of the genesis of *On War* is therefore limited. In the absence of new evidence, both documents must be handled with caution, and we should be wary of relying on them to make broad claims about the evolution of Clausewitz's thought.

For now, the mysteries and ambiguities of *On War* seem destined to endure.

Appendix 1. A textual comparison of the twelve aphorisms found *verbatim* or almost *verbatim* in both the version of *On War* held at the *Staatsbibliothek* of Berlin and the published version

Aphorism number	**From the manuscript kept at the *Staatsbibliothek* in Berlin**	**From the published version of *On War***	**From *Aphorismen über den Krieg und die Kriegführung***
No. 20	Wie schon von Hause aus das Absolute, das sogenannt mathematische in den Berechnungen der Kriegskunst nirgend einen festen Grund findet und daß gleich von vorn herein ein Spiel von Möglichkeiten, Wahrscheinlichkeiten, Glück und Unglück hinein kommt, welches in allen großen und kleinen Fäden seines Gewebes fortläuft und den Krieg von allen Zweigen des menschlichen Thuns dem Karten Spiele am nächsten stellt.	Wir sehen also, wie von Hause aus das Absolute, das sogenannte Mathematische, in den Berechnungen der Kriegskunst nirgends einen festen Grund findet, und daß gleich von vornherein ein Spiel von Möglichkeiten, Wahrscheinlichkeiten, Glück und Unglück hineinkommt, welches in allen großen und kleinen Fäden seines Gewebes fortläuft und von allen Zweigen des menschlichen Tuns den Krieg dem Kartenspiel am nächsten stellt.	Das Absolute, das sogenannte Mathematische, findet also in den Berechnungen der Kriegskunst nirgends einen festen Grund, weil gleich von vornherein ein Spiel von Möglichkeiten und Wahrscheinlichkeiten, von Glück und Unglück eintritt, welches in allen großen und kleinen Fäden seines Gewebes fortläuft.
No. 45	Von der Gefahr im Kriege Gewöhnlich macht man sich ehe man sie kennen gelernt hat eine Vorstellung davon die eher anziehend als zurückschreckend ist	Viertes Kapitel: Von der Gefahr im Kriege Gewöhnlich macht man sich, ehe man sie kennengelernt hat, eine Vorstellung davon, die eher anziehend als zurückschreckend ist.	Von der Gefahr im Kriege macht man sich, bevor man sie kennen lernt, gewöhnlich eine Vorstellung, die eher anziehend als abschreckend ist.
No. 46	Dies sei unserer Anschauung ein Maaß des Einflusses den die körperliche Anstrengung übt, und	Dies sei unsere Anschauung, ein Maß des Einflusses, den die körperliche Anstrengung übt, und	Die körperliche Anstrengung gehört zu den vielen Dingen, für deren Gebrauch keine Polizeitaxe ein Maß

	der Rücksicht, die sie beim Urtheil verdient. Unter den vielen Dingen im Kriege, für deren Gebrauch keine Polizei Taxe ein Maaß festsetzen kann, gehört hauptsächlich die körperliche Anstrengung. Vorausgesetzt daß sie nicht verschwendet wird, ist sie ein coefficient aller Kräfte und niemand kann genau sagen, wie weit sie getrieben werden darf.	der Rücksicht, die sie beim Urtheil verdient. Unter den vielen Dingen im Kriege, für deren Gebrauch keine Polizeitaxe ein Maß festsetzen kann, gehört hauptsächlich die körperliche Anstrengung. Vorausgesetzt, daß sie nicht verschwendet wird, ist sie ein Koeffizient aller Kräfte, und niemand kann genau sagen, wie weit sie getrieben werden darf.	festsetzen kann; sie ist im Kriege ein Koeffizient aller Kräfte, und Niemand kann genau sagen, wie weit sie getrieben werden darf.
No. 49	der Eindruck der Sinne ist stärker als die Vorstellungen des überlegenden Kalkuls, und dies geht so weit, daß wohl noch nie eine einigermaaßen wichtige Unternehmung ausgeführt worden ist, wo der Befehlshaber nicht in den ersten Momenten der Ausführung neue Zweifel bei sich zu besiegen ge-(Bl. 31 v) habt hätte	Der Eindruck der Sinne ist stärker als die Vorstellungen des überlegenden Kalküls, und dies geht so weit, daß wohl noch nie eine einigermaßen wichtige Unternehmung ausgeführt worden ist, wo der Befehlshaber nicht in den ersten Momenten der Ausführung neue Zweifel bei sich zu besiegen gehabt hätte.	Der Eindruck der Sinne ist stärker als die Vorstellungen des überliegenden Kalküls, und dies geht so weit, daß wohl noch nie eine Unternehmung von Wichtigkeit ausgeführt worden ist, wo der Befehlshaber nicht, in den ersten Momenten der Ausführung, neue Zweifel bei sich zu besiegen gehabt hätte.
No. 51	Es ist alles im Kriege sehr einfach, aber das Einfachste ist schwierig. Diese Schwierigkeiten häufen sich und bringen eine Friktion hervor, die sich niemand richtig vorstellt, der den Krieg nicht gesehen hat. Man denke sich einen	Es ist alles im Kriege sehr einfach, aber das Einfachste ist schwierig. Diese Schwierigkeiten häufen sich und bringen eine Friktion hervor, die sich niemand richtig vorstellt, der den Krieg nicht gesehen hat. Man denke sich einen	Im Kriege ist alles sehr einfach, aber das Einfachste ist schwierig. Diese Schwierigkeiten bringen eine Friktion in der Kriegsmaschine hervor, von der nur der erfahrene Krieger eine richtige Vorstellung haben

	Reisenden, der zwei Stationen am Ende seiner Tagereise noch gegen Abend von einer Stadt zur andern zurück zu legen denkt; 4 bis 5 Stunden - mit Postpferden, auf der chaussée - es ist nichts! Nun kommt er an findet keine oder schlechte Pferde, muß warten, bergige Gegend, verdorbene Wege, es (Bl. 17 v) wird finstre Nacht und er ist froh die erste Station nach vielen Mühseeligkeiten erreicht zu haben und eine dürftige Aufnahme dort zu finden. So stimmt sich im Kriege durch den Einfluß unzähliger kleiner Umstände, die auf dem Papier nie gehörig in Betrachtung kommen können, alles herab und man bleibt weit hinter dem Ziel. – Ein mächtiger eiserner Wille überwindet diese Friktion, er zermalmt die Hindernisse, aber freilich die Maschine mit.	Reisenden, der zwei Stationen am Ende seiner Tagereise noch gegen Abend zurückzulegen denkt, vier bis fünf Stunden mit Postpferden auf der Chaussee; es ist nichts. Nun kommt er auf der vorletzten Station an, findet keine oder schlechte Pferde, dann eine bergige Gegend, verdorbene Wege, es wird finstere Nacht, und er ist froh, die nächste Station nach vielen Mühseligkeiten erreicht zu haben und eine dürftige Unterkunft dort zu finden. So stimmt sich im Kriege durch den Einfluß unzähliger kleiner Umstände, die auf dem Papier nie gehörig in Betrachtung kommen können, alles herab, und man bleibt weit hinter dem Ziel. Ein mächtiger eiserner Wille überwindet diese Friktion, er zermalmt die Hindernisse, aber freilich die Maschine mit.	kann. Ein mächtiger, eiserner Wille überwindet diese Friktion, er zermalmt die Hindernisse, aber freilich die Maschine mit.
No. 52	Die militärische Maschine, die Armee, und alles was dazu gehört, ist im Grunde sehr einfach und scheint deswegen leicht zu handhaben. Aber man bedenke daß kein	Die militärische Maschine, die Armee und alles, was dazu gehört, ist im Grunde sehr einfach und scheint deswegen leicht zu handhaben. Aber man bedenke, daß kein	Die militärische Maschine, d.h. die Armee und alles, was dazu gehört, ist im Grunde sehr einfach und scheint deshalb leicht zu handhaben. Aber man bedenke,

	Theil davon aus einem Stück ist, daß alles aus Individuen zusammengesetzt ist, deren jedes seine eigene Friktion nach allen Seiten hin behält.	Teil davon aus einem Stücke ist, daß alles aus Individuen zusammengesetzt ist, deren jedes seine eigene Friktion nach allen Seiten hin behält.	daß kein Teil davon aus einem Stücke ist, daß alles aus Individuen zusammengesetzt ist, deren jedes seine eigene Friktion hat.
No. 53	Diese entsetzliche Friktion die sich nicht wie in der Mecha-(Bl. 19 r)nik auf wenig Punkte konzentriren läßt, ist deswegen überall im Contact mit dem Zufall und bringt dann Erscheinungen hervor, die sich gar nicht berechnen lassen, eben weil sie zur Hälfte dem Zufall angehören.	Diese entsetzliche Friktion, die sich nicht wie in der Mechanik auf wenig Punkte konzentrieren läßt, ist deswegen überall im Kontakt mit dem Zufall und bringt dann Erscheinungen hervor, die sich gar nicht berechnen lassen, eben weil sie zum großen Teil dem Zufall angehören.	Diese entsetzliche Friktion, die sich nicht wie in der Mechanik auf wenig Punkte konzentrieren laßt, ist deshalb überall im Kontakt mit dem Zufall, und bringt dann Erscheinungen hervor, die sich gar nicht berechnen lassen, eben weil sie zum großen Teil dem Zufall angehören.
No. 54	Das Handeln im Kriege ist eine Bewegung im erschwerenden Mittel. So wenig man im Stande ist im Wasser die natürlichste und einfachste Bewegung, das bloße Gehen mit Leichtigkeit und Präzision zu (Bl. 20 r) thun, so wenig kann man im Krieg mit gewöhnlichen Kräften auch nur die Linie des Mittelmäßigen halten. Daher kommt es daß der richtige Theoretiker wie ein Schwimmmeister erscheint der Bewegungen die fürs Wasser nöthig sind, auf dem Trocknen üben	Das Handeln im Kriege ist eine Bewegung im erschwerenden Mittel. Sowenig man imstande ist, im Wasser die natürlichste und einfachste Bewegung, das bloße Gehen, mit Leichtigkeit und Präzision zu tun, sowenig kann man im Kriege mit gewöhnlichen Kräften auch nur die Linie des Mittelmäßigen halten. Daher kommt es, daß der richtige Theoretiker wie ein Schwimmeister erscheint, der Bewegungen, die fürs Wasser nötig sind, auf dem Trocknen üben	Das Handeln im Kriege ist eine Bewegung im erschwerenden Mittel. Sowenig man im Stande ist, im Wasser die natürlichste und einfachste Bewegung, das bloße Gehen, mit Leichtigkeit und Präzision zu tun, sowenig kann man im Kriege mit gewöhnlichen Kräften auch nur die Linie des Mittelmäßigen halten. Daher kommt es, daß der richtige Theoretiker wie ein Schwimmeister erscheint, welcher Bewegungen, die fürs Wasser nötig sind, auf dem Trocknen üben

	läßt und die denen grotesk und übertrieben vorkommen die nicht ans Wasser denken;	läßt, die denen grotesk und übertrieben vorkommen, die nicht an das Wasser denken;	läßt, die nur denen grotesk und übertrieben vorkommen, welche nicht an das Wasser denken.
No. 55	Die Kenntniß dieser Friktion ist ein Haupttheil der oft gerühmten Kriegserfahrung welche von einem guten General gefordert wird. Freilich ist der nicht der beste der die größte Vorstellung hat, dem sie am meisten imponirt (dies giebt jene Klasse von ängstli- (Bl. 21 r)chen Generalen, die unter den erfahrenen am häufigsten zu finden sind) sondern der General muß sie kennen um sie zu überwinden wo dies möglich ist und um nicht eine Präcision in den Wirkungen zu erwarten die eben wegen dieser Friktion nicht möglich ist. –	Die Kenntnis dieser Friktion ist ein Hauptteil der oft gerühmten Kriegserfahrung, welche von einem guten General gefordert wird. Freilich ist der nicht der beste, der die größte Vorstellung davon hat, dem sie am meisten imponiert (dies gibt jene Klasse von ängstlichen Generalen, die unter den Erfahrenen so häufig zu finden sind), sondern der General muß sie kennen, um sie zu überwinden, wo dies möglich ist, und um nicht eine Präzision in den Wirkungen zu erwarten, die eben wegen dieser Friktion nicht möglich ist.	Die Kenntnis der Friktion ist ein Hauptteil der oft gerühmten Kriegserfahrung. Freilich ist der nicht der beste General, der die größte Vorstellung davon hat, dem sie am meisten imponiert; aber der General muß sie kennen, um sie zu überwinden, wo dies möglich ist, und um nicht eine Präzision in den Wirkungen zu erwarten, die, eben wegen dieser Friktion, nicht möglich ist.
No. 56	So wie den Weltmann nur der fast zur Gewohnheit gewordene Takt (Bl. 21 v) seines Urtheils immer passend sprechen, handeln und sich bewegen läßt, so wird nur der kriegserfahrne Offizier bei großen und kleinen	So wie den Weltmann nur der fast zur Gewohnheit gewordene Takt seines Urteils immer passend sprechen, handeln und sich bewegen läßt, so wird nur der kriegserfahrene Offizier bei großen und kleinen Vorfällen, man möchte	So wie den Weltmann nun der, fast zur Gewohnheit gewordene, Takt seines Urteils immer passend sprechen, handeln und sich bewegen läßt: so wird nur der kriegserfahrene Offizier, bei großen und kleinen Vorfällen,

	Vorfällen, man mögte sagen bei jedem Pulsschlage des Krieges immer passend entscheiden und bestimmen.	sagen bei jedem Pulsschlage des Krieges, immer passend entscheiden und bestimmen.	man möchte sagen bei jedem Pulsschlage des Krieges, immer passend entscheiden und bestimmen.
No. 72	Untersucht die Theorie die Gegenstände welche den Krieg ausmachen, unterscheidet sie schärfer, was auf den ersten Blick zusammen zu fließen scheint, giebt sie die Eigenschaften der Mittel vollständig an, zeigt sie die wahrscheinlichen Wirkungen derselben, bestimmt sie klar die Natur der Zwecke; trägt sie überall das Licht einer verweilenden kritischen Betrachtung in das Feld des Krieges so hat sie den (Bl. 11 r) Hauptgegenstand ihrer Aufgabe erfüllt. Sie wird dann ein Führer desjenigen, der sich mit dem Kriege aus Büchern vertraut machen will; sie hellt ihm überall den Weg auf, erleichtert ihm seine Schritte, erzieht sein Urtheil, bewahrt ihn vor vielen Abwegen.	Untersucht die Theorie die Gegenstände, welche den Krieg ausmachen, unterscheidet sie schärfer, was auf den ersten Blick zusammenzufließen scheint, gibt sie die Eigenschaften der Mittel vollständig an, zeigt sie die wahrscheinlichen Wirkungen derselben, bestimmt sie klar die Natur der Zwecke, trägt sie überall das Licht einer verweilenden kritischen Betrachtung in das Feld des Krieges, so hat sie den Hauptgegenstand ihrer Aufgabe erfüllt. Sie wird dann demjenigen ein Führer, der sich mit dem Kriege aus Büchern vertraut machen will; sie hellt ihm überall den Weg auf, erleichtert seine Schritte, erzieht sein Urteil und bewahrt ihn vor Abwegen.	Untersucht die Theorie die Gegenstände, welche den Krieg ausmachen, unterscheidet sie schärfer, was auf den ersten Blick zusammenzufließen scheint; gibt sie die Eigenschaften der Mittel vollständig an, zeigt sie die wahrscheinlichen Wirkungen derselben; bestimmt sie klar die Natur der Zwecke, trägt sie überall das Licht einer verweilenden kritischen Betrachtung in das Feld des Krieges: so hat sie den Hauptgegenstand ihrer Aufgabe erfüllt. Sie wird dann demjenigen ein Führer, der sich aus Büchern mit dem Kriege vertraut machen will; sie hellt ihm überall den Weg auf, erleichtert seine Schritte, erzieht sein Urteil und bewahrt ihn vor Abwegen.
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	dunkeln Gegenstand überall aufzuklären, so wird er wohl weiter kommen als derjenige, welcher in kurzer Zeit damit vertraut sein will. Damit also nicht jeder von neuem aufzuräumen und sich durchzuarbeiten habe, sondern die Sache geordnet und gelichtet finde, dazu ist die Theorie vorhanden. Sie soll den Geist (Bl. 11 v) des künftigen Führers im Kriege erziehen, oder vielmehr ihn bei seiner Selbst-Erziehung leiten, nicht aber ihn auf das Schlachtfeld begleiten; so wie ein weiser Erzieher die Geistes-Entwickelung des Jünglings lenkt und erleichtert, ohne ihn darum das ganze Leben am Gängelbande zu führen.	dunkeln Gegenstand überall aufzuklären, so wird er wohl weiter kommen als derjenige, welcher in kurzer Zeit damit vertraut sein will. Daß also nicht jeder von neuem aufzuräumen und sich durchzuarbeiten habe, sondern die Sache geordnet und gelichtet finde, dazu ist die Theorie vorhanden. Sie soll den Geist des künftigen Führers im Kriege erziehen oder vielmehr ihn bei seiner Selbsterziehung leiten, nicht aber ihn auf das Schlachtfeld begleiten; so wie ein weiser Erzieher die Geistesentwicklung eines Jünglings lenkt und erleichtert, ohne ihn darum das ganze Leben hindurch am Gängelbande zu führen.	dunkeln Gegenstand überall aufzuklären, so wird er wohl weiter kommen, als derjenige, welcher in kurzer Zeit damit vertraut sein will. Daß also nicht jeder von neuem aufzuräumen und sich durchzuarbeiten brauche, sondern die Sache geordnet und gelichtet finde, dazu ist die Theorie vorhanden. Sie soll den Geist des künftigen Führers im Kriege erziehen, oder vielmehr ihn bei seiner Selbsterziehung leiten, nicht aber ihn auf das Schlachtfeld begleiten; so wie ein weiser Erzieher die Geistesentwicklung eines Jünglings lenkt und erleichtert, ohne ihn darum das ganze Leben hindurch am Gängelbande zu führen.

The intersection of military requirements and missionary aspirations in British India: Catholic Army Chaplains in the Second Afghan War, 1878-1880

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ABSTRACT
This paper attempts to further an understanding, albeit in a limited historical context, of how the interests of the British administration and the Catholic Church in India intersected through the ministry of chaplains who, at the request of British military authorities, tended the spiritual needs of Catholic soldiers in the Second Afghan War. It seeks also to show that whilst fulfilling chaplaincy duties Catholic missionaries simultaneously endeavoured to establish structures for evangelisation in a hostile cultural environment and debilitating climatic and topographical conditions.

Introduction

The increasing availability and accessibility of military and religious archival sources has stimulated interest in and generated research into the historical development of military chaplaincy and has provided fresh and detailed insights into the role and effectiveness of chaplains in war and in peace. The publication of studies relating to religion, churches and societies in war has also enabled historians of military chaplaincy to contextualise their research in a wider field of historiography, particularly when studying chaplaincy in twentieth century conflicts.[1] Studies of chaplaincy in earlier

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DOI: 10.25602/GOLD.bjmh.v12i3.1996

[1]See for example: A. Billings, *The Dove, the Fig Leaf and the Sword: Why Christianity changes its mind about war,* (London: SPCK, 2014) M. Dempsey, *The Priest Among the Soldiers,* (London: Burns & Oates, 1947); J. Hagerty and B Hudd, *Defend Us in Battle: Catholic Chaplains in the British Military,* (Durham: Sacristy Press, 2024); P. Howson, *Muddling Through: The Organization of British Army Chaplaincy in World War One,* (Solihull:

periods are limited but material may be found in religious records, military monographs, memoirs, regimental histories, historical journals and academic theses all of which facilitate a deeper understanding of the chaplain's role as a representative of an institution devoted to peace while at the same time working among military personnel trained for war.[2]

Whilst genuinely concerned for the spiritual welfare of Catholics in the military, British Catholic bishops in the Victorian era did not see Catholics in the armed forces and Catholic military chaplains as part of an episcopal remit which focussed on the expansion of the domestic Church. Consequently, Catholic historians have tended to research prominent features of the developing Church such as chapels, schools, congregations and clerical personalities, and the history of Catholics in the armed forces and their chaplains has been largely overlooked.[3] This paper offers a partial corrective to this imbalance by introducing a range of ecclesiastical sources which illustrate the religious milieux and military circumstances in which Victorian Catholic army chaplains ministered.

As studies in missiology testify, Christian denominations in Victorian Britain conducted foreign missions in a period when the spreading of Christianity, especially Anglicanism, was regarded as an essential element of British imperialism.[4] Missionary institutes fulfilled their primary function of evangelisation in territories under British rule and influence and with British military protection. In return they addressed the religious

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Helion & Company Limited, 2013); W. Sheils (Ed.) *Church and War*, Studies in Church History, vol. 20, (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 1983); M. Snape, *The Royal Army Chaplains' Department: Clergy Under Fire,* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2008).

[2]See for example: D. L. Bergen (Ed.), *The Sword of the Lord: Military Chaplains from the First to the Twenty-first Century,* (Notre Dame, In.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004); Dow, A. C., *Ministers to the Soldiers of Scotland: A History of the Military Chaplains of Scotland prior to the War in the Crimea,* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1962); A. Laurence, *Parliamentary Army Chaplains, 1642-1651,* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1990); Rev O. S. Watkins, *With Kitchener's Army,* (London: S. W. Partridge, 1899).

[3]See G. A. Beck, *The English Catholics 1850-1950,* (London: Burns Oates, 1950) and V. A. McClelland and M. Hodgetts, *From Without the Flaminian Gate: 150 Years of Roman Catholicism in England and Wales 1850-2000,* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1999).

[4]See R. Strong (Ed.), *The Oxford History of Anglicanism, Volume III: Partisan Anglicanism and its Global Expansion 1829-c.1914*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); H. M. Carey, '*Overseas Missions'* in C. M. Mangion and S. O'Brien (Eds.), *The Oxford History of British and Irish Catholicism, Volume IV: Building Identity, 1830–1913*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023).

needs of occupying armies, colonial officials and trading communities whilst simultaneously attempting to moderate the social excesses of soldiers.[5]

The Catholic Church, with its universal religious perspective, acknowledged the benefits of imperial arrangements but was acutely aware of international and institutional competition for papal favour among Catholic missionary orders as they established foreign missions. In consequence, Propaganda Fide, the dicastery responsible for missionary activity, was ever watchful of maintaining a balance between spreading the faith, encouraging missionary institutes and ensuring the favour and protection of Britain and other European imperial powers.[6]

This paper shows how the connection between British imperial politics, the Vatican and Catholic missionary orders was exemplified in the late-nineteenth century on India's north-west frontier where Afghanistan's strategic position threatened British interests. Britain had mounted an unsuccessful campaign to impose its influence over Afghanistan in the First Afghan War, 1839-1842, but British attempts to further prevent outside interference in Afghanistan coincided, later in the century, with increased Russian interest in the region. Anglo-Russian diplomatic tension mounted as each power sought to exert dominance over Afghan politics, rulers, economics and people and the Second Afghan War (1878-1880), involving Britain and Afghanistan but not Russia, began as a result of the failure of Anglo-Afghan diplomatic manoeuvres.[7]

The British army in India requested the Vatican to provide chaplains for Catholic British soldiers engaged in the conflict and in 1879 the Vatican selected the Mill Hill Missionaries, an English male religious institute, for this task. In exchange, the Vatican promised the institute future exclusive Catholic missionary rights in Afghanistan with the assurance of British political and military protection. The Mill Hill Missionaries acceded to the Vatican's request.

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[5]M. Snape, 'Missions and the Military: the British Empire and Commonwealth, *c.*1800 –1960' in B. Stanley (Ed.), *Christianity and Empire Revisited*, (Brill: Ebook, 2025). Snape examines the complex relationships between religious and military dimensions in British imperial history.

[6]A Dicastery is a department of the Roman Curia, the administrative body of the Holy See. Propaganda Fide was established in the seventeenth century. See P. Hallett, *A Catholic* Dictionary, (London: Virtue & Co., 1954).

[7]For analyses and interpretations of the development of nineteenth century Afghanistan see M. Bayly, *Taming the Imperial Imagination, Colonial Knowledge, International Relations, and the Anglo-Afghan Encounter, 1808–1878*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,2016) and B. D. Hopkins, *The Making of Modern Afghanistan*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

The archives of the Mill Hill Missionaries provide sufficient material on which to base a study of the institute's contribution to military chaplaincy in the Second Afghan War. By consulting in-house histories, institutional correspondence, individual records and clerical accounts of wartime experiences, the British empire and army in India can be viewed through the prism of a nascent religious institute anxious for its priests to fulfil their vocation and to please both its Church and imperial masters.[8] An examination of Mill Hill's military mission also affords deeper insights into the chaplain's role in providing spiritual welfare to soldiers, his place in the wider imperial milieu and his value to military authorities.[9]

This article reveals the complex inter-relationship between Britain's military and political control over India, Afghanistan's importance in Britain's protection of India's north-west frontier, Sacred Propaganda's world-view of Catholic evangelization, and the routine spiritual work of Catholic chaplains among soldiers. As they conducted their ministry in the Second Afghan War at the behest of the British military, Mill Hill chaplains were subject to the army's battlefield tactics and pervasive bureaucracy, Afghan opposition to external interference in its affairs, and Vatican missionary politics. The army's withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1880 demonstrated the Vatican's dependence on British imperial policy and Mill Hill's dependence on the Vatican's authority. The missionaries attempted to fulfil their vocation and bravely conducted their original remit to the army but this account shows that they were prevented from laying the foundations of a promised mission in Afghanistan by political, military, cultural and religious factors well beyond their control.

St Joseph's Foreign Missionary Society and Afghanistan

St Joseph's Foreign Missionary Society, founded in 1866 by Father (Fr) Herbert Vaughan, became known as the Mill Hill Missionaries after its seminary, St Joseph's College, was established at Mill Hill, north-west London, in 1869.[10] The Society's early professors and recruits came from England, Prussia, Ireland, Belgium, Holland, the Tyrol and the United States of America, however, and although English in origin it soon assumed an international, multi-lingual character. Vaughan sought 'new territories' for his missionaries and such missionary fields included Britain's recently-

[8]The Mill Hill Missionaries Archives are kept at the Mill Hill Missionaries Heritage Centre; https://millhillmissionaries.com/mill-hill-archives/. Accessed 22 May 2026.

[9]For a pioneering study of Catholic military chaplaincy, see T. Johnstone and J. Hagerty, *The Cross on the Sword: Catholic Chaplains in the Forces*, (London: Geoffrey Chapman: 1996).

[10]Fr Herbert Vaughan (1832-1903). A priest of the Westminster Archdiocese, Vaughan was successively Bishop of Salford (1872) and Archbishop of Westminster (1892). See P. Hughes, 'The Bishops of the Century' in Beck, *The English Catholics,* pp.164-171, p,470.

proclaimed Indian Empire.[11] In 1875, Bishop Stephen Fennelly, Vicar Apostolic of Madras, invited Fr David Forbes and three other Mill Hill priests to minister in the Telugu mission in Andhra Pradesh where they were immediately confronted with an epidemic, care for the sick and the distribution of aid.[12] However, the Mill Hill Missionaries were later required to undertake another challenge.

On 18 January 1879, Fr Peter Benoit, Rector of St Joseph's College, was informed by Monsignor Henry O'Callaghan, Roman agent for the Bishops of England and Wales, that Pope Leo XIII had ordered Cardinal Simeoni, Prefect of Propaganda, 'to provide at once for the spiritual wants of the English soldiers engaged in the war with Afghanistan.'[13] For this assignment, Simeoni chose the Mill Hill Missionaries who, in 1879, were the only English overseas missionary order. The Vatican, therefore, had little choice when assembling English army chaplains for Afghanistan.[14] Simeoni informed Benoit that the Pope,

> … desired me to write and offer you a district in that quarter to be formed into a Prefecture. He wishes to know if you are able to send three or four priests,

[11]T. Rafferty MHM, *The Crimson Lily in our Midst: St Joseph's Missionary Society (Mill Hill) in the Punjab, Afghanistan, Kashmir, and North-West Frontier Province,* (Mill Hill: Mill Hill Missionaries, 2007), pp.13-15. Fr Rafferty relied on J. Van der Klugt MHM and M. Conroy MHM, *The Opening Door. Mill Hill Mission to Afghanistan: 1878-1882. History of the Diocese of Rawalpindi: Part 1*. (Rawalpindi: Pastoral Institute Publication Centre. Multan, 1979).

[12]Maire Ni Chearbhaill, 'The Fennelly Brothers and the Maynooth Mission to India' in S. Ryan (Ed.), *Treasures of Irish Christianity, (Volume 111), To the Ends of the Earth*, (Dublin: Veritas, 2015), pp.127-129. Missionary regions where a Church hierarchy has not been established are governed by a papal delegate who is usually a bishop and designated a Vicar Apostolic. Prefectures are missionary regions insufficiently developed to be an Apostolic Vicariate. *The Tablet*, 29 April, 1876. *The Tablet*, a Catholic periodical, was founded by Frederick Lucas in 1840. It campaigned vigorously in the nineteenth century for the official appointment or commissioning of Catholic army and naval chaplains.

[13]See M. E. Williams, *The Venerable English College, Rome: A History* (Leominster: Gracewing, 2008); and after Vaughan was appointed Bishop of Salford, he delegated daily supervision of the Society to Fr Benoit. See Rafferty, *The Crimson Lily,* 15.

[13]See E. Cruise, 'Development of the Religious Orders' in Beck, *The English Catholics,* p.470.

[14]See E. Cruise, 'Development of the Religious Orders' in Beck, *The English Catholics,* (London: Burns Oates, 1950), p.470.

> English or Irish, who may be able to attend also to the natives, and will obtain recognition from the English government as army chaplains.[15]

Assuming that the British intended 'to make a permanent occupation' in Afghanistan, Propaganda offered the Mill Hill Missionaries 'this new mission'. The Vicar Apostolic of Agra had been requested to make temporary provision and had sent some Italian Capuchin missionaries but Propaganda repeated the Pope's intention to have English or Irish missionaries. 'An Irish name' wrote O'Callaghan, 'would fit the purpose'.[16] A government 'subsidy' may be forthcoming but, if not, Propaganda would endeavour to make some financial provision. Simeoni 'wished to know without delay' if the Mill Hill authorities were disposed to accede to the Pope's wishes.[17]

Vaughan accepted Propaganda's offer and Simeoni wrote that the Pope was 'gratified'.[18] Vaughan's concern, however, was that the Society's mission in Afghanistan did not become primarily devoted to the military. 'The army commitment might be predominant for the time being', he wrote, 'but it would be continued only if a local mission could be maintained at the same time'.[19]

Emphasising the Afghan threat to the British empire in India and the bleak contemporary view of both the military campaign and the religious extremism of the Afghans, *The Tablet* stated that the task facing the Mill Hill Missionaries [20]

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[15]Archives of Mill Hill Missionary Society (hereinafter AMHMS), Pakistan Archives 1879-1882, Box 1, Kashmir and Afghanistan, O'Callaghan to Vaughan, 30 January 1879.
[16]Ibid., O'Callaghan to Vaughan, 30 January 1879. Archives of Mill Hill Missionary Society, Pakistan Archives 1879-1882, Box 1, Kashmir and Afghanistan (hereinafter AMHMS). The Vatican's insistence on English and Irish priests related to the language barrier between British soldiers and Italian missionaries in India. The Italian title 'padre' was adopted by British troops in India and remains in use in the British military when addressing a chaplain. Soldiers of all ranks had difficulty relating to European missionaries who could not speak or spoke little English and this affected military morale. A Mill Hill account mentions 'Irish' but omits 'English'. *The Opening Door*, p. 10, p.14. None of the Mill Hill Missionaries who served in the Afghan War were Irish. They included one Englishman (Fr Jackson), one German (Fr Temme), one American (Fr Browne), one Canadian (Fr Burke) and four Dutchmen (Frs Raatger, Van Eyndthoven, Aelen and Prenger), all priests. The five European missionaries sent to Afghanistan were proficient in spoken and written English.
[17]AMHMS, Cardinal Prefect of Sacred Propaganda to Superior of St Joseph's Missionary Society, 18 January 1879.
[18]Ibid., Simeoni to Vaughan, 31 January 1879.
[19]Rafferty, *The Crimson Lily in our Midst*, p.21.
[20]*The Tablet*, 9 November 1878.

> … will be an arduous one. They will have at first to endure the hardships of a military life…and their missionary labours will be among a fanatical people who are trained up with the idea that in putting to death an apostle of God's Church they are performing an act pleasing to God. [21]

The Second Afghan War

The Afghan War of 1878-1880 was the result of Britain's response to Russia's diplomatic incursion into Afghanistan and a perceived threat to the north-west frontier region of British India. In July 1878 an uninvited Russian mission arrived in Kabul but was then welcomed with Britain subsequently demanding that the Emir accept a similar British mission. This was denied and a British mission was refused entry. In November 1878, three columns of British and Indian troops were sent to Afghanistan to assert British influence. However, the Russian mission had left, and in May 1878 the Emir was forced to accept British terms. Two British columns returned to India while one remained in Kandahar. Another British mission under Sir Louis Cavagnari was despatched to Kabul but, in September 1879, he and his mission were killed by Afghans.[22] The British sent three columns totalling some forty thousand men to exact retribution and exert influence.[23] It was to this force that the Mill Hill chaplains were to minister.

Major-General Frederick Roberts' Kabul Field Force of seven thousand troops left Kandahar for Kabul on 27 September. They reached Kabul on 9 October but on 23 December they were besieged in the fortified cantonment of Sherpur outside Kabul by fifty thousand Afghans. Roberts defeated the Afghans and re-entered Kabul. On 19 April 1880, Lieutenant-General Donald Stewart, having defeated an Afghan force at Ahmed Khel, between Kabul and Kandahar, met up with Roberts but as they were preparing to return to India, news arrived that on 27 July Major-General George Burrows' force of 2,476 men had been heavily defeated by over 12,000 Afghans at Maiwand, 45 miles west of Kandahar. 969 British and Indian troops were killed in action and 177 were wounded, and 3,000 Afghans were killed. In ensuing days, the survivors, under the command of Lieutenant-General James Primrose, struggled back

[21] *The Tablet*, 19 April 1879.

[22] The war of 1878-1880 is generally referred to as the Second Afghan War. The First Afghan War, 1838-1842, had involved Britain and the Emirate of Kabul. See I. Knight, *Go To Your God Like A Soldier: The British Soldier Fighting for Empire* 1837-1902, (Greenhill Books: London, 1996), pp.55-68.

[23] A. Mallinson, *The Making of the British Army: From the English Civil War to the War on Terror,* (Bantam Press: London, 2009), pp.214-215.

to Kandahar, which the Afghans then proceeded to besiege.[24] Roberts and his force marched 334 miles from Kabul in twenty-three days, inflicted heavy losses on the Afghans and relieved Kandahar on 1 September.[25] British influence was restored but Victorians regarded Maiwand as a severe British military reverse.[26]

That the Second Afghan War was fierce and brutal was testified by the awarding of sixteen Victoria Crosses. After some official debate as to whether a chaplain could be awarded the honour, one was eventually awarded to the Reverend James Adams, an Irish-born, experienced Anglican chaplain of the Bengal Ecclesiastical Establishment, serving with the Kabul Field Force at Killa Kazi.[27] 1,850 British and Indian men had been killed in action in the conflict while an estimated 8,000 more died of disease and sickness.[28]

Army Chaplains in India

The British Army Chaplains' Department was established in 1796, but did not provide chaplains for British regiments in India.[29] Chaplains on the sub-continent, in British and Indian regiments, were appointed and financed by the East India Company and, after the Company was disbanded in 1858, by the Presidencies of Bengal, Madras and

[24]C. Jackson, 'General James Primrose: Reconstructing A Life' in *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research,* vol. 97, no. 389, Summer 2019, pp.147-167.

[25]Ian Knight, *Go To Your God Like A Soldier,* (London: National Army Museum, 1996), pp. 55-68.

[26]*The Tablet,* 2 October 1880*,* referred to it as '…the disastrous affair at Maiwand.' See B. Robson, 'Maiwand, 27th July 1880' in *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, Vol. 51, No. 208 (Winter, 1973), pp.194-224.

[27]J. Smyth, *In This Sign Conquer: The Story of the Army Chaplains* (London: Mowbray, 1968), pp.117-120; 'The First Parson VC' in *Journal of the Royal Army Chaplains' Department,* vol. XI, June 1956, pp.191-194.

[28]B. Robson, *The Road to Kabul: The Second Afghan War 1879-1881,* (Stroud: Spellmount, 2007), p.299. Knight, quotes Rudyard Kipling's poem *The Young British Soldier*: 'When you're wounded and left on Afghanistan's plains, An' the women come out to cut up what remains, Jest roll to your rifle an' blow out your brains, An' go to your Gawd like a soldier'.

[29]In 1882 the Marquess of Hartington, in a parliamentary reply to a question about military chaplains in India, said, "'There are no military chaplains in India, Protestant or Catholic" but there were clerics "paid for religious duties to the army when required"". Hansard, *House of Commons Debates*, 16 March 1882, vol. 267, cc1005-1006. Such chaplains were not on the British army's establishment and were funded by the Presidencies. Catholic priests were first commissioned as British army chaplains in 1858. For the history of Catholic chaplains, see Hagerty and Hudd, *Defend Us in Battle: Catholic Chaplains in the British Military*, (Durham: Sacristy Press, 2024).

Bombay. The Company Presidencies had their own armies but no chaplaincy structure.[30] Civilian clergy serving as chaplains in India had no commission or rank and later on came under the military jurisdiction of the Adjutant General in the Indian Government's Military Department. The official request to the Pope for chaplains for Afghanistan came from the Indian Government via the Vicars Apostolic in India. [31]

Ballhatchet estimated that in the mid-nineteenth century at least a half of British soldiers in India were Catholic while Mill Hill sources indicate that in areas served by their missionaries in the Second Afghan War, about twenty per cent of the soldiers were Catholic.[32] Whichever assessment is taken, and assuming that most Irish soldiers were Catholic, there were significant numbers of Catholic soldiers in India requiring the ministry of Catholic padres.

Most army chaplains in India were ministers of the Church of England, Church of Scotland and the Anglican Church Missionary Society who received higher remuneration and greater emoluments than their Presbyterian, Wesleyan, Baptist and Catholic counterparts, a source of persistent discontent to the Catholic Vicars Apostolic. Ecclesiastical responsibility for Catholic army chaplains in southern India rested with the Jesuit-run Vicariate of Bombay and for chaplains in northern India by the Capuchin-staffed Vicariates of Agra and Patna. Providing army chaplains placed a strain on vicariates, a task further complicated by the army's unwritten policy against the employment of Irish priests who were regarded as a source of political disaffection among Irish troops.[33] The Vatican, meanwhile, was anxious to relieve the stresses of an additional military ministry on over-stretched vicariates whilst simultaneously maintaining British favour and protection.

The armies of the Presidencies included Indian and European Christian soldiers and missionaries served them and British regiments either as Acting Chaplains at the full-time service of the military in times of war, or as part-time Officiating Chaplains ministering to military and ex-patriate civil communities in peacetime and in war.[34] Catholic chaplains were traditionally recruited from Italian and French missionary orders such as Jesuits, Capuchins and Franciscans but since the opening of the Irish

[30]Smyth, *In This Sign Conquer*, p.111.
[31]AMHMS, Horace Walpole, India Office to Bishop Vaughan: 'Employment and allowance of Roman Catholic chaplains rests on the Government of India', 10 February 1879.
[32]See K. Ballhatchet, 'Missionaries, Empire and society: the Jesuit mission in Calcutta, 1834–1846' in *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History,* vol. 7 (1978), pp.18–34; Rafferty, *The Crimson Lily*, p.19.
[33]Ibid., pp.21-22.
[34]Smyth, *In This Sign Conquer*, p.111.

colleges of Maynooth in 1795 and All Hallows in 1842, an increasing number of Irish missionaries arrived in India.[35] Both Indian and British armies had substantial numbers of Irish soldiers, accompanied by their families, and there were strong Irish-Catholic military networks in which missionaries were prominent and who were largely sustained by Catholic troops.[36] Sudden increases in military personnel, as for example during the Indian Uprising of 1857, were likely to include Catholics thus placing an added burden on missionary institutes.[37] British authorities meanwhile considered the increase in Irish-Catholic chaplains to be politically unwelcome.[38]

While Catholic soldiers and their families would be familiar with Latin as the medium of liturgies such as the Mass, British military authorities informed the Vatican that English-speaking troops found it difficult to relate to European chaplains whose first language was not English. The morale of English Catholic soldiers was likely to have been adversely affected, especially before battle, by their inability to engage in meaningful counselling sessions or receive the Sacrament of Penance from a non-English counsellor or confessor.[39]

Mill Hill Army Chaplains in the Second Afghan War: First Cohort

On 15 February 1879, Bishop Vaughan wrote to Fr Forbes informing him of the Pope's intentions and ordering him to be ready to accompany Fr Browne and the other missionaries bound for Afghanistan. 'The fact is', wrote Vaughan,

> … the Holy See has urgently requested me to undertake the Afghanistan mission without delay. It is to be formed into a Prefecture. The plan laid down by Leo XIII is that we should send three or four chaplains to Afghanistan as military chaplains, first to attend to the soldiers and then to insinuate ourselves into the confidence of the natives. The chaplaincies are to be the stepping stones to the missions and are to form a preliminary protection.[40]

On 14 April 1879, after Vaughan had accepted Propaganda's invitation to provide chaplains, the first cohort of Mill Hill Missionaries – Frs George Browne, Richard Burke, John Aelen, and John Van Eyndthoven – left for Afghanistan '… in obedience

[35] See K. Condon, *The Missionary College of All Hallows, 1842-1891,* (Dublin: All Hallows College, 1986).
[36]See B. Crosbie, *Irish Imperial Networks: Migration, Social Communication and Exchange in Nineteenth Century India,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp.91-93.
[37]Rafferty, *The Crimson Lily*, p.19.
[38]Crosbie, *Irish Imperial Networks,* pp.94-96.
[39]See Reference 18 above.
[40]AMHMS, Vaughan to Forbes, 15 February 1879. Fr Forbes did not become a chaplain.

to the directions of the Holy See.'[41] *The Tablet* stressed the significance of the occasion and the importance of the mission selected by the Vatican:

> The departure of these missioners … to the far north of India … will bring a soothing comfort into many an English and Irish home, when the public will know that, besides the primary duty of evangelising the heathens, the Holy Father has imposed on these missioners the duty of attending to the spiritual wants of the Catholic soldiers who are now fighting the battles of their country in Afghanistan. But the great and more general cause of joy is that these Fathers go forth to plant the cross in a heathen country and bring the light of Gospel, which we enjoy in its fullness, to people that are in darkness and the shadow of death.[42]

Vaughan reminded the missionaries of their primary objectives: 'Seek to win and influence the natives, as far as possible; and remember that the Holy Spirit has sent you as missioners to the native races, as well as for the time being as chaplains to the army of occupation'.[43]

After a month's journey, the priests arrived at Bombay and were welcomed by Bishop Meurin the Jesuit Vicar Apostolic and a former army chaplain in India.[44] Fr Browne had been appointed Superior of the Mission to Afghanistan by the Mill Hill authorities but this title carried no military jurisdiction over his confrères.[45] He, Fr Aelen and Fr Burke were to undertake their ministry to the military while the recently ordained Fr Van Eyndthoven was intended for duty in the Vicariate of Madras. However, three priests were considered inadequate for work with the military and Bishop Fennelly permitted Fr Van Eyndthoven to accompany his companions on the proviso that another Mill Hill missionary was sent to replace him. Frs Aelen and Burke set out for Kandahar via Karachi while Frs Browne and Van Eyndthoven began the long northward journey to the strategically important towns of Quetta and Peshawar.[46] According to army regulations, Fr Browne stated, they had 'to buy each a horse, tents, camp furniture,

[41]Ibid., *Tenth Annual Report 1879*.
[42]AMHMS, *The Tablet*, 17 April 1879.
[43]*The Opening Door*, p.10.
[44]Families in British India Society (hereinafter FBIS), *Dictionary of Indian Biography, Database.* https://www.fibis.org/. Accessed 2 June 2026.
[45]*The Crimson Lily*, pp.20-21. Fr Browne's letters include details of the military deployment of the missionaries. See also AMHMS, Browne to Benoit, 9 December 1879.
[46]*The Opening Door*, pp.13-14. Bishop Fennelly also gave the missionaries detailed instructions on their religious and social duties rather than their military responsibilities. Rafferty, *The Crimson Lily*, p.22.

kitchen utensils etc. ... besides we shall have to have each 3 servants viz a horse keeper, a grasscutter & a cook …'[47] From then on the missionaries were to quickly learn the a 'chaplain's work with troops on the frontier allowed for neither comfort, settlement nor stagnation'.[48]

On arrival at Quetta on 5 June, Frs Browne and Van Eyndthoven initially assumed cantonment duties but were subsequently deployed by army headquarters at Simla. Fr Browne was sent to Peshawar and the Kurram Field Force where 'the heat was intense and we are in the midst of cholera'. There he learned that the 'Capuchins have been recalled by their bishop but no new arrangements have been made as to the new chaplains'. The Capuchins had been acting as chaplains and were disappointed that Mill Hill Missionaries were to be entrusted with the new Afghan mission but Fr Browne found individual Capuchin missionaries helpful.[49]

Fr Van Eyndthoven went to the mountain village of Landi Khotal in the Khyber Pass where he found three hundred soldiers in tented hospitals and cholera-stricken Catholic soldiers dying without the ministry of a priest. He began his work among the 17th Regiment of Foot - later the Leicestershire Regiment. on 28 June.

The following day, Fr Van Eyndthoven celebrated Mass at which 355 soldiers were present. On 11 July, he wrote to Mill Hill with an account of his work and complaining of the debilitating heat. The field hospital and cholera camp and the 17th Regiment, with 173 Catholics, had been moved nearer the 12th Regiment, which was later the Suffolk Regiment, but they were still a substantial distance from each other. He was permitted to move to a more convenient location and was assisted by soldiers of all ranks including 'our 3 Catholic doctors'. He heard confessions in a sergeant's tent and was given permission to pitch three tents side-by-side, accommodating 250 men and where Mass was celebrated three times a week. He ended by saying that it was impossible to speak individually with soldiers about their spiritual lives 'as they are mixed with all kinds of religious sects'. On 13 July Fr Van Eyndthoven was admitted to the hospital suffering from dysentery and died four days later. [50] He was cared for by

[47]AMHMS, Browne to Benoit, 23 May 1879.
[48]Quoted in 'The First Parson VC' in *Journal of the Royal Army Chaplains' Department,* vol. XI, June 1956, p.192.'
[49]*The Opening Door*, pp.12-13.
[50]AMHMS, Memoir of Fr Van Eyndthoven. Bishop Fennelly suggested that Fr Van Eyndthoven change his surname to 'Endoven'. The name on his tombstone was 'Eindhoven'. Vaughan wrote to Benoit on 14 September 1879: 'these foreign names prejudice the govt and officials against our men before they see them …' and suggested that they be Anglicised as soon as possible. *The Opening Door*, p.11. See also B. Sullivan MHM, 'The Road to Kabul', in *Missions and Missionaries*, Autumn 1983, p.6. The

Dr Alfred Rattigan, a Catholic doctor of the Bengal Presidency's Army Medical Service.[51]

The soldiers had quickly come to know their chaplain and appreciated his work. Quarter-Master John Fallon of the 17th Regiment wrote,

> He came out to us here newly ordained and set himself to work with zeal among his flock until he could do no more. He had to go to the hospital himself; from his sick bed he went to attend to a man taken to the cholera camp, and died the next day.' In the absence of a priest, Quarter-Master Fallon conducted the burial and soldiers of all denominations attended the funeral.[52]

Fr Browne, now with Roberts' Kabul Field Force, found Kabul 'a nasty, dirty, filthy hole much worse than Peshawar'. He tried to purchase grapes for altar wine from 'some Armenians' but 'they would take no pay from the padre'; they were delighted to see a priest, welcomed him and treated him with the utmost respect.[53] He was now ministering to over a thousand Catholic soldiers, 'more than one-fifth of the European soldiers,' in five stations covering forty miles between Kurrum and Alei-Kheyl.[54]

In April 1879, Fr Aelen was deployed with General Stewart's troops and accompanied them on the hazardous march from Kandahar to Kabul. By November 1879 he was again in Kandahar where he 'had plenty of work'. For some time, he celebrated two Masses on Sundays and visited Catholic soldiers unable to get to Church Parade or who were at distant outposts.[55] The chaplain was present at the battles of Ahmed Khel and Urzoe on 19 April 1880 and, at great personal risk, ministered to the spiritual needs of Catholics and others. He was listed in the officers involved in the action, was mentioned in despatches and later awarded the Afghan medal with the Ahmed Khel clasp.[56] In a leader about 'the gloomy campaign' in Afghanistan, the *Evening Standard* of 19 October 1880 commented.

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surname of Fr Aelen was Anglicised to 'Allen' either by the military through ignorance or by the Mill Hill authorities to make it more acceptable to the government. Fr Braun had changed his name to Browne in 1875. Rafferty, *The Crimson Lily*, p.21.

[51]FBIS, *Trousdale's Second Anglo-Afghan War database; The British in Afghanistan 1878-1881*, vol 1.

[52]AMHMS, Quarter-Master John Fallon to Fr Browne, 17 July 1879; 'Memoir of Father Van Eyndthoven'.

[53]*The Opening Door*, pp.16-17.

[54]Ibid., Browne to Goosens, 26 July 1879; 'Memoir of Father Van Eyndthoven'.

[55]Ibid., Aelen to Browne, 10 November 1979.

[56]*The Tablet*, 19 Aug 1882 and 24 November 1894; FBIS, *Trousdale's Second Anglo-Afghan War database; The British in Afghanistan 1878-1881*, vol 1. 181 officers took part in the

> … there are others, rated as non-combatants, who confront terrible risks without the heat of battle to inflame them, or the hope of distinction to beckon them on. Their conduct in the affairs in and about Kandahar is such as to do them high honour and stir the pulses of their countrymen at home to thankful enthusiasm. At a meeting at Simla recently, Sir Donald Stewart made a speech in which he paid marked compliment to the army chaplains in the field. He relates how he saw a Roman Catholic clergyman attending to the wounded in the fighting line of a British regiment. The General alludes to the Rev. John Allen who accompanied him in his march from Kandahar to Kabul. [57]

Fr Burke, who had been sent to Kandahar with Fr Aelen, replaced Fr Van Eyndthoven at Lundi Khotal. There he shared facilities with the Reverend J. Gelson Gregson, Secretary to the Soldiers' Total Abstinence Association of India formed to reduce drunkenness among the troops, and they both made use of the tents erected by Fr Van Eyndthoven. Reverend Gregson, a Baptist missionary, recalled that Fr Burke was in very bad health, suffering from the effects of sunstroke after travelling from Kandahar. He had been expected to die on the journey. 'The heat in crossing the sand was fearful', said Fr Burke,' but it had to be done; it was work for the Master … It would not have mattered if I had died, it was God's work, and that is worth dying for.'[58]

Mill Hill Chaplains in the Second Afghan War: Second Cohort

On 1 October 1879, three newly-ordained missionaries left Mill Hill 'on their way to Peshawar and then to Kabul' to unite with Frs Browne, Aelen and Burke 'to attend to the spiritual wants of the Catholic soldiers of the army on its return march through Afghanistan'. *The Tablet*, however, was in no doubt, once again, of their primary purpose and its attendant dangers,

> Their distinctive duty, when things are settled in those parts, will be to devote their time and attention to the conversion of the heathen and Mahomedan races. For, as it has been clearly explained by the founders and supporters of this English Foreign Missionary College, the primary object of the members educated by the institution is to furnish missionary priests for the pagan and infidel populations of the countries to which they may be sent. No doubt the

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action including 'Roman Catholic Chaplain: Father J. Allen'. See V.W. Ellis, *Kandahar Field Force, 1878-80,* (Bristol: E. S. and A. Robinson Ltd, 1912).

[57]Ibid., Cited in *The Tablet*, 13 November 1880.

[58]J. G. Gregson, *Through the Khyber Pass,* (London: Elliot Stock, 1883), pp.14-15. Reverend Gregson commented on harmonious working and social relations between missionary chaplains of different Christian denominations.

> new field of labour reserved for these generous volunteers in God's service is difficult and toilsome; but in it there are immortal souls to be saved, and to those who will contribute to the extension of God's Kingdom there is promised by Him a reward exceedingly great.[59]

The second cohort included Frs John Temme, Gerard Raatger and Thomas Jackson and according to the *Civil and Military Gazette* of Lahore, they were bound 'for an unpleasing destination'.[60]

Mill Hill's 'Memoir of Fr Raatger' states that after arrival in India he travelled to Afghanistan 'which meant journeys either on foot or on horseback through suffocating hot valleys and over icy mountains and the Sacraments had often to be administered in dangerous circumstances.[61] At Peshawar, he and Fr Temme received instructions from Fr Browne to ensure that Fr Burke was well cared for before leaving for their military duties.[62]

Thomas Jackson was accepted by St Joseph's Missionary Society in July 1875 for priestly training and was ordained on 28 September 1879. [63] Thirty years later, he recalled: '… when I had been a priest three days, I left Mill Hill with two companions to go to Afghanistan to serve as volunteer chaplains to the British soldiers in the Afghan War.'[64]

Chaplains under Fire: Maiwand and other Engagements

Arriving in India, Fr Jackson immediately set off for Karachi and then Kandahar via army headquarters at Quetta. Attached to a convoy guarded by Indian soldiers he arrived at Quetta where he learned that non-combatants were prohibited from entering into Afghanistan. The military authorities were unaware of his coming and he stayed in Quetta for three months until being deployed with the 66th Regiment, later Royal Berkshire Regiment, and a part of Burrows' Brigade of 2,500 men, bound for Kandahar two hundred miles away. The commanding officer had received no information to indicate that Fr Jackson was a military chaplain and he could only

[59]*The Tablet*, 11 October 1879.
[60]Cited in *The Opening Door*, p.20.
[61]AMHMS, 'Memoir of Father Gerard Raatger'.
[62]Ibid., Browne to Raatger, 7 December 1879.
[63]Ibid., Fr Thomas Jackson, personal record, Fr Jackson's Afghan ministry and subsequent ministry was covered in D. Burton, *Valiant Men of God,* (London: St Paul Publications: 1963) under the title 'A Lancashire Hero: Thomas Jackson, Mill Hill Father (1844-1916)', pp.9-34.
[64]*St Joseph's Advocate*, Winter 1909. *Advocate* is the Mill Hill Missionaries' in-house journal.

provide him with a cart for his baggage. The padre was, for him, at a more serious disadvantage: he had received no faculties from a bishop to exercise his priestly duties.[65]



Figure 1: Officers & Thomas Jackson MHM (seated fourth from left).[66]

For five days, and in intense heat, wearing his cassock, the chaplain walked alongside the military column. They were attacked frequently and, as Reverend Alfred Cane, an experienced Anglican chaplain with British and Indian regiments, wrote: 'We had Father Jackson, the R.C. padre, out with us. He went on foot and was carrying about

[65]AMHMS, Jackson to Benoit. 20 November 1879.
[66]Image courtesy of Mill Hill Archives.

a cannon ball which passed by him. He might have made a collection of them.'[67] The column eventually faced and defeated a force of the Emir of Kandahar.[68]

Reverend Cane and Fr Jackson were then involved in the disaster at Maiwand and their accounts present a picture of the mayhem during which they experienced the full horrors of war whilst attending to their duties – tending the wounded, bringing them water, offering words of comfort and saying prayers over them amid the noise and detritus of battle. Reverend Cane wrote,

> Then came the most awful part. Wounded men lying down and giving all up. Others getting off their ponies or camels & lying down to die. All begging for water. Officers' kit was strewn about in all directions - wine or spirits all went down the throats of these thirsty men like water. I helped men on to their beasts & urged others on till the task became hopeless …[69]

Fr Jackson's account was equally graphic and distressing,

> As soon as the armies came within gunshot of each other the battle began with dreadful fury … Cannon balls and bullets began to fall on every side of us, and made dreadful havoc among our men. After an hour or two we were entirely surrounded … and it seemed all was lost, for I could not see how any of us could escape alive …

The Anglo-Indian force soon 'lost about half' its infantry and the situation deteriorated. Fr Jackson continued,

> And now began a scene which is beyond description. Worn out by fatigue and hunger, even those not wounded had scarcely strength to move out much less to resist the fire of the enemy. Most of the wounded had to be left on the field. Only a few of the wounded who had to be treated by the doctors had been placed on stretchers, but in the general panic the bearers threw down their burdens and left the wounded to look out for themselves. In utter despair of escaping, some were seen to take their own lives. Volley after volley was fired on us until the enemy had driven us into a barren desert where we likely to be

[67]B. Robson, 'The Kandahar Letters of the Reverend Alfred Cane' in *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, Part 1, vol. 69, no. 279 (Autumn 1991), pp.146-160; Part 2, vol. 69, No. 280 (Winter 1991), pp. 206-220. Reverend Cane was an army chaplain with the Bombay Presidency and in 1880 was chaplain in Kandahar.
[68]*The Opening Door*, p.26.
[69]B. Robson, 'The Kandahar Letters of the Reverend Alfred Cane' in *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, Part 2, vol. 69, No. 280 (Winter 1991), p.212.

> killed without cannon ball or bullet. I think if I live a hundred years, the horrors of what I saw and felt in the passage through that dreadful desert will ever cause me to shudder when I recall them to mind.[70]

Fr Jackson's bravery drew admiration from senior officers, one recalled,

> I never saw a man more earnestly devoted to his work and duty. He is one of the best and bravest men I ever met. On every march he walked the whole way in his long black gown amongst the European soldiers, talking to and encouraging them. During the action on the 27th I saw him walking about in the thickest of the fire quite unconcernedly.[71]

The retreat towards Kandahar, 'about 40 miles distant', brought more horror. 'The sight of the dead and the dying along the side of the road was enough to drive one mad', wrote Fr Jackson. 'Even dogs lay down and died for want of water' and officers 'broke open the medicine chests and drank the medicines to save themselves from perishing of thirst.' 'More dead than alive', they reached Kandahar on the evening of 28 July but there followed the siege of the city. All through August, as Afghan forces attacked and the besieged were cut off from 'the rest of the world', Fr Jackson continued his ministry. On 15 August, the eighteenth day of the siege, he said Mass in a large tent as 'our chapel had to be turned into a hospital.' He heard Confessions and administered the Sacrament of Extreme Unction, the Last Rites, but ordinary soldiers, despite knowing they could die any moment, seemed 'dreadfully ignorant and indifferent' and some refused the sacraments. Fr Jackson was 'glad to be able to add, however, that many of the Catholic officers … have shown a bright example in the practice of their religion.' A war correspondent who attended Mass celebrated by Fr Jackson was 'astonished at the intensified realistic feelings with which I assisted at the mass; but, as I have said, it was my first for some time. This little altar with its two tiny candles and all its diminutive essentials, electrified my whole soul …'[72]

One of the padre's more sombre duties was attending burial parties of the many dead soldiers lying immediately outside the city and cantonments. Stripped by Afghans, eaten by vultures, and decomposing in the heat, few men could be identified and were laid in trenches as the funeral service was read over them.[73] Reverend George Maxwell Gordon, a chaplain of the Church Missionary Society, had been shot dead on 16

[70] *The Opening Door*, pp.31-32.
[71] *The Globe*, 11 October 1880. Quoted in Rafferty, *The Crimson Lily,* p.70.
[72] *The Opening Door*, pp.31-32
[65] *The Opening Door*, pp.31-35; Burton, *Valiant Men of God*, pp.15-20.

August while helping to recover wounded soldiers.[74] Fr Jackson recalled that 'he was a most-kind hearted man and was always very civil and obliging to me.'[75] Reverend Cane also missed his colleague and reflected on his own and Fr Jackson's ministry,

> I hope I have been of some use in cheering up the wounded & others & perhaps in giving some comfort to the dying but I come miserably short. Father Jackson the R.C. priest has worked wonderfully well, going about in a black cassock with a scarlet cincture always, he never fails to be noticed and he has a most charming manner & and most liberal views.[76]

Others wrote of Fr Jackson's ministry during the retreat to Kandahar. Gunner William Hamilton Williams recalled that on the dangerous 40-mile trek,

> … a shell came so close to the Revd. Father Jackson, as to knock that gentleman down with its force, while he was following up the Infantry attending to the sick and wounded. He however soon regained his feet and gathering up his Clerical robes ran after the infantry to the general satisfaction of all.[77]

Gunner Williams recalled how 'the R.C. chaplain', was 'a great favourite with the column.'[78] Relying on these and other testimonies, *The Tablet* reported:

> As the column was retreating and the route was difficult and speed was necessary, like the other officers, the chaplain was provided with a camel but he noticed a wounded soldier dragging himself along on foot. Fr Jackson placed the soldier on the camel and he followed on walking by the side of a gun-carriage. Wearied and exhausted, he was unable to keep up with the retreat and became isolated in the midst of a wild dangerous country, inhabited by bitter, fanatic and hostile tribes. Somehow he managed, hiding by day and travelling by night, and almost starved to death, to overtake the column and reach Kandahar, where he remained during the long siege until General Roberts relieved the town. In token of admiration, Fr. Jackson was allegedly given the flag which had floated

[74]S. H. Shadbolt, *The Afghan Campaigns, of 1878-1880, vol. 2, Biographical Division* (Sampson Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington: London,1882), pp.94-95.
[75]*The Opening Door*, p.34.
[76]Robson, 'The Kandahar Letters of the Reverend Alfred Cane' in *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, Part 2, vol. 69, No. 280 (Winter 1991), p.220. The scarlet cincture, or waistband, was worn by Mill Hill Missionaries on taking vows to the priesthood.
[77]FBIS *Second Afghan War Database.*
[78]FBIS, Trousdale's *Second Anglo-Afghan War database.*

> over Kandahar. Officers said that the padre's heroism was such that he deserved the Victoria Cross.[79]

The Standard stated:

> Rev. Thos. Jackson, a missionary priest from Mill Hill, appears to have behaved with great courage and fortitude. He accompanied the advance guard under fire at Maiwand, was present in the thick of the combat, and shared in the retreat through that terrible desert …[80]

In a despatch of 26 August, 1880, General Primrose wrote: 'I cannot over-value the services rendered … on many occasions by Father T. Jackson, who was always in the foremost of the fight, attending upon and offering every assistance to the wounded, both European and native.' In another despatch, dated 30 August, 1880, he wrote: 'To Father T. Jackson I am deeply indebted for his constant care and attention to the wounded.'[81]A relieved Fr Raatger told Fr Jackson that he had scanned the *Civil and Military Gazette* 'in order to find some news' about his fate at Maiwand. 'Thanks be to God', he wrote, 'I did not find your name among the number of deaths'.[82] Fr Jackson later wrote to a student at Mill Hill,

> I hope that it will never fall to your lot to be a military chaplain, especially during a campaign in a Mohamedan country. It's awfully hard work & far different from what it would be in a European War. For there you would have what they call the "rights of war", the chaplains & other non-combatants wear badges & are not to be fired at, while here the reverse is the case. Nobody's life is in greater danger, even now, than mine is for these people think that I am here for the purpose of encouraging the soldiers to fight, just as their own mullahs or priests call upon them to fight in the name of God & the Prophet. It is the opinion of many of our people here that I shall lie murdered before the winter is over.

He added:

> It seems that no honour or distinction is to be given for the many brave deeds done at Maiwand & at the sortee at Kandahar on August the 14th, because they

[79]*The Tablet*, 15 April 1916. This issue contained Fr Jackson's obituary.
[80]Ibid., *The Standard* cited in 19 July 1884.
[81]Ibid., 19 July 1884.
[82]AMHMS, Raatger to Jackson, 8 August 1880.

> happened to end in defeat. I think it is very unfair. I myself saw deeds of bravery done in their actions that can never be surpassed.[83]

Meanwhile, Fr Browne had accompanied the relief column from Kabul and his letters to Fr Benoit recall the 334 mile march to Kandahar which was covered in twenty-three days. At first, details of Maiwand were withheld but soon the troops were preparing to 'make a rapid march' for Kandahar. Kit and equipment were restricted but by special order of the General, 'the chaplains were allowed two mules each so that they might carry their necessary church furniture.' There followed days of marching under a fierce sun, through well-cultivated valleys, mountain passes and dry river beds; they slept under the stars. By Friday, 27 August they established 'heliographic communication' with the garrison at Kandahar. On the following Sunday, Fr Browne celebrated Mass for the first time since leaving Kabul. 'You have no idea', he told Fr Benoit, '… what a consolation it was to me to have the soldiers once more gathered round me for Mass and for instructions, perhaps for the last time before they would have to encounter the enemy. For a few of them it really was the last time …'

On 31 August, as the relief column reached Kandahar, Fr Browne, wearing khaki, met up with Fr Jackson and joined him in his tent for a meal of 'grapes and water-melon'. But the 'pleasant hour' was not to last for Fr Browne re-joined the relief force in the battle to defeat the Afghans. Of the engagement on 1 September, he wrote:

> I will not attempt to describe the horrors of the battlefield; they are more easily imagined than described. I will only say that in God's mercy the rifle bullets whistled past me and the shells avoided me. I left the battlefield as sound and safe as I had entered it.[84]

After the siege was lifted, Fr Jackson returned to Maiwand where he said Mass on the battlefield and again buried many dead.[85]

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[83]AMHMS, Jackson to unnamed recipient, 5 March 1880. He wrote that one non-Catholic chaplain 'dressed like an officer, carried a revolver' and 'rode with the general and his staff'. The military authorities insisted that chaplains carry a revolver for personal protection but this was 'much against our own will', wrote Fr Jackson. Bishops in England were reluctant to let chaplains wear military uniforms lest their clerical state was regarded as inferior. Catholic chaplains were always unarmed. See Hagerty and Hudd, *Defend Us in Battle*, p.74. The un-named non-Catholic chaplain was probably Reverend Arthur Male, a Wesleyan minister.

[84]*The Opening Door*, pp.37-44.

[85]FBIS**,** Burton, *Valiant Men of God,* p.20.

As for the sensational accounts of the battle published in the English press about the 'unimaginable atrocities committed on the fallen soldiers by the Afghan women', Fr Jackson wrote that such comments were without substance. They were ' … based on hearsay, imagination and the desire to cast aspersions on an enemy who had inflicted one of the few defeats which the British had suffered in India.' Understandably, he commented, Afghan soldiers and people were not disposed to watch their land be invaded and have an alien religion imposed on them.[86]

Besides being mentioned in despatches, Frs Jackson, Browne, Aelen and other chaplains were awarded campaign medals. Fr Jackson's citations, prepared by Fr Browne, included references to the Battles of Girishk on 14 July 1880, Maiwand on 27 July and Sortie Deh Khojah on16 August. In his application for medals, Fr Jackson stated, 'I hereby declare that I was present at the actions … doing all in my power to aid the wounded, without distinction of Creed or Race.'[87] Others considered his bravery worthy of the Victoria Cross.[88]

Having installed an emir in whom they had confidence; the British and Indian armies marched back into India 'and with them the men who were to have established the Mill Hill Mission in Afghanistan'.[89] In October 1881, Fr Alexander Prenger, was sent to replace to replace Fr Jackson but when he arrived at the Afghan frontier, in 1882, all the British troops had been withdrawn. Instead, a large body of troops was now quartered at Quetta where Fr Prenger and other Mill Hill Missionaries ministered to the troops for about a year when the British Government made it a permanent military station. For ecclesiastical purposes it was included in the Vicariate-Apostolic of Bombay and two Jesuit Fathers were sent to Quetta as chaplains. [90]

Post-War Reflections

After hostilities ceased, the Mill Hill Missionaries reflected on their recent military experiences. As Superior of the Mission, Fr Browne acted as Senior Chaplain and was in frequent correspondence with the Vicars Apostolic and army authorities.[91] He informed ecclesiastical authorities of the locations, military engagements and health of

[86]*The Opening Door,* p.35.
[87]AMHMS, Browne to Jackson, 2 February 1881. See *The Tablet*, 23 February 1929 for details of Fr Aelen's medals.
[88]Rafferty, *The Crimson Lily*, p.54-56. For Fr Aelen see *St Joseph's Advocate*, Spring 1929, p.149.
[89]*The Opening Door*, p.46.
[90]Rafferty, *The Crimson Lily*, p.75.
[91]AMHMS, Bishop Jacobi to Fr. Browne 29 November 1879. 'I told the Secretary to the Govt. in India to write to you instead of me & told him that you are the Superior of the Mission of Afghanistan & Baluchistan'.

the chaplains. He was assisted in his ministry by helpful Catholic officers but considered the attention to religious duties by ordinary soldiers 'really deplorable … the greater dangers they have to encounter, the more careless they become about their immortal souls …' He took comfort in the fact that he had started a Temperance Society.[92] Bishop Meurin took care of the chaplains' pay and missionary fund, provided Holy Oils and maintained contact with the British military authorities stressing Browne's religious authority over Catholic chaplains.[93] In addition to chaplaincy duties, Fr Browne, like his confrères, exercised his priestly ministry which included saying Mass, hearing Confessions, tending the sick, burying the dead, praying his daily office, and counselling. All had to be fulfilled in the most difficult conditions and often bereft of clerical company.[94]

From letters exchanged between Fr Browne and Fr Temme it became obvious that Fr Browne had been at the Battle of Sherpur, had accompanied a march from Kabul to Kandahar, and was present at the final defeat of Ayub Khan. Fr Temme was on a march from Lundi Kotal to Kabul and from Sibi through the Bolan Pass to Quetta leading three camels carrying his kit through a sand storm.[95]

As their military duties gradually eased, the missioners desperately wished to revert to missionary work. In frustration, Fr Raatger wrote to Fr Browne in May 1881: 'I am loafing about. Nobody can employ me. What am I to do?'[96] He was subsequently appointed to Mill Hill's new mission in Borneo.[97]

Meanwhile, Fr Temme and the newly-arrived Fr Prenger were stationed at Quetta, still learning the native language and working among European troops in an Indian regiment. Like other chaplains, Fr Temme was disappointed by the soldiers' poor attention to their religious duties and their anti-social behaviour. He told Fr Browne,

> We have had very few Easter Communions as yet here in Quetta. Of the European soldiers, I think we had not yet a dozen of them. There are about a hundred in the regiment but very few attend to their religious duties. The only thing they care about is drink, and to provide this they go and rob Europeans and natives ... I shall be glad when I have done with English soldiers.'[98]

[92]AMHMS, Browne to Meurin, 27 August 1879; 7 June 1880.
[93]Ibid., Meurin to The Secretary to Government, Military Department, 1 April, 1880.
[94]Ibid., Browne to Benoit, 6 August 1879. At Peiwar Kotal Fr Browne was 180 miles away from the nearest priest at Peshawar.
[95]Ibid.,Temme to Browne, 23 May 1882.
[96]Rafferty, *The Crimson Lily*, p.74
[97]AMHMS, Memoir of Fr Gerard Raatger.
[98]Ibid., Temme to Browne, 23 May 1882.

The soldiers, he lamented to Fr Benoit, were not very 'attentive to religious duties at Easter…' and '…the only thing they care about is drink … I shall be glad when I have done with English soldiers. I think there are no worse Catholics in the world than them'. 'European soldiers pretend to be civilized', he continued, 'but are more uncivilized than the barbarians of this country'. He was shocked by the 'scandal of drunkenness and robbery' among European soldiers in Quetta. 'I confess I am tired of the chaplainship … I have been ordained for the mission, but now all the time since I left Europe, I have had to deal with soldiers.' He had no chapel, had to say Mass in a tent and had to carry 'articles on Sunday'. He was willing to go anywhere as long as it was away from Afghanistan.[99] Fr Prenger was similarly 'unsettled' and preferred to read rather than conduct his ministry with the troops. Out of a hundred, only a dozen English, Irish and Anglo-Indian soldiers would attend services. In general, he wrote, soldiers were, 'poor examples of Catholicism'.[100]

More important to the missionaries was their assessment of the prospects of their future mission. Fr Jackson wrote to Bishop Vaughan: 'As I have not had time to learn the language, my intercourse with the Afghans has been limited, and not enough for me to be able to form a correct judgement about the disposition of the people.' But he went on to say that 'one of the greatest obstacles in the way of converting the Afghans is the great difficulty of overcoming influence over them on account of their intense hatred of the Europeans.' Although he wore his cassock and never bore arms, his mere presence, he felt, was an insult to the Afghans. In the likelihood of Kandahar being evacuated, he concluded, 'all chances of mission work will for the present be at an end.'[101]

Missionary Issues: The New Prefecture?

With the end of war and the army's withdrawal, the issue of the new missionary Prefecture re-surfaced but the Vatican appeared uncertain of missionary plans for Afghanistan. In January 1879 O'Callaghan had stated that a new Prefecture in Afghanistan would be entrusted to the Mill Hill Missionaries but by April 1879, when Vaughan pressed the matter with Propaganda, he was told that a precise definition of a territory 'was not yet opportune'.[102]

In July 1879, when Fr Browne and the first cohort passed through Bombay, Bishop Meurin advised that they erect a base in the Punjab, which was within the Vicariate of Agra, rather than Afghanistan. Fr Browne agreed with the bishop but saw the necessity

[99]Ibid., Temme to Benoit, 1 August 1882.
[100]Ibid., Prenger to Benoit, 1 August 1882.
[101]*The Opening Door*, pp.47-50.
[102]Rafferty, *The Crimson Lily*, p.24.

of first gaining British approval. 'We must secure the Punjab if we are to have a good base and in order to have the Punjab, we must have men whom everyone (i.e. military officials) can understand (i.e. English speaking).'[103]

It had been made clear initially that Mill Hill's involvement with army chaplaincy would result in the institute being able to establish a mission in Afghanistan. The Vatican offer was made on the assumption that Britain intended to annex Afghanistan but with the end of the war it became evident that this was unlikely. For Britain the advantages to be gained by annexation of Afghanistan did not measure up to the costs of maintaining an army of occupation in hostile territory so the British withdrew from Afghanistan in 1881. The replacement of Disraeli's Conservative administration by Gladstone's Liberal Party in 1880 also marked the end of Disraeli's assertive foreign policy. Fr Browne reported that imperial policy prevented any missionary expansion that might involve the army and 'General Stewart has set his face determinedly against all missionary enterprise.'[104]

Vaughan wrote to Fr Jackson asking if the British withdrew from Afghanistan would a new mission still be viable? Fr Jackson replied that sending a missionary into Afghanistan would be tantamount to signing his death warrant. Circumstances that left a priest unprotected among aggressive and unreceptive Afghans was to be prevented and advised that Mill Hill Missionaries should not embark on any further attempt to establish an Afghan missionary structure. In the unlikely event of British annexation, Fr Jackson stated, missionaries might be able to enter the country but results would be very slowly achieved. Bishop Meurin suggested that a solution might be the establishment of a new prefecture in Balochistan with headquarters at Quetta but the Mill Hill priests considered that Balochistan, with few military stations, provided little outlet for missionary work.[105]

Meanwhile, in October 1880, Fr Browne wrote that 'From Rome I have as yet no definite information as to our future except we are to abandon Afghanistan'.[106] In 1881 he was trying to close the mission and get the Vicars Apostolic of Bombay and the Punjab to discuss where the Mill Hill Missionaries might work but he was adamantly against one Mill Hill priest staying alone in the garrison town of Quetta.[107]

[103]*The Opening Door*, pp.12-14.
[104]AMHMS, Browne to Meurin, 7 June 1880.
[105]*The Opening Door*, pp.51-54; A. Camps, 'Mill Hill Missionaries in Afghanistan from 1879 until 1881 and their stay in Quetta-Baluchistan until 1883' in *Studies in Asian Mission History, 1956-1998* (Brill: EBook, 2000), pp.211-258.
[106]AMHMS, Browne to Vaughan, 4 March 1880.
[107]Ibid., Browne to Meurin, 15 October 1880.

Another factor which affected the future of the Afghanistan mission was Cardinal Simeoni's late 1879 decision to transfer supervision of the Borneo mission to the Mill Hill Missionaries. Vaughan wrote to Benoit for suggestions as to who should become the new Prefect in Borneo and it was tacitly accepted that the Afghanistan group must provide the Prefect. Fr Allen was the preferred choice but Browne objected to losing this experienced and trusted priest. On 15 March 1881 Vaughan submitted Fr Jackson's name to Rome and at the end of March the appointment was made. Jackson cleared up his affairs in India, obtained release from the army and arrived in Borneo in August 1881.[108]

The future of a Mill Hill mission to Afghanistan was still under Vatican discussion, however, and, in late-1881, Vaughan was called to Rome to seek a settlement of the matter. Browne and his companions hoped that some of their hopes of a new responsibility might be salvaged by this means and were encouraged by the appointment of Fr Prenger in 1881. But Vaughan and the Vatican had decided that the Afghanistan mission should be closed and the remaining priests be re-deployed. Fr Browne was recalled to London; Frs Aelen, Raatger and Temme were assigned to Madras, where they re-assumed their own names; and Fr Prenger was assigned to Borneo. With a clear end in view, they began to settle their affairs and obtain release from the army. Fr Prenger, the last to leave, did not reach Borneo until 1883.[109]

The Mill Hill mission to Afghanistan had started with great promise. The brief service to the military was conducted admirably and courageously but the apostolic labours of the missionaries ended in disappointment. With the departure of Fr Browne and other Mill Hill Missionaries the military chaplaincies returned to their pre-1879 state. The soldiers were still unhappy with foreign chaplains and the army authorities remained reluctant to appoint non-British chaplains to minister to British troops.

Conclusion

The Mill Hill Missionaries took advantage of British imperial expansion in order to fulfil their evangelising charism and the institute's later account of its involvement in the Second Afghan War was redolent of 'The marching armies of colonial conquest, with their cannon and their swords' who,

> …were Christian and needed chaplains to cater to their spiritual needs. The soldiers of Christ would join the marching caravans and, cross in hand, would build the Church in lands that had never known the blessings of Christianity. The dream was the age-old apostolic dream which had inspired the missionaries

[108]Rafferty, *The Crimson Lily*, p.71.
[109]Ibid., p.75.

> down the years and now was to animate a whole new generation of missionary crusaders.[110]

In Afghanistan, however, the reality of the military-missionary relationship was far removed from a romantic endeavour of military might conjoined with religious fervour.

Mill Hill's optimistic acceptance of the military appendage to its proposed mission in Afghanistan displayed its willingness to undertake a dangerous assignment but it also exemplified the dependence of the Catholic Church's missionary expansion on British imperial policies. Support for a missionary venture was always a secondary concern for the British army facing a hostile foe. Government policy and military authority and tactics determined missionary endeavours.[111]

As *The Tablet* had predicted, chaplaincy in Afghanistan proved difficult for inexperienced padres unfamiliar with both the demands of military life and the extreme climatic conditions, but their personal testimonies vividly illustrate their attempts to confront the religious, social and military challenges that they faced. Their priesthood was conducted in hazardous conditions and whilst they brought the sacraments and spiritual comfort to Catholic officers and men, some soldiers spurned their ministry. They were unable to curb the excesses of men engaged in savage warfare and soldiers turned to alcohol and other comforts for relief despite promises made to the contrary. As ministers to the healthy, wounded and dead, Mill Hill chaplains were admired and treated with respect and courtesy by all ranks who appreciated their brave ministry, offered assistance, and befriended them. The presence of Mill Hill chaplains also sometimes exposed fractious clerical intra-denominational and inter-denominational relationships but circumstances and necessity generated goodwill and co-operation between ministers of the same and different denominations.

Fulfilling their primary function of evangelisation during and after their army chaplaincy proved to be a complicated ecclesiastical process for the missionaries. In April 1887, Cardinal Simeoni expressed the Vatican's desire that Mill Hill Missionaries should now assume missionary responsibility for British controlled Punjab in addition to another mission in Borneo. Canon Benoit remarked to a correspondent in *The Tablet* that 'St. Joseph's Missionary Society was bound by its fundamental rule to be at the disposal of

[110] *The Opening Door*, p.8.

[111] The Second Afghan War was one of many wars fought by the British army in Queen Victoria's reign. See B. Bond (Ed.), *Victorian Military Campaigns,* (London: Tom Donovan Publishing, 1967). Bond's edited volume deals with seven long-forgotten campaigns

the Sovereign Pontiff' and remained at the disposal of the Holy See in any field of labour assigned to it.[112]

For Bishop Vaughan military chaplaincy in Afghanistan was intended to be a means to an end but secondary chaplaincy duties soon far outweighed primary missionary undertakings. His hope of acquiring new fields for missionary endeavour in return for army chaplaincy did not materialise as he envisaged although his priests came to the notice of the Vatican, British military authorities, Catholic rank and file, and ecclesiastical communities in England and India. The recently-ordained missionaries who bravely undertook army chaplaincy in Afghanistan and north-west India had also gained much pastoral experience. They had shared the many dangers, traumas, discomforts and privations of army life, brought spiritual comfort to men in battle, maintained morale, and enhanced the reputation of Catholic chaplaincy in the British army.

This article has shown how the Catholic Church collaborated and co-operated with the British military administration in India anxious to provide Catholic chaplains for British, European and Indian soldiers engaged in bitter warfare. By tracing and examining the experiences of the Mill Hill Missionaries ministering as chaplains, it has revealed how young priests, and ministers of other denominations, faced up conscientiously and courageously to the extreme cultural and physical demands imposed on them and how they conducted their ministry in war. It has also shown that because British interests in India outweighed all others the Mill Hill Missionaries were unable to advance their missionary endeavours in Afghanistan as they had hoped.

In 1887 Mill Hill Missionaries began their apostolic labours in the Punjab where they continued to serve for more than a hundred years.

[112] *The Tablet*, 1 Nov. 1879.

'Such is war nowadays!': Sport and other pastimes in the British forces during the South African war 1899-1902

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ABSTRACT
This article examines the sport and other pastime activities in which members of the British forces engaged during the South African War (1899–1902). The article questions which sports and other pastime activities were practiced, and why certain activities were sanctioned by the officers and military authorities. The article thus argues that these sport, leisure and artistic activities within the British army in South Africa could be seen as interconnected phenomena, with similar motivations of the service members who practiced the pastimes, and of the officers who sanctioned it.

Introduction

At 14:00 on the afternoon of 22 January 1901, 2 Battalion Prince of Wales's Own West Yorkshire Regiment arrived by train in the town of Middelburg in the Transvaal, seventy miles east of Pretoria. To escape the humid heat of high summer, some of the officers went to the local club for a whisky and soda. Afterwards, they went to the town square where they laid on the grass and listened to the regimental band. In other areas around the town, British soldiers kept themselves busy by playing football or cricket, while others were lounging about, reading, writing letters, or playing cards. One of the officers in the square, Lieutenant Sydney Francis, reflected on these scenes in his diary when he wrote, 'Such is war now-a-days!'[1]

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DOI: 10.25602/GOLD.bjmh.v12i3.1997

[1]National Army Museum (hereinafter NAM) 1976-07-49, Photocopy typescript extracts from letters written in diary form by Lt Sidney Goodall Francis, West Yorkshire Regiment, 22 January 1901. Used also in title of this article.

For Lieutenant Francis, as for most British soldiers, the war in South Africa was neither glorious nor exciting. At times, it hardly felt like a war at all. After the British forces had invaded the two Boer republics, the Orange Free State and the Transvaal, during 1900, the war descended into a drawn-out guerrilla conflict. The out-numbered and scattered Boer commandos prolonged their resistance by sabotaging railways, bridges, and telegraph lines, and occasionally targeting isolated British convoys. To counter this, the British forces used controversial scorched earth tactics to destroy Boer farmhouses, livestock and crops in order to deprive them of the means of continuing resistance. The war thus degenerated into a slow simmering cat-and-mouse contest with seemingly no end in sight.[2]

This meant that, during the war, the daily lives of most British soldiers were boring, even aimless. Long marches, called treks, over the veldt, and boring sentry duty along the two thousand miles of blockhouse lines defending railways and bridges, offered little excitement. Writing on the experiences in the blockhouses, Thomas Pakenham notes, 'boredom was the enemy that Tommy knew best'.[3] In the eastern Transvaal, Lieutenant Lachlan Gordon-Duff of 1 Gordon Highlanders, wrote in a letter to his father that it was 'extraordinary the way things drag on … we all sit tight and do nothing except fortify. For over a week we talk and do nothing else …'[4] In June 1900, Lance-Corporal F.W. Schofield of 1Yorkshire Regiment, wrote in his diary that there was 'nothing to note. I am sick of this continual misery. Wonder when it will finish.' [5] The war lasted for another two years before Schofield received his answer.

The result of boredom and abundant free time led British soldiers to adopt a wide variety of sport and other pastimes during the war. The officers and military authorities had the challenging task of keeping the troops occupied with healthy and productive pastimes, and in doing so, preventing them from partaking in 'undesirable'

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[2]For general reviews of the course of the war, see Leo Amery (ed), *The Times History of the War in South Africa, 1899–1902*, I–VII, (London: Sampson Low, Marston & Company, 1900–1907), and Frederic Maurice and Maurice Harold Grant (eds), *History of the War in South Africa 1899–1902*, I–IV, (London: Hurst & Blackett, 1906–1910), André Wessels, *The Anglo-Boer War, 1899-1902*: *White man's war, black man's war, traumatic war,* (Bloemfontein: Sun Press, 2017), and for general references, Fransjohan Pretorius, *The A to Z of the Anglo-Boer War,* (Cambridge: Langham, 2010).

[3]Thomas Pakenham, *The Boer War* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1979), p.538.

[4]Lachlan Gordon-Duff (ed), *With the Gordon Highlanders to the Boer War and Beyond: The Story of Captain Lachlan Gordon-Duff 1880–1914,* (Staplehurst: Spellmount, 2000), p.178.

[5]War Museum of the Boer Republics (hereinafter WMBR), Copy Archive: Diary of the Boer War 1899–1902 by 4710 Lance Corporal F.W. Schofield, G Company 1st The Princess of Wales's Own 19th (Yorkshire Regiment), 18 June 1900.

activities. The extent to which certain activities were sanctioned and supported, and others suppressed, is insightful in terms of the development of the social and physical culture of the British army at the turn of the nineteenth century. The British army serving in South Africa was in some ways a precursor to the army that served during the First World War only a decade later, in that it was an army largely made up of British and colonial volunteers rather than professional soldiers.[6]

Noteworthy studies into the late Victorian army include several authoritative works by Edward Spiers, who understandably focussed more on the military and social aspects of the war in South Africa than on sport and leisure.[7] A handful of scholars have studied sport within the British army, but they often focussed on broader timeframes. Tony Mason and Eliza Riedi's book *Sport and the Military*, James Campbell's *'The Army Isn't All Work'*, and most recently, Peter Donaldson's *War and the British*, all fall into this category.[8] All three offer excellent oversights into the adoption of sport within the British army during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but they do not include any substantial research on the topic in terms of the South African War. Donaldson's book is an exception, with a chapter, 'We are having a very enjoyable game: Britain, Sport and the South African War, 1899–1902')' being mostly a reprint of a 2018 article with the same title.[9] Donaldson's focus was mainly centred on the reaction of the British public and military authorities to the playing of sport in South Africa, rather than a from below look at the experiences of the soldiers themselves.

The current article expands on these works by taking a specific and more in-depth focus of sport and other pastime activities within the British army during the South

[6]For reviews of the composition of the British forces during the South African War, see Stephen Miller, *Volunteers on the Veld: Britain's Citizen Soldiers and the South African War, 1899–1902,* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), Louis Venter, Marietjie Oelofse, and Johan van Zyl, "The Composition of the Imperial British Forces in the Anglo-Boer War, 1899–1902: A Military and Socio-Historical Overview", *Scientia Militaria: South African Journal of Military Studies*, 52, no. 2 (2024): pp.53–69.

[7]Edward Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army 1868–1902,* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), Edward Spiers, *The Victorian Soldier in Africa,* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004).

[8]Tony Mason and Eliza Riedi, *Sport and the Military: British Armed Forces 1880–1960,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), James D. Campbell, *'The Army Isn't All Work': Physical Culture and the Evolution of the British Army, 1860–1920,* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), Peter Donaldson, *Sport, War and the British: 1850 to Present*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020).

[9]Peter Donaldson, 'We Are Having a Very Enjoyable Game': Britain, Sport and the South African War, 1899–1902, *War in History*, 25, no. 1 (2018).

African War. In defining the boundaries of such activities, the article is concerned with what British soldiers did when they were not fighting, marching, or otherwise engaged in military activities. In doing so, the article fundamentally asks two questions:

- In which pastime activities did British soldiers engage?
- Why and how did the officers and military authorities support certain activities while discouraging others?

In answering these questions, the article argues that sport and other pastime activities within the British army during that period should be studied and understood not as isolated, but rather as interconnected phenomena. There were similar motivations for the service members who participated, as well as for the officers in promoting or prohibiting such activities.

Sport in the British forces

During the war, sport was undoubtedly the most popular and most prevalent pastime in the British army. It is no surprise that sport occupied – and was allowed to occupy – so much of the soldiers' time. The late nineteenth century was a period when organised sport gained a considerable level of popularity and cultural importance in Britain and across the Empire. Sports such as association football, rugby, cricket, hockey, and polo, were codified, formally organised, or became extremely popular between the 1870s and 1890s.[10] In the same period, the playing of sport also became very popular within the British army. The growth of organised sport in the army was a spontaneous and bottom-up development, mainly driven by sports-obsessed junior officers. By that time, sport had been widely adopted in public schools as a form of teaching discipline, subordination, co-operation, obedience, and self-sacrifice. These characteristics were considered equally important in sport and war.[11] Boys from such sports-obsessed public schools largely made up the officer corps, with 62 per cent of regular British officers during the South African War coming from public schools, and 11 per cent from Eton alone.[12] As a group, they revered a heroic idea that wars were fought and won on 'character' and morale rather than as a result of professional training, and as a whole, they attached a high level of importance to sport and its benefits for the army.[13]

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[10]For general reviews of the development of organised sport in Victorian Britain, see Mike Higgins, *The Victorians and Sport,* (London: Hambledon and London, 2004), and Richard Holt, *Sport and the British: A Modern History*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

[11]Mason and Riedi, *Sport and the Military*, p.4.

[12]Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army*, p.97.

[13]Ibid., pp.96–99.

The sporting culture within public schools was very closely aligned with broader support for British Imperialism. J A Mangan has stated that many headmasters of Victorian and Edwardian schools believed that Imperialism was a 'moral endeavour and they [schools] were the repositories of effective moral education'. Sports was a central part of this education, as served as a part of inculcating Imperial values, standards, traditions and norms into boys.[14] Furthermore, Mangan argues that athleticism at schools was associated with cohesion, identity, patriotism and morality – characteristics which were deemed essential for public school boys to become Imperialists and consequently, army or navy officers.[15]

Mason and Riedi identified several reasons why sport was allowed to gain such a strong foothold in the peacetime British army in the decades before the South African War. These reasons were a belief that it improved recruitment, nurtured a sense of *esprit de corps*, and improved fitness and physical health.[16] As James Campbell illustrates, the use of sport as part of the physical training regimen of the army was mainly brought about through the passion of junior officers, but it quickly spread to the rank and file.[17] The sport–war analogy also gained unexpected influence in the decades before the war amongst the upper ranks of the army. Senior commanders, such as Lord Wolseley, Commander-in-Chief of the British army between November 1899 and January 1901, were also proponents of the perceived values of sport to the service. 'Being a good sportsman,' Wolseley wrote as a colonel in 1869, 'a good cricketer, good at rackets or any other manly game, is no mean recommendation for staff employment. Such a man, without book lore, is preferable to the most deeply-read one of lethargic habits.'[18] The sentiment that sport was good for the armed forces was not just prevalent within the army, but also within the popular civilian culture. We now know that the Duke of Wellington never said that Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton; nevertheless, few Victorians would have disagreed with the sentiment, a sentiment, made especially poignant in Henry Newbolt's 1892 poem 'Vitai Lampada'. As a result of the disastrous defeats of 'Black Week' at the battles of Stormberg (10 December 1899), Magersfontein (11 December 1899), and Colenso (15 December 1899), the British army decided to implement the large-scale recruitment of British and colonial volunteers for service in South Africa. The mass

[14]J.A. Mangan, *The games ethic and imperialism: Aspects of the diffusion of an ideal,* (London: Frank Cass, 2003), p.21.
[15]J.A. Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian public school: The emergence and consolidation of an educational ideology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp.179-206.
[16]Mason and Riedi, *Sport and the Military*, pp.38–42.
[17]Campbell, *'The Army Isn't All Work,'* Chapter 4.
[18]Quoted in Byron Farwell. *Eminent Victorian Soldiers,* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1985). p.206.

recruitment of civilian volunteers led to an expansion of sporting activities amongst the members of the army. Peter Donaldson states that the largely middle-class volunteers who swelled the ranks of the army 'brought to the barrack room and parade ground a civilian fervour for games'.[19] Those volunteers however did not spend much time in the barrack rooms or on the parade grounds before being deployed. Because of the need to get boots on the ground in South Africa, volunteer training was often rushed, sometimes lasting only a few weeks. One volunteer described that their two-week-long training consisted of a one-mile running drill before breakfast followed by rifle practice and learning signals in the afternoon.[20]

Time constraints meant that training continued on board the troopships, with the decks of the troopships doubling as parade grounds, shooting ranges, and sports fields. Physical drills, called 'monkey motions' by some soldiers, were practiced on a daily basis.[21] Lieutenant Francis recorded their daily physical exercises on board.

> We have parades all day long, consisting of physical drill and running round the decks, so we are keeping very fit. We have a good scheme for keeping up the shooting – a section is lined up facing the stern – then barrels and boxes are dropped and volleys fired at them until they disappear.[22]

The officers did the same by throwing bottles into the ocean and shooting at them with their revolvers. These drill and shooting exercises soon transformed into competitions between the men from different companies. On board the SS *Ormazon*, the Fifth Australian Contingent held a drill competition between companies for a prize of £10.[23]

Physical drills and shooting competitions were not sufficient to keep the men occupied for the entire duration of the three or four week-long sea voyages. To help pass the time, various types of sport were therefore practiced on board – especially sports that were deemed to aid physical development, such as tug-of-war and boxing, with the

[19]Peter Donaldson, 'We Are Having a Very Enjoyable Game,'p.6.
[20]NAM 2001-07-508: Typed copy of the diary of Pte Thomas James Monday, 1st Vol Bn The Buffs (East Kent Regiment), p.1.
[21]NAM 2005-07-773: Diary, typed transcript, relating to the Boer War service of 3723 Cpl George S Botwright, 1st Bn The Durham Light Infantry, 2 November 1899.
[22]NAM 1976-07-49: Photocopy typescript extracts from letters written in diary form by Lt Sidney Goodall Francis, West Yorkshire Regiment, p.2.
[23]Australian Boer War Memorial (ABWM), "The Diary of Trooper Frederick Edwards," 15 March 1901, https://www.bwm.org.au/soldiers/Frederick_EdwardsNDD.php

boxers sometimes blindfolded for the amusement of the spectators).[24] Cricket was also played on the decks of the troopships, and officers even played tennis on occasion.[25]



Figure 1: A pillow fight aboard the SS *Avoca* en route to South Africa[26]

Once in South Africa, sport not only continued to occupy a large amount of the soldiers' time, but in many cases, was also encouraged. Even during the initial months of the war (prior to the guerrilla warfare period), sport was very common within the ranks of the British army. Association football was especially popular. Some soldiers

[24]NAM 1991-07-177: Bound typescript of diary of Tpr, later SQMS, William E. Rider, Warwickshire Yeomanry, 7 March 1901, Carmen Miller (ed.), *Charlie's First War: South Africa, 1899-1900,* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014), 22 November 1899.
[25]D.W. Churcher, *From Alexandria to Ladysmith with the 87th: The 1st Battalion Princess Victoria's Royal Irish Fusiliers in South Africa 1899-1900,* (York: Boer War Books, 1984), 8, Gordon-Duff (ed.), *With the Gordon Highlanders*, p.37.
[26]*Black And White Budget,* 25 August 1900, p.662.

reported that they played football within the first week of disembarking in South Africa.[27] In Natal, both the besieged and relief forces spent their spare time occupied in playing football. In the besieged town of Ladysmith, there was a football match between the Natal Carbineers and Natal Mounted Rifles in November 1899, the former winning by two goals to one.[28] In the relief forces, Private Frederick Tucker of the Rifle Brigade, noted in his diary that, among the approximately 22,000-strong force stationed at Frere, football was the 'chief amusement' among the troops. 'One thing to be admired about British soldiers,' he wrote, 'is they will not be denied sport, and if a football is to be found they will have it.'[29] There were even football tournaments, with the West Yorkshire Regiment, for example, holding an inter-company tournament on the Natal front which lasted for several months. The 'Regimental Shield' was won by H Company in the final that was held to mark the occasion of Queen Victoria's birthday on 24 May 1900.[30]

The popularity of football during the war was to be expected considering that it was already one of the most popular sports within the peacetime army.[31] It was certainly also the easiest sport for the British soldiers to play on the African veldt, requiring only a flattish piece of land and a ball. In Victorian Britain, one in 20 men between 18 and 39 years of age were active amateur football players, fuelling participation amongst the volunteers in South Africa.[32] In 1890, there were 190 football clubs in Liverpool, and probably more than 200 in Birmingham.[33] The soldiers never lost interest in the domestic matches that were taking place back home, one soldier noting that when they got newspapers from Britain, the first thing that they did was to look for the latest football results.[34]

Whereas football was a clear favourite among the British soldiers, cricket was also very popular, especially among the English officers and men. In South Africa, cricket

[27]NAM 2001-07-508: Typed copy of the diary of Pte Thomas James Monday, 1st Vol Bn The Buffs (East Kent Regiment), p.3.
[28]Ladysmith Historical Society, *Extracts from Notes Taken on the Boer Campaign by Arthur Joseph Crosby, Natal Carbineers*, (Ladysmith: Wescott, 1976), p.10.
[29]Pamela Todd and David Fordham (eds), *Private Tucker's Boer War Diary: The Transvaal War of 1899, 1900, 1901 & 1902 with the Natal Field Forces,* (London: Elm Tree Books, 1980), p.24.
[30]NAM 1976-07-47: Photocopy typescript of the diary of 4412 Dmr H. Goodwin, 2nd Bn West Yorkshire Regiment, p.17.
[31]Campbell, *'The Army Isn't All Work,'* Chapter 4
[32]Robert Tombs, *The English and Their History*, (London: Penguin Books, 2015), pp.515–516.
[33]Holt, *Sport and the British*, p.151.
[34]Van Dyk ABO Trust: P. Jackson, South African War Diaries 1900, p.49.

matches were often lopsided affairs. In November 1899, for example, the side of the Natal Carbineers were far superior to that of the Natal Mounted Rifles, the former beating the latter by an innings and 43 runs.[35] In January 1901, the Bultfontein garrison was no match for the Cape Mounted Riflemen, who won by an embarrassing margin of 189 runs to 29.[36] There were even matches between civilians and British soldiers. In a match held on 27 January 1900, the townspeople of Prieska, in the north-western border districts of the Cape Colony, were outclassed by the New South Wales Mounted Rifles, who declared their innings on 146 for 7. The team from Prieska could only muster a pitiful 25 and 14 in response.[37]



Figure 2: A game of cricket on the veldt, circa 1900.[38]

[35]Ladysmith Historical Society, *Extracts from Notes*, p.11.
[36]André Wessels (ed), *Anglo-Boer War Diary of Herbert Gwynne Howell,* (Pretoria: HSRC, 1998), p.91.
[37]WMBR Copy Archive: W.H. Barham – Diary of the Boer War, 1899–1901, 27 January 1900.
[38]Courtesy of the Australian War Memorial, P00295.700

Cricket and rugby were the most popular sports within the colonial contingents from New Zealand and Australia. These sports were popular because of the cultural exchange with the United Kingdom, and by the turn of the nineteenth century, both rugby and cricket were well established on the colonial sport scenes. For example, by 1900, the four major population centres of New Zealand, Wellington, Dunedin, Christchurch, and Auckland, each had more than forty men's cricket teams playing competitive weekly matches.[39]

According to Peter Horton, rugby suited the 'competitive' and 'rugged' nature of the colonial environment. Horton states that rugby's violent nature and subtext of 'heroism, selflessness and camaraderie' gave it a hold on the culture of colonial Australia.[40] This is opposed to football, which, according to Ian Syson 'failed to embed itself as a component of the national cultural-mythological discourse, especially when it comes to military history.'[41]

Other less popular sports practiced by the British soldiers included rugby, hockey, tennis, and even golf. Lieutenant Gordon-Duff played golf in the Eastern Transvaal on a makeshift course called the Yeomanry Links. Gordon-Duff complained that he was out of practice and that the greens were 'hard and lumpy', which made putting 'a nightmare'.[42] On 30 October 1901, he wrote in a letter, 'I have been golfing a bit every day with a driver; it helps to pass the time, but the excitement consists of losing as few balls as possible.'[43]

It is noteworthy that where the British forces almost invariably played organised sports, the opposing Boers kept busy with so-called *Boeresport*, rural games, such as athletics and horse racing but also included more informal games such as 'leapfrog' and 'egg in the hat'. The Boers also sometimes played sports such as football whilst boxing was popular among the burghers.[44] Boers who were captured and interred in prisoner-of-war camps in South Africa, St Helena, Ceylon (Sri Lanka), India and Bermuda had a far greater exposure to the British organised sport and readily adopted it. The

[39]JP Carr, "The first Golden Age?: A social history of New Zealand Cricket 1914-1939," MA thesis, University of Canterbury, 2001, pp.1-2.
[40]Peter Horton, "Rugby union football in Australian society: An intended consequence of intended actions," *Sport in Society*, 12, no. 7 (2009): pp.968-969.
[41]Ian Syson, "Fronting up: Australian soccer and the First World War," *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 31, no. 18 (2014): pp.2346-2347.
[42]Gordon-Duff, *With the Gordon Highlanders*, p.239.
[43]Ibid., p.258.
[44]Dean Allen, "Sport and the Anglo-Boer War in South Africa, 1899-1902," in Michael Butterworth (ed.), *Sport and Militarism; Contemporary global perspectives,* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), pp.84-85

monotonous life in these camps encouraged the playing of sports and other leisure activities. The Boers copied many of the organised sports that they observed from the British.[45] On some occasions, the Boers even played against locals and British soldiers. In Colombo, Ceylon for example, a group of Boer prisoners played cricket against a local British team. The Boer lack of cricketing experience showed, as they were beaten by 141 runs.[46]

The highpoint of sport in the British army during the war was undoubtedly the regimental or garrison sports days, also known as 'gymkhanas', which were often held to celebrate special occasions, such as Christmas, New Year, or royal birthdays. These sports days usually consisted of a variety of activities based around athletics and, in mounted units, equestrian competitions. Sergeant Edgar Henry Redway of the Royal Canadian Regiment recorded that, on one such day, the Canadians held a long-distance run, an obstacle race and a 100-yard dash, the winner of the latter clocking an impressive time of 11 seconds.[47] Lieutenant Gordon-Duff gives a rather comical description of a gymkhana where the main event was fence-jumping:

> The race was awfully funny, many of the ponies never having jumped. There was frightful confusion at the first jump, all refusing, however they all scrambled over after a little. There were several falls. There were only two entries for the mule race … We also had a flat race for ponies, and a foot race for the men, altogether a very successful afternoon and a fair attendance.[48]

Tug-of-war was a regular part of such sports days, being considered a healthy and manly activity. In the Royal Artillery, Lieutenant Maturin offered two bottles of whisky to the winners of a regimental tug-of-war competition.[49] There was a tug-of-war competition on Christmas Day during the siege of Ladysmith in which even some of the ladies of the town took part.[50] To celebrate Queen Victoria's birthday on 24 May

[45]Floris JG van der Merwe, "Sport in Concentration and Prisoner of War Camps during the Anglo-Boer War, 1899–1902," in Gregor Reindt, Anke Hilbrenner, and Dittmar Dahlmann (eds), *Sport under unexpected circumstances: Violence, discipline, and leisure in penal and internment camps,* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2018), pp.51-54.
[46]Ibid., p.56.
[47]Queen's Own Rifles of Canada Regimental Museum and Archive (hereinafter QORCRMA), "South African War Diary of Edgar Henry Redway," 17 January 1900, https://qormuseum.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/04650-redway-diary-south-africa.pdf. Accessed 23/10/26.
[48]Gordon-Duff, *With the Gordon Highlanders*, p.223.
[49]Walter Mitton (ed), *The Boer War: A Bombardier's Memoirs*, (Knebworth: Able, 1996), p.42.
[50]Churcher, *From Alexandria to Ladysmith with the 87th*, p.63.

1900, Lieutenant Herbert Gwynne Howell of the Cape Mounted Rifles gave a description of the activities of one such day, 'Queen's birthday. Lovely day. Divine service 8 o'clock. Full parade all hands 11.30 and marchpast. Usual cheers, etc. Sports in afternoon. Artillery won tug-of-war on horseback. Cape Mounted Riflemen won ditto on foot. … great success.'[51]

As mentioned by Gwynne Howell, gymkhanas sometimes included some head-turning events, such as mounted wrestling on mule back and mounted tug-of-war, but perhaps one of the most creative events was organised by 5 New Zealand contingent, who held a unique kind of horse race, called the 'V.C.' (Victoria Cross). This was a mounted race over four flights of hurdles, picking up a dummy representing a wounded fellow soldier, and returning over the hurdles carrying the dummy; thus, saving the 'wounded man' and earning the rider the distinguished medal for valour.[52] Equestrian sport naturally attracted betting. The men under Lance Corporal Murray Jackson of 2 Hampshire Regiment for example, held horse races which featured what he called 'some pretty tall betting'.[53] Jackson wryly remarked that he, as lance corporal, did not stop these races on account of him having the fastest horse.[54]

Celebratory sports days were used as propaganda in British newspapers and magazines to downplay the difficulties of campaigning in South Africa, furthering a 'cult of athleticism' in the British public.[55] The illustrated news magazine *Black and White Budget*, for example reported on 1 December 1900 about a sports day celebrating the birthday of the King of Portugal, where a team of the Gordon Highlanders competed in tug-of-war against a team from the Royal Irish. When the Gordons won the contest, the publication gave a rather comical reason why. 'Owing to the incessant and useless beeswaxing of rifle butts, the Gordons have developed very powerful muscles,' the publication reported.[56]

Among equestrian sports, none surpassed polo for widespread popularity, especially amongst officers. Lieutenant Gwynne Howell recorded that they played up to three times a week in the garrison towns of Klerksdorp and Ventersdorp during the latter stages of 1901.[57] This is no surprise, as polo was a staple of the officer class in the

[51]Wessels, *Anglo-Boer War Diary*, p.50.
[52]Frank Perham, *The Kimberley Flying Column: Being Reminiscences of Service in the South African War of 1899–1903*, (Timaru: unknown., 1957), p.63.
[53]Murray Cosby Jackson, *A Soldier's Diary: South Africa 1899–1902,* (Winchester: Royal Hampshire Regiment Museum Trustees, 1999), p.48.
[54]Jackson, *A Soldier's Diary*, p.48.
[55]Donaldson, 'We Are Having a Very Enjoyable Game,' p.9.
[56]*Black and White Budget*, 1 December 1900, p.283.
[57]Wessels, *Anglo-Boer War Diary*, p.156.

peacetime army, especially in India. Mason and Riedi argue that the high financial costs of purchasing ponies and maintaining grooms associated with polo served to maintain social standards amongst the officer class. 'At the end of the nineteenth century, as polo developed into a focus of regimental activity and pride, it became an almost compulsory activity for young officers – especially cavalry officers.'[58]



Figure 3: Polo match played as part of a Cape Mounted Police Gymkhana at Vryburg, Cape Colony, in 1901.[59]

Hunting was another sport that was associated with the officer class, specifically those from the landed gentry. Hunting was encouraged within the army because it was said to promote 'an eye for the country', and was useful for judging distances and scanning horizons for Boer commandos.[60] Apart from the perceived benefits of hunting as a training ground for war, it was also of practical value for the soldiers in South Africa, being both an activity to occupy free time and to secure extra food, something that

[58]Mason and Riedi, *Sport and the Military*, p.59.
[59]Courtesy of the McGregor Museum, mmkp4952.
[60]Ibid., p.43.

was always scarce during the war. Despite excessive hunting during the nineteenth century, wild game was still plentiful at the time, and soldiers hunted extensively.



Figure 4: Colonel A. T. Slogget, Superintendent of the Imperial Yeomanry Hospital, posing with his trophies after a springbok hunt.[61]

Major John Pine-Coffin of the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment recorded that he hunted in the Bloemfontein area every day during May and June 1900.[62] Pine-Coffin even complained that he was accidentally shot at while hunting, drolly noting in his diary that his fellow British soldiers 'are more dangerous than the Boers'.[63] When stationed in the northern Transvaal in September 1900, Lieutenant Francis described that the West Yorkshire Regiment had a 'great time out there' owing to there being 'lots of buck to be shot'.[64] Lieutenant Gordon-Duff and his fellow officers of 1 Gordon Highlanders hired black child servants as beaters and retrievers when they went

[61]Courtesy of the Van Dyk ABO Trust.
[62]Susan Pine-Coffin (ed), *One Man's Boer War: The Diary of John Edward Pine-Coffin,* (Bideford: Edward Gaskell, 1999), pp.60–90.
[63]Pine-Coffin, *One Man's Boer War*, p.91.
[64]NAM 1976-07-49: Photocopy typescript extracts from letters written in diary form by Lt Sidney Goodall Francis, West Yorkshire Regiment, p.27.

hunting for game birds, recreating as much as they could the grouse hunts they were used to back home.[65]

Besides hunting animals, some members of the British army also kept them as pets. There were the usual ones, such as dogs and cats – one unfortunate regimental cat was named 'Emergency Rations' – but here were also some more unusual pets.[66] Lieutenant Gordon-Duff kept an ill-tempered aardvark, which spat at anyone who came close to it.[67] A Squadron of the New South Wales Mounted Infantry branded a sable antelope in the hope of making it the regimental pet, which – needless to say – they did not succeed in keeping for very long.[68] Other pets that were kept included goats, pigs, monkeys, baboons, and even lizards.[69]

There was some vocal opposition against the sport–war analogy, notably from the Tommies' bard himself, Rudyard Kipling, who wrote a scathing poem, *The Islanders*, criticising among other things Britain's sporting culture. Kipling's criticism of the 'flannelled fools at the wicket' and 'muddied oafs at the goals' was a direct reference to the failures of the British war effort in South Africa.[70] This was part of a larger debate in Britain around sporting culture and its effect within the armed forces. Some criticised the officers for the amount of time and energy spent playing sport, including Leo Amery, editor of the influential *The Times History of the War in South Africa*. According to Donaldson, polo and hunting were even used as shorthand for an unreformed army culture.[71] The South African War was both the high tide for the playing of sport within the British army, and the turning point towards a more professional, less sport-orientated order that burgeoned as a result of the ineffective performance of the army in South Africa.

Whatever the criticism back in Britain might have been, it had little effect on the playing of sport within the army in South Africa. There does not seem to have been much awareness of this debate amongst the rank and file, and senior officers continued to advocate for the playing of sport. This may in part be due to reluctance to move away from the sport-as-training-for-war metaphor and the 'gentleman-amateur' ideal as

[65]Gordon-Duff, *With the Gordon Highlanders*, p.192.
[66]Byron Farwell, *The Great Boer War*, (London: Allen Lane, 1976), p.371.
[67]Gordon-Duff, *With the Gordon Highlanders*, p.258.
[68]WMBR Copy Archive: W.H. Barham – Diary of the Boer War, 1899–1901, 7 June 1900.
[69]Johan Hattingh and André Wessels, "Life in the British Blockhouses during the Anglo-Boer War, 1899–1902," *South African Journal of Cultural History*, 13, no. 2 (1999): p.52; Farwell, *The Great Boer War*, p.371.
[70]Donaldson, 'We Are Having a Very Enjoyable Game,' pp.4–5.
[71]Ibid., p.16.

general principle but in the South African case, specifically, there were more immediate advantages in allowing the playing of sport during the campaign. The excessive amount of free time on the hands of the members of the British forces meant that there were plentiful opportunities to stray into mischiefs, such as drunkenness, prostitution and theft. Tom Williams made this argument when discussing the leisure and tourist activities of the occupying British Rhineland army between 1918 and 1929. He stated:

> An analysis of British soldiers' tourism and leisure activities in the occupied Rhineland reveals an underlying strategy not only to manage soldiers' free time by proposing healthy, respectable and educational activities but also to limit interactions between the occupying forces and the civilian population.[72]

This is supported by Lord Kitchener's stance on occupying soldiers' time in India when shortly after the end of the war in South Africa he was appointed Commander in Chief of the British forces in India. Kitchener stated in 1903, 'all healthy outdoor sports and games' acted as a bulwark against drink, idleness and sexual promiscuity amongst the men on campaign.[73] The question of how much his experience in South Africa over the preceding two years had influenced this opinion is up for scrutiny. It may thus be argued that sport in the British army during the South African War was promoted by officers as a practical way of keeping soldiers occupied, rather than as grandiose notions of fair play or training. Keeping soldiers within watching range was essential for officers in preventing them from partaking in forbidden activities. Two cases in point are alcohol abuse and sexual misconduct among the British troops. Paul Kopperman states that alcohol abuse within the late Victorian army was far less prevalent compared to its eighteenth century equivalent. Kopperman argues that the officers' ability to keep watch over their men meant they could better monitor their intake of liquor.[74] This is part of a broader development within the late Victorian army that officers became increasingly concerned with the off-duty activities of their men, and with preventing immoral or illegal activities. Sport was thus a popular and effective way of keeping soldiers occupied and in camp, where the officers could observe them. Evidence of the use of sport in this way by officers can be illustrated in the fact that laying out sports fields was often given priority when camp was set up. At times, both a cricket and football field would be laid out, which could take the better part of a day's labour to do.[75] The prevalence of officially sanctioned sports days and the number

[72]Tom Williams, "Keeping the Occupiers Occupied: Leisure and Tourism in the British Rhine Army, 1918–1929," *British Journal for Military History*, 9, no. 3 (2023): p.110.
[73]Quoted from Mason and Riedi, *Sport and the Military*, p.38.
[74]Paul E. Kopperman, "'The Cheapest Pay': Alcohol Abuse in the Eighteenth-century British Army," *The Journal of Military History*, 60 (1996): p.468.
[75]NAM 1980-10-15: Manuscript diary of L/Cpl F. Rutledge, H. Coy 2nd East Surrey Regt, 16 August 1900., Van Dyk ABO Trust Diary of the Hon. E.H. Lygon, p.23.; WMBR

of mentions by officers of the matches played further supports the fact that officers often initiated and supported the sporting activities.

Sexual misconduct was another example of unwanted behaviour that officers attempted to control. This was an especially challenging task, as the British forces were broadly spread out across South Africa and often intermingled with the civilian population. Bill Nasson argues that British troops paid scant regard to the colour line in their public consorting with women, in contrast to the more racially exclusive social norms of South Africa. Alert to the potential damage to the standing of the army, especially among the Cape Afrikaner population, British commanders attempted to contain soldiers from consorting with local women, especially black women.[76] Prostitution was furthermore problematic for the British authorities for its connotations with the spread of sexually transmissible diseases.[77] Despite attempts to limit the freedom that soldiers had to stray out of camp, especially at night, there certainly were instances of prostitution. For example Trooper Frank Perham of 5 New Zealand Contingent wrote of a brothel in Kimberley, describing that, 'at any time any of the boys wished to get over the traces, they could go to 'houses of ill fame', which he labelled 'numerous'. 'A number of the boys,' he wrote, 'did pay visits to these places and some of them to their later regret.'[78] He was quick to absolve himself, however, writing that he himself made a point of giving such places 'a wide berth'.[79] He later gave a detailed description of the time he did visit a brothel in Kimberley, noting that the prostitutes were multi-racial, supporting Nasson's argument. Prostitution and other sexual misconduct were obviously extremely difficult to police, as the British forces and the civilians were broadly spread out across South Africa, often in isolated convoys with little oversight. It was easier and more effective for the military authorities to attempt to prevent such illicit activities by organising or allowing alternative leisure activities.

Other Pastimes in the British Forces

It became increasingly difficult to police soldiers' pastime activities when they were on leave in the cities. If the veldt and garrison towns of South Africa were places of sport, the cities were places of leisure. By 1901, the British army was practically in complete control of the metropolitan areas of the former Boer republics. These cities were

Copy Archive: Extracts from letters written by Captain George Vernon Clarke, 8 May 1900.

[76]Bill Nasson, "Tommy Atkins in South Africa," in *History Matters: Selected Writings, 1970–2016*, (Cape Town: Penguin, 2016), p.39.

[77]Philippa Levine, "'A Multitude of Unchaste Women': Prostitution in the British Empire," *Journal of Women's History*, 15, no. 4 (2004): p.159.

[78]Perham, *The Kimberley Flying Column*, p.42.

[79]Ibid., p.42.

referred to as 'protected areas', and within them, civilian life more or less returned to normal.[80] When enjoying the advantages of cities, such as restaurants, hotels, shops, and social gatherings, officers had a great advantage owing to having more free time, money to spend, and high social status.

Shortly after the occupation of Johannesburg in June 1900, Lieutenant Gordon-Duff went to a restaurant where he had eggs and beefsteaks, with coffee and cakes for dessert.[81] He appreciated that he could eat at a table and sit on a chair, but he complained that the prices were very high, describing Johannesburg as the 'most extortionate place' he had ever been.[82] In the cities, there were numerous balls, dances, and other social gatherings where service members and civilians intermingled. These events were almost exclusively reserved for officers. They were also very popular. Lieutenant Gwynne Howell wrote that a ball hosted by Lady Methuen, General Paul Methuen's wife, in Pretoria was so crowded that he left after a few dances.[83] A captain with the Royal Field Artillery wrote in September 1901 that in Johannesburg, he attended 'recherché' dinner parties twice a week, while a lieutenant with 1 King's Dragoon Guards recorded that he regularly attended roulette and garden parties with ladies in Cape Town.[84] Hospitals also offered a unique opportunity to socialise, and several officers mention in their letters and diaries that, while convalescing, they played tennis and croquet and had tea and picnics with nurses.[85]

[80]Pakenham, *The Boer War*, p.536.
[81]Gordon-Duff, *With the Gordon Highlanders*, p.103.
[82]Ibid.
[83]Wessels, *Anglo-Boer War Diary*, p.169.
[84]WMBR Copy Archive: Extracts from letters written by Captain George Vernon Clarke, 5 September 1900, WMBR Copy Archive: Lieutenant Vere-Wayte-Wood – 1st King's Dragoon Guards, South Africa, 8–10 April 1901.
[85]Wessels, *Anglo-Boer War Diary*, p.161.



Figure 5: Nurse A.G. Jones and another nurse on a picnic with some officers at the No. 7 Hospital at Mooi River, Natal .[86]

Some troops were upset about the time officers spent in the company of ladies. On 23 January 1902, Private Walter Putland (Middlesex Regiment) voiced his displeasure in a diary entry:

> [O]ne would not think there were Boers a few miles from here, officers playing polo, tennis, with ladies and plenty of dinner and tea parties, there are plenty of Balls [*sic*] but not for Thomas Atkins, he is still the same absent minded beggar as he was when the war first broke out, and if officers wifes [*sic*] continue to come out of England and stay here, I am thinking the War will never be over.[87]

In the larger towns, soldiers could go to see professional plays and shows. In Bloemfontein, the town hall was known by the British soldiers as the 'Vaudeville

[86]Courtesy of the Van Dyk ABO Trust.
[87]Alan Putland (ed), "The Personal Diary of Private Walter Putland," 23 January 1901, http://samilitaryhistory.org/diaries/diaputld.html.

Theatre'.[88] Lance-Corporal Syd Critten (9th Battalion, Imperial Yeomanry) went there to see *The Private Secretary* and *I don't like London*, while Trooper Frederick Edwards saw *Charlie's Aunt* in August 1901.[89] In Kimberley, Trooper Perham saw performances of *Ye mariners of England*, *Rip van Winkle* and *A message from Mars*.[90] He also mentioned in his diary that he went to Kimberley during his free time to see the bioscope in the town hall.[91]

The soldiers who were stationed on the veldt outside the cities and larger towns had to be more creative, especially at night when it was too dark to play sport or hunt. Amateur dramatic and musical concerts (or concert parties) were the chief recreation. Such concerts typically consisted of a repertoire of events that included instrumental solos, singing, dancing, and recitations.[92] Some of the songs that were performed at these concert parties were *Goodbye Mother Annie*, *Unexpectedly*, *The Lodger In Our Yard*, *What's Up*, *Stalls & Boxes*, *4 & 20 Girls*, *It's a Fine Quiet Place Where I Am Lodging Now*, and *The Irish Jubilee*, usually concluding with the national anthem.[93] As early as December 1899, Sergeant Redway wrote that the Canadians put up a concert with anything that could be used as an instrument, including tin cans and foghorns.[94] The Scottish regiments played their bagpipes in the evenings around campfires, and even during the siege of Ladysmith, the Natal Carbineers formed a band, which consisted of a big drum, side drum, triangle, and eight tin whistles.[95] What the Tommies lacked in instruments, they made up for with enthusiasm.

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[88]Derek du Bruyn and André Wessels, "The British Soldiers' Bloemfontein: Impressions and Experiences during the Time of the British Occupation and Lord Roberts's Halt, 13 March – 3 May 1900," *Navorsinge van die Nasionale Museum Bloemfontein*, 29, no. 3 (2013): p.51.

[89]Jenny Hardwick (ed), "The Letters of Syd Critten, Imperial Yeomanry from March 1900 to May 1901," 17 November 1900, http://samilitaryhistory.org/diaries/critten.html (Accessed 23/10/26), ABWM, "The Diary of Trooper Frederick Edwards," 16 August 1901, https://www.bwm.org.au/soldiers/Frederick_EdwardsNDD.php (Accessed 23/10/26).

[90]Perham, *The Kimberley Flying Column*, p.42.

[91]Ibid., p.62.

[92]NAM 2001-11-174: Typed transcript of a diary kept by 4645 Tpr William Atkinson-Cluer, A sqn 1st Royal Dragoons, 3.

[93]See for example NAM 1976-07-47: Photocopy typescript of the diary of 4412 Dmr H. Goodwin, 2nd Bn West Yorkshire Regiment, 11, Gordon-Duff, *With the Gordon Highlanders*, 40, QORCRMA, "South African War Diary of Edgar Henry Redway," 17 January 1900.

[94]QORCRMA, "South African War Diary of Edgar Henry Redway," 25 December 1899.

[95]Ladysmith Historical Society, *Extracts from Notes*, p.18.

Helen Barlow argues that such concert parties had a dual purpose within the British army, namely as a tool of soft power to 'enforce a sense of authority, discipline and order' as well as to 'boost morale and solidarity in situations of tension and conflict'.[96] Both these were very clearly visible in the case of the South African War. Just as the role of sport by day was to boost morale and build a sense of *esprit de corps* amongst the service members, so too did such concerts in the evenings. Lieutenant Gordon-Duff reported a 'magnificent' concert that the Gordon Highlanders and an Australian unit put together.

> It was a glorious night and the stage was a wagon at the foot of Camp Kopje, the audience being seated on the slope. The performers were all men [privates], ours and the Australians. Some of the items were wonderfully clever. There were all sorts of songs and duets, and recitations and violin solos etc.[97]

The use of such evocative terms – 'magnificent', 'glorious', 'wonderfully clever' – indicates that these concerts also improved the general mood of life on the veldt. Another example is that of a trooper in the Imperial Yeomanry, who wrote that for New Year's celebrations, they held a concert party around a bonfire 'just to let the Boers know we were enjoying ourselves despite their sniping'.[98] Similar to sport, concerts also served to keep men occupied and out of trouble. John Mackenzie-Rogan, reflecting on his time as a regimental bandmaster in the Coldstream Guards, praised the perceived advantage of these musical concerts for soldiers stationed in India.

> The band performances vary the dreary monotony of cantonment life and help to dispel the depression consequent thereon. Their effect upon the general health and tone of the troops is incalculable … daily programmes of light and lively music have acted as a wholesome tonic to the community, and in many cases have helped to restrain the men from indulgence in drink and other excesses.[99]

[96]Helen Barlow, "From the Band of Musick to the Concert Party, Ca. 1780–1918: Musical Entertainment in the British Army," *Music in Art*, 41, no. 1/2 (2016): p.83.
[97]WMBR Copy Archive: Diary of the Boer War written by Pri. Richard Coyle, Loyal North Lancashire Regiment March 1900 – March 1901, 20; Gordon-Duff, *With the Gordon Highlanders*, p.57.
[98]Hardwick, "The Letters of Syd Critten," 1 January 1901.
[99]Quoted in Barlow, "From the Band of Musick to the Concert Party," pp.85–6.



Figure 6: Officers who won the 'costume race' as part of the Easter celebrations during the siege of Mafeking.[100]

Apart from sport, hunting, or musical concerts, soldiers spent their free time in innumerable other casual pastimes, especially in the quiet periods between other organised activities. Playing cards was very popular, the games of choice being whist and napoleon – called nap.[101] In his memoirs, Burgher Frederick Botha recalled that his commando once overran a blockhouse while the British soldiers inside were playing cards.[102] Card games invariably led to gambling. 5 New Zealand contingent, for example, played nap for threepence a corner.[103] Private Monday of 1 Volunteer Battalion, East Kent Regiment, noted in November 1900 that the men of his company were gambling away the £2 pay that they had received only two days earlier.[104] Gambling was so widespread that Lance Corporal Jackson wrote how even their chaplain staked money, ostensibly to show the men it was possible to lose without

[100]*Black and White Budget*, 30 June 1900.
[101]NAM 1991-07-177: Bound typescript of diary of Tpr, later SQMS, William E. Rider, Warwickshire Yeomanry, 7 March 1901, Perham, *The Kimberley Flying Column*, p.30.
[102]WMBR 05796/00001: Personal experiences of Frederick Gerhardus Botha during the Boer war, 1899–June 1902, p.91.
[103]Perham, *The Kimberley Flying Column*, p.30.
[104]NAM 2001-07-508: Typed copy of the diary of Pte Thomas James Monday, 1st Vol Bn The Buffs (East Kent Regiment), p.19.

using foul language.[105] Technically gambling was not allowed but, as it was almost impossible to police effectively, officers turned a blind eye, especially if it kept men in camp and away from worse distractions. Lieutenant Carey complained that he ordered his men that, if they 'must' gamble, they had to do it 'privately and unbeknown' to him, exasperatedly adding that it was 'very foolish!'.[106]



Figure 7: Bivouac & troops playing cards.[107]

Reading and writing letters were further pastimes in which almost all soldiers participated. Mostly starved of news, Tommies often asked in their letters for papers and magazines to be sent to them. Bombardier Mitton noted in his diary, 'tis a great treat to sit down with a paper … any old paper is of interest to us.'[108] After three weeks' worth of mail arrived at once at their camp, a lance corporal in the Imperial Yeomanry noted that they stayed up into the small hours of the morning reading their letters and papers.[109] Major Churcher described the longing for letters and news from home as 'insupportable'. 'No one', he wrote, 'who has not been through it can realise the utter misery of it all.'[110]

[105]Jackson, *A Soldier's Diary,* p.4.
[106]Arthur Carey (ed), *Dearest Mother: Arthur Carey's Letters Home* (*S.l.: s.n., s.a.*), 17 October 1901.
[107]Courtesy of the War Museum of the Boer Republics, AG 15035.
[108]Mitton, *The Boer War*, p.65.
[109] Hardwick, "The Letters of Syd Critten," 18 November 1900.
[110] Churcher, *From Alexandria to Ladysmith with the 87th*, p.75.

Conclusion

The 'utter misery of it all' ended on 31 May 1902, with the signing of the Treaty of Vereeniging. It concluded a war which had lasted for more than two and a half years and involved approximately 448,000 British and imperial soldiers. As a result of the guerrilla warfare in South Africa, British soldiers had an abundance of free time, which they spent engaging in sport and other pastimes. Until recently, scholars have predominantly studied sport and other pastimes within the British army as separate phenomena, often over a long period. Scholars have also focussed predominantly, and justly, on the cultural side of such pastimes. Sport, for example, has been studied as a cultural phenomenon within British society generally and the army specifically. The same can be said of tourism and artistic activities. This has however meant that the specific situation and requirements of campaigning in South Africa have been undervalued when specifically discussing sport and other pastimes during the South African War.

In South Africa, such sport and other pastimes were often allowed and encouraged by officers as meaningful pastimes, which served to keep the men occupied during the long periods of inactivity. This had a two-fold purpose. Firstly, it was meant to keep up morale and create a sense of *esprit de corps* within and between regiments, especially considering that the British forces in South Africa were an amalgam of regular professional soldiers and British and colonial volunteers. Secondly, troops who were actively busy with sport, hunting, concert parties, and other pastimes were less likely to indulge in unwanted behaviours, such as drunkenness, prostitution, or theft. Officers could closely observe the behaviours of the men under their command when they were engaged in sport and other pastime activities.

The South African War can thus be seen as a turning point in the British army's relationship with sport and other pastimes. During the war, sport started to lose its central and almost unquestioned place as a form of training for war. On the other hand, officers and military commanders started to realise the use of sport and other pastimes as a way to occupy the time of soldiers, and keep them under observation in order to improve discipline and boost morale as wars started to become more drawn out. The same pattern for the use of sport and other pastime for these purposes thus becomes clear during the World Wars and after. In 1917, during the First World War, all unit sports championships and squad PT was codified in a series of rules and doctrine that was governed by a single body after the war – the Army Physical and Recreational Training Staff.[111] Organised, centralised sport and recreation continued to expand throughout the twentieth century, and with the advent of national service

[111]See Campbell, *'The Army Isn't All Work'*, Chapter 12: "The Greater Game: Wartime Recreational Training" for a description of how the Army sports and physical culture was centralized and expanded during the First World War.

that mobilised millions of men outside of war situations, required the perpetual availability of such activities to keep service members occupied during long spells of boredom and inactivity.

Pseudohistory: The Case of Alan Clark's *The Donkeys*

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ABSTRACT
This article considers how scholarship about the demarcation problem – the problem of distinguishing science from pseudoscience – can help historians distinguish history from pseudohistory. It uses the work of demarcationist scholars to help it provide an original analysis and set of historical demarcation criteria, before moving on to consider a case study: Alan Clark's book The Donkeys, *about the British Army in the First World War. Guided by the principles established in the first parts of this article, the second part examines the contents of* The Donkeys *in a methodical way and concludes that Alan Clark's book is in fact pseudohistorical.*

Introduction

What is pseudohistory? Most historians would agree that there are such things as counterfeit or spurious histories, like the works of Holocaust deniers.[1] But among academic historians, only Ronald Fritze has done substantial research on this topic: and while his books have been wide-ranging and informative, discussing many types of pseudohistory, they do not provide an explicit or clear definition of this concept.[2]

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DOI: 10.25602/GOLD.bjmh.v12i3.1998

[1]Deborah Lipstadt, *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory,* (New York: Plume, 1994); Richard Evans, *Lying about Hitler: History, Holocaust, and the Irving Trial,* (New York: Basic, 2001); Robert Jan van Pelt, *The Case for Auschwitz: Evidence from the Irving Trial,* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002).

[2]Ronald Fritze, *Invented Knowledge: False History, Fake Science and Pseudo-Religions,* (London: Reaktion, 2009); Ronald Fritze, *Hope and Fear: Modern Myths, Conspiracy Theories and Pseudo-History,* (London: Reaktion, 2022).

Theoreticians, by contrast, have been too busy questioning history's epistemic status to concern themselves with pseudohistory.[3]

Consequently, the task of defining pseudohistory has mostly been left for debunkers of pseudoscience – with disappointing results. Robert Todd Carroll's criteria mostly cover ancient pseudohistory, and pseudoarchaeology.[4] Michael Shermer's definition ('the rewriting of the past for present political or personal reasons') is too vague.[5] Brian Regal's definition is more specific,

> Similar to pseudoscience only dealing with historical topics, pseudohistory uses the trappings of scholarly historical method – footnotes, citations, bibliographies, and primary sources – yet is designed not as a thoughtful analysis intent on discovering insights into the past, but as a subjective arranging of facts to support a predetermined idea that often supports a political agenda.[6]

But still, this does not provide clear guidelines for distinguishing pseudohistory from history: many works of pseudohistory, for example, do not use the trappings of scholarly method.

Sociologist Damian Thompson even turns to Wikipedia for help: 'For a loose definition of pseudohistory,' he says, 'it is hard to improve on Wikipedia',

> "Pseudohistory is a pejorative term applied to texts which purport to be historical in nature but which depart from standard historiographical conventions in a way that undermines their conclusions." A watertight definition is impossible because the decision to use the word is always subjective. Even so, there are broadly agreed criteria.[7]

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[3]Robert Eaglestone, *Postmodernism and Holocaust Denial,* (Duxford: Icon, 2001); Benjamin Kelly, 'Deviant Ancient Histories: Dan Brown, Erich von Däniken, and the Sociology of Historical Polemic,' *Rethinking History* 12, 3 (2008), pp.361-382.

[4]'Pseudohistory,' *The Skeptic's Dictionary*, https://www.skepdic.com/pseudohs.html. Accessed 6 June 2026.

[5]Michael Shermer and Alex Grobman, *Denying History: Who Says the Holocaust Never Happened and Why Do They Say It?,* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

[6]'Pseudohistory,' in Brian Regal, *Pseudoscience: A Critical Encyclopedia,* (Santa Barbara: Greenwood, 2009), pp.136-139.

[7]Damian Thompson, *Counterknowledge: How We Surrendered to Conspiracy Theories, Quack Medicine, Bogus Science, and Fake History,* (Toronto: Atlantic, 2008).

This is better, but still not good enough: among other problems, it is broad enough to cover merely bad or mistaken history. And since historians and philosophers of history have only scratched the surface of this topic, Thompson's pessimism seems premature.

Scientists and philosophers of science, by contrast, have spent a lot of time trying to solve what they call the 'demarcation problem', the problem of how to distinguish genuine science from pseudoscience.[8] The demarcation debate has gone back and forth. Karl Popper's falsifiability criterion, for example, has not stood the test of time; but neither has the pessimism of Larry Laudan, who argued that the fuzzy nature of science itself made it impossible to find criteria that would include every science, while excluding every pseudoscience.[9]

Today, philosophers and historians of science are attacking this problem from two directions. Some have been working from the top down, looking for global demarcation criteria that separate science in general from pseudoscience. Others have been working from the bottom up, arguing that while both science and pseudoscience are indeed fuzzy concepts, local demarcation criteria can help us identify pseudosciences and separate them from sciences. And in the process, researchers like Sven Ove Hansson have discovered similarities between pseudoscience and pseudohistory. 'The misrepresentations of history presented by Holocaust deniers and other pseudo-historians,' he says, 'are very similar in nature to the misrepresentations of natural science promoted by creationists and homeopaths.'[10]

In a recent article, the author explored some of the literature on the demarcation problem, to see if it was possible to apply their conclusions about pseudoscience to pseudohistory.[11] It was discovered that, while pseudoscience and pseudohistory are indeed similar, they are not the same: and that both global and local demarcation criteria designed for pseudoscience must be modified before they can apply to pseudohistory. The author then used these modified criteria to survey the field of pseudohistory to propose criteria for demarcating history from pseudohistory.

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[8]Massimo Pigliucci, 'Pseudoscience and the Demarcation Problem,' *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, https://iep.utm.edu/pseudoscience-demarcation/. Accessed 6 June 2026.

[9]Larry Laudan, 'The Demise of the Demarcation Problem,' in R. S. Cohen and L. Laudan (eds), *Physics, Philosophy and Psychoanalysis,* (Dordrecht: Springer, 1983), pp.111-127; M. Pigliucci and M. Brower (eds), *The Philosophy of Pseudoscience,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

[10]Sven Ove Hansson, 'Science Denial as a Form of Pseudoscience,' *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* 63 (2017), p.40.

[11]David Leeson, 'The Four Types of Pseudohistory,' *The Historian* (US) 85, no. 3 (2023): pp.285-314.

Laudan sets out the minimum standards that any demarcation criterion must meet. First, he says, 'a philosophical demarcation criterion must be an adequate explication of our ordinary ways of partitioning science from non-science and it must exhibit epistemically significant differences between science and non-science;' second, 'the criterion must have sufficient precision that we can tell whether various activities and beliefs whose status we are investigating do or do not satisfy it;' in addition, 'it would specify a set of individually necessary and jointly sufficient conditions for deciding whether an activity or set of statements is scientific or not.'[12]

From this, it should be clear why pseudoscience debunkers have not succeeded in demarcating history from pseudohistory. Regal's criteria, for example, are neither individually necessary, nor jointly sufficient; Shermer's are not sufficiently precise; and Wikipedia's criteria neither explain our usual ways of distinguishing pseudohistory from history, nor provide us with epistemically significant differences between the two.

Since historians reason from the particular to the general, the author surveyed the field and found four types of pseudohistory. The first is *fake history* – pseudohistory based on deliberate falsehoods. The second type of pseudohistory is *weird history* - pseudohistory based on impossible beliefs.[13] The third type of pseudohistory is *crackpot history* – pseudohistory based on unwarranted conspiracy theories.[14] And the fourth type of pseudohistory is *junk history* – pseudohistory based on egregiously deficient sources or methodologies. These four categories are not mutually exclusive, because it is possible to satisfy more than one of these criteria.

Clearly, pseudohistory, like pseudoscience, is a fuzzy concept: a cluster of similar but not identical statements and practices, all of which pretend to be historical, but which

[12]Laudan, p.118.

[13]On pp.14-30 of *How to Think About Weird Things: Critical Thinking for a New Age,* (New York: McGraw Hill, 2020), Theodore Schick and Lewis Vaughn identify three types of impossibility: logical impossibility (anything that violates the laws of thought), physical impossibility (anything that violates the laws of science or nature), and technological impossibility (anything that is beyond our capabilities at present). On weird history (and weird archaeology), see Fritze, *Invented Knowledge*, especially pp.167-220.

[14]'Conspiracy theories assert the existence of a covertly operating group of people—the conspirators – who seek, from base motives and by underhand means, to achieve a certain end.' Michael Butter, *The Nature of Conspiracy Theories,* (Cambridge: Polity, 2020), p.9. On the distinction between warranted and unwarranted conspiracy theories, see Matthew Dentith, *The Philosophy of Conspiracy Theories,* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2014). For a survey of crackpot history, see Fritze, *Hope and Fear*.

lack an epistemically reliable core, and are compromised by some type of epistemic misconduct. This fuzzy concept requires a fuzzy, multicriterial definition,

(*Pseudohistory*) (1 and/or 2 and/or 3 and/or 4) and 5.

1. Is based on deliberate falsehoods.
2. Is based on impossible beliefs.
3. Is based on unwarranted conspiracy theories.
4. Is based on egregiously deficient methodologies or sources.
5. Is presented as historical knowledge.

That is to say: pseudohistory is anything that is based on deliberate falsehoods; and/or is based on impossible beliefs; and/or is based on unwarranted conspiracy theories; and/or is based on egregiously deficient methodologies and sources; and is presented as historical knowledge.

This definition satisfies all of Laudan's requirements for a demarcation criterion: it is an adequate explication of our ordinary ways of partitioning history from pseudohistory; it exhibits epistemically significant differences between history and pseudohistory; it is precise enough to guide our investigation of statements that may be pseudohistorical; and it specifies a set of individually necessary and jointly sufficient conditions for deciding whether statements are pseudohistorical or not. Any statement that is presented as historical knowledge, but which satisfies at least one of the four other conditions, is a pseudohistorical statement.

The rest of this article will examine a detailed case study of a controversial work that presents itself as history – Alan Clark's *The Donkeys* – to show how this analysis can help determine if such works are historical or pseudohistorical. Previous attempts to consign *The Donkeys* to the fringes of history have not been successful, because they were not guided by clear demarcation criteria. Whereas the analysis here will show that Alan Clark's book satisfies three of the five necessary conditions described above. *The Donkeys* presents itself as a work of history. But as a work of historical scholarship, Clark's book is egregiously deficient: his book is full of mistakes, and its mistakes all tend in the same direction – to support his thesis. To make matters worse, Clark embellished his work with deliberate falsehoods: he says things in *The Donkeys* that he must have known were not true. From this, we must conclude that *The Donkeys* is, in fact, a work of pseudohistory. Once we reach this conclusion, we will consider some of the wider implications of these findings.

The Great War and Pseudohistory

Historians of the First World War do not often write about pseudohistory: but they do write about 'myths,' in the sense of 'widespread but untrue or erroneous beliefs or stories; widely held misconceptions; misrepresentations of the truth.' This concept is vague enough to cover memory as well as history: German historians, for example, write about 'the Langemarck Myth,' a widely held German misconception about the final German attacks at the First Battles of Ypres, while American historian Terence Zuber has criticized the British for believing a 'myth' about the Battles of Mons and Le Cateau.[15] But in both cases, these 'myths' originated in official pseudohistories: after the Battle of Langemarck, Germany's OHL (Supreme Army Command) issued a communiqué that described how 'young regiments singing "Deutschland über alles" broke forward against the front line of the enemy's positions and captured them,' while according to Zuber, the postwar British official history promoted a false narrative about the Battle of Mons, in which massed German infantry attacks were defeated by rapid British rifle fire.

Moreover, if we look more closely at the historiography of the First World War, we do sometimes find historians talking about pseudohistory without using that word. The British official historian, James Edmonds, has been accused more than once of downplaying and even concealing the deficiencies of Britain's military leaders.[16] Jesse Pyles has argued that the commander-in-chief of the British Armies in France, Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, falsely blamed the Portuguese Corps for the German breakthrough at the Battle of the Lys in 1918, and that Edmonds later embodied this falsehood in the battle's official British narrative.[17] And in his book *Haig's Command: A Reassessment* (1991), Denis Winter even argued that 'Haig had systematically falsified the record of his military career,' and that 'the official record of the war – political as

[15]Bernd Hüppauf, 'Langemarck, Verdun, and the Myth of a New Man in Germany after World War I,' *War & Society* 6, no. 2 (1988), pp.70-103; Mark Connelly and Stefan Goebel, 'Forgetting the Great War? The Langemarck Myth between Cultural Oblivion and Critical Memory in (West) Germany, 1945-2014,' *Journal of Modern History* 94, no. 1 (2022), pp.1-41; Terence Zuber, *The Mons Myth: A Reassessment of the Battle,* (Stroud: History Press, 2010).

[16]David French, "'Official but not History?" Sir James Edmonds and the Official History of the Great War," *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution for Defence Studies'* 131, no. 1 (1986), pp.58-63; David French, 'James Edmonds and the Official History: France and Belgium,' in Brian Bond (ed.), *The First World War and British Military History,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp.70-86.

[17]Jesse Pyles, 'The Battle of the Lys: The Uncovered History,' *Antologia Militare* 3, 12 (2022), pp.97-124.

well as military, had been systematically distorted both during the war as propaganda and after it, in the official history.'[18]

Historical opinions concerning senior British commanders in the First World War – and especially concerning Douglas Haig – have ranged from very positive to very negative.[19] But since the late 1920s, the British popular memory of generals like Haig has been mostly negative. This consensus is reflected in a hyper-critical school of, mostly but not exclusively popular, historical writing, which has persisted in the face of repeated attempts by, mostly but not exclusively academic, military historians to fringe it out. Most reviewers, for example, concluded that Winter's conspiracy theories were unwarranted; one researcher even wondered 'why people in Britain seem disposed to believe just about anything about Haig and his generals, the more disreputable and fantastic the better, so long as it is critical.'[20]

It is fair to say that no book in this hyper-critical tradition has had a more enduring influence, or has earned a worse reputation among British military historians, than Alan Clark's *The Donkeys*, a popular study of British generalship on the Western Front in the second year of the First World War, published by Hutchinson of London in 1961. *The Donkeys* was part of a wave of popular histories about the First World War in the late '50s and early '60s.[21] But unlike his contemporaries, who wrote about large, well-known battles and campaigns like Verdun, the Somme, and Passchendaele, Clark chose to write about small and obscure British battles on the Western Front in the year 1915.

For most of 1914 the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) in France had been a single army under its Commander-in-Chief, Field-Marshal Sir John French. At the end of the year, on 26 December, it was divided in two: the First Army was on the right, under the command of General Sir Douglas Haig, and the Second Army was on the left, under General Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien. During 1915 the Second Army became the

[18]Denis Winter, *Haig's Command: A Reassessment,* (London: Viking, 1991), pp.3-4, pp.225-57.
[19]Stephen Heathorn, *Haig and Kitchener in Twentieth Century Britain* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), pp.147-190; Keith Simpson, 'The Reputation of Sir Douglas Haig,' in Bond, *First World War and British Military History*, pp.141-162.
[20]Correlli Barnett, 'Did They Doctor the Records?' *Times Literary Supplement* (19 April 1991), pp.7-8; Gerard DeGroot, *Haig's Command* (review), *International History Review* 14, 2 (1992), pp.387-390; David French, *Haig's Command* (review), *History* 77, 250 (1992), pp.345-346; Jeffrey Grey, 'Denis Winter's "Haig's Command: A Reassessment,"' *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research* 71, 285 (1993), p.63.
[21]Alex Danchev, '"Bunking" and Debunking: The Controversies of the 1960s,' in Bond, *The First World War and British Military History*, pp.263-288.

shield of the BEF, and the First Army the sword. On the left, the Second Army was battered by the Germans at the Battles of Ypres, 1915 (22 April-25 May), where the Germans carried out attacks with clouds of chlorine gas – the first large-scale chemical attacks in history. In this battle the Second Army suffered heavy casualties – 2,150 officers and 57,125 other ranks; when the fighting subsided, the Ypres Salient was less than half its former size and was surrounded by German-occupied high ground.

On the right, the First Army hacked and stabbed at the German lines four times, at the Battles of Neuve Chapelle (10-13 March), Aubers Ridge (9 May), Festubert (15-25 May), and Loos (25 September-8 October, followed by the Actions of the Hohenzollern Redoubt, (13 -19 October). Each of these blows was heavier than the last, but none of them pierced the German defences. By the end of the year the First Army had lost 5,927 officers and 134,579 other ranks – more than the full complement of the BEF at the start of the war – and the German line remained unbroken.

The First Army's defeats had important political and military consequences. Field Marshal French blamed a shortage of munitions for the debacle at Aubers Ridge: the resulting 'shell scandal' worsened a political crisis in Great Britain that ended only when Prime Minister Asquith formed a coalition government and established a Ministry of Munitions. Later, after an almost equally disastrous attack by the British reserves at the Battle of Loos on 26 September, the new coalition government relieved Field-Marshal French and appointed General Haig to command the BEF – a post that Haig held for the rest of the war.

Two volumes of the British official history were devoted to these operations: *The British Campaign in France and Flanders, 1915* by J. E. Edmonds (and G. C. Wynne), which were published in 1927 and 1928. But when it appeared in 1961, *The Donkeys* offered its readers a short, accessible, and hyper-critical alternative to the lengthy, dense, and apologetic official British history. While he relies on Edmonds for the bare facts of his account, Clark tells a tale of butchery, bungling, and backstabbing. At Ypres, for example, French interferes with Smith-Dorrien's direction of the battle, ordering Second Army to make futile counterattacks: when Smith-Dorrien opposes any further waste of life, and advocates withdrawal instead, he is relieved of his command. Later, General Haig orders two divisions of raw New Army troops to their deaths on the second day at Loos, then blames this hideous blunder on French, engineers the dismissal of his chief, and then fails upward by taking French's job. And so on.

Thirty years later, Denis Winter would call *The Donkeys* 'the single most accurate book in print on any Western Front campaign, despite systematic attempts to discredit it.'[22] But Clark's hyper-critical conclusions were challenged even before his book appeared

[22]Winter, *Haig's Command,* p.255.

in print. In 1960, Clark had published an excerpt from his forthcoming book, 'The Dismissal of Sir John French,' about the affair of the reserves at Loos and its aftermath, as an article in *History Today*. This led to an exchange of letters with Haig's most prominent defender, John Terraine, who was the first to suggest that Clark's work was, in effect, pseudohistorical.[23]

In October 1915, for example, King George V was thrown from his horse while inspecting Haig's troops in France. Clark says that Haig devotes more space in his diary to this accident than he does to the whole Battle of Loos; this is false, Terraine says. He disputes Clark's account of the handling of the reserves at Loos, arguing that French was to blame, not Haig. And then, most seriously, he accuses Clark of both cherry-picking evidence and ignoring contrary evidence, to support his account of the fall of Sir John French. In particular, he says that Clark has created a misleading impression by quoting selectively from Haig's diaries, and by not mentioning that his narrative is contradicted by passages from the same source. 'I must apologize for taking up so much space with this,' he concludes. 'It is, however, the great advantage of systematic misrepresentation that the reply has to be of inordinate length.'

Clark's reply to Terraine is not very convincing. 'As regards to the relative space devoted in Haig's diary to the battle of Loos and the King's fall from a horse,' he says, 'I can only repeat that the proportion quoted by me holds true in respect to those passages from his diary which it has been thought fit to *publish*.' Note Clark's lapse into the passive voice. Clark does a better job of defending his version of Haig's handling of the reserves at Loos, by pointing to mistakes in Terraine's critique. But his response to the charge of 'systematic misrepresentation' indulges in *ad hominem*. 'The remaining "points" seem really to be matters of interpretation,' he says.

> Readers will doubtless be aware that Mr. Terraine is currently the official custodian of Haig's reputation and is working on a biography. And this explains why he has been entrusted with the full text of Haig's diaries. His objections seem to be that in quoting from them I have not reproduced the surrounding text.[24]

[23]Alan Clark, 'The Dismissal of Sir John French,' *History Today* 10 (1960), pp.623-630; John Terraine and Alan Clark, 'John French and Douglas Haig,' *History Today* 11 (1960), pp.65-67.

[24]On the King's fall from a horse: 'Haig's diary devotes much space to an account of, and apologia for, this incident; more space, indeed, than is occupied by the whole of the battle of Loos.' [Note: 'I am referring to the published text of Haig's diary. Robert Blake has kindly pointed out to me that in the original document (which has not been published) this ratio does not apply.'] Clark, *The Donkeys,* (London: Hutchinson, 1961), p.180.

And when *The Donkeys* was published the following year, some of its reviews were very negative. A. J. P. Taylor thought that Clark's work was entertaining: 'There are plenty of laughs in this book,' he wrote, 'tempered with sadness at the thought of the forgotten men who died because their commanders were incompetent, jealous, blundering, and complacent.' However, Taylor also wrote that *The Donkeys* 'lacks understanding and sympathy,' 'disregards the most elementary rules of historical scholarship,' and 'is valueless as a serious contribution to history.'[25] Michael Howard's opinion was like Taylor's: 'As "'entertainment" this book is good value,' he wrote. 'As history it is worthless.'[26] Rudest of all was John Terraine, whose review article damned and blasted *The Donkeys* once again, calling it 'the apotheosis of distortion.'[27]

So: was Terraine correct? Had Clark engaged in 'systematic misrepresentation' and was *The Donkeys* 'the apotheosis of distortion'? What is the verdict of the relevant group of historians? No historian besides Terraine has criticised *The Donkeys* in any detail. Terraine confines his criticism to just one chapter of Clark's book. And John Terraine is not always a reliable source: he was a partisan historian who devoted much of his career to rehabilitating the reputations of senior British commanders of the First World War.[28]

Dan Todman's *The Great War: Myth and Memory* devotes a chapter to the generalship controversy, but while this chapter is entitled 'Donkeys,' its analysis and critique of *The Donkeys* is brief and superficial. Both Todman's book and Ion Trewin's *Alan Clark: The Biography* have confirmed what John Terraine suspected, that Clark had fabricated the quotation that gave *The Donkeys* its title, and we will return to this point later.[29] But neither of these authors answer the question that concerns us here: is *The Donkeys* itself a work of pseudohistory?

[25]*The Observer*, Sunday, 23 July 1961, p.19.
[26]*The Listener*, 3 August 1961, pp.180-181.
[27]John Terraine, 'Instant History,' *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution* 107 (1962), pp.140-145.
[28]For a summary of his position, see John Terraine, 'British Military Leadership in the First World War,' in Peter Liddle (ed.), *Home Fires and Foreign Fields: British Social and Military Experience in the First World War,* (London: Pergamon, 1985), pp.39-51.
[29]Dan Todman, *The Great War: Myth and Memory* (London and New York: Hambledon and London, 2005), pp.99-103; Ion Trewin, *Alan Clark: The Biography,* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2009), Kindle edition, chapters 15-17.

The only other general book about the British army on the Western Front in 1915 argues that Alan Clark was wrong, but does not accuse him of historical misconduct.[30] The best and most recent academic work on this general topic, by contrast, is *Courage without Glory*: *The British Army on the Western Front in 1915*; published in 2015 it is a collection of essays edited by Spencer Jones. In his introduction, Jones makes it clear that in his view, *The Donkeys* has been discredited: he describes Clark's book as 'an influential but notorious study of British High Command in 1915 which popularised the phrase "lions led by donkeys" and became the foundation of much critical historiography. Although academically dubious,' he says, 'Clark's contrast between an ignorant officer class and the courageous, stoic common soldier struck a powerful chord that still resonates in many popular interpretations of the war.' And that is the last word about *The Donkeys* in *Courage without Glory*: not one footnote in the fifteen chapters of Spencer's collection references Clark or his work.

But not all academics have rejected *The Donkeys*: the best recent account of the Battle of Loos, for example, calls *The Donkeys* 'a bitter, if unreliable polemic,' but cites Clark as a source on a number of points.[31] An interesting comparative study of British and German histories of the sector between Armentières and La Bassée cites Clark as well.[32] For their part, popular historians have been referring to *The Donkeys* for information about the British campaigns on the Western Front ever since its publication.[33] And some of Clark's arguments have stood the test of time: at least some historians agree nowadays that Haig was responsible for what happened to the reserves at Loos, and concede that Clark's conspiracy theory concerning the dismissal of Sir John French was not unwarranted.[34]

Junk History and Fake History

Let us therefore consider if *The Donkeys* will satisfy the conditions in our new definition. It does present itself as historical knowledge. It is not based on impossible

[30]Robin Neillands, *The Death of Glory: The Western Front 1915* (London: John Murray, 2006), esp. pp.xvii-xxii, pp.268-274.

[31]Nick Lloyd, *Loos 1915,* (Brimscombe Port Stroud: History Press, 2008).

[32]John F. Williams, *Modernity, the Media and the Military: The creation of national mythologies on the Western Frant 1914-1918,* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

[33]David Leeson, 'Alan Clark's *The Donkeys* and the History of the British Campaign in French Flanders and Artois, 1914-15,' unpublished paper, Laurentian University, 2000, pp.24-25.

[34]See e.g. Tim Travers, *The Killing Ground: The British Army, the Western Front, and the Emergence of Modern Warfare 1900-1918,* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1987), pp.16-19; Gerard J. DeGroot, *Douglas Haig, 1861-1928,* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988), pp. 203-214; J. P. Harris, *Douglas Haig and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp.174-185.

beliefs, or on unwarranted conspiracy theories, or on egregiously deficient sources. But is it based on deliberate falsehoods, or on egregiously deficient methodologies? Does it really disregard the most elementary rules of historical scholarship, and systematically misrepresent British military leadership on the Western Front in 1915? Is it junk history, or worse – fake history?

Before we can distinguish junk history from bad history, we must be ready to distinguish what is *egregiously* deficient from what is merely deficient. That is to say: we need a set of individually necessary and jointly sufficient conditions for deciding if a historian's methods are obviously wrong or bad, beyond a reasonable degree.

Here is a tentative list of such conditions. A historian's methods are egregiously deficient if they repeatedly,

1. Misquote and mis-reference their published sources, and
2. Provide misleading and selective quotations, and
3. Take passages from their sources out of context, and
4. Put words in people's mouths, and
5. Misrepresent passages from secondary sources as passages from primary sources, and
6. Provide misleading, inaccurate figures, and
7. Provide misleading, inaccurate captions for images.

One additional test for egregiously deficient methods might be called 'the criterion of miscoherence.' Bad historians are incoherent: they make all kinds of mistakes, which do not cohere with each other, and gallop madly off in all directions. Pseudohistorians, by contrast, tend to make just one kind of mistake: the kind that supports their thesis. Their mistakes are miscoherent, charging in formation toward their conclusions. So, a historian's methods are egregiously deficient if, in addition to the conditions above:

8. Their mistakes are miscoherent.

The author believes that most historians would agree that these are both appropriate and reasonable standards. Any work that presents itself as history, and meets all these conditions, is junk history.

We should note, moreover, that there is an important precedent for accepting miscoherence as evidence of deception. In his expert report for the defence in the case of *Irving v Penguin Books Ltd*, Richard Evans found that the work of Holocaust denier David Irving was also full of miscoherent mistakes. This was enough to convince the judge that Irving had engaged in deliberate misrepresentation. As Evans explains:

> 'Historians are human,' the judge noted. 'They make mistakes, they misread and misconstrue documents and overlook material evidence.' But in all the instances in which Irving had done these things, the effect was to cast Hitler in a favourable light. There were no instances in which his errors worked in the opposite direction. His mistakes were thus 'unlikely to have been innocent.'[35]

But while these are good grounds for suspecting deception, miscoherent mistakes might simply be the result of bias. Perhaps, out of an abundance of caution, we should only conclude that historians have based their works on deliberate falsehoods if we find convincing evidence that they knowingly (or must have knowingly) made false statements in their work. If, for example, they confess to lying, then that would be convincing evidence that they lied. If, on the other hand, we find them saying things in their work that are clearly contradicted by the sources they cite, then that would be convincing evidence that they must have lied. Any work that presents itself as history, and which meets either of these conditions, is fake history.

Alan Clark's *The Donkeys*

If we check Alan Clark's footnotes, we will soon discover that *The Donkeys* is riddled with errors. Out of twenty-nine references to the two volumes of the British official history for 1915, for example, just eight are correct and complete. Some of Clark's mistakes are minor: in nine cases, he refers the reader to the wrong page, or the wrong volume, or the wrong page in the wrong volume.[36] But in other cases, his work includes misleading and selective quotations, just as Terraine says. On p.94, for example, Clark describes how, on the evening of 26 April, Smith-Dorrien tried to dissuade Field-Marshal French from ordering any further counterattacks at Ypres. 'Sir John, however, was steadfast in his contention that "he did not wish any ground to be given up if it could possibly be avoided", and the situation should be "cleared up", and the area "quieted down" as soon as possible.'

On p.254 of Volume I of the official history, by comparison, it says: 'During the evening Smith-Dorrien motored to Hazebrouck, and in a personal interview was given the Commander-in-Chief's instructions.'

> These were to the effect that he did not wish any ground to be given up if it could possibly be avoided; but unless the French regained what they had lost, or a good portion of it, it might be impossible to retain the very salient position in front of Ypres. It was essential, however, that the situation should be cleared up and the area quieted down so that the offensive of the First Army might be

[35]Evans, *Lying About Hitler*, p.227; for another example, see Richard Evans, *In Defence of History,* (London: Granta, 1997), pp.135-142.
[36]Clark, *The Donkeys*, pp.37n, 38n, 41n, 70n, 86n, 89n, 94n, 100n, and 104n.

> carried out even if this involved the Second Army withdrawing to a more retired line.

Clark has omitted much more than just 'the surrounding material.' He has distorted the meaning of this passage. To make matters worse, his footnote is misleading: it says 'OH, 1915, II, 16,' but that is the wrong page in the wrong volume.

Some of Clark's references to British regimental histories are just as unreliable as his references to the British official history. On p. 62 of *The Donkeys*, for example, Clark quotes at length from a first-person account of the British advance at Neuve Chapelle and attributes this passage to John Ewing's *The Royal Scots*. But Clark's quotation does not appear in Ewing's book; to make matters worse, 8 Royal Scots was present at Neuve Chapelle but was kept in reserve throughout the battle, as Ewing makes plain: 'The 8th Royal Scots, forming the left pivot of the division, were not called upon to advance, and their participation in the conflict was confined to standing fast in the trenches, which were intermittently bombarded by the enemy.'[37]

When discussing British casualties, Clark sometimes exaggerates for emphasis. In Chapter 3, which covers the fighting on the morning of the first day at Neuve Chapelle, Clark describes the failed assault of 2 Middlesex on the German front line. The British official history states that, when the 2 Middlesex attacked, its three leading lines were 'completely annihilated' by 'heavy machine-gun and rifle fire at point-blank range both from their front and left flank.'[38] According to *The Donkeys*, every soldier in the battalion died in this assault: 'every man,' he writes, 'and there had been nearly a thousand, was killed.'[39] In fact, not only was every man in 2 Middlesex not killed, but enough of the battalion survived to advance again later, capture its objective, and hold it until relieved.[40] According to their regimental historian, the 2 Middlesex lost 78 killed, 307 wounded, and 89 missing on the first day at Neuve Chapelle – about 50 per cent of their total strength.[41]

Later, in Chapter 12, at the end of his account of the massacre of 21 and 24 Divisions on the second day at Loos, Clark writes that twelve attacking battalions, 'a strength of just under ten thousand,' lost 385 officers and 7,861 men.[42] This attack was indeed

[37]John Ewing, *The Royal Scots 1914-1919*, II, (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1925), p.89.
[38]J. E. Edmonds and G. C. Wynne, *History of the Great War: Military Operations, France and Flanders, 1915*, I, (London: Macmillan, 1927), p.98.
[39]Clark, *The Donkeys*, p.55.
[40]Edmonds and Wynne, *1915*, I, p.100. Robin Prior and Trevor Wilson, *Command on the Western Front,* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), p.49.
[41]Everard Wyrall, *The Die-Hards in the Great War* (London: Harrison, no date), p.102.
[42]Clark, *The Donkeys*, p.173.

a bloodbath, but the attacking battalions did not suffer 82 per cent casualties, as Clark suggests. According to the official history, the two divisions, a force of *twenty-four* battalions, numbering about *twenty* thousand men, lost 385 officers and 7844 other ranks in the day's fighting, or about 41 per cent casualties. The twelve attacking battalions lost 183 officers and 4316 other ranks – about 45 per cent. [43]

Clark also sometimes takes passages from sources and presents them out of context. In his account of the Calais Conference in July 1915, Clark quotes Brigadier-General Sir Edward Spears, who describes a foolishly optimistic Rawlinson raising impossible French hopes of unlimited British artillery support.[44] In this case, the reference is accurate: Spears's words can be found on p.88 of his book *Prelude to Victory*, just as Clark says.[45] What Clark neglects to mention is that the incident described by Spears took place in 1917, during the preparations for the Nivelle offensive during the spring of that year.

Similarly, Clark says that on 18 April 1915 German General Erich von Falkenhayn wrote: 'The English troops, in spite of undeniable bravery and endurance on the part of the men, have proved so clumsy in action that they offer no prospect of accomplishing anything decisive against the German Army in the immediate future.'[46] But the original, in Falkenhayn's *General Headquarters 1914-1916 and its critical decisions*, is written in the past tense: 'In any case, the English troops, in spite of undeniable bravery and endurance on the part of individuals, had proved to be so clumsy in action, that they could offer no prospect of accomplishing anything decisive against German troops for the immediate future.'[47] This passage was not written in 1915, as Clark suggests, but after the war, along with the rest of Falkenhayn's book.[48]

Nor is this the only case in which Clark rewrites a passage from a secondary source and presents it as a quotation from a primary source. On p. 115 of *The Donkeys*, at the head of Chapter 8 describing the Attack on Fromelles during the Battle of Aubers Ridge, Clark quotes the following conversation between two British commanders:

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[43]J. E. Edmonds, *History of the Great War: Military Operations, France and Flanders, 1915*, II, (London: Macmillan, 1928), pp.341-342. These numbers are endorsed by Prior and Wilson, *Command*, p.129fn.
[44]Clark, *The Donkeys*, p.136.
[45]Edward Spears, *Prelude to Victory,* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1939), p.88.
[46]Clark, *The Donkeys*, p.104.
[47]Erich von Falkenhayn, *General Headquarters 1914-1916 and Its Critical Decisions*, (London: Hutchinson, 1920), p.74.
[48]Clark also provides two different titles for this work in his footnote and bibliography, both of which are incorrect.

> General Rawlinson: This is most unsatisfactory. Where are the Sherwood Foresters? Where are the East Lancashires on the right?
> Brigadier-General Oxley: They are lying out in No Man's Land, sir, and most of them will never stand again.

Clark attributes this to the '*Rifle Brigade Official History*, p.186.' There is no 'Rifle Brigade Official History,' and this conversation does not appear in Reginald Berkeley's *History of the Rifle Brigade in the War of 1914-1918*, the closest thing we have to an official history of that regiment. Furthermore, Berkeley's account of 2 Rifle Brigade at the Battle of Aubers Ridge begins on p.99 and ends on p.106. Interestingly, however, the following passage *can* be found in Berkeley's account of this battalion at Aubers Ridge: 'The Rifle Brigade was on the first objective. Where were the East Lancashires on the right, and the Sherwood Foresters beyond them? They were lying out in No-man's-land; and most of them would never stand again.'[49]

Another doubtful epigraph appears at the head of Chapter 12, which describes the second day of fighting at the Battle of Loos:

> The machine-gun is a much over-rated weapon and two per battalion is more than sufficient.
> (HAIG, in a minute to the War Council, 14th April 1915)[50]

The War Council was a Cabinet sub-committee on war policy. This quotation was questioned in the 1980s by Dominick Graham: 'Considering that the scale of machine-guns in a battalion had been doubled by April 1915,' he says, 'that Haig was unlikely to have been in a position to "minute" the War Council from France where he commanded the First Army, and that Clark does not quote the source of his information, this old canard may be safely discarded.'[51]

Clark may have got this 'old canard' from Basil Liddell Hart. In *The Real War 1914-1918*, Liddell Hart writes: 'Even when the machine-gun had obviously gained a dominance of the battlefield, General Headquarters in France resisted its growth from the puny pre-war scale of two in each battalion. One Army commander, Haig, declared that it was "a much overrated weapon" and that this scale was "more than

[49]Reginald Berkeley's *History of the Rifle Brigade in the War of 1914-1918,* I, (London: Rifle Brigade Club, 1927), pp.99-100.
[50]Clark, *The Donkeys*, p.163.
[51]Dominick Graham, 'The British Expeditionary Force in 1914 and the machine gun,' *Military Affairs* 46 (1982), p.193fn. The number of machine guns per battalion had been increased from two to four, in February: Edmonds and Wynne, *1915*, I, p.11.

sufficient.'"[52] But in *The Smoke and the Fire: Myths and Anti-Myths of War* (1984), John Terraine traces this anecdote back to the memoirs of Brigadier-General Christopher Baker-Carr.

Baker-Carr was the first head of the BEF's Machine Gun School in France. Sometime after Christmas 1914, he claims to have sent a memorandum to GHQ, and notably not a 'minute to the War Council,' proposing to double the number of machine guns per battalion. When his file was returned, with comments from senior commanders, 'we nearly wept,' he says.

> Not a single individual had had the courage to support our suggestion, not even those who had given it their private approbation; many had 'hedged' badly; others were frankly hostile. One Army Commander gave his opinion that 'the machine-gun was a much over-rated weapon and two per battalion were more than sufficient.' Another half-heartedly approved of the idea, but doubted it could be carried out.[53]

Terraine says that Liddell Hart identified the Army Commander in question as Haig, based on private information from Edmonds.[54] But even if what Baker-Carr says is true, Clark has committed a pious fraud, by rewriting this passage in the present tense and providing a false reference.

And finally, and notoriously, there is the snippet of conversation that appears at the beginning of *The Donkeys*, and gives this book its title:

> Ludendorff: 'The English soldiers fight like lions.'
> Hoffman: 'True. But don't we know that they are lions led by donkeys.'[55]

Clark gives only 'Falkenhayn, *Memoirs*' as the source of this exchange. No such book exists. Erich von Falkenhayn authored two books before his death in 1922: *Die Oberste Heeresleitung, 1914-1916: in Ihrenwichtigsten Entschliessungen,* (Berlin: Mittler, 1920), and *Der Feldzug der 9. Armee gegen die Rumanen und Russen,* (Berlin: Mittler, 1921). Only the former is listed in Clark's bibliography, and the conversation between Ludendorff and Hoffman cannot be found in either book. We now know that Clark was evasive about the provenance of this quotation, both before and after his book

[52]Basil Liddell Hart, *The Real War, 1914-1918,* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1930), p.128.
[53]Christopher Baker-Carr, *From Chauffeur To Brigadier,* (London: Ernest Benn, 1930).
[54]John Terraine, *The Smoke and the Fire: Myths and Anti-Myths of War, 1861-1945,* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1980), pp.133-142. Interestingly, Terraine's critique also relies in part on evidence from a private source.
[55]Clark, *The Donkeys*, p.1.

was published; claimed (falsely) to have received it from Liddell Hart; and according to his friend Euan Graham, admitted privately that he had invented it.[56]

What even Clark's critics have not noticed, however, is that he mentions lions and donkeys even before this epigraph. A picture of a soldier being decorated faces the title page, with the caption "Donkey decorates Lion. General Alderson pins the D.C.M. on an unknown Canadian lance-corporal for bravery at 'Second Ypres.'". This photograph is held at the Imperial War Museum, and if we check its item description, we will find something strange. 'A Lance Corporal of the 10th Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force,' it says, 'being decorated by Lieutenant-General Edwin Alderson with the Distinguished Conduct Medal. Near Locre, 1916.' [57]

The Donkeys includes thirteen photographs from the holdings of the Imperial War Museum. Eight of these thirteen photos are from the wrong year: they were taken in 1916 or 1917, instead of 1915. Chapter 5, about the Second Battle of Ypres, includes two photos. The first, facing page 80, is captioned "No-Man's-Land in the salient, looking north-east. A quiet day. In the background a 4.7 shell bursts short of the enemy position. In the foreground, human remains and detritus.' But this photo was taken in 1916, at the Battle of the Somme. The Imperial War Museum's online catalogue describes it as, 'A view of the battlefield at Guillemont, September 1916.'[58] It is part of a series of such views taken by photographer Ernest L. Brooks, who was not even in France in 1915.

Clark's account of the Second Battle of Ypres continues in Chapter 6, in which Clark writes of 'a haunting picture of an advanced dressing station taken at this time.'[59] This photo faces p. 81; according to Clark's list of illustrations, this photo was taken at Potijze. But this picture could not have been taken at the Second Battle of Ypres, or at any time in 1915, because it shows men wearing steel helmets; these were not issued to British troops in France until the spring of 1916. And if we check the reference for this photograph in the IWM's digital collections, we will discover that it

[56]Terraine, 'British Military Leadership,' p.39; Ion Trewin, *Alan Clark: The Biography,* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2009), Kindle edition, chapters 15-17.
[57]Imperial War Museum (hereinafter IWM) Q 447, the 'Lion' in this picture is Lance-Corporal Frank Cox of the 10 Canadians, who won the DCM, not at the Second Battle of Ypres, but in a trench raid on the night of 4/5 February 1916. Daniel G. Dancocks, *Gallant Canadians: The Story of the Tenth Canadian Infantry battalion 1914-1919,* (Calgary, 1990), p.57. There is nothing in *The Donkeys* to justify Clark's name-calling in this case: Alderson is hardly mentioned.
[58]IWM Q 1167, there is another picture from the Battle of the Somme facing p. 112 which comes from IWM Q 811.
[59]Clark, *The Donkeys*, p.99.

was taken at the Battle of Arras. Its object description reads: 'Tending wounded outside an advanced dressing station at Tilloy, April 1917.'[60] The photographer, once again, was Ernest L. Brooks.

So: in *The Donkeys*, Alan Clark repeatedly misquotes and mis-references his published sources. In one case, he first distorts Field Marshal French's instructions to General Smith-Dorrien during the Second Battle of Ypres and then directs his readers to the wrong page in the wrong volume of the British official history. He also provides misleading and selective quotations; takes passages from his sources out of context; exaggerates British losses; puts words in people's mouths; rewrites passages from secondary sources and presents them as passages from primary sources; provides misleading, inaccurate figures; provides misleading, inaccurate captions for images; and his mistakes are miscoherent. *The Donkeys* is junk history.

We would also be justified in suspecting that *The Donkeys* is fake history. When Richard Evans found that all of David Irving's mistakes tended to cast Hitler in a favourable light, this was enough to convince the judge in the *Irving v Penguin Books Ltd* case that Irving had probably lied. Similarly, whenever Alan Clark makes mistakes, or misreads or misconstrues documents, the effect is always to cast British generals in an unfavourable light. His mistakes are just as unlikely to have been innocent. To argue otherwise would be special pleading.

In one case, Clark even refused to correct an obvious mistake. Haig's diary does not, in fact, devote more space to the King's fall from his horse than it does to the Battle of Loos. This exciting falsehood trades on a trivial truth: Robert Blake's book *The Private Papers of Douglas Haig*, which consists of selections from Haig's diaries and correspondence chosen by Blake, devotes more space to the King's fall from his horse than it does to the Battle of Loos.[61] But when this was pointed out by Terraine, and confirmed by Blake, Alan Clark responded with a misleading footnote that refers to Blake's book as 'the published text of Haig's diary.'

Still: suspicion is not proof. Have we found convincing evidence that Clark either knowingly made or must have made false statements? The author believes we have. It is now certain that Clark lied about the quotation that gave his book its title. He must

[60] IWM Q 2024, there are more pictures from the Battle of Arras facing p. 112 IWM Q 6229, and p. 160 from IWM 2104. Even photos from 1915 are miscaptioned: compare 'Pinned-down in the wire' (facing p.64) with IWM Q 49750 and IWM Q 49751; 'Aubers: looking back at the English parapet', facing p.113, with IWM Q 49213; and 'The German line in Lone Tree Ridge', facing p.160 with IWM Q 49290.

[61] On this rhetorical manoeuvre, and others, see Nicholas Shackel, 'The vacuity of postmodernist methodology,' *Metaphilosophy* 36 (2005), pp.295-320.

also have lied about other quotations in his book: it is hard to see, for example, how he could have mistaken a passage from the *History of the Rifle Brigade* for a conversation between General Rawlinson and Brigadier-General Oxley. Finally, he must have lied about the photographs in his book, presenting photos from the Somme and Arras in 1916 and 1917 as pictures from Ypres in 1915.

For these reasons, *The Donkeys* deserves also to be condemned as fake history. Historians can make mistakes, and be wrong, but they cannot lie. Anyone who lies while pretending to write history is writing pseudohistory. Otherwise, we must ask ourselves: how many lies are too many?

Conclusion

We can see, then, how scholarship on the demarcation problem in the philosophy of science, the problem of how to distinguish genuine science from pseudoscience, can help historians distinguish genuine history, even bad or mistaken history, from pseudohistory. History and science are not the same: they are different disciplines with different methods. But these two disciplines are alike in at least one crucial respect. Both scientists and historians must obey what Michael Strevens has called 'the iron rule of explanation.' Historians, like scientists, must 'conduct all disputes with reference to empirical evidence alone.'[62]

Pseudoscientists violate this iron rule of explanation – and so do pseudohistorians. Fake historians try to fool their audience with spurious evidence. Junk historians fool themselves with evidence obtained from unreliable sources, or by following unreliable procedures. And both weird historians and crackpot historians offer insufficient evidence to support their deviant doctrines. In some cases, these deviant doctrines are fringe beliefs like 'the Holocaust never happened.' But in other cases, they have wide currency, like 'British senior commanders in the First World War were asinine butchers and bunglers.' A clear definition of pseudohistory, with individually necessary and jointly sufficient criteria for demarcating genuine history from pseudohistory, can help us disrupt the consensus in such cases.

This interdisciplinary approach could help guide historians in other ways as well. Angelo Fasce, for example, has proposed what he calls the Explanation-Polarisation model (EX-PO) to help explain why some people endorse pseudoscience. 'Unwarranted beliefs increase their explanatory appeal by science mimicry,' he says,

[62]Michael Strevens, *The Knowledge Machine: How Irrationality Created Modern Science,* (New York & London: Liveright, 2020), pp.7-8.

'on the basis of spurious categorisations and flawed mechanistic explanations.'[63] In similar fashion, pseudohistorians enhance their appeal by history mimicry: Alan Clark's *The Donkeys*, for example, includes numerous quotations and footnotes—but his quotations are often selective, and his footnotes inaccurate. But more importantly, his book provides a spurious categorisation, 'lions led by donkeys', and a flawed mechanistic explanation, the callousness and incompetence of senior British commanders, which both possess a strong intuitive appeal for some.

The case of Alan Clark's *The Donkeys* is also revealing in other ways. History does not happen by itself. Like a lawn, it must be seeded with reliable sources, watered and fertilised with research, and mowed and trimmed with peer review; and we should also leave space for competing viewpoints, like patches of clover. The weeds of pseudohistory thrive where the turf is thin or bare.[64]

Alan Clark did not choose the campaigns of 1915 by chance. His original intention was to write a book about the Ypres Salient from 1914 to 1917; but he changed his topic after Leon Wolff published *In Flanders Fields*, about 1917's Third Battle of Ypres.[65] The First Army's 1915 offensives did more than give Clark a fresh angle from which to attack Haig. Neuve Chapelle, Aubers Ridge, and Loos were, and still are, some of the most neglected and obscure battles in the history of the First World War. Since the sources were not easy to check, he could tell his audience what they wanted to hear, without fear of contradiction; and he could without most people noticing even leave out the Battle of Festubert, where the First Army won a partial victory. It was bad luck that John Terraine was working on a biography of Haig at the same time, and had been given privileged access to Haig's diary. But it was good luck that nobody followed up on Terraine's critique.

The techniques of the pseudohistorian have not changed much since *The Donkeys* was published. Today, pseudohistory proliferates on the internet, on streaming platforms, and on social media. Like Alan Clark before them, some digital pseudohistorians engage in traditional history mimicry, editing articles on Wikipedia for example to distort the history of the Holocaust by promoting the fringe theories of Polish

[63]Angelo Fasce, 'The Explanation-Polarisation Model: Pseudoscience Spreads Through Explanatory Satisfaction and Group Polarisation,' *Journal of Social and Political Psychology* 10, 2 (2022), p.699.

[64]'Pseudo history exists largely in that world where the evidence is slight and the opportunities for the human imagination to roam are consequently large.' Greg Melleuish, Konstantin Sheiko and Stephen Brown, 'Pseudo History/Weird History: Nationalism and the Internet,' *History Compass* 7, no. 6 (2009): p.1484. << ???

[65]Todman, *The Great War,* p.100.

nationalists.[66] In some other cases, digital pseudohistory, or 'post-truth history', has become even cruder than its physical predecessor, by discarding even the pretence of real scholarship.[67] But Alan Clark anticipated this trend as well. The first few pages of *The Donkeys* resemble an internet meme: with a miscaptioned photograph saying 'Donkey decorates Lion'; and a framing headline 'THE DONKEYS'; and a fabricated quotation with '…lions led by donkeys'; that all prepare the reader to believe Clark's tendentious version of the campaigns of 1915. A 'post-truth' version of *The Donkeys* would just omit the rest of the book.

Finally, the case of Alan Clark's *The Donkeys* highlights the need for two distinct approaches to the problem of pseudohistory. We need patient scholarship and thorough criticism, guided by clear demarcation criteria, to debunk the spurious claims of counterfeit historians. It is not enough to mow the weeds or pull them out by hand: they must be rooted out with a fork. This is hard work, which is made harder by publication bias; historical journals, like scientific journals, prefer studies with positive results.

But ultimately, the best defence against pseudohistory is history itself, just as the best defence against weeds is a thick carpet of healthy grass. Historians must provide an alternative to pseudohistory. They must practice history communication, and make their findings relevant, accessible, and interesting to their students and the public. It was never enough simply to shun *The Donkeys*, or to hold it up as a bad example: what was needed was a better history of the campaigns of 1915. And if historians today cannot find effective ways to connect with audiences of digital natives, then pseudohistorians undoubtedly will.[68]

[66]Jan Grabowski and Shira Klein, 'Wikipedia's Intentional Distortion of the History of the Holocaust,' *Journal of Holocaust Research* 37, 2 (2022): pp.133-90.
[67]Marius Gudonis and Benjamin T. Jones, 'Who Controls the Past?' in Marius Gudonis and Benjamin T Jones, *History in a Post-Truth World: Theory and Praxis,* (New York: Routledge, 2021), pp.1-13.
[68]On 'e-history' and the need for digital history communication, see Jason Steinhauer, *History, Disrupted: How Social Media and the World Wide Web Have Changed the Past,* (Washington DC: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022).

The Most Dangerous Factory in Britain: First World War Gas Warfare and H. M. Cylinder Depot, Stoke-on-Trent, UK

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ABSTRACT
During the First World War, Stoke-on-Trent hosted the Ministry of Munitions' H.M. Cylinder Depot. By 1916 it was storing some 70,000 defective, dud and partially-discharged poison gas cylinders salvaged from the Western Front. With desperate gas shortages, cylinders were emptied, repaired and sent on to regional manufacturers to be refilled. The factory operated on a 24/7 basis. This was highly dangerous work with 2,000+ accidents reported for the 300-strong workforce. So many accidents occurred that pioneering high-oxygen medical treatment wards were developed in the nearby North Staffordshire Infirmary Hospital, forming the UK's first respiratory centre. Over 650,000 poison gas cylinders had been handled onsite by the end of the war.

Introduction

By late 1914, trench warfare became the norm on the Western Front, and in successive years assumed complex proportions. With the growing complexity of trench construction and the defensive power of artillery and machine guns, repeated unsuccessful attempts to 'break through' opposition lines by frontal assault led to large

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DOI: 10.25602/GOLD.bjmh.v12i3.1999

loss of life and ever more elaborate attempts to breach enemy defences, that deployed a range of innovations, from artillery to mining, to tanks, to gas.[1]

It was the first use of lethal gas by the Germans at Ypres in 1915 that 'opened the cylinders' to the widespread use of gas as a weapon of war, despite it being specifically precluded under the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907.[2] This first use of poison gas as a breakthrough weapon in the trench war, had, as Fritz Haber has stated, 'no precursors' in practical terms.[3] Nevertheless, it was the case that though all protagonists had considered the use of chemical lachrymatory agents such as tear gas early on, these were not taken seriously until, in 1915, they were superseded by more powerful agents such as the non-lethal ethyl iodoacetate (SK) and chloropicrin (PS), and ultimately the lethal gases chlorine and phosgene, either used alone or in

[1]For an overview of these techniques, see Paddy Griffith, *Battle Tactics of the Western Front. The British Army's Art of Attack 1916-18*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994); Anthony Saunders, *Raiding on the Western Front*, (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2012); Bull, *Trench*, p. 95 *et seq*. and Peter Doyle, *Disputed Earth. Geology and Trench Warfare on the Western Front, 1914-18*, (London: Uniform, 2017), p. 178 *et seq*. For mining, see for example Peter Barton, Peter Doyle, Johan Vandewalle, *Beneath Flanders Fields: The Tunnellers' War 1914–1918,* (Staplehurst: Spellmount, 2004); Iain Banks, 'Digging in the Dark: The Underground War on The Western Front in WW1', *Journal of Conflict Archaeology*, 9, 3 (December 2014), pp. 156- 176 https://doi.org/10.1179/157407731 4Z.00000000038; Simon Jones, *Underground Warfare*, (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2015) and Kristopher D. Wisniewski, Peter Doyle, Robert J.S. Hunter, Jamie K. Pringle, Ian G. Stimpson, Dane Wright, Kirsty Squires, Zoe Sutherland, John P. Cassella, Fiona Graham, and Paul Ottey, 'A Multidisciplinary Scientific Investigation of the 1916 Hawthorn Mine Crater, Beaumont Hamel, Northern France', *Journal of Conflict Archaeology*, 18, 3-4 (2024), pp. 125-126 http://doi.org/10.1080/15740773.2023.2297202. For the use of gas, see Ludwig F. Haber, *The Poisonous Cloud. Chemical Warfare in the First World War,* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986); Donald Richter, *Chemical Soldiers. British Gas Warfare in World War One*, (London: Leo Cooper, 1986); and Simon Jones, *World War I Gas Warfare Tactics and Equipment*, (Oxford: Osprey, 2007).

[2]James E. Edmonds, G C. Wynne, *Official History of the War. Military Operations, France & Belgium, 1915. Volume ,* (London: Macmillan, 1927)., Charles H. Foulkes, *"GAS!" The Story of the Special Brigade*, (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood & Sones, 1934); Edward M. Spiers, *Chemical Warfare.* (London: Macmillan Press, 1986); Marion Girard, 'Political Decisions and Britain's Chemical Warfare Challenge in World War I; Descend to Atrocities?', *Defence Studies*, 8, (2008), pp. 105-132 https://doi.org/10.1080/14702430701812019

[3]Haber, *The Poisonous Cloud*, p. 15.

combination.[4] The use of chemical weapons in this way is widely condemned and is rightly proscribed by the United Nations, which continues to prohibit their use under the 1925 Geneva Protocol.[5]

To date, most work on the use of chemical weapons in the First World War has naturally focused on: the development and deployment of gas as a battlefield weapon; the mobilisation of chemists and the chemical industry; the impact of that deployment; the means of countering that deployment by protagonists; and the medical implications of the use of chemical weapons.[6] However, the historiography has focussed less on the workers and the industrial complex producing the gas, which as Marion Girard has indicated, was born out of the pre-existing chemical industry with extra layers of control added in wartime conditions.[7] To add to this scant attention, this study considers an even lesser-known aspect of the deployment of poison gas in the First World War; the development of factories under the Ministry of Munitions in the manufacture, repairing and refilling of pressurised cylinders used to deliver the weapon on the battlefield.

The production of chemicals in the United Kingdom during the First World War was controlled by the Ministry of Munitions, with the UK Government establishing national

[4]Ministry of Munitions, *Official History of the Ministry of Munitions. Vol. XI: The Supply of Munitions: Part II Chemical Warfare Supplies*, (Great Britain: H.M Stationary Office, 1922).

[5]United Nations, 'Chemical Weapons', https://disarmament.unoda.org/wmd/chemical/ Accessed 17 June 2025.

[6]Richter, *Chemical Soldiers*, p. 6 *et seq*., Haber, *The Poisonous Cloud,* p. 22 *et seq;* Albert Palazzo, *Seeking Victory on the Western Front. The British Army & Chemical Warfare in World War 1*, (Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press, 2000); Roy Macleod, 'The Chemists go to War: The Mobilization of Civilian Chemists and the British War Effort,1914-1918.' *Annals of Science*, 50, 5 (1993), pp. 455-481; Edgar Jones, 'Terror Weapons: The British Experience of Gas and Its Treatment in the First World War', *War in History*, 21, 3 (2014) https://doi.org/10.1177/0968344513510248; Susan R. Grayzel, 'Defence Against the Indefensible: The Gas Mask, the State and British Culture During and After the First World War', *Twentieth Century British History*, 25, 3 (2014), pp. 418-434 https://doi.org/10.1093/tcbh/hwu035., Thomas Mayer-MaGuire and Brian Baker, *British Military Respirators and Anti-Gas Equipment of the Two World Wars* (Marlborough: Crowood, 2015); Jones, *Terror Weapons*, pp. 6-8; Shirley D. Tuorinsky (ed), *Medical Aspects of Chemical Warfare*, (Washington: Office of The Surgeon General at TMM Publications, 2008)., Jones, *Terror Weapons*, pp. 9-13.

[7]Marion Girard, *A Strange and Formidable Weapon: British Responses to World War I Poison Gas* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), pp.103-106.

factories to ensure that the increasing chemical wartime demands could be met.[8] Increased demands for battlefield gas weapons produced an industrial environment where it was difficult both to retain employees, and protect them from the noxious materials that took a toll of their health through associated illnesses and/or accidents.[9]

This study examines the operations at H.M. Cylinder Depot at Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, a facility created in 1917 to store, sort and recycle used poison gas cylinders salvaged from the battlefields of the Western Front. As will be demonstrated, it is a site that can reasonably be called the 'most dangerous factory in Britain' due to the number of accidents that affected the workers there. The study objectives were: firstly to document operations at H.M. Cylinder Depot in Stoke-on-Trent and workers' accidents therein; and secondly to evidence the innovative medical advancement developed by North Staffordshire Infirmary to treat both workers and in due course gassed Western Front soldiers.

Gas and Gas Cylinders

The first use of gas by the Germans at Ypres on 22 April 1915 saw 170 tonnes of pressurised chlorine gas deployed by the German Fourth Army. It was released from some 6,000 modified commercial liquid cylinders against the northern flank of the trench salient protecting Ypres.[10]

Liquid chlorine was commonly referred to as 'Red Star', from the identifying markers on the cylinders. Acute chlorine gas poisoning led to inflammation of the eyes and the respiratory tract, causing organs to shut down over time and making them susceptible to infections, particularly tuberculosis at that time, and with chlorine being heavier than air it would settle within trenches and dugouts, requiring simple measures such as 'gas curtains' to keep the poison gas out.[11] Later, phosgene was also used. Whilst slower acting than chlorine, it caused similar symptoms, and was more difficult to detect as it was invisible and only the smell of mouldy hay made it noticeable.[12] Phosgene was often used in conjunction with 'Red Star' chlorine, a combination of liquid chlorine and phosgene, carbonyl dichloride ($COCl_2$), a highly lethal pulmonary irritant, referred to as 'White Star', again due to the symbols marked on shells. The

[8]Ministry of Munitions, *Chemical Warfare Supplies,* Appendix IX, p. 102; Peter Reed, 'Making War Work for Industry: The United Alkali Company's Central Laboratory During World War One', *Ambix*, 62 (2015), pp. 72-93 https://doi.org/10.1179/1745823414Y.0000000009.

[9]Girard, *A Strange and Formidable Weapon*, p. 117.

[10]Haber, *The Poisonous Cloud*, pp. 22-40.

[11]James E. Edmonds, G C. Wynne, *Official History of the War*, p.177; Haber, *The Poisonous Cloud*, p. 34.

[12]Haber, *The Poisonous Cloud,* p. 83 *et seq*.

combined gases allowed a better spread before separation, with the chlorine gas layer effectively sealing the underlying denser-than-air phosgene gas that settled into trenches and dugouts. This allowed it to last longer before dispersal and so become more effective.[13]

Added to this arsenal of gas, from July 1917, was bis(2-chloroethyl) sulphide ($S(CH_2CH_2Cl)_2$), known as 'mustard gas' due to its yellow colour and smell, and also known as 'Yellow Cross' by the Germans and 'Yperite' to the French.[14] A dark oily liquid, the 'gas' was delivered in artillery rounds of various sorts. On the night of the 12-13 July 1917 some 50,000 mustard gas shells were fired by the Germans into the Ypres Salient, causing extensive blistering of biological tissue, rather than just extreme lung irritation, together with extreme conjunctivitis.[15] Initial exposure was symptomless until it was too late to take preventative measures. It often pooled in soil and craters for weeks after use, and was visible as an oily yellow liquid. Mustard gas was persistent and penetrated clothing to produce extensive blistering of the skin that could incapacitate a soldier for months.

For the workers in the factories that manufactured the gas, and who pressurised them in cylinders for eventual release, there was considerable danger. The pressure to respond to the first use of gas on the battlefield meant that there was precious little time to develop safety protocols.[16] Notes on conditions made by Miss F.M.G. Micklethwait in June 1915 described the atmosphere in which workers operated, where they 'cheerfully faced each day an atmosphere impregnated with sulphur gases'.[17] Nevertheless, some impacts on the worker population should have been known, especially as chlorine was a common enough chemical in production prior to the war.[18]

On the battlefield, the effectiveness of poison gas as a weapon was heavily dependent upon its means of delivery. In 1915, pressurised cylinders were the only effective means of carrying the gas to the front and deploying it as a weapon (see Figure 1); a method of deployment that would become increasingly outdated as the war proceeded, and as the chemical make-up of the gas became more complex. The first

[13]Jones, *World War I Gas Warfare Tactics and Equipment.*
[14]James E. Edmonds, *Official History of the War. Military Operations, France & Belgium, 1917. Volume 2.* (London: HMSO, 1948), p. 119
[15]Haber, *The Poisonous Cloud,* p. 255
[16]Girard, *A Strange and Formidable Weapon*, p. 117
[17]F.M.G. Micklethwait, 'Note on the Evolution in Chemical Warfare July to August 1915,' 1–2, TNA MUN 5/197/1650/1; quoted in Girard, *A Strange and Formidable Weapon*, p. 118
[18]Girard, *A Strange and Formidable Weapon*, p. 118

use of chlorine gas by the British, released from cylinders, was at the opening of the Battle of Loos on 25 September 1915; it delivered mixed results.[19]



Figure 1: View of a First World War Gas Attack on the Western Front.[20]

For the British, five Royal Engineers (RE) 'Special Companies' were formed into a Special Brigade created to deliver the gas at Loos in 1915 and to handle and emplace the gas cylinders in the front lines (Figure 2), often by men who had been chemists or plumbers in civilian life.[21] The British used modified commercial gas cylinders, 8-inches in diameter and 5-feet 6-inches long, though with early shortages these were sourced from a number of different suppliers, including from the United States. The cylinders were placed below the trench parapet, and once in place had to be placed under guard. Foulkes, commanding the Special Brigade in France, also devised a scheme in 1917 for the use of lighter and smaller cylinders that could be carried by one man and therefore deployed on a local basis. [22]

[19]James E. Edmonds, *Official History of the War. Military Operations, France & Belgium, 1915. Volume 2.* (London: Macmillan, 1928)., Richter, *Chemical Soldiers, p. 38 et seq.;* Palazzo, *Seeking Victory on the Western Front,* p.53 *et seq*.; Peter Doyle, *Battle Story: Loos 1915*, (Stroud: Spellmount, 2012).

[20]Francis J. Reynolds, *Colliers New Photographic History of the World's War*. New York: P.F. Collier & Son, 1919

[21]Foulkes, "GAS!", p. 49 et seq.; Institution of Royal Engineers, *History of the Royal Engineers. Volume V. The Home Front, France, Flanders and Italy in the First World War* (Chatham: The Institution of Royal Engineers, 1952), p. 52; Richter, *Chemical Soldiers*, p. 108 *et seq.*

[22]Foulkes, "GAS!", p. 196



Figure 2: Gas Cylinders in practice and in place in front line trenches.[23]

The gas was released through a valve fitted with a syphon tube that reached the bottom of the cylinder to allow rapid gas discharge without ice forming at the nozzle to block release. Leaks were obviously to be avoided. The ideal tubes were to be semi-flexible copper or lead, though iron pipes were also used if necessary.[24] The variation in pipes and fittings meant that there were difficulties in standardisation, as famously described by Robert Graves, who witnessed the gas attack at Loos in September 1915, and the frantic search for appropriate spanners to release the gas.[25] A great deal of care was required in fitting these pipes, as illustrated by the manuscript diary of Pioneer Richard Hughes of 'O' Special Company, RE which sees him unloading the cylinders, referred to using the code name for cylinders: which was 'rogers', testing the piping on 3 July 1916, testing and fitting the piping in workshops in France for the next three days, before finally connecting them 'in the trenches' and preparing for a gas attack on 8 July.[26] The initial lead discharge pipes were replaced after the attack at Loos by improvised garden rubber hoses as the original lead pipes were prone to

[23]Photographs by C.R. Alderson, from Foulkes 1936
[24]Foulkes, "GAS!", p. 56
[25]Robert Graves *Good-bye to All That. An Autobiography*, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1929), p. 198
[26]Pioneer Richard S. Hughes, 'O' Special Company, Royal Engineers (Unpublished manuscript trench diary for 1916, Peter Doyle archive)

split.[27] By September 1915 some 6,000 gas cylinders had been transported to France in time for the Loos offensive, which contained 180 tons of mostly chlorine gas, and by July 1916, 91,200 gas cylinders had been delivered, and between June 1916 and March 1917 some 42,559 gas cylinders were discharged.[28] Later, cylinders were largely supplanted by other means which delivered the gas to specific locations. These included the electrically-fired Livens Projectors, a form of mortar, and batteries of which delivered gas projectiles – as did Stokes Mortars and artillery shells which were used commonly from mid-1917 onwards.[29] This made gas attacks more accurate and less affected by atmospheric effects, including wind.

Though gas was a dramatic addition to the battlefield in 1915, by 1918, much of its significance had been countered by the introduction of effective anti-gas measures.[30] For the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) in France and Flanders for the period 1915–1918 records indicate that of the 185,706 gas cases admitted to military hospitals, some 5,899 were ultimately fatal, amounting to 1 in 31 overall.[31] Nevertheless, gas remained a much-feared weapon.[32]

Gas Cylinders and H.M. Cylinder Depot site, Stoke-on-Trent

The cylinders required for poison gas discharge were not only expensive to produce, but their manufacture also competed with the production of other cylinders vital for the war effort, such as compressed gasses used in the welding industry, and cylinders for the storage of hydrogen for lighter than air observation and weather balloons which were extensively used by the Army and Navy. This made it necessary to attempt the recycling of gas cylinders after release of the gas.[33] On the Western Front gas cylinders were salvaged from the battlefield and then transported to the UK by boat and train, initially to be stored, then sorted by size and type (see Table 1 below for the symbols used to distinguish the type of agent), before being sent to their respective gas manufacturers to be cleaned, tested and refilled. That work was mostly undertaken by chemical factories in Runcorn and elsewhere in North Cheshire.[34]

[27]The UK National Archive (hereinafter TNA) MUN 5/383/1600/14, L-Col O.F. Brothers, *The Development of Weapons used in Trench Warfare 1914-1918.*
[28]Ministry of Munitions, *Official History of the Ministry of Munitions. Vol. XI: The Supply of Munitions: Part I Trench Warfare Supplies*, (Great Britain: H.M Stationery Office, 1922), pp. 95-96.
[29]Foulkes, "GAS!", pp. 168-173; Richter, *Chemical Soldiers*, p. 159 *et seq.*
[30]Jones, *Terror Weapons*, p. 8 *et seq*.
[31]T J. Mitchell and G M. Smith, *Official History of the War. Medical Services. Casualties and Medical Statistics*, (London: HMSO, 1931), pp. 111-113.
[32]Haber, *The Poisonous Cloud,* p. 195; Jones, *Terror Weapons*, pp. 5-6.
[33]TNA MUN 5/383/1600/14
[34]TNA MUN 5/383/1600/14.



Figure 3: H. M. Cylinder Depot, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire in 1917.[35]

In Figure 3 note, from left to right, the General Store, Valve Shed, and the Vacuum Test and Washing Building in the background. Some seventy thousand salvaged cylinders can be seen in this photograph.

By September 1916, cylinder storage was based at the premises of a contractor at Bucknall Sawmills, near Hanley in Stoke-on-Trent in Staffordshire – where specialist facilities were set up to clean and test the returned cylinders. Hanley had good railway links, both to the south of England for transport back from the Western Front, and to the northwest for refilling where many chemical manufacturers were located. The Ministry had financed a railway spur for this specific purpose. By the end of 1916, 70,000 gas cylinders were being stored there, and this was recognised as a problem. In July 1917 the site was nationalised and became His Majesty's Cylinder Depot under the control of the Ministry of Munitions. The Ministry decided to resolve the cylinder backlog by handling the sorting onsite, but this was relatively basic and lacked professional engineering input and infrastructure.

By the end of the war, more than 650,000 poison gas cylinders had been sorted, repaired, and emptied at the depot. The work was done entirely by munitions workers drawn from across 'The Potteries' in Staffordshire – the region most associated with the ceramics industry – including women workers who handled at least 360,000 of the cylinders on site.[36] By the end of 1917 the number of accidents suffered by the workforce were so large that the depot had become known as the most dangerous

[35]From Day (1919)
[36]Ministry of Munitions, *Trench Warfare Supplies,* p.95

factory in Britain. After this time the need for recycling gas cylinders was superseded by the change to the use of artillery shells and Livens Projector drums for the delivery of gas on the battlefield.



Figure 4: Historical maps of the H.M. Cylinder Depot Site.[37]

[37]Images supplied by Ordnance Survey/EDINA service. © Crown Copyright Database 2023. (a) County Series 1:2,500 1st edition 1880, (b) County Series 1:2,500 1st revision 1900, (c) County Series 1:2,500 2nd revision 1924 and (d) VectorMap Local 1:25,000 2023 in Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, UK

In the mid-nineteenth century the site for His Majesty's Cylinder Depot had been a part of Finney Gardens as shown in Figure 4. This had been a plant nursery covering about 6.5 hectares on both sides of the Biddulph branch of the North Staffordshire Railway line. This opened to mineral traffic in 1859, just to the north of Bucknall Station.[38] The railway was opened to passenger traffic in 1859 and Theophilius Cartlidge, who owned Finney Gardens, sold plants and shrubs from the station and developed the area to the east of the railway with assorted picnic areas, pleasure grounds and sporting venues.[39] The depot site west of the railway was given up to provide a wharf area at the terminus of a mineral tramway connecting the Northwood Colliery to the mainline railway – see Figure 4. The colliery developed a large timber yard onsite trading as Bucknall Saw Mills Company Ltd which provided pit props for the mines.

In 1916 the Ministry of Munitions awarded the company a contract to use their site as a sorting depot for empty gas cylinders, brought in by rail, to be sorted and returned to their respective regional chemical factories in northwest England for cleaning and refilling. A 1924 site map in Figure 4 shows the full extent of the H.M. Cylinder Depot at Hanley, with three cranes to offload and load the gas cylinders from the railway.

An historical record of H.M. Cylinder Depot, written by George Day, a medical officer, survives in The National Archives at Kew, and is very instructive in terms of the working conditions at the site, and this section is largely drawn from this account.[40] The six common gas cylinder types at the H.M. Cylinder Depot site are listed in Table 1. However, by the end of 1916, the number of non-refurbished cylinders being stored at the Depot had reached 70,000, and an adjacent field was rented to store them. The stored cylinders either had no symbol marked on them or were classed as defective, meaning they still contained a quantity of gas, or were known as duds which were cylinders with defects or damage, such as broken spindles and valves, or if the cylinder itself was cracked and in need of repair.

[38]Potteries, Biddulph and Congleton Railway https://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/Gateway/Results_Single.aspx?uid=76088&resourceID=19191. Accessed 8 July 2025.
[39]Steve Birks, 2011. Limekiln junction, Finney Gardens. https://www.thepotteries.org/photo_wk/153.htm. Accessed 8 July 2025.
[40]TNA WO142/253, Historical Record of H.M. Cylinder Depot (1919).

No.	Chemical Gases	Chemical formulae(s)	Military symbol / colloquial name
1	Chlorine	Cl_2	Red Star
2	Hydrogen sulphide and carbon disulphide mixture	H_2S & CS_2	Two Red Star
3	Mixture of phosgene & chlorine	$COCl_2$ & Cl_2	White Star / Cross
4	Mixture of sulphur dichloride & chlorine	SCl_2 & Cl_2	Blue Star
5	Mixture of chloropicrin and chlorine	CCl_3NO_2 & Cl_2	Yellow Star / Cross
6	Mixture of chloropicrin and hydrogen sulphide	CCl_3NO_2 & H_2S	Green Star

Table 1: Medical Officer George Day's Record 1918[41]

By the beginning of 1917 The Ministry of Munitions had resolved the stored gas cylinder problem by building additional plant and requiring both Red and White Star marked cylinders to be sorted at the rate of 2,000 per week.[44]

Clamped at a rate of 20 at a time, the partly-filled gas cylinders were initially placed in 50°C water-filled troughs heated by coke and then connected to valves and tubes which extracted the gas via tubes as shown in Figure 5 with 'the fumes being carried away by ducting by the means of a 30 inch 'Sirocco' fan'. [44] The gas cylinders were weighed before this process and weighed again after to ensure that they were empty. When full, the gas cylinders weighed 140 lb (63.5 kg). Two scrubber towers were built onsite, which fed the extracted gas through cream of lime, a mixture of calcium hydroxide and water, in the first tower and then through a second tower before being vented, but this was still a basic process that lacked professional engineering input and infrastructure.[42]

The now empty gas cylinders were then washed and hydraulically tested to ensure there were no cylinder cracks, which were repaired as necessary, the cylinders dipped in paint, sorted and separately stacked for moving on to their respective gas factories to be refilled. A separate machine shop was also erected for testing the cylinder valves and for general cylinder repairs. [44]

[41]Ibid, p.14 (TNA WO142/253), summarised the six chemical gases commonly dealt with by factory Nos 1-3 at H.M. Cylinder Depot, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire.
[42]Ibid, p.18

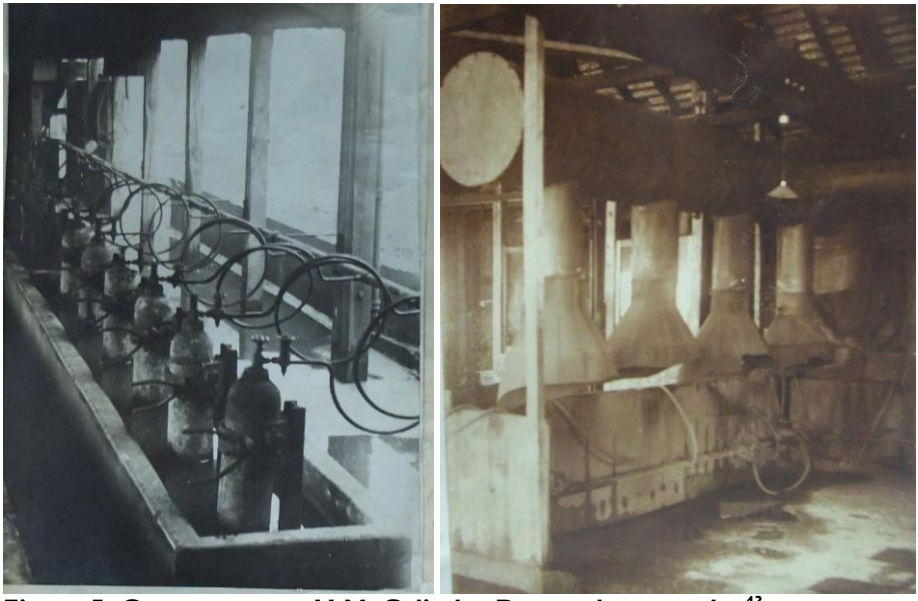


Figure 5: Contemporary H.M. Cylinder Depot photographs.[43]

On the left are the water troughs and clamped gas cylinders having any remaining poison gas evacuated via tubes, and on the right the scrubbers and washing plant to clean the emptied gas cylinders. Both processes were extremely dangerous.

Factory Workers and Accidents

Whilst initially handling 2,000 cylinders a week, the Depot output increased to 5,000 a week. The all-female workers were supervised by foremen, and worked three shifts of up to 8 hours as noted on time clock cards, and with no extra pay for work on the night shifts. However, there was no shortage of workers as pay at the Depot was typically three- to four-times higher than skilled and experienced female workers could earn in the local 'potbank' or ceramics factories. Others worked in the rail sidings, unloading, stacking and re-loading the gas cylinders which, if full, weighed 63 kg and 20-25 kg if empty, on a two 8-hour shift basis.[44]

Upon arriving at work, workers changed into overalls and regularly washed their hands, including before and after lunch in the depot's mess, overcrowding being strictly prohibited in the event of a gas accident, and washed again at the end of a shift, with

[43]TNA WO142/253
[44]Ibid, p.*44*

the daily disinfection also of all offices, lavatories and wash houses. Workers were forbidden to bring in food and were not permitted to eat while in the factory, since food-handling with contaminated hands was a well-known hazard. Workers were also issued with respirators that they had to carry at all times and which were always worn before going into and during work in the gas shed. A dedicated ambulance room onsite was equipped with beds and oxygen cylinders and was staffed at all times by a nurse and matron, with a local GP retained on a fee to treat accidents.[45]

Despite having a manager with chemical knowledge and the preventative measures employed, the initial gas cylinder extraction and cleaning procedure was very dangerous for the factory workers, with exposure to the gases causing acute ill health, both immediately and long term. This included the irritation and inflammation of the respiratory tract, interference with circulation, acute oedema of the lungs, rapid nervous and cardiac system collapse, and lung symptoms developing more slowly, vomiting, bronchitis, conjunctivitis, lung failure, and even heart failure in one fatal case. Damaged bronchial mucous membrane also made exposed workers more susceptible to tuberculosis which was prevalent and incurable at that time.

The average number of workers employed in 1918 was 284 but they suffered over 2,255 factory accidents at a rate of 794% or almost eight accidents per worker on average as shown in Table 2. For the nine serious cases that resulted in 100% incapacity, they were awarded compensation and a pension.[46]

Depot accident type	Depot Workers affected	
	Number	%
Slight accidents	1,114	392%
Eye cases	184	65%
Skin cases	72	25%
Gassing cases (slight)	898	316%
Gassing cases (serious)	2	0.7%
Gassing cases (fatal)	1	0.4%
Hernia cases	2	0.7%
Total	2255	794%

Table 2. Summary of H.M. Cylinder Depot Factory Accidents in 1918.[47]

Methods of treating exposed workers varied, initially comprising simple bed rest and keeping recovery rooms warm and well-ventilated to maximise recovery efforts. An

[45]Ibid, p.20
[46]Ibid, p.21
[47]TNA WO142/253 from medical officer George Day's 1919 Report.

injection of morphine was also recommended for cases of 'restlessness and excitement'. Some cases were more alarming; for example, if workers developed conjunctivitis from gas exposure, the recommended medical treatment was administration of atropine and cocaine.

Successful trials of patients continuously inhaling oxygen were conducted in Cambridge in 1917. By 1918, due to the serious gas exposure experienced by H.M. Depot workers and others in the north of England, the nearby North Staffordshire Infirmary, shown in Figure 6, installed two oxygen wards with an adjoining corridor, each containing four beds. Although over 100 patients had been admitted to the wards by the end of 1920, over 50% were gassed soldiers from the Western Front.



Figure 6: Aerial photograph taken of the North Staffordshire Infirmary.[48]

As reported by Frank Shufflebotham in 1920, the Infirmary's first floor hyperbaric oxygen wards comprised internal steel frames within the building structure, on which were affixed sheet steel, the ward floors being jointless, laid on the existing building

[48]Author owned. Photograph taken in 1930.

floor, and walls and ceilings being plastered.[49] A mezzanine floor carried the 'gas bag' with oxygen cylinders kept on the ground floor piped up to the wards. Air-tight double-framed glass windows were also installed, with double vestibule access and separate double food doors that reduced the egress of oxygen into the wider building. In the ward corridor were scrubbers absorbing carbon-dioxide, moisture and respiration impurities with a Haldane apparatus used to measure oxygen and carbon-dioxide levels and a tank cooler to regulate ward temperature. Electricity was used for lighting and corridor heating by radiators with both an obvious fire hazard. Finally, a rotary pump ensured circulation of air and constituents. Unfortunately, no plans or photographs of those facilities have survived.

Patients were admitted for five to six days with four hours of exercise allowed outside the wards each day. Patients were examined prior to treatment, with notes made of health diagnosis, a chest x-ray, blood examination and response to effort. Emphysema was present in 40% of cases.

Very positive ward results were reported by G.H. Sowry in 1920.[50] Out of 70 cases, 23 were very much improved, 30 much improved, 10 improved and 6 not improved, although the latter may be due to patients' reluctance to acknowledge any improvement until their pensions were settled. Depot workers who were 'unable to work on account of chronic gas-poisoning and other conditions such as asthma or heart and lung problems improved so much in health that they could return to light labour and in many cases they have been able to go back to their former employment'.[51] Finally, a double basal pneumonia severe case soldier made a very rapid and complete recovery which the doctor had never seen such remarkable progress in 27 years of clinical experience.

Keeping the oxygen wards operational at forty percent oxygen levels was estimated to cost of £1 3s. 6d per patient per day due to a production monopoly which was reported to be 'as almost a scandal that the amount of human suffering which may be alleviated by such treatment should be handicapped because of an oxygen monopoly'.[52]

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[49]Frank Shufflebottom, 'Discussion On The Therapeutic Uses of Oxygen', *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine*, Volume 13 (1920), Therapeutic Pharmacology, pp 84-88
https://doi.org/10.1177/003591572001302229

[50]G. H. Sowry, 'Discussion on the Therapeutic Uses of Oxygen', *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine*, 13 (1920), Therapeutic Pharmacology, pp 88-95 https://doi.org/10.1177/003591572001302230

[51]Shufflebottom, 'Discussion on the Therapeutic Uses of Oxygen, p. 88

[52]Ibid, p. 88.

Closure and demolition

After the 1918 Armistice depot staff were employed to process the remaining stored cylinders until 1919 when the factory was closed, and the site cleared. Despite this, the railway yard remained operational up to the 1970s as shown in Figure 7, when the railway was removed and the site redeveloped as an industrial estate, which today houses car showrooms.

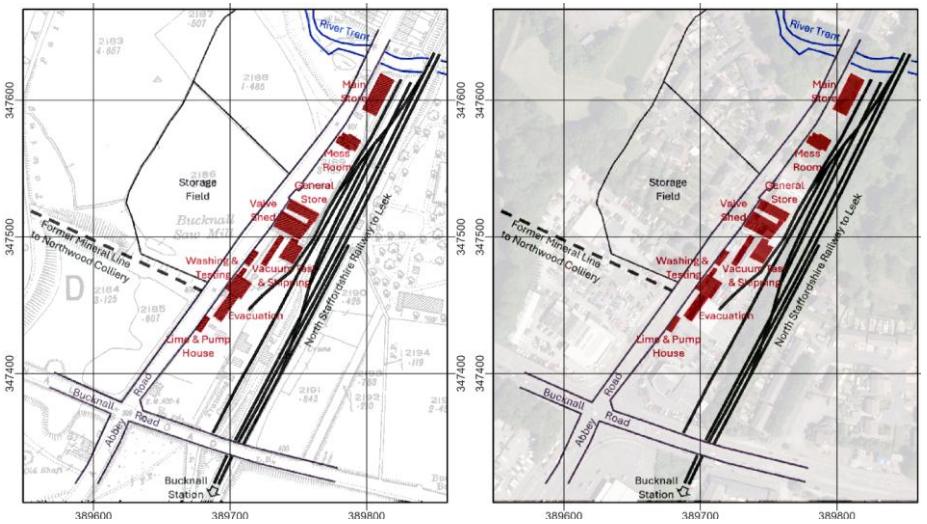


Figure 7: Sketch map of H.M. Cylinder Depot.[53]

Discussion

Poison gas turned out to be a weapon that would not 'break the siege', but from 1917 onwards, was a part of an effective array of weapons directed at enemy infantrymen by the targeted delivery of gas by batteries of electrically-fired Livens Projectors. The demand for suitable gas cylinders made it crucial to recycle spent cylinders from the Western Front, initially by Royal Engineers engaged in salvaging them before they made their way back to the specialist storage and processing site at Stoke-on-Trent that is the subject of this paper. However, limited funding was provided by the Ministry of Munitions' Trench Warfare Supply Department which meant that a full depot and specialised factory could not be built, and crucially, the resulting human cost suffered by the H.M. Cylinder Depot workers was extremely high, with an average rate of over eight accidents per worker in 1917-18. Comparing this with a 1941 commissioned report that found overall accident rates in manufacturing industries in Britain, for the

[53] Depot as listed by the Ministry of Munitions superimposed on modern © Getmapping Ltd. site image of Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, Midlands, UK.

dates 1901, 1904 and 1938, were *only* up to two per worker.[54] Notwithstanding the wartime and site constraints, it is this accident rate that made this facility the most dangerous factory in wartime Britain; and greater than other contemporary munition factory site disasters as detailed in Table 3 that are more well known for single mass casualty events. While no single disaster at the H.M. Cylinder Depot resulted in mass casualties in the same way – it is the pernicious effects of the numerous cumulative accidents that highlight the hazardous nature danger of this site.

Date	Location	Manufacturing type	Deaths / Injuries (est.)
27.05.1915	Sheerness, Kent	300 naval mines (est. 150 Tns) in HMS Princess Irene	352 / 1
02.04.1916	Faversham, Kent	Munitions (200 Tn TNT & ammonium nitrate)	108
19.01.2017	Silvertown, Essex	Munitions (50 Tn TNT)	73 / 400+
01.07.2018	Chillwell, Notts.	Munitions (8 Tns TNT)	134 / 250+

Table 3: First World War Fatal Munitions Factory Disasters.[55]

This was not the only factory dealing with poison gas in the Potteries area during the First World War. At the nearby, and long-demolished, Sneyd Bycars Gas factory, 80-90 tons of the poison gas chloropicrin was being manufactured each week in 1918, it was used to fill 4-inch mortar shells at the impressive manufacturing rate of 400/hr. These were then sent to the Western Front via the same railway system used for the return of salvaged gas cylinders.[56] The Sneyd Bycars production was also hazardous with 117 reported accidents and 1 fatality in 1918 experienced by the 280 factory workers, approximately one event for every two workers. Other recorded health issues included cardiac conditions, anaemia, conjunctivitis, digestive system and skin issues, and even vertigo. Two explosions with accompanying fires also occurred there in late 1918, causing one fatality and several workers suffering serious burns due to picric acid leakage and ignition. Whilst numbers were comparatively small compared to munition factories accidents as shown in Table 3 these were still of concern.

[54] Duncan Wilson, 'Factory Inspection: A Thirty-Five Years Retrospect', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, 104, 3 (1941), pp. 209-234 https://doi.org/10.2307/2980049.
[55] https://historicengland.org.uk/research/current/discover-and-understand/military/first-world-war-home-front/land/first-world-war-accidental-explosions/ Accessed 19 December 2025
[56] George Williams, Medical report for Sneyd Bycars Factory, Burslem, Ministry of Munitions – X Group WE15, 717-979.

However, like other scientific breakthroughs necessitated in wartime, the North Staffordshire Infirmary hyperbaric oxygen wards initially developed for the gassed workers, made amazingly rapid medical progress in the treatment of other patients with various pulmonary and lung disorders. The benefits accrued were not only for those exposed and injured at H.M. Cylinder Depot and other local poison gas factories but for returning soldiers gassed on the Western Front, and subsequently too for the wider local population suffering from a range of health issues, such as asthma attacks, pernicious anaemia, broncho-pneumonia and other respiratory difficulties from work in the local coal mines and potteries industries.[57] Previous nasal administration of oxygen was found to be satisfactory at 40-50% oxygen concentrations but was also evidenced to be wasteful in terms of masks, attending nurses and resistance to breathing, with these hyperbaric oxygen wards a real medical step forward.[58] This pioneering medicinal advancement has largely been ignored in the scientific literature.

As for the long-term environmental legacy and effect of such wartime factories on human health of the nearby population of such sites, there has been little research to-date and a survey of this is beyond the scope of this paper. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that wartime contamination by chemical weapons and artillery fire persists in soils – as demonstrated by recent work on the Messines Ridge in Belgium which still evidences significant soil contamination over 100 years later.[59] For Stoke-on-Trent, a city with a long industrial legacy and areas of 'contaminated ground', finding an environmental signal that could be traced to the former H.M. Cylinder Depot might be difficult to determine, but is certainly worthy of consideration. If so, it is possible that the dangerous work of that factory could continue to influence the health and well-being of locals even today.

[57]Sowry, 'Discussion on the Therapeutic Uses of Oxygen', p. 91-92.
[58]Ibid, p.25.
[59]Jamie K Pringle, Adam J Jeffery, Alastair Ruffell, Ian G. Stimpson, Duncan Pirrie, Elina Bergslein, Charlie Madden, Ian Oliver, Kris D. Wisniewski, Jon P. Cassella, Neil Lamont, Sarah Gormley, and Julian Partridge, 'The use of portable XRF as a forensic geoscience non-destructive trace evidence tool for environmental and criminal investigations', *Forensic Science International*, 332, (2022), 111175.
https://doi.org/10.1016/j.forsciint.2022.111175

Occupied, Looted, and Raped: The Conduct of Canadian Soldiers in Sögel

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ABSTRACT
This article critically examines the conduct of Canadian soldiers from the 4th Canadian Armoured Division in Sögel, a small town in northwestern Germany, during the Second World War. Drawing on an array of archival materials, including local records and Canadian war diaries, the study scrutinises allegations of civilian complicity in German counterattacks, subsequent punitive actions by soldiers, and incidents of misconduct. The article contends that Canadian soldiers' lack of credible evidence for civilian involvement rendered the punitive measures and misconduct indefensible. The findings reveal a more nuanced and problematic understanding of the Canadian military's actions in Sögel than previously acknowledged.

Introduction: The Events at Sögel

In *Werwolf!: The History of the National Socialist Guerrilla Movement, 1944-1946*, Perry Biddiscombe describes the capture of Sögel and the subsequent actions of Canadian forces

> Vokes saw the destruction of property as the most effective answer to civilian resistance, even though he knew that this measure violated the Hague Rules and that it put him on such shaky legal ground that he prudently avoided issuing written proclamations whenever the policy went into force. The first place to suffer under Vokes' heavy hand was the northwest town of Sögel, where a number of civilians harboured *Wehrmacht* bazookamen and participated in a revolt against Canadian troops on 10 April, the day after the community was captured. After five Canadian soldiers lost their lives suppressing this

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DOI: 10.25602/GOLD.bjmh.v12i3.2000

> disturbance, civilians were ordered to leave their homes, and the centre of the town was systematically blown into rubble.[1]

This interpretation reflects a narrative deeply embedded in Canadian military historiography, namely that civilian assistance to German paratroopers during the counterattacks of 10 April 1945 justified the subsequent demolition of Sögel. Although major campaigns in France and Italy have generated extensive scholarship, the final weeks of the war in northwestern Germany – particularly the transition from combat to occupation and the dynamics of occupation in smaller towns – have received comparatively limited analytical attention. Within this context, the Sögel episode is frequently summarised based on wartime reports and C.P. Stacey's 1960 *Official History of the Canadian Army in the Second World War: The Victory Campaign*, in which civilian complicity is presented as an established fact.

A review of Canadian archival records, however, calls that conclusion into question. No documentary record supports the existence of an April 1945 investigation that conclusively implicated civilians. Instead, a 42-page inquiry conducted in July 1945 by the North-West Europe Detachment of the No. 1 Canadian War Crimes Investigation Unit found insufficient evidence to substantiate allegations that civilians had fired on Canadian troops or assisted the counterattacks. Soldiers interviewed from multiple units described widespread suspicion within the ranks, but none could provide firsthand evidence of civilian gunfire or organised collaboration.

A reconstruction of the events in Sögel between 9 and 12 April 1945 enables a reassessment of both the episode and the interpretive frameworks that shaped its historiography. Drawing on Canadian operational records, court-martial proceedings, the 1945 investigation file, and German clerical and civilian testimony, this article demonstrates the instability of the civilian-complicity narrative. It contends that demolition, looting, and sexual violence occurred within a context defined by operational pressure, suspicion of irregular resistance, and inconsistent disciplinary enforcement. Reassessing the Sögel episode from this perspective not only challenges the official narrative but also reveals how interpretations formed under wartime conditions became embedded in Canadian military historiography without subsequent archival scrutiny.

4 Canadian Armoured Division in Sögel, April 1945

The Allied crossing of the Rhine in March 1945 constituted a decisive phase in the advance into northwestern Germany. Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery's revised

[1]Perry Biddiscombe, *Werwolf!: The History of the National Socialist Guerrilla Movement, 1944-1946,* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), p.258.

plan for *Operation Plunder*, issued on 28 March 1945, assigned the First Canadian Army responsibility for clearing western Holland before advancing northwards and eastwards to secure the coastal belt and enemy naval installations up to the Weser line.[2] 4 Canadian Armoured Division, commanded by Major-General Christopher Vokes, was tasked with advancing along the Almelo - Neuenhaus - Meppen - Sögel - Friesoythe - Oldenburg axis to protect the left flank of the British Second Army.[3]

On 9 April 1945, the Lake Superior Regiment (Motor) entered Sögel, a town in the Emsland district of Lower Saxony, and secured it after encountering only limited resistance.[4] On the morning of 10 April 1945, German paratroopers launched a series of counterattacks against Canadian positions, which were repelled through coordinated action by Canadian armoured and infantry units.[5] The fighting resulted in the deaths of five Canadian soldiers and significant losses among German forces, including casualties, wounded, and prisoners.[6]

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[2]Ian Kershaw, *The End: The Defiance and Destruction of Hitler's Germany, 1944-1945,* (New York: Penguin Books, 2012), p.255; C. P. Stacey, *Official History of the Canadian Army in the Second World War: The Victory Campaign: The Operations in North-West Europe, 1944-1945,* (Ottawa: The Queen's Printer, 1960), p.530.

[3]Stacey, *The Victory Campaign,* p.543.

[4]Library and Archives Canada (hereinafter LAC) RG24-C-3, vol. 14054, file 950, microfilm reel T-10660: War Diary of the Headquarters of the 4th Canadian Armoured Brigade, April 1945, p.19; LAC RG24-C-3, vol. 15099, file 942: War Diary of the Lake Superior Regiment (Motor), April 1945, p.15; Pastor Georg Wolters to Bishop Berning, 13 May 1945, Sögel Archives, Germany; Pastor Hubert Garvert, *Krieg in Sögel: Die Tage nach dem Weissen Sonntage 1945,* Sögel Archives, Germany, n.d., ca. 1950, collection: Erinnerungen an das Kriegsende *1945*; Paul Augustus Mayer, *Report No. 32: The Concluding Phase of the Operations by the First Canadian Army* (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, Historical Section Army Headquarters, 1949), p.71.

[5]LAC RG24-C-3, vol. 14766, file 916, microfilm reel T-18599: War Diary of the 8th Field Squadron, RCE, April 1945, p.373; LAC RG24-C-3, vol. 16105, file 299: War Diary of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment, April 1945, p.12; Hermann Hölscher, 'Ein grauenvolles Kapitel aus der Ortschronik von Sögel,' in Elizabeth Schlicht (ed.), vol. 4 (Meppen: Verlag des Emslandischen Heimatvereins, 1957); Theo Kröger, 'Clemenswerth im 2. Weltkrieg – die Kanadier in Sogel,' in Werner Franke and Eckard Wagner (eds.), *Jahrbuch des Emsländischen Heimatbundes* , vol. 33 (Meppen: Verlag des Emsländischen Heimatvereins, 1987), p.254; Mayer, *Report No. 32*, p.72; W.D. of the Lake Superior Regiment (Motor), April 1945, p.17.

[6]Stacey, *The Victory Campaign*, p.558; War Diary of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment, April 1945, p.13; War Diary of the 8th Field Squadron, RCE, April 1945, p.373.

Interpreting the Counterattacks

Initial Canadian explanations for the effectiveness of the German counterattacks in Sögel focused on operational shortcomings. Delayed recognition of the assault was attributed to adverse weather, poor visibility, and the routine discharge of captured enemy weapons, all of which obscured the attack's onset and limited the effectiveness of the immediate response.[7] As 4 Division Engineers observed, 'everyone was used to hearing their own troops discharging captured enemy weapons,' a circumstance that 'prevented early detection of the attack.'[8] A comparable explanation appears in a letter dated 13 May 1945 from the local pastor Georg Wolters, who cited inadequate Canadian security as the enabling condition for German infiltration, noting the absence of guards at the town's entrance.[9]

Subsequent Canadian military reporting, however, shifted away from these explanations. War diaries and unit reports increasingly attributed the counterattacks to civilian complicity, alleging that residents had sheltered German paratroopers and concealed arms and ammunition, and, in some instances, participated directly in armed resistance. The 4 Armoured Division Signals reported that civilians had 'harboured some Jerries,' who subsequently attacked field engineer squadrons.[10] At the same time, other units claimed the discovery of arms and automatic weapons in private homes.[11] Repeated across multiple units, these allegations reframed the counterattacks as the product of civilian complicity, a shift captured in the 9 Field Squadron's description of Sögel as 'the first town in which they encountered civilian snipers.'[12]

From Civilian Complicity to Punitive Measures

By late April 1945, interpretations of the Sögel counterattacks increasingly framed them as the product of civilian complicity. This framing circulated publicly in an article published in the Canadian field newspaper *The Maple Leaf* on 27 April 1945, which attributed the effectiveness of the counterattacks to civilian assistance rather than operational vulnerability. Accompanied by a photograph of civilians kneeling in the town's church square, the article 'German Civilians Five Years Late with Prayer'

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[7]4th Divisional Engineers, *Green Route Up*, ed. Lt. M.O. Rollefson, (The Hague: Mouton and Cy, 1945), p.55.

[8]Ibid., p.55.

[9]Pastor Wolters to Bishop Berning.

[10]LAC RG24-C-3, vol. 14947, file 1926: War diary of the 4th Canadian Armoured Divisional Signals, RCCS, April 1945, p.20.

[11]War Diary of the 8th Field Squadron, RCE, April 1945, p.373; 4th Divisional Engineers, *Green Route Up,* p.56.

[12]LAC RG24-C-3, vol. 14769, file 917, microfilm reel T-18602: War Diary of the 9th Field Squadron, RCE, April 1945, p.1309.

described them as 'civilians rounded up and placed here because of the help some of them had given to counterattacking Hun paratroopers.'[13]

This public framing contrasted sharply with local interpretations. Pastors Georg Wolters and Hubert Garvert rejected the implication of civilian involvement and dismissed the article's reading of the photograph as a misinterpretation of a religious rite by a reporter unfamiliar with the town's social and confessional context.[14] Subsequent historical analysis echoed this position. Writing in 1957, German historian Hermann Hölscher emphasised Sögel's strong Catholic identity and long-standing opposition to the National Socialist movement, suggesting that its inhabitants neither endorsed Hitler nor embraced the movement's ideology.[15] While Hölscher's account cannot definitively establish the town's political orientation – and may reflect, in part, postwar efforts by many German communities to distance themselves from the National Socialist past – it portrays a context incompatible with allegations of organised civilian assistance to paratroopers.

These objections, however, did not inform the conclusions of the Canadian military authorities, which endorsed the civilian-complicity narrative. In *The Victory Campaign*, Stacey reported that an internal investigation conducted in April 1945 concluded that civilians had assisted German paratroopers and attributed Canadian casualties to their actions.[16] As presented in the official history, this assessment provided the basis for demolition orders issued against the town, framed explicitly as both 'a reprisal and a warning.'[17] Operational records further justified the demolitions on logistical grounds. The war diary of 4 Canadian Armoured Division identified Sögel as a source of approximately 30,000 tons of rubble required for urgent road repairs.[18] Responsibility for the demolitions, codenamed *Operation Pushover*, was assigned to 8 Field Squadron, whose war diary recorded plans to dismantle nearly the entire town, except for the church, noting that 'there must be no ecclesiastical rubble, so all but church will go!!'[19]

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[13]'German Civilians Five Years Late with Prayer' *Maple Leaf – West Europe Edition* (Brussels), 27 April 1945, https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=jsY6AAAAIBAJ&sjid=SyoMAAAAIBAJ&pg=1688%2C13134048. Accessed 15 February 2026.
[14]Pastor Garvert, *Krieg in Sögel*; Pastor Wolters to Bishop Berning.
[15]Hölscher, 'Ein grauenvolles Kapitel.'
[16]Stacey, *The Victory Campaign*, p.558.
[17]Ibid.
[18]LAC RG24-C-3, vol. 13790, file 900/GS, microfilm reel T-10547: War Diary of the Headquarters, 4th Canadian Armoured Division, April 1945, p.9.
[19]War Diary of the 8th Field Squadron, RCE, April 1945, p.373.

The Destruction of Sögel, 11-12 April 1945

Although officially authorised on retaliatory and logistical grounds, the destruction of Sögel on 11 and 12 April 1945 was widely perceived by civilians as an act of collective punishment.[20] This interpretation is reflected most clearly in the testimony of Pastor Wolters, who later recalled being informed by a Canadian interpreter that the demolitions were punitive in nature 'because civilians had fired shots.'[21] When pressed on where such firing had occurred, the interpreter reportedly could not provide an answer.[22]

The operation was characterised by its suddenness. Reports from 8 Field Squadron indicate that civilians were given as little as 20 minutes' notice to leave their homes, leaving insufficient time to secure personal belongings.[23] Civilian accounts consistently described the demolitions as abrupt and coercive.[24] Heinz Schmees, then a young resident of Sögel, described seeing two Canadian soldiers place explosives inside his family home and prevent their exit through the front door before the house was destroyed.[25] 'Just in time, we made it outside,' Schmees recalled, 'our house was blown up in a loud bang.'[26]

Canadian military records confirm both the scale and intensity of the demolitions. War diaries describe extensive use of explosives, with the 4 Canadian Armoured Division Signals reporting difficulties in maintaining brigade and divisional communication lines due to the 'inspired demolition work.'[27] It was this use of explosives that led divisional records to compare Sögel and the neighbouring town of Friesoythe, which was itself subjected to extensive destruction in April 1945, to areas 'hit by an earthquake.[28] The material consequences were severe and long-lasting, leaving the town largely

[20]Hölscher, 'Ein grauenvolles Kapitel'; Kröger, 'Clemenswerth im 2. Weltkrieg,' pp.255-256; Pastor Garvert, *Krieg in Sögel*; Pastor Wolters to Bishop Berning.
[21]Pastor Wolters to Bishop Berning.
[22]Ibid.
[23]LAC RG24-C-3, vol. 13790, file 900/GS, microfilm reel T-10547: War Diary of the Headquarters, 4th Canadian Armoured Division, May 1945, p.54; War Diary of the 8th Field Squadron, RCE, April 1945, 373; 4th Divisional Engineers, *Green Route Up*, p.55; Hölscher, 'Ein grauenvolles Kapitel.'
[24]Hölscher, 'Ein grauenvolles Kapitel'; Kröger, 'Clemenswerth im 2. Weltkrieg,' p.256; Pastor Garvert, *Krieg in Sögel*; Pastor Wolters to Bishop Berning.
[25]Heinz Schmees, *Die Kriegshandlungen in Sögel am 8., 9., und 10. April 1945*, Sögel Archives, Germany, n.d., collection: Erinnerungen an das Kriegsende *1945*.
[26]Ibid.
[27]War Diary of the 4th Canadian Armoured Divisional Signals, April 1945, p.20.
[28]War Diary of the Headquarters, 4th Canadian Armoured Division, May 1945, p.54.

unrecognisable.[29] German sources report the destruction of 73 houses, severe damage to many others, and the loss of cultural sites, including the local museum.[30] Reconstruction continued for nearly a decade, and total damage in 1945 was estimated at approximately 4.1 million Reichsmark.[31]

The Misconduct of Canadian Soldiers: Looting

The destruction of Sögel did not end with the demolitions themselves. The occupation that followed raised significant concerns regarding the treatment of civilian property. On 12 April 1945, Vokes issued a statement expressing alarm at the increasing incidence of looting and announcing measures to curb such behaviour.[32] While this directive indicates that looting had become a concern for the Canadian command, it provides no details on how such incidents unfolded in Sögel.

German civilian and clerical testimony, however, reports extensive looting following the town's capture on 9 April 1945. These accounts situate this looting within the context of house searches conducted to locate German soldiers, weapons, and ammunition, during which civilians were removed from their homes and denied the opportunity to supervise their property.[33] Theo Kröger recalled that on the day of the capture, 'the search for 'Nazi soldiers' began in all buildings,' with inhabitants ordered to gather in the church square and denied access to their homes while Canadian soldiers 'ruthlessly plundered all buildings.'[34] Similar patterns of looting were reported during house searches conducted in the aftermath of the German counterattacks on 10 April 1945.[35] Pastor Garvert corroborated these accounts, observing that 'the houses were searched by the troops that afternoon, and a large part of them were heavily looted,' with many buildings also sustaining significant damage.[36] These operations created conditions in which looting could occur on a broad scale, enabling soldiers to take civilian belongings both opportunistically and as perceived spoils of war.

[29]Schmees, *Die Kriegshandlungen.*
[30]Hölscher, 'Ein grauenvolles Kapitel'; Pastor Wolters to Bishop Berning.
[31]Hölscher, 'Ein grauenvolles Kapitel,'; Kröger, 'Clemenswerth im 2. Weltkrieg,' p.262.
[32]War Diary of the Headquarters, 4th Canadian Armoured Division, April 1945: 'Major-General Vokes' Conduct – Personnel in Germany,' 12 April 1945, p.181.
[33]Pastor Garvert, *Krieg in Sögel;* Pastor Wolters to Bishop Berning; War Diary of the 8th Field Squadron, RCE, April 1945, p.373.
[34]Kröger, 'Clemenswerth im 2. Weltkrieg,' p.254.
[35]Hölscher, 'Ein grauenvolles Kapitel.'
[36]Pastor Garvert, *Krieg in Sögel.*

Limited corroboration is provided by the Canadian Army courts-martial records, which document investigations and trials of Canadian soldiers charged with offences including absenteeism, fraternisation, theft, and murder. Illustrative examples include two robbery cases involving Canadian soldiers in Sögel in April 1945. Gunner Bruce Smith of 99 Battery, 19 Canadian Field Regiment, was charged with aggravated robbery after taking a watch from civilians while threatening them with a revolver; although initially sentenced to eighteen months' imprisonment, his sentence was later commuted to six months.[37] A second case involved Gunner Donald Higgs Cole of 87 Canadian Medium Battery, 3 Medium Regiment, Royal Canadian Artillery, who was charged with multiple offences, including the robbery of a civilian's wedding ring, and was sentenced to three years' imprisonment before being released in February 1946 for good conduct.[38]

The Misconduct of Canadian Soldiers: Sexual Violence

Concerns about the treatment of civilian property during the occupation of Sögel were accompanied by more serious allegations of violence against civilians. As with looting, incidents of sexual violence are largely absent from Canadian war diaries, reflecting both a reluctance among soldiers to report crimes committed by their peers and an institutional tendency to avoid documenting such offences. This absence stands in stark contrast to German civilian and clerical testimony, as well as to subsequent senior command directives that indicate awareness of the problem.

Before Canadian troops entered the town, senior command had already identified sexual misconduct as a foreseeable risk during the transition from combat operations to occupation. On 8 April 1945, Vokes issued instructions warning that sexual relations 'where circumstances indicate that consent was induced by force or fear' would result in charges of fraternisation or rape.[39] Despite this directive, however, German accounts suggest that the risk materialised almost immediately after occupation. Pastor Wolters reported that sexual assaults began on the evening of 9 April 1945 and continued into the following day, describing 'a large number of rapes of women and girls,' and noting that the situation was exacerbated by the distribution of large quantities of alcohol in Sögel shortly before the occupation.[40] Following the German counterattacks of 10 April 1945, house searches displaced residents and

[37]LAC R112-609-0-E, RG24-C-27, microfilm reel T-15850: Canadian Army Courts Martial Records: No. A55690 Gunner Bruce William Smith, pp.2544-2548, p.2586.
[38]LAC R112-609-0-E, RG24-C-27, microfilm reel T-15593: Canadian Army Courts Martial Records: No. A60052 Gunner Donald Higgs Cole, p.1361, p.1403.
[39]War Diary of the Headquarters, 4th Canadian Armoured Division, April 1945: 'Major-General Vokes' Division Routine Orders 3142,' 8 April 1945, pp.125-126.
[40]Pastor Wolters to Bishop Berning.

concentrated them in the church square. Pastor Garvert recalled that women hesitated to return home after these searches and, as fear intensified, young women and girls living alone did not want to return home that evening 'without the necessary protection.'[41] On the night of 12 April 1945, Garvert further described that civilians, particularly women and girls, gathered in groups so that they 'would not become the victim of the night,' suggesting a sustained atmosphere of insecurity.[42]

Other local testimonies situate sexual violence within the same sequence of displacement, detention, and intoxication. Kröger described seeing 'drunken soldiers [raping] women and girls in large numbers' while 'men were held behind barbed wire, [and] the houses were searched for soldiers'.[43] Hölscher similarly reported widespread sexual violence committed against women by 'often intoxicated soldiers,' emphasising that neither young girls nor older women were being spared.[44] Hölscher's account notes efforts by clergy and civilians to protect victims where possible, implying that the threat was pervasive enough to prompt organised protective measures.[45]

The available evidence indicates that reports of sexual violence were known to Canadian authorities during the occupation of Sögel. Pastor Wolters appealed directly to the local Canadian commander, seeking intervention against what he described as ongoing assaults.[46] According to Wolters, the commander acknowledged that such acts were prohibited but difficult to stop immediately, advising women and girls to 'keep a very low profile' and to dispose of alcohol supplies.[47] The diary of the Lake Superior Regiment records that a 'German pastor came up to the Colonel' on 11 April 1945 to discuss the events at Sögel, suggesting that the complaint reached regimental command.[48] As both Lieutenant-Colonel Hogarth and Lieutenant-Colonel Keane were present with the regiment that day, Wolters' interlocutor was likely one of the two.[49] On 12 April 1945, Vokes issued a formal directive titled 'Conduct – Personnel in Germany,' explicitly addressing pillage, rape, and fraternisation and warning of maximum penalties.[50] The timing of this order suggests that reports received between 8 and 11 April 1945 had reached divisional headquarters and prompted formal

[41]Pastor Garvert, *Krieg in Sögel.*
[42]Ibid.
[43]Kröger, 'Clemenswerth im 2. Weltkrieg,' p.255.
[44]Hölscher, 'Ein grauenvolles Kapitel.'
[45]Ibid.
[46]Pastor Wolters to Bishop Berning.
[47]Ibid.
[48]War Diary of the Lake Superior Regiment (Motor), April 1945, p.18.
[49]Ibid.
[50]War Diary of the Headquarters, 4th Canadian Armoured Division, April 1945: 'Major-General Vokes' Division Routine Orders 3132-3143,' 8 April 1945, p.181.

disciplinary intervention. Court-martial records, however, demonstrate that recognition did not translate into rape prosecutions arising from events at Sögel. Instead, they illustrate how sexual violence was addressed within military justice through broader disciplinary or moral categories. In the case of Gunner Cole, testimony described physical aggression and coercive sexual intent following an incident on 10 April 1945.[51] A young German woman recounted that Cole, who appeared intoxicated, dragged her into another room, lifted her skirt, and refused to release her despite her pleas.[52] Although testimony indicates sexual coercion, the court-martial proceedings avoided reference to rape or attempted rape, Cole being instead charged with fraternisation.[53]

Quantifying sexual violence in Sögel presents significant methodological challenges. Local accounts estimate 'over 50 incidents,' with some suggesting figures 'possibly exceeding 100' or even 'hundreds.'[54] These discrepancies stem from the instability of evidence produced under occupation and the structural barriers to documenting sexual violence, especially where victims faced stigma, fear of reprisal, and limited access to formal reporting mechanisms. Precise calculation is further complicated by uncertainty about the town's wartime population. Post-war demographic data record approximately 3,200 inhabitants in 1946, suggesting that the pre-war population in 1939 was likely comparable, notwithstanding wartime displacement and refugee presence.[55] Allowing for evidentiary uncertainty, the reported figures indicate a locally significant level of sexual violence in a town of this size.

Assessing the Evidence and Its Limits

German accounts of the events at Sögel must be situated within the broader context of postwar German memory formation, in which narratives of destruction and suffering occupied a central place. As Robert G. Moeller has demonstrated, accounts of civilian victimhood functioned not only as recollections of loss but as mechanisms of postwar reintegration, allowing communities to process defeat while re-establishing

[51]Canadian Army Courts Martial Records: No. A60052 Gunner Donald Higgs Cole, p.1393.
[52]Ibid., pp.1406-1407.
[53]Ibid., p.1393.
[54]Hölscher, 'Ein grauenvolles Kapitel'; Pastor Wolters to Bishop Berning, Kröger, 'Clemenswerth im 2. Weltkrieg,' p.255.
[55]Statistisches Reichsamt, *Volks-, Berufs- und Betriebszählung vom 17. Mai 1939: Gemeinden mit 2.000 und mehr Einwohnern,* (Berlin: Reichsdruckerei, 1940); Statistische Ämter des Bundes und der Länder, *Amtliches Gemeindeverzeichnis für das Vereinigte Wirtschaftsgebiet 1946,* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1948).

coherent moral identity.[56] Memories of wartime violence were therefore not transmitted as objective records of events but were shaped by social and emotional pressures that influence how suffering was narrated.[57]

Harald Welzer's analysis of postwar family memory further illustrates these dynamics, showing that recollections of wartime violence were often subject to unconscious exaggeration and narrative drift.[58] Over time, stories became simplified, moralised, and intensified through repetition, without necessarily involving intentional fabrication.[59] These processes are especially relevant to clerical sources, which often functioned as moral documents, foregrounding injury, loss and injustice rather than detail or contextual explanation. Recognising these conditions of production does not invalidate German testimony but clarifies the interpretive limits. When critically assessed alongside the silence of Canadian military records, German civilian and clerical accounts remain essential for reconstructing patterns of civilian harm that occupying forces rarely documented. The lack of detailed Canadian reporting reflects institutional reluctance rather than a lack of evidence, a dynamic common to many occupational contexts.

The plausibility of German accounts from Sögel is reinforced by events in Friesoythe that occurred only days later. Following the killing of a Canadian officer, Canadian units systematically destroyed much of the town in what was explicitly framed as a punitive response.[60] Unlike Sögel, this episode is well documented in Canadian records, which detail both the scale and intentionality of the destruction. Friesoythe demonstrates that retaliatory violence was not a unique feature of operations in Sögel but formed part of a broader repertoire of punitive responses employed during the transition from combat to occupation. In this context, German accounts of violence and destruction in Sögel require no exaggeration to sustain their credibility. Even allowing for emotional emphasis, narrative drift, or moral framing, the patterns described align with conduct independently documented elsewhere under comparable operational conditions. The central analytical problem is therefore not whether misconduct occurred, but how such violence was produced and justified within the legal, institutional, and disciplinary frameworks governing Canadian operations in northwestern Germany.

[56]Robert G. Moeller, *War Stories*: *The Search for a Usable Past in the Federal Republic of Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), pp.1-20.
[57]Moeller, *War Stories*, pp.1-20; Harald Welzer, Sabine Moller, and Karoline Tschuggnall, *'Opa war kein Nazi: Nationalsozialismus und Holocaust im Familiengedächtnis', (*Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 2002), pp.258-272.
[58]Welzer, Moller, and Tschuggnall, *'Opa war kein Nazi'*, pp.258-272.
[59]Ibid.
[60]Biddiscombe, *Werwolf!,* pp.258-265; Stacey, *The Victory* Campaign, pp.558-559.

Interpretation and Accountability

The misconduct documented in Sögel must ultimately be assessed against the legal framework governing the treatment of civilians and private property in 1945. The Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907 prohibited collective punishment, looting, and violence against civilian populations during both combat operations and military occupation. Article 28 explicitly forbade the pillage of towns or places, even taken by assault, while Article 46 required the protection of 'family honour and rights,' a formulation contemporaries understood to encompass coercive sexual acts.[61] Although enforcement during the war was inconsistent and prosecutions were relatively rare, these provisions nonetheless constituted an accepted legal and normative standard within Western Allied military culture. Acts of looting, sexual violence, and punitive destruction, therefore, cannot be dismissed as informal excesses of battle or unavoidable by-products of operational stress but instead fall within a legally defined framework distinguishing permissible security measures from unlawful punishment and criminal behaviour.

After the capture of Sögel, Canadian forces engaged in various forms of civilian harm, including looting, sexual violence, and punitive destruction. Although these acts varied in form and severity, they occurred within a brief period and under similar operational conditions, suggesting a broader breakdown in discipline during the transition from combat to occupation rather than isolated incidents. Reconstructing the extent of this violence is methodologically challenging. German civilian and clerical sources provide numerous accounts of abuse, while Canadian war diaries are largely silent, reflecting both the complexities of documenting civilian harm in wartime and the institutional reluctance of military organisations to record crimes by their own personnel. Nevertheless, even a conservative reading of the available evidence indicates that misconduct in Sögel was neither isolated nor incidental. When considered alongside Vokes' 12 April 1945 statement acknowledging a high incidence of rape and pillage, as well as corroborating court-martial records, the sources collectively indicate a pattern of widespread misconduct, even if its precise scale cannot be conclusively determined.

[61] Hague Convention (II) with Respect to the Laws and Customs of War on Land, (The Hague, 29 July 1899); Hague Convention (IV) with Respect to the Laws and Customs of War on Land, (The Hague, 18 October 1907); Roger Mac Ginty, 'Looting in the Context of Violent Conflict: A Conceptualisation and Typology,' *Third World Quarterly* 25, no. 5 (2004): pp.859-861; Tuba Inal, 'The (Non) Prohibition of Rape in War: The Hague Conventions,' in *Looting and Rape in Wartime: Law and Change in International Relations,* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), p.61.

Explaining this breakdown in discipline does not require certainty about soldiers' intent.[62] As John Horne and Alan Kramer have shown in their study of wartime atrocity, historical explanation may proceed through analysis of structural conditions, situational pressures, and institutional responses that make violence against civilians possible.[63] In April 1945, Canadian forces advancing rapidly in northwestern Germany were operating amid fatigue, dislocation, and uncertainty. The transition from conventional combat operations to occupation and stabilisation tasks strained command structures and blurred the boundaries between combatant and civilian. Operational pressure remained high, yet responsibilities expanded to include policing, population control, and security against perceived irregular threats. As Claire Cookson-Hills has shown, environments characterised by weakened oversight, inconsistent enforcement of discipline, and permissive command climates create conditions in which sexual violence and civilian abuse become more likely.[64]

These pressures were compounded by unit composition. Many Canadian formations incorporated substantial numbers of recently arrived reinforcements, including conscripts introduced following the Conscription Crisis of late 1944.[65] Soldiers with limited combat experience were often rapidly integrated into units shaped by prolonged fighting, heavy casualties, and informal disciplinary norms developed over months of combat. The combination of rapid advance, unstable occupation conditions, and uneven integration placed additional strain on already stretched systems of supervision and discipline.

Perceptions of civilian complicity significantly influenced Canadian responses. War diaries and contemporaneous reports frequently alleged civilian assistance to German paratroopers during the counterattacks of 10 April 1945, despite a lack of substantiating evidence. A post-war investigation in July 1945 determined that these claims were primarily based on hearsay, general suspicion, and retrospective rationalisation rather than direct observation. Once these assumptions became entrenched, they justified reprisals and collective punishment. Within this framework of presumed civilian culpability, looting, sexual violence, and punitive destruction were not isolated excesses but practices embedded in a broader logic of retaliation and control.

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[62]See John Horne and Alan Kramer, *German Atrocities, 1914: A History of Denial,* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).
[63]Ibid.
[64]See Claire Cookson-Hills, 'Sexual Violence as Motivation,' in Robert C. Engen, H. Christian Breede and Allan English (eds.), *Why We Fight: New Approaches to the Human Dimension of Warfare,* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2020), pp.51-81.
[65]C.P. Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments: The War Policies of Canada, 1939–1945,* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1970), pp.434-475.

Command climate further influenced the trajectory of events. Vokes was known for endorsing severe measures to deter perceived resistance, and his willingness to employ punitive destruction as a warning to civilian populations was consistent with wider Allied anxieties surrounding irregular warfare in Germany's final months.[66] While formal orders concerning the demolition of Sögel emphasised logistical necessity, German and Canadian testimony alike suggests reprisal was widely understood as a primary motive, rendering the destruction of the town both a material and symbolic assertion of authority.

Within this broader breakdown of discipline, sexual violence constituted one of the most severe forms of civilian abuse. Scholarship on military occupation has consistently rejected explanations that reduce such violence to individual pathology or the inevitability of war. Joanna Bourke has demonstrated that it is frequently enabled by permissive disciplinary environments in which civilian populations are dehumanised rather than protected.[67] Elisabeth Jean Wood has shown that its occurrence varies systematically across conflicts and correlates closely with the presence or absence of effective command and control.[68] These findings shift the analytical focus from individual motivation to institutional context. In environments marked by inconsistent oversight and uneven disciplinary enforcement, especially where civilians are regarded as suspect or expendable, opportunities for abuse expand. Under such conditions, sexual violence reflects failures of command and control rather than isolated misconduct.

In Sögel, German testimonies consistently linked sexual violence to house searches, alcohol consumption, civilian displacement, and inadequate supervision. The reluctance of Canadian soldiers to report crimes by their peers, combined with limited prosecution, further diminished the likelihood of accountability and contributed to an environment where abuse could recur. Sexual violence, therefore, did not occur in isolation but formed part of a broader pattern of civilian harm enabled by fear, disorder, and a command climate shaped by suspicion and reprisal.

The July 1945 Investigation

A review of the relevant Canadian archival material yields no evidence of an investigation conducted on 10 April 1945 into the events at Sögel. This absence stands in contrast to Stacey's assertion that such an inquiry conclusively implicated civilians

[66]Biddiscombe, *Werwolf!,* pp.258-265; C.P. Stacey, *The Victory Campaign*, pp.558-559.
[67]See Joanna Bourke, *Rape: A History from 1860 to the Present,* (London: Virago, 2007).
[68]See Elisabeth Jean Wood, 'Variation in Sexual Violence during War,' *Politics & Society* 34, no. 3 (2006): pp.307-342.

in the counterattacks.[69] Instead, a previously unidentified 42-page report entitled 'Atrocities Committed by Citizens of Sögel against Canadian and Allied Troops' documents a subsequent investigation initiated in July 1945.[70] Of particular significance, the investigation concluded that insufficient evidence existed to substantiate allegations of civilian involvement.

The July inquiry was prompted by the interception and censorship of a letter written by Major Bruce F. MacDonald on 23 April 1945. In the intercepted correspondence, MacDonald described the situation as follows,

> I lost a very dear friend when the citizens of Sögel turned werewolves on us and shot up a field ambulance and an Engineer Unit. They used Dum-Dum bullets and nearly tore the chaps apart that we hit. We levelled their town for them, and there has been less trouble since.[71]

In response, the North-West Detachment of the No. 1 Canadian War Crime Investigation Unit was tasked with examining allegations that civilians had engaged in 'sniping on Allied troops,' used dum-dum bullets, and concealed weapons and ammunition. Between 5 July and 7 July 1945, investigators interviewed soldiers who had been present during the counterattacks in Sögel.[72] While many interviewees acknowledged having heard rumours of civilian involvement, none could provide firsthand evidence.[73]

Testimonies from multiple units revealed a consistent pattern. Several soldiers conceded that civilians might have assisted German paratroopers but admitted that these beliefs were based on general impressions rather than direct observation. Captain J. G. Murdock of 8 Field Squadron referred to 'a general feeling among the troops that the attack would not have been successful as it was if civilians had not helped,' while conceding the absence of proof. Corporal R. J. Parker similarly described a 'general feeling in the unit,' but stated that he had 'no knowledge of any hidden weapons in houses that were used by German troops during the attack.'

Major W.E. Boothroyd of 15 Canadian Field Ambulance characterised the counterattacks as 'a normal, well-thought-out and well-executed counterattack,'

[69]Stacey, *The Victory Campaign*, p.558.
[70]LAC R112, RG24-C-2, vol. 12842, file 67/Sögel/1: *Atrocities Committed by Citizens of Sögel against Canadian and Allied Troops*, July 1945.
[71]*Atrocities Committed by Citizens of Sögel,* p.15.
[72]Ibid., p.23.
[73]For interview summaries, see Atrocities *Committed by Citizens of Sögel*, pp.23-36.

adding that, although Canadian troops had been caught off guard, he had 'no reason for believing that war crimes were committed' and possessed 'no knowledge of any overt acts on the part of civilians.' Lieutenant A.B. McAdam, Major H.M. Jolley, and Corporal N.E. Burns likewise reported no knowledge of civilians engaging in sniping.

Allegations that civilians carried weapons were similarly unsubstantiated. Sapper W.R. Mitchell of 8 Field Squadron reported seeing a civilian with a rifle but emphasised that 'at no time was any civilian shooting at troops or taking an active part in the counterattack.' Sapper W. Skemin, also serving 8 Field Squadron, observed civilians leaving houses with German helmets and Mauser rifles, but did not witness civilians firing weapons. Skemin further claimed seeing '28-30 German soldiers … wearing British helmets and carrying British Bren and Sten guns.' Investigators, however, rejected these claims, concluding that no evidence existed that German soldiers in Sögel possessed British weapons, clothing, or helmets.

The Findings

Following its investigation, the North-West Europe Detachment of the No. 1 Canadian War Crime Investigation Unit determined that the allegations of civilian involvement in the counterattacks lacked substantiated evidence. The inquiry was formally closed on 8 July 1945, with the investigators concluding:

> [The] original censor intercept had been made on hearsay and did not correspond with the known facts. The attack on Sögel was entirely a German paratroop counterattack; no civilians were seen to have fired on the Canadian troops, and none were found with arms, ammunition or equipment. Of the large numbers of witnesses interrogated, including medical installation personnel, none could recall a Canadian body bearing seven bullet wounds. No evidence was obtainable from medical channels of the admission of any wounded Canadians suffering from other than normal bullet wounds. … This case has been closed. Even if the original story as told by Major MacDonald is true, which is questionable, the perpetrators are unknown.[74]

The findings suggest that troop suspicions, rather than verified evidence, shaped wartime reports of civilian participation and the punitive measures that followed. Stacey's claim that an April 1945 investigation implicated civilians cannot be corroborated without supporting documentary evidence in Canadian archives. His failure to cite sources limits the assessment of the claim's reliability and warrants caution in treating it as conclusive. It remains unclear whether Stacey's interpretation reflected prevailing assumptions within the Canadian army, the political and institutional context in which the *Official History* was produced, or an incomplete

[74] *Atrocities Committed by Citizens of Sögel*, pp.17-18.

evidentiary record. Regardless of its origin, the persistence of this unsubstantiated claim in subsequent scholarship illustrates how authoritative narratives, once established, can be reproduced without evidentiary reassessment. This episode highlights the importance of continued critical engagement with military historiography.

Conclusions: Canadian Soldiers' Misconduct in Sögel

Although the events at Sögel represent a minor episode in the history of the Canadian campaign in northwestern Germany, they offer significant insight into the formation of wartime narratives. In April 1945, the demolition of Sögel was framed as a reprisal for civilian participation in German counterattacks. This explanation, perpetuated in official history and subsequent scholarship, was based on assumptions that the July 1945 investigation ultimately failed to substantiate. No reliable evidence confirmed that residents had fired on Canadian troops or assisted the counterattacks; nevertheless, suspicion proved more enduring than documentation.

Simultaneously, the occupation of Sögel revealed significant disciplinary failures. Reports of looting and sexual violence in German testimony, partially corroborated by Canadian court-martial records and senior command directives, indicate that misconduct occurred under conditions of uneven supervision and enforcement. These acts cannot be attributed solely to individual misconduct; rather, they unfolded within an environment shaped by fatigue, rapid transition from combat to occupation, the integration of inexperienced reinforcements, and a command climate permissive of punitive destruction. Collectively, these factors undermined disciplinary restraint and enabled violence against civilians.

When considered within the structural and situational realities of late-war occupation, the events at Sögel do not appear as an isolated episode but as an example of patterns that extended beyond a single town. Operational strain, suspicion of irregular resistance, and uneven disciplinary enforcement shaped Canadian conduct on the ground and framed the interpretation that followed. The episode thus illustrates how wartime assumptions can become embedded in authoritative accounts. Reassessing Sögel does not diminish the broader record of Canadian military achievement in the Second World War; rather, it underscores the importance of subjecting even established narratives to critical scrutiny. Such analysis contributes to a more historically grounded understanding of Canadian conduct during the final weeks of the war and the transition from combat operations to occupation.

Bargaining Chips: British Repatriations and Europe's Worst Post-Second World War Massacres, Yugoslavia 1945

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ABSTRACT
In May 1945, British forces in Austria forcibly repatriated over twenty-six thousand Yugoslav POWs to Communist Yugoslavia. Most repatriates had collaborated with Axis forces and fought against Josip Broz Tito's Communist-led Partisans and most were executed after their handover, in Europe's worst post-Second World War massacres. This article examines British motives for the repatriations, and argues that the lack of reciprocity, specifically the absence of any British POWs in the custody of anti-Partisan Yugoslav forces, removed a crucial restraint on British treatment of their captives. Unhindered, the repatriations helped extricate the British from an early Cold War geopolitical crisis in Austria. Reciprocity's importance is further revealed by comparing these repatriations with British opposition to Tito's mistreatment of German POWs, as well as Anglo-American forced repatriation of Soviet citizens to Stalin's Soviet Union.

Introduction

The killings perpetrated by Yugoslav Partisan leader Josip Broz Tito's regime against its wartime civil war opponents, and against Axis collaborators stand as Europe's worst post-Second World War massacres.[1] Hundreds of thousands of anti-Partisan troops, most of whom had collaborated in some fashion with the Axis occupiers of Yugoslavia, attempted to avoid capture by the Partisans by crossing into Italy and Austria in May 1945 where they surrendered to Anglo-American forces. They included Serb and Montenegrin Četnik detachments, the Serbian Volunteer Corps under Serb fascist Dimitrije Ljotić, the remnants of the Serbian State Guard that served the

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DOI: 10.25602/GOLD.bjmh.v12i3.2001

[1]The killings took place after VE Day on 8 May 1945, although they were inextricably linked to the events of the Second World War in Yugoslavia.

collaborating Serbian administration of Milan Nedić, the Slovene Home Guard, the forces of the Independent State of Croatia/Nezavisna Država Hrvatska (NDH), the Ustaše, Croatian Home Guard, and others. Most of the personnel that succeeded in entering Italy, which included the Serbian Volunteer Corps and Serbian State Guard, along with some Dalmatian and Bosnian Četnik detachments, were not repatriated to Yugoslavia, and would ultimately escape punishment by emigrating and forging new lives.

A different outcome awaited those units that attempted to enter the British-controlled southern Austrian provinces of Carinthia and Styria. The British barred the majority of NDH forces from entering Austria at the Austrian border town of Bleiburg, so they subsequently surrendered to Tito's troops. Nevertheless, some Montenegrin and Serb Četnik detachments, the majority of the Slovene Home Guard, a portion of the NDH forces, and many civilians did succeed in entering Austria. Before they could surrender to the British, they had to evade capture by Tito's Partisans, who had seized control of most of Carinthia south of the River Drava/Drau, leading to several battles between the anti-Titoist Yugoslavs and the Partisans. Some battles were witnessed by British troops and continued after VE (Victory in Europe) Day.

Those that made it north across the Drava, were disarmed by the British and placed into camps – divided between civilians and prisoners of war (POWs) – in the environs of Klagenfurt. NDH forces were placed in the camps of Grafenstein and Krumpendorf, while the Serbs, Montenegrins, and Slovenes, and a few Croats, were held in the camp near the village of Viktring. From 18-24 May, the British repatriated the Croats to Tito's Yugoslavia, and from 24-31 May the British repatriated the Yugoslav POWs from the Viktring camp, starting with the Serbs and Montenegrins and followed by the Slovenes. An order was issued on 31 May by British military authorities to repatriate 2,700 Slovene civilians the following day, but this order was ultimately cancelled through the intervention of the Canadian major in charge of the civilian refugees in Viktring camp, Major Paul Barre of the Allied Military Government (AMG).[2] In a number of cases, British forces carrying out the repatriations did not tell the anti-Partisan forces where they were going, nor did they disabuse them of rumours that Italy was the final destination. The total number repatriated remains in dispute owing to the speed in which the repatriations were carried out. The British Eighth Army's 5 Corps, which contained the units that carried out the repatriations, estimated that 26,339 Yugoslavs were repatriated, 12,196 Croats, 8,263 Slovenes, 5,480 Serbs, and 400 Montenegrins, while émigré and other historians have claimed this to be an underestimate, with figures for the Slovene Home Guard alone estimated at over

[2]John Corsellis and Marcus Ferrar, *Slovenia 1945: Memories of Death and Survival after World War I,I* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), pp.60-61.

11,000 repatriated.[3] Upon arrival in Yugoslavia, most captives were imprisoned briefly at a number of collection points in Slovenia, after which the vast majority, with the exception of some minors and very recent recruits, were summarily executed, mostly at karst sinkholes in Kočevski Rog, in abandoned mine shafts south of Celje, and in anti-tank ditches near Maribor. The postwar killings were ordered by Tito's regime and involved select units of the Department for the Defence of the People (OZNA) and the Yugoslav Army's security-intelligence units, the People's Defence Corps of Yugoslavia (KNOJ). The exact number of dead in all postwar killings in Yugoslavia, including those repatriated, those denied access into Austria and those captured in Yugoslavia, or even a close estimate, will probably never be known as no detailed records survive of who was executed. The estimates vary from sixty to seventy thousand victims, the conclusion of the 1990 analysis of Croatian demographer Vladimir Žerjavić and later Jozo Tomasevich, of over one hundred thousand postwar victims in Slovenia alone, is a figure put forth by the Slovene government's Commission on Concealed Mass Graves.[4] Tito's Yugoslavia was party to the 1929 Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, which it inherited from the prewar Yugoslav government which had signed the treaty on 20 May 1931. The abuse and mass murder of the repatriated POWs at various killing sites in Yugoslavia was, in addition to being a crime against humanity, a clear violation of many of the Geneva Convention's articles.

This paper seeks to understand the context within which the British agreed to repatriate Tito's opponents from Austria to Yugoslavia. While several explanations have been offered as to why the British made the decision they did, what is often overlooked is the comparative value that the British ascribed to the anti-Partisan collaborating forces that had surrendered to them. The Geneva Convention's policies on POWs were certainly informed by idealistic and humanitarian principles, but what helped ensure that these laws were generally adhered to in the absence of a global authority to police them was the principle of reciprocity. In layperson's terms, reciprocity regarding POWs can be summarised as follows: you treat our prisoners well and we will treat your prisoners well. At the heart of reciprocity lies national self-interest, as two or more warring states hope to protect their own captured soldiers and facilitate their return home through the reciprocal example of humanely treating the captive POWs of their enemies. But reciprocity did not exist between the British

[3]Florian Thomas Rulitz, *The Tragedy of Bleiburg and Viktring, 1945*, (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2016), p.62.; Tadeja Tominšek Rihtar, 'The Post-War Retribution in Slovenia: Its Death Toll', *Slovene Studies*, 28, 1–2 (2006), p.97.

[4]Jozo Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945: Occupation and Collaboration,* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), p.765.; Matej Avbelj and Jernej Letnar Černič, *The Impact of European Institutions on the Rule of Law and Democracy: Slovenia and Beyond,* (Oxford: Hart, 2020), pp.37-39.

and the anti-Partisan forces that had surrendered to them in Austria after the war had ended in May 1945. There were no British or Allied troops held by the remnants of these forces; so, these units were at the mercy of the British. The paper will argue that the lack of reciprocity was critical to the British decision to withhold the granting of POW status, and all its ascribed obligations enumerated in international law, to the surrendered Yugoslav forces. Instead, for several reasons that have been well described by previous scholars, it was in the interest of the British to repatriate them to what the British commanders knew would be a very dangerous and perhaps lethal reception in Yugoslavia. In short, without reciprocity, the anti-Partisan POWs in the hands of the British became flexible bargaining chips, untethered from any mutual restraining obligations, that could be 'cashed in' to help resolve the tense geopolitics that flared up in British occupied southern Austria in May 1945. The British disregard for the health and wellbeing of the postwar Yugoslav repatriates will be compared to the prominent British opposition to their ally Tito's mistreatment of German POWs in Partisan custody during the Second World War, a concern that was driven by wartime reciprocity between Britain and Germany in regard to POWs, but one that largely dissipated after Germany's defeat and the liberation of Western POWs from German captivity. An additional comparison between the British forced repatriations of anti-Partisan Yugoslavs and the Western powers' forced repatriations of Soviet citizens to Stalin's Soviet Union after VE Day will reveal that reciprocity can, in certain circumstances, also drive inhumane forced repatriations.

Possible Motives for Repatriations from Austria

Postwar anti-communist émigrés could rationalise why Tito's forces summarily executed so many of their domestic opponents after the war, as these crimes mirrored their anti-Partisan wartime propaganda, which described the Partisans as harbingers of godless, genocidal communism. These same writers had a far more difficult time in understanding why the British would repatriate anti-Partisan and collaborating forces, especially as many of these units were under the impression that the Western Allies shared their anti-communism views, with the most optimistic – and perhaps deluded – believing that the British would join them in driving Tito from power. Many explanations have been offered. The British-Russian writer Count Nikolai Tolstoy pulled the repatriations out from obscurity with his 1986 book, *The Minister and the Massacres* – an expansion of his 1983 article 'The Klagenfurt Conspiracy' that appeared in the British literary journal *Encounter* – and, in which he pointed an accusatory finger at: Brigadier Toby Low, the British Conservative politician Lord Aldington, and the British Minister Resident in the Mediterranean and later British Prime Minister Harold MacMillan, of having been part of a 'conspiracy' to repatriate Soviet and Yugoslav anti-communist 'patriots' from Austria into Stalin's and Tito's hands.[5] This conspiratorial circle ensured that the repatriations went ahead, contrary to the alleged position of

[5]Nikolai Tolstoy, *The Minister and the Massacres*, (London: Century Hutchinson, 1986).

their superiors, notably the then British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and British Field Marshal Harold Alexander.

In the wake of Tolstoy's sensational charges, Brigadier General Anthony Cowgill held his own inquiry in 1988 into the British role in the repatriations and was joined by British journalist Christopher Booker. Booker's resulting work argued that Tolstoy had an overly victim-centred approach that took the British position on repatriations out of historical context.[6] Booker highlighted that repatriations of warring factions back to the countries where they fought was not inconsistent with British Second World War policy as voiced since 1941.[7] Indeed, repatriations were recognised as official operating procedures at the February 1945 Yalta Conference, where in two bilateral agreements between the USA and the USSR, and the USSR and the UK, Soviet citizens liberated by Anglo-American forces, and Anglo-American citizens freed by Soviet forces, would be handed over to their respective states. On the question of the forced or involuntary nature of these repatriations, the Yalta agreements made no specific mention of repatriating POWs or citizens against their will. A quarter century before Booker's work, Julius Epstein's 1973 study *Operation Keelhaul* – the codename for the American and British repatriations of Soviet citizens – described the operation as a 'crime against humanity,' maintaining that repatriations against one's will was definitely not standard operating procedure in the decades before the Second World War.[8] In relation to the present study, Yalta could not be used to justify the British repatriation of Yugoslav troops and citizens to Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia was not a signatory to the Yalta agreements, and the protocols on repatriation only applied to Soviet, British and American, and later to French and Belgian, citizens, not Yugoslavs.[9] Nevertheless, some commentators, such as Carol Mather, a former liaison officer with Field Marshal Bernard Law Montgomery, claimed that Yalta extended unofficially to Stalin's communist ally Tito. Applying reciprocity by highlighting the fate of British POWs liberated from German camps by the Soviets, Mather claimed that not returning 'all those fighting against our Allies into their custody … might have jeopardised the return not only of our own prisoners "who may be in the area" but thousands of others who were now behind Russian lines.'[10] Historian Florian Thomas Rulitz cast doubt on such interpretations by pointing to the Americans who also accepted the surrender of anti-Partisan Yugoslav POWs while staring down Tito's

[6]Christopher Booker, *A Looking-Glass Tragedy: The Controversy over the Repatriations from Austria in 1945*, (London: Duckworth, 1997).
[7]Ibid., pp.145-146.
[8]Julius Epstein, *Operation Keelhaul: The Story of Forced Repatriation from 1944 to the Present,* (Old Greenwich, CT: Devin-Adair, 1973), p.1, pp.13-21.
[9]Rulitz, *Tragedy*, p.154.
[10]Carol Mather, *Aftermath of War: Everyone Must Go Home,* (London: Brassey's, 1992), p.107.

aggressive irredentism in northeastern Italy, and who also had their troops behind Russian lines, but did not forcibly repatriate their Yugoslavs.[11]

Booker, Mather, Rulitz and others all highlighted the perceived emergency situation in Carinthia in May 1945, when the British confronted the surrender of tens of thousands of German troops and their collaborators of various nationalities, and associated civilian refugees, at the same time that Tito's Yugoslav People's Army (YPA) had entered Carinthia in violation of the four-power postwar administration of Austria in pursuit of irredentist territorial claims to southern Carinthia. Contemporary sources claimed that British personnel were outnumbered 1:25 in Carinthia by these sundry remnants of Hitler's empire.[12] There was, thus, a pressing need to 'clear the decks' of these surrendered units, words used by Alexander in his cable to Churchill on 16 May in anticipation of the British Army's plan – codenamed Operation Beehive – to forcibly remove Tito's units from Carinthia.[13] It was in this chaos that the surrendered anti-Partisan POWs in Carinthia became pawns in the negotiations between local British commanders in Austria and their communist Yugoslav counterparts.

While most scholars agree that the approximately twenty five thousand strong British 5 Corps in Carinthia, led by Lieutenant-General Sir Charles Keightley, faced enormous administrative hurdles, with the surrendered detritus of Hitler's multinational army – Germans, Volksdeutsche, Russians, Cossacks, Caucasians, Slovenes, Croats, Serbs and others – needing to be guarded, housed and fed all while facing down Tito's irredentist claims to the region, they disagree on whether administrative difficulties drove the forced repatriations.[14] Booker argued that the administrative chaos of overseeing tens of thousands of POWs and refugees, or Mather's improbable figure of one million men 'to feed and guard', would obstruct Operation Beehive, and left 5 Corps with no other choice than to repatriate.[15] Others reject this explanation. Barre, who oversaw the civilian camp of mostly Slovene refugees at Viktring, testified that there was no administrative justification for the British repatriations. He witnessed no administrative chaos and noted that the Slovene refugees were disciplined and organised, along with the impressive punctual assistance of the local Austrian *burgomeisters*, in sharp contrast to the administrative disarray of his earlier posting in northeastern Italy.[16] Rulitz saw

[11]Rulitz, *Tragedy*, p.155.
[12]The UK National Archives (hereinafter TNA) War Office (hereinafter WO) 258/93, letter from Secretary of War, J. J. Lawson to Duchess of Atholl, 24 October 1945,
[13]Booker, *A Looking-Glass Tragedy*, p.197; Mather, *Aftermath of War*, p.113.
[14]Mather, *Aftermath of War*, p.81.
[15]Ibid.
[16]Imperial War Museum (hereinafter IWM) https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/80010810. Accessed 9 October

the repatriations less as a decision that was forced upon the British by administrative difficulties, which he agrees the British custody of anti-Partisan Yugoslavs contributed to, but more as opportunism on the part of the British to entice Tito's forces to withdraw behind the pre-war Yugoslav-Austrian border. Key to his argument were the negotiations, which he claims were 'deliberately ignored by some historians,' that were held between the British and the YPA on May 15, 19 and 20 when 'the actual deal [to repatriate] was most certainly made'.[17] For Rulitz, the 'countless anti-Communist refugees in Carinthia were undoubtedly an asset, a security, in the hands of the British, which were traded to make the Partisan units of the Yugoslav Army withdraw from Carinthia relatively quickly, especially as the new authorities in Yugoslavia seem to have been very keen on catching the military refugees above all things – because they posed the potentially biggest threat to the successful establishment of the new power.'[18] The fact that the first British repatriations began on 15 May, the first day of negotiations between British and YPA forces, was, thus, not surprising to Rulitz.[19] Booker disagreed, noting that 'Tito's unilateral decision on 18 May to retreat from Austria had no direct connection with the British decision to hand over to his forces the eighteen thousand Yugoslavs who had been "'fighting in uniform with the Germans" and "their camp followers"' and that the British decision to repatriate 'had been taken strictly in accordance with the British interest to clear the area, to meet both operational and administrative requirements'.[20] However, Rulitz's argument is borne out by some archival testimony. The commander of the British 5 Corps reported in September 1945, several months after the repatriations, that to not repatriate the anti-Partisan Yugoslavs would give Tito 'a very strong and justifiable cause for complaint' and might serve as a further incentive for Yugoslav forces to remain in Carinthia, or perhaps even invite stronger Soviet intervention in support of Tito's claims.[21] Continuing, the commander reported that 'During the negotiations which led to the evacuation of Tito forces from Austria, the main conditions pressed by the Tito representatives was the return of surrendered personnel who had been fighting against them. As this was in accordance with our instructions, this condition was agreed to, and the details were fixed up at conference between the respective chiefs of staffs.'[22]

2025. Audio interview of Paul Herbert Barre, 17 November 1989. Time period 25:46-27:38.

[17]Rulitz, *Tragedy*, p.156.

[18]Ibid.

[19]Ibid.

[20]Booker, *A Looking-Glass Tragedy*, p.216.

[21]TNA WO 258/93, Report by Commander of 5th Corps, Repatriation of Yugoslav personnel, 7 September 1945.

[22]Ibid.

The Legality of the Repatriations from Austria

Thus, in assessing motives for the repatriations, many British commanders saw them as a reasonable solution to the overcrowding and administrative chaos in Carinthia, as a useful lubricant in maintaining stable relations with Tito's forces, and as a carrot to encourage them to retreat behind the agreed upon southern border of Austria. The 5 Corps commander was particularly unperturbed by reports of mistreatment of those repatriated,

> Rumours concerning the treatment of surrendered personnel by our Allies were not considered valid grounds for cancelling a transaction that is normal between Allies,

adding that,

> It is considered outside the sphere of military responsibility either to investigate the alleged treatment of surrendered personnel by an Ally, which is taking place in that Ally's sovereign territory or in any other way to protect our enemies from our Allies.[23]

In a curt July 1945 reply by Field Marshal Alexander's Chief of Staff, Lieutenant-General William Duthie Morgan, to Miha Krek, a Slovene member of the wartime Yugoslav government-in-exile who in a 7 June letter became one of the first émigrés to raise the possibility that Tito's forces were executing the repatriates, Morgan concluded that the 'Quisling forces of one sort or another … were handed over to the latter forces [YPA] in the course of a normal military transfer of prisoners of war.'[24]

Morgan's response raises a critical question: was the British forcible repatriation of anti-Partisans to Yugoslavia in May 1945, where most were summarily executed, 'normal' according to international law at the time? The 1929 Geneva Convention was created to account for conventional interstate conflicts, not civil wars, which is how the wartime struggle between Tito's Partisans and their domestic Axis collaborators and opponents is often understood, notwithstanding the reservations of some scholars who fear the 'civil war' moniker whitewashes the treason of the anti-Partisan units.[25] This interstate bias was evident in Article 75 of the Geneva Convention, which spelled out the practice of repatriations of POWs,

[23]Ibid.
[24]TNA WO 258/93, letter from William Duthie Morgan to Miha Krek, 31 July 1945.
[25]See, for example, Oto Luthar, 'Slovenia: History between Myths and Reality,' *Slovene Studies*, 27, 1–2 (2005), p.117.

> When belligerents conclude an armistice convention, they shall normally cause to be included therein provisions concerning the repatriation of prisoners of war. If it has not been possible to insert in that convention such stipulations, the belligerents shall, nevertheless, enter into communication with each other on the question as soon as possible. In any case, the repatriation of prisoners shall be effected as soon as possible after the conclusion of peace.[26]

Article 75 made repatriation 'an issue for bilateral agreements' between two belligerents who had concluded an armistice and who were working towards a peace agreement. But which state represented the hodgepodge anti-Partisan Yugoslavs? Royalist Yugoslavia, to which some of them had sworn oaths of loyalty before the war, no longer existed, having disbanded itself in March when a new Titoist-dominated Yugoslav provisional government was created from the Tito-Šubašić Agreement.[27] Moreover, Article 75 never addressed the issue of POWs who refused to be repatriated, a description that applied to almost all of the anti-Titoist Yugoslavs in British custody, nor did it contain 'any provisions explicitly forbidding forced repatriation of prisoners of war and displaced persons.'[28] Many scholars, perhaps most forcibly Epstein, made various claims 'that historically a right of option has been given to prisoners of war'.[29] Focusing especially on the many former Russian POWs which the Allies did not forcibly repatriate to a post-1918 Russia wracked by revolution and civil war, Epstein concluded that 'international practice after World War I shows that no prisoners of war were forcibly extradited to their countries of origin.'[30] Yet legal scholar Christiane Shields Delessert's exhaustive legal review of repatriations at the end of hostilities concluded that clauses promising choice and only voluntary return inserted into specific repatriation treaties 'should actually be seen as exceptions.'[31] Delessert's conclusion is all the more surprising given that the Geneva Convention was comparatively clear in expressing its humane intentions towards POWs, with Article 2 stating that 'prisoners of war . . . shall at all times be humanely treated and protected, particularly against acts of violence, from insults and from public curiosity.

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[26]International Committee of the Red Cross Geneva: Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War. Geneva, 27 July 1929, International Humanitarian Law Databases, https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/gc-pow-1929/article-75?activeTab=. Accessed 6 June 2026..

[27]Walter R. Roberts, *Tito, Mihailović and The Allies, 1941-1945,* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1973), pp.316-317.

[28]Epstein, *Operation Keelhaul*, p.14.

[29]Christiane Shields Delessert, *Release and Repatriation of Prisoners of War at the End of Active Hostilities*, (Zurich: Schulthess Polygraphischer Verlag, 1977), p.175.

[30]Epstein, *Operation Keelhaul*, p.14.

[31]Delessert, *Release and Repatriation*, p.175.

Measures of reprisal against them are forbidden.'[32] As for the urgency of repatriations, Article 75 offered 'legal cover' to slow roll repatriations when it suited national interest, as it stipulated that repatriations were to be instituted 'as soon as possible *after the conclusion of peace*.'[33] For example, with no Versailles-like peace treaty between Britain and a divided Germany, and with dire labour shortages, hundreds of thousands of German POWs were retained and employed as labourers in Britain in the three years following VE Day.

British treatment of anti-Partisan POWs during their brief sojourn in Austria did not always uphold the letter, to say nothing of the humane spirit, of the 1929 Geneva Convention. Article 26 of the convention stipulated that 'In the event of transfer, prisoners of war shall be officially informed in advance of their new destination.'[34] The 5 Corps commander seemingly ignored this requirement, stating that 'surrendered personnel were not told of their destination as it is not the normal practice when dealing with surrendered personnel or PW [prisoners of war] of any nationality, to keep them informed of our plans for disposal.'[35] Nigel Nicolson, the intelligence officer for the 1 Guards Brigade that provided guard detail for the repatriations, offered what he saw as,

> the British point of view' for dispensing with Article 26 in Carinthia, stating that 'there was no alternative other than lying to the refugees. Had the British told them the truth, the refugees would have hastily left the wagons and lorries. The deception is justified with the argument that the refugees could be guarded more easily and that no mass panic erupted among them.[36]

Indeed, many surviving eyewitnesses of the repatriations recalled being under the impression that they were being relocated to Italy, not Yugoslavia. Major Barre testified that deception was integral to the repatriations from Viktring camp.[37] When he was first verbally ordered by Lieutenant Ames, the commander of the POW camp at Viktring, to ready Slovene civilians to be 'entrained, to be sent' the next morning,

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[32]Epstein, *Operation Keelhaul*, pp.13-14.
[33]Joan Beaumont, 'Protecting Prisoners of War, 1939-95,' in Bob Moore and Kent Fedorowich, eds., *Prisoners of War in the Second World War: An Overview*, (Oxford: Berg, 1996), p.282.
[34]International Committee of the Red Cross Geneva: Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War. Geneva, 27 July 1929, International Humanitarian Law Databases, https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/gc-pow-1929/article-75?activeTab=. Accessed 6 June 2026.
[35]TNA WO 258/93, Report by Commander of 5th Corps.
[36]Rulitz, *The Tragedy*, p.63.
[37]IWM Audio interview, Barre, Time period 21:44-23:00

'he wouldn't tell me where or how', an order that Barre ultimately ignored.[38] In relation to the mostly Slovene POWs repatriated from Viktring, Barre testified that they were transported in rail cars at night to conceal the direction that they were travelling in, and that 'they were supposed to be sent to Italy, but they were actually sent to Yugoslavia.'[39] British units involved in the repatriations understood that the final destination was Yugoslavia, as YPA troops took command of the repatriation trains already in the Austrian border town of Rosenbach. Nicolson wrote in his daily situation report on 18 May,

> The Croats have been given no warning of their fate and are being allowed to believe that their destination is not Yugoslavia but Italy until the actual moment of their handover. The whole business is most unsavoury and British tps [troops] have the utmost distaste in carrying out the orders. At the moment it is not known what higher policy lies behind the decision.[40]

British command was evidently sensitive about Nicolson's admission and admonished him,

> I was sent for by the General or his chief of staff and told that, whatever truth there was in this, I should never have stated it in a public document and, further than that, I was told, and it was more or less dictated to me, that in the next day's situation report I must deny what I'd written the day before and say that we have every reason to believe that they would be well treated once they got to Yugoslavia. That was totally untrue.[41]

While it is unclear if the British units were ever instructed to tell the repatriated anti-Partisan forces that they were being sent to Italy, they were ordered not to divulge to them their real destination nor dispel rumours that Italy was the destination. Major General Horatius Murray, the commander of the 6 British Armoured Division, reported on 25 June that care was taken 'not to encourage or deny' the rumour among those being repatriated that they were being transferred to Italy, and that the British soldiers overseeing the repatriations were told to respond with 'no comment' after

[38]Ibid., Time period 14:20-15:08.
[39]Ibid., Time period 20:55-21:45.
[40]*History Extra*, 17 January 2020; Laurence Rees, 'Falsified Yugoslav handover to Tito' in 'What would you have done? 6 terrible choices people had to make during the Second World War'. https://www.historyextra.com/period/second-world-war/terrible-choices-decisions-ww2-how-volunteer-jews-kamikaze-ss-prisoner-of-war/. Accessed 7 June 2026.
[41]Ibid.

the inevitable news leaked out that they were in fact being transported to Yugoslavia.[42] This same report noted that the commander of the Slovene Home Guard, General Franc Krener, who visited 8 Army headquarters and demanded to know where his troops were being taken, was 'told in writing that he had no right to know.' The 5 Corps' Deputy Assistant Adjutant General Major Taylor told Major Johnson, the head of the AMG's Displaced Persons Branch in Carinthia, that the British were not employing force to repatriate the Slovenes, and justified their refusal to disclose the real destination to them by stating that 'subterfuge did not constitute force.'[43]

While the refusal to clearly identify the destination of the repatriations was designed to ensure they went ahead smoothly, it also supports the view that the British knew something awful was in store for the repatriated in communist Yugoslavia. Some British military commanders and politicians claimed that Yugoslav émigré reports of atrocities having been committed against the repatriated were 'exaggerated' and that 'there was no reason to believe that any arbitrary and deliberate ill-treatment would occur to these soldiers'.[44] Yet, numerous wartime reports by British liaison officers stationed with the Partisans emphasised the viciousness of the civil war raging in Yugoslavia. British Special Operations Executive agent Lieutenant Colonel Peter Moore noted as much in his February 1945 'Report on Slovenia',

> some discreditable excesses by the Partisans, are unfortunately only too likely after the departure of the Germans, … Missions from all organizations in Slovenia should be reduced to an absolute minimum, and in particular the number of senior officers should be reduced. Otherwise the goodwill we have earned with the civil population will be lost, by our being identified with possible excesses by the Partisans over whom we have no control whatever.[45]

A 17 May telegram from Field Marshal Alexander seeking from the Combined Chiefs of Staff's urgent 'direction regarding final disposal' of Cossacks, Četniks and Croats noted that 'to return them to their country of origin immediately might be fatal to

[42]TNA WO 204/12970, Report by Major-General Horatius Murray to Main 5th Corps, 'Handing over of Jugoslavs', 25 June 1945.
[43]TNA WO 258/93, Major William Johnson, 'Report on the Repatriation of Slovenes', undated but composed between 8-16 August 1945.
[44]TNA WO 258/93, Report by Commander of 5th Corp, letter from J. G. Tahourdin, WO to A.C.W. Drew, Foreign Office (hereinafter FO) 26 November 1945.
[45]Thomas Barker, *Social Revolutionaries and Secret Agents: The Carinthian Slovene Partisans and Britain's Special Operations Executive,* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), p.158.

their health.'[46] As early as the night of 26/27 May, Ljotić's son, who managed to escape the transport train and returned to Viktring, told the remaining Slovenes that Yugoslavia was the final destination, not the Italian town of Palmanova as many believed, and that massacres awaited them.[47] Such reports evidently made it up the British chain of command, as they were critical to suspending the repatriation order for Slovene civilians issued on 31 May. Major Barre's superior in the AMG, Major Johnson, who claimed not to have been consulted about the repatriations that were being carried out by 5 Corps, had discussed 'the verbal reports' which he had received 'regarding the robbing and slaughter of a first batch of Serbs who were returned' with the General Staff of 6 Armoured Division overseeing the repatriations. The General Staff's response was that they 'were aware of all the circumstances and that there was nothing we could do about it.'[48] Nevertheless, Johnson was able to have the 5 Corps' repatriation order rescinded for Slovene civilians because unlike the NDH forces, the Četniks and the Slovene Home Guard, repatriating Slovene civilians also required 'the knowledge and consent of [British] Military Government' – consent which Johnson at Barre's urging denied.[49]

In addition to the Geneva requirement to notify POWs on their transfer destination, the Convention set standards on the treatment of POWs, including housing conditions, caloric intake, and the type of labour POWs could be assigned. Confronting a tsunami of Axis forces who would be surrendering to Allied forces in the aftermath of VE day – by one estimate almost 3.5 million, in addition to the 4.2 million already in Allied custody at war's end – and whose treatment would be bound by the Geneva Convention, British and American forces had already decided in March 1945 to redesignate all Germans in uniform who surrendered after war's end as 'surrendered enemy personnel' (SEP) and as 'disarmed enemy forces' (DEF) in British and American parlance respectively.[50] Contemporary documentation reveals an almost uniform avoidance in the communications of British command of describing surrendered Yugoslavs in Carinthia as POWs. The most common designation was 'surrendered personnel', 'surrendered enemy military personnel', and 'disarmed hostile troops', but also 'dissident forces', 'Yugoslav quislings' and – in the aftermath

[46]TNA FO 371/48918, telegram from Field Marshal Alexander (AFHQ) to Combined Chiefs of Staff / British Chiefs of Staff, 17 May 1945.,
[47]TNA WO 258/93, Report, 'About the deliverance of the Slovene National Army to the Tito Partisan Authorities by the British military authorities in Carinthia', 1 June 1945, Klagenfurt.
[48]Ibid., Major William Johnson, 'Report on the Repatriation of Slovenes,' undated but composed between 8-16 August 1945.
[49]Ibid.
[50]Bob Moore, *Prisoners of War: Europe, 1939-1956* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), pp.420-21.

of the forced repatriations – as 'the Parties which returned to Yugoslavia'. The consistent use of the 'surrendered enemy personnel' designation was deliberate, as 'the decision of the Allies to place surrendered enemy personnel in a special category … deprived the surrendered individual of the rights and privileges inherent in the status of prisoner of war, as defined by the [1929] convention'.[51] Or, as historian Bob Moore summarised, the redesignations of POWs 'removed them from the protection of the Geneva Convention and allowed local commanders to feed them at levels below those stipulated by the Convention.'[52] Indeed, the British had begun denying POW status to 'nationals from neutral or Allied states who had served in German uniform during the Second World War' as early as August 1944.[53] According to the British, these individuals, which included the repatriated anti-Partisan POWs, 'could not claim POW status and Geneva Convention protection but could be delivered "unconditionally" to his own state.'[54]

Reciprocity at Work: Opposition to Tito's Mistreatment of German POWs

While British authorities denied POW status to the surrendered anti-Partisan forces in Carinthia in May 1945, the British insisted fastidiously that Geneva Convention protections be applied to German POWs captured by the Partisans during the war in Yugoslavia in areas of joint Partisan-Allied operations. The difference in these two British approaches appeared to be based on the existence of reciprocity, for as long as there were significant numbers of British POWs held by German forces, British authorities insisted on strict adherence to the Convention. This utilitarian application of the Geneva Convention was apparent in a 12 April 1944 telegram marked 'emergency' from the Supreme Allied Commander in the Mediterranean, General Henry Maitland Wilson, who brought to the attention of the Air Ministry, War Office (WO) and Foreign Office (FO) reports that the Yugoslav Partisans had shot forty-five German POWs as war criminals on the Adriatic island of Vis. Wilson's key concern was that that the presence of Allied garrisons on Vis made them potentially complicit in the eyes of the Germans for any Partisan mistreatment of their POWs, and risked reprisals being taken against British or Americans POWs in German custody, stating 'repercussions might ensue if details reached Germans with possible reprisals on Allied P.W's taken this theatre. Enemy may further accuse us of connivance with these

[51]AMEDD Center of History & Heritage, United States Army Medical Department, *Preventive Medicine in World War II*, IX, 1969, p.369.
[52]Moore, *Prisoners of War*, p.421.
[53]Richard Wiggers, 'The United States and the Denial of Prisoner of War (POW) Status at the End of the Second World War', *Militärgeschichtlichen Mitteilungen*, 52, 1 (1993), p.95.
[54]Ibid.

shootings.'[55] As a result of this 'protest has been made to Marshal Tito over such action and request made that in the future international law be observed in such matters.'[56] In a subsequent urgent message to Tito on 11 May, Churchill made clear the reciprocity that underpinned British adherence to the Geneva Convention, demanding that in joint British-Partisan operations 'we ask that Germans who have surrendered themselves as prisoners of war shall be treated in accordance with International Law. … We have always adhered most strictly to the Geneva Convention, not only because the Germans have 120,000 British prisoners in their hands, but also on grounds of principle. We cannot have our position in this matter impaired.[57]

Tito's contrite reply to Churchill, in which he agreed to intervene to avoid any similar future incidents, nonetheless justified the executions on the grounds of reciprocity, arguing that the Germans had not observed international law and shot thousands of Partisans and their wounded, and hence 'rare cases' of 'revenge' were not unexpected.[58] In response, Churchill recognised the 'intolerable provocation' that Tito's troops faced by the Germans' 'total breach of all the laws of war', but that 'we have for our part still been able to maintain with the Germans a certain observance of the Geneva Convention … and as the Germans hold so many of our prisoners, we are anxious that this contact should not be broken.'[59]

The British continued to intervene whenever reports surfaced of Partisan executions of German POWs in areas of joint Allied-Partisan operations, including in the execution of fifty German POWs on the island of Korčula in May 1944. After British troops reported that the Partisans had executed over two hundred German POWs near the Montenegrin town of Grahovo – a charge that Tito claimed to be 'completely untrue'– Wilson wrote to Tito in January 1945, with reciprocity as the cornerstone of his objections: 'If such actions continue in areas of joint operations with our forces they can seriously imperil the lives of many thousands of British and American prisoners held by the enemy.'[60]

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[55]TNA FO 371/44365, telegram from AFHQ to Air Ministry and Britman Washington, 12 April 1944.
[56]Ibid.
[57]TNA FO 371/44365, draft letter from Prime Minister Winston Churchill to Tito, 11 May 1944.
[58]Ibid., telegram from Tito to Churchill, Bari to Foreign Office, 23 May 1944.
[59]Ibid., telegram from Churchill to Tito, 24 May 1944.
[60]TNA FO 371/48906, telegram from Resident Minister's Office Central Mediterranean Caserta to FO, 19 January 1945, and Draft Statement From General Wilson to Marshal Tito, January 1945.

British concern for German POWs in Yugoslavia evaporated in the final days of the war, as the British distanced themselves from Tito and any 'discreditable excesses' – to borrow Lieutenant Colonel Moore's February 1945 description – he would take against surrendered Axis forces. If judged by Anglo-American policies, already in effect, to deny POW status to surrendering German troops after war's end, instructions from AFHQ to the Allied Balkan Air Force on 13 April 1945 appeared particularly hypocritical. They counselled that the AFHQ,

> do not consider it desirable that we should be associated with action Tito may take to obtain surrender of German forces in Yugoslavia. He will not be in a position to feed large numbers or treat them in any way comparable to PW status under international law.[61]

During the war, with Germans imprisoning large numbers of British POWs, reports of Partisan executions of German POWs had garnered the attention of Churchill and top British generals. Now, with the war coming to an end, such scrutiny disappeared as the British felt little compulsion to support the application of the Geneva Convention to German POWs in Yugoslav custody, not least because the British would themselves soon deny Convention status to German POWs in their custody.

One vivid example of the British dissociating themselves from Tito's breaches of the Geneva Convention emerged from an 11 June 1945 report by Colonel J. Clarke, the military attaché at the British embassy in Belgrade, who, citing a 'reliable source', described a column of ten thousand POWs made up of Germans, Turkmen Axis auxiliaries, and a few Četniks and Ustaše, who had marched from Zagreb to Belgrade. Borrowing the Soviet policy of *Sühnemärsche,* atonement marches,

> whereby captured enemies were force-marched through as many communities as possible to show the extent and totality of the victory,'[62]

the source described

> one of the most beastly scenes I have ever seen.… many were barefooted, starving, haggard with large percentage suffering from dysentery and even typhus. To the delight of the populace they were marched through the city in broad daylight. Laggards were kicked by Partisans and Bulgarian elements of the crowd. Rear files of the column were carrying 3 dead men.[63]

[61]TNA 23/8176, telegram from AFHQ to Balkan Air Force, 13 April 1945.
[62]Moore, *Prisoners of War*, p.82.
[63]TNA FO 371/48906, telegram from AFHQ to WO, 11 June 1945.

The German general who spoke for the POWs told the source of the 'dreadful treatment' the men were enduring and solicited British intervention.[64] With little urgency, Clarke's report would make the rounds of various British government offices over the next month. The British WO was perhaps bluntest in their recognition that the mistreatment of German POWs in Yugoslavia after the war was no longer of any reciprocal interest to them. Citing the Grahovo cables of January 1945, the last time that high-ranking British officials had intervened with Tito in a 'case involving the shooting of German prisoners of war by the Yugoslav Authorities', the WO communicated to their FO colleagues that 'we no longer feel that we are qualified to comment since there is no longer any question of the interests of British prisoners of war being affected.'[65] The FO had a similar attitude, noting in a draft letter to the British Ambassador to Belgrade, Ralph Stevenson, that 'the basis of our previous representation to Tito about Yugoslav treatment of German prisoners of war was the risk of reprisals on our own prisoners in German hands', adding that 'it might well be dangerous to take up with the Yugoslavs this evidence of ill-treatment' and would most likely garner a denial by them.[66] The FO's instructions to Stevenson emphasised that the previous British interventions on behalf of German POWs that had been shot on the island of Vis and in Dalmatia was done 'on the basis of reprisals on our own prisoners of war in German hands.'[67] While the FO suggested that 'taking up the present case with the Yugoslavs has to be judged on the basis of humanity and of expediency', humanity appeared not to be worthy of the effort, as the FO concluded that 'any representations from us are not likely to improve the treatment of these unfortunate people.'[68]

With advice like this, it is little surprise that Stevenson decided on 6 July 'that it would serve no useful purpose' for the British government to intervene on behalf of the mistreated German POWs, and that any joint Anglo-American representation would probably not have 'any practical impact.'[69] Instead, Stevenson attempted to justify the behaviour of the Yugoslavs, noting 'The vilely inhuman treatment which the Germans themselves meted out to the Yugoslavs is too fresh in the latter's memory for them to be able to appreciate the feelings of people who have not suffered as they have.'[70] As further evidence that British officials were already well aware of the abysmal treatment of Tito's domestic opponents, Stevenson – in a demeaning stereotyping of

[64]Ibid.
[65]Ibid., letter from Henry Phillimore (WO) to John Addis (FO), 16 June 1945.
[66]Ibid., Draft letter from John Addis (FO) to British Ambassador Stevenson, Belgrade, 22 June 1945.
[67]Ibid., telegram from FO to R.C. Skrine Stevenson, Belgrade, 28 June 1945.
[68]Ibid.
[69]Ibid., letter from British Embassy, Belgrade to Douglas Howard WO, 6 July 1945.
[70]Ibid.

Yugoslavs – added that 'it is not only the Germans who are ill-treated. Very similar handling is given to their own quislings, partly in revenge for what the latter have themselves done, and partly out of the sheer insensibility which seems to be inherent in the character of these people.'[71]

Reciprocity at Work: Forced Repatriations of POWs to Stalin's USSR

The classic comparison of the forced repatriation of anti-Partisan Yugoslavs in May 1945 is the even larger-scale Western Allied forced repatriations of Soviet POWs back to Stalin's Soviet Union. Yet, unlike the repatriation of anti-Partisan Yugoslavs, the existence of reciprocity in the shape of hundreds of thousands of Western POWs who had been liberated by the Soviet Red Army from German camps in 1944 and 1945, is critical to understanding the speed and scale of the Western Allies' repatriation of Soviet POWs. In only a two-week period in late May and early June 1945, the Soviets handed over 171,069 POWs to Western powers, while the Western Allies repatriated 620,998 Soviet POWs and civilians from their custody.[72] By March 1946, the two sides had exchanged a little over one million POWs each.[73] While there were concerns raised in Britain and elsewhere over the fate of those returned to Stalin – only underscored by the suicidal terror of the Cossacks repatriated by the British in Austria in May 1945 – Churchill's Assistant Private Secretary John Colville emphasised the immovable reciprocal logic behind the repatriations. [74]

> A refusal by us to return Russian prisoners or, for that matter, Russian traitors, would have been matched by a refusal on their part to return British and American prisoners. What, after the long years of captivity, would the British and American public have said to that?[75]

Clearly, the existence of reciprocity on its own does not ensure correct treatment of POWs, as evident in the reciprocal atrocities committed against POWs and civilians by Germany and the Soviet Union during the Second World War or in the 'shackling crisis' between Britain, Canada and Germany in 1942-43.[76] Yet Anglo-American treatment of Soviet citizens captured in German uniform was rather different a year

[71]Ibid.
[72]Moore, *Prisoners of War*, p.91.
[73]Ibid.
[74]Nicholas Bethell, *The Last Secret: Forcible Repatriation to Russia, 1944-47*, (London: Andre Deutsch, 1974) pp.124-165.
[75]Moore, *Prisoners of War*, p.390.
[76]For a discussion of negative reciprocity see Sean Watts, 'Reciprocity and the Law of War', *Harvard International Law Journal*, 50, 2 (Summer, 2009), pp.365-434. For the 'shackling crisis' see Neville Wylie, *Barbed Wire Diplomacy: Britain, Germany, and the Politics of Prisoners of War, 1939-1945*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

earlier when the Germans still imprisoned large numbers of Western POWs and the Soviets had not advanced sufficiently to liberate many of the Western captives from German camps. The Americans in particular were reluctant to allow their captive German POWs - who 'were apparently entitled to claim Soviet citizenship, according to representatives of the Soviet Union' – to be repatriated to the Soviet Union and to be treated as anything but German prisoners 'for fear that the German Government might be afforded a pretext to subject American POWs in its custody to reprisals'.[77] As there were a number of non-US citizens in the American armed forces, 'it was the concern of the American Government that they should be protected.'[78] Similarly, among Soviets captured in German uniform by the British in the Middle East theatre, there was, according to a communication between the British WO Under Secretary Sir Frederick Bovenschen and the FO's Sir Orme Sargent, a practice in which,

> We did not tell the Russians that those who were unwilling to be repatriated are not in fact being handed over. This condition was agreed between the Foreign Office and the War Office – I think at the War Office suggestion – in order to prevent a situation arising in which the Russians maltreated their compatriots who were handed back to them and the Germans found in this a pretext for reprisals on British and American prisoners of war.[79]

Shaped by reciprocity, US and British authorities attempted to thread the needle between their fear of German reprisals against their own captured troops that might be provoked by their repatriation of Soviet citizens in German uniform to Stalin, and their fear of the prolonged retention of their own troops 'liberated' by the Red Army in reprisal for Western foot-dragging in their handover to Stalin of captured Soviet citizens. The fact that the British Cabinet revisited their approval of repatriations of captured Soviet POWs in German uniform, in a manner that 'protect[ed] British and American prisoners from all risk of reprisal,' several times in the summer of 1944 underscores their torturous calculation of risk to their imprisoned troops.[80]

Conclusion

The lack of similar reciprocal pressures between the Western Allies and the anti-Partisan Yugoslavs in their custody allowed the Western Allies a degree of latitude in how they responded to them, with the Americans in Italy refusing wholesale repatriation of Yugoslavs while the British repatriated them en masse from Austria. The forcible repatriation of anti-Partisan Yugoslavs was in the national interest of the British at that time and in that place. The need to remove as many POWs from

[77]Delessert, *Release and Repatriation*, p.153Fn39.
[78]Ibid.
[79]Mather, *Aftermath of War*, p.96.
[80]Ibid., p.197.

strategic Carinthia in preparation for possible British military action to secure the four-power agreement by ejecting the YPA from Austria, or, better yet, using the repatriations to entice Tito's voluntary withdrawal of his forces, all weighed on the British decision. So too did the knowledge that many of these forces had collaborated and 'borne arms for the Germans against the Allied Yugoslav troops of Marshal Tito', at a time when Tito was still popular in the West on account of his anti-fascist credentials.[81] Yet, as Bob Moore noted, 'even the partisans were surprised by their [the British] lack of interest in anti-communist forces when the Cold War agendas were coming to the fore.'[82] Nevertheless, it is arguable that these listed factors would not have been sufficient to motivate the British decision to repatriate had the situation been different with significant numbers of British troops imprisoned and threatened with reprisals – as fantastic as that may sound – by Yugoslav quisling forces.

As evidence for this hypothetical scenario, this paper compared the British treatment of anti-Partisan POWs in Austria in May 1945 and British attitudes towards Tito's abuse of Axis POWs and his domestic opponents in postwar Yugoslavia, with the striking wartime British demands to Tito's Partisans to abide by the Geneva Convention in their treatment of captured German POWs. In the case of Yugoslav POWs who surrendered to the British in Austria in the days after VE Day, the British refused to grant them POW status and the protections of the Geneva Convention, consistent with their policy towards all so-called Axis 'surrendered enemy personnel' who came into British custody after 8 May 1945. The British denied their captives knowledge of where they were being repatriated to, before unloading them to an enemy that they knew had a penchant for applying 'Soviet-style' justice to their opponents. In the case of German POWs who experienced what the Geneva Convention prohibited, namely 'acts of violence, … insults and … public curiosity' in their forced march through Belgrade in June 1945, the British response was silence that was justified by the assumed inherent cruelty of the Yugoslav population and the assumed lack of impact that any interventions would have.[83] Yet during the Second World War, none other than the British Prime Minister and a Field Marshal intervened with Tito to prevent further Partisan abuses of German POWs captured in areas of Allied-Partisan operations. In the case of the Anglo-American policy of repatriating Soviet citizens in German uniform to Stalin's USSR, the fear of German reciprocal reprisals against Western POWs in Nazi captivity, especially in 1944, was the main source of internal opposition against this policy. The ultimate Anglo-American decision to sideline these concerns and repatriate hundreds of thousands of Soviet citizens, in many cases involuntarily, to the Soviet Union, was the arguably even more significant reciprocity that could have witnessed Stalin retaining and mistreating Western POWs

[81]TNA WO 258/93, letter from William Duthie Morgan to Miha Krek, 31 July 1945.
[82]Moore, *Prisoners of War*, pp.281-282.
[83]Epstein, *Operation Keelhaul*, p.13.

in his custody in reprisal for Western intransigence on the return of Soviet POWs. As a draft communication between the British FO and WO made clear, should the British not repatriate Cossacks who had fought on the side of Hitler, 'It might … have very unfortunate reactions *upon the Russian treatment of our prisoners of war uncovered by them*.'[84]

The Geneva Conventions of 1929 contained no legal right to asylum for POWs who feared return to their home country, and as Delessert concluded, 'the fact that a prisoner might be liable to severe punishment upon return has not previously been considered a bar to repatriation.'[85] Yet despite the lack of legal prohibition against forced repatriation, Epstein's survey of the first half of the twentieth century led him to conclude that it was 'this overriding consideration of humanness,' evident in Article 2 of the 1929 Geneva Convention – 'Prisoners of war…shall at all times be humanely treated and protected' – and in Article 12 of the 1949 Geneva Convention – 'Prisoners of war must at all times be humanely treated' – that in his view formed 'the very foundation of both Geneva Conventions of 1929 and of 1949'.[86] Confronted with numerous pragmatic arguments for why repatriating the defeated Yugoslav POWs was beneficial to the British position in southern Austria in the spring of 1945, and with no British POWs held by the various anti-Partisan forces, only the Geneva Convention's 'consideration of humanness' militated against repatriation. However, as historian Stevan Pavlowitch concluded, 'to repatriate them, and shut one's eyes to the consequences was, perhaps, an easy way to get rid of the burden and the danger' that the surrendered anti-Partisans posed to the British in Austria in May 1945.[87]

[84]TNA FO 371/48918, Draft Letter from FO to War Cabinet Office, 26 May 1945, [author's italics]
[85]Delessert, *Release and Repatriation*, p.195.
[86]Epstein, *Operation Keelhaul*, pp.13-14.
[87] Moore, *Prisoners of War*, p. 282.

Stormy Petrel: The rise and fall of Royal Navy submarine ace Alastair Mars

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ABSTRACT
Thanks to a pair of entertaining war memoirs that have been in print for more than sixty years, Alastair Mars has long been among the most recognised British submarine commanders of the Second World War. He is also notorious for being court martialled and dismissed seven years after the conflict ended; an outcome which remains quite controversial. This article seeks to explain how, thanks to a combination of personality traits, the lingering stress effects of wartime service made manifest in part through alcohol abuse, and a run of bad luck, this wartime submarine ace became the architect of his own downfall within the peacetime Royal Navy.

Introduction

On 25 June 1952, Prime Minister Winston Churchill, engaged in his breakfast routine of perusing the morning newspapers, was disturbed to read of the court-martial and dismissal from the Royal Navy (RN) of a highly decorated wartime submariner, Lieutenant-Commander A. C. G. Mars, Distinguished Service Order (DSO), Distinguished Service Cross (DSC) and Bar, over the apparently trivial issue of taking exception to a posting and wishing to retire.[1] There were headlines such as 'Navy Sacks War Ace' (*News Chronicle*) and 'Navy dismisses submarine hero who said "No"' (*Daily Herald*); and according to a submarine commander of a later generation, at the time the dismissal 'was considered by many as a very contentious and undeserved sentence imposed upon a gallant officer'.[2] His fate continued to be judged unfair more

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DOI: 10.25602/GOLD.bjmh.v12i3.2002
[1]See UK National Archives (hereinafter TNA) PREM 11/272 Pitblado to Marshall, 25 June 1952.
[2]Richard Woodman with Dan Conley, *Cold War Command: The Dramatic Story of a Nuclear Submariner,* (Barnsley: Seaforth, 2014), p.191, *Daily Herald*, 25 June 1952, *News*

than half a century later, not least among readers of the oft-reprinted pair of wartime command memoirs Mars wrote after his departure from the navy, *Unbroken* and *H.M.S. Thule Intercepts*. 'A very special book', as one reader of the latter commented, 'which makes what happened to Mars at the end of his RN career seem all the more disgusting.'[3] The sense of an injustice done is strongly implied in a current biographical encyclopaedia entry in which it is stated that Mars 'was court martialled and dismissed from the service under controversial circumstances'.[4]

There can be little doubt that Alastair Mars earned the medals he was awarded for submarine service during the Second World War. In command of *Unbroken* in the Mediterranean and then *Thule* in the Far East, he was credited with, among other achievements, crippling a pair of Italian cruisers in August 1942 and sinking a Japanese submarine in December 1944.[5] That he was later dismissed unfairly, however, is more questionable.[6] This article examines the life of this self-acknowledged 'stormy petrel,' with particular emphasis on the postwar period when he got himself into increasingly serious trouble.[7] The aim is to chronicle and explain the combination of external and internal factors that led Mars down a path which culminated in an ignominious end to

Chronicle, 25 June 1952, see also e.g. *Daily Mirror*, 25 June 1952, Frank Goldsworthy, *You Soonest … Memoirs of a War Reporter*, (Pittsburgh, PA: Dorrance, 1997), p.132.

[3]Urrah review, 6 February 2013, https://www.amazon.co.uk/H-M-S-Thule-Intercepts-Alastair-Mars/ Accessed 2 May 2026, see also e.g. 'Court martial of Alastair Mars' thread, 2010, https://www.shipsnostaliga.com. Accessed 2 May 2026

[4]Wikipedia, Alastair Mars, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alastair_Mars. Accessed 11 May 2023; see also e.g. Alastair Mars entry, unit histories, https://www.unithistories.com/officers/RN_officersM2.html Accessed 2 May 2026.

[5]See TNA ADM 199/1826, HMS *Unbroken*, 10th Flotilla patrol report, 10th July – 30th August 1942; TNA ADM 199/1867, HMS *Thule*, 4th Flotilla patrol report, 11th December 1944 – 4th January 1945. It was eventually determined that one of the torpedoes fired by Mars at the Japanese submarine had exploded prematurely, giving a false impression of a fatal hit through the periscope. Arthur Hezlet, *History of British and Allied Submarine Operations in World War Two*, vol. 2 (Gosport: Royal Navy Submarine Museum, 2001), Ch. 30, Fn.9.

[6]See e.g. TNA ADM 156/217 NL2612/1952, Ewen Montague minute, 6 July 1952, and Alexander Madden minute 17 July 1952, and Arthur Power submission, cover for minutes of court martial, A. C. G. Mars.

[7]For 'stormy petrel' see Alastair Mars, *British Submarines at War, 1939-1945,* (London: Kimber, 1971), author jacket note.

his once-impressive career in the Royal Navy in the context of somewhat *laissez-faire* service attitudes to combat stress and alcohol consumption.[8]

Prewar

Alastair Campbell Gillespie Mars was born in 1915 in St. John's, Newfoundland, the son of a Scots commission agent and a local language teacher. He was educated at St. Bonaventure College and then, after he and his two siblings were relocated to England in the mid-1920s, at the Dragon School in Oxford. 'At the age of 8 Alastair declared he wanted to join the Navy,' his mother later revealed, and in 1928 he entered the Britannia Naval College at Dartmouth.[9] His early years ashore and at sea were fairly typical, his performance as a midshipman and sub-lieutenant being rated as satisfactory or entirely satisfactory.[10] Mars, however, was aware that he lacked the kind of prosperous and well-connected family background that allowed some of his peers to network and advance through service on big ships, and in 1936 he volunteered for submarines.[11] After successfully completing submarine training in 1937, Mars served aboard *Grampus*, *H.44*, and *Swordfish* before in 1938 being posted to the Far East. The reports from his commanding officers were positive, he was promoted from sub-lieutenant to lieutenant, and at the outbreak of war against Germany in September 1939 was navigation and gunnery officer aboard *Regulus*.[12]

Wartime

By the spring of 1940 Mars had risen to become First Lieutenant on *Perseus*, which operated in the Mediterranean and Adriatic without much success but under a certain amount of threat during the summer months. After being hospitalised for six weeks due to a bad case of dysentery, Mars was directed to attend a submarine command

[8]A problematic attitude toward heavy drinking in the service would persist well beyond Mars's lifetime: see Arthur Henderson, Victoria Langston, and Neil Greenberg, 'Alcohol Misuse in the Royal Navy', *Occupational Medicine* 59 (2009), pp.25-31.

[9]Mrs. P. C. Mars quoted in *Argus* [Melbourne] 25 June 1943, p.6.

[10]See TNA ADM 156/317 Abstract of Certificates, A. C. G. Mars, trial transcript (insert), p.54.

[11]Mars, *British Submarines*, pp.20-21, Alastair Mars, *Court Martial,* (London: Muller, 1954), p.59. Mars's father, who died in 1937 in Newfoundland, had got into serious financial trouble in 1930, necessitating special provision for the payment of reduced fees at Dartmouth for Mars's final four terms. TNA ADM 156/317 NL3104/52 Mars to Admiralty Secretary, 31 July 1952. On fees see Christopher M. Bell, 'The King's English and the Security of the Empire: Class, Social Mobility and Democratisation in the British Naval Officer Corps, 1918-1929', *Journal of British Studies*, 48 (July 2009), p. 705, p.707.

[12]TNA ADM 156/317 Abstract of Certificates A. C. G. Mars, trial transcript (insert), p.54, Mars, *British Submarines*, pp.248-249.

course due to begin at the start of 1941.[13] Sailing back to England via the Red Sea on the liner *Britannic*, he engaged in a whirlwind romance with nursery governess Irene Ing, marrying her when the ship called at Mombasa.[14]

Mars passed the rigorous 'Perisher' course for potential RN submarine captains, and after time as a staff officer with a training squadron at Rothesay was sent in the spring of 1941 to take over an old boat being used for anti-submarine exercises off Lough Foyle near Londonderry.[15]After what he described as 'months of nail-biting impatience as captain of a training submarine', he was made responsible in November for a new U-class boat then under construction at Barrow-in-Furness.[16]

It was as skipper of *Unbroken*, sent after completion and trails to operate in the Mediterranean in the spring of 1942, that Mars, 'mad keen' to prove himself, would have the opportunity to shine.[17] He did so over the course of the next twelve months, not only crippling the aforementioned cruisers and earning himself the DSO but also landing personnel to undertake a trio of tricky special operations, damaging a couple of merchantmen, and bombarding the enemy coast on several occasions, for which he was awarded his first DSC.[18] As a consequence of official publicity efforts, these exploits first put him in the public eye.[19]

Mars attributed the success of *Unbroken* in part to his individualistic and aggressive style of command. To his superiors this made him either an 'independent' or simply

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[13]Mars, *British Submarines*, pp.80, pp.84-86, see also Imperial War Museum (hereinafter IWM) 1459 Peter Bartlett memoir August 1940 – May 1941 pp.13-15.

[14]Hugh Mackenzie, *The Sword of Damocles*, (Stroud: Sutton, 1995), p.89, Alastair Mars, *H.M.S. Thule Intercepts,* (London: Elek, 1956), pp.41-43.

[15]Mars, *British Submarines*, pp.103-108, pp.113-19; TNA ADM 173/26782-16787 *H.44* logs, June-November 1941.

[16]Alastair Mars, *Unbroken: The Story of a Submarine,* (London: Muller, 1953), p.8. On this submarine type see Derek Walters, *The History of the British U Class Submarine,* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2004).

[17]The phrase 'mad keen' was how Mars later recalled his state of mind on taking command of *Unbroken* (Mars, *Unbroken*, p.8). A sympathetic passenger on one of the boat's first war patrols confirmed that the captain was extremely eager to make his mark: 'his whole demeanour was that of a man who is going to get the V.C. or bust.' Peter Churchill, *Duel of Wits,* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1953), p. 35.

[18]HMS Unbroken (P-42), Allied Warships, https://uboat.net/allies/warships/. Accessed 2 May 2026, Mars, *Unbroken*, p.193, p.221. See Mervyn Wingfield, *Wingfield at War,* (Dunbeath: Whittles, 2012), p.94.

[19]See e.g. *Daily Mail*, 4 September 1943, *Illustrated London News*, 22 August 1942, IWM, 2438, BBC broadcast by Mars, 21 June 1943, Mars, *British Submarines*, p.196.

an 'obstinate' subordinate.[20] To his crewmates, it made him either an inspirational leader or an intolerant tyrant. A number of ratings from *Unbroken* would later volunteer to serve again with Mars.[21] Yet, at the time, one of the petty officers aboard *Unbroken* unsuccessfully tried to jump ship, arguing that his skipper was 'half mad and dangerous.'[22] As for his commissioned subordinates, by his own account Mars got on well with most of them; yet he insisted that the First Lieutenant initially assigned to the crew be replaced after this officer seemed to question Mars' seamanship.[23]

Either way, more-or-less continuous operations as captain of *Unbroken* in 1942-1943 took their toll. 'In his early patrols he suffered some of the worst depth charging experienced in the Central Mediterranean', his flotilla commander, George Simpson, later wrote, 'and was fortunate to survive.'[24] In consequence Mars developed what he described as 'nerves' and 'claustrophobia' when under attack.[25] Unable to sleep for any length of time while at sea, he took to his bed for forty-eight hours both before and sometimes after each patrol.[26] He 'felt pretty shaky' by late 1942, and told Simpson in February 1943 that 'I was good for perhaps four more patrols, but could not guarantee my nerves and strength beyond that.' By April, when he was finally sent home, Mars was in pretty rough shape. 'Apart from the physical strain,' he later reflected, 'my nerves were beginning to fray after a year of submarine warfare in the Med.'[27]

Following several months of well-deserved home leave with wife and baby daughter, Mars was in August 1943 posted to Submarine Headquarters as Assistant Staff Officer Operations. Though still a lieutenant by rank, he found himself being consulted a good deal by Sir Claud Barry, the Rear Admiral, Submarines, on matters ranging from the operational use of manned torpedoes to an abortive plan to smuggle submarines into the Black Sea. While unimpressed by what he regarded as a lack of professional

[20]TNA ADM 156/317 Simpson memo on Mars, 22 May 1952, p.1.
[21]Mars, *H.M.S. Thule*, pp.4-5.
[22]Wingfield, *Wingfield at War*, p.94.
[23]Mars, *Unbroken*, p.50, pp.82-83, see also *Daily Telegraph*, Paul Thirsk obituary, 13 August 1996. Mars, to be sure, was by no means the only RN wartime submarine skipper to behave aggressively toward his officers or men on occasion: see e.g. Paul Chapman, *Submarine Torbay,* (London: Hale, 1989), p.148 and Brian Izzard, *Gamp VC: The Wartime Story of Maverick Submarine Commander Anthony Miers,* (Sparkford: Haynes, 2009), p.85, pp.137-138, and IWM 28417/3 J. H. Harvey-Jones.
[24]TNA ADM 156/317, Simpson memo on Mars, 22 May 1952, p.1.
[25]Mars, *Unbroken*, p.108; see also pp.172-173.
[26]TNA ADM 156/317, Simpson memo on Mars, 22 May 1952, p.1, Mars, *Unbroken*, p.128.
[27]Mars, *Unbroken*, p.208, p.200, p.183, and Mars, *British Submarines*, p.175.

knowledge among senior policymakers, Mars worked himself fairly hard, practically camping out at HQ and taking only one in two weekends off.[28]

In December 1943, Mars took over a T-class submarine then under construction at Devonport. *Thule* was destined for service in the Far East after commissioning, trials, and a long journey to Ceylon the following year.[29] By the spring of 1944 Mars, by now a father of two, who admitted he could be 'irritable' the morning after imbibing too much alcohol ashore - an occasional problem that seems to have dated back to his early days as a submarine captain – had developed a reputation for being a difficult skipper to work with.[30] 'I discovered that my new captain was to be Lt. Cdr. A. C. G. Mars, DSO, DSC,' Matthew Todd later wrote of news he was to join *Thule* as navigation officer, 'and every time his name was mentioned I got the same reaction, "And jolly good luck to you . . . you'll need it."'[31]

Things got off to a bad start when *Thule* nearly sank in the Kilbrannan Sound while testing a new type of air-conditioning equipment.[32] The abortive nature of these trials meant that *Thule*, after arriving to begin operations across the Bay of Bengal starting in November 1944, had to make do with the existing dehumidifier system, which did not cope well with the tropical climate, especially when the boat was submerged. There were several cases of serious heat exhaustion among the crew on the first patrol, one of which proved fatal; something which naturally was not good for anyone's morale.[33]

In subsequent patrols, which ran the gamut from minelaying expeditions to landing agents, the crew of *Thule* faced a variety of other challenges, including depth charging by an enemy submarine chaser, a mutiny of crewmen saved from a sinking junk, and an attack by a Japanese aircraft. Besides his encounter with a Japanese submarine, Mars was able to sink a fair number of local craft engaged in coastal traffic, often through

[28]Mars, *British Submarines*, p.190 Fn.27, pp.187-202; Mars, *Unbroken*, pp.219-220.
[29]Mars, *H.M.S. Thule*, pp.1-46. On this submarine type see Paul Kemp, *The T-class Submarine: The classic British design,* (London: Arms & Armour, 1990).
[30]On being 'irritable' see Mars, *H.M.S. Thule*, p.8 and Matthew Todd, *A Long Time Underwater*, (Privately published, 2014), p.49, p.57, p.58; on this dating from his early days as a submarine captain see TNA ADM 156/317 Simpson memo on Mars, 22 May, 1952, p.1, Volker comments.
[31]Todd, *Long Time*, Second Patrol, (Privately Published).
[32]Mars, *H.M.S. Thule*, p.18, pp.13-17, and TNA ADM 213/1107 Submarine air-purification trial carried out in HM submarine THULE on 4-7 July 1944.
[33]See Mars, *H.M.S. Thule*, pp.54-62, TNA ADM 199/1867, HMS *Thule*, Report of Patrol, 7-23 November 1944.

ramming, and engage in a series of special operations, for which he was awarded a second DSC at the end of the war for his service in the Far East.[34]

Once again, though, there were indications that the skipper's leadership style was not always appreciated by his subordinates. Todd found Mars to be 'difficult and unpleasant'; the torpedo officer, Bertie Basset, considered some of the orders he was given to be 'unnecessary, superfluous, or just a plain pain in the neck'; and Mars himself wondered if his valued First Lieutenant, Sandy Stewart, had engineered a transfer into the Fleet Air Arm in January 1945 'because he wanted to get away from me!'[35] It also did not escape his notice that the ratings closed ranks against him when he tried to discover who was behind one of his routine orders being disobeyed.[36]

By the end of February, Mars was uncertain 'if I could last for the duration, whatever that might be.'[37] He found special operations, the dropping off or picking up of agents or commandos along enemy-held coastlines, both stressful and frustrating, as they were quite hazardous yet offered no opportunity to strike at the enemy. It did not help his mood when in early June one of his contemporaries, Arthur Hezlet, commanding *Trenchant*, torpedoed and sank a Japanese heavy cruiser.[38] Mars later admitted that shortly thereafter, with his boat *en route* to Fremantle, 'I unleashed my fury on the wretched Matthew Todd who had contrived somehow to steer an incorrect course for a couple of hours. It was sheer absentmindedness on his part of course, but as he was the navigator and I was in a temper, he got it in the neck.' His anger was not quick to cool. 'In fact I think I took it out of Bertie too (probably for answering me back) and I certainly had a go at [Charles] Bedale [the engineering officer].'[39]

[34]See Mars, *H.M. S. Thule*, pp.63-219; TNA ADM 199/1867, HMS *Thule* patrol reports, 11 December 1944–4 January 1945, 23 January-24 February 1945, 23 March-19 April 1945, 15 May-23 June 1945, 15-31 July 1945; see also George Woodward in Jean Hood (ed.), *Submarine: An Anthology of First-Hand Accounts of the War under the Sea, 1939-1945,* (London: Conway, 2007), p.27. On Mars being partial to ramming see *Unbroken*, p.53 and *H.M.S. Thule*, p.83.

[35]Mars, *H.M.S. Thule*, pp.105, p.66. Stewart certainly took note of Mars's abrupt command style, referring to him years later as 'the great "I am"'. Ibid., p.62. On Mars as 'difficult and unpleasant' see Todd, *Long Time*, p.35.

[36]Mars, *H.M.S. Thule*, pp.149-151.

[37]Ibid., p.136.

[38]Ibid., p.168; see Todd, *Long Time*, pp.74-75.

[39]Mars, *H.M.S. Thule*, p.170.

Though he had sworn off alcohol while on patrol, there are signs that, once ashore, Mars was drinking pretty heavily as a means of stress relief.[40] By August he was also crossing swords with his flotilla commander, Ben Bryant, who thought Mars was taking too many risks and who had refused to be bullied into Mars using *Thule* for only offensive patrols.[41] To everyone's relief the war suddenly ended that month in the wake of the atomic bombings, and Mars was allowed to go home as a passenger aboard the submarine *Tudor*.[42]

Postwar

By his own account Mars, now a thirty-year-old lieutenant-commander, seriously considered resigning his commission on returning to England in the late summer of 1945. His wife wanted a proper home life and he correctly suspected that he would not enjoy the routine nature of the peacetime navy. Yet he decided to stay on, partly out of a sense of service loyalty and partly through a belief that he would be able to influence future policy. 'I decided to give it a go', he remembered. 'But first I must have a very long rest.'[43]

Mars got less time off than he would have liked because he had been selected to attend a staff course at the Greenwich Naval College beginning in January 1946. The authorities seem to have thought he might have a bright future in the service, since Mars was offered the opportunity 'on a plate' while another talented submariner in the postwar period had his application turned down. But he soon found himself in difficulty.[44] This was because he was no longer entitled to the generous extra pay given to serving submariners and because neither he nor his wife had any private financial means: 'the gap between pay and expenses was too wide for our family needs.'[45] He also may have undermined his future prospects by, as he saw it, abjuring the Admiralty

[40]Ibid., p.145, pp.174-175, p.221.
[41]Ibid., pp.176-177, p.223.
[42]Mars, *Court Martial*, pp.20-21.
[43]Ibid., p.21. Mars assumed that he could easily resign at this stage, something which an even more burnt-out submarine commander, William King, found not to be the case: 'At the end of the war I was thirty-five and looked fifty-five', he later related. 'I was a wreck, physically, morally, socially, financially and in every other way. I wanted to get out of the navy but of course they wouldn't let us go.' King in J. E. S. Parker, *The Silent Service: The Inside Story of the Royal Navy's Submarine Heroes,* (London: Headline, 2001), p.267.
[44]Mars, *Court Martial*, p.62, see also Mackenzie, *Sword of Damocles*, p.165.
[45]Mars, *Court Martial*, p.64. Concerning pay and promotion, Mars overlooked the fact that at his age he was still relatively young and therefore junior compared to many older and equally promising lieutenant-commanders.

patronage network and not understanding shore-based jealousies aroused by his wartime success at sea.[46]

The next appointment, which began in September 1946 and ran to April 1949, was from a career standpoint 'a backwater one' as First Lieutenant on the cruiser *Bellona*, on loan to the Royal New Zealand Navy (RNZN).[47] From a financial perspective, though, it seemed to be advantageous. Mars would be paid in local currency while being exempt from income tax and social security payments, which, given the exchange rate, would boost his income by a quarter and thus allow him to pay for his family to travel by sea to live with him in New Zealand.[48]

Aboard *Bellona,* Mars was observed imbibing to a degree which suggested that, like more than a few other RN officers who had fought through the war, he was suffering from a form of post-traumatic stress disorder.[49] 'It was said on *Bellona* that he used to drink a bottle of gin a day or something in his cabin', recalled the ship's yeoman of signals.[50] He spent a lot of time there, and at one point was observed by a fellow officer tipsy enough to engage in a wardroom swordfight brawl with another ex-submariner. In general, Mars 'set a very bad example'.[51]

Once in New Zealand he had to cope with two unexpected and unwelcome developments associated with a new pay code introduced by the New Zealand government at the start of April 1947. One was a lower-deck mutiny, the reaction to which he had to treat with uncharacteristic delicacy and circumspection in view of being an RN rather than an RNZN officer.[52] The other was a change for the worse in Mars's personal finances. British officers would now have New Zealand income tax and social security contributions imposed on them, which in his case meant a loss of

[46]Ibid., pp.80-81.
[47]Ibid., p.81.
[48]TNA ADM 156/317, Simpson memo on Mars, 22 May 1952, p.2.
[49]On postwar stress-related alcoholism among veteran RN officers see e.g. Peter Herbert in Peter Hennessy and James Jinks, *The Silent Deep: The Royal Navy Submarine Service since 1945,* (London: Allen Lane, 2015), p. 65, and Sandy Woodward with Patrick Robinson, *One Hundred Days: The Memoirs of the Falklands Battle Group Commander,* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1992), p.34.
[50]W. A. Weldale interview, Royal New Zealand Navy Communicators Association (RNZNCA), https://rnzncomms.org/wheldale/ Accessed 2 May 2026.
[51]E. C. Thorne interview, RNZNCA, https://rnzncomms.org/thorne/ Accessed 2 May 2026.
[52]See Mars, *Court Martial*, pp.91-104. On the mutiny see Tom Frame and Kevin Baker *Mutiny! Naval insurrections in Australia and New Zealand,* (St. Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2000), pp.89-206.

about £300 per year. The following August the New Zealand government announced that it was putting its currency on a one-for-one par with Sterling, which wiped out the 25 per cent pay advantage RN officers had enjoyed while on loan to the RNZN.[53]

When his family had first arrived in Auckland after a difficult voyage the only accommodation Mars had been able to afford for them, at what he regarded as an exorbitant rent, amounted to a workman's cottage.[54] His wife and children avoided living there whenever possible. A more senior officer heard through the grapevine that 'on occasion they left their sub-standard accommodation on an invitation to stay a week and would impose themselves upon their hosts indefinitely, in one case for six weeks'.[55] What were effectively pay cuts made the situation worse, with the cottage left in a state of decay. 'I was involved in arranging for him and his wife to rent a house down in front of Milford,' an RNZN officer serving aboard *Bellona* recalled. 'Some months later the owner of the place would hardly speak to me because of the state they had left it.'[56] In the latter part of 1948 Mars, feeling double crossed and becoming 'surly and difficult' as his family suffered various ailments related to winter damp and cold, felt he had no option but to send his family off to stay with some of his wife's relations in Western Australia.[57]

In his own words 'extremely hard up' Mars made a bad situation worse by volunteering to stay in the Far East in 1949, accepting an appointment on the intelligence staff in Hong Kong without checking on the current availability there of married accommodation.[58] It turned out that there was none available, but by this time his family had left Australia for Singapore, and after his spouse borrowed enough money to get to Hong Kong he put his wife and children up in a hotel room at the rate of £150 a month.[59] After six weeks living in this location Mars was hospitalised for what he was told was 'a mild anxiety state' but was described by Admiral Sir Patrick Brind, overall RN commander in the Far East, as 'a nervous breakdown, to which war strain

[53]TNA ADM 156/317 Simpson memo on Mars 22 May 1952, p.2. The Admiralty protested that these were not the terms on which RN officers had agreed to serve with the RNZN, but it took years for recompense to be made. See TNA ADM 156/317 CW8636/1951and CW9638/1950.
[54]Mars, *Court Martial*, p.108, Irene Mars in *Reynolds News*, 6 July 1952.
[55]TNA ADM 156/317 Simpson memo on Mars, 22 May 1952, p.2.
[56]E. C. Thorne interview (RNZNCA).
[57]TNA ADM 156/317 Simpson memo on Mars, 22 May 1952, p.3, and Mars, *Court Martial*, pp.108-109.
[58]Mars, *Court Martial*, p.109.
[59]Ibid., pp.109-111, TNA ADM 156/317 Simpson memo on Mars, 22 May 1952, p.3.

and current financial difficulties may well have contributed.'[60] While still in hospital, Mars wrote a letter to the Admiralty on 13 October 1949 announcing: 'It is my inflexible resolve to quit His Majesty's Service.'[61]

Sent back to England in November with his family, and arriving, as the liaison officer meeting him in Liverpool put it, 'in a bad way', Mars was admitted to the naval hospital at Chatham in December.[62] Meanwhile the Admiralty anticipated that, once recovered, Mars would reconsider his resignation letter, and did nothing about it.[63] Mars himself thought 'my naval career was finished' and decided 'there would be no harm in trying politics.'[64] With a general election only a matter of weeks away, at the beginning of February 1950 and as he was being discharged from hospital Mars contacted the Liberal Party and was quickly adopted as their candidate for Windsor. He had to obtain permission from the Admiralty to stand, however, and in return was persuaded to withdraw his resignation letter.[65]

If he had been elected, Mars would have had to resign his commission in order to take up his seat; but he came in a distant third when the votes were counted in what was a safe Tory constituency, which in turn raised the question of a new service posting.[66] Mars pressed for an extended period of paid leave in order to try and get his affairs in order, but instead in March 1950 was sent to serve aboard *Duncansby Head*, a reserve fleet maintenance and repair vessel moored off Sheerness, which he took command of in July.[67] Mars was 'aghast' at this apparent effort to put him in his place, and subsequently found neither job satisfaction nor much return on his efforts to get the Admiralty to help recoup what he had lost while seconded to New Zealand or to obtain an early transfer in 1951.[68]

[60]TNA ADM 156/317 CW17868/49, Bishop to Lang, 7 November 1949, Mars, *Court Martial*, pp.120-122.
[61]TNA ADM 156/317 CW17868/49 Mars to Evans, 13 October 1949.
[62]Ibid., B. I. Ballinshaw minute, 30 December 1949, see also J. R. Richardson minute, 17 December 1949.
[63]Ibid., jacket minutes 30 December 1949 to 16 January 1950.
[64]Mars, *Court Martial*, p.126.
[65]Ibid., pp.126-127, TNA ADM 156/317 CW1879/49 Mars to Admiralty 6 February 1950, and CW1813/50.
[66]Ibid., CW17868/49 B. I. Ballinshaw minute, 15 February 1950.
[67]Mars, *Court Martial*, pp.129-130, see also TNA ADM 156/317 CW3844/1950.
[68]Mars, *Court Martial*, pp.130-138, see TNA ADM 157/317 CW9638/1950. Mars had also ascertained that he would not be eligible for a full retirement grant and pay until 1954. See also TNA ADM 156/317 PM4263/1951.

Crisis

In early 1952, matters reached a breaking point. Despite the appearance of some monetary recompense for what had happened in New Zealand, 'I found myself running seriously into debt', Mars related a couple of years later, while his wife continued to suffer from 'nervous strain' likely caused by 'lack of money and two children to look after in unsettled conditions.'[69] As the date for his next appointment loomed, Mars lobbied hard both in person and by letter over where he would be posted next. Various possibilities, suggestions, counter-suggestions, and provisional options were floated, with Mars objecting to everything but a possible Whitehall appointment, and settling his family in the capital on the assumption that this would occur, while an irritated official reminded him that the Admiralty was 'not a housing agency'.[70]

In the fourth week of April 1952, having already turned over command of *Duncansby Head*, Mars was at his rented house in Stafford Place, Westminster when he received notice he was to report for a course in Portsmouth at the end of the month. Mars had already decided to decline any unsuitable appointment and simultaneously apply to retire from the Royal Navy, which he did by letter on 21 April.[71] 'Lieutenant Commander Mars is to be informed that he has a liability for service which he cannot evade simply merely because he has apparently acquired a distaste for it', the Second Sea Lord decreed.[72] Mars was again told to report for duty at Portsmouth and also informed that his application to retire had been refused. He in turn again declined the appointment and again indicated he wished to retire, this time spelling out in detail his dire financial situation.[73]

'I was firmly of the opinion that an appointment of the type I had been given was not a direct order but something that had to be accepted by me', Mars subsequently wrote, claiming that if he had been given a personal directive from a senior naval officer rather than receiving letters from Admiralty civil servants, he would have obeyed.[74] As the course and outcome of his court martial would indicate, this was a highly dubious

[69]Mars, *Court Martial*, p.152, see also TNA ADM 156/317 NL3104/1952 Mars to Admiralty Secretary, 31 July 1952.
[70]TNA ADM 156/317 CW5835/1952 24WW/PERS, copy of letter to Mars, 25 March 1952, Mars, *Court Martial*, pp.151-154.
[71]TNA ADM 156/317 CW5835/1952, Exhibit No. 1, appointment notification, Mars resignation letter 21 April 1952, and Mars refusal of appointment letter, 22 April 1952; see Mars, *Court Martial*, p.154.
[72]TNA ADM 156/317 CW5835/1952, Alexander Madden minute, 25 April 1952.
[73]Ibid., Exhibit No. 6, Mars to Admiralty Secretary, 27 April 1952 & Exhibit No. 7 C. G. H. Cardo to A. C. G. Mars, 26 April 1952 Exhibit No. 6, Baldock to Mars, 26 April 1952, and Exhibit No. 5, Mars to Admiralty Secretary, 25 April 1952.
[74]Mars, *Court Martial*, pp.154-155.

line of reasoning, and it seems possible that Mars expected the Admiralty to negotiate a settlement rather than risk the publicity of putting him on trial for what would amount to absence without leave. 'I told her', Mars revealingly recalled of a conversation with his wife in early May, 'that perhaps they would retire me after all.'[75] It is also possible that at some level Mars actually wanted an all-out confrontation.[76]

Court Martial

If a public trial was what Mars really yearned for, there were those in the Admiralty more than willing to accommodate him. The Naval Assistant to the Second Sea Lord was Captain St. John R. J. Tyrwhitt, son of an admiral and a baronet with no empathy at all for the financial predicament Mars, in his view through a complete absence of self-control, had gotten himself into. Tyrwhitt argued strongly for a trial. The Deputy Chief of Naval Personnel, Rear Admiral D. M. Lees, concurred, but noted that 'in view of the fact that there will probably be considerable publicity I think the First Lord should have the final word.'[77] As minister responsible for the navy, James Thomas eventually agreed that a court martial should take place if Mars refused to back down.[78]

In mid-May 1952 the Admiralty gave Mars a written formal warning that he was liable to be arrested if he did not report at once to Portsmouth for an investigation into his previous failure to turn up for his course. Mars immediately replied that he would not do so, explaining that his wife was too ill from nerves to be left alone and stressing that, if arrested and taken for court-martial, he would be 'willing and able to defend myself with vigour'.[79]

In a final effort to head off this outcome, the Admiralty sent John Stevens, an old submariner colleague, to try and reason with the recalcitrant lieutenant commander on the afternoon of 20 May 1952, but to no avail: 'If they want me, they must come and get me'.[80] Mars was then arrested by the naval provost-marshal on a charge of

[75]Ibid., p.157.

[76]"I feel that the present state of mind of this officer is obstinate and embittered', opined George Simpson, now a rear admiral and flag officer submarines, 'with determination to receive the opportunity to justify himself at a Court Martial for the satisfaction of his own ego.' TNA ADM 156/317 Simpson memo on Mars, 22 May 1952, p.4.

[77]Ibid., NL1752/52 D. M. Lees minute, 2 May 1952; and St. J. R. J. Tyrwhitt minute, 29 April 1952.

[78]Ibid., J. P. L. Thomas minutes response, 12 May 1952.

[79]Ibid., Exhibit No. 11 Mars to Admiralty Secretary, 15 May 1950; and Exhibit No. 10, Brookling to Mars, 14 May 1952; see Mars, *Court Martial*, p.157.

[80]John S. Stevens, *Never Volunteer: A Submariner's Scrapbook,* (Privately published, 1971), p.77.

absence without leave and, after being allowed to pack and phone his solicitor, was taken by car to Portsmouth that evening.[81] His wife, having been warned by her husband that the navy might try and hush things up, decided to let the press know what had happened.[82]

Meanwhile, down in Portsmouth, the authorities seemed keen to avoid a court martial if they could do so on medical grounds. Mars was diagnosed as suffering from 'chronic anxiety' by a naval psychiatrist and then sent for further examination in the psychiatric wing of a nearby military hospital. Once there he took great exception to how he was being treated, but with indirect help from his wife and a journalist friend was quickly released and sent on leave. All this took place over a matter of a couple of days, but left a shaken Mars convinced that the Admiralty had tried to certify him insane.[83]

As it happened the Royal Army Medical Corps physician concerned with his case at the military hospital had concluded of Mars that while 'the inflated ego, the tendency to be litigious, the deep distrust of the Admiralty, the determination to get even with authority' and other aspects made for a troubled and difficult personality, 'I feel that he is quite legally responsible for his actions.'[84] In early June 1952, Mars was formally charged with wilfully disobeying the earlier summonses to report for duty and with being absent without leave, with a court martial scheduled to begin later that month. The prosecuting officer got in touch informally with Reginald Paget, the high-profile civilian barrister Mars had engaged, suggesting that the accused plead guilty; but the accused, utterly convinced he was in the right, thought this an outrageous idea.[85]

His case, however, was very weak, as became clear over the course of the court martial that took place in the historic setting of the after-deck of HMS *Victory* on 24 June 1952 with press representatives present. Paget could prove that the communications Mars had received and had baulked at came from a secretary on instructions from the naval assistant to the Second Sea Lord rather than the Second Sea Lord himself; but this was in reality immaterial as it was normal practice, and as the prosecuting officer was easily able to show in cross-examination, Mars himself had raised no issues of lawful command concerning his previous notifications of appointment. He was found guilty and, after Paget had by way of a plea for mitigation

[81]See Mars, *Court Martial*, pp.12-14.
[82]See Mars, *Court Martial*, pp.14-15; Goldsworthy, *Want You*, pp.130-131, see also e.g. *Daily Express*, 21 May 1952 and *Daily Mail*, 21 May 1952.
[83]Mars, *Court Martial*, pp.159-190.
[84]ADM 156/317 NL5128/52, encl. 6 J. F. D. Murphy report on A. C. G. Mars, 29 May 1952, p.3.
[85]Mars, *Court Martial*, pp.194-197.

on his client's instructions laid out his service record and the various tribulations he and his family had undergone since the war, was dismissed from the service.[86]

Aftermath

Mars petitioned to have his conviction overturned, which it was not, and then launched an appeal, in which the original verdict was upheld.[87] Two years later he was able to win compensation for having been improperly confined at the military hospital, but a petition for a royal pardon three years after that was refused.[88] Later efforts to have his naval pension restored proved equally fruitless.[89]

Despite the success of his war memoirs and a number of attempts at writing naval fiction, Mars proved unable to live by his pen as a nautical novelist in the manner of other ex-RN wartime submariners such as Alexander Fullerton and John Wingate.[90] An attempt to stand again for parliament went nowhere while money shortages remained a problem, with Mars taking odd jobs as a car or van driver and serving as second mate aboard ocean weather ships.[91] After his first marriage collapsed Mars married again in 1967, and while able to write and see through to publication in 1971 an idiosyncratic study of the British submarines in the Second World War, the writing of another naval history was derailed when he was thrown out of Malta for making his disapproval of the island's foreign policy too obvious.[92] In his mid-sixties Mars struck

[86]Ibid., pp.198-208; ADM 156/317, NL2612/1952, Minutes of the Court Martial of Lieutenant Commander Alastair Campbell Gillespie Mars.

[87]See TNA ADM 156/317, NL3450/1952, NL3929/1952; Mars, *Court Martial*, pp.214-222.

[88]On the royal pardon campaign see TNA ADM 156/317, NL777/1957. On the settlement see ibid., NL5128/1952-1953, NL1139/1954; *Daily Mail*, 17 April 1954.

[89]*Daily Telegraph*, 19 September 1969; TNA ADM 156/317 NL1022/65, letter to Mars, 1 June 1965.

[90]See e.g. Alexander Fullerton, Penguin Random House, https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/authors/2013094/alexander-fullerton/ Accessed 2 May 2026, John Wingate, Sapere Books, https://saperebooks.com/authors/john-wingate Accessed 2 May 2026. *Tycoon*, a 1958 novel based on Mars's experiences as skipper of a Greek shipping magnate's yacht in 1955, was withdrawn before publication due to libel threats. Goldsworthy, *Want You*, pp.133-4.

[91]See Ocean Weather Ships, https://www.weatherships.com/crew-lists/crew-officers Accessed 2 May 2026.
On odd jobs and lack of money see *Daily Mirror*, 23 August 1965. On earlier debt problems see *Daily Mail*, 26 September 1957. On trying to stand again for parliament see *Daily Mirror*, 4 December 1953.

[92]See *Daily Telegraph*, 14-15 March 1972.

a Canadian acquaintance as 'a bit of both Crocodile Dundee and Indiana Jones; he loved audiences, storytelling, and being the centre of attention – the definitive dinner guest.'[93] Heavy drinking, however, was catching up with him: when Alastair Mars passed away aged 70 at Ipswich on 12 March 1985, a listed cause of death was cirrhosis of the liver brought on by alcoholism.[94] At the request of his widow his ashes were the following month scattered at sea from the deck of a surfaced nuclear submarine, HMS *Valiant*.[95]

Analysis

Back in 1952 the Prime Minister had not been at all satisfied with the Admiralty reply to his query about the reasons for dismissing Mars. Churchill dictated in a private note to the First Lord

> I should have thought myself that an officer who has rendered this exceptional service and undergone so many ordeals should have been entitled by the Board as an act of grace to retire from the Service if he felt he had given all he had to give.

'Personally,' Churchill added, 'I rate the tenacity, endurance, and devotion of a famous submarine commander so high that I would have granted his request if, after a personal interview, he persisted.[96]

What had happened to the former lieutenant commander, though, needs to be understood in context. It was the result of a variety of factors, most arising from the war years and later but one or two dating back to Mars' adolescence.

Alastair Mars had demonstrated a desire to do things his own way as early as his time at preparatory school when he decided on his own initiative to run away and make a cross-channel trip to visit his parents who were at that stage residing in France.[97] At Dartmouth this had been combined with aggression insofar as his main sporting

[93]Donald Lang, 'Aquinas's notion of good in the context of educational leadership', in Eugenie A. Samier with Kristina Mihailova (eds), *Ethical Foundations for Educational Administration: Essays in Honour of Christopher Hodgkinson*, (London: Routledge Falmer, 2002), p.95 Fn.5.
[94]Copy of Ipswich death certificate, Alastair Campbell Gillespie Mars, 12 March 1985.
[95]*Daily Telegraph*, 22 April 1985, Woodman and Conley, *Cold War Command*, pp.191-192.
[96]TNA PREM 11/272 Churchill to Thomas, 6 July 1952, and note to Prime Minister, 27 July 1952.
[97]TNA ADM 156/317 Simpson memo on Mars, 22 May 1952, p.2.

distinction as a cadet was as a boxer.[98] For someone without family means, the prospect of better pay played into Mars' decision in the mid-1930s to join the submarine service, as did the prospect of early advancement and command.[99]

During the Second World War his abrasive style and confrontational personality were such that, while acting in a sometimes rather tyrannical fashion toward his subordinates, Mars had on occasion locked horns with his superiors to the point of near insubordination, and had even once or twice deliberately disobeyed instructions he had been given.[100] Either in spite of this, or, as he assumed, in consequence, Mars had scored well enough against the enemy to earn the DSO and a pair of DSCs.[101] In between his two fighting commands, moreover, he had been allowed a degree of input into major decisions concerning the deployment of operational submarines that was unusual for a junior staff officer.[102] None of this, unfortunately, was good preparation for a much less independent series of postings at sea and ashore in the postwar Royal Navy.

In certain respects Mars had had a very good war. Nonetheless he had shown signs of mental as well as physical exhaustion as time went on, and emerged from the conflict, as he put it, 'worn out.'[103] There are indications that the naval authorities had anticipated and made allowances for this sort of thing, as there were plenty of other RN officers suffering the effects of prolonged stress.[104] 'I believe the Admiralty had given instructions that the officers concerned were all suffering, in some degree,' Mars recalled of his postwar staff course, 'from long and most strenuous war service and were not to be overworked.'[105] There seems nonetheless to have been a reluctance to treat this as a medical issue for the service to actively address, which meant that,

[98]Mars, *British Submarines*, p.248.
[99]Ibid., p.21.
[100]On arguing with superiors see Mars, *Unbroken*, pp. 82-83, *H.M.S. Thule*, p.177, on disobeying orders see Mars, *Unbroken*, pp.110-111, and on bullying his own subordinates see p.39. Aggression, of course, could produce results, Mars being by no means being the only example of a problematic character who nonetheless won laurels for sinking enemy vessels (see, e.g. Izzard, *Gamp*), but it is important to note that a quieter approach to submarine command could also generate success, e.g. John Linton and David Wanklyn p.71, p.203).
[101]Mars had no false modesty about decorations: see Mars *Unbroken*, p.156.
[102]See Mars, *British Submarines*, p. 190, pp. 93-194, *Court Martial*, p.47.
[103]Mars, *Court Martial*, p.61.
[104]See e.g. Woodward and Robinson, *One Hundred Days*, p.34.
[105]Mars, *Court Martial*, p.66.

for example, a blind eye was often turned toward signs of alcoholism.[106] In addition there is evidence to suggest that naval psychiatry was not taken very seriously by veteran submarine officers; and when a medical assessment was ordered prior to his court martial, Mars fiercely contested any implication that he had not been coping well psychologically.[107]

His whirlwind marriage proved a mental boon for Mars during the war years.[108] Afterward, though, his wife became a source of anxiety as well, both in terms of the

[106]On alcoholism among war-veteran RN officers in the postwar years see e.g. Peter Herbert comment in Hennessy and Jinks, *Silent Deep*, pp.65-66. On the higher-than-average death rate from alcohol abuse among ex-submariners decades later see Hazel Inskip, Michael Snee, and Lesie Styles, 'The mortality of Royal Navy submariners, 1960-89', *Occupational and Environmental Medicine* 54 (1997), pp. 209-215. The miniscule number of alcoholism cases officially registered during the war - F. P. Ellis, 'The Royal Navy Medical Services: Medical Statistics', in W. Franklin Mellor (ed.), *Casualties and Medical Statistics*, (London: HMSO, 1972), Tables 4-10, pp.21-51 - appears symptomatic of a desire to avoid confronting the scale of the problem. On acceptance of alcohol as a relaxant among RN officers in general and submariners in particular see Hugh Philip, *Two Rings and a Red: A Naval Surgeon's Log,* (London: International, 1944), pp.16-17, p.40. Meanwhile official assessments of psychological health among wartime RN personnel appear to have been overly optimistic at times - see Edgar Jones and Neil Greenberg, 'Royal Navy Psychiatry: Organization, Methods and Outcomes, 1900-1945', *Mariner's Mirror* 92, 2 (2006), pp.193-195 - and while trained psychiatrists treated at least some submariners during the war - see James F. McHarg, 'The Mental Health of Submariners, with Special Reference to 71 Cases Examined Psychiatrically', *Journal of Mental Health* 92 (1946), pp.343-356 - and the RN medical services did undertake a postwar study of combat stress among U-boat crews - see Jones and Greenberg, 'Royal Navy Psychiatry', p.198 - it is notable that no such study was undertaken of wartime RN submariners; perhaps in part because no figures seem to have been kept on combat stress related breakdowns among them during the war: see Psychiatric 'Casualties' Afloat table in D. Curran, 'Operational Strain: Psychological Casualties in the Royal Navy', in Royal Society of Medicine, *Inter-Allied Conferences on War Medicine,1942-1945,* (London: Staples, 1947), p.235. It cannot have helped that as consultant in psychological medicine to the wartime Royal Navy as a surgeon captain, Desmond Curran had grave doubts about combat stress as a diagnosis; in part because he thought it potentially offered an easy way out for de facto cowards as in p.233.
[107]See Mars, *Court Martial*, p. 175. On submarine officers not taking naval psychiatrists seriously see e.g. Alexander Fullerton, *Surface!,* (London: Peter Davies, 1953), p.117.
[108]See Mars, *Unbroken*, pp.78-79, Mars, *H.M.S. Thule*, p.135.

family finances and related worries about her health.[109] At the same time, Irene 'Ting' Mars hero-worshipped her husband and backed him up without reservation in his increasingly confrontational dealings with the Admiralty.[110]

The postwar financial problems Mars experienced were in part simply the result of bad luck, New Zealand policy reversals for example, and personal circumstance, such as Mars' lack of private means; but they were also the consequence of a tendency to leap before looking, as was volunteering for Hong Kong, as well an inability to economise by spending according to his means. It is notable that Mars himself could only make a detailed case to the Admiralty concerning direct and indirect expenditures related to his service at home and abroad which covered only a half of his accumulated debts.[111]

As for the Admiralty court-martialling Mars rather than acceding to his retirement request, there was more to this than was superficially apparent. The *prima facie* case for not going along with him was that allowing Mars to leave prematurely would be grossly unfair to the many less famous regular officers who also wanted out for various reasons but were being kept in because of Cold War needs.[112] Beyond that, though, Mars almost guaranteed a negative response by insisting on a specific gratuity amount on departure and by making his written case for a positive decision from the Admiralty in what was by this point a typically aggrieved and aggressive manner.[113] It is noteworthy that, in reference to *Court Martial*, his own exculpatory account of the affair published a few years later, a number of reviewers remained unconvinced, being struck as much by what the book revealed about the egocentric nature and confrontational temperament of the author as by the case he was making.[114]

[109]On worries concerning his wife's health see TNA ADM 156/317 Exhibit No. 11, Mars to Admiralty Secretary, 15 May 1952.
[110]See Mars, *Court Martial*, pp. 12-13, TNA ADM 156/317 Simpson memo on Mars, 22 May 1952, p.4.
[111]See TNA ADM 156/317 Exhibit No. 8, Mars to Admiralty Secretary, enclosure, 27 April 1952. Mars was not by any means the only married officer to find the Admiralty rather unhelpful in securing timely passage and suitable accommodation overseas for wives and children: see Chris Howard Baily (ed.), *Social Change in the Royal Navy, 1934-1970: The Life and Times of Admiral Sir Frank Twiss,* (Stroud: Sutton, 1996), p.128.
[112]See TNA PREM 11/272 First Lord to Prime Minister, 14 July 1952.
[113]See TNA ADM 156/317 Exhibits Nos. 2 and 8, Mars to Admiralty Secretary, 22 and 27 April 1952; see also ibid., CW5835/52 file minutes.
[114]*Argus* [Melbourne], 22 May 1954, *Northern Miner* [Queensland], 23 September 1954, see also *Irish Times*, 12 June 1954.

Mars, in short, fell victim to aspects of his own personality, aggravated by specific situations, and the lingering psychological effects of his war service, rather than to an inflexibly vindictive Establishment. His decline and fall nonetheless highlights the extent to which the Royal Navy in the mid-twentieth century tended to underestimate the need for preventative psychiatric evaluation and care while exhibiting a high tolerance for drinking as a de facto coping mechanism, not least among submariners. Commanding a submarine was a stressful business even without the threat of enemy action; and it is worth remembering that Mars was by no means the first or last RN submarine officer whose career was affected adversely by misuse of alcohol and its effects on health and mental fitness.[115]

[115]On the comparatively high rate of alcoholism among boat skippers based outside the UK in the interwar decades see Matthew Heaslip, 'The Personal and Operational Consequences of Global Forward Basing and Officer Rotation in the Interwar Royal Navy', *International History Review* 44 (2022), p.1238. On a postwar RN diesel boat skipper's career - that of Michael Touhy - apparently curtailed by alcohol consumption and insubordinate behaviour, see Eric Thompson, *On Her Majesty's Nuclear Service,* (Oxford: Casemate, 2028), p.62, p.71.

The Evolution of British Army Adventurous Training: 1960-2008

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ABSTRACT
From the early 1960s Adventurous Training (AT) was seen as good training for active service and was encouraged in the British Army. However, it took place on an ad hoc basis until the mid1960s after which it became a part of formal training. In 1973 it was decided that AT should be delivered on a joint service basis with each service delivering the AT relevant to that service. In 2002 Army AT was centralised under the Adventurous Training Group (Army). This article examines the evolution of British Army AT and AT Policy in the period 1960 to 2008.

Introduction

Although the Army has always encouraged soldiers to undertake adventurous activities, it was not until the early 1960s that the Army mandated Adventurous Training (AT) as a component part of Army general training. From 1973 all AT moved onto a Joint Services basis when the first Joint Services Adventurous Training Scheme (JSAT 1973) was introduced.[1] Later, in 1992, the Army recognised that,

> (w)hen properly conducted, adventurous training complements both individual and collective training by providing the physical hardening and mental robustness that is so vital in war, but so difficult to inculcate in peace …' [and went on to say] … 'the importance of which in preparing soldiers "to stand up to the shocks and strains of war" was acknowledged by the Principal Policy Officers (PPOs) as long ago as 1969.[2]

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DOI: 10.25602/GOLD.bjmh.v12i3.2003

[1]UK Ministry of Defence (hereinafter MOD) JSP 419, e.g. *Joint Services Adventurous Training (JSAT) Scheme*, Aug 2008, JSAT Charter and Administrative Details, paragraph 3.

[2]HQDT/17/26/1 Trg 3(072), A Review of Adventurous Training, circulated under letter from Major General S.C. Grant (DGAT) dated 21 February 1992. The PPOs

The aim of this article is to record the historical background to and evolution of Army AT and how by 2008 policy had slowly brought it under the central control and direction of the Adventurous Training Group (Army) with the Army Physical Training Corps (APTC) adopting the instructional specialisation.[3] It was not a smooth journey, and from inception there were arguments as to what was AT and what was sport, and what service should provide it etc

Research Difficulties

In researching the evolution of Army AT and AT policy, the author found that the early documentation had not been retained on a logical basis by the UK Ministry of Defence (MOD). Sometime before 1990 the MOD files were sifted and weeded after which the more important files were transferred to The UK National Archives (TNA).[4] The basis for this sifting and weeding is unclear with some TNA AT Folders containing an incomplete series of papers. For example, some AT files with TNA are not the complete series of files, so there are many gaps. Further some Minutes of Meetings have been retained, but the papers for the meetings have been weeded, making it difficult to determine what was agreed or discussed. In the text & footnotes, where no source is referenced for a document, it was recovered from the MOD Historical Documents Section under a Freedom of Information request. Neither has the MOD retained early copies of Army Council Instructions (ACI) and Defence Council Instructions (DCI) relating to AT, and to which references can be found in Hansard, AT Expedition Reports and other sources. Similarly, the first (1973) copies of the Joint Services Publication (JSP) 419, Adventurous Training in the UK Armed Forces and, for the Army, the Adjutant General's Administrative Instruction (AGAI), Chapter 11, Adventurous Training were not retained. An FOI request on the MOD produced copies of JSP 419 from 2016, but the earliest JSP 419 that the author has been able to source is from 2008.[5] Similarly, the earliest AGAI, Chapter 11 dates from 1980.[6] In the author's view, and from experience in dealing with AT these later documents are not too dissimilar from the editions first issued around 1973.

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were the Second Sea Lord (RN), the Adjutant General (Army) and the Air Member for Personnel (RAF).

[3]https://www.army.mod.uk/learn-and-explore/about-the-army/corps-regiments-and-units/army-adventurous-training-group/ (accessed 6.6.2025).

[4]MOD Information Management Report: 2020. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/transfer-of-mod-records-to-the-national-archives-reports-2020/mod-information-management-report-2020. Accessed 6 June 2025.

[5]MOD JSP 419, August 2008 (amended Jul 09).

[6]MOD AGAI (1980), Chapter 11, Issue 26.

Similarly, a TNA file on the Joint Services Expeditions Trust (JSET) Committee exists for the period 1967 to 1972, but does not hold files from before or after those dates.[7] The earliest file records the 1962 formation of the Committee which continues to the present day. Consultation with a present MOD staff officer showed he was unaware of, and did not hold, any papers relating to JSET expeditions prior to 1975. Most of the documentation provided by the MOD dates from after 2000, with any surviving, but weeded, documentation before that date held at TNA.

Where documentation is not available, gaps have been filled from the author's own memory and experiences, and that of contemporaries consulted in writing this article.[8]

Another challenge has been describing AT evolution over an albeit limited period of some forty plus years without placing AT in, or considering AT within the wider context of change in the British Army in the same period. The constraints of a journal article limit what can be covered here.

The British Army & Historical Exploration

The Army has a long history of taking part in exploratory and mountaineering expeditions. A notable early example was the 'Great Game' which saw young army officers exploring and carrying out intelligence gathering operations in Central Asia at a time when the Russian Empire was expanding there and was seen to threaten British India. To enter Central Asia the officers had to pass through the mountains of the Hindu Kush and the Karakorams, often on secretive routes.[9]

Soldiers were also engaged in exploring Greenland in the 1930s with the British Arctic Air Route Expedition of 1930-1931, and Lieutenant Martin Lindsay's crossing of the Greenland Icecap in 1934.[10] In 1935 Lieutenant John Hunt, later Brigadier Lord Hunt, who led the 1953 Everest Expedition, led a joint services expedition to the Himalayan Peak K36, now Saltoro Kangri.[11] Commander C. J. W Simpson RN led the British

[7]TNA DEFE 68/60, Joint Services Expeditions Trust Committee: minutes and briefs.
[8]Principally Lieutenant Colonel J W Fleming, Parachute Regiment; Major M T King, RAOC, and Colonel M G le G Bridges, RE.
[9]Peter Hopkirk, *The Great Game: On Secret Service In High Asia*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).
[10]Lieutenant Colonel Sir Martin Lindsay of Dowhill Bt., Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Online Edition. https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/31363. Accessed 6 June 2025; Martin Lindsay, *Sledge, The British Trans-Greenland Expedition 1934*, (London: Cassells, 1935).
[11]Alpine Journal November 1935, No 251, 272. https://www.alpinejournal.org.uk/Contents/Contents_1935.html. Accessed 6 June 2025.

North East Greenland Expedition of 1951, which consisted of civilian scientists and service personnel, including four from the Army. In 1955 the British Kanchenjunga Expedition and the Royal Air Force Mountaineering Association Kulti Himal Expedition were the first expeditions to be allocated service manning and dedicated resources.[12]

The Post-War Emergence of the Character Training Industry

Army AT received an impetus from the evolution of the post-Second World War 'character-training industry'.[13] The idea of British youth going overseas in search of adventure dates back to 1932, when Surgeon Commander Murray Levick formed the Public Schools Exploring Society. It was renamed British Exploring Society in 2012.[14] Post-war examples of civilian AT can be found in Kurt Hahn's Outward Bound Trust which has its roots in 1941, The Sail Training Association founded in 1956, and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme of 1956.

It was against this civilian AT background, and its expansion, that the Army began to promote and develop its own AT. In late 1956 the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Field Marshal Sir Gerald Templer ordered the creation of an Army Outward Bound School and appointed Lieutenant Colonel Jack Churchill as its first Commandant.[15] The school opened on 11 March 1957 at the Army's Trawsfynydd Training Area in North Wales where AT activities included hill-walking, navigation, camping, rock climbing, canoeing, caving and survival skills.[16] The Army Outward Bound Centre, later called the British Outward Bound Centre, at Isejaer, near Kristiansand in Norway was established in 1958 as a part of the British Army of the Rhine (BAOR) to provide 'physically and mentally demanding activities in difficult climatic and geographical terrain'; a further camp was established at Gautestad in 1966.[17] Both camps closed in

[12]Bronco Lane, Military Mountaineering, A History of Services Mountaineering, 1945-2000, (Kirby Stephen: Hayloft Publishing, 2000). (Lane, Military Mountaineering)

[13]Kenneth Roberts & Graham White, The character-training industry: Adventure-training schemes in Britain, (London: David & Charles, 1974).

[14]T. Stott, P. Allison, J. Felter & S. Beames, 'Personal development on youth expeditions: A literature review and thematic analysis' *Leisure Studies*, Vol. 34 No. 2, 2015, p.2.

[15]M. Bibby, *Fighting Jack Churchill*, Historic UK. https://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofBritain/Fighting-Jack_Churchill/. Accessed 6 June 2025.

[16]Lane, Military Mountaineering pp.43-44; MOD, The Joint Services Training Centre (Wales), (Until 31 December 1972 known as The Army Outward Bound School), A Short History, Precis No. 102, Revised FEB 85 obtained from Lieutenant Colonel John Muston, RAOC who was, at one time, Commandant of the School.

[17]Military Historical collection – Gausdal – Army Outward Bound Camp Isejaer - http://www.spycom.org/11_KALD_KRIG/AOBCI/index.htm. Accessed 6 June 2025.

1992. The BAOR's Kiel sailing center had also been running since shortly after the Second World War.[18] However, the Joint Secretary of the Defence Training Committee noted in 1977 that, 'it was discovered that the Army had an establishment at Kiel tasked with diver training and "adventurous" training' and a request was made to bring the Kiel Centre 'within the umbrella of the JSAT Scheme'.[19] Providing an example of ongoing AT activities being brought under centralised MOD control.

Under the auspices of the Army Sports Control Board (ASCB) formed in 1918, a number of other organisations connected with adventurous activities had been formed, including the Army Sailing Association (1947); the Army Mountaineering Association (1957) (AMA); the Army Canoe Union and similar sports associations. Unsurprisingly there was some tension in such organisations as to what sport the Army would recognise as AT and how it would be controlled.

The 1960s Evolution of Army AT

In 1961, Major G.S. Hatch, Royal Artillery, later Brigadier and in retirement Secretary of the Royal Artillery Historical Trust, suggested that,

> a new approach to some aspects of training; to show how adventurous training can be used to make an ordinary soldier's life full and interesting, as well as to develop leadership qualities of sub-unit commanders; and to urge its application on a worthwhile scale so as to enhance unit morale by binding together the leaders and the led with a common feeling of real achievement.[20]

Hatch further recommended that AT training for leaders should be conducted at Adventure Training Centres and expressed criticism that '(t)he Army's present attitude to adventure training is to regard it mainly as a way of developing leadership qualities. Its real aim should be to provide a full and interesting life for all ranks'.[21]

AT had also become the subject of comment and questions in Parliament. In an Army Estimates debate on 13 July 1960, Field Marshal Lord Harding of Petherton said that more needed to be done by subsidising 'adventure activities' that 'call for skill and hard

[18]Katy Stickland, 'End of an era; British Kiel Yacht Club boats are transferred', *Yachting & Boating World*, 10 October 2016. https://www.ybw.com/news-from-yachting-boating-world/british-kiel-yacht-club-germany-closed-boats-transferred-43047. Accessed 6 June 2025.
[19]TNA DEFE 24/1695, Minutes - Defence Training Committee, MOD file D/D.S.15/507/150/5, Minute dated 13 May 1977.
[20]G.S. Hatch, 'Adventure Training and Recruiting – Some Suggestion', *Journal of the Royal United Services Institution,* Vol. 106, 1961, pp.486-490.
[21]Ibid.

work in preparation and courage and resolution in execution', if it was to attract young men.[22] He went on to refer to the British-Indian-Nepalese Joint Services Mountaineering Expedition and how an offer of cine cameras and film had been withdrawn.[23] This expedition was the first Himalayan venture of, the now noted mountaineer, and then, Captain Chris Bonington, Royal Tank Regiment, who made the first ascent of Annapurna II in 1960.

The diplomatic repercussions of adventurous training, for example by the Black Watch who had travelled through Lebanon, Syria and Jordan in 1961, was raised with the Secretary of State for War who replied that 'I am anxious that this sort of scheme of training should be developed to the fullest extent.'[24]

In May 1961 Lord Nathan asked: 'how many soldiers, and of what rank, have taken part in exploring or mountaineering expeditions', The Earl of Jellicoe replied,

> My Lords, the only two Service-sponsored expeditions in recent years were those to Chitral in 1959 and to Annapurna in 1960.[25]
>
> On the Chitral expedition, two majors, four captains, two subalterns and one sergeant took part, at an extra cost to the Exchequer of £1,970.
>
> On the Annapurna expedition, one lieutenant colonel, one major, one captain and one subaltern took part, at no extra cost to public funds' noting that it was 'a reasonable surmise … the Treasury refused to find the funds'.

The leader of the Annapurna expedition, Major J.O.M. Roberts, a Gurkha officer, noted that the expedition received no financial assistance from official funds.[26] But neither did he underestimate the value of the Services' assistance to that expedition

[22]Hansard, HL Debate 13 July 1960 Vol. 225 cc.200-26 https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/lords/1960/jul/13/the-army-estimates#column_200. Accessed 9 June 2025.

[23]'British Indian Nepalese Services Himalayan Expedition 1960 led by Maj. J.O.M. Roberts', *Alpine Journal* 1960. p.143. AJ`1960C143-150_Roberts_Annapurna2.pdf. Accessed 11 May 2025.

[24]Adventure Training Exercise, Middle East HC Deb 08 March 1961 vol 636 cc445-7. https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1961/mar/08/adventure-training-exercise-middle-east. Accessed 9 June 2025.

[25]See fn 27.

[26]Lieutenant Colonel James Owen Merion Roberts, LVO, MBE, MC. Himalayan Journal 1998, Vol 54. https://www.himalayanclub.org/hj/54/21/in-memoriam/#point1 Accessed 9 June 2025.

including leave, travel and accommodation, and the loan of some equipment, oxygen sets and cylinders, etc.[27]

In the same year, in answer to a further question by Lord Nathan about 'Adventure Training in the Army 1961-1962', Earl Jellicoe, then a Government Whip, said that AT was given every encouragement by the Army Council and was a normal part of military training and that it was carried out at unit level and during recruit training.[28] In March 1963, in a debate proposing that the Army strength should not exceed 241,000, Sir Harwood Harrison MP noted that 'I am glad to see his paragraph on more men doing adventure training.'[29]

The Emergence of Army AT Policy: 1960-1970

Against this previous and rather *ad hoc* approach to AT the Army began to develop AT policy. Jellicoe's reply to Lord Nathan in May 1961 demonstrated that while AT was by then being encouraged by the Army Council, it was still being organised at command and unit level, so there does not seem to have been any overall policy for Army AT before 1961.

In a debate on AT in July 1963, and when asked about the Women's Royal Army Corps (WRAC) taking part, the Secretary of State for War replied that the extent to which women took part in adventure training was decided by the WRAC commander. He referred to the latest War Office directive on adventure training issued in June that year.[30] This is the first mention of any 'directive on adventurous training' that has been found, but it has not been possible to source this document. It is noted that the MOD had refused permission for a female climber, Gwen Moffat, to join the 1959 AMA Karakoram Expedition, despite her being an experienced mountain guide and being selected.[31] The outdated WRAC training syllabus was rewritten by Major Rowena Patrick post 1969 to include 'adventurous survival training for both men and women, including rock climbing, ice climbing, and walking in all weather in the UK and abroad';

[27]British Indian Nepalese Services Himalayan Expedition 1960. J O M Roberts, Annapurna II, 1960, Alpine Journal 1960 143. https://www.alpinejournal.org.uk/Contents/Contents_1960.html. Accessed 9 June 2025.

[28]Hansard, HL Deb 31 May 1961 vol 231 c 805. https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/lords/1961/may/31/adventure-training-in-the-army#column_805. Accessed 9 June 2025.

[29]Hansard, HC Deb 14 March 1963 Vol. 673, cc 1557-701, c1660

[30]Hansard, HC Deb 10 July 1963 Vol.680. col 1215. https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1963-07-10/debates/8572b049-e868-4dbf-a2ff-36991c514956/AdventureTraining. Accessed 12 August 2025.

[31]Lane, Military Mountaineering, p.41

and from then on women were fully included in Army AT.[32] Nevertheless, it was not until 1980 that the first all-female WRAC mountaineering expedition was mounted to the Pyrenees.[33]

In 1962 it was stated that the AT scheme, supported by an annual grant, was now a part of normal military training. Personnel taking part in AT under the scheme were seen as being on duty; a significant change because, if injured on AT, then the soldier, or their relatives, were eligible for military support and/or a service pension. A 1962 Memorandum noted that,

> The aim of adventurous training is to develop initiative, self-reliance and discipline in all ranks' [and went on] '(t)he element of risk in hazardous forms of adventure training is accepted … It is important that skill should be joined with courage, and prudence with daring; it is folly for hazardous exercises to be undertaken without the inherent risks being carefully calculated.[34]

An AT Brief for 1963/64 noted that AT funding totalled £120,000, some £2.2 million in 2026 terms, but conceded that the sum could only support 6% of the Army taking part in AT. The Brief noted that approximately 14,377 all ranks or 5% of the Army had taken part in AT in 1960/61, and 18,217 or 6% in 1961/62. It noted that many of the AT exercises 'have in the past relied upon regimental and/or individual financial support … we think it is wrong that payment to achieve the aim of Adventure Training should come other than from public funds.' The Treasury responded that it would not agree to an increase in funding to £120,000 and recorded that it understood 'that adventure training needs careful planning and skilled control, if it is not to be a waste of time and at worst, dangerous to participants' and went on to agree an increase only to £75,000.[35]

Defining Acceptable Army AT Activities: 1960-1970

Initially, there were arguments and discussions as to what was an acceptable AT activity and what activities should be regarded as sport. A BAOR General Routine Order of 1963 listed acceptable AT activities as (a) canoeing, (b) sailing, (c) underwater swimming, (d) mountaineering and rock climbing, (e) trekking, (f) potholing and (g) cycling and then set out detailed instructions regarding political clearance, financial

[32]Rowena Patrick. https://www.legasee.org.uk/project/women-of-the-army-1949-92/. Accessed 14 June 2026.
[33]Lane, Military Mountaineering, p.166.
[34]TNA WO 32/19687, Adventure Training Scheme: policy. See Minutes dated 15 September 1962 and 21 December 1962.
[35]Ibid. Treasury Chambers letter dated 29 January 1963 Reference 20DOP.207/208/01.

control and necessary qualifications for those leading these activities.[36] Correspondence between Major General Victor FitzGeorge-Balfour and Lieutenant General Gordon Lennox refers to 'the ease with which this kind of activity can be attacked' and that expeditions 'might be open to suspicion and criticism'.[37]

A 1964 Memorandum stated that the AT directive 'set out the principles on which Adventure Training would be organised'. It then complained that 'many of the schemes submitted by Commands, including Boys Units, seem to be outside the scope of Adventure Training' and gave examples. It questioned whether for sub-aqua training, it was necessary to go to the Mediterranean to practice it. It also commented that a tiger shoot and [a] crocodile hunting expedition might be highly adventurous but was hardly Adventurous Training.[38]

The Memorandum also stated that club activities, such as a sailing club 'cannot be said to cover the majority as it can only be open to club members to participate and to that extent is a closed shop' and so could not be considered AT. There was also confusion between AT and sport, so that a regimental team taking part in a French Canoeing championship was not entitled to AT funds, because it was sport – 'This sort of confusion is in its infancy' is annotated on the Memorandum. A later letter to Headquarters, BAOR, states 'It is regretted that Gliding cannot be accepted as an Adventure Training Activity per se' because it was an authorised sport, but, at least by 1977 it was included as an AT activity.[39] The AGAI 1980 included motor cycling as AT, but it was no longer in the list by 2003.[40]

While dinghy sailing had not been recognised as AT, a Minute dated 3 July 1974 recommended that it should be recognised as a joint service AT activity.[41] A Loose Minute dated 22 June 1977 recommended 'an authorised scale for recreational dinghy sailing in the RN' and proposed sailing centres where dinghies could be located.

A good example of the arguments about the definition of AT comes from SAS Trooper Tom McLean's request that his attempt to row the Atlantic single-handed in 1969

[36]Ibid. BAOR General Routine Order dated 15 March 1963, Issue No. 476 (7353-7369), p. 5 para 4.
[37]TNA WO 32/19687, Exchange of letters dated 24 May 1963 and 30 May 1963.
[38]Ibid. Memorandum to Colonel GS AT 1, Adventure Training reference 505/QMGF/A(i) dated 30 July 1964.
[39]Ibid. Letter to Headquarters, BAOR dated 20 November 1964 reference 43/Trg/5535; Defence Council Instructions (DCI) Joint Service, Issue No. 4 dated 28 January 1977.
[40]AGAI, Ch 11 (2003) paragraph 11.006.
[41]TNA MOD D/D.S.15/507/150/5, Minutes in File.

should be recognised as AT.[42] Army Strategic Command reported that 'The GOC-in-C does not consider that this crossing of the Atlantic could be counted as adventure training, nor does he propose to give it official support in any other way' and went on to say that the HQ would not prevent McLean's attempt.[43] A file note, with the letter, records,

> the proposal is not acceptable as it is an individual gladiatorial effort.

A further file Note from the Col A.TI (?) then says,

> Go back to Stratco (Army Strategic Command). I simply cannot understand why the GOC in C does not consider this Adventure Trg … It is not military trg, but surely comes with the (at least) lowest category of Adv Trg. We are otherwise going to look damned silly again in the Press when it comes out that he is not even being paid!!!!

A compromise was reached and McLean was allowed to do the row on annual leave and on special unpaid leave although he had to sign a disclaimer that the Ministry of Defence and the Special Air Service would have no responsibility for his death or injury. An example of policy evolution is that Atlantic rowing and participation in the Talisker Whisky Atlantic Challenge is now routinely considered to be AT.[44]

A Memorandum of 1964 noted that 'Present policy is that officers are not entitled to any assistance from Adventure Training Funds unless leading or taking part in 'All Ranks' expeditions and exercises'.[45] It opined that this was unfair on officers on long courses such as those studying for a degree, as they had no other ranks to call upon, and suggested that such officers should be allowed £10 for each AT expedition they went on.

The whole emphasis of policy in the years 1962-1966 referred to small or unit AT training expeditions or exercises, and does not reference any major expeditions.[46]

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[42]Tom McLean, Motivational/Inspirational Speaker http://www.motivationspeaker.co.uk/Biography.asp. Accessed 9 June 2025.

[43]HQ Army Strategic Command letter dated 23 December 1968 to Ministry of Defence (P39) (Army).

[44]For example, Force Atlantic team (2024) https://www.army.mod.uk/news/army-s-first-all-female-force-atlantic-team-takes-on-world-s-toughest-row/. Accessed 9 June 2025.

[45]Memorandum to QMCF, Adventure Training, Assistance to Young Officers, by Col GS AT1 dated 20 April 1964.

[46]TNA WO 32/19687, Adventure Training Scheme: policy. (1962-1966)

References to World Wide AT endeavours start in 1968.[47] The file includes a number of examples of the continuing dispute as to what was or was not AT. In June 1969 the Command Secretariat refused to approve a grant to soldiers taking part in the Joint Services alpine meet, but the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief gave his opinion that 'individual participants in organised Services meets of this nature … should qualify for a grant up to £12 towards travel and accommodation expenses'.[48] In the same year, approval was given for the funding of two apprentices from the Army Apprentices College, Arborfield to join the British Schools Exploring Society expedition to Newfoundland because 'the value of the expedition and the possible public relations cover mades (sic) it very worthwhile expenditure'.[49] Likewise in 1969, agreement in principle was given for the Special Air Service to take part in the Around Britain Powerboat race, and for the services to participate in the Daily Mail Transatlantic Air Race.

As can be seen an acceptable distinction had emerged by about 1970 as to what was sport and what was AT, an example of policy making having caught up with reality.

Army AT Training Centres: 1957-1973

Following the opening of the Tywyn and Norwegian Army Outward Bound centres in 1957 and 1958, no further Army AT centres were opened. In 1969 Tywyn was redesignated as an Army Mountain Training Centre (AMTC). The Fort George Inverness-shire AMTC was set up in April 1969 and was intended,

> as a pilot scheme [and] as a centre from which parties of up to 30, under their own qualified leaders, can collect equipment, rations and information on local mountain training facilities'. [It was stated that] 'although instruction does take place at the AMTC, its primary role is to assist parties to carry out their own expeditions.[50]

Army or Territorial Army accommodation was provided at Ballachulish, Ballater and Kingussie in Scotland for skiing and other mountaineering activities, and a Forestry

[47]TNA WO 32/21598, Adventure Training – Miscellaneous – World Wide, MOD reference A/43/Overseas/1882.

[48]Ibid. Letter from HQ Southern Command reference 652/3 G(Trg) dated 9 June 1969 to Ministry of Defence (AT 1).

[49]Ibid. Letter from Headquarters South East District reference 62091 G (Trg), dated 12 May 1969 to Command Secretary HQ Southern Command.

[50]Report by the Joint Services Working Party on Mountain Training and Ski-ing dated October 1970 – copy obtained from Col. Peacock's personal papers. (Hereinafter The Peacock Report 1970), now held by the AMA.

Commission camp at Capel Curig, Wales was purchased in 1970 to replace two smaller camps then in use for AT.[51]

The Army & Major Expeditions: 1965-1970

From about the mid 1960s the Services began to approve funding for participation in major expeditions. These were intended to give individuals experience in AT and fit them to organise unit level AT and provide positive publicity for the services as an aid to recruiting and retention.

In 1966 the Royal Navy supported an expedition to the unexplored Schweizerland region of east Greenland, and on which the author was the Army representative. [52] Major John Peacock, Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, led an expedition from the Royal Military Academy (RMA) Sandhurst to West Greenland.[53] Two years later, the author led the Army's East Greenland Expedition to the Kristian glacier, the aim of which was to climb in the area and make an attempt on Mount Forel, Greenland's second highest peak, while collecting botanical specimens for Lancaster University.[54] Expeditions to the Himalayas were also approved, including the AMA Tirich Mir, Pakistan Expedition in 1969, under the leadership of Major Jon Fleming, Parachute Regiment, and the AMA Annapurna I Expedition led by Major Henry Day in 1970.[55] These Himalayan expeditions were a prelude to and training for the Joint British and

[51]The Peacock Report 1970.

[52]M.B. Thomas & R.H. Wallis, 'The Royal Naval East Greenland Expedition, 1966', *Alpine Journal* 1967, Pt. 1, pp.29-35, https://www.alpinejournal.org.uk/Contents/Contents_1967_files/AJ%201967%2029-35%20Thomas%20&%20Wallis%20East%20Greenland.pdf. Accessed 9 June 2025) Pt 2 pp.212-224. http://www.alpinejournal.org.uk/Contents/Contents_1967_files/AJ%201967%20212-224%20Thomas%20&%20Wallis%20E.Greenland.pdf#search=%22royal%20navy%20east%20greenland%22 (Accessed 9.6.2025).

[53]J.D.C. Peacock, 'Sandhurst in Greenland, 1966', *Alpine Journal* 1967, pp.45-56.

[54]Noel Dilly, 'East Greenland: Kristians glacier area 1968', *Alpine Journal,* pp.276-281; National Records of Scotland, Author's expedition papers & files, Agnew of Lochnaw Muniments GD154, Nos. 1024-1026 & 1043-1055.

[55]Henry Day, 'Tirich Mir, 1969', *Alpine Journal* 1970, pp.79-86; https://www.alpinejournal.org.uk/Contents/Contents_1970_files/AJ%201970%2079-86%20Day%20TirichM.pdf. Accessed 9 June 2025; H. Day, 'Annapurna – North face route', *Alpine Journal,* 1971, pp.88-98. https://www.alpinejournal.org.uk/Contents/Contents_1971_files/AJ%201971%2088-98%20Day%20Annapurna.pdf. Accessed 9 June 2025.

Nepalese Army Everest Expedition 1976, which successfully put two Special Air Service servicemen on the summit.[56]

Colonel John Blashford-Snell, Royal Engineers, organised and led two RMA Sandhurst expeditions to Ethiopia in 1964 and 1966 to collect specimens for the Natural History Department of the British Museum; and he went on to lead the Great Abbai Expedition in 1968, which carried out a scientific exploration of the Blue Nile gorge by descending the river in rafts.[57] The emergence of a new scientific focus can be seen in these expeditions.

The Role of The Joint Services Expedition Trust (JSET): 1962-1975

In parallel with each Service developing its own AT policy, the MOD set up the Joint Services Expedition Committee to sponsor, every second year, a major expedition having scientific objectives.

The first joint expedition was a 1962 Joint Services Expedition to Mount McKinley (Denali), at 20,320 feet the highest mountain in North America. It was led by Major Mike Banks, Royal Marines who had been a member of the British North East Greenland Expedition 1951-1952, and the British Combined Services Rakaposhi Expedition in 1958.[58] The McKinley expedition successfully reached the summit, although one member required evacuation due to altitude sickness and two others sustained frostbite and snow blindness.[59]

The second was the Combined Services Expedition to South Georgia in the summer of 1964/65, in which Lieutenant Commander Malcolm Burley RN, with Major John Peacock REME, led a team of eight.[60] The party crossed South Georgia from King Haakon Bay in the south, to follow the route taken by Shakleton when seeking help after the sinking of his ship *Endurance*. The expedition surveyed and mapped the ice-

[56]J. Fleming & R. Faux, *Soldier on Everest,* (London: HMSO, 1977).

[57]J.N. Blashford-Snell, P.A. Morris, C.M. Chapman, & M.G. Spratling, 'Conquest of the Blue Nile' *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. 136, No. 1, 1970, pp.42-60. This also refers to the RMA Sandhurst expeditions.

[58]John Cleare, 'Obituary of Mike Banks, MBE, Polar Medal 1922-2013', *The Alpine Journal* 2013 pp.380-385. https://www.alpinejournal.org.uk/Contents/Contents_2013_files/AJ%202013%20376-415%20In%20Memoriam.pdf. Accessed 9 June 2025.

[59]John Hinde's Diaries, British Joint Services Alaska Expedition 1962, *The Climber*, December 1962. https://diariesofjohnhinde.wordpress.com/2017/12/30/british-joint-services-alaska-expedition-1962/. Accessed 9 June 2025.

[60]M. Burley, 'Combined Services Expedition to South Georgia, 1964-65', *Polar Record*, Vol. 13 , Issue 82 , January 1966 , pp.70-71;

free area north-east of the Ross Glacier and made botanical, geological and zoological collections and observations.[61]

The next was the Joint Services North Peary Land Expedition 1969, to north Greenland, led again by Peacock.[62] The expedition carried out a closed tellurometer, a surveying instrument that measures distances using microwaves, and theodolite traverse of the peninsula, a geological survey in the eastern region and made geological collections. It also carried out botanical, mammalogical, ornithological and meteorological research, it also climbed twenty one peaks in the area.

In 1969 the committee converted itself into the Joint Services Expedition Trust (JSET), a charitable trust, with the objective:

> To further the efficiency of Her Majesty's Armed Forces and to educate their personnel by undertaking expeditions for the purpose of carrying out research in geology, geophysics, glaciology, meteorology, physiology, ornithology, botany, natural history and kindred sciences and, where practical, to disseminate the knowledge gained as a result thereof.[63]

There was competition for JSET sponsorship for the 1970 expedition between a proposal by Commander Burley, to explore Elephant Island in Antarctica, and one by the author that proposed an expedition to the Northern Chilean Icecap. The committee selected the Elephant Island expedition, suggesting that the author go on that expedition and then re-submit his application for possible sponsorship in 1972.[64] Both expeditions had detailed scientific objectives to comply with the JSET requirement. The Elephant Island expedition went ahead in the southern summer of 1970/71 surveying the island and carrying out geological, geomorphological, glacial,

[61]M. Burley, Expedition Report addressed to The Permanent Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Defence dated 14 April 1965; Bodleian Library, Archive of Sir Edwin Arrowsmith, MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 511/5/4 - Combined Services

[62]J. Peacock, 'North Peary Land, British Expedition, 1969', *Alpine Journal* 1958 pp.234-240. http://www.alpinejournal.org.uk/Contents/Contents_1970_files/AJ%201970%20237-247%20Greenland.pdf#search=%22north%20peary%20land%22. Accessed 22 June 2026.

[63]TNA JSET DEFE 68/70, Draft Deed of Trust 1969 (unsigned and undated). – The Deed was signed on 8 September 1969; MOD Letter dated 9 September 1969 reference D/1413/1/PPO to ACAPL and others.

[64]TNA JSET DEFE 68/70, JSET Minutes of Meeting, 19 June 1969.

botanical, ornithological, mammalogical and biological research.[65] In the southern summer of 1972/3 the author led the Joint Services expedition to the Northern Chilean Patagonian Icecap.[66] The expedition carried out a survey to fix the location of the coastline last surveyed by Darwin in 1831. It also carried out a hydrographic survey of Kelly Inlet; collected geological and geomorphological specimens; conducted a detailed glaciological survey of the Benito Glacier; ran a meteorological weather station, and collected botanical and entomological specimens, as well as recording ornithological species and undertook a physiological experiment on body weight.[67]

Since then, the JSET has sponsored an expedition every second year and provided some endorsement or other support to other expeditions. On 27 February 2001 the JSET executed a revised Deed of Trust simplifying its role,

> The object of the charity is to further the efficiency of the Armed Forces of the Crown and to educate their personnel by undertaking or supporting expeditions and adventurous activities.[68]

The research objective present in the 1969 Deed was dropped so that the JSET could now sponsor or endorse an expedition entirely lacking in scientific content. The

[65]M. Burley, 'Joint Services Expedition to Elephant Island', The Geographical Journal, Vol. 138, No. 3, 1972, pp.298-308.; C.H. Agnew of Lochnaw yr, 'Elephant Island', Alpine Journal 1972, pp. 204-210. https://www.alpinejournal.org.uk/Contents/Contents_1972_files/AJ%201972%20204-210%20Agnew%20Elephant.pdf (accessed 9.6.2025). M. Burley, *Joint Services Expedition, Elephant Island Report* (FONAC 1971) in author's possession.

[66]TNA, JSET DEFE 68/70. JSET Minutes of Meeting, 22 July 1971 records the approval for that expedition The expedition is described in C.H. Agnew of Lochnaw & C.S. Gobey, 'The Joint Services Expedition to Chilean Patagonia 1972/73', *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. 140, No. 2, 1974, pp.262-268. *https://www.jstor.org/stable/1797083?seq=1* Accessed 9 June 2025;

[67]C.H. Agnew, *Joint Services Expedition to Chilean Patagonia 1972-73, General Report,* (London: HMSO, 1974) and individual Scientific Reports (HMSO 1974); V. Winchester, M. Sessions, J.V. Cerda, O. Wündrich, S. Clemmens, N.F. Glasser & M. Nash (2014) 'Post-1850 changes in Glacier Benito, North Patagonian Icefield, Chile', *Geografiska Annaler*, Series A, *Physical Geography*, Vol. 96, No. 1, 2014, pp.43-59; J.C. Ryan, M. Sessions, R. Wilson, O. Wündrich & A. Hubbard, (2018) 'Rapid Surface Lowering of Benito Glacier, Northern Patagonian Icefield'. Front. Earth Sci. 6:47.

[68]Revised Deed of Trust.

constraints of time and manpower had meant that it was increasingly difficult for expeditions to find worthwhile science or research to carry out.[69]

The Emergence of Joint Services AT Policy in the 1970s.

From the early 1970s AT was put on a Joint Services basis, with particular Services nominated to run particular AT activities and AT centres for all services. This was separate from the more general AT run by the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force for their servicemen. Generally, that AT was similar to that provided by the Army for its soldiers, and as discussed in this article.

A Review of Adventurous Training in 1992 noted that 'The current Joint Services Adventurous Training (JSAT) Scheme, which was originally formulated by the Defence Training Committee (DTC) was approved by the Principal Planning Officers and the Treasury in 1971'.[70] Each Service then had to deliver AT within its own Service under the overall policy set out in the Joint Services Scheme. The Joint Services Adventurous Training (JSAT) Scheme, JSP 419 of August 2008 recorded that,

> In May 1970 the need was recognised for a co-ordinated approach to, and an expansion of the existing facilities for Adventurous Training, and the Defence Training Committee (DTC) was tasked by the Principal Planning Officers (PPOs) (2SL, AG & AMP) to devise an appropriate scheme. This was completed in 1973 when the JSAT Scheme was introduced. This Charter was amended in 1994 and this update re-establishes the fundamental guidelines for the conduct of JSAT administered by the Armed Forces Adventurous Training Committee (AFATC).[71]

The 1970 Peacock Report commissioned by the Director of Army Training gave advice on a Joint Service approach.[72] The committee's terms of reference were to,

a) Examine the needs of all three Services for Mountain Training and Skiing in the context of Adventurous Training,

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[69]Letter, M.H.H. Adler, Treasurer JSET, to Secretary JSET, DGTE-TEPOL, MOD dated 5 April 2005. Recovered from MOD JSET under a FOI request.

[70]A Review of Adventurous Training circulated by Ministry of Defence, Reference HQDT/17/26/1 Trg 3 (072) dated 21 February 1992. The PPOs were the Second Sea Lord (RN), the Adjutant General (Army) and the Air Member for Personnel (RAF). JSP means Joint Services Publication.

[71]JSP 419, Aug 08 (amended Jul 09) paragraph 3.

[72]Report by the Joint Services Working Party on Mountain Training and Ski-ing dated October 1970 – copy obtained by author from Colonel Peacock's personal papers. (The Peacock Report 1970). Now held by the AMA.

b) Consider existing and proposed facilities,
c) Prepare a plan, showing costs, for the joint use of such facilities as would be necessary to meet the needs of all three services …'

The Report examined the different AT facilities of each Service, the individual costs to each Service and made recommendations, most of which appear in the later editions of JSP 419.

The guiding document was Joint Services Publication (JSP) 419, Adventurous Training in the UK Armed Forces; Part 1: Directive, Part 2: Guidance. The earliest edition that was found by the author dates from 2008. The Territorial Army (TA) took part in AT from 1992 'under the same policy guidelines and conditions as the Regular Army, once operational objectives have been achieved.'[73]

Services AT Policy Evolution from the mid-1970s Onwards

Although, as noted earlier, the archival record is woefully poor, one important file still exists, MOD file D/D.S.15/507/150/5 opened 31 January 1977 - Training Adventurous.[74] This gives a good insight into 1970s AT.

A Defence Council Instruction, dated 28 January 1977 (DCI) entitled 'Joint Services Adventurous Training' which predates the JSP 419 (2008), records that the activities approved in 1977 were free-fall parachuting, sub-aqua diving, gliding, off-shore sailing, and mountain activities, including canoeing and skiing.[75] It also listed the locations for AT training and noted that personnel attending JSAT courses were on duty and that they were permitted to travel at public expense. It provided for courses to be available for Servicemen and Servicewomen and on certain conditions members of the Reserve Forces. JSP 419 (2008) added caving and hang gliding/paragliding to the list.

A Progress Report by the Adventurous Training Sub-Committee dated 31 January 1977 noted that the total cost of AT, as it had developed since 1970 and which should be put into the estimates for 1977 was £1,781,000, some £14 million in 2026 terms.

A draft report on AT attached to a Memo by Joint Secretary, Defence Training Committee to MA/ACPL and others dated 14 March 1977 recorded that 'The primary

[73]A Review of Adventurous Training, circulated under letter from Major General S C Grant (DGAT) dated 21 February 1992 reference HQDT/17/26/1 Trg 3(072). The author obtained a copy from Major (retd) Tim King, RAOC who had it from his time as Secretary of the AMA.
[74]TNA DEFE 24/1695, file D/D.S.15/507/150/5, Training Adventurous.
[75]Defence Council Instructions (DCI) Joint Service, Issue No 4, dated 28 January 1977.

reason for sustaining adventurous training at public expense, is to provide a modest range of outdoor activities for Service personnel, requiring participation in challenging pursuits …' It went on to note that 55-60,000 Servicemen took part in AT expeditions annually, including a small number of major expeditions, but that most activities were unit level expeditions.

Following a review, another Minute dated 19 April 1977 noted that there was agreement in the 'assessment of the military advantages, particularly for the Army, of adventurous training, but accepts that in the present financial circumstances it is necessary to make a cut of 3½%, i.e., £70,000 …'.

The 2008 Joint Services Adventurous Training (JSAT) Scheme (JSP 419) notes that,

> The value of Adventurous Training in leadership and personal development is recognised by the Services. It adds an extra dimension to the life of Servicemen and women. Adventurous Training provides challenge, a sense of achievement, excitement, variety, enjoyment, interest, contact with nature and the broadening experience of travel. It introduces personnel to new activities and provides opportunities to improve the skills and knowledge of those with previous experience. It enhances the quality of Service life and is an aid to recruiting and retention.[76]

It defined the overarching definition of JSAT, agreed by the Armed Forces Adventurous Training Committee (AFATC), as,

> Challenging outdoor training for Service personnel in specified adventurous activities, involving controlled exposure to risk, to develop leadership, teamwork, physical fitness, moral and physical courage, among other personal attributes and skills vital to operational capability.

And went on to list the nine adventurous activities that were funded by the three Services and which Service sponsored particular activities: offshore sailing and sub-aqua diving by the Royal Navy, canoeing, caving, mountaineering and skiing by the Army and freefall parachuting, gliding, hang gliding and paragliding by the Royal Air Force. It also recognised that 'a variety of activities may qualify as Adventurous Training because they promote the development of the qualities mentioned at Paragraph 6'. It provided that the delivery of AT as defined by JSP 419 and the funding of the various centres at which it was provided was the responsibility of the Service that provided the activity.

[76]MOD, JSP 419, Joint Services Adventurous Training (JSAT) Scheme (Amended July 2009) (2008).

The JSP 419 also listed the Joint Services Centres at which the nominated activities could be carried out and which provided training for recognised qualifications in the nominated activities for a leader/supervisor/instructor. It concluded by setting out certain training and qualification standards and administrative requirements for AT and contained Annexes specifying how to apply for courses at the relevant centres.

Implementation of AT within the Army

The Adjutant General's Administrative Instruction of 1980 implemented JSP 419 and set out the Army's policy for AT and noted that:

> There is little need to justify the philosophy of adventurous training. A good soldier needs mental and moral self discipline as well as physical strength and endurance; he needs to become accustomed to danger, hardship and challenge and these are not easy to provide within the constraints of normal peace time training.[77]

The AGAI recognised that participation could be by way of attendance at courses, by individuals in continuation training, taking part in Service or civilian clubs providing AT activities. It is interesting to note that participation includes club activities as authorised, when in the 1960s participation in club activities was not recognised as AT. Participation in private expeditions was authorised provided 'any period of annual leave has been forfeit' and participation had been authorised in advance by MOD (PAT 2). Expeditions were said to 'provide particularly valuable training, involving planning, leadership, administration, public relations, etc in addition to the benefit to be derived from carrying out the main task.' Three types of expeditions were defined: unit expeditions, major expeditions and civilian expeditions, in which Service personnel might apply to take part.[78]

The AGAI then set out the principles for conducting AT, the need for authorisations and political clearance and administrative arrangements, including travel, equipment from stores, casualty procedures, pay and allowances and financial arrangements and grants to expeditions, safety regulations including qualifications required etc., with detailed Annexes. Annex A lists the accepted activity and any appropriate link with an Army sport association.

Participating personnel were considered to be 'on duty' even if AT was being carried out voluntarily during leave on an expedition, or on an individual basis, for example going climbing in the Alps with a non-military climbing partner. Individuals were

[77]AGAI, Chapter 11 (2008), paragraph 11.004 to 11.007.
[78]Ibid. AGAI, Chapter 11 (2008), paragraph 11.002.

entitled to apply for an annual grant, in 2008 it was £15, and for cash in lieu of rations (CILOR). Further 'the MOD would accept vicarious liability for any negligent actions or omissions committed in the performance of those duties.'[79] 'Vicarious liability' means that the MOD will accept liability for any negligent actions or omissions of the soldier on AT, which may have caused injury or damage to another party.[80]

This financial support dated back at least to the early 1970's as the author applied for, and was granted support, for climbing trips to the European Alps from 1973 including claiming CILOR.

Political and Other Clearances

Political clearance for AT expeditions was always an issue for the MOD as shown by the Black Watch's Syrian expedition in 1961 mentioned above.

Chapter 11 of the 1980 AGAI provided that with the exception of attendance at courses at AT centres, all AT activities required,

a) military clearance,
b) political clearance outside the United Kingdom including activities in countries in which British forces were normally stationed e.g. West Germany and
c) security clearance for any AT in or that required transit through a country to which leave travel was restricted, but which was not banned outright. It set different timetables and requirements for different countries, including '(c)ountries to which expeditions are not to be planned' as set out in Annex C.[81]

In 1984, the Ministry of Defence and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office tried to develop a policy to rationalise applications relating to political clearance for AT because 'it seems to me that a lot of unnecessary time and effort is consequently wasted …'[82] The file shows discussions about which countries should be in which category and which countries were excluded from AT.

A Memo dated 16 April 1984 about the Whitbread Round the World Yacht Race 1985/86 notes that the South African media were likely to play up the event 'as a

[79]Annex C to JSP 419 Part 2 – Chapter 3 (V1.0 Jan 16).
[80]Armitage, M. and others. Charlesworth and Percy on Negligence, 15th Edition (2024. Sweet & Maxwell) para 7.01 'Nature of vicarious liability'.
[81]AGAI, Chapter 11 (Issue 26) (D/DAT/64/5/1/PAT2).
[82]TNA FCO 46/4253, File No. DPP 072/2 Title Adventurous Training Policy; Joint Services Adventurous Training Scheme.

measure of re-acceptance into the sporting world' and so 'the participation of a Service vessel and crew would in such circumstances not be in the UK interest'. This was because under the Gleneagles Agreement 'the Government are committed to discouraging sporting contacts with South Africa'. A Services' team therefore did not take part in the race.

Major 1970s Expeditions

In 1971 the AMA proposed an expedition to climb Everest and a booking was made with the Nepalese authorities for Spring 1976 for what was to be a Joint British and Nepalese Army expedition.[83] Training for the expedition included an expedition to climb in Himal Praedesh in the western Himalayas in 1973, an alpine training meet in 1974, and an attempt on Nuptse Himal in 1975, where four team members unfortunately died.[84] Despite this tragedy, Everest was successfully climbed in 1976.[85]

During the 1970s there were a number of other Army mountaineering expeditions to Greenland, the Himalayas and other parts of the world.[86]

The Royal Naval Sailing Association entered the Sailing Vessel *Adventure* in the 1973/4 Whitbread Round the World Yacht Race.[87] The Army chartered Chay Blyth's yacht *British Steel*, renamed *British Soldier*, for the same race.[88] The Joint Services were authorised by the MOD to enter Her Majesty's Sail Training Yacht *Adventure,* in the 1977/78 Whitbread Round the World Yacht Race, and the Army entered *British Soldier*.[89] The proposal to enter the 1980 race was vetoed for political reasons, as the yachts were to visit Cape Town.

[83]J. Fleming & R. Faux, *Soldiers on Everest,* (London: HMSO, 1977), Chapter 2.

[84]J. Fleming, 'Nuptse 1975', *Alpine Journal* 1976, p.107. AJv1976107-116Fleming Nuptse.pdf. Accessed 9 June 2025); TNA DEFE 70/1435, Himalayan Expedition; Mount Nuptse; mountaineering accident. Board of Inquiry.

[85]J. Fleming, 'The Army Mountaineering Association Himachal Praedesh Expedition 1973', *Alpine Journal* 1974, p.21; Fleming & Faux, R. *Soldiers on Everest.*

[86]Crispin Agnew, Soldiers in Greenland 1930-1980', *British Army Review* No. 108, Spring/Summer 2021, p.112; Lane, *Military Mountaineering*.

[87]Oceanum Vela, the ocean race. https://www.oceanumvela.net/the-ocean-race. Accessed 9 June 2025.

[88]Information from Colonel Meryon Bridges, Royal Engineers, an active mountaineer and offshore sailor in the Army who was on the 1976 Everest and the 1980 Api Himal expeditions with the author.

[89]Letter from Naval Personnel Division 1 reference D/NP1/12/10/4B dated 31 December 1976; Information from Colonel M G le G Bridges.

Colonel Blashford-Snell led the Darien Gap Expedition 1971/2 which crossed the gap, a dense rain forest area between Colombia and Panama in South America.[90] Two years later, Blashford-Snell led the Zaire River Expedition 1974/5[91]. He was awarded the Royal Scottish Geographical Society Livingstone Medal.[92] He went on to found the Scientific Exploring Society and Operation Raleigh.[93]

Unit Level AT Activities: 1960 to 1980

Details of AT expeditions conducted at unit level are not generally available, so the author has provided details from his own experience, and which were probably replicated in other units. From 1966 to 1968 the author was with the Junior Soldiers Unit at the Lowland Regimental Depot, near Edinburgh where he took junior soldiers camping and hill walking in the Scottish Borders or skiing at Glenshee as their AT. Funding for skiing had to be applied for on the basis that the unit was running a 'winter warfare cross country training exercise' and army skis, that did not have safety bindings, were provided, which resulted in numerous injuries.

A posting back to his battalion in 1969 at Fort George, near Inverness, provided opportunities for unit camping and hill walking expeditions and the operation of the unit mountain rescue team (MRT) that trained with the RAF Kinloss MRT. A group from the regiment went climbing in the Chamonix Alps for two weeks in the summer 1970.

In 1972 the author was posted to the Junior Tradesmen's Regiment at Troon, Ayrshire as adventurous training officer. This involved taking platoons of junior soldiers away for a week at a time in summer to the Isle of Arran for camping, hill walking, cycling and sailing and during the winter for skiing and winter mountaineering in the Cairngorms near Aviemore.

In the summer of 1972, the author was asked by MOD (PAT 2) to lead a party of junior soldiers to the Austrian Alps for three weeks, employing local guides and introducing the junior soldiers to alpine climbing. This was one of a series of annual junior soldier AT expeditions of various types sponsored by the MOD.

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[90]R. Braddon, *The Hundred Days of Darien,* (London: Collin, 1974); P.J.K. Burton, 'The Province of Darien', *Geographical Journal*, 1973, pp.43-47.
[91]J. Blashford-Snell, *In the Steps of Stanley,* (London: Hutchison, 1975).
[92]Colonel John Blashford-Snell, Royal Scottish Geographical Society https://www.rsgs.org/blog/john-blashford-snell. Accessed 16 June 2025.
[93]Colonel John Blashford-Snell website - https://www.johnblashfordsnell.org.uk/biography/. Accessed 16 June 2025.

AT & The Army Cadet Force (ACF) & Others

The ACF, always recognised as a good source of Army recruits, was also encouraged to undertake AT, although it remains unclear when it was brought into the Army's AT regime, but the AGAI Chapter 11 of 2003 stated that its instructions also applied to the cadet forces and recognised that,

> the significant benefits Cadets gain from participation in adventurous outdoor pursuits, [and that] it is necessary to provide policy as to how such activities are conducted.[94]

It then listed the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme, challenge pursuits such as water-skiing, pony-trekking and mountain biking, and acknowledged that low level adventurous training was to be 'recognised as AT activities'. The Cadet Centres for AT, set up about this time and are now at Capel Curig, Halton Training Camp, Lancaster and Rothiemurchus Lodge, Cairngorms.[95]

AT was also used to recruit particularly young soldiers. Neville Trotter MP noted in 1978 the 'highest regard for Army Youth Teams following our experience in running Adventure Training for unemployed boys.'[96]

The value of AT in the rehabilitation of injured soldiers was also recognised but this is a topic worthy of research in itself and is not covered here.[97]

Army AT Post 1980

By 1980 the Joint Services approach to AT had been well settled by JSP 419 and the Army's participation was governed by AGAI, Chapter 11. Minor amendments to these key documents were introduced, as necessary and from time to time. In 1990 the Director of Internal Audit (Services) 'although recognising the value of adventurous training, criticised various aspects of the current arrangements' which led to a review

[94]Apart from the 1980 AGAI which applied to the Regular Army alone, this is the first of the more recent AGAIs recovered under FOI.

[95]HQ Cadet Centre for AT. https://armycadets.com/who-we-are/cadet-centre-for-adventurous-training/ (accessed 16.5.2025).

[96]Nevill Trotter MP in a debate about the decision to abolish Army Youth Teams. Hansard HC Deb 30 January 1978, Vol 943 cc 207-20. https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1978/jan/30/army-youth-teams. Accessed 16 May 2025.

[97]JSP 419 Pt (V1.0 Jan 16) para 28. S. Peacock, D. Carless & J. McKenna, 'Inclusive adapted sport and adventure training programme in the PTSD recovery of military personnel: A creative non-fiction', *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, Vol. 35, 2018, pp. 151-159.

of Army AT which was intended to '... recommend the future structure, management and funding of adventurous training within the Army'.[98] The paper defined AT, in terms slightly different to the JSP 419, as,

> a form of outdoor training for Service personnel requiring participation in challenging pursuits, by inference those which contain an ever present risk to life and limb, and calling for, from those taking part, some or all the qualities of fitness, physical and moral courage, initiative, powers of endurance and interdependence.[99]

It went on to list the approved activities as mountain training, including rock climbing, top roping and abseiling, trekking and mountaineering, caving, canoeing, skiing including, cross-country, downhill and ski touring, gliding, free-fall parachuting, off shore sailing and sub-aqua diving.[100] By 2016 Mountain biking (MTB) had been added to the list of AT activities.[101]

AT was formally recognised as a mainstream activity in the Army's overall training strategy so that it could be properly structured as an essential element in both individual and collective training.[102] Four levels were proposed with,

> (1) an introduction to AT for RMAS Officer Cadets, Apprentices, junior leaders and adult recruits,
> (2) in-theatre unit AT run by platoon officers and NCOs assisted by trained unit instructors, so that 30% of the army took part in a minimum of seven days AT each year,
> (3) expeditions ranging from the simple to the sophisticated, depending on the vision, ambition and expertise of the leader and participants and
> (4) training and continuation training for instructors.

The various AT training centres in the UK and overseas were also detailed.[103]

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[98]Headquarters Doctrine and Training, Army Plans and Resources Committee, *A Review of Adventurous Training, (A Paper by COS HQDT),* Reference APRC/P (92) 6 dated 22 Apr 92; File Reference HQDT/4/16/20/12 (Coord), paragraphs 1 and 2.
[99]Ibid, paragraph 3.
[100]Ibid, paragraph 4.
[101]JSP 419 Pt 2 (V1.0 Jan 16) p 1-1.
[102]Ibid, paragraph 8.
[103]Ibid, paragraphs 8-17.

The Territorial Army could participate in AT under the same policy and conditions as Regular Army.[104]

Safety & Risk Assessment

In the early days of AT, while the risks were noted, it was left to units and experienced individuals to organise AT. A Memorandum dated 21 December 1962. refers to 'the inherent risks being carefully calculated' and refers the reader to various safety booklets issued by national bodies.[105] While the author was active in organising unit AT from 1964 to 1976, and leading major expeditions up to 1980, he was never required to produce a risk assessment. The risks were understood and dealt with by the team.

From1980 there was more formality with the AGAI 1980 Chapter 11 paragraph 11.011 requiring that strict attention be paid to safety standards. Applications for approval for expeditions had to be signed by the commanding officer or an officer delegated by him had to sign applications for expeditions and state that he was satisfied that the person leading an expedition was competent to do so, but this still left the assessment at unit level.

The increased Army emphasis being placed on safety and risk assessments was probably prompted by the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, and, in particular, the Crown Proceedings (Armed Forces) Act 1987, which made the Armed Forces liable for acts of negligence by Service personnel. The 1990 Audit required that an 'Expeditionary Advisory Cell was to be set up'.

By 2003 Divisional/District AT Staff Officers had been established with a duty to scrutinise 'the thoroughness of the risk assessments, and the AGAI 2003 goes on to set out the duties of the Regimental Adventurous Training Officer (RATO) including 'Ensuring the expedition leader has carried out an exercise risk assessment'.[106]

JSP 419 (2016) refers to High Risk and/or Remote Panels which determine if an expedition is high risk or going to a remote area in which case the leader 'must attend a HR&R Panel which will fully assess the feasibility of the Expedition'.[107] The criteria for that assessment being set out which includes '(a) detailed Risk Assessment' with the process being outlined in JSP 375, Part 2, Vol 1, Ch 40.[108]

[104]Ibid, paragraph 21.
[105]Fn 52. Memorandum dated 21 December 1962.
[106]AGAI 2003 para 11.017; AGAI 2003 para 11.019 g.
[107]JSP 417 2016 Pt 2, Ch 3 (V 1.0 Jan 16) paragraph 2c.
[108]JSP 417 2016 Pt 2, Ch 3 (V 1.0 Jan 16) Annex A paragraph 3; JSP 419 Pt 1 Directive (V1.0 Jan 16) paragraph 30.

The Army Adventurous Training Group 2002

The Command and Control of Adventurous Training in the United Kingdom (2001) Study identified major weaknesses in the provision of AT to the Army mainly from the lack of overall co-ordination between many disparate elements, including some called 'black economy' facilities unofficially funded by units. It recommended the establishment of an Adventurous Training Group (Army) (ATG(A)) and (paragraph 20) that the Headquarters of the Army Physical Training Corps should take control of all AT requirements and training courses. [109] The Study was approved by Headquarters Land Command on 31 January 2002 and directed the establishment of the Group under command Regional Forces with the implementation team formed in April 2002.[110]

By 2003 the Directorate of Individual Training (Army) had set out the Armed Forces Physical Development Policy recognising three core pillars namely physical education, AT and sport. The Army AT Policy (2003) was in Annex B. The policy refers to the Joint Services AT Centres which conduct recognised AT training; it sets out the scope of the formal training, which accords with the Levels 1 to 5 noted above; provides that 'The Field Army is mandated (and publicly funded) to provide directed low level AT for seven days annually for 20% of the force. Units within the Field Army were encouraged to mount AT expeditions where training programmes and availability of resources permit.'; that the JSAT and Expeditions were supported by both public and non-public funding; that the Army was to provide canoeing, caving, mountaineering and skiing. [111]

The new ATG(A) undertook A Review of Adventurous Training in the Army (2003) setting out the role of AT as,

> AT is an essential part of tri-Service training. It develops leadership, inter-dependency, physical courage and mental robustness. Properly conducted, it provides the opportunity in a physically challenging and mentally demanding outdoor environment to experience danger and hardship. It contributes

[109]Ministry of Defence, *Study into the C² of Adventurous Training in the United Kingdom*. The author has only been able to obtain the second draft dated 18 June 2001. (C² means Command and Control).

[110]HQ Land Command letter dated 31 January 2002 reference LAND/Trg/PAT/2120.

[111]Directorate of Individual Training (Army), *Armed Forces Physical Development Policy*, circulated by letter dated 26 November 2002, reference D/DTTrg(A)/11815/4. Annex B to D/DGTE/4/1713 dated 1 Aug 03, Adventurous Training Policy & see paragraphs 3, 9b., 10, 11,14 & 14b.

> significantly to the development of fighting power. The conduct of AT as a G3 training activity undoubtedly adds to the "cutting edge" absent from the Armies of so many of our allies and potential adversaries. AT is also enjoyable, exciting and rewarding. It makes a positive contribution to recruiting, motivation and retention. The opportunity to take part in AT is a fundamental part of the soldiering 'contract'.'

and that ATG(A)'s mission was:

> to provide focus and pan-Army C2 for AT conducted at Army-sponsored AT centres; on OTX; Expeditions and Operations; and multi-activity AT conducted by units or at Army AT lodges; in order to enhance the physical, mental and environmental preparedness of soldiers for operations.[112]

Since then, the ATG(A) opened a new era and mission for AT within the Army and now provides opportunities 'for anyone to pursue Adventurous Training to the highest level. Whether to summit Everest without oxygen, wreck dive off the coast of New Zealand, white-water kayak the Sjoa River in Norway or skiing first descents in Greenland.'[113]

The foreword by the Commander, Home Command AT, to the ATG(A) guide sets the scene:

> Physical and mental fitness are essential to our people, as is fighting spirit and the will to win; leadership, team cohesion, inclusivity, self-confidence, resilience and determination are also critical to our success. The British Army promotes Adventurous Training because it develops and nurtures all of these attributes in our people and enhances our military capability.'[114]

It lists the AT activities as summer, winter and alpine mountaineering, klettersteiging (or via ferrata climbing), rock climbing, mountain biking, Nordic and alpine skiing, ski mountaineering, winter climbing, caving, inland kayaking, open canoeing, sea kayaking, sub aqua diving, offshore sailing, paragliding, freefall parachuting and gliding.

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[112] Adventurous Training Group, *A Review of Adventurous Training in the Army*, ATG(A)/27 dated 30 November 2003.

[113] https://www.army.mod.uk/learn-and-explore/about-the-army/corps-regiments-and-units/army-adventurous-training-group/ (Accessed 16/6/2025)

[114] ATG(A), *Army Adventurous Training, the Guide*, Army AT Guide ADRo10025 JSMTC Guide 2021 v7. (Available only to army personnel).

Conclusions

It has been shown that within the Army AT can be traced back to the 1930s and a time when there was no policy to determine what was AT or determine how it was to be controlled. In the post-war period that situation continued alongside an evolution in AT that was influenced by the Character Training Industry's activities. Army AT only began as an on-duty activity in the early 1960s and even then was mainly conducted on an ad hoc basis, and at unit level, alongside some major expeditions organised by individuals within the Army, the Services as a whole or by Sports Associations. By the end of the 1960s individual Service AT centres, such as the Mountain Training Centres in Wales and Scotland, had been established to provide formal AT training for individuals. Army AT was also extended to include Army Reservists, the WRAC and the ACF, and by the early 1970s was re-organised on a Joint Service basis with major expeditions needing a scientific or research basis to justify them. That basis gradually disappeared until at Army level the establishment of the Adventure Training Group (Army) in 2002. This brought in a new AT era which is outside the scope of this article although AT remains a central component of Army training. It has also been shown that Army AT has supported a number of major expeditions as well as it being delivered at unit level; with support through the progressive evolution of policy enshrined within the various JSPs, AGAIs and Directives.

An understanding of AT's evolution in the period from 1960 to 2008 shows how Army AT has become more inclusive, how policy has in general followed practice, while the Army adopted and adapted AT within its training regime, at a time when the Army was looking for ways to provide a substitute for active service.

Jupiter, Medea and Triton, October 1778: new evidence

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ABSTRACT
In 1778 HMS Jupiter and HMS Medea engaged the French Warship Triton. This engagement was widely reported in British newspapers and an in-depth review demonstrates considerable variation in their content. New evidence is presented which casts doubt on accepted accounts of the engagement and indicates that the Medea's crew was inexperienced, that the crew refused to fight once the action turned lethal and that Medea's subsequent re-assignment to 'the worst Station that a Ship can be placed in, the North Sea,' was ordered by Lord Mulgrave, publicly rebuked at the trial of Admiral Keppel by the father of the Medea's captain only weeks before.

Introduction

This Research Note arose from a University of Winchester post-doctoral research project into the correspondence of Edward Montagu, (1717-1798), Master in Chancery. It focuses on Edward's nephew Captain James Montagu (1752-1794), James is unknown to history save for his death on 'the Glorious First of June'. However, information contained in his uncle's letters to the first Earl of Ailesbury, and contemporary news reports, reveal information about military events not otherwise easily visible to the historical gaze and not previously discussed.

Captain James Montagu (1752-1794) was the third son of Admiral John Montagu (1719-1795), and one of five Wiltshire Montagu's in the British military during the second half of the eighteenth century. In July 1778 Edward Montagu reported that 'My nephew Capt James Montagu is just appointed to the Command of the *Medea* now at Bristol & I believe lately built there by Contract'.[1] *Medea* was indeed Bristol built,

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DOI: 10.25602/GOLD.bjmh.v12i3.2004
[1]Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre (hereinafter W&SHC) 9/35/203/28, Letter dated 'London July 28 1778'.

'Bristol, May 2. Tuesday was launched from Mr Hillhouse's yard, near Hot-Wells, his Majesty's ship Medea a fine frigate of 32 guns, - the first King's ship ever built in this city'.[2] The deployment of the new ship was delayed, numerous papers reported that 'Though the Government are in such want of frigates, yet the Penelope and Medea, which were launched … upwards of three months ago, are not yet ready for sea'.[3] However Medea eventually joined Admiral Keppel's fleet and in September 1778 newspapers reported that,

> The Medea frigate, belonging to Admiral Keppel's fleet, has taken an American ship, of 20 guns mounted, from a French port to Boston, which had on board the following valuable cargo, viz, a great variety of India goods, fans, bunches of artificial pearls and garnets, paper hangings, watch chains, complete sets of paste shoe, knee and stock buckles, gold watches, with chain, seals &c. The Medea chased the American vessel upwards of 40 hours before she came up with her, during which she started part of her water, in order to lighten her, which made her sail the swifter.[4]

A month later *Medea,* in company with the brand-new HMS *Jupiter* (30 guns) under Captain Reynolds, was involved in a 'most gallant action' off Cape Finisterre. A number of newspapers carried an,

> Extract of a Letter from Falmouth, Nov 23. The Medea frigate is arrived at Lisbon, much shattered by an Engagement which she had in the Bay with a French 74 Gun Ship, with whom she left the Jupiter, of 50 guns, closely engaged, and 'tis feared, from the Great Disparity of Force, she must be taken. The Medea had an 18 Pounder shot through her Hull under Water, which rendered her so leaky, that she was under a necessity of quitting the Contest'.[5]

Other versions of the event were reported,

> the action between the French 74 gunship and the Jupiter of 50 guns, and the Medea of 28, happened off Saint Martins, on the coast of France. The Medea was dismasted almost at the beginning of the action, but the Jupiter continued to engage until a gale of wind arose, whereby the Frenchman was drove

[2]*The Bath Chronicle* 6 May 1778.
[3]*Jopson's Coventry Mercury*, 27 July 1778; also the *Newcastle Chronicle, Caledonian Mercury* and *Norfolk Chronicle* all 12 September 1778.
[4]*Ipswich Journal* 26 September 1778, *Northampton Mercury,* 28 September 1778 and *Saunders's Newsletter* 1 October, all 1778.
[5]*Drewry's Derby Mercury* 27 November, *The Kentish Gazette* and *Caledonian Mercury* 2 December and *The Dublin Evening Post* 5 December, all 1778.

> onshore, and the Jupiter narrowly escaped; It is supposed that the Frenchman would be lost. The Medea has since got into Lisbon, and we hear that the French ship is the Vigo, the Captain and several men killed, and the vessel much damaged, but no tidings have come to hand of the Jupiter.[6]

Yet another, fuller and more *celebratory*, version was carried by many other newspapers,

> The Lisbon papers are full of Commendations of a most gallant Action which happened on the 20th of October, between his Majesty's Ships the Jupiter, of 50 guns, Capt Reynolds, and the Medea, of 28, Capt James Montagu, with a French 80 Gun Ship, off Cape Finisterre. Capt Reynolds and Capt Montagu conceiving her to be and Indiaman, got so close to her without Apprehensions of Danger, that that it was too late to escape it, they therefore attacked her like Englishmen. Capt Reynolds at once laid alongside of her to Windward, at Five o'Clock P.M. the Medea placed herself on the Lee Quarter, and continued for some Time giving her Broadsides, but from the Inferiority of her Force could do very little Execution [Medea only mounted 28 guns with a throw-weight of 117 pounds, compared to *Jupiter's* of 414 pounds and Triton's 550 pounds], and was soon driven to leeward with an 18 Pounder between Wind and Water, and never able to recover her Station, so as to be of any Service to the Jupiter. Capt. Reynolds continued close engagement till 8 o'Clock, when the French ship gave Way, took the advantage of the very dark Night, and escaped to Ferrol, with the loss of her Captain and above 200 men. The Jupiter arrived in Lisbon in a shattered Condition to refit, and found the Medea there on the same Business.[7]

Captain Reynolds' report stated that the identity of the French warship was unknown but he later learnt she was Ship of the Line *Triton,* under her captain the Comte de Ligondés.

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[6]*The Kentish Gazette*, 2 December 1778. This version on page 4, the previous on page 3.Which ship the report meant is unclear, the only records for *Vigo* are either too early (a British Prize 1702-3) or too late (1810-1865, 1817-1887) for this action - source *Threedecks*, at https://threedecks.org/index.php?display_type=show_ship&id=521, and https://threedecks.org/index.php?display_type=show_ship&id=7331. All Accessed 5 October 2026.

[7]*The Norfolk Chronicle* & *The Kentish Gazette* 5 December, *The Hampshire Chronicle* & *The Reading Mercury* 7 December, *The Cumberland Pacquet and Ware's Whitehaven Advertiser, The Manchester Mercury and Harrop's General Advertiser* and *Adam's Weekly Courant* 8 December, *Saunders's News-Letter* 10 December and *Caledonian Mercury* 12 December, all 1778.

Historical research has thrown doubt on the casualty figures given in the newspapers, when as early as 1897 William Clowes and Clements Markham claimed that 'Triton had 13 killed & about 20 wounded … The Jupiter's loss was three killed & seven wounded; the Medea's loss was one killed & three wounded'.[8] Clowes and Clements noted that the Comte de Ligondés was apparently wounded, not killed as some newspapers reported, and this is supported by the *Hibernian Journal*,

> Brest, Nov. 16. The St. Michael, and the Triton, of 64 Guns each, are come into this Road, the last commanded by the Comte de Ligondes, who being separated from the St. Michael came across and engaged with an English Man of War of 70 Guns, and a Frigate of 30. 'The Engagement lasted several Hours, till the English Ships ceased her [sic] Fire and sheered off. The Comte was wounded in his right Heed, by a Musket Ball, and another in his Arm. He had 15 Men killed, and 14 wounded.[9]

Captain James Montagu's account in his log gives a slightly different version from that seen in the newspapers, including dating the event a day later than usually given, as 21 October,

> Wednesday 21 October Lat 43 53N long a C Finnistere 77 &c Bearing & Distance at Noon Cape Finisterre S52W 24 leagues Fresh gales & V Clear Weather. PM Saw a Sail Gave Chace with the Jupiter At 6 Bills shortn'd Sail came up with the Chace who hoisted French Colours & fired on the Jupiter, which she returned. We endeavoured to get upon her Quarter to rake her, but it blowing hard & the Ship so crank we could not, but ran alongside & receiv'd two heavy fires which were returned in the best manner our force would admit of & upon the Jupiter getting between us & the Enemy Wore with the intention of getting on his Quarter & on coming up found the firing had ceased & the Ship to Leeward which we took to be the Jupiter wear & Stand from the Enemy. The wind increasing & the weather thick lost sight of both. Our loss in the Action was one Man killed & three wounded. (AM Buried James Lockington, found one of the Chain Plates shot away, Carpenter fixing a new one & stopping the hole in the Water).[10]

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[8]Sir William Clowes & Clements Markham *The Royal Navy, a History from the Earliest times to the Present*, (London: Sampson Lowe Marston, 1897) *vol IV*, pp.21-22.
[9]*The Hibernian Journal: Or, Chronicle of Liberty*, 14 December 1778.
[10]UK National Archive (hereinafter TNA) ADM 51/573 Part II 'Journal of the Proceedings of His Majesty's ship the Medea between the 25th July 1778 & the 31st of July 1779 by James Montagu Comm'.

This confirms the *Medea*'s losses, and the damage below the waterline. The use of the word 'crank' to describe the ship is noteworthy. 'krank' is 'ill' or 'sick' in German, and there were very close ties between Britain and Germany at the time with George III being also Elector of Hanover and Hessian troops regularly deployed with British military forces. It was also used in English to imply 'bent out of shape' in 1793 and the *Oxford English Dictionary* gives '(c1745-1825) In figurative sense of 'twisted, angular'; crabbed, awkward or difficult to pronounce, understand, or execute'.[11] Tied to these definitions the Royal Navy used the term to describe a ship that was 'either because her construction or by the way her cargo was stowed, could not carry a great deal of sail without the danger of capsizing.'[12] This would explain why the Medea was unable to 'get upon [*Triton's*] quarter' in the heavy swell and wind. From Montagu's logs it is clear that *Jupiter* and *Medea* were not in Lisbon at the same time, *Medea* was there in the River Tagus for three days, 4 - 6 November 1778, but the first mention of seeing *Jupiter* was Saturday 14 November at 42 04 N 2 55W 'fresh Gales & Cloudy Spoke His Majesty's Ship Jupiter hoist out the cutter & went on board Am Blowing fresh with rain in company with Jupiter'.[13] A number of different and conflicting versions of the events can be found.

The received version, that *Medea* was unable to continue the action because of damage sustained, does not tell the whole story and is challenged by an account given by Edward Montagu. In a letter to the Earl of Ailesbury in March 1779, Edward said, 'I agree with him that the Medea has hitherto been much out of Luck, more particularly in the Affair of Lisbon'.[14] The 'him' was a 'young Seaman', one of James Montagu's midshipmen William Birchell. Birchell was a protege of Lady Ailesbury taken on by James Montagu through her patronage, directed through Edward Montagu in July 1778. Edward Montagu had informed the Earl that 'If Mr Wm Birchell is not disposed of & still continues an object of Lady Ailesburys favour, Capt Montagu will be happy in obeying her Ladyships Comands – & if [he] shod happen to be at Bath may go on board with great Facility, - & little Expence'.[15] Edward Montagu's letter of March 1779 suggests a reason why the *Medea* was unable to be more effective in the battle that is not given elsewhere; Edward stated that, 'Tho' Mr Birchell properly keeps the Secrets of his Ship yet I will whisper them to your Lordship', indicating that Birchell had not told the Earl of the 'affair' but was clearly the source of Edward's information. Edward Montagu told the Earl that the *Medea* was undermanned and mostly crewed by

[11] *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "crank (adj.3), sense 2," September 2023, https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/6911702879. Accessed 5 January 2025.
[12] 'Terminology', The Art of Age of Sail at http://www.ageofsail.net/aoshiptm.asp. Accessed 21 August 2026.
[13] TNA ADM 51/573 Part II
[14] W&SHC 9/35/203/32, Letter dated 'Frognal Grove March 31 – 79'.
[15] W&SHC 9/35/203/28, Letter dated 'London July 28 1778'.

inexperienced hands, 'To accommodate Mr Keppel [and] prevent a Ship in his Fleet giving Offence to a Seamans Eye the Medea was stript'd of every good Man & when she went to Sea might have been taken by a ten oar'd Boat'. The lack of experienced hands would have also contributed to the *Medea* being unable to manoeuvre as was required and 'get upon her quarter'. It was also contributory to what amounted to a mutiny, or at least loss of control of the crew, during the action; Edward Montagu continued that 'In the Engagement, he [Birchell] mentions as soon as it was promulged that "a man was kill'd" [all] except eight [of] the whole Crew ran from their Quarters & neither Persuasion, Threats or the Point of the Sword could get them back', which would have made it impossible for the ship to continue the action. This would have reflected very badly on the Captain but there is no mention of it anywhere.

There was no investigation of the incident, Edward Montagu claimed, because James did not insist on an enquiry to defend himself 'As this Circumstance must have been publish'd on an Enquiry into the Captain's Conduct & whose Reputation has greatly suffered by Newspaper criticisms he was persuaded to withdraw an Application so necessary for his own Honor, to prevent the Increase of Abuse elsewhere' [i.e. criticism of Keppel]. An investigation of the *Medea*'s logs, those of both Montagu and her Sailing Master John Wilson, was made to see if further information could be located about this incident.[16] Nothing at all was found, and William Birchell/Edward Montagu's claims cannot be substantiated. However it may not be a coincidence that, in the words of his uncle, 'In return [for not insisting on an enquiry], by the Interest of Ld Mulgrave he [James Montagu] is rewarded with the worst Station that a Ship can be placed in, the North Sea, & is to call every 14 days at Grimsby Road'.[17] Lord Mulgrave was Captain the Honourable Constantine John Phipps, (1744-92), 2nd Baron Mulgrave, and in 1779 he was a Lord of the Admiralty, and more than capable of arranging the re-assignment of a naval vessel. In command of HMS *Courageux* (74 guns) he was also part of Keppel's fleet. At the First Battle of Ushant in July 1778, before *Medea* joined the Fleet, he was in Palliser's division and 'played a distinguished part in action with the 'Ville de Paris' (110 guns). In the subsequent courts-martial sparked by the dispute between Admiral Keppel & his second-in-command, Hugh Palliser, he sided with Palliser'.[18] Subsequently, at Keppel's trial in January 1779, Mulgrave was 'unable to hide his support for his fellow Lord of the Admiralty, Sir Hugh Palliser, caused a rumpus and was ultimately censured by the court for refusing to give a direct answer when asked by Vice-Admiral John Montagu as to whether he had seen any instance of

[16]TNA ADM 51/573 Part II; TNA ADM 52/1864 'Medeas Log & Journal John Wilson Master 20 May 78 - 19 January 79'.
[17] W&SHC 9/35/203/32, Letter dated 'Frognal Grove March 31 – 79'.
[18]'Lord Mulgrave', *Royal Museums of Greenwich* at http://collections.rmg.co.uk/collections/objects/14345.html#D8rK8gshVq1xzuDp.99. Accessed 4 January 2025.

neglect in Keppel's duty.[19] Following the popular commander-in-chief's acquittal, Mulgrave's London residence in Harley Street was one of those attacked by a mob, and his windows were broken'.[20] Given John Montagu was James' father this might be a cause for dislike of Captain Montagu. The trial took place in January 1779 with Edward Montagu's letter written only six weeks later. It is very possible therefore that Mulgrave's 'Interest' in having the *Medea,* and her Captain, re-assigned to the North Sea was a result of the opprobrium Mulgrave suffered because of Admiral Montagu. This does not prove this new version of events but, as it supports Edward Montagu's assertion of Mulgrave's involvement in *Medea's* reassignment, it lends credence to his other claims. As does the consideration that if James Montagu refused to cast a shadow on Keppel's reputation by not seeking an enquiry into the 'affair at Lisbon', even at the cost of his own 'honour', this would not have recommended him to Mulgrave.

It is suggested here that while not proving that the events described by William Birchell and Edward Montagu were what happened, it raises considerable doubt as to whether the accepted 'facts' surrounding the engagement of HMS Jupiter and HMS Medea with French Ship of the Line Triton in October 1778 are correct. It is maintained that the supporting evidence, while circumstantial, is convincing.

[19]Decision of the court read to Lord Mulgrave by the Judge Advocate 'My Lord, I am directed by the Court to observe to your Lordship, that in the course of the reasons you have thought fit to use in your declining an answer to the question put you by one of the members of the Court, with the approbation of the Court, you have made use of improper language, and that too with a warmth unbecoming the Court to receive, Your treatment of them is such, as they cannot pass over without observing to your Lordship their sense of the impropriety of it; and it is their pleasure, that I acquaint your Lordship of their disapprobation of your Lordship's behaviour to them,' [Anon, *The Trail of the Honourable Augustus Keppel, Admiral of the Blue Squadron, for a Charge of Misconduct and Neglect of Duty exhibited against him by Vice-Admiral Hugh Palliser*, (Bath: R Cruttwell, 1779), p.120.

[20]Richard Hiscocks, 'Hon. Constantine John Phipps, Lord Mulgrave', *More than Nelson,* (4 April 2016) at https://morethannelson.com/officer/hon-constantine-phipps-lord-mulgrave/. Accessed 4 January 2025.

The Elegance of Survival: French Perfume Houses, Logistics and the Politics of Continuity, 1940–1945

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ABSTRACT
While the Second World War severely disrupted the French economy, the perfume industry maintained both its activity and prestige. Between 1940 and 1945, leading firms devised ingenious logistical strategies to overcome shortages, blockades, and surveillance through material substitution, recycling, parallel trade, and chemical innovation. Supported by the Vichy regime and regarded as a vehicle of national prestige, the sector adapted to supply chain breakdowns through a mix of circumvention and compromise. The inventiveness displayed by French perfume houses during the Occupation foreshadowed a distinctive form of logistical resilience that later shaped the post-war revival of France's luxury industry.

Introduction

War is not fought solely on the battlefields but also in the silent margins of production, distribution, and consumption. Military history has traditionally privileged strategies, armies, and technologies, often neglecting the critical role of civilian logistics and industrial networks that underpinned wartime resilience. In this context, the case of the French perfume industry under the Occupation presents a compelling paradox: how could a sector associated with frivolity, refinement, and luxury not only endure but also strategically adapt amidst systemic scarcity and authoritarian oversight? This research note examines how, between 1940 and 1945, the French perfume houses devised intricate logistical strategies operating at the intersection of commerce, diplomacy, and State policy, negotiating shortages, blockades, and political supervision.

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DOI: 10.25602/GOLD.bjmh.v12i3.2005

By tracing both the material and symbolic circulations sustaining this sector, it demonstrates that luxury logistics constituted a distinctive form of civilian logistics in wartime – discreet, adaptive, and intimately linked with national prestige and economic continuity. Perfume thus emerges as an unexpected object of military history, invisible on the front lines yet essential to sustaining the nation's economic stability and symbolic capital, complementing the reflections of Marc Bloch on the 'strange defeat'.[1]

Adopting a supply chain perspective, the analysis recasts the perfume industry as a complex system of circulation and strategic adaptation rather than mere creation, emphasising the interdependencies between raw materials, artisanal expertise, and international trade. It shifts attention from the conventional language of taste and femininity to the material infrastructures, administrative practices, and diplomatic negotiations that enabled survival under German Occupation. This approach invites a reassessment of luxury as a mode of organised resilience and tactical ingenuity, wherein scarcity became a catalyst for innovation, negotiation, and calculated compromise. By foregrounding such discreet mechanisms of continuity, the study moves beyond moral or aesthetic readings to reveal the logistical intelligence embedded in routines of production, substitution, and exchange, highlighting the sector's remarkable adaptive capacity under extreme constraint. In this sense, perfume becomes not merely an emblem of refinement, but a lens for understanding how France's most symbolically potent industries navigated constraint, preserved international reach, and redefined the grammar of elegance and endurance during wartime.

To situate these sectoral dynamics within their broader geopolitical framework, it is necessary to recall that during the Occupation the French economy became deeply integrated into the system of economic exploitation organised by Nazi Germany across Europe. The armistice of 22 June 1940 did not merely mark the cessation of military operations on French soil; it also inaugurated an administrative, financial, and commercial framework designed to redirect French resources towards the German war effort. As François Boudot demonstrated in his still influential study of the economic structures of the Occupation, this system relied in particular on the Franco-German clearing mechanism and on a range of regulatory instruments intended to supervise production and control the circulation of goods.[2] Requisitions of raw materials, administrative oversight of firms, and the reorganisation of commercial networks thus contributed to the progressive integration of the French economy into a war economy dominated by the Reich. Within such environment – characterised by

[1]Marc Bloch, *Strange Defeat: A Statement of Evidence Written in 1940,* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1968 [1940]).

[2]François Boudot, 'Aspects économiques de l'Occupation allemande en France', *Revue d'Histoire de la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale*, 54 (1964), pp.48-50.

scarcity, financial pressure, and territorial fragmentation – even sectors traditionally associated with luxury, including the perfume industry, were compelled to adjust to profoundly altered conditions. Their survival depended less on the intrinsic value of their products than on their capacity to navigate, negotiate, and occasionally circumvent the constraints imposed by the structures of Occupation.

Luxury under Fire

The debacle of May–June 1940 plunged France into a dual collapse, military and economic, that unsettled even its most emblematic industries, none more so than perfume. Centred in both Grasse (near Nice) and Paris, the perfume houses, established commercial firms combining artisanal craftsmanship, chemical laboratories, and international trade networks to produce and distribute luxury fragrances, embodied a lifestyle that political authorities celebrated as a showcase of 'national genius'. From the outset, these firms were recognised not only as commercial enterprises but as instruments of French cultural identity, connecting industrial, artisanal, and diplomatic circuits that extended far beyond metropolitan borders. Their symbolic role as a vehicle of national prestige was frequently highlighted in trade bulletins, propaganda reports, and governmental correspondence, reflecting the intertwining of luxury and sovereignty during wartime. Though often dismissed as the epitome of French frivolity, the sector rested upon a deeply globalised logistical network: imported essences from the colonies, such as ylang-ylang, vetiver, vanilla, or patchouli, and solvents from metropolitan chemical industries, and bottles crafted by Baccarat or Lalique, supported exports to the United States, South America, and the Middle East.[3] By 1939, more than seventy per cent of the sector's revenue derived from exports, rendering its economic equilibrium acutely vulnerable to supply disruptions. This hybrid system, blending artisanal savoir-faire with proto-industrial organisation, revealed a sophisticated logistical framework reliant on imperial and maritime infrastructures. When the Second World War broke out, perfume paradoxically became both a strategic commodity and a marker of identity, with its preservation a means of sustaining an emblematic product while maintaining access to the international markets vital for survival.

Understanding these dynamics requires recognising the agencies involved: the major perfume houses, their networks of managers, brokers, and artisans, and the coordinating role of the Chambre Syndicale de la Parfumerie Française (French Perfumery Association) in managing production priorities, negotiating transport permits, and overseeing scarce resources. Far from being a mere advisory body, the Chambre Syndicale brought together all the perfume houses established in Grasse and Paris, forming an extensive professional network capable of significantly influencing

[3]Eugénie Briot, 'From industry to luxury: French perfume in the nineteenth century', *Business History Review*, 85, 2 (2011), pp.275-279.

political and economic decisions. It comprised some thirty influential members, including Guerlain, Coty, Caron, and Chanel, who wielded considerable power through their diplomatic connections. Integrated into transnational networks, these players can secure raw materials and solvents, while maintaining trade flows to American and Latin American markets despite the constraints. The tensions between Grasse and Paris reflected both specialisation strategies and strategic control: the Grasse cluster retained artisanal expertise and access to local raw materials, while Paris centralised mass production, marketing, and exports. Such dynamics illustrate the importance of individual and collective agency, as each house, according to its size, influence, and network, negotiated with the Vichy regime, the German authorities, and international intermediaries, finding a delicate balance between autonomy, constraint, and sectoral coordination. As Dorota Leszczyńska and Nada Khachlouf emphasise, the maintenance and resilience of the cluster depended as much on the entrenchment of collective knowledge and skills as on the organisational structures and strategies of the actors.[4] The interplay between these different levels indicates that the survival of the perfume industry during the Occupation was not merely a matter of market forces, but rather the result of a strategic and diplomatic capacity supported by the expertise and influence of the sector's leaders.

The German Occupation and the division of France in 1940 into the Occupied Zone and the so-called Free Zone swiftly disrupted this fragile equilibrium. The maritime blockade, together with acute shortages of raw materials, the requisitioning of factories, and heightened surveillance of transport, brought supply chains to near collapse.[5] To prevent the total disintegration of the sector, the Chambre Syndicale devised a continuity plan intended to safeguard a core of production and technical expertise, with coordination extending beyond administrative supervision: it facilitated exchanges between factories, managed clandestine imports via neutral territories, and liaised with officials in both Vichy and the Occupied Zone, effectively functioning as a quasi-strategic logistical authority. The leading companies benefited from existing stocks, established diplomatic contacts, and connections with colonial suppliers, while smaller artisans were compelled to improvise through chemical substitution, bottle reuse, and shared workshops. In doing so, they exemplified a form of industrial resilience rooted in both skill and strategic foresight. A rudimentary command of logistics thus became an instrument of survival, transforming the notion of luxury into a synonym for ingenuity and endurance. Keen to preserve export revenues, the Vichy regime lent partial support to this adaptation, integrating the perfume houses into its

[4]Dorota Leszczyńska and Nada Khachlouf, 'L'influence de l'enracinement du savoir sur l'évolution d'un cluster: Etude de la trajectoire historique de l'industrie des parfums de Grasse', *Cahiers de la Méditerranée*, 92 (2016), pp.201-213.
[5]Julian T. Jackson, *France: The Dark Years, 1940-1944,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p.162.

wider economic apparatus. This support formed part of an ambivalent political strategy, simultaneously ensuring economic continuity and demonstrating the regime's claim to national sovereignty.

Under the now-famous motto '*Travail, Famille, Patrie*' (Work, Family, Fatherland), the Vichy regime promoted a vision of moral and cultural regeneration that celebrated traditional symbols of French identity and refinement.[6] Within this ideological framework, perfume and other luxury crafts were implicitly associated with the idea of an 'eternal France', a France of artisanal excellence and aesthetic distinction. Official reports and internal memos suggest that the regime viewed these industries as emblematic of French ingenuity, capable of projecting soft power abroad while maintaining domestic morale. The *Commissariat Général à la Production Industrielle* (General Commissariat for Industrial Production) established mechanisms of economic collaboration designed to maintain the continuity of certain trade flows in exchange for controlled deliveries to Nazi Germany.[7] Firms in Grasse and Paris entered joint ventures supervised by the German authorities, securing essential raw materials, fuel, and transport permits while navigating the political tightrope between collaboration and survival. This form of logistical collaboration—at once imposed and opportunistic, blurred the boundaries between accommodation and complicity.[8] As Rachel Chin observes, the Vichy regime grounded its legitimacy in a rhetoric of national continuity. By claiming to embody the 'true France', it sought to justify political and economic decisions that consolidated its authority while placating the occupying power.[9] This discourse, conflating cultural preservation with strategic submission, finds a direct echo in the way the luxury economy was mobilised as a symbolic instrument of national endurance.

Amid acute shortages and the rise of a thriving black market, the French perfume houses were transformed into a veritable laboratory of industrial and logistical

[6]Jane F. Fulcher underlines that the Vichy regime sought to redefine the meaning of *Frenchness* through a programme of moral and cultural regeneration rooted in the values of *Travail, Famille, Patrie*. While her analysis focuses on musical culture, in Chapter 1 of her book, she situates these policies within a broader ideological effort to restore what the regime portrayed as the nation's authentic traditions and refined heritage. Jane F. Fulcher, *Renegotiating French Identity: Musical Culture and Creativity in France during Vichy and the German Occupation,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

[7]Julian T. Jackson, p.185 ff.

[8]Luc-André Brunet, 'Patrons résistants? French industrialists during the Second World War', *French History*, 31, 4 (2017), p.513.

[9]Rachel Chin, 'Who speaks for France? Vichy, Free France and the battle over French legitimacy: 1940-1942', *British Journal for Military History*, 6, 3 (2020), p.10.

innovation. Constraints spurred the development of alternative processes: agricultural distillation for solvents, the recovery of animal by-products for fixatives, and the systematic recycling of containers. Grasse's artisans relied on semi-clandestine networks linking the Free Zone to North Africa, Spain, and Switzerland, illustrating the capacity of peripheral actors to negotiate, bypass, and stabilise fragile supply chains.[10] These adaptive practices were guided by both technical knowledge and strategic reasoning: choices over chemical substitution, storage prioritisation, and export destinations reflected careful calculation rather than ad hoc improvisation. Within this unstable environment, perfume houses reinvented an economy of scarcity and circumvention, turning constraint itself into a catalyst for adaptation. As Kenneth Mouré notes, the experience of a planned economy and of State-imposed price controls, soon condemned as a form of 'economic tyranny', would profoundly shape post-war industrial culture.[11] Building on this experience, French perfumers approached the Liberation with a newly acquired logistical expertise and organisational discipline, enabling them to transform the management of scarcity into a durable strategic asset.

Networks of Necessity

The perfume houses of Grasse were far from an isolated case, instead forming a central node in the wartime logistics of French luxury industries. Indeed, the archives of the *Commissariat Général aux Affaires Economiques* (General Commissariat for Economic Affairs) under the Vichy regime, together with those of trade associations representing various luxury sectors, including the Chambre Syndicale, reveal a complex mosaic of arrangements involving colonial suppliers, neutral countries, and carefully negotiated accommodation with the occupying authorities.[12] Administrative reports from the period indicate that the Vichy regime regarded perfume not merely as an economic commodity, but as a vehicle for national prestige and a tool for political legitimation. Internal communications from the *Commissariat Général* emphasised that maintaining perfume production and exports was a strategic priority for upholding the international reputation of 'Made in France'.[13] Far from a marginal concern amidst widespread privation, the luxury economy assumed significant diplomatic and political

[10]This issue was swiftly taken up by Robert Chollot, an executive at the Charabot company in Grasse, a firm specialising in the production and supply of raw materials for the flavour and fragrance industries, precisely because of its sensitive, even taboo, nature. Robert Chollot, 'The commercial history of Grasse', *Perfumer & Favorist*, 9 (1984), p.76.

[11]Kenneth Mouré, "Economic tyranny' and public anger in France, 1945-1947', *Contemporary European History*, 33, 2 (2024), p.456.

[12]Philippe Burrin, *France under the Germans: Collaboration and Compromise,* (New York: The New Press, 1997), p.100.

[13]French National Archives, AJ/40 to AJ/43.

weight.[14] French perfume houses were thus compelled to combine chemical innovation, administrative ingenuity, and commercial discretion, generating a parallel geography of trade flows connecting African ports, Swiss trading posts, and French factories.[15]

From 1941 onwards, shortages of essential oils from Indochina, Madagascar, the Comoros Islands and Thailand severely disrupted established supply chains.[16] Since the 1920s, the Indian Ocean had in fact constituted a particularly important zone of procurement for the French perfume industry, owing to the exceptional quality of its aromatic resources, including fragrant woods, clove, vanilla, ylang-ylang, and cinnamon.[17] In response to disruptions, producers in Grasse intensified the cultivation of lavender, mimosa, and other locally available raw materials, while laboratories in Lyon refined synthetic molecules derived from wartime pharmaceutical research. This increasing reliance on applied chemistry formed part of a longer tradition of industrial innovation established in the late nineteenth century, when leading European firms, particularly German ones, systematically integrated scientific research into their core production processes.[18] As Carolyn Cobbold underlines in her study of chemical additives and industrial dyes, European firms systematically embedded scientific expertise into production networks, linking technical research to commercial and

[14]Robert O. Paxton, *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order, 1940-1944,* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001, 2nd ed.), chapter 5.

[15]For a critical analysis of the adaptation strategies adopted by French companies during the Occupation, see Patrick Fridenson, 'French Enterprises under German Occupation, 1940-1944', in Harold James and Jakob Tanner (eds.), *Enterprise in the Period of Fascism in Europe,* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp.259-269.

[16]The case of Thailand, an important supplier of essential oils, is instructive, though it remains comparatively little known. At the end of 1940, the country declared war on France in order to recover the territories in Laos and Cambodia that it had lost between 1893 and 1907. The conflict concluded with a Thai victory, largely because France was unable to deploy the necessary men and equipment to confront Thai forces, which were supported by Japan. The war consequently brought the importation of essential oils to an immediate halt. Madison Dubois, *L'industrie du parfum dans les Alpes-Maritimes du XIXe au XXe siècle: Entre développement économique, encadrement public et protections juridiques*, Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Université Côte d'Azur, September 2022, p.662.

[17]Mathilde Cocoual, *Aux sources des parfums: Industrialisation et approvisionnement de la parfumerie grassoise (milieu XIXe–milieu XXe siècle)*, Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Université Côte d'Azur, December 2017, pp.425-426.

[18]Ernst Homburg, 'The emergence of research laboratories in the dyestuffs industry, 1870–1900', *British Journal for the History of Science*, 25, 1 (1992), p.98.

regulatory frameworks.[19] This historical perspective reinforces the understanding that French perfume chemists drew upon a cross-national culture of applied chemistry, transforming scarcity into innovation while operating under complex economic and political constraints.

Throughout the Second World War, the *Bulletin de la Société Chimique de France* emphasised that this adaptation relied on a culture of applied research and advanced training for local chemists.[20] The trend mirrored a broader European movement towards the chemicalisation of luxury, wherein scientific expertise increasingly supplanted natural ingredients. *Bulletin* issues from 1942 to 1944 document the use of novel synthesis methods, experimentation with local substitutes, optimisation of industrial processes, and rigorous evaluation by specialised scientific committees. French chemists adapted their techniques to preserve the olfactory identity of renowned perfume houses despite chronic shortages. Substitutes, aldehydes, such as nitro-musks, and acetates, helped maintain symbolic and patriotic continuity, as perfume, now a rarity, assumed moral, cultural, and national significance. Formulas were simplified, bottles miniaturised, and frugality became synonymous with elegance. For instance, major houses such as Guerlain issued *Mitsouko* and other perfumes in 'war time edition' bottles produced in plain clear glass without the usual decorative elements, reflecting material constraints and a move towards sobriety in packaging. This technical creativity also acquired a political dimension: mastery of olfactory synthesis represented an act of scientific independence contested between Vichy and German authorities.

Material constraints further affected both production and planning. Shortages of glass, metal, and alcohol forced continual reorganisation of industrial routines. The economic departments of the Vichy regime imposed strict rationing on non-ferrous metals, and paper, and cardboard, granting exceptional exemptions only to internationally prominent perfume houses.[21] Smaller workshops, in contrast, developed a culture of resourcefulness: systematically recycling, retrieving and refilling bottles, repackaging under improvised conditions, and engaging in inter-professional barter to maintain minimal activity. Commercially, the closure of Allied markets compelled producers to bypass official trade routes. Perfumes were channelled through Switzerland, Portugal, and Spain in semi-clandestine operations destined for

[19]Carolyn Cobbold, *A Rainbow Palate: How Chemical Dyes Changed the West's Relationship with Food,* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2020).
[20]See Bulletin issues available at https://delibra.bg.polsl.pl/dlibra. Accessed 13 June 2026.
[21]Chad Denton, "Récupérez!' The German origins of French wartime salvage drives, 1939-1945', *Contemporary European History*, 22, 3 (2013), p.400; and French National Archives, AJ/40 to AJ/43.

the United States and Latin America. These discreet exchanges, negotiated by brokers, intermediaries, and occasionally diplomats, provided the foreign currency essential for importing raw materials and sustaining production.[22] Perfume thus became both a cultural showcase and a medium of economic resilience: a luxury product transformed into an instrument of survival within a shadow economy, whose logistical dexterity operating between legality and ingenuity remains largely overlooked in business history.

No major perfume house illustrates these contradictions more vividly than Chanel, whose factory in Neuilly-sur-Seine, near Paris, remained operational under German supervision throughout the Occupation.[23] Stocks of the celebrated N°5 were guarded continuously, while the brand maintained a discreet yet ongoing presence in the United States. Gabrielle Chanel repeatedly attempted to regain control of the company by exploiting Aryanisation laws and cultivating highly ambiguous relationships with Nazi officials.[24] In short, Gabrielle Chanel played a complex economic and diplomatic role, navigating between forced collaboration and maintaining the company as a symbol of French prestige. This behaviour was tolerated by the Vichy regime, mindful of the symbolic importance of certain perfume houses in preserving the cultural grandeur of a nation scarred by its 1940 collapse. This dual strategy – well documented by historians – reveals an approach driven as much by survival as by calculated compromise and diplomatic manoeuvring. Briefly interrogated after the Liberation on charges of collaboration, Gabrielle Chanel ultimately avoided prosecution, largely owing to interventions by Winston Churchill and her contacts within Swiss and Spanish diplomatic circles. Like many owners of leading French perfume houses, she successfully steered a precarious course between economic pragmatism and political calculation, ensuring the preservation of supply chains essential to the continuity – and post-war revival – of her enterprise.

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[22]On this point, several relevant perspectives can be found in the collection edited by Lou Taylor and Marie McLoughlin, *Paris Fashion and World War Two: Global Diffusion and Nazi Control,* (London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2020).

[23]Hal Vaughan, *Sleeping with the Enemy: Coco Chanel's Secret War,* (New York: Vintage, 2011), chapter 7.

[24]Within the framework of its anti-Jewish legislation, the Vichy regime sought to 'purify' certain sectors of the French economy, as noted by Michel Margairaz and Henry Rousso, 'Vichy, la guerre et les entreprises', *Histoire, Economie & Société*, 11, 3 (1992), p.354. It should be recalled that in 1940 the owner of Chanel holding seventy per cent of the company was Pierre Wertheimer, the son of a Jewish family from Alsace who had settled in Paris after 1871. In order to escape the German Occupation, he took refuge in the United States, leaving Gabrielle Chanel with full decision-making authority over the company; and Hal Vaughan, p.149.

Logistical Resilience

The case of French perfumers during the Second World War stands today as a textbook example of logistical resilience.[25] While much of the French economy collapsed under Occupation, leading perfume houses managed to preserve an unexpected vitality, drawing on both pre-war international networks and diplomatic connections. In a nation subjected to rationing, Occupation oversight, and the curtailment of civilian trade, perfume, like haute couture, continued to be produced and sought after, albeit only available in limited quantities, reflecting both economic ingenuity and cultural persistence. The Vichy regime explicitly framed luxury production as a symbol of national prestige, with the *Commissariat Général* facilitating mechanisms to maintain trade continuity in exchange for regulated deliveries to Germany, highlighting the political as well as economic stakes involved. Beyond routine commercial activity, a remarkably inventive system emerged, relying on alternative supply chains, recycling, semi-clandestine negotiations, and intricate networks of intermediaries, including brokers, diplomats, and colonial administrators. Wartime adaptations in the French perfume industry thus built upon much older international supply systems: by the early twentieth century, firms such as the Chiris group in Grasse had established extraction facilities and procurement networks extending across North Africa, the Indian Ocean, Indochina, and Southeast Asia, supplying European perfumers with essential raw materials on a global scale.[26] This grey economy, tolerated by Vichy and closely monitored by the occupiers, sustained a delicate equilibrium between constraint and autonomy.

Such arrangements illustrate the nuanced agency of both organisations and individual actors, challenging simplistic narratives of Collaboration or Resistance and situating the perfumery sector within broader historiographical debates on adaptation under Occupation. In the aftermath of the war, French luxury appeared to rise phoenix-like from the ashes, led by Chanel, Dior, Balmain, and Carven, with Gabrielle Chanel returning to France in 1954 after nearly a decade in Switzerland, while her network of international contacts had ensured the continuity of N°5 throughout the Occupation. Yet this renaissance rested upon the infrastructure, expertise, and

[25]Logistical resilience refers to the capacity of a supply chain to withstand disruptions, adapt to them, and recover rapidly while maintaining or restoring its essential functions. It encompasses flexibility, redundancy, visibility, collaboration, and a swift response to crises such as natural disasters, supply chain breakdowns, or pandemics. On this point, see the seminal contribution by Martin Christopher and Helen Peck, 'Building the resilient supply chain'. *International Journal of Logistics Management*, 15, 2 (2004), pp.1-13.

[26]Eliane Perrin, Marcel Baumann and Olivier Buttner, 'Fondation, croissance, opportunités et déclin de la production des matières premières pour la parfumerie: L'exemple de Chiris (1768–1967)', *Cahiers de la Méditerranée*, 92 (2016), pp.222-223.

logistical networks painstakingly developed under wartime constraints. Scarcity necessitated the rationalisation of production processes, pooling of resources, and unusually close collaboration among artisans, chemists, and managers, demonstrating a form of organisational resilience that prefigured modern logistics. Wartime alliances proved unexpectedly durable, forming the backbone of postwar industrial partnerships, while advances in chemical synthesis accelerated olfactory experimentation, securing France's avant-garde position globally. By emphasising both material ingenuity and human agency, this episode reframes luxury not merely as aesthetic consumption but as a strategic and adaptive system, linking the perfumery sector to broader considerations of industrial and economic history during the Occupation.

The history of French perfumery during the Second World War was ultimately less a tragic parenthesis than a moment of industrial lucidity. Operating under acute material scarcity, political oversight, and moral ambiguity, the sector displayed a capacity for adaptation that transformed constraint into opportunity and innovation. Beneath the patriotic rhetoric of preserving the *goût français* i.e. French taste values elegance, refinement, quality, and effortless style, a discreet logistical intelligence operated, its finesse often bordering on diplomatic craft, as exemplified by the strategies of Gabrielle Chanel and other house managers. By navigating the porous boundaries between collaboration and circumvention, the major perfume houses safeguarded what truly mattered: their brands, networks, and prestige. This strategic foresight, cultivated through decades of artisanal and industrial experience, within an industry whose development had long relied on the interaction between perfumery, chemical research, and pharmaceutical expertise, highlights the intertwined economic, cultural, and political dimensions of luxury, demonstrating that resilience relied as much on agency, negotiation, and moral calculation as on production. [27] Whether one chooses to admire or to criticise it, the legacy of the Second World War endures: a model in which elegance thrives on ambiguity, opportunism, and the artful management of compromise.

Conclusion

This research note suggests that the perfume industry transcends the narrow confines of a luxury sector, offering a crucial lens through which to examine the complexity of economic and political interactions under the Occupation. Perfume houses were far more than commercial actors: they embodied networks of expertise, diplomatic connections, and transnational logistics capable of operating amid profound crises. Their activity exemplifies how an industrial sector can reorganise, innovate, and

[27]Quentin Jagodzinski and Anne Dalmasso, 'Acteurs et territoire: L'écosystème industriel des cosmétiques français au XX[e] siècle', *Entreprises & Histoire*, 111 (2023), pp.17-18.

preserve profitability even under authoritarian control. In this sense, perfumery constitutes a paradigmatic case of resilience, in which brand preservation emerged as a central strategic objective that was underpinned by managerial pragmatism. Archival evidence from the French National Archives indicates that the Vichy regime explicitly recognised perfume as a vehicle of national prestige, positioning certain houses within a 'zone of tolerance' defined by stringent political directives. This dual logic, combining relative autonomy with imposed constraints, underscores the capacity of private actors to negotiate and exploit the limited scope for manoeuvre afforded by an authoritarian regime.

The study of French perfumery offers a particularly revealing vantage point from which to reconsider several important, yet still insufficiently explored, questions in the economic history of the Occupation. Rather than reproducing the familiar binary that opposes resistance to collaboration, it encourages a more graduated interpretation of corporate behaviour, one attentive to the wide spectrum of practices that emerged under conditions of constraint. Within this framework, firms adopted a range of responses that combined pragmatic adaptation, tactical negotiation, and, in many cases, carefully calibrated compromise. The perfume industry is especially well suited to such analysis because it brings into focus the interdependence of economic organisation, managerial decision-making, political pressure, and social networks. Investigating the strategies pursued by perfume houses reveals how companies sought to manoeuvre within the overlapping demands of the German occupying authorities and the regulatory agenda of the Vichy regime. Their actions were shaped not only by immediate shortages and administrative controls, but also by the imperative to preserve export markets, protect specialised expertise, and maintain the symbolic and commercial value of established brands in a context of acute uncertainty.

Approached from such perspective, the wartime trajectory of French perfume houses illuminates broader dynamics within the French economy under occupation. Firms were compelled to rethink procurement strategies, reorganise production, and cultivate new channels of supply to mitigate disruptions to international trade and colonial provisioning. Comparable adjustments can be observed in other sectors, including large manufacturing concerns such as Lesieur, which undertook far-reaching reorganisation of its supply chains to maintain efficient sourcing.[28] In both cases, the

[28]The French company Lesieur, specialised in the processing of oilseeds and the production of edible oils, extended part of its operations to North Africa and French West Africa during the Second World War to secure access to raw materials and sustain production despite the disruptions caused by the Occupation. Under the supervision of its managing director, Jacques Lemaigre-Dubreuil, industrial facilities were notably consolidated in Casablanca and Dakar from 1941 onwards. This strategy aligned with the economic policies of the Vichy regime and can be interpreted as a

preservation of productive capacity required a delicate balance between compliance with regulatory demands and the defence of long-term commercial interests. What emerges from these experiences is a more complex understanding of corporate resilience, grounded not in heroic narratives but in the everyday practices of negotiation, improvisation, and institutional flexibility. The example of French perfumers therefore places the luxury sector at the centre of historiographical debates on economic life during the Occupation, highlighting the extent to which businesses were obliged to navigate the moral, political, and material ambiguities created by foreign domination.

form of pragmatic economic collaboration aimed primarily at ensuring the continuity of activity. Clotilde De Gastines, 'La conversion libérale de Jacques Lemaigre Dubreuil au Maroc (1950–1955)', *Outre-Mers: Revue d'Histoire*, 364 (2009), p.346.

Rare Official Insight into Officer Conduct Amongst Prisoners of the Japanese

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ABSTRACT
This research note article highlights tensions and misconceptions in the dominant narrative of the Pacific prisoner of war (POW) experience by examining a document concerning British officer, Lieutenant Colonel T.H. Newey. On the Burma-Thailand railway and in the last year of the war when he was 'representative officer' in Changi, Newey incurred the wrath of his fellow officers who sought to have him court-martialled after liberation. That request was ultimately denied but the investigation into Newey's conduct provides a valuable insight for researchers seeking to sift through the layers of reticence, story-construction and myth-making associated with survivor-recounts of captivity during the Pacific War.

Introduction

Forty years ago, Joan Beaumont referred to 'an informal conspiracy of silence' in the postwar period regarding the nature and prevalence of officer-privilege amongst Second World War prisoners of the Japanese.[1] This research note builds on Beaumont's contention by arguing that the silence was not exclusively informal. A 1946 report into the conduct of the British Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Henry Newey of 1 Straits Settlements Volunteer Force was kept under seal for more than forty years, and provides an illustration of the way the silence described by Beaumont extended into official circles.[2] Other scholars, such as Katie Lisa Meale, have previously cited a version of the Newey document available at the Australian War Memorial archive but that version features only three pages extracted from the original

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DOI: 10.25602/GOLD.bjmh.v12i3.2006
[1]Joan Beaumont, 'Rank, Privilege and Prisoners of War,' *War & Society,* Vol.1, No.1 (1983), https://doi.org/10.1179/10698048379030312 6, p.74.
[2]The UK National Archives (hereinafter TNA) WO32/15769, *Enquiry into allegations against Representative Officer Limi Road [sic] Camp and No 1 P.O.W. camp Changi,* 1946. The camp name, Limi Road, should, in all probability, read Sime Road.

document.[3] Testimony given under oath by Burma-Thailand railway survivors and postwar public statements by senior officers served further to perpetuate the belief that the experience of captivity, particularly on the railway, was characterised by equity and accord amongst prisoners of all ranks.[4] In this research note the author argues that this was both an improbable and a partial representation of the reality on the ground where life was 'lived red in tooth and claw'.[5] The value of the Newey report is the insight it provides into the challenges of command for Pacific POW leaders. It shows that, while the role of a POW leader was by no means an easy one, the performance of officers varied considerably. Moreover, it is contended that this was an issue about which there was a lack of frank public discussion in the postwar period. Penultimately, in this note, the author examines competing claims concerning Lieutenant Colonel T.H. Newey's effectiveness as a POW leader. Finally, the author argues that revisiting the issues raised by the Newey case may allow us to scrutinise the Japanese POW experience, in all its gritty reality, with the clarity achieved when discussion proceeds free from vested interest and emotional investment.

The Newey report compiled for the British Judge Advocate General (JAG) in November 1945 and 'registered' on 4 March 1946 is notable for its frank discussion of the challenges, tensions and leadership failures associated with wartime incarceration. It contains forty-two pages of testimony mainly in the form of affidavits from officers, both British and Australian. The front page of the document has a label with the words, 'Closed until 2022'.[6] According to journalist, Noel Crusz, British court martial documents from the Second World War were originally intended to be 'closed for seventy-five years from the last recorded date of entry'.[7] However, public agitation in Great Britain related to freedom of information resulted in these records being released in the 1990s.[8] Despite its entry into the public record three decades ago, the full Newey report is rarely cited in scholarly writing on the Japanese POW experience.

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[3]See Katie Lisa Meale, 'Leadership of Australian POWs in the Second World War, (Doctoral Thesis, University of Wollongong, 2015), p.86, p.88, https://ro.uow.edu.au/theses/4620. Accessed 10 June 2026; and Lt-Col. F.G. Galleghan, Australian War Memorial (hereinafter AWM) 3DRL/2313 File 749/36/1, *Report on Treatment of Prisoners of War dated 5 Sept., 1945,* p.49, p.51, p.53.

[4]See, for example, S/Sgt G.G. Rickwood quoted in Robin Rowland, *A River Kwai Story: The Sonkrai Tribunal,* (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2007), p.256.

[5]Quoted in Julie Summers, *The Colonel of Tamarkan: Philip Toosey and the Bridge on the River Kwai,* (London: Simon and Shuster 2005), pp. 145-146.

[6]TNA WO32/15769, *Report on Newey*, p.1.

[7]Noel Crusz, *The Cocos Islands Mutiny,* (Fremantle, WA: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 2001), p.118.

[8]Ibid., p.14, p.118.

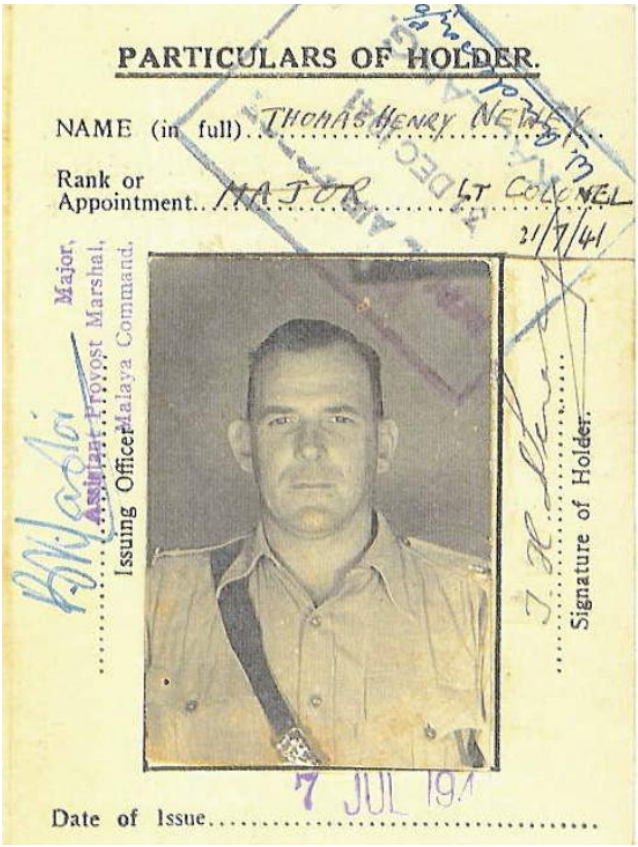


Figure 1: Lieutenant-Colonel Thomas Henry Newey.[9]

That the Newey report was considered sufficiently sensitive to be kept from public view for four decades speaks to the official component of the 'conspiracy of silence' on the subject of POW-officer-privilege referred to by Beaumont.[10] In the postwar period, Australian Lieutenant-Colonel R.F. Oakes implausibly described as 'absolutely false' any suggestion that officers were better off than enlisted men on the Burma-

[9]Ancestry.com, *Thomas Henry Newey*. n.d., https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/mediaui-viewer/tree/21160733/person/1048410040/media/f1c96c4a-b5f3-4fc1-8ad4-05c72ade28fa. Accessed 18 December 2024.
[10]Beaumont, 'Privilege,' p.74.

Thailand railway.[11] This was the officer who, at Singapore's Adam Park camp in May 1942, had five enlisted men, who had been planning escape, turned over to the Japanese.[12] Oakes' Hintok railway camp was described by the legendary Australian POW leader, 'Weary' Dunlop', as 'a shambles'.[13] Private Alex Drummond claimed Oakes was so cowed by Japanese camp staff that he retreated into his hut and built a model boat.[14] According to another source, Oakes issued double rations to himself and frequently annoyed those working in the cookhouse by purloining the best portions of their paltry supplies.[15] While it may be quixotic to think officers would expose themselves to avoidable risk, that is, after all, what their role entailed and the ostensible primary reason they occupied their privileged positions.[16] A case could be made to suggest that those whose record was notable for an absence of courage and selflessness to then deny, in the postwar period, the effect of officer-privilege was an even greater affront than their succumbing, under wartime conditions, to the temptations of self-preservation.

The subject of the 1946 JAG report, Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Henry Newey, was a British colonial citizen-soldier who had been Assistant-Controller of Posts and

[11]Ivan Chapman, *Tokyo Calling: The Charles Cousens Case,* (Sydney, NSW: Hale & Ironmonger, 1990), p.347.

[12]The five POWs were sentenced to three years' imprisonment at the notorious Outram Road Jail. See Lynette Silver and Billy Young, *Billy: My Life as a Teenage POW*, (Binda, NSW: Sally Milner Publishing, 2016), pp.224-226, p.234.

[13]Edward E. Dunlop, *The War Diaries of Weary Dunlop,* (Melbourne: Nelson Publishers, 1986), p.255.

[14]AWM MSS1530, Alexander Hatton Drummond, *The Naked Truth,* n.d., p.207.

[15]2/4 Machine Gun Battalion Ex Members' Association, *'H' Force Group No 3 – H3 & H6 Officers Party*, 2018, https://2nd4thmgb.com.au/story/h-force-group-2-4th-mgb-deaths-pows-of-japan-working-thai-burma-railway/. Accessed 6 February 2025,

[16]An old army adage is 'Never to ask my men to do anything I am unwilling to do myself'; coupled with that is the notion that the welfare of the men should come before that of the officers. For examples see: Andrew Faulkner, *Arthur Blackburn, VC: An Australian Hero, his men, and their two world wars,* (South Australia: Wakefield Press, 2008), p.190; Gilbert Mant, *You'll Be Sorry,* (Sydney: Frank Johnson, 1944), p.36; Sir Andrew Gilchrist, *Malaya 1941: The fall of a Fighting Empire,* (London: Robert Hale, 1992), p.151; Edward E. Dunlop, *The War Diaries of Weary Dunlop,* (Melbourne: Nelson Publishers, 1986), p.103; Field-Marshal Viscount William Slim, *Defeat Into Victory: Battling Japan in Burma and India, 1942-1945,* (New York: Cooper Square Press, 2000), pp.184, p.468; Thomas M Coffey, *Iron Eagle: The Turbulent Life of General Curtis LeMay,* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1986), p.36, p.95, p.114, p.277.

Telegraphs in Singapore prior to the outbreak of war with Japan.[17] The report includes statements from ten officers: one colonel and five lieutenant colonels; with five of that total members of the Second Australian Infantry Force (AIF).[18] The accusations against Newey included claims that: he was rude and impolite to his brother officers; that he was obsessed with his own status and seniority; that his punishment of enlisted men went beyond the powers laid down by British military law; and that he was unnecessarily friendly with the Japanese commanders to whom he reported as 'representative officer'.[19] Specific complaints include the allegation that, in May 1942, in front of a parade of two hundred Straits Settlements Volunteers, he threatened a public flogging for an individual who had stolen another man's hat.[20] In January 1944 at Sime Road on Singapore, Newey ordered a British soldier to be '"tied up" for a number of days without preferment of charges'.[21] Lieutenant Colonel Oakes charged Newey with 'wilfully and untruthfully accusing a senior brother officer of being a liar before an enemy administration.'[22] At Changi Jail, the senior Australian officer, Lieutenant Colonel F.G. Galleghan, was aggrieved that Newey 'inflicted punishment on Australian prisoners of war' whom Galleghan felt it was his prerogative, as an Australian officer, to punish.[23]

The March 1946 verdict of the brigadier who adjudicated on the JAG report was that Newey was 'a man of violent temper' and 'entirely lacking in tact' whose actions were 'insufferable'.[24] However, this verdict did not warrant the laying of formal charges against Newey. An unnamed major examining the case concluded that the charges against Newey were 'purely disciplinary' and that, in 'cases emanating from the Far East', there were no security implications. On that basis, he concluded, 'the Security Service does not feel that it would be justified in undertaking its handling'.[25] That seems to have provided the final justification the adjudicating brigadier needed to recommend 'No further action'.[26] Notwithstanding, there is a disturbing theme in these affidavits wherein officers seemed more concerned about their seniority, status and reputations than about Newey's high-handed treatment and sometimes extreme punishment of

[17]TNA WO 32/15769, *Report on Newey*, p.2; Jonathan Moffatt, Facebook Messages to author re: T.H. Newey, 31 August 2024.
[18]Ibid., p.4.
[19]Ibid., pp.2-7, pp.13-15, pp.18-19, pp.22-23, p.36, p.41.
[20]Ibid., p.2.
[21]Ibid., p.3.
[22]Ibid., p.2.
[23]Ibid., p.3.
[24]Ibid., p.4, p.7; that brigadier signed his name on p.4 of the document but the signature is illegible.
[25]Ibid., p.5.
[26]Ibid., p.7.

enlisted men, which included beatings for dysentery sufferers who had been 'taken short' and had failed to defecate in latrines.[27] Newey issued order this that included men punished by confinement to a cell only being fed and watered every third day; sentencing a man at Changi to 28 days' solitary confinement for being in possession of equipment he was using to operate a secret radio; threatening to hand defaulters to the Japanese; and acting in concert with the Japanese camp commandant when issuing such punishments.[28] In his memoir, one former POW described Newey as 'a Pro-Jap snob', and accused him of obsessive concern about noise made near his quarters at Hintok, even when the source of that noise was community singing, or emanated from delirious hospital patients.[29] Newey's one-time adjutant, Major D.A. Duke, saw Newey as a self-made man whose prejudices seemed to ossify in captivity. 'He had terrific energy and was blessed with a good constitution. … He would go into every detail of the administration himself. … He detested correspondence and kept it to a minimum.'[30] Duke noted that, in his First World War service, Newey had risen only to the rank of corporal and implies that this led to an entrenched bias against officers, particularly those from the privileged classes. One possible interpretation of the complaints in this report is that Newey's dislike of members of the privileged classes was seen by those who fitted that description as his greatest crime; specifically, in circumstances where excessive punishment could have dire consequences for enlisted men's survival prospects.[31] Officers, both British and Australian, complained most vociferously about Newey's rudeness, his breaches of normal procedure, offensive accusations made in front of Japanese staff, and their own wounded pride.[32]

Another possible explanation for the hostility that existed between Newey and his fellow officers was his status as a citizen-soldier of the Straits Settlements Volunteer

[27]Ibid., p.31; this was at Konkoita in about September 1943.
[28]TNA WO 32/15769, *Report on Newey*, pp. 2, p.15, p.23, p.33 p.37; Lucy Robertson, "Changi: Military discipline in a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp, 1942-45", in Beyond Surrender: Australian Prisoners of War in the Twentieth Century, ed. Joan Beaumont, Lachlan Grant, and Aaron Pegram, (Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing, 2015), p.2, pp.171-172.
[29]Drummond, *Truth*, p.222; State Library of Victoria MS 13716, Alexander Hatton Drummond, *Papers, 1941-2001 [manuscript] Alexander Hatton Drummond 1911-1983,* n.d., p.255.
[30]TNA WO 32/15769, *Report on Newey*, pp.40-41.
[31]Australian Pte David Smith was sentenced by Lt Col. S.A.F. Pond to 28 days' detention on half-rations at Changi for selling a shirt. He was one of twenty men so detained who went to Thailand with 'F' Force. Of those twenty, only three survived the railway. See David F. Smith, Yasme Nei: Memoirs of F Force Thai-Burma Railway, (Self-published, 1996), p.37.
[32]Ibid., pp.2-3, p.13, pp.18-19, pp.22-23, p.24.

Force. The Straits Settlements Volunteer Force was a colonial version of the British Territorial Army. Its members were drawn largely from planters, bankers, professionals and colonial officials who trained on a part-time basis. Two of its Second World War members who wrote memoirs were Captain Stanley Pavillard and Lance-Corporal Denys Peek.[33] Newey's status as a high-ranking citizen-soldier may have been a source of jealousy or enmity amongst those who had been career soldiers in the inter-war period. The Straits Settlements Volunteers' military experience was similar to that of Second AIF soldiers who had served in the inter-war militia and one of the most prominent Australian citizen-soldiers was Major General Henry Gordon Bennett. Gordon Bennett's outspoken nature and his status as a part-time soldier had caused a bitter and long-running feud between him and members of the Australian Army's professional staff corps.[34] But, unlike Newey, Gordon Bennett's service in the Great War was particularly distinguished and he rose to become the youngest brigadier in the First AIF.[35] On the other hand, the parallels between Newey's service and that of one of his loudest Australian critics, Lieutenant Colonel Frederick Galleghan, are striking. In the Great War, Galleghan had not risen above the rank of sergeant but, in the Second World War, was a stickler for protocol and was considered by many apt to become hysterical if denied any of the courtesies of rank.[36] The tension between these two officers was unrelated to Newey's status as a citizen-soldier.

Evidence that the problems facing POW officers were complex and multifarious can be seen in Newey's comments on his experience at the Tonchan South camp in Thailand in June 1943. In his own report on 'H' Force, Newey described the effects of having a large number of officers encamped with his party. Since these officers insisted that, in line with Article 49 of the 1929 Geneva Convention, they do no manual labour, the result was additional pressure on members of the other ranks because the daily quota of men sent to work was calculated from every POW in camp.[37] Accordingly,

[33]Stanley S. Pavillard, *Bamboo Doctor*, (London: Pan Books, 1962); Ian Denys Peek, *One Fourteenth of an Elephant*, (Sydney: Pan Macmillan, 2003).
[34]Frank Legg, *The Gordon Bennett Story*, (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1965), p.200, pp.274–275; John Hetherington, *Blamey, controversial soldier: a biography of Field Marshal Sir Thomas Blamey, GBE, KCB, CMG, DSO, ED*, (Canberra, ACT: Australian War Memorial, 1973), p.257, p.335, p.339; John Wyett, *Staff Wallah At the fall of Singapore*, (St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1996), pp.12–13, pp.24–25, p.205, pp.209–210.
[35]Stan Arneil, *Black Jack: The Life and Times of Brigadier Sir Frederick Galleghan*, (South Melbourne: MacMillan, 1983), p.148.
[36]Ibid., p.58, pp.76-78, pp.123-124, p.148.
[37]Joan Beaumont, 'Officers and men: Rank and survival on the Thai-Burma railway', in *Beyond Surrender: Australian Prisoners of War in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Joan Beaumont,

to make up numbers, sick enlisted men had to join work parties while healthy officers remained behind. As Newey put it, 'This, together with a starvation diet and the hardness of the work on the railway, soon affected the health of the men and a large number became sick.'[38] Many of these same officers then 'sat around on their fat behinds', read books, and played bridge or chess, collected orchids and butterflies, or saved up for cars at the end of the war.[39] As mentioned, it may be quixotic from this remove to think they would do otherwise when the consequences for selflessness were so dire, but, equally, there should be little wonder disaffection in the ranks was widespread. As Newey put it, in the conditions that prevailed, with no hospital facilities and the infirm not being allowed to be evacuated, developing 'any sort of sickness meant almost certain death.'[40] The prevalence of such inequities makes it all the more remarkable that the victims of that injustice, the enlisted men who, on the railway, died at a rate between ten and twenty times higher than their officers, later remained silent, and for so long, about the true nature of the situation, especially in the face of officers' compounding their poor wartime performance by postwar misrepresentations of their record.[41] It has been suggested that Other Ranks (ORs) restraint arose, at least in part, from their postwar ambivalence or guilt about their surrender and survival; their reserve perhaps also speaks to conventions of an era different from those of the present day. However, whatever its precise motivation, its grip on veterans' tongues was both effective and enduring; in the author's view, its

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Lachlan Grant, and Aaron Pegram, (Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing, 2015), p.179.

[38]Thomas Henry Newey, *Report on 'H' Force,* King's College, London: Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, 1945, p.5.

[39] Stanley S. Pavillard, *Bamboo Doctor,* (London: Pan Books, 1962), p. 119; Peter Brune, *Descent into Hell: the Fall of Singapore - Pudu and Changi - the Thai-Burma Railway,* (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 2014), p.634; Pavillard, *Bamboo Doctor*, p.119; Newton, *Glory*, p.507. The officer in question was 13350 Lt Col. A.A. Johnson, Suffolk Regiment. See: Ronald Hastain, *White Coolies,* (London: Transworld Publishers, 1959), p.164; Dunlop, *Diaries*, p.218; Robert Hardie, *The Burma-Siam Railway: The secret diary of Dr Robert Hardie 1942-45,* (London: Imperial War Museum, 1983), p.134; Newton, *Glory*, p. 507.

[40]TNA WO 32/15769, Newey, *Report*, p.5.

[41]For the British, as has been shown, their overall railway mortality rate, was 21.1 percent; for their officers, the rate was between 2 and 2.5 percent, i.e., about ten times lower. For Australians, their overall railway mortality rate was 20.5 percent but, for their officers, the rate was 'Less than one percent', i.e., over twenty times lower, figures which rebut the alleged egalitarianism of the Second AIF. Sweeting, *Prisoners*, pp.571, p.588. See also the evidence of Lt-Col. C.H. Kappe at the Singapore trial of 'Lt Col. Banno Hirateru and six others' in: Rowland, *Kwai Story*, p.301.

long-standing hold on Australian POWs speaks to a respect for authority in marked contrast to the larrikinism and indiscipline allegedly prevalent in the Second AIF.[42]

The 1946 JAG report provides strong evidence Lieutenant Colonel T.H. Newey was a controversial POW leader. However, the JAG report is less definitive on the question of whether Newey was an effective POW leader. The brigadier evaluating the case against him argued that Newey's harsh punishments, while probably in breach of Section 40 of the Army Act, were issued 'in order to prevent the Japanese from taking control of discipline, and had they done so the treatment meted out would undoubtedly have been considerably harsher.'[43]

In his own report on 'H' Force, Newey does not explicitly make that same argument. Rather, he refers to himself at Tonchan South in June 1943 being 'often subjected to unpleasantness and humiliating treatment' as a result of his 'frequent complaints'.[44] He wrote that, at the Hintok Valley camp in July 1943, 'Protests [to the Japanese] seemed to produce nothing but retaliatory action'. As a result, 'I came to the conclusion that it was wiser to avoid them.'[45] And that is a damning admission from an officer whose primary role in that situation was protecting and advancing the welfare of his men. Surely 'unpleasantness and humiliating treatment' were not consequences so dire as to prevent an officer from interceding on behalf of his men, especially when there is evidence Japanese camp staff accorded grudging respect to officers who persisted with complaints regardless of intimidation.[46] Captain R.M. Horner was a member of Newey's 'H5' component of 'H' Force and with him at Tonchan South and Hintok.[47] In his diary on 31 May 1943, Horner noted that Newey protested to the Tonchan South camp authorities 'about sending officers out on working parties' but that

[42]Sally Moore McQuaid, *Singapore Diary: The Hidden Journal of Captain R.M. Horner,* (Gloucestershire, UK: Spellmount, 2006), p.25, p.165, p.197; Pyne, "Officers/ORs,", (Location: Publisher, Year), pp.159-160, p.198; Lachlan Grant, *Australian Soldiers in Asia-Pacific in World War II,* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2014), p.45.
[43]TNA WO 32/15769, *Report on Newey*, p.6.
[44]Ibid., pp.27-28.
[45]Ibid., p.29.
[46]Perhaps the most celebrated example is that of 'Weary' Dunlop being spirited away from the Kinsayok camp in October 1943 by the notorious Cpl Okada Seiichi, aka 'Dr Death', after disarming a guard. See Dunlop, *Diaries*, pp.298-290.
[47]Guy Newey, *Liberation Questionnaire of Lt-Col. T.H. Newey*, Ancestry.com.uk. n.d.,. https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/discoveryui-content/view/574078:61642?tid=&pid=&queryid=8adf05a8-8dc1-4906-8cb6-b13bbfa38e29&_phsrc=EPJ1&_phstart=successSource. Accessed 1 September 2024; McQuaid, *Horner Diary*, pp.86-91, pp.92-100.

protest was met with a denial which Horner described as 'our lowest ebb'.[48] On 24 June 1943, at the same location, the normally restrained Horner wrote: 'It is regrettable to have to state that our CO here is more concerned with a quiet life and appeasing the Japs [*sic*], than taking a strong line of resistance.'[49]

'Weary' Dunlop was with Newey at the Hintok camp complex and, according to his *War Diaries*, Newey's camp was in an 'appalling' condition with entirely inadequate provisions made for the sick and the dying.[50] To assist an Australian gravely ill with cerebral malaria, Dunlop had to 'disregard' one of Newey's orders.[51] On 10 July 1943, Dunlop noted that, in Newey's Hintok Valley camp, 'The Nipponese have interfered in administration matters so much and there is so much starvation and apathy, that there is difficulty in even keeping up the water supply to 280 patients in hospital.'[52] Dunlop went on to describe the high death-rate, the sick in an improvised 'hospital' being left to lie in their own filth, the backlog of grave-digging, and the failure to cremate cholera victims.[53] If, as the JAG brigadier argued, Newey's intention was to limit Japanese intervention and improve the conditions for his men, Dunlop's comments suggest that it was a strategy that failed.

Before concluding this note, it should be emphasised that the argument being advanced here is not that all POW officers had it easy, or that all were bad, or that those who did their jobs properly did not perform a vital role, and a role which made a significant difference to the survival rates of the men in their charge. What is being argued is that the performance of officers varied considerably and that this was an issue about which there has been a lack of frank public discussion in the postwar period. The value of the Newey report is that it provides an atypical instance of official confirmation of issues rarely spoken of in public forums, or written about in memoirs and official histories; diaries, if published in close to their original forms (as a few were), tend to be franker, 'warts and all' accounts and thus can be exceptions to the reticence evident in other records. As an illustration, no official history or other government issued documents have been found that show the stark contrast between officer survival rates and the survival rates of enlisted men. One has to dig deep to uncover those figures. More than forty years ago, Joan Beaumont wrote of 'the paucity of statistical evidence dealing explicitly with the question of officers' as opposed to other ranks' rates of survival'.[54]

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[48]McQuaid, *Horner Diary*, p.87.
[49] Ibid., p.92.
[50]Dunlop, *Diaries*, p.269.
[51]Dunlop's diary does not explain the nature of that order. See p.268.
[52]Ibid., p.258.
[53]Ibid.
[54]Beaumont, 'Privilege,' p.87.

In concert with factors including a dynamic of changing attitudes to war memories, there remained, in the postwar period, a prevailing and prolonged veteran silence, in both formal and informal spheres, on the different experiences of officers and enlisted men while POWs. The silence or omissions by officers on the subject of rank differentiation is readily understood: in Australia such a framing of the narrative was inconsistent with the Anzac legend's tenets on shared privation and leadership by example, meaning that unexpurgated accounts were likely to provide examples uncomplimentary to the Australian officer class. British officers probably shared similar concerns. However, for those who had been members of the other ranks, their prolonged silence is less easily explained. According to Private George Aspinall, while former enlisted POWs remained reluctant decades later to name names, their private discussions could descend into hate sessions.[55] As Aspinall saw it, he and his comrades maintained their public reserve because 'we were supposed to be soldiers' and 'We perhaps tried to live up to a code, something set by our forefathers.'[56] A range of other reasons could be advanced to explain veterans' reticence, but it is less clear why, more than eighty years after the Second World War ended, that illusion is prolonged. While veterans' comments on the subject tended to be veiled, and individuals were rarely named, the disparities in prisoners' experiences based on rank are there for those who carefully read and accurately report on the record. So why don't we? Could it be that such a narrative would clash with the story of courage, sacrifice and fellowship, that we, as a listening public, seem to want to hear about our boys who survived the dreadful privations of Japanese captivity during the Second World War?[57] Could it be that we are so invested in the POW narrative as a

[55]Aspinall, the famous 'Changi photographer', was one of the AIF soldiers listed in Lt Col. F.G. Galleghan's report as being illegally punished by Newey in 1945. See Galleghan, *Report on Treatment*, p.51; Tim Bowden, "I Don't Think I Deserve A Pension – We Didn't Do Much Fighting,' Interviewing Australian Prisoners of War of the Japanese, 1942-1945," (Paper Presented at 'Prisoners of war: A conference on the Australian experience of captivity in the 20th century,' Australian National University, Canberra, Thursday, 6 June, 2013), p.45.

[56]Ibid.

[57]The precise words were used by Australian Prime Minister John Howard in 1998 were 'courage sacrifice and mateship'. In 1994, his predecessor, Paul Keating, spoke of 'courage, comradeship, sacrifice and resourcefulness". See Lachlan Grant, 'Monument and Ceremony: The Australian Ex-Prisoners of War Memorial and the Anzac legend,' in *Forgotten Captives in Japanese-Occupied Asia*. ed. Karl Hack and Kevin Blackburn, (London: Routledge, 2008), pp.43-44. In February 2025, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese spoke of 'sacrifice, courage and mateship'. See The Hon Anthony Albanese MP, *Speech at 20th Anniversary Australian Prisoners of War Memorial, 11 February 2024*. Office of the Prime Minister of Australia. 2024,

representation of our national characters, British and Australian, that we simply do not want to entertain evidence to the contrary?

Finally, whatever the precise answers to those questions may be, the Newey court-martial investigation provides a rare glimpse behind the veil and one which emanates from an official source. The JAG document on Newey's conduct has been in the public record for thirty years now but, even after that length of time, its import and implications seem to have been missed in the gloss put on Australia's, and possibly Britain's, chapter of the Japanese POW story. Unlike researchers engaged with this material two, three or four decades ago, those of us grappling with it now are no longer able to speak to the individuals who were there. As such, the Newey report is a valuable resource for researchers seeking to crack what was, in 1983, so aptly described as a 'conspiracy of silence'.[58]

https://www.pm.gov.au/media/20th-anniversary-australia-prisoners-war-memorial. Accessed 15 December 2024. See comments on this subject in Lucy Robertson, 'Changi', p.175; Joan Beaumont, 'Prisoners of War in Australian National Memory', In *Prisoners of War, Prisoners of Peace: Captivity, Homecoming and Memory in World War II*, edited by Bob Moore and Barbara Hately-Broad, (Oxford: Berg, 2005), pp.185-194, p.189.

[58]Beaumont, 'Privilege,' p.74.

Alexander S Burns, *Infantry in Battle, 1733-1783*. Warwick: Helion, 2025. 222 pp. 4 maps. ISBN 978-1804515433 (hardback). Price £35.00.

Alexander Burns's fascinating book is a social history of military tactics. He builds on research that has fundamentally changed our understanding of common soldiers in the eighteenth century, rejecting long-held ideas that they were tricked into service, then kept in the ranks only by brutal discipline. In his 2017 book *Motivation in War*, Ilya Berkovich showed that eighteenth-century military discipline involved negotiation between officers and men. Burns shows how this negotiated authority worked in battle. In their 2020 book *Prussian Army Soldiers and the Seven Years War*, Katrin and Sascha Möbius demonstrated that 'tactical decisions were made in a triangle between the high command, the officers on the spot and the men in the ranks, whereby the latter had the last say' (p.128). Burns expands on such findings. He describes the positive motivations that inspired many eighteenth-century soldiers, and he presents eighteenth-century infantry tactics as a process of negotiation between officers and men.

Given the weapons technology of the time, eighteenth-century officers typically wanted their troops to fire only when they got very close to the enemy, or to attack with the bayonet without firing at all. Burns describes, however, how common soldiers often preferred to shoot from distance, ideally from behind cover. 'Troops . . . were begged, cajoled, and threatened into holding their fire as long as they could bear'. However, 'a wide gulf remained between what officers hoped was theoretically possible and what soldiers actually practiced on the battlefield' (p.155).

Burns portrays the eighteenth century as a period of persistent tension between a 'more intuitive style of fighting' that 'made sense to the infantry soldiers who took part' and alternative approaches which emphasized strict discipline and control (p.81) He argues that the musket of the period was more accurate than has sometimes been recognized. Soldiers were trained to aim when firing and could hit a specific human target at a range of 100 yards. Often, 'the side which embraced the realities of eighteenth-century infantry combat, rather than the side which attempted to use preconceived notions regarding intimidating bayonet attacks, emerged victorious' (p.196).

The eighteenth century is famous as the era when well-drilled troops manoeuvred in tight formations, often marching in step. Burns shows, however, that eighteenth-century soldiers could also break out of their rigid formations to respond to the circumstances of battle. It was 'incredibly common' for eighteenth-century troops to lie down under fire (p. 158). Burns presents examples of soldiers ducking down when

the enemy fired, then standing up to fire back. He also describes how, to catch up with other units or to reach the enemy line quicker, eighteenth-century infantry might break ranks, moving quickly or even running on the battlefield.

Burns also contributes to work showing that many of the military methods of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars were already in use in the preceding decades. French revolutionary armies are famous for using skirmishers to provide fire support for line infantry. Burns, however, provides evidence of this practice already in the Seven Years War, and demonstrates its widespread use by 'Hessian' units in the American Revolutionary War. He also notes that the deeper and more manoeuvrable column formations associated with French revolutionary armies had already been used on the battlefield by the Austrians in the Seven Years War.

Burns's study is ambitious, examining battlefields across Europe and North America from 1733 to 1783, using material from numerous archives in Britain, Germany and the United States. Given such admirable breadth of perspective, it may seem churlish to ask for more. Nevertheless, by starting in 1733, Burns raises questions about the situation before then. The age of the flintlock musket and socket bayonet started in the late seventeenth century, not the mid eighteenth. Burns argues that the 1733-5 War of the Polish Succession 'began a unique period of infantry battle' (p.176). However, without detailed discussion of the period before, the reader cannot judge whether this was in fact the case. Burns describes the 'Prussomania' which swept Europe in the later eighteenth century in response to the successes of Frederick the Great. He argues that the Prussians were crucial in fostering ideas that soldiers should be subjected to exact discipline and move like clockwork. Certainly, the Prussians re-introduced the practice of marching in step. However, the cult of order had existed across Europe and its armies from the mid seventeenth century. Burns himself notes that Humphrey Bland – whose 1727 work codified British methods from the age of Marlborough – presented similar principles to those of the Prussians. And what about Louis XIV's famous drillmaster Jean Martinet? Hopefully, future scholarship will integrate the Nine Years War and War of the Spanish Succession with the later period to give us a more comprehensive understanding of the realities of infantry combat in the age of the flintlock musket.

In a study of the mechanics of combat, I would have liked to see some mention of John Keegan's classic 1976 work *The Face of Battle*, which really defined the field. Burns notes his debt to Rory Muir, and it would have been nice if he had engaged with Muir's 1998 book *Tactics and the Experience of Battle in the Age of Napoleon*, which emphasized, as Burns does, the difference between drill manuals and the practical reality of combat. When Burns describes soldiers' anxieties about hand-to-hand combat, and discusses infantry's experiences facing cavalry, he is substantially paralleling what Keegan and

Muir said, and this reviewer would have liked to see him stand a bit more securely on the shoulders of previous giants.

Nevertheless, Burns has written an important book, which will be essential reading for all those who want to understand what battle was really like in the eighteenth century. Those researching the experience of combat in more recent periods should also take careful note.

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DOI: 10.25602/GOLD.bjmh.v12i3.2008

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES (July 2021)

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The editors are keen to encourage submissions from a variety of scholars and authors, regardless of their academic background. For those papers that demonstrate great promise and significant research but are offered by authors who have yet to publish, or who need further editorial support, the editors may be able to offer mentoring to ensure an article is successfully published within the Journal.

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- Line spacing should be single and a single carriage return applied between paragraphs.

BJMH Specific Conventions

- Spelling follows British English conventions i.e. –ise endings where appropriate, colour etc., 'got' not 'gotten', etc. The Oxford 'Mini Dictionary of Spelling' and 'The Oxford Dictionary for Writers and Editors' are invaluable guides.
- Verb past participles: -ed endings rather than –t endings are preferred for past participles of verbs i.e. learned, spoiled, burned. While is preferred to whilst.
- Contractions should be removed wherever found and replaced by the full phrase i.e. 'didn't' would become 'did not'.
- Foreign words like *weltanschauung* or *levée en masse* must be italicised.
- Sentences should NOT have a double space between them. This is an antiquated practice from the early days of typewriters and monospace type and should have died out fifty years ago. Feel free to point proponents at this explanation: http://www.slate.com/articles/technology/technology/2011/01/space_invaders.html (Accessed 19 July 2022)
- The Oxford comma is to be avoided unless there is a clear and tangible reason for its inclusion (i.e. to avoid confusion when two list items are given that could be considered separate or linked in different circumstances.
- All acronyms should be spelled out in full upon first reference with the acronym to follow within brackets e.g. British Expeditionary Force (BEF).
- Upon first reference the full name and title of an individual should be used as it was as the time of reference i.e. 'On 31 July 1917 Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig,

Commander-in-Chief of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF), launched the Third Battle of Ypres.'

- When referring to an historical figure, e.g. King Charles, use that form, when referring to the king later in the text, use king in lower case, e.g. 'the king failed…'.
- Generally, designations of twentieth century and later military formations below the level of Army (e.g. Third Army etc.) are given without ordinals, so XXX Corps, 50 Division, 23 Brigade, 11 Battalion, do not use 50th Division, 23rd Brigade, etc. Pre-1900 formations will use ordinals e.g. the 42nd Foot, 8th Dragoons, etc. NB. The definite article should not be used before unit identifiers without ordinals, e.g. '50 Division launched their offensive…' NOT … 'The 50 Division launched their offensive….'
- Dates are given without ordinals, e.g. 19 July 2022.
- Centuries are spelled out and use lower case, so 'eighteenth-century armies' or 'the thirteenth century', unless in a title. Note the hyphenation for adjectival use.

Illustrations, Figures and Tables:

- Must be suitable for inclusion on an A5 portrait page.
- Included within the body of the text.
- Centred.
- Text should not be smaller than 8 pt Gill Sans MT font.
- Should be numbered sequentially with the title below the illustration, figure or table in 10pt bold, e.g. **Figure 3: Fighting for Barricades in Manchester, (Le Queux, Great War, opposite p. 222)**
- Any necessary acknowledgement or citation can either be at the end of the title (if short) or in a separate footnote.

Quotations:

- Short (less than three lines of continuous quotation): placed in single quotation marks unless referring to direct speech.
- Long (more than three lines of continuous quotation): No quotation marks of any kind. No change in font size, standard footnote citation at the end of passage.
- Punctuation leading into quotations is only necessary if the punctuation itself would have been required were the quotation not there. i.e. : ; and , should only be present if they were required to begin with.
- Full stops are acceptable inside or outside of quotation marks depending upon whether the quoted sentence ended in a full stop in the original work i.e. Mitchell deconstructed the chauvinist, realist paradigm when he argued 'yummy, yummy, yummy I've got love in my tummy'. He further elucidated the neo-liberalist

weltanschauung when he argued: 'and I feel like loving you.' Note end of sentence so punctuation inside the brackets.

- When quoting a text maintain the form of words used in that text. This may include non-UK English spellings, non-standard punctuation or variations from the usual BJMH style e.g. ordinals in unit numbers or dates.

Footnoting:

- All references should be in footnotes not endnotes. These can be easily switched between using the relevant feature on MS Word.
- Footnote numeral should come at the end of the sentence and after the full stop. The journal does not normally allow mid-sentence referencing and footnoting. Only in exceptional circumstances will footnote numerals be allowed at the end of clauses where it is essential for comprehension.
- Footnotes at the end of paragraphs with multiple references covering that section are acceptable so long as the citations themselves are divided by semi-colons.
- If citation management software is used the footnotes in the submitted file must stand alone and be editable by the editorial team.

Citations:

- For books: Author, *Title in Italics*, (place of publication: publisher, year of publication), p. # or pp. #-#.
- *Op cit.* should be shunned in favour of shortened citations.
- For journals: Author, 'Title in quotation marks', *Journal Title in Italics*, Vol. #, Iss. # (or No.#), (Season/Month, Year) pp. #-# (p. #).
- For edited volumes: Chapter Author, 'Chapter title' in Volume Author/s (ed. or eds), *Volume title in italics*, (place of publication: publisher, year), p. # or pp. #-#.
- Primary sources: Archive name (Archive acronym), Catalogue number of equivalent, *'source name or description' in italics* if publicly published, p. #/date or equivalent. Subsequent references to the same archive do not require the Archive name.
- Shortened citations should include Author surname, shortened title, p.# for books. As long as a similar practice is used for journals etc., and is done consistently, it will be acceptable.
- Ibid.: In line with the latest Chicago Guide to Style, the journal will no longer use 'Ibid.' for consecutive citations. Shortened citations, as above, should be used instead.

- Internet sources: Author, 'title', URL Accessed date. The time accessed may also be included, but is not generally required, but, if used, then usage must be consistent throughout.

Examples of Citations:

[1]Frank McLynn, *The Burma Campaign: Disaster into Triumph 1942-45*, (London: Vintage Books, 2010), p. 81.

[2]McLynn, Burma Campaign, p. 82.

[3]Michael Collins, 'A fear of flying: diagnosing traumatic neurosis among British aviators of the Great War', *First World War Studies*, 6, 2 (2015), pp. 187-202.

[4]Michael Howard, 'Men against Fire: The Doctrine of the Offensive in 1914', in Peter Paret (ed.), *Makers of Modern Strategy*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), pp. 510-526.

[5]The UK National Archives (hereinafter TNA) CAB 19/33, Lieutenant-General Sir Henry Sclater, evidence to Dardanelles Commission, 1917.

[5]TNA CAB 19/33, Lieutenant-General Sir Henry Sclater, evidence to Dardanelles Commission, 1917.

[6]Shilpa Ganatra, 'How Derry Girls Became an Instant Sitcom Classic', *The Guardian*, 13 February 2018, https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2018/feb/13/derry-girls-instant-sitcom-classic-schoolgirls-northern-ireland. Accessed 20 April 2019.

Note: Articles not using the citation style shown above will be returned to the author for correction prior to acceptance for publication.