*English Historical Review* Vol. CXXXIX No. 600 Advance Access publication on 6 September 2024
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# *War, the State and Local Office-Holders in Britain, 1689–1750*[*]

'I have not time to say more but to beg You will give my duty to the Queen, and let her know Her Army has had a Glorious Victory', scribbled the first duke of Marlborough, Queen Anne's captain-general, to his wife late on 13 August 1704 from the field of the battle of Blenheim.[1] Marlborough and his army's most celebrated victory against France stunned contemporaries. It heralded a remarkable transformation in the balance of geopolitical power in Western Europe and in Britain's military reputation. From being a pensioner of France and a barely second-rate power during Charles II's reign (1660–85), by the end of the War of the Spanish Succession in 1713, Britain had emerged as a dominant force on the European stage.

Historians have sought to explain this transformation in two interconnected ways. Firstly, they have pointed to the political circumstances of the late seventeenth century that allowed it to occur. The Revolution of 1688–9 brought about the replacement of the Catholic James II with his eldest Protestant daughter, Mary II, and her Dutch husband, William III. They immediately led Britain into the Nine Years War against France, with parliament's support. Parliamentary backing was crucial to ensure military funding, with the result that parliament sat on an annual basis. In return, William agreed to a range of limitations on royal power, thus creating a Protestant parliamentary monarchy and a constitutional stability which continued to develop after 1714. Secondly, and closely related to this development, Britain became increasingly adept at fighting wars because of the activities of the British 'fiscal-military state', a concept advanced by John Brewer in 1989 to explain the British state's success in mobilising money and manpower to fight wars.[2]

* I wish to thank Erica Charters, the late Aaron Graham and editors of the *English Historical Review* for their comments at various stages of this project. I also wish to thank the following for research funding for this article: the Leverhulme Trust through the award of a Philip Leverhulme Prize; the Henry Huntington Library, San Marino, through the award of an Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Fellowship, and the British Academy for a Small Research Grant. Walpole (Houghton) MS, Ch (H) Pol. Papers 80, is cited by permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library. National Records of Scotland, GD205/33/3/2/13, is cited with the kind permission of Sir Francis Ogilvy.

1. Cited in W.S. Churchill, *Marlborough: His Life and Times*, II (London, 1934), p. 456.

2. J. Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State, 1688–1783* (London, 1989). For important earlier works on British financial and fiscal history in this period, see P.G.M. Dickson, *The Financial Revolution in England: A Study in the Development of Public Credit,*



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This article seeks to expand historical understandings of the 'fiscal-military state' by emphasising the pivotal role of local office-holders in providing logistical support to the army and recruiting soldiers for Britain's eighteenth-century wars. The scope of research into the 'fiscal-military state' has expanded since Brewer expounded the concept, but focus has remained on the raising and spending of money to pay for British troops and subsidise foreign troops and the development of the bureaucracy of the central state.[3] One line of enquiry has explored how states continued to be committed to outsourcing their military needs, whether by relying on private interests or on more overtly commercial ones. Indeed, the notion of the 'contractor state' has become as influential as that of the 'fiscal-military state'.[4] However, little has been written on the contribution of local government.[5]

This article examines local office-holder involvement in the 'fiscal-military state' between 1689, when Britain entered the first of a series of major wars, and 1750, after the end of the War of the Austrian Succession. This was a formative era in the development of the 'fiscal-military state' in Britain in several ways. The Bill of Rights (1689) made a permanent army in peacetime illegal unless it had parliamentary consent. The post-Revolutionary parliament determined the army's size through voting on funding. These were responses to long-standing concerns over the potential threat that 'standing armies' posed to parliamentary government.[6]

*1688–1756* (London, 1967); J.V. Beckett, 'Land Tax or Excise: The Levying of Taxation in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century England', *English Historical Review*, c (1985), pp. 285–308; P.K. O'Brien, 'The Political Economy of British Taxation, 1660–1815', *Economic History Review*, xli (1988), pp. 1–32.

3. J. Brewer, 'The Eighteenth-Century British State: Contexts and Issues', in L. Stone, ed., *An Imperial State at War: Britain from 1689–1815* (London, 1994), pp. 52–71; J. Brewer and E. Hellmuth, eds, *Rethinking Leviathan: The Eighteenth-Century State in Britain and Germany* (Oxford, 1999); J.S. Wheeler, *The Making of a World Power: War and the Military Revolution in Seventeenth-Century England* (Stroud, 1999); M.J. Braddick, *State Formation in Early Modern England, c.1550–1700* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 214–21; C. Storrs, 'Introduction: The Fiscal-Military State in the "Long" Eighteenth Century', in C. Storrs, ed., *The Fiscal Military State in Eighteenth-Century Europe: Essays in Honour of P.G.M. Dickson* (Farnham, 2009), pp. 1–22.

4. J.E. Cookson, *The British Armed Nation, 1793–1815* (Oxford, 1997); A. Mackillop, *'More Fruitful than the Soil': Army, Empire and the Scottish Highlands, 1715–1815* (East Linton, 2000); S. Conway, *War, State and Society in Mid-Eighteenth-Century Britain and Ireland* (Oxford, 2006); G.E. Bannerman, *Merchants and the Military in Eighteenth-Century Britain: British Army Contracts and Domestic Supply, 1739–1763* (London, 2008); R. Knight and M. Wilcox, *Sustaining the Fleet, 1793–1815: War, the British Navy and the Contractor State* (Woodbridge, 2010); J. Fynn-Paul, ed., *War, Entrepreneurs, and the State in Europe and the Mediterranean, 1300–1800* (Leiden, 2014); A. Graham, *Corruption, Party and Government in Britain, 1702–1713* (Oxford, 2015); R. Torres-Sánchez, P. Brandon and M. 't Hart, 'War and Economy: Rediscovering the Eighteenth-Century Military Entrepreneur', *Business History*, lx (2018), pp. 4–22.

5. For historians who have explored aspects of local government's contributions as well as voluntarist ones, see J. Innes, *Inferior Politics: Social Problems and Social Policies in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford, 2009), pp. 64–74; E. Charters, *Disease, War and the Imperial State: The Welfare of the British Armed Forces during the Seven Years' War* (Chicago, IL, 2014); G.L. Hudson, 'Disabled Veterans and the State in Early Modern England', in D.A. Gerber, ed., *Disabled Veterans in History* (rev. edn, Ann Arbor, MI, 2012), pp. 117–44; M. Neufeld, 'The Framework of Casualty Care during the Anglo-Dutch Wars', *War in History*, xix (2012), pp. 427–44.

6. A.J. Guy, *Oeconomy and Discipline: Officership and Administration in the British Army, 1714–63* (Manchester, 1985), pp. 5-6. For concerns about standing armies, see L.G. Schwoerer,



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The period saw the growth of a centralised, professionalised infrastructure for the armed forces. Much of this infrastructure concerned naval administration and particularly the naval dockyards, which employed 9,618 people by 1730.[7] A centralised army administration emerged too, at the War Office. The War Office remained small though; by 1782, after almost a century of prolonged warfare, the office still only had around thirty employees.[8] Moreover, the army's centralised support infrastructure in Britain was very limited. There were few barracks. The army had no transport service to move troops and luggage. Nor did it have professional administrators in the localities to organise support. Instead, the army's support infrastructure was facilitated by thousands of local, unpaid, civilian office-holders, whose activities form the focus of this article.

Attention to local office-holders is imperative for three reasons. Firstly, local office-holders did much of the central state's work when it came to military support services. Parliament tasked local office-holders with receiving the instructions of the secretaries of state, the Privy Council, the secretary-at-war and the War Office to manage a range of essential aspects fundamental to the army's existence. The bulk of this work was undertaken by those who already carried demanding administrative responsibilities in their parishes and counties: parish constables and justices of the peace (JPs), although other local office-holders were also involved, from the lord lieutenant of the county to parish overseers of the poor and churchwardens.

Secondly, a focus on local office-holders is important because of the very large number of them who were concerned with military-related tasks. A significant proportion of the county elite served as magistrates. After the Revolution of 1688–9, the number of JPs rose dramatically. There were 919 JPs in 1700.[9] Parish elites were also widely involved. There were over 9,700 constables in England and Wales on the basis of one for each parish, probably more since some communities had two constables. The office of constable was usually held for a period of a year, occasionally two, by rotation among the more prosperous male heads of parish households.[10] Over the course of Queen Anne's twelve-year reign, when impressment into the army was at its height, quite possibly somewhat under 116,400 men in England and Wales,

*'No Standing Armies!' The Antiarmy Ideology in Seventeenth-Century England* (Baltimore, MD, 1974); H. Smith, *Armies and Political Change in Britain, 1660–1750* (Oxford, 2021).

7. N.A.M. Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean: A Naval History of Britain, 1649–1815* (2004; London, 2005), p. 297; D.A. Baugh, *British Naval Administration in the Age of Walpole* (Princeton, NJ, 1965).

8. Guy, *Oeconomy and Discipline*, pp. 25–7; *An Eighteenth-Century Secretary at War: The Papers of William Viscount Barrington*, ed. T. Hayter, Army Records Society, iv (1988), pp. 77–81.

9. L.K.J. Glassey, *Politics and the Appointment of Justices of the Peace, 1675–1720* (Oxford, 1979), p. 16.

10. J.R. Kent, *The English Village Constable, 1580–1642* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 20–21, 74–6; M. Goldie, 'The Unacknowledged Republic: Officeholding in Early Modern England', in T. Harris, ed., *The Politics of the Excluded, c.1500–1850* (Basingstoke, 2001), pp. 153–94, at 161.



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out of an estimated total population of 5.6 million people, served as their parish's constable and routinely dealt with business relating to the army. In this context, the number of the state's professional administrators—over 12,000 by the mid-1720s—no longer seems so large.[11]

Thirdly, an examination of the involvement of local office-holders is important because their participation was fundamental to central government. Local office-holders already operated as long-established and accepted mediators of central-government policies in their capacities as dispensers of law, order and relief. They were familiar rather than intrusive, alien presences within their neighbourhoods. By virtue of their local office, and sometimes because of their personal standing, they had the capacity, the legitimacy, to make the centre's military-related demands more acceptable in the localities.[12] They were not only mediators but also influencers of parliamentary policy. Wealthier local office-holders had a voice in parliamentary matters as voters or, more rarely, as members of parliament (MPs). When it came to military administration, they already organised the militia, a non-professional, defensive force which was raised and run on a county-wide basis.[13] Moreover, parliament preferred local, unpaid civilian office-holders to organise the army's support and manpower requirements in Britain rather than professional administrators, since there existed more generally an antipathy towards a larger, professionalised, centralised state.[14]

This article argues that the eighteenth-century 'fiscal-military' British state was not only the product of a combination of professional administrators, taxpayers, contractors and the armed forces. Local office-holders—part of a system of governance that has been described as 'the old world of the parish republic'—also played a major role, and far outnumbered the professional bureaucrats.[15] The first part of the article examines the work which local office-holders undertook to support the army in Britain: quartering troops, arranging transport, arresting deserters, subsidising travelling soldiers and their families, and providing care for the sick and veterans. The second half of the article examines the role of local office-holders in army recruitment. The processes behind the forcible recruitment of men into the British army offer an illuminating study into the relationship between regimes, parliament and local governors and the latters' perceptions and backing of the 'fiscal-military state'.

11. For estimated numbers of professionals, see G. Holmes, *Augustan England: Professions, State and Society, 1680–1730* (London, 1982), p. 255.

12. M.J. Braddick, *The Nerves of State: Taxation and the Financing of the English State, 1558–1714* (Manchester, 1996), pp. 174–7.

13. J.R. Western, *The English Militia in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1965), pp. 16–17, 47.

14. J. Brewer and E. Hellmuth, 'Introduction: Rethinking Leviathan', in eid., eds, *Rethinking Leviathan*, pp. 1–22, at 16–17.

15. For this description, see Goldie, 'Unacknowledged Republic', p. 183.



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## I

Local office-holders undertook a range of routine but crucial military support services for central government. The most important of these routine services was quartering troops. Since the Petition of Right of 1628, it had been illegal for troops to be billeted on private householders without their permission. Instead they were usually quartered in small groups in inns and alehouses, which could lead to tensions within communities between soldiers and local inhabitants. Yet there was no movement to demand the construction of barracks to house troops. Barracks were widely viewed as segregating the army from civil society and thus potentially making it the tool of a ruler or general with designs on parliament and the constitution. The Mutiny Acts from December 1689 provided instructions about quartering. Local office-holders, rather than the unit's commanding officer, were responsible for assigning quarters.[16] On the whole, the proprietors of inns and alehouses disliked military guests—and were more than prepared to articulate 'the Hardships of having Soldiers Quartered' on them.[17] Constables might baulk at imposing these unwelcome guests on their neighbours. Army personnel could be belligerent, and constables were in the front line for conflict with them.

When soldiers moved on, after receiving marching orders from the War Office, their removal was another task that local office-holders had to shoulder, since parliament was not minded to provide the army with its own transport service. Indeed, it has been posited that 'the particular and effective restraint the civil arm came to place upon the military was precisely the restraint of transport'.[18] Thus the army was utterly reliant on civilians to move from one place to another within Britain. Under an amendment to the Mutiny Act in 1692, a detailed procedure was set down which required army officers to show their orders to JPs, who would then empower constables to procure transport from parishes along the marching route. Payment for this service was set by statute.[19] The requirement that private individuals should haul the army's lumber was another fraught obligation, particularly at busy times during the agricultural year or when troops were frequently on the move. Since there was a risk that carts might be damaged and horses injured, some individuals simply refused to co-operate. As a result, the 1709 Mutiny Act stipulated that those who were unco-operative would be subject to financial penalties.[20]

16. J. Childs, *The British Army of William III, 1689–1702* (Manchester, 1987), pp. 91–3.

17. Woking, Surrey History Centre [hereafter SHC], QS2/6/1721/Eas/37, Information of John Volverston.

18. R.C. Jarvis, 'Army Transport and the English Constitution: With Special Reference to the Jacobite Risings', *Journal of Transport History*, ii (1955–6), pp. 101–20, at 101.

19. Ibid., pp. 110–11.

20. Wakefield, West Yorkshire Archives Service [hereafter WYAS], Quarter Session Rolls, QS1/57/6; Kew, The National Archives [hereafter TNA], WO 4/19/53–4; Jarvis, 'Army Transport', pp. 112–13; Childs, *British Army of William III*, pp. 98–9.



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As well as providing transport for units on the move, local office-holders also found themselves involved in conveying and sustaining soldiers travelling on their own and discharged soldiers who were journeying to their place of legal settlement or where they wished to 'exercise trades'.[21] This duty devolved upon office-holders as part of their more general responsibilities for monitoring travellers who passed through their area. After being discharged from the army, soldiers were issued with discharge papers by the War Office so that they could prove that they were not deserters and to allow them to return home without being apprehended as vagrants by parish office-holders. These were crucial documents, as soldiers were aware. When Daniel Standfast was discharged from the army, the War Office issued him a pass in 1715 to go to his place of settlement at Glastonbury, Somerset. Three decades later, in April 1746, it appears that he still had the pass, produced in the context of a settlement examination.[22]

Parishes also provided financial support for soldiers and ex-soldiers as they passed through, as they did for other travellers who asked for assistance.[23] For places which were situated on major roads or were seaports, this could involve a significant outlay of parish or civic funds. In some cases, constables directed requests for repayment or an additional allowance to magistrates at the Quarter Sessions. The constable of Brotherton, West Yorkshire, asked in April 1714 that the town be recompensed since 'by reason of y:[e] disbanding of y:[e] Army y:[e] last year, such vast numbers of Soldiers disbanded have come and demanded relief and lodging late at night that it has been an extraordinary Charge to y:[e] s:[d] Town because of its lying upon y:[e] Road'.[24] Aside from the financial cost of relieving serving or disbanded soldiers, assessing and dealing with each case took time and could be dangerous. The conveyor of vagrants for the West Riding complained to the Quarter Sessions in January 1718 that he and his servants were 'very much abused by disbanded Soldiers having their Swords', and requested that they be disarmed.[25]

Local office-holders played an important role in transporting or securing another type of soldier—the deserter. Their assistance and vigilance was necessary since they provided an on-the-ground, ready-made system for handling deserters, including conveying them securely 'from Constable to Constable'.[26] As the secretary-at-war explained in 1724,

21. A.E. Cormack, *'These Meritorious Objects of the Royal Bounty': The Chelsea Out-Pensioners in the Early Eighteenth Century* (London, 2017), p. 142.

22. Taunton, Somerset Heritage Centre, D\P\ed/13/3/2. For another example, see Carlisle, Cumbria Archive Centre [hereafter CAC], Q/11/1/160/8, Petition of Joseph Steel.

23. Innes, *Inferior Politics*, p. 70; CAC, Ca/4/4, Carlisle Chamberlains' Accounts, 1695–1727, 1714–15, fo. 5; CAC, Q/11/1/42/4, Petition of Henry Jackson, Penrith, High Constable; Preston, Lancashire Archives, QSP 1235/4.

24. WYAS, QS1/53/4.

25. WYAS, QS1/57/3.

26. TNA, SP 44/101/299. See also TNA, WO 4/9/226; WO 4/20/23, 41; WO 4/21/79.



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when ordering Lieutenant-General Charles Wills to collect and pay the mounting expenses incurred by a deserter from Wills's regiment who had been detained by order of a JP and secured in Gloucester gaol, 'for without Care be taken for them [the JP and gaol-keeper] to have their just Demands it will be impossible for any Deserter to be Secured'.[27] During wartime, the magistrates of seaports could be particularly useful in apprehending deserters returning from the Continent.[28] Relative confidence in the support provided by local office-holders is suggested by Major-General George Carpenter's threat in August 1709 to track deserters from the army fighting overseas to their parishes in Britain.[29]

Parliament had made the decision that organising the accommodation and transport of soldiers very clearly lay within the remit of local office-holders. However, the care of sick and injured soldiers and veterans was viewed as requiring a more central response. The late seventeenth century had seen the beginnings of centrally organised medical care for members of the armed forces. Inspired by Louis XIV's Hôtel des Invalides, Charles II had established military hospitals for aged and infirm soldiers at Kilmainham, Dublin, in 1679 and Chelsea in 1681. Mary II and William III founded the Royal Naval Hospital at Greenwich in 1694, a similar institution for sailors.[30] The navy's Sick and Wounded Board, which operated in peace as well as war, organised the medical care of sailors by contractors; from 1745, parliament committed to a state-funded hospital for naval casualties at Haslar, Portsmouth, with the aim of providing better and more organised care.[31] Yet because this central provision was underfunded and understaffed, in effect it became another responsibility for local office-holders.

During the Nine Years War, when wartime finance was especially shaky, port towns were in the front line for caring for ill or injured soldiers. By April 1690 the Medway towns of Rochester, Strood and Chatham were asking for reimbursement for maintaining sick troops.[32] Harwich's mayor was forced to accommodate a number of soldiers in the Town Hall; the town and one of its surgeons were not reimbursed until 1694–5. The situation reoccurred during the War of the Spanish Succession. In July 1709, JPs claimed that parish constables between Harwich and Bow had spent £1,000 on the care and transport of sick and wounded soldiers arriving from the Low Countries, paid for from the parish rate and by increased local taxation instigated by the magistrates, which prompted the government to intervene by

27. TNA, WO 4/25/149.

28. TNA, SP 44/101/198–9.

29. Maidstone, Kent Archives Service, Kent History and Library Centre [hereafter KHLC], U1590 O139/5, Major-General George Carpenter to General James Stanhope, 13 Aug. 1709.

30. C. Stevenson, *Medicine and Magnificence: British Hospital and Asylum Architecture, 1660–1815* (New Haven, CT, 2000), pp. 32, 50, 67–8.

31. Baugh, *British Naval Administration*, pp. 49–52.

32. TNA, SP 44/236/215.



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appointing an official to co-ordinate care.[33] In 1747 parish constables between Harwich and Bow again complained to the War Office about the expense and trouble of conveying sick and wounded soldiers. In response, the government once more appointed an official to take care of such individuals.[34] Even in peacetime, communities might have to pay out in advance for sick soldiers who had fallen ill while on the march.[35]

Once former soldiers had reached their place of legal settlement, those who had been injured or disabled in military service might call upon local assistance. Again this was because the centralised provision which had emerged with the establishment of hospitals at Chelsea and Greenwich proved unable to cope with the sheer number of men who had served in the large armies of the era from 1689 to 1713. The situation was not helped by the view that a Chelsea pension was a privilege, not a right. Some former soldiers were assisted by Chelsea Hospital, either as residents, or more frequently, given the growth of the army in relation to the places available, as out-pensioners. There were 4,000 or so in the latter category by the end of the War of the Spanish Succession. Chelsea Hospital undoubtedly helped to relieve local communities of the financial burden of some ex-soldiers, although parishes in Chelsea and Westminster, where a number of out-pensioners were living, also took the strain and in 1703 were reported to be owed around £5,000 dating back to the late 1690s.[36] Moreover, since out-pensioners could be called upon to undertake garrison duty, this left the problem of who would support their families; occasionally local office-holders asked that ex-soldiers in this category be excused so that they could remain within their parish to provide for their dependants.[37] Magistrates were incorporated into the Chelsea organisation from 1719 when they were called upon to monitor the credentials of out-pensioners.[38]

Thus, many injured and aged soldiers were forced to look for local support. There was a long-standing precedent for this. A county pension scheme had been established in 1593 to provide for injured soldiers, funded by parish rates and administered by county treasurers and JPs. The county scheme was revised on several occasions during the early and mid-seventeenth century, and again in 1662. It lapsed in 1679, although its provisions lingered on under an earlier act of 1601.[39] Some ex-soldiers requested relief under the old county scheme.[40] James Lawrence of Sevenoaks told JPs in 1704 of his lengthy military career in

33. E. Gruber von Arni, *Hospital Care and the British Standing Army, 1660–1714* (Aldershot, 2006), pp. 93–4, 121, 168–9.

34. TNA, WO 4/44/176.

35. TNA, WO 4/29/200.

36. Cormack, *These Meritorious Objects*, pp. 53, 90–93.

37. TNA, WO 4/29/45, 48.

38. Cormack, *These Meritorious Objects*, pp. 209–10.

39. Hudson, 'Disabled Veterans', p. 122; Cormack, *These Meritorious Objects*, p. 88.

40. J. Childs, *The Army, James II and the Glorious Revolution* (New York, 1980), p. 35; Childs, *British Army of William III*, pp. 155–6; Innes, *Inferior Politics*, p. 65.



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the Restoration army before he was blinded in 1692. He petitioned for a county pension 'which is Established by an Act of Parliament, for all Disabled Soldiers & Salors'.[41] John Rowlay of Holden, East Yorkshire, was another Restoration soldier who had been semi-blinded in the army and petitioned JPs in 1707 for the same allowance 'that other poor distressed Soldiers has'.[42] In east and north Norfolk in 1738, seventy-three former soldiers and sailors received a pension from local rates, and sixty-nine did in 1739.[43]

Central government's inadequate attempts to provide care for sick, wounded and aged soldiers imposed considerable burdens on the localities. But local office-holders also had to intervene to manage a problem that the centre consistently evaded addressing in an adequate way—support for soldiers' families. This situation was the product of military policy, as well as the political inclination to provide as little permanent support for the army as possible. Throughout the period, army commanders believed that married soldiers should be strongly discouraged; wives, and the inevitable children, were a drain on a regiment's resources and distracted soldiers from their duties.[44] Despite its anti-marriage policy, the army could not dispose of women altogether, particularly when on campaign. After all, meals needed to be cooked, clothing laundered and the sick attended to, and soldiers, as men, could not be expected to undertake this highly gendered labour. A select number of soldiers, therefore, were permitted to marry. Their wives were officially maintained by the regiment and travelled with it at home and overseas to do this work.[45] These women were in a privileged position. Many more accompanied their spouses unofficially within Britain and thus were unable to follow their husbands when the regiment was deployed overseas.

Soldiers' families created a series of problems, both for the War Office and, more particularly, for local office-holders, since the War Office's response was to pass on responsibility for them as soon as possible. The War Office issued passes to soldiers' families to ensure they returned to their place of legal settlement.[46] War Office officials might not look too closely into whether applicants were who they purported to be. As a War Office official admitted in August 1743 when investigating a forged pass, 'Such Women usually come to this Office [in London] pretending they want to go to their Friends or Place of Abode, & with their Children Crying they make great Complaints of the Distress they

41. KHLC, Q/SB/27/162, Petition of James Lawrence.

42. Beverley, East Riding Archives [hereafter ERA], QSF/3/D17, Petition of John Rowlay.

43. Cormack, *These Meritorious Objects*, pp. 295–6.

44. J.A. Lynn II, *Women, Armies, and Warfare in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 2008), p. 78; J. Hurl-Eamon, *Marriage and the British Army in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 2014), pp. 35, 156. TNA, SP 44/41/41; WO 4/23/178–9, 189.

45. Childs, *British Army of William III*, p. 119. TNA, SP 44/105/72; WO 4/3/17.

46. Innes, *Inferior Politics*, p. 71, n. 50.



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are in here & beg very earnestly that Passes may be Granted them as Soldiers Wives'.[47] Occasionally, some form of official financial assistance was provided for families to travel to their place of settlement.[48] But aside from this infrequent acknowledgement that soldiers' families formed a special category, they were otherwise seen as similar to other groups of the transient poor. Families were rendered destitute as they trekked long distances across the country and local office-holders had to step in to substain them. When questioned at Marlborough in December 1741, Ann Langley stated that she was born in Edinburgh and her husband, with whom she had three children, had left with his regiment at Portsmouth. She asked for relief as she and her children made their way in the depths of winter to her husband's place of settlement at Nantwich, Cheshire.[49]

Destitute soldiers' families who were travelling on their own placed an extra financial burden on communities. But so did those who accompanied troops and, in the case of some regiments, families formed a large entourage.[50] Their presence added to already tense relations with innkeepers and local office-holders, who tended to view soldiers' wives as of dubious morality.[51] Communities not only had to deal with these stranger families in their midst but also provide for them when family disaster struck. The churchwardens and overseers of the poor of St Mary's, Carlisle, for instance, petitioned the Quarter Sessions for relief in 1715 after the parish was left with the upkeep of the two children of a soldier travelling from Ireland to Bristol who had died in the parish.[52] The mayor of Bristol complained to the War Office in 1733 that when one regiment marched out of the city, several soldiers' families were left behind 'in a starving Condition'.[53] Some cities on marching routes or which housed garrisons took precautionary measures against such eventualities. In 1729 the mayor of Carlisle, whose city held a garrison, made a list of married soldiers and their places of settlement, so that soldiers' wives and children could be returned there if they became a financial liability.[54] The office-holders of the parish of St Edmund's, Salisbury, undertook a similar initiative in around 1735 when drawing up a list of individuals who had no legal settlement in the parish and were likely to become chargeable, and these included several soldiers'

47. TNA, WO 4/38/273.

48. Arni, *Hospital Care*, p. 129.

49. Chippenham, Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre [hereafter WSHC], G22/1/128, Marlborough Borough Council, Court of Quarter Sessions, Vagrants Passes and Examinations.

50. *The Chronicles of John Cannon, Excise Officer and Writing Master,* II: *1734–1743*, ed. J. Money, British Academy Records of Social and Economic History, new ser., xliii (2010), p. 341.

51. Hurl-Eamon, *Marriage*, p. 41; University of Nottingham Manuscripts and Special Collections, Pw 2/308, Petition of the Innholders and Victualers of Mansfield to the duke of Newcastle, 1699; Southampton Archives [hereafter SA], SC9/4/344.

52. CAC, Q/11/1/116/5, Petition of the Churchwardens and Overseers of St Mary's Carlisle. See also CAC, Ca/4/4, 1714–15; SA, SC9/4/386.

53. TNA, WO 4/32/376–7.

54. CAC, Ca/2/459–460, 464, Carlisle Administrative Records.



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wives. They appear to have solved the problem at least temporarily and at a cost, with the overseers of the poor's accounts showing a payment of £11 *6s 6d* to the former mayor for 'sending Home the Soldiers Wives'.[55]

Local office-holders, therefore, undertook key tasks that kept the British army operational. These tasks consumed their time, sometimes endangered their person, and cost parishes money. Why did local office-holders obey these demands from the centre? Not all, of course, did co-operate and some ignored the legislation. Constables and magistrates made themselves scarce when soldiers turned up in their area to avoid having to quarter them. Others subverted the legislation for their own direct or indirect benefit. Magistrates routinely enjoyed sway over innholders since they licensed their premises; billeting requirements could give this power an extra edge. Office-holders took bribes to exempt certain establishments from billeting, distributed troops unevenly or were unwilling to punish innkeepers who refused to host soldiers.[56] It is telling that at the start of the Seven Years War, when the secretary-at-war wanted to find out how much accommodation there existed within inns and alehouses in England, he turned to excise officers rather than JPs or constables.[57] The latter group were equally likely to have a good idea of the capacity of establishments but might prove reluctant to provide accurate figures if this then resulted in their communities having a large number of soldiers quartered on them. Local office-holders could prove unreliable in other ways too. Some discharged those taken up for desertion or accepted a bribe to allow them to escape.[58] Nevertheless, non-compliance appears to have been relatively infrequent.

Local office-holders co-operated for a number of reasons. They were legally required to do so by act of parliament and could be prosecuted if they did not. When faced with intransigence, the War Office wrote to the attorney-general to request that the legislation be tightened, or waved the statute book at offenders.[59] Indeed, the fact that quartering arrangements were enshrined in law was a retort used by soldiers when faced with inhospitable landlords.[60] Additionally, there operated the more informal mechanisms of pressure, linked to various types of local patronage, and the prestige of serving the Crown as lord lieutenant and on the bench. Government ministers were also regional magnates and had local political interests and clientage networks. To forfeit these benefits, and obligations, was not an action to be undertaken lightly by

55. WSHC, G23/1/126, Salisbury City Council Overseers' Papers and Accounts.

56. Narcissus Luttrell, *A Brief Historical Relation of State Affairs from September 1678 to April 1714* (6 vols, Oxford, 1857), iv, p. 120. TNA, WO 4/18/21; WO 4/34/68–9, 87; SP 29/289/1; SP 41/13/132, 138.

57. *Eighteenth-Century Secretary*, ed. Hayter, p. 223.

58. TNA, SP 41/3/43; WO 4/13/147; WO 4/37/39.

59. TNA, WO 4/18/21; WO 4/36/276; WO 4/40/71.

60. SHC, QS2/6/1721/Eas/37.



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any of those concerned. Furthermore, a willingness to accept the duties connected with troops was one way in which towns and cities could signal their more general support for a regime. This had associated benefits, especially if boroughs returned ministerial supporters to parliament. The War Office was sympathetic to their subsequent requests, relayed by their MPs and supporters, to relieve them of quartering all or a sizeable number of troops.[61]

However, co-operation had an ideological basis too. This was centred on the fact that parliament—and thus its legislation—was almost universally respected as the main source of authority for legitimising national and local initiatives.[62] More specifically, the post-Revolutionary parliament controlled military expenditure and so had the financial power to shape the contours of the Crown's foreign policy initiatives. In this way, parliament, and thus MPs and their constituents, could determine the wars to be fought and make sure that they were broadly aligned with perceived national interests, whether those interests were economic, confessional or political. There was considerable—although distinctly not uncritical—public support for at least some of the broader objectives of the conflicts in this period. This was particularly the case in the initial stages of a war and, unsurprisingly, when the British army was successful. These objectives were debated and publicised in the rapidly growing print culture which was regional as well as metropolitan by the early eighteenth century.[63] As members of a politically aware and increasingly literate population, parish constables and JPs were conversant with the motives and aims of wars, and discerned why parliament required their efforts. Wartime patriotism, it might be argued, also prompted compliance.

Moreover, the Bill of Rights (1689) and, in particular, the Mutiny Acts had formalised the widely held principle that the civil magistrate—in whatever office—should have authority over the army when it came to the latter's interaction with civilians in Britain, thus emphasising the army's inferior position *vis-à-vis* the civil power. Burdensome as military-related tasks were to individual local office-holders, carrying out these tasks that parliament had assigned to them also empowered them and gave status to their office. This principle was exemplified by contemporary interpretations of the Riot Act of 1715, that troops could only act against rioters on the order of the civil magistrate.[64] The involvement of local office-holders in quartering, transportation and other military activities publicly represented the trust which parliament

61. TNA, WO 4/18/137; WO 4/27/281.

62. Innes, *Inferior Politics*, pp. 88–90.

63. T. Claydon, *William III and the Godly Revolution* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 122–47; M. Knights, *Representation and Misrepresentation in Later Stuart Britain: Partisanship and Political Culture* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 124–6, 148–51; P. Woodfine, *Britannia's Glories: The Walpole Ministry and the 1739 War with Spain* (Woodbridge, 1998), pp. 5–7, 217–18, 237–9; B. Harris, *A Patriot Press: National Politics and the London Press in the 1740s* (Oxford, 1993).

64. T. Hayter, *The Army and the Crowd in Mid-Georgian England* (London, 1978), pp. 9–13.



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had placed in them. The idea of the local office-holder as the more reliable agent of the central state was further emphasised by the clause in the Mutiny Act that required magistrates to attend troop musters as a check against fraud by army officers and to supervise the disbandment of troops.[65]

Ministers were certainly very cautious to avoid giving the impression that army officers and soldiers somehow possessed authority over their fellow countrymen and women. Indeed, the secretary-at-war—who held civil rather than military office—tended to side with the civil magistrate, even when the latter had behaved provocatively, for fear of a parliamentary outcry. In 1744, for instance, following an incident when Captain Samuel Bagshawe had assaulted a constable at Portsmouth who had refused to provide quarters, the War Office wrote to the town's mayor to request that he intervene to prevent legal proceedings against Bagshawe. Otherwise, the secretary-at-war, Sir William Yonge, would be obliged to prosecute innkeepers who contravened parliamentary legislation by refusing to supply soldiers with small beer, and the constable for neglect of duty for refusing to quarter Bagshawe's men. However, Yonge did little else to support Bagshawe, who eventually agreed to pay compensation to settle the matter.[66] Unsurprisingly, this angered army officers but it also restrained them. In 1747 one of Bagshawe's military colleagues, William Dawkin, complained to him about the unco-operative behaviour of Plymouth's mayor, concluding that 'such a parcel of Rascalls & Vilians as this Corporation is composed of there is not in all England'. 'If I thought Mr Fox [Henry Fox, the secretary-at-war] wo$^{d}$ stand by me, better than your Friend S.$^{r}$ W.$^{m}$ [Yonge] did by you, I w.$^{d}$ be revenged of some of those People'.[67]

## II

So far this article has explored the routine tasks that local office-holders undertook to house, transport and provide care for members of the army. Yet in Queen Anne's reign, and for several years under George II, parliament obliged local office-holders to undertake a far more challenging task; to press their neighbours into a wartime army. This section explores how JPs and constables responded to this combustive demand from central government.

The wartime British army required large numbers of men. By the end of the Nine Years War, the army stood at just over 66,000 British soldiers, on paper.[68] During the War of the Spanish Succession, the

65. Childs, *British Army of William III*, p. 48. The presence of magistrates was also useful on such occasions in case aggrieved ex-soldiers turned riotous.

66. TNA, WO 4/40/71; WO 4/40/112.

67. Manchester, John Rylands Library, University of Manchester Library, BAG 2/2/140, William Dawkin to Samuel Bagshawe, 20 Mar. 1747.

68. Childs, *British Army of William III*, p. 103.



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number of British troops was calculated to be around 50,000 men in 1706, with nearly 75,000 men in 1711. At the start of the War of the Austrian Succession, the army stood at over 45,000 men, rising to around 68,000 in 1745.[69] In 1748 the British and Irish army officially numbered around 88,500 men but possibly in practice was about 64,000.[70]

Recruiting and pressing men for the army was a long-standing responsibility of early modern local office-holders. JPs and parish constables had been heavily involved in pressing manpower for Tudor wars, offensives on the Continent in the 1620s and the wars against the Scots in 1639–40.[71] Despite the urgent need for troops during the Nine Years War, impressment only occurred on an occasional basis, unlike in Scotland in the 1690s, which adopted a quota system for particular areas.[72] Desperate for soldiers and with a French invasion imminent, in early 1692 the English government permitted the impressment of the 'idle' and the enlistment of convicted criminals. In 1695 parliament approved the enlistment of debtors into the army.[73] The demand for troops meant that army officers were given quotas for the number of recruits they needed to enlist and some resorted to tricking or forcing men into the army.[74] As a result, parliament stipulated in March 1693 that recruits had to be brought before a magistrate to attest that they had freely consented to enlistment, although the practice of forcible enlistment appears to have continued.[75] A yeoman's son from Crosscanonby, Cumberland, was pressed 'contrary … [to the] Lawes of this Nation', as his father put it in a petition for his release to the magistrates at the Quarter Sessions in 1695/6.[76]

The resumption of the war against France in 1702 triggered a rapid expansion of the army, and the urgent need to fill it. Consequently parliament turned to implementing a more general press of men to

69. R.E. Scouller, *The Armies of Queen Anne* (Oxford, 1966), p. 82; Guy, *Oeconomy and Discipline*, p. 9.

70. S. Conway, 'The Mobilisation of Manpower for Britain's Mid-Eighteenth-Century Wars', *Historical Research*, lxxvii (2004), pp. 377–404, at 382.

71. S.J. Stearns, 'Conscription and English Society in the 1620s', *Journal of British Studies*, xi (1972), pp. 1–23; T. Garden Barnes, 'Deputies not Principals, Lieutenants not Captains: The Institutional Failure of Lieutenancy in the 1620s', in M.C. Fissel, ed., *War and Government in Britain, 1598–1650* (Manchester, 1991), pp. 58–86; V.L. Slater, 'The Lord Lieutenancy on the Eve of the Civil Wars: The Impressment of George Plowright', *Historical Journal*, xxix (1986), pp. 279–96.

72. K.M. Middleton, 'Religious Revolution and Social Crisis in Southwest Scotland and Ulster, 1687–1714' (Trinity College Dublin Ph.D. thesis, 2010), pp. 136–7, 162–3; Childs, *British Army of William III*, pp. 105, 109; R.B. Manning, *An Apprenticeship in Arms: The Origins of the British Army, 1585–1702* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 419–20.

73. Luttrell, *Brief Historical Relation*, ii, pp. 345, 422; Childs, *British Army of William III*, pp. 113–14. Most soldiers in the Restoration army were volunteers, although a press was deployed to garrison Tangier in 1672: J. Childs, *The Army of Charles II* (London, 1976), pp. 23, 123–4.

74. Childs, *British Army of William III*, pp. 105, 109–13; Luttrell, *Brief Historical Relation*, iii, p. 435.

75. Childs, *British Army of William III*, p. 110.

76. CAC, Q/11/1/37/9, 1695-6, Petition of Richard Brumfield.



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serve in the army. The recruiting acts passed by parliament from 1704 to 1712 permitted men to be forcibly enlisted into the army. JPs and, from 1709, land tax commissioners (who were also 'non-professionals' drawn from the local elites) served as recruiting commissioners. They were authorised to issue warrants to parish constables, who then had to identify likely men who could be pressed. All recruits had to be brought before the magistrate to formalise their official entry into military service. Parliament consented to impressing men to serve in the army but it was a highly controversial measure.[77] Impressment was therefore carefully circumscribed to only 'such Abled-Bodied men, as have not any Lawful Calling or Imployment, or visible Means for their Maintenance and Livelihood'. In a concession to landowners, labourers could not be pressed during the harvest season.[78] During the War of the Spanish Succession, the Duke of Marlborough, the Lord Treasurer, the secretary-at-war and other ministers put considerable effort into devising and tweaking the annual recruiting act and getting it through parliament to meet the perpetual manpower crisis. By way of encouragement, constables were allowed several shillings per man whom they recruited, and threatened with a fine if they obstructed.[79] The number of JPs required to enlist men was reduced from three to two since there was often a problem with finding a third.[80] The need for JPs to fulfil recruiting tasks may be why few magistrates were removed for party political reasons in 1709, when recruits were still needed.[81] In exceptional cases local office-holders were even asked to deliver pressed men to their regiments if no military personnel were available.[82]

The War of the Austrian Succession saw a similar need for a large number of troops. Parliament once again resorted to passing recruiting acts between 1744 and 1746, which were backed up by the Vagrancy Act of 1744. This offered male beggars the option of military service as an alternative to a flogging. For some regiments, pressed men formed a substantial component. Overall, however, the number of pressed men serving in the army, especially those from Scotland, was not significant.[83] In May 1744 the War Office acknowledged the difficulties in executing the Recruiting Act.[84]

77. G. Davies, 'Recruiting in the Reign of Queen Anne', *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, xxviii (1950), pp. 146–59; A.N. Gilbert, 'Army Impressment during the War of the Spanish Succession', *The Historian*, xxxviii (1976), pp. 689–708; J.A. Houlding, *Fit for Service: The Training of the British Army, 1715–1795* (Oxford, 1981), p. 118; *Letters Illustrative of the Reign of William III from 1696 to 1708 Addressed to the Duke of Shrewsbury by James Vernon*, III, ed. G.P.R. James (London, 1841), p. 310.

78. *An Act for the Better Recruiting of Her Majesties Land Forces and the Marines* (London, 1704); *Letters Illustrative*, III, ed. James, pp. 318–25.

79. Scouller, *Armies of Queen Anne*, pp. 106–16.

80. *Letters Illustrative*, III, ed. James, pp. 345–6.

81. Glassey, *Politics*, p. 190.

82. TNA, WO 4/12/241.

83. Conway, 'Mobilisation', pp. 391–3.

84. TNA, WO 4/39/179. See also University of Nottingham Manuscripts and Special Collections, Ne C 238, Michael Lee Dicker to Henry Pelham, 28 Apr. 1744.



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The impact of the recruiting acts was not felt in the number of men who were successfully forced into military service. Where figures exist, such as for London and Sevenoaks, Kent, in the spring of 1709, the number of men who were pressed, as opposed to those who were assessed as potential for impressment, was quite small. In London, twenty-five men were enlisted and 141 men discharged. In Sevenoaks, eight men were enlisted and sixteen discharged.[85] Rather, the impact of the acts was felt in their implementation, which caused disruption, fear and anger within communities and made major demands on local office-holders, in particular parish constables, who had to seize the individuals concerned.[86]

As the successive amendments to the Recruiting Acts indicate, some local office-holders were unwilling to find men for the army. Even before the introduction of the Recruiting Acts, in May 1702 the secretary of state Sir Charles Hedges was urging the mayor of Ripon and lord mayor of York to ensure that recruiting was not obstructed within their jurisdictions.[87] The secretary-at-war castigated the mayor of Maidstone in 1705 for not providing a 'proper Place' to secure recruits brought in from Kent.[88] The same year, Middlesex JPs, 'upon some scruples', refused to put the Recruiting Act into execution, forcing Hedges to intervene.[89] Other JPs simply discharged the men that were brought before them by the recruiting officer.[90] There was a particular aversion to sending men into the army during harvest time, 'when everie ffarmer and many Gentleman think themselves oblidged not only to protect every ffellow that can serve them in their harvest but often to seduce them to desert', as a disgruntled army officer complained in 1708.[91] In 1744, it was reported that a few commissioners had tried to enlist Irish Catholics (who were ineligible) and men who were too old or infirm, or had allowed new recruits to escape.[92]

Where magistrates did not obstruct, those further down the chain of command might hesitate. Constables were in an especially vulnerable position since they were resident members of their communities, holding a temporary position of authority within the parish for the space of a year while, at the same time, coming under considerable pressure from their social superiors to supply recruits.[93] In

85. Gilbert, 'Army Impressment', pp. 697–8.

86. Scouller, *Armies of Queen Anne*, pp. 106–17; Conway, *War, State and Society*, pp. 69–74.

87. TNA, SP 44/101/215.

88. TNA, WO 4/3/131.

89. TNA, SP 44/105/235.

90. TNA, WO 4/7/283; Gloucester, Gloucestershire Archives, GBR B3/8, Gloucester Borough Records Minute Book, 1700–1716, fo. 459.

91. Edinburgh, National Records of Scotland [hereafter NRS], GD124/15/845/1–2, Major William Cleland to sixth earl of Mar, 26 June 1708.

92. TNA, WO 4/39/113.

93. Gilbert, 'Army Impressment', pp. 693–4. For the community context to local office-holding, see Goldie, 'Unacknowledged Republic', p. 166.



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Buckinghamshire, the lord-lieutenant, the fourth earl of Bridgwater and Marlborough's son-in-law, received the Privy Council's instructions relating to the Recruiting Act in early January 1705. He communicated the act's requirements to Buckinghamshire JPs, who reported back, as commanded, at the end of the month about their activities in the three Hundreds of Aylesbury. A first attempt by the constables produced what appears to be a token offering of just two men, whom the recruiting officer from the Earl of Orkney's regiment refused to accept, one being lame and the other too young. The magistrates then ordered a second attempt, with parish constables being ordered by warrant, and local gentlemen being asked if they knew of any likely candidates. This produced a list of thirteen individuals whom the constables were ordered to take and bring before the magistrates. It was here that the plan started to unravel. A number of the men had already absconded—had the list become popular knowledge and, if so, how? Others fled on the constable's arrival. The end result was a modest haul of one man (who was enlisted). Fortunately, the magistrates also apprehended a vagrant in Aylesbury who volunteered himself into the regiment of a local landowner, Sir Richard Temple.[94]

It is tempting to conclude that a number of Buckinghamshire's parish constables baulked at forcing their neighbours into military service and ran with the hare as well as hunted with the hounds. After all, having pressed a man into the army, local office-holders still had to live alongside the man's family and friends and there was every possibility that the man would survive the war and come home, angry about how his life had been disrupted and, in some cases, irrevocably changed. Ex-soldier John Groves presented an embittered petition to East Yorkshire JPs for relief, describing how he was 'Taken away from his Wife and Children By M[r] Lowther to Serve The queen By force contrary to his mind … Untill Such Times as he became Lame and Diseased By hard useing and other Misfortune … and in a Very Low condition Did he Return'.[95]

The Recruiting Acts created tensions and stresses within communities, disordered the peace and prompted challenges to local authority. Townspeople in Newbury rescued pressed men from a recruiting party in 1706. The same year, the impressment of a man at Abergavenny caused a two-day riot, and the recruiting party and constables were assaulted by a mob.[96] Since the Recruiting Act had only been passed in the English Parliament, it did not cover Scotland until the Act of Union and the creation of the British Parliament.[97] (Indeed, one of

94. San Marino, Henry Huntington Library [hereafter HHL], EL 9483, EL 9489, William Busby to fourth earl of Bridgwater, 30 Jan. 1704.

95. ERA, QSP/61, Petition of John Groves.

96. TNA, WO 4/4/107; SP 34/8/71. *The Manuscripts of His Grace the Duke of Portland*, IV (Historical Manuscripts Commission; London, 1897) [hereafter HMC *Portland*], pp. 279, 335.

97. S.H.F. Johnston, 'The Scots Army in the Reign of Anne', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th ser., iii (1953), pp. 1–21, at 12.



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the grounds for Union, Daniel Defoe argued, was Scotland's alleged 'inexhaustible Treasure of Men' to serve in the army.)[98] This legal immunity did not stop attempts by English troops to cross the border and kidnap Scots, whom they pressed into military service. Seventeen English dragoons and their officers were apprehended in February 1705 by the Marquis of Lothian's dragoons on the orders of the sheriff of Berwickshire for this offence.[99]

Violent protests had repercussions for those implementing the Recruiting Act. As the Abergavenny riot indicates, constables were subject to physical attack in attempting to carry out their official duties. The Abergavenny constables were described as 'much frighted' by the incident.[100] Popular knowledge of legal procedures and rights concerning naval impressment was quickly acquired and applied to impressment into the army.[101] Some constables were subject to legal intimidation from pressed men and their supporters; for this reason the Recruiting Act of 1708 stipulated that if a case of false arrest against a constable or commissioner failed, then their accuser would have to pay triple the costs.[102] In an attempt to deal with press riots, the Recruiting Act of 1706 fined rioters the sum of £5, which was later increased to £10 in a further attempt to deter rioters.[103]

The Recruiting Acts undermined the authority of local office-holders in their communities in other ways. The families and neighbours of pressed men petitioned magistrates, begging for their release.[104] MPs were asked to use their influence with the War Office. In 1709 the mayor of Hereford was furious to learn that applications had been made to James Brydges, one of the city's MPs, to discharge individuals whom the mayor and city magistrates had pressed: 'Now If you think our Judgm^ts in Hereford are not Suffic^t to Answ^r what is done wee desire your Excuse in doeing any thing more to promote her Majes^ties Interest … by this meanes you wile Save y^r Selfe a great deale of trouble and us too'. The Hereford justices were particularly angered by an application to free Henry Symonds, a 'very Idle dissolute & disorderly fellow plainly within the letter of the Law for Raising forces' and they demanded that he should not be discharged 'in respect to the governm^t loss of a Soldier and the reflection that probably light on us for being no better Judges whose fitt to serve or not'.[105] In 1745 the commissioners for recruiting in Wiltshire were 'greatly disgusted' about the case of a

98. Daniel Defoe, *An Essay at Removing National Prejudices against a Union with Scotland* (London, 1706), p. 28.

99. HMC *Portland*, IV, p. 164.

100. TNA, SP 34/8/71.

101. For popular legal knowledge relating to naval impressment, see N. Rogers, *The Press Gang: Naval Impressment and Its Opponents in Georgian Britain* (London, 2007), ch. 2.

102. TNA, WO 4/5/138; Gilbert, 'Army Impressment', pp. 693–5.

103. Gilbert, 'Army Impressment', p. 693.

104. CAC, Q/11/1/74/2, Parish Certificate for Charles Ramsey, 1704–5.

105. HHL, ST 58, III, fos 195–6, Phillip Scandrett to James Brydges, 18 and 28 Jan. 1708–9.



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man whom they had pressed but who had been discharged at the request of his parish and the second duke of Grafton, and had returned home, 'the Fellow being a Notorious Poacher, and Destroyer of the Game, & guilty of vile Usage to his Family'.[106]

Indeed, the difficulty in recruiting men led to the perception among army officers that personal contacts were more likely to result in recruits.[107] Those who had their own territorial influence were in a stronger position. Sir Charles Hotham recruited in the neighbourhood of his estates in East Yorkshire and shipped the soldiers whom he raised in 1706 from Hull to Sheerness to prevent them from deserting.[108] Army officers who did not have local clout required all the assistance they could muster from family, friends, patrons and neighbours.[109] Lady Grisel Baillie badgered William Bennet of Grubbet in 1709 on behalf of an ensign who had to recruit six men. 'You have often heard of the recruting officer but never of any of our fair sexe imploy'd that way', she commented. Justices of Peace were 'often meeting with Such Sparks as may well be Spair'd & if any Such come throw your hands, one of them wo'd be a mighty obligation to us all'.[110] Such was the shortage of men that a promise to bring along recruits was used by aspiring army officers as an incentive when lobbying for military preferment.[111]

Impressment caused bitter tensions within communities; however, overall local office-holders still set about complying with the Recruiting Acts.[112] Indeed, while the number of recruits rarely met the government's expectations, nevertheless, men were being found.[113] Some magistrates greeted the task of recruiting with energy. Southwark JPs proposed an initiative—which was implemented—to prevent 'Confusion and Disorder' by handing over insolvent debtors to the army in May 1704.[114] Later that year, the mayor of Coventry

106. TNA, WO 4/41/44, 81.

107. Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, MS 1033, fo. 14, first earl of Orkney to second earl of Selkirk.

108. TNA, WO 4/4/256. For a Beverley man who joined Hotham's regiment, see ERA, QSF/19/D/1, Petition of William Thistlethwayte.

109. KHLC, U1590 c7/1, James Stanhope to Alexander Stanhope, 27 Mar. 1694.

110. NRS, GD205/33/3/2/13, Lady Grisel Baillie to William Bennet of Grubbet, 16 Feb. 1709.

111. Northampton, Northamptonshire Archives, C2922, Charles Medlycott to marquis of Montrandre, 29 Nov. 1709.

112. For examples from Anne's reign, see Exeter, Devon Heritage Centre, Woodland, 2660A/1/PC/3, Directions to the Constables, 1706; Chester, Cheshire Archives and Local Studies, ZM/F/121/82–3 and ZM/F/122; HHL, EL 9503, 'An Account of the Persons Listed within the Three Hundreds of Newport'; Hull City Archives at the Hull History Centre, C BRB/6, Bench Book of the Mayor and Aldermen of Hull, fos 537, 563; KHLC, PS/Se/Sm/1, Minute Book of Paul D'Aranda JP, fos 18–20, 24–6, 30–32, 34, 39, 45, 151, 184; TNA, WO 4/9/326; WYAS, QS1/44/1; Worcester, Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service [hereafter WAAS], Worcestershire Quarter Sessions Records, 1/1/195/61, 93. For examples from 1744–6, see Redruth, Kresen Kernow, DDX 568/24, Robert Moon, High Constable, to the Petty Constables of Liskeard, 10 May 1745; TNA, WO 4/39/120, 146, 148–9, 161–2.

113. Gilbert, 'Army Impressment', p. 702.

114. TNA, WO 4/3/25.



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sustained new recruits who had been 'deserted' by their sergeant.[115] Robert Walpole, secretary-at-war, wrote letters thanking the JPs of Hertford, Leicester, Ludlow and Oswestry in April 1708 for their 'Zeal' in raising recruits, and sent a similar message to the commissioners for Derbyshire in May 1709.[116] A 'Mr Cole' of Oxfordshire was known to the War Office in 1712 for being 'very Serviceable to the Army in getting Recruits' and encouraging men to enlist for three years under the terms of the 1708 Recruiting Act.[117] In the spring of 1744, commissioners in Birmingham, Bristol, Chippenham, Devon, Harwich, Lincolnshire, Rutland, Wisbech, Worcestershire and Yorkshire complained to the War Office about the tardiness of army officers in collecting the volunteers and impressed men that they had raised.[118] Meanwhile, the mayor of Abingdon wrote to the secretary-at-war for more information about what to do with undersized volunteer recruits (the War Office suggested sending them to the Marines).[119] Surely one of the most enthusiastic and hardened recruiters was George Smith, who informed the secretary of state Robert Harley in March 1706 that he had spent the winter raising over sixty recruits in Gloucestershire. Smith was particularly irked that one desperate man from Wotton-under-Edge had attempted to escape his zeal by crippling himself by slashing 'the great sinews of his legs above the heels' and Smith demanded that if the man could not be prosecuted under common law, then he should be court-martialled and shot.[120]

Some local office-holders paid little attention to whether men were eligible for military service. Diplomatic representatives made complaints to the government on behalf of foreign nationals pressed into the army, including itinerant Tyrolese canary-sellers.[121] The first duke of Leeds and Sir Humphrey Mackworth protested to Queen Anne in July 1705 after several of the men whom they had introduced to work in Welsh lead and copper mines were pressed by three Glamorgan JPs, with a hundred more of their miners taking flight in fear.[122] Those on the road were at risk from JPs and constables hunting for men.[123] The parents of a Hereford bricklayer's apprentice, who had been given leave by his master to go to London, begged James Brydges in 1711 to protect their son since they were anxious that he might be pressed while on his travels.[124]

115. TNA, WO 4/3/86–7.

116. TNA, WO 4/7/62, 87; WO 4/9/6.

117. TNA, WO 4/13/152.

118. TNA, WO 4/39/146, 148–9, 161–2.

119. TNA, WO 4/39/101.

120. HMC *Portland*, IV, p. 289.

121. TNA, SP 44/105/63, 71–2; WO 4/7/27; WO 4/8/209; WO 4/9/255; WO 4/10/103.

122. TNA, SP 44/241/140–45.

123. NRS, GD 124/15/843, Thomas Warner to earl of Mar, 21 Apr. 1708. TNA, WO 4/4/149; WO 4/8/79.

124. HHL, ST 58, X, fos 97–8, Anne and Francis Millward to James Brydges, 17 Dec. 1711.



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There also existed an additional inducement for local office-holders to press men. The Recruiting Acts gave them a terrifying form of power over others within their community. As one character joked in George Farquhar's very popular comedy *The Recruiting Officer* (1706), about army recruiting in Shropshire, he would prefer to be a JP than an emperor, for 'since this Pressing Act, they are greater than any Emperor under the Sun'.[125] Impressment was an unpleasant duty but it could be used by JPs and constables—and indeed by wealthier members of a community—to pursue their private, sometimes illegal, interests under cover of fulfilling the duties of their office.

The 1620s had seen complaints that local office-holders were pressing individuals out of personal revenge or to extract bribes to release them.[126] Such accusations were also made a century later. In 1709 Queen Anne removed two Cambridge JPs from the bench after they had enlisted men into the army and discharged them on payment of a bribe 'to the prejudice of the Service, the disgrace of the Commission of the peace … and the ruin of Several poor familys'.[127] The same year, Michael Linn maintained that he had been 'maliciously pressed' by the constables of Croglin, Cumberland. When they brought him before the magistrates, his neighbours were able to prove that he was of 'honnest fame & good Credit', had a customary tenement of land and was not burdensome to the parish. He was also found to be too short and the JPs released him. But shortly after, the constables pressed him again and took him to Carlisle before JPs who were 'strangers to him' and who handed him over to the recruiting officer before his neighbours could verify his status and character. Worried about his family, Linn deserted, was taken and found himself in irons in Carlisle gaol, appealing to magistrates at the local Quarter Sessions for release. Linn believed that the constables had identified a man who was eligible to serve but that they had been bribed to let the individual abscond.[128]

Impressment was also a useful weapon for those engaged in feuds within their communities. This required the connivance of local office-holders but since the Recruiting Acts offered constables a financial reward to recruit men, constables had an incentive to do so. The rector of West Woodhay, Berkshire, maintained in 1706 that one of his parishioners had been pressed because he was due to act as a witness on behalf of the rector in a dispute. William Brotheridge, a labourer from Castle Morton, Worcestershire, claimed in 1711 that after he attended the Quarter Sessions at Worcester concerning a dispute between himself

125. George Farquhar, *The Recruiting Officer: A Comedy* (London 1706), p. 18.

126. Stearns, 'Conscription and English Society', pp. 9–10.

127. Hertford, Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies, Hertfordshire County Council [hereafter HALS], DE/P/F153, fo. 6, third earl of Sunderland to Lord Cowper, 28 Jan. 1709. This occurred over several years and problems with irregular recruiting in Cambridge continued into the late summer of 1709: TNA, WO 4/4/226–7; WO 4/9/145, 155. See also Glassey, *Politics*, p. 189.

128. CAC, Q/11/1/92/31, Petition of Michael Linn.



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and William Bond, a blacksmith, Bond had him pressed and taken before the mayor of Worcester by a constable.[129]

In the age of party politics, religious division and a disputed succession to the throne, it is unsurprising that some of these cases had a partisan edge. John Evans, a Cardiganshire schoolmaster, alleged that after he had claimed that several gentlemen, including two Jacobite-inclined JPs, had drunk a toast to James II's exiled son, the Pretender, the JPs handed him over to a recruiting officer in revenge.[130] In July 1706 Walter Carwardin of Southwark, a 58-year-old cutler and cork-cutter, related how he had been brought before the Southwark magistrates by the instigation of one of the JPs, John Lade, and pressed as a soldier. Carwardin attributed Lade's malice to the antagonistic electoral politics of the Southwark constituency, where Lade unsuccessfully stood for election in 1702, because Carwardin had 'very often voted for Mr. Cox [Charles Cox, the sitting Whig MP], but never for Mr. Lade'. Lade, who had a reputation for Jacobitism, was dismissed from the bench by the Whig secretary of state, the third earl of Sunderland, in April 1708.[131]

The power given to local office-holders by the Recruiting Acts extended not only to impressing men but also to the families of such men, whose circumstances were changed by the demands of warfare and the state. When parliament passed the Recruiting Acts in Anne's reign, it included a crucial provision for several years to make impressment more acceptable to parishes. An allowance of £3 was paid to the parish from Land Tax monies to support the family of each impressed man, who would otherwise have had to be maintained by the parish rate.[132] The payment of this allowance was in itself a source of tension in some parishes, whose officials might be unwilling to pass the money on. After all, the families of pressed men were generally drawn from the lowest socio-economic strata of the parish and antagonistic relations may have already existed between wealthier parish office-holders and the family in question, including its male breadwinner. Indeed, ill-feeling could be instrumental in identifying the man as suitable for compulsory military service in the first place. Margaret Todd of Walton, Cumberland, alleged to magistrates in 1744, who had previously awarded her some relief because of her infirmities, that her son had been pressed and 'the parishioners tells her If it had not been for your petitionr. requireing an allowance out of the parish, They Would never have prest him from her'.[133]

129. TNA, WO 4/4/151–2, 175; WAAS, 1/1/218/35.

130. Cambridge University Library, Walpole (Houghton) MSS, Ch (H) Pol. Papers 80, fo. 200, Petition of John Evans to first duke of Marlborough.

131. HALS, DE/P/F153, fo. 92, statement of Walter Carwardin; N. Landau, *The Justices of the Peace, 1679–1760* (Berkeley, CA, 1984), p. 83; TNA, SP 44/106/207; *The Divided Society: Parties and Politics in England 1694–1716*, ed. G. Holmes and W.A. Speck (London, 1967), p. 102.

132. Innes, *Inferior Politics*, p. 65, n. 36.

133. CAC, Q/11/1/217/9, Petition of Margaret Todd.



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While local office-holders operated from a position of power that the Recruiting Acts had enhanced, soldiers' families, in turn, used the acts to gain some leverage in this unequal power relationship. When parishes withheld support, soldiers' families looked beyond the parish structure and appealed to JPs in order to force parish office-holders into action, thus setting one group of local office-holders against another. Despite their marginal socio-economic status, some soldiers' families were not shy in pointing out their legal entitlements. Dorothy Ion of Lazonby, Cumberland, asked the Quarter Sessions for an allowance from the parish for herself and three small children in 1709, since her husband Thomas was 'by the late Act of Parlia^t. Impress'd to Serve as a Soldier'. JPs ordered the parish to spend the £3 grant on the Ion family at 2*s* 6*d* a week but this was soon used up and by the autumn of 1710 the aggrieved parishioners of Lazonby were themselves petitioning the JPs to cancel Dorothy Ion's payments. Her husband had deserted and they had heard that 'he hath hired him Selfe about Barny Castle [Barnard Castle]' in the adjacent county of Durham. The magistrates refused to take sides and ordered that the family continue to be relieved but at a reduced rate of 1*s* a week.[134] Ann Rea petitioned JPs at Carlisle in 1744 after her husband was 'prest for a Sogier', leaving her with three small children. When the parish of Rockcliff refused her assistance, she acquired legal representation in the form of 'Lawyer Gilpin', who managed to extract an offer of the £3 bounty money from the parish, which she refused, 'it being the King's Bounty to all wives and Children that has their husbands presst'. She asked the JPs to grant her a weekly allowance from the parish.[135]

Local office-holders set about the business of pressing men for the same range of reasons that prompted their compliance with routine duties connected with the army. It helped that the War Office, with an eye to parliament, was keen to emphasise that the principle of the primacy of the civil magistrate was as important in the context of recruiting as it was in other matters. In 1708 Walpole harangued a junior army officer who had apparently compelled a man to enlist after subjecting him to 'threats and hard usage'. 'It will not be at all for the Queens Service to keep this Man but rather a Disincouragem^t. to the Justices of the Peace to See their Neighbours taken from them in this manner', Walpole thundered, and ordered that the man be discharged. Walpole was especially assiduous in this instance, it might be noted, since the complaint came from two Tory MPs, Charles Caesar and Ralph Freman, who were perfectly capable of causing embarrassment

134. CAC, Q/11/1/91/33, Q/11/1/92/21, Petitions of Dorothy Ion, and Q/11/1/97/8, Petition of the parish of Lazonby, Cumberland. For a similar case, see KHLC, PS/Se/Sm/1, fo. 52.

135. CAC, Q/11/1/217/4, Petition of Ann Rea. 'Lawyer Gilpin' was probably a member of a prominent local family of lawyers and stewards; see *The Correspondence of Sir John Lowther of Whitehaven, 1693–1698: A Provincial Community in Wartime*, ed. D.R. Hainsworth, British Academy Records of Social and Economic History, new ser., vii (1983), p. xliii.



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to the Whig ministry if Walpole let the case go unchecked.[136] Overall, despite the attendant difficulties and dangers involved in recruiting, local office-holders accepted the need to recruit, and press, men into the army. This was important work, for a war required men as well as money. The widespread involvement of local office-holders in this stressful task confirms the vigour of the British state in its various dimensions when it came to mobilising and fighting wars, and especially so when recruiting is added to the list of other demanding, military-related tasks that fell to the lot of JPs and constables.

## III

Local office-holders continued to provide essential support for the army throughout the second half of the eighteenth century, as Britain entered the Seven Years War and the War of American Independence, both conflicts requiring even greater numbers of soldiers.[137] It was a system that was creaking, yet there was little political will to undertake major change. Parliament was more interested in creating an effective force of amateur soldiers through changes to the militia in the 1750s than streamlining arrangements for professional troops while in Britain.[138] Administrative efforts focused on the health of troops serving overseas.[139] Indeed, where calls for change occurred, they were more likely to come from communities who were struggling to quarter troops in hostelries. In 1759, the town of Guildford even asked the government to build barracks to reduce some of the pressure placed on it.[140]

The turning point was Britain's entry into the Revolutionary War against France in 1793, which imposed massive logistical and manpower demands and saw the beginnings of change. Local office-holders remained a linchpin of military recruitment. Troops continued to be quartered in inns and alehouses by local office-holders, who also organised their transport.[141] However, political attitudes towards barracks were changing with the growing weight of troop numbers and the government started to build barracks from 1793.[142] Injured soldiers could obtain a Chelsea pension more easily from 1807.[143] The government considered providing more financial assistance for the dependants of soldiers in 1799 and then again a decade later. In 1803

136. TNA, WO 4/7/312–13.

137. Conway, *War, State, and Society*, pp. 40, 51, 118–19, 268; S. Conway, *The British Isles and the War of American Independence* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 273–6, 288–91, 299.

138. See M. McCormack, *Embodying the Militia in Georgian England* (Oxford, 2015).

139. Charters, *Disease, War and the Imperial State*, pp. 194–200.

140. *Eighteenth-Century Secretary*, ed. Hayter, p. 213.

141. C. Emsley, *British Society and the French Wars, 1793–1815* (London, 1979), p. 39.

142. Houlding, *Fit for Service*, p. 41.

143. C.L. Nielsen, 'Disability, Fraud and Medical Experience at the Royal Hospital at Chelsea in the Long Eighteenth Century', in K. Linch and M. McCormack, eds, *Britain's Soldiers: Rethinking War and Society, 1715–1815* (Liverpool, 2014), pp. 183–201, at 192–3.



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the Royal Military Asylum was established to educate a select number of soldiers' children, at a cost to the government of over £300,000 by 1815.[144] But these new developments were as politically motivated as aspects of the old system had been. Barracks enabled the government to police the large new industrial towns more effectively, at a time of significant socio-economic and political unrest, by grouping soldiers together. Barracks also allowed army officers to maintain surveillance over their men amid growing fears that soldiers were influenced by radical ideas.[145] The government's new-found interest in military families can be seen as an attempt to impose greater discipline over their soldier spouses, fathers and sons.

Local office-holders were essential to the strength of the British 'fiscal-military state'. This is not to suggest that they enthusiastically undertook the military-related tasks that parliament had directly or indirectly allocated to them. On top of taxation, central government was demanding even more from local office-holders and their communities by insisting that inns and alehouses quarter troops, individuals loan carts and horses for military transport, parishes and corporations care for sick soldiers, and sons, husbands, fathers, friends and employees be forcibly pressed into the army. Communities were paid at a standard rate for providing services but payment could be slow, troops disorderly and cause damage, and parish resources diverted. Such activities were time-consuming, stressful and sometimes even physically dangerous for local office-holders. All parties might have a clear sense of their legal rights and evoke parliament's authority and the law to justify whatever position they were maintaining. Magistrates and constables might well baulk at full or even partial compliance with the demands from the centre.

Despite this, as a system it not only held together but also persisted throughout the eighteenth century. This situation was partly the result of parliament's fundamental disinclination to pay for and employ professional administrators and enlarge central government. But it was also because enough local office-holders performed the duties that parliament assigned to them, and undertook them in a satisfactory enough way to be effective. Parliament was key to this since it had the recognised authority to make these demands. Local office-holders complied for a range of other reasons too. There was scope for them to carry out their military-related duties for personal benefit. Patriotism could certainly be an incentive in wartime, and in wartime at least, local office-holders appreciated the need for a professional army to fight Britain's enemies. Widely held concerns over professional armies and centralised administration might also have motivated local

144. P.Y.C.E. Lin, 'Citizenship, Military Families, and the Creation of a New Definition of "Deserving Poor" in Britain, 1793–1815', *Social Politics*, vii (2000), pp. 5–46, at 14–16.

145. R. Bonner, 'Hulme Cavalry Barracks, Manchester', *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, xci (2013), pp. 206–25, at 206.



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office-holders to take responsibility for military-related tasks in order to retain local, civilian agency; the alternatives, such as army officers or professional administrators, were politically unpalatable.

The strength of the British 'fiscal-military state' stemmed from its ability to tax and borrow. However, its strength also derived from the willingness of local office-holders to organise the infrastructure and source the manpower for the army in a polity that was alarmed by professional armies and a centralised state. British military land power in this period owed as much to the efforts of local office-holders as it did to taxpayers, professional administrators, soldiers and generals.

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