



Abstract

The British Volunteer Movement, 1793-1807

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This thesis deals with the political, military and social aspects of the volunteer movement in Great Britain during the wars against revolutionary and Napoleonic France. It explores the nature and purpose of the volunteer infantry, yeomanry cavalry, and armed associations: their organisation, administration, membership, and political adherences. Several questions concerning the political nature of volunteering are addressed, and it is shown that both the volunteers' motivation and the government's reasons for raising a voluntary force were more closely related to military than to political considerations. The occupational structure and political allegiances of several corps are analysed, revealing a broad range of political allegiance. The conclusion is drawn that the volunteers were more a 'constitutional' force than a partisan one.

This thesis also investigates the ways in which the volunteer movement posed a challenge to the established social and political order, particularly in its autonomy and 'democratic' organisation. The central government and local authorities were, however, well aware of the potential threat, and precautions were taken against its development. The workings of the volunteer 'system' are explored in order to judge the validity of contemporary criticism of volunteer autonomy, and it is concluded that fears of apparently democratic organisation were exaggerated. The question of volunteer loyalty is investigated by examining the means of selection, individuals' motives, and the response of corps to peace-keeping duties. Finally, an assessment of the position of the movement in contemporary society shows it to have been closely related to the ambivalent concept of the 'citizen-soldier'.

Extensive use is made of manuscript sources, particularly the papers of the Home and War Offices held in the Public Record Office, and official and private correspondence in the British Library and several county record offices.

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The volunteer force formed in Great Britain during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars was one of the largest movements of any sort during the eighteenth century yet has been little studied except as a military phenomenon. It involved numerous and varied armed corps of civilians associated for internal defence in the event of an invasion, which were provided with government allowances and exemptions both from taxes and from compulsory full-time military service. This study deals with a broad range of political, military and social aspects of the volunteer infantry, yeomanry cavalry and armed associations. It is only incidentally concerned with other military forces and the issues of wartime politics and society. All areas of Great Britain and all corps are considered, although some are inevitably more prominent because of the uneven survival of evidence. The entire period of the wars, from 1793 till 1815, is considered, although emphasis is placed on the years before 1808 when the force played a significant military and political role, and to which the majority of surviving documentation belongs.

The study seeks to explore the nature and purpose of the force: how it was organised and administered, who joined it and why. It sets out the important questions involving the political nature of the force: whether the volunteers were formed as part of a conscious policy of creating an anti-radical and counter-revolutionary force, or whether, as is concluded here, that the volunteers' political purpose, though important, was only incidental to their primary military concerns. The thesis also sets out to investigate the membership of the force, and analyses a range of corps by occupation. The nature of volunteer political adherences is also considered. It is shown that the widely-accepted image of the volunteers acting as direct descendants of the Reevesite loyalist associations is only part of the picture. A much broader range of political allegiance is revealed, leading to the conclusion that the volunteers were more a 'constitutional' force than a partisan one.

Several of the questions addressed here draw upon recent work on loyalism and nationalism in the period of the French revolution. Volunteers have been represented on the one hand as a central part of a loyalist reaction against political reform and French republican ideas, while on the other hand they have been represented as a nationalist force which itself represented a challenge to the established order. This thesis argues that although the volunteer movement posed a challenge to the established order in some aspects, particularly its 'democratic' organisation and habits of autonomy, the government and local authorities were well aware of the potential threat, and precautions were taken to avert its development. It is concluded that the volunteers' connections with the loyalist associations have been over-emphasised and are based on a misleading picture of the nature of both movements; volunteers engaged in few of the characteristic activities of loyalist associations, and the nature of volunteer membership did not indicate a uniformly anti-reform or even ministerialist political stance.

This thesis is organised in eight chapters, the first half dealing with questions of organisation and membership, and the second half addressing the issues of volunteers' political allegiance and loyalty, and considering the public activity of corps. It starts by outlining the background to volunteering and tracing its origins in the political associations and voluntary military corps earlier in the eighteenth century. The political situation in 1793-1794 and in particular the development of the Association for the Preservation of Liberty and Property are considered, and the Association's connections with the volunteer movement questioned. Other examples of voluntary military associations are considered, especially the Irish volunteers. An attempt is made to follow the development of the ministerial plans to form a volunteer force by examining a range of proposals made to the government for raising voluntary companies. Conclusions are then drawn about the reasons the ministry had for raising volunteers in the manner it did at this time.

Next, the development of the force over the entire period is considered. The changes in numbers and geographical distribution of volunteers are calculated and an attempt made to relate them to contemporary political and military developments. Inferences are drawn from the changing nature of the force about the motives for volunteering and forming corps, and the government's reasons for giving its consent or encouragement. The changes in numbers and geographical distribution of corps are calculated and attempts made to relate them to the apparent threat of invasion, the activity of the radical political societies and the incidence of militia balloting. The raising of volunteers is shown to be clearly related to the apparent threat of inva-

sion and the compulsory measures taken to raise men to face it, and not obviously to be connected with fears of political subversion. The level of participation in volunteering in each locality is then calculated, from which it is concluded that, despite wide regional variation, probably around a fifth of the adult male civilian population was involved in 1803. In the light of those figures, the 'system' of volunteering is then considered: how it was organised, regulated and administered. The process by which corps were formed is set out, the means adopted varying according to the instigators, the type of corps they planned, and the extent of county organisation and support provided.

Having established the official intentions behind volunteering, the ways they were put into effect and the political results, this study then turns to consider the volunteers themselves. It seeks to investigate systematically and on a national scale the nature of the membership of the force, which has not previously been attempted. A system of social categorisation is adopted which, despite the limitations of the evidence of muster roll and poll books, shows that a wide variety of corps existed that has been inadequately characterised hitherto. The force was more socially mixed than has been recognised by historians. Urban volunteers were typically skilled workmen and artisans, and not labourers; the yeomanry cavalry, far from being dominated by the aristocracy and gentry, often comprised tenant farmers and rural tradesmen. The features that may have made the volunteers a distinctive group are then considered. Political allegiance, as gauged from poll books, defines volunteer officers in some cases as among the more conservative or ministerialist of their peers. Private volunteers, however, appear indistinguishable in their politics from other groups in the enfranchised population. This apparent lack of partisanship leads the enquiry into the question of the extent to which, if at all, volunteering was a political movement. If it were one, signs of ideological criteria in the selection of members would be expected. The largely informal methods of selection are investigated, together with the criteria employed. The concepts of loyalty and reliability employed are shown to be highly flexible, and in most cases served in practice to exclude at most only outright republicans and democrats. An apparent paradox existed in the government's wish to enrol only trustworthy and loyal men while at the same time using the volunteer force as a means to inculcate loyalty among potentially unreliable men.

Having outlined the sort of force the authorities sought to create by examining the grounds on which they approved volunteers, the men's own motives for joining the force are next considered, largely on the evidence of

private correspondence. The earlier conclusion that many joined to avoid militia service is confirmed, but qualified by the addition of several further motives: patriotism, financial reward, social attractions or pressure, employment prospects or political advantage. The force is characterised as in general a socially mixed but hierarchical organisation committed to preserving the social and political order but without involvement in political activity on its own account. The force was loyal but not anti-radical in the manner of Reevesite loyalism. The ambiguities in the volunteer system are explored in the light of these conclusions. Volunteer corps may have been intended to preserve the existing order, but the way in which they went about it threatened to subvert some of its principles. Corps were unusually egalitarian, and in electing their officers and submitting to management by elected committees appeared to be giving unwarranted and disproportionate power to a democratic interest. The validity of contemporary criticism of volunteer autonomy is considered, and it is concluded that fears of allegedly democratic organisation were exaggerated. In practice, by 1804 limitations were placed on the major aspects of volunteer autonomy: their freedom to resign was restricted, they were required to swear an oath of allegiance, and committees were suppressed.

With these conclusions about the conditional loyalty of volunteers and their deliberately independent and loosely-regulated organisation in mind, the activities of corps in practice are then considered. Volunteers' response to rioting was their only major test of reliability, and the result was equivocal. Many incidents indicated that volunteers could not be trusted unconditionally to carry out peace-keeping or police duties. Differing responses to disorder are set out, ranging from support of the civil authorities through evasion of duty, refusal to co-operate or resignation, to involvement in riots by volunteers themselves. The degree of readiness or reluctance on the part of magistrates to employ volunteers against riots is tentatively ascribed largely to local circumstances — the type of corps, the availability of other forces, and the likelihood of aggravating the situation.

An explanation for the reluctance of volunteers to serve in peace-keeping roles is provided by their own view of the force. Volunteers saw themselves as 'citizen soldiers' who had associated to defend their localities against invasion and consequent disorder, but did not thereby become military men or renounce their rights as civilians. They retained strong local loyalties and commitments, and were ready to put them first when they conflicted with their obligations to their corps. Volunteers' self-image is explored and contrasted with the public conception of volunteering. Foremost among those

seeking to provide volunteering with an ideological basis were the authors of sermons and tracts addressed to corps. Volunteer relations with their corps and with their local communities, both as individuals and as a corps, are then explored. The force remained resolutely civilian. Though they accepted military practices and clothing, volunteers asserted that they were not soldiers. Membership of a corps bore strong similarities with membership of a convivial club, aside from its military obligations. In conclusion, the limits to volunteer acceptance of a military role, and the volunteers' assumption of corresponding social and political roles are used to explain the differences between the official expectations for the force and its nature and activities in practice. The government's willingness to maintain a force that had developed along apparently unintended lines is explained in terms of expediency and usefulness in the peculiar circumstances of the wars.

The great bulk of this thesis is based on the evidence provided by official and private correspondence contained in the collections of the Public Record Office, British Library, and many county record offices. Most of the official correspondence on volunteer affairs was handled by the Home Office and the lords lieutenant of counties, but the pervasiveness of volunteering ensured that relevant material is to be found in many other areas. Extensive use is made of important though neglected collections of documents relating to corps, most notably the papers of the London and Westminster Light Horse Volunteers. Due to the uneven survival of correspondence, this study does not concentrate on any one area; emphases on any district, period or corps are in general dictated by the availability of information.

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Preface

This study is concerned with the voluntary military corps formed in England, Wales and Scotland during the wars against the French republic and Empire. The volunteers comprised several major types of corps: volunteer infantry, yeomanry cavalry, volunteer artillery, and armed associations of infantry or cavalry, and were distinct from the militia, fencibles and regular army. All volunteer corps were organisations of armed civilians, associated with official sanction for the maintenance of internal order and for defence against invasion. Volunteer and yeomanry corps were formed throughout the country from 1794, reaching by 1803 a total of nearly 400,000 men in more than 4600 individual companies, representing possibly around 18% of men of military age. Volunteers committed themselves to full-time military service in local defence in the event of an invasion or insurrection, but until such an event remained civilians exercising only occasionally. In return, corps were provided with arms and allowances for uniforms, and the exempted from militia service. Volunteer corps were organised throughout the country, with concentrations in southern coastal counties and in Scotland, in some counties involving a third of the adult males. Men of all social levels other than the very poor were involved either actively or as subscribers in what has been characterised as the single largest mass movement of the eighteenth century.¹

Official proposals for voluntary corps for local defence to augment the militia and funded by public subscription were first made in 1794 but the volunteers rapidly developed, particularly from 1798, into a mass force with a local role distinct from that of the militia. After the re-establishment of the force at the renewal of war in 1803, Addington's ministry consolidated volunteer legislation, bringing the corps under closer governmental and military control, limiting their autonomy and developing a more systematic organisation and administration. The force was already in decline when Grenville's ministry introduced a scheme for general military training and cut back allowances for volunteers; from 1807, the new Local Militia replaced or subsumed most of the remaining volunteers, who were finally disbanded in 1814.

The volunteers were the largest of the auxiliary forces. They were also clearly different from the fencibles and the regular, supplementary and lo-

¹John Cookson, 'The English Volunteer Movement of the French Wars, 1793-1815: Some Contexts', *Historical Journal*, (forthcoming, 1989), p.1.

cal militias. Unlike the militia, raised by ballot and administered by the War Office, the volunteers were strictly voluntary and largely self-regulating organisations, coming under the control of the military authorities only in the event of an invasion. The movement was essentially local in its membership and organisation, whereas militia regiments were absent for lengthy periods and did not take all their recruits from their home counties.² In contrast to other local defensive forces, the local militia, levy en masse and the bodies raised under the Defence Act, volunteer corps were raised on individual local initiative with only general supervision by the central government; regular administration was left to the corps themselves, which were responsible to the lords lieutenant. A desire for professionalism existed alongside a strong assertion of corporate self-sufficiency. Volunteer corps partially funded themselves by public subscription, were initially administered by elected committees and elected officers, levied their own fines and were not subject to military discipline. Volunteers were military men only on their own terms, and attempts by the government to interfere with those terms were likely to cause dissension.

The intention of this thesis is to provide a broadly-based account of the genesis, development and context to volunteering in Great Britain. It seeks to provide a comprehensive interpretation of all aspects of the movement, political, social and military. There have been few detailed studies of the volunteers of the revolutionary and Napoleonic wars, and even those that exist tend to view volunteers in the light of other considerations. Broadly, the volunteers have been interpreted in two ways: as part of a system of auxiliary military forces, or as an organisation with a political and loyalist intent.

Within these interpretations, widely varying conclusions have been drawn. Militarily, the volunteers have been portrayed on the one hand as a useful adjunct to the regular defensive forces, or on the other hand as part of an expensive and wasteful system that was a hindrance to internal defence and created difficulties for army recruiting. Politically, the force has been variously characterised as a loyalist force, as an anti-revolutionary force, or as a manifestation of popular nationalism. Political interpretations often impute a desire to create a strong party of order among the politically conservative to the government in creating the force, and 'loyalty' or 'patriotism' (in its conservative sense) to the men who joined the volunteers. As one

²J.R.Western, *The English Militia in the Eighteenth Century The Story of a Political Issue 1660-1802*, (London, 1965), pp.258-260.

of the auxiliaries to the military forces, the volunteers were employed frequently in policing and riot control duties. As a force for the preservation of internal order they also allegedly acted as an instrument of social control and a highly visible component of a popular national conservative coalition. This interpretation is turned on its head by the alternative argument that, rather than being a conservative force organised from 'above', the volunteers were mobilised by their members from 'below', with all the potential for social disruption and nationalist political demands inherent in such popular organisations. Latterly, some historians have taken a broader view of the volunteers as a movement, and have sought to explain its wider social significance by considering both its military and political aspects.

Many early histories of the volunteer force viewed it purely as a military development, setting it in a long-term context of voluntary military service as far back as Domesday and beyond. The two earliest full-length studies of volunteering, by Robert Potter Berry and Cecil Sebag-Montefiore, provided largely circumstantial accounts in a teleological framework dominated by the volunteers of the late nineteenth century.³ Regimental histories frequently sought to create an unbroken lineage from the 1790s to the volunteers replaced by Lord Haldane's Territorial Army in 1907.⁴ Haldane, as Secretary of State for War, subsidised Sir John Fortescue's *County Lieutenancies and the Army*, which echoed contemporary concern for the reform of the auxiliary forces in a study of military organisation and recruiting during the Napoleonic War. To Fortescue, the whole organisation and system of the volunteers under Pitt had been chaotic, vicious and false. They were 'a huge amorphous mass of undisciplined men', some of whom had volunteered from sound patriotic feeling, while others had joined to escape more arduous service. Their exemption from service in other auxiliary forces, he alleged, deprived the militia, Army of Reserve and the regular army of a numerous source of recruits. The principles of volunteering were, according to Fortescue, so far debased that by 1807 its sole object seemed to be to act as a refuge for the 'evasion of national duty'. Castlereagh created

³Cecil Sebag-Montefiore, *A History of the Volunteer Forces From the Earliest Times to the Year 1860 being a recital of the citizen duty*, (London, 1908), chapters I-IV; Robert Potter Berry, *A History of the Formation and Development of The Volunteer Infantry, From the Earliest Times, Illustrated by the Local Records of Huddersfield and its Vicinity*, (London and Huddersfield, 1903), pp.13-19.

⁴See, for example, Charles J.Hart, *The History of the 1st Volunteer Battalion The Royal Warwickshire Regiment And Its Predecessors: The Birmingham Independent Volunteers, 1782; The Birmingham Loyal Association, 1797; The Loyal Birmingham Volunteers, 1803*, (Birmingham, 1906).

the Local Militia as a useful force to replace the 'armed rabble' of the volunteers. Fortescue's notion of volunteering as a patriotic response, which when the immediate danger of invasion had passed became an evasion of national duty is a narrowly military interpretation which deals with 'patriotism' anachronistically. He cites numerous instances of insubordination to establish a picture of volunteer indiscipline which fails to take into account anything more than the military aspect of the movement.⁵

Subsequent military histories have been heavily dependent on Fortescue's work. Richard Glover, however, in his study of military institutions before the Peninsular War, modifies Fortescue's criticism of Addington's and Pitt's management of the volunteers by pointing out the practical difficulties faced by administrations, and by arguing that the training provided was suited to the nature of the force, concluding that the volunteers formed as effective a force as could be hoped for.⁶

A much broader view of volunteering was taken by John Western in his influential study of the volunteers as an anti-revolutionary force. Considering their political and social dimensions in addition to the military, he presented volunteering as an aspect of the process by which 'the bulk of the propertied classes and the traditionalists were fused into a fairly solid "party of order"'.⁷ A French invasion, it was feared, would lead to insurrection and give British Jacobins the chance to seize power. Pitt's ministry sought to create an anti-revolutionary force to withstand the challenge from the democrats and reformers. The volunteers occupied a central position in this 'national conservative coalition', as an instrument of loyalist political propaganda and by uniting men in the defence of order. Many corps had links with the Reevesite loyal associations, and so were 'perfect cadres for political clubs.' Their political intent was to diffuse as widely as possible among the middle and lower classes active political consciousness and allegiance to the state. The movement's military purpose was as an instrument of repression, the executive arm of loyalist committees. By the allocation of allowances and exemptions, the government was able to ensure that some corps were composed largely of propertied men and so were trustworthy for

⁵ J.W. Fortescue, *The County Lieutenancies and the Army 1803-1814*, (London, 1909), pp.12, 68-70, 98-110, 119, 167, 198, 200.

⁶ Richard Glover, *Peninsular Preparation The Reform of the British Army 1795-1809*, (Cambridge, 1963), pp.232-237; see also Richard Glover, *Britain at Bay Defence against Bonaparte, 1803-14*, (London, 1973).

⁷ J.R. Western, 'The Volunteer Movement as an Anti-Revolutionary Force, 1793-1801', *English Historical Review*, Vol. LXXI, October 1956, p.603.

policing duties.⁸

Roger Wells develops this argument with regard to the volunteers' participation in the suppression of food rioting. The fiercely repressive tone of Pitt's 'reign of terror', he argues, was reinforced by the conscious creation of the volunteers as an ultra-conservative military establishment. Yet Wells identifies structural weaknesses in the loyalism represented by the volunteer movement. The patriotic policies which 'radiated' from the volunteers into the community were weakened by the erosion of confidence in their policing role as a result of desertions during food riots; the corps were 'essentially compromised and therefore suspect'.⁹

Western's argument that the volunteers were a vital component of a 'party of order' has been widely influential. However, his picture of Pitt's ministry actively seeking to create a loyalist consensus and shaking the middle and lower classes from their political torpor is modified by those who argue for the prior existence of a conservative majority willing to mobilise itself in defence of the constitution. The volunteers are presented as a surrogate police force, upon whose popular, spontaneous support the regime could rely at times of great strain. Ian Christie believes them to have contributed to Britain's political and social stability during the 1790s and consequent avoidance of revolution. Social cohesion, prosperity and facilities for the redress of grievances made the social and political system flexible. At a time of great strain, the forces of order depended on the 'popular spontaneous support' of the loyalist associations and the volunteers, which reflected 'a broad-based moderation'.¹⁰

H.T.Dickinson also assigns an important political role to the volunteers and emphasises the existence of a loyalist majority. He argues that in order to explain the failure of radical reformers to effect political change in the 1790s it is necessary first to understand the strength and success of the conservative reaction. The supporters of the established order developed an ideological and moral defence, and formed organisations that mobilised mass support, principally the Reeves associations and the volunteers. He argues that the primary significance of the volunteers was as an instrument of pro-

⁸J.R.Western, 'The Volunteer Movement as an Anti-Revolutionary Force', pp.603-607, 612-613.

⁹Roger Wells, *Wretched Faces: Famine in Wartime England 1793-1801*, (Gloucester, 1987), pp.284-285, 329; Roger Wells, '"Amidst these shaking times": Britain's avoidance of revolution revisited', (unpublished conference paper, 1989), pp.24-26.

¹⁰Ian R.Christie, *Stress and Stability in Late Eighteenth-Century Britain Reflections on the British Avoidance of Revolution*, (Oxford, 1984), pp.36-37.

paganda, demonstrating the willingness of the propertied classes to defend their established position. In both these interpretations, armed associations are considered to be the natural successors of the loyalist associations, intimidating their radical opponents and encouraging loyalty and patriotism among the public in general.¹¹

Taking the view to its logical extreme, Robert Dozier has characterised the volunteers of 1794 as the final and strongest appearance of the loyalists; they were the loyalist associations in arms, in 'full-fledged physical opposition to their enemies, the radical artisans.' He identifies close links between the Reevesite loyal associations of 1792–1793 and the loyal volunteers of 1794, calculating that a large majority of the early corps had officers who had been members of loyalist associations. Until the threat of invasion became paramount, the volunteers grew sporadically in response to the supposed dangers to internal peace posed by the radicals. As the internal threat died away, the external danger of invasion took prominence 'until the loyalists were gradually transformed into patriots.' With the decline of both the radical societies and the ideological and military threats from France by the end of 1794, the reason for the existence of the loyalist associations disappeared. With the end of the revolutionary threat, there was no longer any reason for distinctions between loyalists and 'patriots'. Thereafter, the loyalists formed the nucleus of a broader volunteer movement.¹²

The principal defect of this interpretation is that it places undue stress on the loyalist, anti-radical component of the volunteer movement, and presumes that it characterised the force as a whole. It neglects the primacy from the beginning of the volunteers' military purpose. The force was designed to face an invasion, not radical artisans. Moreover, the loyalist tenor of the volunteers is deduced from an estimated high proportion of volunteer officers who had been 'members' of loyalist associations. Yet the proportion is calculated on the tendentious assumptions that the areas for which information is available about loyalist associations are representative of England as a whole and that the 'associations' were formal organisations with strict notions of membership, rather than being simply associations of individuals who signed declarations to support the constitution.¹³ The underlying

¹¹H.T.Dickinson, 'Popular Conservatism in Late 18th Century Britain', (unpublished conference paper, 1986), pp.2, 12–17.

¹²Robert R.Dozier, *For King, Constitution, and Country The English Loyalists and the French Revolution*, (Lexington, Kentucky, 1983), pp.138–139, 153, 167–171; 'Patriot' is here used in its conservative sense.

¹³Robert R.Dozier, *For King, Constitution, and Country*, p.153; see Donald E.Ginter,

assumption is that the vast bulk of the population must have been sympathetic either to the radical or to the loyal cause, which are presented as mutually exclusive and together comprehensive. Yet contemporaries tended to believe that the mass of the people were indifferent to political matters, and so should be won over to the side of government in order to save them from rival influences.¹⁴

However, it is far from clear that Pitt's ministry deliberately set about creating the volunteer force primarily or even largely for purposes of political repression. Armed corps were a much less effective means than loyal associations of countering political reform societies, as they did not engage in political debate. Declarations of political purpose by a volunteer corps were exceedingly rare. Unlike the Reeves associations and many other, less formal loyalist groups, volunteer corps are not known to have engaged in prosecutions, harassment or violence against radical reformers or Jacobins. The links between the different loyalist associations, and between the loyalists and the volunteers, are not sufficiently clear and direct to justify their being described as a 'national conservative coalition'.

Making similar assumptions about their political purpose, Edward Thompson considered that the volunteer movement 'was a very powerful auxiliary force to the other resources of Church and State in repressing native Jacobins.' Yet in contrast to Dozier, Thompson believes that the conservative volunteer force was not representative of popular opinion. The 'incurably anti-militaristic rank-and-file' were reluctant to come forward, and the common people were allegedly hostile to the system of volunteering. Historians of the working class continue to emphasise the impact of popular radical societies to the exclusion of labourers' and artisans' experience in volunteering. Implicitly, the experience of working men as volunteers has not been considered to be part of the making of working class consciousness. Thompson depicts the movement, and particularly the yeomanry, as an exclusive, elitist and middle class affair, the sons of squires, attorneys and manufacturers enjoying dressing up on horseback and attending volunteer balls. 'A common understanding grew up between aristocracy and middle class, forming that *esprit de corps* which was later to carry the field at Peterloo'.¹⁵

'The Loyalist Association Movement of 1792-93 and British Public Opinion', *Historical Journal*, Vol.IX, No.2, 1966.

¹⁴National Library of Scotland, MS 1048, Melville Papers, Home Defence, ff.9-10, Samuel Swinton, Sloane Street, 13 January 1794; another copy: f.18, 'An Old Sea Officer', 13 January 1794.

¹⁵E.P.Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, Second Edition, (London,

Where Western, Dozier and Dickinson have seen the political significance of volunteering in its loyalist aspect — whether as in Western's picture of a loyalism fostered and manipulated by the government, or as in the spontaneous popular loyalism identified by the latter two — others have in contrast identified its political significance in terms of popular nationalism. Linda Colley has linked the growing involvement of civilian working men in national defence with the development of a populist national consciousness in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Britain. Yet she presents a distinctly different account of popular nationalism to that of Victorian and Edwardian historians of volunteering, who saw the movement as an effusion of national spirit and patriotic ardour. Cecil Sebag-Montefiore presented the force as a spontaneous manifestation of the 'patriotic wave' passing over the country in 1794, corps springing into existence in response to appeals to citizen duty. The 'temper of the people', he believed, was adapted to the government's measures for internal defence.¹⁶ Appeals to the people, Colley suggests, were inherently dangerous. Patriotism and nationalism were potentially serious threats to the established constitution, and were not inherently loyal as Sebag-Montefiore presumes. Large-scale involvement in the militia and volunteers was seen by some contemporaries as likely to foster popular assertiveness and demands for the enfranchisement of men subject to military service. The volunteers 'were therefore almost certain to have democratic implications', and cannot be characterised as a surrogate police force.¹⁷

Colley points out that the government was at first reluctant to allow the creation of a mass organisation; the first public appeal for volunteers in 1794 was to 'gentlemen of weight and property'.¹⁸ Contrary to the widely repeated picture of the movement as the centrepiece of a party of order and a creature of the ministry, she asserts that by the end of 1803 the government was 'confronted with' a huge number of volunteers of doubtful political constancy. Corps were autonomous, private institutions, run by committees; many elected their own officers. Yet the movement did not use its potential power to extort concessions from the government, and was superseded with surprisingly little opposition by the Local Militia from 1808. The problem

1980), pp.189–190, 495–496.

¹⁶Cecil Sebag-Montefiore, *A History of the Volunteer Forces*, pp.165–166, 189, 248.

¹⁷Linda Colley, 'Whose Nation? Class and National Consciousness in Britain 1750–1830', *Past & Present*, No. 113, November 1986, p.114.

¹⁸Linda Colley, 'Whose Nation?', pp.113–115, 109, there misquoted as 'gentlemen of wealth and property'.

to explain becomes that of the relative lack of volunteer political activity rather than the extent of their loyalism.¹⁹

Colley's interpretation places much stress on the supposed conflict of interests between the governing oligarchy and the large plebeian volunteer movement. Yet the case for volunteer autonomy and opposition to the ruling oligarchy is overstated. The movement was both a mass popular movement and relatively autonomous for only a comparatively brief part of this period. It reached its greatest size and highest level of plebeian participation not in the 1790s but from 1803 till 1805. In 1804 the Volunteer Consolidation Act placed significant restrictions on corps' autonomy, ending the right to elect officers and effectively restricting the role of committees. The movement might be viewed from a slightly different angle: the government may have believed that it could harness a popular nationalist movement to the loyal cause and did not expect such a movement to become a threat to the established order, as nationalist movements became on the continent.

John Cookson similarly argues for the significance of popular nationalism to an understanding of volunteering. Rather than being an outgrowth of counter-revolutionary loyalism, he suggests that the growth of patriotism and national consciousness evident in volunteering were unifying elements in the political, and particularly the patriotic, activity of the urban middle classes. Volunteer corps contributed to the building of 'civic cultures'; through them, the urban middle class asserted its interests against the county oligarchy. They used the volunteer movement, along with other patriotic activity, to 'legitimate their concerns and secure their status against an enormously powerful hierarchy.' The prosperous and settled middle classes, formerly distinguished by their antipathy to military service, were drawn into it by volunteering. Cookson emphasises that the arming of the middle classes might have altered urban social relationships profoundly, but failed to do so because the volunteers were short-lived.²⁰

On the national level, Cookson suggests that volunteers were regarded ambiguously by the state. The movement was hard to control closely, and its independence was progressively constricted from 1803–1804, till its displacement in 1809. Like Colley, Cookson sees the gradual demise of the volunteers as a vital indication of their relationship with the state. He qualifies her argument that the demise of the volunteers showed how volatile and potentially subversive the force was perceived to be, by pointing out that

¹⁹Linda Colley, 'Whose Nation?', pp.109, 113–115.

²⁰John Cookson, 'The English Volunteer Movement', pp.3, 40–41.

the government worked to 'militarise' the volunteers, and that corps were disbanded on grounds of 'efficiency' and 'public service'; the force had outlived its usefulness. He argues that a mass force had been created because the authorities turned to volunteering in the necessity of the hour, prepared to run the risk of an armed populace. In 1803 the opportunity was taken to encourage the growth of a more rural-based force by threatening a levy on the counties, but this too proved inadequate. The government soon discovered the force was neither efficient nor satisfactorily under their control, and so set about creating a replacement, the local militia.²¹

David Eastwood likewise argues that the patriotic enthusiasm engendered by voluntary endeavour was a unifying force. It helped enable the state to confront the revolutionary challenges of the 1790s without substantial structural reform and without adopting revolutionary means. The voluntary principle 'did not challenge but almost explicitly endorsed the ideological assumptions of conservatism.' The government's enthusiasm for the volunteers survived throughout the 1790s despite growing evidence of their limited effectiveness, he argues, because the 'manner in which the Volunteers combined patriotism, public service and economy was particularly welcome to government'. Only later did official disillusionment with the force lead to the creation of the Local Militia.²²

The few serious local studies have sought to explore the wider social context of volunteering.²³ In his detailed study of the Ely volunteers, John Cookson argues as a counter to the prevailing view of volunteering as a movement with national purposes that the movement must be related to the localities which organised, recruited and financed the individual corps. Stressing the parochial nature of volunteering, he emphasises that individual corps can be better understood as communal institutions than as part of a military 'system'. Mark Pottle, considering volunteering in Nottinghamshire, deliberately focusses on the 'positive' aspects of the movement. He

²¹ John Cookson, 'The English Volunteer Movement', p.3.

²² David Eastwood, 'Fading Visions? Patriotism, Loyalist Enthusiasms, and the English State in the 1790s', (unpublished conference paper, 1989), pp.3, 11-13, 20-22.

²³ See John Cookson, 'Patriotism and Social Structure: the Ely Volunteers, 1798-1808', (unpublished paper, 1989); Ann Hudson, 'Volunteer Soldiers in Sussex during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, 1793-1815', *Sussex Archaeological Collections Relating to the History and Antiquities of the Counties of East and West Sussex*, Volume 122, 1984; Mark Christopher Pottle, 'Loyalty and Patriotism in Nottingham, 1792-1816', D.Phil.thesis, University of Oxford, 1988; J.D.Sainsbury, *Hertfordshire's Soldiers A Survey of the Auxiliary Military Forces raised in Hertfordshire from 1757 to the Present Day*, (Hitchin, 1969).

concludes, like Cookson, that the volunteers were committed to the county community, a 'narrower patriotism' than that portrayed by Colley.²⁴

Cookson argues that volunteer localism obstructed the government's military requirements for the force. The state gradually directed volunteer activity into line with the army's strategic plans, away from the corps' local concerns, under the ethos of 'public service' and 'national defence'. The volunteers became committed to territorial defence, acquiring a 'sense of military citizenship'.²⁵ However, David Eastwood argues that volunteers reinforced the structure of the state because their localism was perfectly consonant with the decentralised traditions of the polity.²⁶

There is evidently a need for an account that takes notice of all of these interpretations of the volunteer movement and provides a broadly-based study which also deals with certain questions not before addressed. A much broader and yet detailed view of the movement's purposes, organisation and activities is necessary. Furthermore, much of the interpretation of the volunteer movement suffers from having an antagonistic radical-conservative model of politics imposed on it. Volunteers are frequently unreservedly classed as anti-radicals and all aspects of their activities viewed in that light. The movement needs to be considered outside the framework of radicalism and loyalism in which the politics of the period are most often interpreted. The simplistic division obscures the complexities of the gradations of political allegiance, all but the most radical of which were represented in the volunteer movement.

The historiography prompts several important questions. The first concerns the extent to which volunteering can be considered a political movement. Second, if the volunteers had a political aspect, there is the question of the extent to which they can be considered a loyalist force, in its conservative and anti-radical sense. This is in turn linked to the question of motivation — whether men joined for 'patriotic' purposes, or because they wished to avoid more arduous service elsewhere — and to the question of the political motivation of the ministry — whether they sought to use the volunteers as an anti-radical force, or to use them simply as auxiliaries to the regular forces. It will be argued that the government's purpose in creating the volunteer force was principally military, for defence against invasion

²⁴Mark Pottle, 'Loyalty and Patriotism in Nottingham', pp.184–185.

²⁵John Cookson, 'Patriotism and Social Structure: the Ely Volunteers, 1798– 1808', pp.1, 15.

²⁶David Eastwood, 'Fading Visions? Patriotism, Loyalist Enthusiasms, and the English State in the 1790s', p.11.

and internal policing duties, although the force's less explicit political and social roles were nevertheless important. The government was concerned to create a force which would bolster the impression of national unanimity by bringing uncommitted men into active support for the prosecution of the war while reinforcing the links between the different ranks of society. The volunteers themselves had distinctly different ideas of the purpose of the force, believing that it was intended for local defence and security but not in all cases intended for the suppression of civil riots. While involvement at first seemed to carry ministerialist political overtones, eventually a wide range of political opinion was accommodated. The force was loyal to the crown in a general sense, as opposed to being 'loyalist' in the specific sense of active anti-radical and anti-democratic political activity. Most corps avoided involvement in political controversy and confined themselves to general statements of support for the crown and constitution.

The nature of the force and its duties, however, raised the possibility that the volunteers might disrupt the social and political system that they had associated to defend. A middle line will be steered between Colley's view of the volunteers as a popular nationalist force potentially hostile to the established state, and Western's model of a government-sponsored bastion of a conservative 'force of order'. It will be concluded that although the volunteers did not constitute the homogeneous loyalist force that the government intended, the significance of their plebeian autonomy and 'democratic' organisation should not be over-estimated. Their political intent was too complex to be characterised simply as loyalist or nationalist. Volunteers had a clear conception that they were to be a force of order, but not an actively political or counter-revolutionary force.

This argument is assembled in three broad stages. The first traces the genesis of the volunteer system, and establishes that the volunteers were planned and raised primarily for military purposes and organised as part of the varied auxiliary forces. The next considers the men who raised and belonged to volunteer corps and their motives for doing so; military, financial, social and political. The third stage deals with the effects the nature of the membership had on the ways the force acted and was employed. It considers the volunteers both as a challenge to, and as a support of, the existing order. Investigation of volunteer activities is in turn divided between their active military role and their less formal civil role, both of which illustrate volunteers' place in social life and their public image and purpose.

The first chapter traces the development of the volunteer force and locates it in the context both of political associations and other military or-

ganisations. Although there were clear differences between the plans for a volunteer force and the force as it came to be formed, the movement can be placed in the existing tradition of voluntary military corps formed during invasion crises. Yet the possibility existed that the new force might acquire a political role, either on the model of the Irish volunteers, or through its apparent connections with the loyalist Association for the Preservation of Liberty and Property against Republicans and Levellers.

This raises the question of why the ministry chose to suggest the formation of the volunteers in the way it did, and why it sanctioned the growth of the force along lines apparently not anticipated. In an attempt to explain this, the second chapter outlines the growth, organisation and administration of the volunteer system, and considers the size and extent of the movement and the limitations on the government's ability to manage it. The government appears to have resorted to inviting volunteers primarily in order to augment the local defensive forces but also to provide the appearance of wide public support for its prosecution of the war. When the response proved unexpectedly great, the government sought to make more effective use of the volunteers as a national defensive force by bringing them under closer military control. The authorities were to a large extent dependent on the willingness of men to volunteer, and this willingness appears to have been related to the impetus of the compulsory raising of other military forces to face invasion, as much as of the threat of invasion itself. The perceived threat of civil disruption by popular political reform societies seems to have had little correlation in time or place with volunteering. As a result, the picture of the volunteers as a force of armed loyalists organised for counter-revolutionary purposes must be viewed with some reservations.

This examination of the differences between the government's intentions for the volunteers and the nature of the force in practice is taken a stage further in the third chapter. The major topic here considered systematically on a national scale for the first time is the membership of corps: who joined, where and why, and what features made them a distinctive group. Except in rare cases, the information about individual volunteers has been considered too sparse, scattered or inconclusive for analysis, or to justify anything more than anecdotal treatment.²⁷ Unsupported assertions about the composition of corps have frequently been repeated without further investigation. The far from comprehensive available information suggests that the force was more

²⁷But see John Cookson, 'Patriotism and Social Structure: the Ely Volunteers, 1798-1808', pp.4-10.

diverse than generally assumed, although individual corps could be relatively socially homogeneous. Disparate and incomplete sources of information are used to establish the nature of the membership, and conclusions are drawn from this about the limitations thereby placed on the employment of the force.

The original intention of this study was to discover as much as possible about those involved in volunteering: the organisers, subscribers and members of corps. Once the identity of the volunteers had been established, it should then have been possible to draw conclusions about their motivation for becoming involved. Their occupations, length of service, and membership of other organisation might have been traced, to reconstruct networks of military and social activity. Unfortunately, questions about identity, membership and motivation can only be answered occasionally and indirectly.

It is established that, despite considerable variation, the force was predominantly one of artisans, skilled workmen and retailers, and not one of labourers and unskilled workmen as were the militia and army. Volunteers were in general men in settled occupations who found the force less disruptive of their civil concerns than any other military force. As far as it is possible to tell, the change in the social composition of the force as time passed made this tendency clearer. Volunteers were distinctly unlike regular soldiers, and themselves stressed that their status did not subject them to regular military discipline or command, and did not over-ride their liberties as civilians. Nor were the many small and independent tradesmen willing to sacrifice their livelihoods by agreeing to serve on the same terms as regular soldiers. Their political adherences were generally not significantly different from those of the rest of the politically active nation, though the officers were, if anything, a little more conservative than either their men or their peers. The general conclusion is, however, that the volunteers in practice were not a uniformly conservative force of propertied men and those under their clientage. They encompassed a broad range of political allegiances and religious denominations and so were unlikely to be amenable to overt political manipulation.

The fourth chapter investigates the methods of selection of volunteers, and the criteria adopted. It identifies the ways in which reliability and loyalty were defined, and how they were monitored in practice. This provides the basis for discussion of the question of the extent to which, if at all, volunteering was a political movement. The range of membership and lack of a unified political line appear to undermine Western's picture of the volunteers as the keystone in a national conservative coalition. The interpretation of

the movement as part of an anti-revolutionary coalition is based on the belief that its members were propertied men or carefully selected unpropertied men chosen for their political loyalty. Investigation of the means and criteria used for the selection of volunteers demonstrates that loyalty to the crown and constitution was a vital consideration, but that nevertheless there were varying patterns of political allegiance which were determined more by local circumstances than by national politics. Though the process of selection of members was informal and indirect, it is clear that political principles were nearly always taken into account. Acceptable political principles, however, spanned a wide range of political allegiance, including moderate reformers but generally excluding republicans and democrats. Though a loyal force, the volunteers as a whole cannot be characterised as 'loyalist': a conservative or anti-radical force. The force was loyal in the general sense of allegiance to the crown, but there were limits to the extent to which that loyalty could be relied upon.

The fifth chapter considers further the purpose of volunteering and draws upon the conclusions of the second chapter regarding the balance between government direction and local concerns that determined the pattern of volunteering. It examines the motives of individuals in joining the movement, taking into account the options available to them and the circumstances in which they joined. Patriotic motives are nearly always imprecise and unclear, and mixed with less disinterested intentions. A strong connection is evident between volunteering and a desire to avoid compulsory service in other additional forces. To a lesser extent, men volunteered for economic, social or political advantage or under related pressures. If both the type of men who became volunteers and the reasons they had for joining suggest an ambiguous political picture, then the organisation of corps provides even greater reason to question the picture of a loyalist force of order.

The political implications of the nature of volunteer organisation are explored in the sixth chapter. Critics warned that the force was dangerously democratic, pointing not only to its plebeian membership but also to its egalitarian organisation. Officers were elected by their corps, and most did not have to meet property qualifications. Much of the business of corps, including discipline, was conducted by elected committees to whom the officers were responsible. Most corps were at least partially financially self-sufficient through subscriptions, which potentially could be appropriated to other purposes. Deliberation within a corps on political matters became a possibility, and co-operation between different corps to put pressure on the government was an alarming prospect to critics of the system, among whom

William Cobbett and William Windham were prominent. Volunteer organisation was unusually egalitarian for a military body, maintaining many of the features of civil clubs and societies which gave the corps much latitude in their public activity.

Though the force was loyal in a general sense, that loyalty was conditional. The limits to the extent to which volunteer loyalism could be relied upon are explored in the seventh chapter, which considers whether the volunteers can genuinely be considered a force of order when confronted by internal disaffection and disorder. It asks what steps were taken to ensure the loyalty of volunteers, and how effective were the efforts to create a loyal and reliable force in practice. The view that the volunteers, and especially the yeomanry, were reliable riot-control forces because they were composed of the gentry and their dependents is undermined by the evidence of a much more socially-mixed composition. Several cases of volunteer insubordination and unreliability in the face of riots suggest that the force could not always be trusted in a repressive or policing role. Loyalist politics appear to have been compatible with the acceptance by volunteers of limitations to their civic duty and with attachment to their rights as civilians. Yet when the general trustworthiness of corps is taken into account and compared with the record of the militia and regular army, magistrates' continued readiness to employ the volunteers in riot control-duties is more readily understood. Examples of the volunteers in action show how the new and ubiquitous force was used in conjunction with the regular forces in their established riot-control role. Policing duties were closely related to the volunteer force's planned role in the event of an invasion. It was to act both as a reinforcement for the regular forces and to take over their policing and evacuation duties in order to free soldiers to face an invasion. This interdependent relationship of volunteers, militia and army gave rise to the volunteers' uneasy position between the military and civilian in their own eyes and those of the public, the subject of chapter eight.

This, the final chapter, considers the place volunteering occupied in public life, the relationship between volunteers and their communities, and the images that corps sought to project about themselves. A wide range of information attests to the pervasiveness of volunteering in local communities, and makes it clear that the volunteers drew a distinction between themselves and the regular military forces. Volunteers saw themselves and were seen by others not as military men but as armed civilians who had taken up a military character in the face of an emergency and would relinquish it when the danger was past. They adopted an ambivalent position with regard to

the army; volunteers sought to dissociate themselves from the vices of a standing army while adopting many of its practices. Amateurs were most enthusiastic about the forms and practices of military life, and least about its duties. Volunteers encapsulated the ideal of the propertied 'citizen soldier' that they believed had been lost by the militia and distorted by the French revolutionary armies. Volunteers' relationships with their corps had many of the features of membership of a club which provided opportunities for conviviality and social mixing on common ground. Yet although corps' convivial aspects mitigated the tedium of military duties, they were not alone the reason for the existence of the movement. Volunteering remained fundamentally a military activity, though with an important social role.

The conclusion brings together these lines of argument by considering what the force was thought to have achieved. Contemporaries concentrated on the volunteers' influence in the creation of a sense of national unity and the creation of a loyalist consensus, and not so much on their contribution to national defence. Since the government needed an efficient military force, it chose to replace the volunteers with the less resolutely civilian local militia.

This subject has been approached from the angle of the civilian response to the war and threats of invasion rather than the more usual directions, which treat volunteering as a military institution or as a political and administrative phenomenon. In seeking to reconcile these three approaches it has become clear that the volunteers cannot be understood other than with all those contexts in mind. A picture increasingly complex in detail but familiar in outline has emerged from the sources. Wide local variation was accommodated within a broadly uniform overall structure. Sufficient exceptions existed to any aspect to give rise to hesitation in describing volunteering as a 'system'.

Several of the terms to be used here need to be more clearly defined. The term 'volunteer' was applied to a variety of military bodies and so carried several meanings for contemporaries. Strictly, volunteers in the sense considered here were men who, without compulsion and often without reward, joined local military corps in which they retained civilian status, until and unless called on to permanent duty by the crown. Their corps were partially autonomous corporate organisations which met only occasionally, a few of which had a small permanent staff. Yet voluntary service in general did not imply civilian status. The term 'volunteer' applied to other military forces distinguished men who joined for a bounty from those who were compelled to join by ballot, or who acted as substitutes for others who were balloted. A distinction was drawn between the mass armies raised by compulsory levies

in revolutionary France and their British counterparts, raised by voluntary enlistment.

The term 'association' was also far from unambiguous. Associations of individuals binding themselves to a common course of action usually had political aims, and often opposition connotations. The Yorkshire Association movement and the Association for the Preservation of Liberty and Property demonstrated in opposite causes the potential political strength of such loose organisations, while Lord George Gordon's Protestant Association in 1780 showed the danger to public order possible. Members of the armed and unarmed associations formed from 1797 subscribed to a stricter form of engagement, to defend their locality in the event of an invasion. Neither the associators nor the government was unaware of the ambiguous political connotations of the term, however.

Many such associations called themselves 'loyal', by which they meant that they owed allegiance to the crown and the established constitution. It does not appear that loyalty so defined in the eyes of most volunteers excluded a commitment to moderate reform of the parliamentary representation, but 'loyalism' is generally taken by historians to be synonymous with opposition to democratic reform or republicanism. Here, a distinction will be drawn between 'loyalty' in the former, broad, constitutional sense, and 'loyalism' in the sense of active anti-radical or counter-revolutionary activity. The loyal or constitutional activity characteristic of the volunteers, which included petitioning and peace-keeping, will be distinguished from the 'loyalist' activity of the Reeves associations and anti-radical groups: intimidation, physical violence, prosecutions and vigilante activity.

'Patriotism' in the sense of active civic virtue and the defence of the country's interests, freedoms and rights, as distinct from 'loyalism', carried many connotations of opposition to the government, which was by no means generally believed to be acting in the country's best interests. During the 1790s the government was able to claim much of the vocabulary of patriotism, but it could be used with different shades of meaning by both loyalists and their opponents. Only in some contexts did the word have its later predominant sense of nationalist loyalism; on the contrary it was possible in 1799 to describe a democrat as 'a very great Patriot and a violent enemy to our present happy system of Government'²⁸

For a large, ubiquitous but relatively short-lived movement without di-

²⁸Hugh Cunningham, 'The Language of Patriotism, 1750-1914', *History Workshop*, Issue 12, Autumn 1981, pp.13-15; HO 42/46, Thos.Bayley, Hereford, 17 February 1799.

rect successors, the volunteers have left a surprisingly large trail of information. The internal defence series of the Home Office papers contains the main bulk of documentation on the volunteers, mixed with correspondence on other auxiliary forces. More formally organised (by counties) from 1803, the series contains a wide variety of correspondence, including proposals to form corps, recommendations for commissions, requests for allowances; a great deal of the material is routine correspondence.²⁹ Many of the replies can be traced in the secretary of state's out-letter books, and further correspondence survives among the private papers of Pitt, Dundas, Addington, Windham and others.³⁰

The correspondence of other government departments is far less useful. The War Office was responsible for pay and allowances, and the printed lists of officers and the very large series of manuscript muster rolls of paid corps are the basis for the analysis of membership.³¹ Occasional letters concerning the volunteers are collected with the general correspondence of the Home Office, which is most useful for information on the discussion and proposals leading to the formation of volunteer corps in 1793 and 1794.³² The Commander-in-Chief's office has left little of importance regarding volunteering, and correspondence between the military departments rarely touches on the subject. The collection of official circulars to volunteer corps is far from complete and must be supplemented by copies of circular letters received by lords lieutenant and individual corps.³³ The little that survives of the correspondence of Inspecting Field Officers is mostly routine.³⁴

At the local level, the survival of correspondence is much patchier and can often dictate or foreclose lines of enquiry. It is frequently impossible to reconstruct all levels of correspondence on controversial matters, in the records of central government, county lieutenancy and individual corps. The survival of lieutenancy records is often linked with the fate of the private papers of the lords lieutenant, and the quality of the records in the first place often was a product of the diligence of the lieutenants. Among the best

²⁹Of these, the more useful are: HO 50/40–56 volunteers; HO 50/57–323 internal defence; HO 50/330–356 volunteers supplementary; HO 50/389–461 military correspondence; HO 51/74–89 volunteers; HO 51/103–107.

³⁰See especially Public Record Office, PRO 30/8, Chatham Papers; Devon Record Office, 152 M, Sidmouth Papers; National Library of Scotland and Scottish Record Office, Melville Papers; BL Add.MSS 37,903–37,908, Windham Papers.

³¹WO 13 Muster Rolls and Pay Lists.

³²HO 42, Domestic and General correspondence.

³³HO 51/120, Circulars.

³⁴See especially Guildhall Library, MS 4951, Col.Henry Harnage letters.

collections for this purpose are the Northumberland, Buckinghamshire and Berkshire lieutenancy papers, each of which deals with the militia alongside the volunteers and yeomanry. The letter books of the Hampshire internal defence committee are unusually comprehensive and are especially valuable for information on the early organisation of county defence. The Duke of Northumberland paid unusually close attention to the membership of corps, so the muster rolls among his lieutenancy papers are particularly valuable for an analysis of membership.³⁵

The survival of the papers of individual corps is even more unpredictable. From a few apparently comprehensive collections it is possible to conjecture the nature of the records that may have been kept by others. One of the fullest surviving collections is that of the London and Westminster Light Horse Volunteers, containing committee minute books, orderly books, reports from officers, muster rolls, financial and legal documentation, in addition to correspondence with magistrates, the Lord Mayor, the Home Office and other government departments.³⁶ Other, smaller, collections of officers' papers occasionally contain a range of printed and manuscript ephemera relating to the daily running of a corps; good examples are the papers of Captain Humphrey Hall of the Light Horse Volunteers, Colonel John Drinkwater of the Ealing and Brentford Volunteers, and Thomas Estcourt of the Wiltshire Yeomanry. The papers of most volunteers contain only occasional references to their military activities, strongly suggesting their subordination to the requirements of civil life.³⁷ The pervasiveness of volunteering means that much incidental information can be gathered from private correspondence, diaries, newspapers, periodicals, pamphlets, engravings, caricatures, poetry, songs and a wide range of ephemera, much of which has not before been used in this connection.

The nature of the records, almost as much as their survival, determines the uses to which they can be put. The usefulness of most surviving financial

³⁵ Particularly useful collections are: Berkshire Record Office, D/ERa, Radnor Papers; Buckinghamshire Record Office, Lieutenancy Papers; Hampshire Record Office, 11 M 49, Lieutenancy Papers; Devon Record Office, 1262 M, Fortescue MSS; Northumberland Record Office, 1812, Duke of Northumberland's lieutenancy papers; Norfolk Record Office, Townshend Correspondence.

³⁶ PRO 30/3, Bosanquet Papers; Guildhall Library, MS 18,942, Light Horse Volunteers MSS; see also Hertfordshire Record Office, papers of the Hitchin Loyal Volunteers.

³⁷ National Army Museum, 7805-72, Col. John Drinkwater, Ealing and Brentford Volunteers papers; National Army Museum, 6807-268, Papers of Captain Humphrey Hall of the Light Horse Volunteers; Gloucestershire Record Office, D 1571, Papers of Thomas Estcourt, M.P., Devizes troop, Wiltshire Yeomanry Cavalry.

documentation, for example, is extremely limited because of its fragmentation. Because most corps did not have a continuous existence there was little incentive to maintain financial records systematically. Much of what survives comprises merely collections of bills and receipts, with occasional lists of accounts. The St.James's Westminster Loyal Volunteers, unusually, resolved to preserve their books and papers 'so as to shew at any future time the mode of conducting the business of the Regiment'.³⁸ The analysis of membership is also restricted by the sources, but less because of the survival of documentation than because of the purposes for which the information was originally compiled. Muster rolls very rarely provide anything more than nominal and parochial information because they were concerned with attendance and the payment of allowances. Consequently, the identification of volunteers in electoral and taxation records is usually uncertain; in rare instances, occupational information was recorded expressly for the benefit of posterity.³⁹

³⁸Westminster City Library, 767/1, St.James's Westminster Loyal Volunteer Regiment, 23 November 1815.

³⁹I should like to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Joanna Innes, for her advice, guidance, confidence and forbearance, and to Dr.John Cookson and Dr.David Eastwood for information, comments and copies of unpublished papers.

*Chapter One: 'So gallant and patriotic a measure':
The Genesis and Development of the Volunteer Force*

In March 1794 the government invited 'Gentlemen of Weight or Property' to stand forward to carry out plans for the security of the country that included the formation of volunteer infantry and yeomanry cavalry corps. By the end of the year, 154 corps of volunteers and yeomen had been formed for local defence against invasion. By the end of 1800 there were perhaps 111,000 volunteers, of which almost a quarter were cavalymen, and by 1804 380,258 were enrolled.¹ The force thereby created was the largest voluntary movement of the eighteenth century, though the variety and size of the response was apparently not anticipated.

It is the intention of this study to examine the volunteer movement in its political, military and social aspects. This chapter will establish a chronological framework within which broader questions will later be set. The movement as it developed differed in several respects from what was originally planned, so it is necessary to distinguish the intended nature of the force from its subsequent development, and to set that development in the context of the British response to wartime exigencies. The discussion will fall into two parts, of which the first places the volunteers of the French wars within the tradition of voluntary political and military organisations, and examines the range of ideas that influenced the decision to, and manner of, inviting the formation of volunteer corps in 1794. The second part follows the development of volunteering as it changed in response to the demands of military planning and popular involvement.

The origins of the volunteer force of the 1790s can be traced both to the voluntary defensive forces formed to oppose invasion on occasion throughout the preceding century, and to political associations. These two aspects raise a major question which any study of the volunteers must confront: to what extent, if any, they were, either in intention or in practice, political organisations. Though in some respects a purely military organisation designed to oppose invasion, the volunteers had a related role, the maintenance of public order, which impinged upon popular political activity, particularly that of the popular reform societies of the mid 1790s. John Western's the-

¹ *To Escape the Monster's Clutches Notes and documents illustrating the preparations in North Yorkshire to repel the invasion threatened by the French from 1793*, North Yorkshire County Record Office Publications No.15, Compiled by M.Y.Ashcroft, (Northallerton, 1977), pp.43-46, p.11; Cecil Sebag-Montefiore, *A History of the Volunteer Forces*, p.224; J.W.Fortescue, *The County Lieutenancies and the Army*, Appendix III, p.294.

sis that the volunteers were consciously created by Pitt's ministry as an anti-revolutionary force, the keystone of a 'party of order', has been highly influential in this matter. He believes that corps were formed with a view to presenting a solid front against the propagation of democratic ideas by the reform societies, and his view is bolstered by Robert Dozier's examination of the links between the loyal associations of 1792-1793 and the volunteers. Dozier concludes that the earliest volunteers of 1794 carried on the loyalists' political aims.²

A broader view, however, makes this analysis appear less satisfactory as an explanation of the formation and growth of the volunteer movement. A much broader approach will be adopted here, dealing with the entire period of the wars, one in which the military and social aspects of volunteer organisation assume greater prominence than the political. It will be argued that though political considerations were important in volunteering, they were not its primary purpose nor were the politics necessarily loyalist. The chronological development of volunteering clearly shows the dominance of the military demands of the state. Volunteer corps were increasingly brought into close co-ordination with national defensive plans; their individuality and independence were gradually restricted in order to create a manageable anti-invasion force. Concessions to volunteer individuality, however, continued to be necessary to preserve their co-operation. When the advantages of a large volunteer force no longer outweighed the inconveniences of volunteer individuality, the volunteers rapidly withered in the face of government hostility.

This account of volunteering will first set out the government's plans for a voluntary military force, and place them in the context of precedents for voluntary corps and political associations. The loyalist association movement will be discussed, and reservations expressed about the apparent connections between political loyalism and volunteering. Then an attempt will be made to follow the way in which the ministry's plans were formed by studying the proposals made over the preceding months, and in the small local defence corps formed during 1793. The plans presented to the counties in March 1794, and the response to them, will be analysed in order to clarify the ministry's intentions in inviting the formation of the force. It is concluded that while the measure was primarily one intended to take advantage of potential public willingness to contribute towards defence, the inclusion of

²Robert R. Dozier, *For King, Constitution, and Country*, pp.167-171; J.R. Western, 'The Volunteer Movement as an Anti-Revolutionary Force', p.603.

subscriptions and the tradition of voluntary associations gave the volunteers strong political overtones which were to be exploited by both supporters and opponents of the ministry.

The second section traces the development of the force through the 1790s and from its re-establishment in 1803 until the end of the wars against France. It is shown that the growth of the force, like its inception, was closely related to plans for opposing invasion and preserving internal order. Yet the measures taken against invasion also show an additional intention on the part of the government and the county oligarchies: to strengthen social ties between landowners and their dependents.

Part One: The Background to Volunteering

Several proposals for the organisation of a voluntary defence force had been made in the first year of the war against France, but serious official planning appears to have taken place only in the few months immediately preceding the publication of Dundas' proposals in March 1794.

In March 1794 proposals were circulated to lords lieutenant in England and Wales for the formation of voluntary corps for local defence. Two of the proposals led to the formation of the volunteer force. As in the American war, volunteer companies raised in particular towns, especially in coastal areas, were proposed. They were to be adapted to local circumstances, and, vitally, were to act in defence of their own areas only. Their cavalry counterparts were to consist of gentlemen or yeomen and their nominees, who would provide their own horses. These troops of 50 to 80 men were specifically liable to be called upon to act in their own or adjacent counties to suppress riots and tumults. Both these forces were to be funded in part by a public subscription raised in each county.³ The following month a volunteer act was passed, which regulated the new corps and provided the legal basis for the formation of the large force subsequently raised.

These proposals drew heavily on the several precedents provided by earlier voluntary associations of armed civilians sanctioned by the crown, some of which had been prompted by the inadequacies of the militia. The usual expedient in times of crisis had been to augment the militia by raising fenci-

³[House of Commons], *House of Commons Sessional Papers of the Eighteenth Century*, Edited by Sheila Lambert, Volume 93, *George III Corresponding Societies, Defence &c. 1794*, (Wilmington, Delaware, 1975), pp.49-57; PRO 30/8/244, Chatham Papers, ff.174-186, Amherst to Pitt, 6 March 1794; *To Escape the Monster's Clutches*, Compiled by M.Y.Ashcroft, pp.10-11.

bles and forming independent voluntary companies in the counties. Each of the 1757, 1762, 1778 and 1794 Militia Acts also provided for the recruitment of volunteers in place of a parish's quota, but these were not volunteers in the sense of constituting separate companies.⁴

When France joined in the American war in 1778, the militia was embodied, additional regular regiments were raised by influential individuals, and volunteer corps were formed at private expense without government support.⁵ Statutory provision was made for distinct companies of volunteers separate from the militia for the first time in 1778, and in 1782 they were provided with statutory regulations similar to their counterparts of 1794: the officers held commissions from the lords lieutenant, and the corps received official pay when on duty and were provided with firearms.⁶ The Gordon Riots provided a spur to the formation of metropolitan corps. A general meeting of the Billingsgate Ward in June 1780 decided to form a military association to protect their neighbours and their property, and to preserve the public peace. When danger was expected from rioters, more than 60 men armed themselves as 'Militia-men and *free Citizens*', patrolled the streets, examined public houses and arrested several suspected persons found lurking in the ward.⁷

These volunteer companies appear to have been modelled on the associations raised by leading Whigs in September 1745 in the aftermath of the Jacobite victory at Prestonpans, although similar companies had been raised during the invasion threats of 1759, 1715 and 1690.⁸ As late as 1798 an armed association could be offered by the Mayor of Portsmouth on the same terms as adopted by the corporation in December 1745.⁹ During the 1745 rebellion, the Duke of Newcastle had proposed, as an alternative to the militia, to raise troops by local associations and subscriptions. A county

⁴Robert Potter Berry, *A History of the Formation and Development of The Volunteer Infantry*, pp.49–51.

⁵J.R.Western, *The English Militia in the Eighteenth Century The Story of a Political Issue 1660–1802*, (London, 1965), p.205.

⁶Robert Potter Berry, *A History of the Formation and Development of The Volunteer Infantry*, pp.51–54.

⁷British Library, Add.MS 16,929, Reeves MSS, Loyal Declarations Vol.I, f.10, Billingsgate Ward, 10 July 1780; H.C.Cardew-Rendle, 'The Volunteer Movement in the Metropolis, 1779–1780', *Notes and Queries for readers and writers, collectors and librarians*, Vol.166, No.16, April 21, 1934, pp.275–277.

⁸J.R.Western, *The English Militia in the Eighteenth Century*, pp.112, 152.

⁹HO 50/41, S.Gasselee, Portsmouth, 16 April 1798, enclosing request for arms, Portsmouth, 12 December 1745.

meeting at York on 24 September organised a loyal association with an eventual total of 41 companies. A county subscription provided pay and clothing, while arms were provided by the government. The scheme was deliberately non-partisan, and was adopted with varying degrees of enthusiasm by the lieutenancies in other counties.¹⁰ Independent corps of volunteers were raised to supplement the militia, which was largely ineffective. The Lancashire Militia had received no training since 1715, but a volunteer corps, the Liverpool Blues, was more useful.¹¹

The organisation of these associations possibly owed something to the military associations of the civil war. Several groups of contiguous counties had combined from late 1642 for mutual defence under a common military commander, although most associations were failures. Both parliamentary and royalist, regional associations like the East Midlands, South Eastern or the Eastern Association, the most successful, had only loose organisational and financial bases.¹²

Other precedents for volunteering were more ambiguous. The Irish volunteer movement of the 1770s provided a cautionary example of a large popular movement developing a political purpose. The first corps were formed in 1774 but the movement grew rapidly in 1778, to reach perhaps 40,000 members at its height. Like their later British counterparts, the volunteers performed police duties, suppressed riots, mounted regular patrols, guarded prisoners and occasionally fought fires. Yet the corps also provided opportunities for political education and agitation. Predominantly Protestant, and politically cohesive, the volunteers appreciated the influence armed citizens could exert on the government. The lord lieutenant accepted the force as a necessary evil without which policing and defence would have been difficult, but nevertheless in 1779 considered replacing the volunteers with a militia.¹³ Not surprisingly, Lord Westmorland, Lieutenant from 1789 till 1794, had strong reservations about the introduction of volunteering to Great Britain in 1794. He told Pitt that as lord lieutenant he had most fortunately succeeded in putting down volunteer corps in Ireland, and had set himself against every appearance of voluntary armament in any form

¹⁰W.A.Speck, *The Butcher The Duke of Cumberland and the Suppression of the 45*, (Oxford, 1981), pp.55–62, 70–71.

¹¹J.R.Western, *The English Militia in the Eighteenth Century*, p.73.

¹²Clive Holmes, *The Eastern Association in the English civil war*, (London, 1974), pp.1–4.

¹³R.B.McDowell, *Ireland in the Age of Imperialism and Revolution 1760–1801*, (Oxford, 1979), pp.254–262.

whatever. He feared his contribution to the Northamptonshire subscription in support of volunteers would lay him open to the charge of encouraging in England what he had reprobated in Ireland.¹⁴

The volunteers also built on traditions of civilian associations for enforcing the law. Many associations for the prosecution of felons were established throughout the country from the 1770s, and particularly during the 1780s. They were local voluntary associations of property-owning subscribers who organised at common expense prosecution of alleged offenders for a variety of crimes, mostly against property. Most had fewer than fifty members, who were usually gentlemen, farmers and tradesmen. Like the volunteers, their subscriptions were dominated by the gentry and clergy, while most of the active membership comprised lesser propertied men.¹⁵

The volunteer associations of the 1790s also carried the political connotations of 'associations', which were by the late eighteenth century often those of opposition. An association usually involved a pledge to a course of action, but did not necessarily imply the existence of any permanent organisation. The modern origin seems to have been the Bond of Association devised by the Privy Council after the discovery of an assassination plot against Elizabeth. The Bond was circulated in late 1584, binding its signatories to act against anyone procuring an attempt against the life of the Queen.¹⁶ Similarly, the revelation of an assassination plot against William III provided the opportunity for a display of loyalty by the Junto Whigs, and to use an association to distinguish those who refused as disaffected. Members of parliament, local officials and many private individuals subscribed to an association pledging themselves to defend King and country, and acknowledging William's right by law to the crown. The Junto had tried unsuccessfully to include a clause implying hereditary right. The great majority of men in public life signed the association, since those who refused

¹⁴Cambridge University Library, Add.6958, Copies of Pitt Correspondence, f.1437, Lord Westmorland [to Pitt], 8 May 1794.

¹⁵David Phipps, 'Good Men to Associate and Bad Men to Conspire: Associations for the Prosecution of Felons in England 1770-1860'; Peter King, 'Prosecution Associations, Courts and Community Concerns in Essex 1740-1800', both in D.Hay and F.Snyder (eds.), *Policing and Prosecution in Britain, 1730-1850*, (forthcoming, Cambridge, 1989); Adrian Shubert, 'Private Initiative in Law Enforcement: Associations for the Prosecution of Felons, 1744-1856', in *Policing and Punishment in Nineteenth Century Britain*, Edited by Victor Bailey, (London, 1981); Hampshire Record Office, 44 M 69/K2/19/1&2, Herriard, Lasham, Tunworth, Winslade, and Ellisford Association, 1 June 1801; 44 M 69/K2/20, Odiham Association, 2 March 1804; 44 M 69/K2/11, Alresford Association.

¹⁶J.M.Neale, *Elizabeth and her Parliaments 1584-1601*, (London, 1957), pp.15-17.

were disqualified from public office.¹⁷

By the later eighteenth century, however, associations had become connected with extra-parliamentary political movements, and had acquired more formal organisation and overtones threatening to the political establishment. In America, the Continental Congress and Association of October 1774 had pledged associators to stand together in the common cause. At home, a county association movement for constitutional reform developed from the Yorkshire Association, organised by Christopher Wyvill with the support of the Marquis of Rockingham in 1779 to petition for oeconomic reform. An informal central committee was rivalled by the Westminster Committee of Association, which formulated demands for annual parliaments, an equitable distribution of single-member constituencies, and universal male suffrage, but the movement proved ineffective at the general election. Around the same time, the Protestant Association sought the repeal of the Roman Catholic Relief Act of 1778 and to prevent its extension to Scotland. The London Protestant Association formed links with the Scottish societies and encouraged the establishment of associations elsewhere. Intimidation of catholics and rioting spread from Edinburgh to Glasgow in early 1779, but the movement's most violent results were the riots of June 1780 in London, the worst of the century.¹⁸

The political association most directly connected with the development of the volunteers was the Association for the Preservation of Liberty and Property against Republicans and Levellers, formed in late 1792 in response to political reform activity. It adapted the techniques of association for loyal and anti-republican purposes. The Association was formed on 20 November 1792 by John Reeves, a writer on legal subjects, a former Chief Justice of Newfoundland, and the Receiver of the Public Offices. He later claimed to have founded the society independently without consulting the ministry, but it is unlikely that he did so without being sure of official countenance, and future financial support to continue the enterprise.¹⁹ The active life of the Reeves associations was relatively short. After a rapid growth in November

¹⁷ Jane Garrett, *The Triumphs of Providence The Assassination Plot, 1696*, (Cambridge, 1980), pp.141-144.

¹⁸ Eugene Charlton Black, *The Association British Extraparliamentary Organisation 1769-1793*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1963), pp.31-130, 131-173.

¹⁹ Robert R. Dozier, *For King, Constitution, and Country*, pp.56-58; H.T. Dickinson, 'Popular Conservatism in Late 18th Century Britain', (unpublished conference paper, 1986), p.13; Albert Goodwin, *The Friends of Liberty: The English Democratic Movement in the age of the French revolution*, (London, 1979), p.264, n.256.

and December 1792, they had suspended their activities by the following spring.²⁰

Associations are known to have been formed in every English and Welsh county except Northumberland, Westmorland, Cumberland and Rutland. From the first association, formed in Westminster in late November 1792, the movement spread rapidly to the south-eastern and home counties, then to the west and the midlands, and, by the end of 1792, as far north as County Durham. The size and variety of the response was connected with the contemporaneous mobilisation of the militia and attendant rumours of invasion and insurrectionary plots, but the reasons for the nature of the geographical distribution of associations are unclear.²¹ The associations varied widely, and many did not conform to the Reeves pattern.²² Most held public meetings to discuss the state of the country, and published in the newspapers their declarations of loyalty and resolutions in support of the established constitution and against republicanism. Not all declarations and resolutions were followed by the formation of an association.

The loyal association movement was the largest such organisation in the eighteenth century. It probably had more than 15,000 signatories in at most 1500 associations, although it was claimed that 2000 had been formed.²³ Yet this should not be construed as a formal membership, analogous to the radical corresponding societies. Reeves' correspondence gives the impression that most loyalist activity was organised by the subscription committees, and the apparent 'membership' was simply those who signed broadly-worded loyalist declarations.²⁴ Unlike the corresponding societies, the loyal associations were not mass membership organisations meeting regularly and electing delegates to a general committee. Yet like the corresponding societies, the active part of the associations consisted of relatively small organising committees which co-ordinated the publication and distribution of political propaganda and solicited subscriptions.

Sometimes signatures to loyal resolutions were solicited throughout a district, as for example in the Rape of Pevensey. The resolutions of the

²⁰ Albert Goodwin, *The Friends of Liberty*, p.274.

²¹ Robert R. Dozier, *For King, Constitution, and Country*, pp.65-68.

²² Donald E. Ginter, 'The Loyalist Association Movement of 1792-93 and British Public Opinion', *Historical Journal*, Vol.IX, No.2, 1966, p.180.

²³ Robert R. Dozier, *For King, Constitution, and Country*, p.55; H.T. Dickinson, 'Popular Conservatism in Late 18th Century Britain', p.13.

²⁴ Austin Mitchell, 'The Association Movement of 1792-3', *Historical Journal*, Vol.IV, No.1, 1961, p.64; see British Library, Add.MS 16,929, *Associations for Preserving Liberty and Property: Local Declarations*, Vol.I.

Bath Association attracted an exceptional 5033 signatures, while none other exceeded 1700. In some instances, subscriptions were opened by associations; five of them offered rewards for information that would lead to the arrest of republicans. Prosecutions were, however, uncommon. Most associations' efforts were directed to the dissemination of short, popular loyalist and anti-radical pamphlets and handbills, and to public displays like the ceremonial burning in effigy of Tom Paine. Several loyalist societies also coordinated publicans' and innkeepers' attempts to prevent their houses being used for seditious meetings. Where publicans were unwilling to exclude such meetings, Reeves' association encouraged local magistrates to use pressure through their licensing powers. In general, loyalist associations soon became inactive after they had successfully countered local radical activity.²⁵

The loyalists did not necessarily see themselves as part of a conservative attack on reform but instead as defenders of a balanced constitution against those who wished to introduce French republican principles. Men holding a wide range of political opinions used the association movement as an opportunity to declare their loyalty to what they believed the constitution to be. Depending on how the 1688 settlement was interpreted, the resolutions of loyalist meetings are capable of representing any ideological position other than revolutionary republicanism. Moderate reformers were actively involved as well as conservatives; the declarations and associations cannot be presented as the products of a monolithic 'party of order'. The associations were designed to gain the adherence of everyone in a community; compromises were made with moderate opinion in order to secure unanimity.²⁶

The associations were not opposed to the principle of constitutional reform, but argued that it was not necessary, and dangerous, to put forward at a time when the nation faced external dangers.²⁷ In this way loyalists'

²⁵Robert R.Dozier, *For King, Constitution, and Country*, pp.60, 63-64, 85-87, 90-97; Donald E.Ginter, 'The Loyalist Association Movement of 1792-93', p.185; Albert Goodwin, *The Friends of Liberty*, pp.264-265; H.T.Dickinson, 'Popular Conservatism in Late 18th Century Britain', p.14.

²⁶Arthur Young, *The Example of France, a Warning to Britain*, (London, 1793), p.105; Donald E.Ginter, 'The Loyalist Association Movement of 1792-93', pp.184-189; See Austin Mitchell, 'The Association Movement of 1792-3', p.57. But see also North Yorkshire County Record Office, ZQH 11/3/22 William Chaytor's lieutenancy papers, f.27, draft letter, W.C., 16 February 1793; ZQH 11/3/20, William Chaytor's lieutenancy papers, Rev.C.Wyvill to William Chaytor, Col.Turner Straubenzee, Thomas Maude and Rev.T.W.Morley, Burton Hall, 15 December 1792.

²⁷Robert R.Dozier, *For King, Constitution, and Country*, pp.82-83, 97.

activities were closely related to the apparent threat from France and those in Britain whom they saw as representing French principles.

Alarm at the apparent revolutionary threat of the British radical reformers was a major impetus in December 1792 to the rapid and widespread formation of Associations for the Preservation of Liberty and Property. The foremost of the popular parliamentary reform societies, the London Corresponding Society, had been founded in January 1792 as a political discussion club aiming to promote the reform of parliamentary representation and universal male suffrage: it established contacts with provincial radical reform societies, principally those in Sheffield, Manchester and Norwich, as well as some patriotic clubs in France. They became closely identified in the eyes of their opponents with French revolutionary principles.²⁸

The first year of an indecisive war transformed the political situation in Britain for both the loyalist and reform societies. Radical reformers in Britain could now be presented as supporters of the enemy; correspondence with France became a treasonable offence in March 1793. Several prosecutions of radical booksellers in early 1793 led to a decline in reform activity. Reeves' Association for the Preservation of Liberty and Property considered it unnecessary to continue its activities after early spring. However, despite difficulties, the parliamentary reform societies continued to campaign. The London Corresponding Society and provincial societies presented thirty-six petitions to parliament to coincide with Charles Grey's unsuccessful motion for parliamentary reform in May 1793.²⁹

In November a British Convention in Edinburgh attempted to put pressure on the government to end what were seen as encroachments on popular liberties, but was dissolved by magistrates and two of the delegates convicted of sedition. The London Corresponding Society organised a large general meeting at Chalk Farm in April 1794 and planned to call a General Convention of the People. In the following months several of its leaders were arrested, and two reports of committees of secrecy of the House of Commons were published, setting out alleged evidence of a seditious conspiracy by the London Corresponding Society. Twelve leading members of the Corresponding Society and Society for Constitutional Information eventually were charged with high treason. After the first three were acquitted

²⁸ Albert Goodwin, *The Friends of Liberty*, pp.21-25, 189, 196, 199-200, 203-205, 213, 215, 233-234, 266-267; Malcolm I. Thomis and Peter Holt, *Threats of Revolution in Britain 1789-1848*, (London, 1977), p.9; Robert R. Dozier, *For King, Constitution, and Country*, pp.1, 11-12 21-25.

²⁹ Albert Goodwin, *The Friends of Liberty*, pp. 269-274, 279-280.

in October, the charges against the rest were dropped.³⁰

The loyalist associations came into being to counter what was seen to be the threat from these radical societies, and organised 'to marshal public sentiment behind the ministry and to assist in the suppression of dissident opinion.'³¹ It has even been claimed that the greatest immediate impact of the radicals was in the creation of the loyalists, among whom the volunteers were the most important group. In this interpretation, the loyal volunteers are seen as the natural successors of the loyalist associations, continuing the opposition to radicalism by other means. Once the ideological challenge of the radical societies had been countered and the revolutionary threat from France had subsided by the end of 1794, the loyal volunteers were transformed into 'patriots', no longer with an ideological purpose. If this was the case, the lull in loyalist activity between the fading of the association movement in early 1793 and the formation of the volunteers in March 1794 needs to be explained. It cannot be explained by the disappearance or inactivity of the radical societies, for their activities were not seriously restricted until the end of 1795. Nor can the question be avoided by characterising 1793 as 'the year of indecision'. Rather, it will be argued here that there was no continuity in loyalist activity because the volunteers were not the ideological successors of the loyalist associations; their primary purpose from the beginning was military, not political. They did not enter 'into full-fledged physical opposition to their enemies, the radical artisans.'³²

The volunteer movement had close connections with the loyalist associations which flourished between November 1792 and February 1793, but the extent and significance of those connections can be questioned. Dozier argues that the outbreak of war revived loyalism by widening its appeal to patriotism, in its conservative sense of defence of the existing constitutional settlement. Companies of volunteers had been recommended by associators as early as November 1792.³³ Many men involved in the volunteers, as officers or committee members, had been active in the association movement. A small minority of associations transformed themselves into volunteer corps. The Loyal True Blues of Birmingham, formed to oppose sedition, declared that invasion was a greater danger, and announced its intention to 'quit the

³⁰ Albert Goodwin, *The Friends of Liberty*, pp.284-299, 303-306, 340-358.

³¹ Eugene Charlton Black, *The Association*, p.234.

³² Robert R. Dozier, *For King, Constitution, and Country*, pp.x, 170-171; Chapter V, pp.103-138.

³³ British Library, Add.MS 16,919, Reeves MSS, ff.1-2, Anon. to John Moore, Secretary, 2 November 1792.

field of argument for that of arms'.³⁴

In an apparently unsuccessful proposal made to Pitt in March 1793, T.Spooner suggested the formation of volunteer corps to augment the loyalist associations. He believed the patriotic associations had produced essential and salutary effects, but the prosecution of more decided and vigorous measures was needed. Spooner suggested that volunteers would both check the menaces of the French and defeat the subversive plans of the disaffected. His plan contained many of the elements of later corps. The corps he proposed were a respectable body of propertied men who offered to serve without expense to the government except when on actual service. They were to appoint their own officers and to raise a subscription to defray expenses.³⁵

It has been calculated that a significant proportion of volunteer officers had been members of the earlier associations.³⁶ On the available evidence, however, it is unwise to conclude that former associators dominated the volunteers. Fifty-four corps were formed in places where loyal associations had existed, and for which members' names are known, out of a total of 136 volunteer corps listed by the War Office. Of those, 41, or three quarters, had officers who had been members of loyalist associations. It has been claimed that this proportion can be applied to the country as a whole. More than seventy of the corps of 1794 had been formed in areas where no loyal associations are known to have existed.³⁷ Very few volunteer corps mentioned to the lords lieutenant or the Home Office any connection with former Reeves associations, though such a connection could only have been in their favour.

It is by no means surprising that a high proportion of volunteers had been signatories to loyalist associations. As has been pointed out, the associations' declarations of loyalty and support for the royal proclamation against seditious publications were deliberately intended to be acceptable to a broad range of constitutional opinion. Subscriptions were solicited among the politically active population; it would be surprising if volunteer officers were not drawn from among them. Yet this connection does not prove that membership of the volunteers and subscription to an association were part of one wider loyalist movement. If they were so, it would be difficult to explain the formation of volunteer corps in many areas where loyalist associations

³⁴Austin Mitchell, 'The Association Movement of 1792-3', p.75.

³⁵PRO 30/8/180 Chatham Papers, f.43, T.Spooner [to Pitt], Leigh Court, 6 March 1793; f.45, T.Spooner, [to Pitt], 18 March 1793.

³⁶Robert R.Dozier, *For King, Constitution, and Country*, p.55.

³⁷Robert R.Dozier, *For King, Constitution, and Country*, p.153.

had not been formed, and the lack of volunteering where associations had existed. The fact that the London Corresponding Society even considered a proposal to form a volunteer corps, however seriously and with whatever intent, raises doubts about the substance and perception of the loyalist and anti-democratic tone of the volunteer movement.

This is not to suggest that political considerations were absent from volunteering, only that they were not the primary consideration. If the motivation for volunteering had been the fears of internal revolutionary insurrection, then it is difficult to account for the lateness of the initiation of volunteer associations, particularly when the lack of activity of Reevesite associations during 1793 is also taken into account. Nor was there a significant revival of loyalist activity after early 1793, when the events in France and the activities of the British radicals may have been expected to have provoked some response. The comparative lack of loyalist activity throughout 1793 and the rapid and large response to the call for volunteers in March 1794 are entirely consonant with the prime importance of the development of the perception of the threat of French invasion. Reeves' plans to revive the loyal association movement in late 1795 strongly suggest that the volunteers were not seen to be its political heirs.³⁸

The volunteers combined aspects of the traditions of both political and military associations. Members of each corps subscribed to a declaration of principles and intent and contributed towards the cost of the organisation, as with political associations. Yet membership of a volunteer corps carried a far greater commitment than subscription to an association. Volunteer organisation was on a much more formal basis and more closely tied to the military authorities than the military associations of earlier wars.

The government's invitation to counties to raise volunteers in March 1794 was made not only against a background of popular associations on a national scale for both loyal and reformist political purposes, but also in the light of both a wide range of proposals for the raising of voluntary military forces and the existence of several small voluntary armed corps organised for local defence.

As has been shown, the official proposals of March 1794 were by no means unprecedented, drawing particularly on the experience of the American war.³⁹ They also incorporated many of the suggestions and advice

³⁸See David Eastwood, 'Fading Visions? Patriotism, Loyalist Enthusiasms, and the English State in the 1790s'.

³⁹See for example [Sir William Jones], *An Enquiry into the Legal Mode of Suppressing Riots, with A Constitutional Plan of Future Defence*, (London, 1780), pp.31-35.

proffered to the ministry throughout 1793 and the early months of 1794. Some of the more detailed plans were proposed by the Marquis of Buckingham, the agricultural writer Arthur Young, and the senior army officers Sir William Erskine and Lord Amherst. Elements of each of their plans are recognisable in the eventual form of the volunteer force. The common features of the schemes to augment the internal forces were a presumption of the danger posed by the mass of the population, the belief that a relatively small force of loyal men could contain this threat, and an emphasis on the need for respectability and coercion in the raising of men for such a force. Cavalry forces were preferred to infantry partly because those able to provide horses and equipment were likely to be those 'Gentlemen of Weight or Property' and their dependents, to whom the government later addressed its proposals. Mounted troops were also better suited to the purpose which was implicit in each of the proposals, the suppression of internal disorder.

It was assumed that, other than the voluntary corps of gentlemen and yeomen, the additional forces would need to be raised by compulsion. In the event, voluntary offers of service far exceeded the expectations of the government and the private proponents of the new corps. Yet until this was apparent, anxieties focussed on not merely the readiness of common men to co-operate with the state, but also on whether they wished to overthrow it. In a proposal to establish a non-military national Association of Loyal Britons in December 1793, the government spy Grove Taylor argued that it would have the desirable effect of keeping the middle and lower orders of the people in a proper state of subordination and prevent them from disturbing the nature of civil society. He hoped the Association would prevent applications for reform and end petitioning of parliament designed to harass or perplex the administration.⁴⁰

In the light of fears of political and social disruption by the middle and lower ranks of society, the scheme to raise volunteers appears to have been a means of combining landed gentlemen for the protection of their own interests. Yet not all proponents of the idea of volunteering, although they acknowledged the dangers presented by the middle and lower classes, believed that property owners among those classes should be excluded from voluntary associations. Rather, the experience of such membership was expected to inculcate loyalty among such dangerous men. William Ogilvie set

⁴⁰HO 42/27, ff.510-515, 625, Grove Taylor, No.20 Haymarket, 3 December 1793; Robert R.Dozier, *For King, Constitution, and Country*, pp.124-125; Eugene Charlton Black, *The Association*, p.272.

out such an argument in two papers discussing military associations and other measures to be taken against invasion, presented to Henry Addington and the Home Office by March 1794. He believed that an invasion would provide the opportunity for evil-minded men to produce disorder. Within London, more than 100,000 of these desperate men would take any opportunity to disseminate dangerous principles and doctrines; Ogilvie thought them the really formidable, concealed, enemy, and more to be feared than the French. The dangerous but popular doctrines of liberty and equality, he feared, gave the advantage to the poor. His solution was for the rich to form 'voluntary Associations for Mutual & General Defence'. By 'rich' he meant in effect all property owners: merchants, manufacturers, tradesmen, shopkeepers, farmers and housekeepers. They were to be armed, while men without property were to be disarmed by the civil magistrates. These military associations were explicitly intended to face both foreign invasion and domestic sedition and rioting. Ogilvie argued that they 'would at once *repress sedition, check innovation, and overwhelm those affiliated Societies* which the *Promoters of Mischief* are endeavouring to introduce into this Kingdom, in imitation of the Jacobins of France.'⁴¹

Prominent among those making proposals was the Marquis of Buckingham, who as lord lieutenant was to be influential in the organisation of volunteer corps in Buckinghamshire, and had been active in the formation of loyalist associations in late 1792.⁴² He had suggested a comprehensive set of measures to increase internal defence forces to Henry Dundas in 1793 and early the following year asked his brother, Lord Grenville, to press for their introduction to parliament. Buckingham did not foresee that a force of reasonable size or usefulness could be raised voluntarily. Each of his proposed forces involved some degree of compulsion. Buckingham planned to raise by ballot in each county a permanent 'militia cavalry', one tenth the size of the regular militia. He believed the ballot would be considered more a tax on the property than on the persons of individuals. A separate force raised compulsorily from among gamekeepers, park keepers and hunters, who were to be clothed by their masters and who already owned rifles, was also proposed. They were thought to be potentially useful from their knowl-

⁴¹HO 42/29, f.287, William Ogilvie, *Observations on the means of repelling an invasion*, March 1794; Robert R.Dozier, *For King, Constitution, and Country*, pp.131-133.

⁴²Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Report on the Manuscripts of J.B.Fortescue, Esq., preserved at Dropmore*, Vol.II, p.344, Marquis of Buckingham to Lord Grenville, Stowe, 27 November 1792; p.352, Marquis of Buckingham to Lord Grenville, Stowe, 8 December 1792.

edge of the country and possession of rifle guns. Gamekeepers were licensed, so it was feasible to consider raising a force of at least 20,000 in England. These two forces were to become the basis of a much larger irregular force gathered when invasion became imminent.⁴³ The formation of companies of sharpshooters from among gamekeepers was eventually proposed by the Home Office in 1798.⁴⁴

When forces raised voluntarily were considered, they were intended to be organised less rigidly and on a much smaller scale. Buckingham proposed that the King should have the power to commission bodies of men on any plan he might approve. He thought a force of irregular cavalry on the model of the Yorkshire Rangers of 1746 might be formed from the young idle gentlemen of the county, foxhunters and sportsmen, who could be induced to bring their grooms and servants with them. An irregular force might also be collected from tenantry in the maritime counties, as had been done in the American war. Lord Grenville by contrast favoured a very large voluntary cavalry force and had set out the sorts of men he believed most suitable for volunteer companies to be added to the militia. In London, he intended his projected association to consist of merchants and lawyers, although he believed a few men of rank could not be kept out of it. In the country, he advocated enrolling as many farmers and yeomen as possible.⁴⁵ In either case, the cavalry and infantry volunteers clearly were intended to comprise a broad range of property holders, both landowners and tenants, and those under their direct influence, and no-one else.

The Marquis of Buckingham was least sanguine of all about the corps which were closest in plan to those which eventually formed the basis of the volunteering movement. In the country, he was not confident that much real assistance could be expected from the young farmers until

the moment of difficulty had arrived. He thought twenty or thirty men

⁴³HO 42/28, ff.193–199, Marquis of Buckingham to Lord Grenville, 2 February 1794; HO 42/28, f.302, Nugent Buckingham to Henry Dundas, 15 February 1794; Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Report on the Manuscripts of J.B.Fortescue*, p.501, Marquis of Buckingham to Lord Grenville, Stowe, 19 November 1795; Robert R.Dozier, *For King, Constitution, and Country*, p.135.

⁴⁴Scottish Record Office, Buccleuch Muniments, GD 224/30/5/9, Henry Dundas to Lord Lieutenant of Midlothian, 26 April 1798, (circular); see also Buckinghamshire Record Office, L/P:5/9, [n.d., c.July 1803].

⁴⁵The Duke of Buckingham and Chandos, *Memoirs of the Court and Cabinets of George the Third. From original family documents*, (London, 1853), vol.2, p.312, Lord Grenville to Marquis of Buckingham, Whitehall, 25 November 1792; HO 42/28, ff.193–199, Marquis of Buckingham to Lord Grenville, 2 February 1794.

might be induced to enrol in some great towns. Yet he warned that permission for such corps should be given cautiously for fear of a body of republicans arming, as he believed had happened at Nottingham. In 1793 a group of 'democrats' there had resolved to learn military discipline. They paraded openly near the town with sticks instead of guns. The incident seems to have been the basis of fears that insurrectionary armed associations might form in other large towns.⁴⁶

The Marquis of Buckingham's proposals for a militia cavalry were similar to the ideas published by Arthur Young the year before. Young later claimed that he had been acknowledged as the originator of the idea of yeomanry cavalry.⁴⁷ He had proposed a 'militia of property' to counteract what he saw as the danger of French revolutionary principles leading to attacks on property in Britain. The threat came from the unpropertied masses, particularly those in the army, whom he thought would always be attracted by the idea of division of property, and from those who favoured reform of the parliamentary representation. Regiments of one thousand cavalrymen in each county would, he believed, give permanent security against the propagation of French principles. They would end the reliance, at last resort, on an unpropertied and potentially insurrectionary army.⁴⁸ Young used his *Annals of Agriculture* to emphasise the importance of keeping arms out of the hands of the unpropertied. Many years later, he complained that the volunteer system had developed in an unintended and dangerous fashion. Arms had been given to thousands of unreliable men without property whose allegiance and constitutional principles were doubtful.⁴⁹

Yet Young's proposals could themselves be attacked as potentially dangerous even by a sympathetic critic, as 'the most hazardous that can be conceived'.⁵⁰ While Young complained that the volunteer infantry had fallen under democratic influence, his 'militia of property' in turn had been criticised for giving power to an immense aristocratic influence. The Reverend Samuel Partridge, while expressing concurrence with Young's intentions,

⁴⁶ Malcolm I. Thomis, *Politics and Society in Nottingham 1785-1835*, (Oxford, 1969), pp.175-176; HO 42/28, ff.193-199, Marquis of Buckingham to Lord Grenville, 2 February 1794.

⁴⁷ *The Autobiography of Arthur Young with selections from his correspondence*, Edited by M. Betham-Edwards, (London, 1898), p.204.

⁴⁸ Arthur Young, *The Example of France, a Warning to Britain*, pp.99-100.

⁴⁹ *The Autobiography of Arthur Young*, pp.204-205.

⁵⁰ *Annals of Agriculture, and other Useful Arts*, Collected and published by Arthur Young, Vol.XXI, 1793, p.514; *The Parliamentary History of England, from the earliest period to the year 1803*, Vol.XXXI, col.84, 24 March 1794.

claimed that every septennial meeting of the commanders of such a force — presumably meaning at a general election — would put the constitution of the country at the mercy of mighty men and their tenants and dependents. Even if corps were to escape the ‘frenzy of *democracy*’, the crown and the liberty of the people would have little security against ‘an immense *aristocratic* influence’ of ambitious, unconstrained men of property. Partridge believed such a force would be safe if called out only in emergencies, and not kept permanently embodied.⁵¹

The final plans suggested to the county lieutenancies bear signs of the influence of a plan for parochial defence against invasion adopted in the Imperial provinces on the River Lys, in the neighbourhood of Courtrai. General Sir William Erskine sent a translation of the plan to Henry Dundas on 19 February 1794, and it very likely was influential in forming his plans to invite the formation of volunteer companies for local defence the following month. Associations of five or more parishes engaged to train in the use of arms every Sunday after divine service, and on alarm to assemble for the defence of the associated districts. The regulations were very similar to the later British armed associations: each prospective member of a parochial association was required to produce two neighbours to bear testimony ‘to the sincerity of his present Intentions’ and the general propriety of his former life and conduct. When called out, the men were to be paid at the same rate as regular soldiers; discipline was enforced by fines and expulsion, as in the British volunteers.⁵²

The plans for volunteer associations therefore gave rise to widely varying expectations of the nature of the force. Ogilvie claimed that every man able to bear arms would be willing to join, and even men of doubtful character would be eager, although for the wrong reasons.⁵³ Henry Dundas’ official plan, among others, presumed any mass popular participation would remain by compulsion, in the regular militia. The numbers expected to join in some cases greatly underestimated the numbers who actually did become volunteers.

The plans to increase county forces that actually were adopted were those of Lord Amherst. He presented detailed proposals to the King for approval, and sent copies to Dundas, in mid February 1794. The final six

⁵¹Rev.Samuel Partridge, ‘Observations on a Militia of Property’, in *Annals of Agriculture*, Vol.XXI (1793), pp.514–516.

⁵²National Library of Scotland, MS 1048, Melville Papers, Home Defence, Invasion, in General Sir William Erskine’s of 19 February 1794, pp.20–25.

⁵³HO 42/29, f.286, William Ogilvie, March 1794.

proposals were transmitted to Pitt early in March, and were substantially the same as those contained in the circular letter issued by the Home Office later the same month. Amherst recommended three types of organisation: infantry companies to man coastal batteries, voluntary companies to augment the militia, and volunteer cavalry troops. Volunteer companies were to be added to the militia and the fencible cavalry. Like Buckingham, Amherst emphasised the importance of cavalry, and considered volunteer infantry principally as small bodies for manning coastal artillery. Bodies of cavalry were to consist of gentlemen, yeomen, or such persons as they should bring forward. Gentlemen of weight or property were 'naturally' expected to take the lead in raising these forces, but it was additionally thought desirable that the scheme be supported by a general subscription, to be distributed under the direction of a committee.⁵⁴

The government's invitation to form volunteer corps in 1794 was made not only in the light of long-established precedent and at the suggestion of several respected public figures, but also against the background of numerous small voluntary military corps that had been formed for coastal defence since the outbreak of war in January 1793. Voluntary armed associations, mostly on the south coast, had existed, with official countenance, well before the government's proposals were circulated. Dundas reported in February 1793 that 'a great number of Letters have been received from different Persons residing chiefly upon the coast opposite to France, wherein they have signified their Readiness of Embodying themselves in order to resist any incursions which may be attempted to be made by the Enemy and have requested that Government will order them to be supplied with Arms and Accoutrements for their use during the continuance of hostility.' The requests were approved, and rules established on the precedents of the American war.⁵⁵

A county meeting in Kent on 30 March 1793 seems to have proposed the formation of military associations, but the Home Office would not countenance any military association that did not rest on commissions from the King. A newspaper correspondent at Chichester complained in early March that several offers of voluntary armed associations from East Sussex

⁵⁴Robert R. Dozier, *For King, Constitution, and Country*, p.136; HO 42/28, ff.269-275, Amherst to Dundas, 13 February 1794; PRO 30/8/244, Chatham Papers, ff.174-186, Amherst to Pitt, 6 March 1794.

⁵⁵HO 51/147, p.30, Henry Dundas to Lord Amherst, Whitehall, 25 February 1793, quoted in Clive Emsley, *British Society and the French Wars 1793-1815*, (London, 1979), p.38.

had received no response from the government.⁵⁶ However, small voluntary associations formed mounted patrols in Brighton, Rye and Lindfield shortly after the outbreak of war.⁵⁷ In April 1793 a volunteer company was formed for the defence of Penzance and assisting the magistrates against smugglers.⁵⁸ In general, these organisations were intended less to assist the magistrates than to defend property against possible French attack.⁵⁹ In the capital, a City Association for Aiding and Assisting the Civil Power and for Preserving His Majesty's Peace existed in June 1794, one of its members calling himself a 'Gentleman Volunteer'.⁶⁰ The legislation authorising the formation of volunteer corps in March 1794 can be interpreted as in part an attempt to impose some organisation upon these local defence associations.

The 'Plan of Augmentation of the Forces for Internal Defence' circulated to lords lieutenant on 14 March suggested four ways in which volunteer forces could be raised. Several of the forces proposed had been put into practice during the American war. The augmentation of the militia by individuals or companies of volunteers was suggested, together with the formation of volunteer companies for the fencible cavalry. What is generally recognised as the volunteer force stemmed from the other proposals: to form volunteer companies in 'particular Towns', especially coastal ones, for local defence, specifically, manning batteries on the coast, and to form throughout the country bodies of cavalry 'to consist of the Gentlemen and Yeomanry, or such Persons as they shall bring forward'. Officers of both infantry and cavalry were to hold commissions from the crown. Arms and accoutrements were to be supplied by the government and pay allowed to both when on service and to infantrymen for exercises, although there was as yet no exemption from militia service proposed. Cavalry troops were liable to be called out to repel an invasion, or to suppress riots and tumults in their own or adjacent counties. The infantry companies were liable to service within five miles of their home only, except in an invasion. These geographical limits on their

⁵⁶ *Portsmouth Gazette*, No.36, 10 March 1794, p.3 c.3, Chichester, March 8; See also No.35, 3 March 1794, p.3 c.3, Southampton, March 1.

⁵⁷ Ann Hudson, 'Volunteer Soldiers in Sussex', p.166; Robert R.Dozier, *For King, Constitution, and Country*, p.112.

⁵⁸ HO 42/29, f.23, Jno.Fremenheere to Henry Dundas, London, 4 March 1794; Robert R.Dozier, *For King, Constitution, and Country*, p.137.

⁵⁹ Robert R.Dozier, *For King, Constitution, and Country*, p.135; *Portsmouth Gazette*, 37, 17 March 1794, p.3. c.3, Chichester, 15 March.

⁶⁰ HO 42/32, f.422, Alexander Morrice to William Pitt, St.James's Brewhouse, Clerkenwell, 23 June 1794; f.423, Alexander Morrice to Wm.Wickham at Mr.Dundas's office, St.James's Brewhouse, Clerkenwell, 27 June [1794].

service differentiated the volunteers from the militia and fencibles, which were liable to serve throughout the country. Finally, a force of pioneers was proposed to assist the regular forces in case of emergency.

The county lieutenancies were assigned the major and decisive role in the creation of this new force. Not merely the formation of the forces, but the decision whether to carry 'into Execution all or any of the Measures' suggested was left to the county authorities. They were to organise a general subscription to fund the measures adopted, and the application of the money was assigned to county committees appointed for the purpose. Only a general indication was given of the anticipated size of the volunteer companies — between 50 and 80 cavalrymen, and at least 60 infantrymen — but no guide was given to the numbers in each county. It seems reasonable to infer that the government was testing for a response by suggesting a range of expedients that had been adopted in the previous war. Although the volunteers became the largest and longest-lived of the resulting forces, they did not develop entirely in the form proposed. Significantly, there was no suggestion in the circular letter that the volunteers were the favoured option. The proposals presented a range of options, the principal of which was the voluntary augmentation of the militia. They left to local initiative which, if any, of the others were to be taken up, and how many men were to be raised.

Dundas' proposals to raise volunteers were made at a time of anxiety about French invasion and the activities of the reform societies which appeared to be promoting revolutionary ideology at home. It seems that the government made a broad range of proposals for civilian military service in order to discover what response would be elicited, with the subsidiary purpose of enlisting the active support of the loyal and propertied in the war effort. It was the implication of support for the prosecution of the war that gave rise to the strongest opposition to the implementation of the government's plans.

The proposals of March 1794 encountered considerable criticism when presented to the counties and to parliament. They provided the first major public trial of strength between the loyalists and their opponents. The opposition Dundas' proposals attracted was not so much to the way in which men were to be raised by voluntary association, but rather to the financial basis of the scheme. The government used the scheme to embarrass its opponents by inviting private contributions to national defence.⁶¹ Hostility

⁶¹ J.E.Cookson, *The Friends of Peace Anti-war liberalism in England, 1793-1815*, (Cam-

to the proposals centred on the suggestion that general county subscriptions should be opened to contribute towards the expenses of the proposed forces.⁶² Three days after the circular letter was issued, the legality of voluntary subscriptions for public purposes was debated in the House of Commons.⁶³ Objections were raised that the crown was, in effect, soliciting money for the executive independent of parliament. Richard Sheridan, later a prominent supporter of volunteering, complained that the subscriptions were advertised in a manner that implied that those who did not contribute were hostile to the constitution.⁶⁴ Philip Francis, also later a volunteer officer, believed the intention was to mark out those loyal and disloyal according to whether they contributed or refused.⁶⁵

The proposals to raise voluntary companies met substantial opposition in the counties as well as in parliament. The issue provided the opportunity for public opposition both to the war itself and to the ministry's handling of it. Opponents of the plan objected to both the allegedly unconstitutional subscriptions and to the implication that willingness to subscribe would become a test of loyalty. Some of their hostility was due to the way in which Dundas had made the proposals directly to the lords lieutenant before they were presented to parliament. Opponents of subscriptions were not necessarily opposed to the plan of volunteering itself. More than a year earlier, in November 1792, an 'Ante-Levelling' society had set out the general principles of its constitution in a letter to the Home Office. The society was intended to give armed support to the civil power in suppressing tumults, but its principles included a declaration that no money could be raised other than by a law of parliament.⁶⁶

The proposals were rescued by legislation rendering subscriptions for voluntary corps legal, several county meetings having been postponed until the legality of the proposed subscriptions had been determined. The ministry was obliged rapidly to submit the proposals to parliament, where Charles Fox, Richard Sheridan and Philip Francis attacked the subscriptions as unconstitutional. They revived the arguments used against similar

bridge, 1982), p.137-138.

⁶²[House of Commons], *House of Commons Sessional Papers of the Eighteenth Century*, Edited by Sheila Lambert, Vol.93 p.51.

⁶³The plans were presented on 26 March 1794; *The Parliamentary History of England*, Vol.XXXI, cols.89-91.

⁶⁴*The Parliamentary History of England*, vol.XXXI, cols.84, 97-112.

⁶⁵*The Parliamentary History of England*, Vol.XXXI, col.88.

⁶⁶HO 42/22, f.405, Ante-Levelling (*sic*) Society. 17 November 1792; Robert R.Dozier, *For King, Constitution, and Country*, p.143-146.

subscriptions in 1782, that they were effectively raising supplies for the executive without the sanction of parliament. Sheridan suggested that the ministry had a purpose in working through the lords lieutenant and county grand juries rather than through parliament.⁶⁷

Despite allegations of ministerial pressure, and a favourable response in Berkshire to preliminary proposals, many of the county meetings of gentry and freeholders failed to produce the expected impression of unanimity.⁶⁸ They provided a platform for opponents of the ministry and the war, and for proponents of reform. The Surrey county meeting on 26 March was largely hostile to a subscription. The *London Evening-Post* alleged that Philip Francis distributed hand bills opposing such a levy about Richmond before the meeting opened. Fox proposed a resolution that raising money for public services at the prompting of ministers was illegal, though the county was willing to help defend the country on constitutional grounds. The lieutenant, Lord Onslow, succeeded in having the meeting adjourned until parliament had decided the legality of subscriptions.⁶⁹ He was better able to manage the second meeting on 10 April, which overwhelmingly approved the plans for augmenting the county forces. Yet Sir Joseph Mawbey was able to use the occasion to bring in the wider issue of parliamentary reform. He claimed that parliament would willingly approve the ministerial proposal because of the nature of the representation, alleging that eight of the fourteen Surrey members were appointed by five individuals. A 'tumultuous altercation' is reported to have followed his declaration of support for a radical reform.⁷⁰

Elsewhere, the county meetings were used to publicise opposition to the war. At Norwich, Thomas Coke spoke on the impolicy of the war at a meeting which approved a subscription overwhelmingly.⁷¹ A meeting of the nobility, clergy and principal landowners of Kent at Maidstone on 8 April was presented with the resolutions of a preparatory meeting, which recommended the formation of a corps of cavalry. Despite these careful preparations, Lord Thanet proposed five resolutions as an amendment. They included a declaration that subscriptions not previously authorised by parliament were unconstitutional. The ministers' first duty was declared to

⁶⁷ *The Parliamentary History of England*, Vol. XXI, cols. 89–91, 97–112, 133–136, 207–233; Robert R. Dozier, *For King, Constitution, and Country*, pp. 142–145.

⁶⁸ Robert R. Dozier, *For King, Constitution, and Country*, pp. 141–142.

⁶⁹ *London Evening-Post*, 27–29 March 1794, p. 2, c. 1.

⁷⁰ *London Evening-Post*, 11165, 10–12 April 1794, p. 1, c. 4; *London Chronicle*, 5882, 10–12 April 1794, p. 345, c. 2.

⁷¹ *London Chronicle*, 5883, 12–15 April 1794, p. 360 c. 3.

be the abolition of sinecure places. Continuation of the war would ruin the country by increased taxation, so a speedy and honourable peace was necessary. All the resolutions were rejected except an ambiguously loyal declaration of willingness to defend King and country in a constitutional manner.⁷² The way in which the raising of the volunteers gave opportunities for opponents of the war and the ministry to put forward their ideas points to the potential dangers to the ministry of the volunteer force. An unenthusiastic response would be politically and militarily embarrassing. Conversely, an open appeal for voluntary support exposed the new force to the possibility of being taken over by opponents of ministerial policies.

Not all county meetings were as difficult to manage, however. The lord lieutenant, high sheriff, noblemen, gentlemen, clergy, freeholders and yeomanry of Buckinghamshire met on 3 May to consider measures for internal and external security. There was no question of opposition to a subscription, since by then parliament had declared the measure legal. Buckinghamshire was unusual in immediately setting out plans for the raising of a co-ordinated county force. The Buckinghamshire meeting so readily produced a scheme for voluntary local defence probably because of the influence of the lord lieutenant, the Marquis of Buckingham, who had earlier discussed his plans with ministers. The meeting invited gentlemen, yeomen, and substantial inhabitants to enrol in several cavalry troops of between fifty and eighty men each. These were to be attached to a single organisation, the Armed Yeomanry of the county, commanded by the lord lieutenant.⁷³

Dundas' proposals had been made under the 1794 Militia Act's provision for augmenting the force by voluntary companies, but the response in the counties meant the government was obliged rapidly to submit to parliament legislation specifically to regulate independent military corps on the lines of the 1782 Volunteer Act. Companies formed under officers commissioned by the crown and undertaking to assemble to repel an invasion or suppress riots and tumults were authorised to receive pay at army rates when on service, and those members who regularly attended exercises were exempted militia service.⁷⁴ The volunteer corps to be considered here were formed under these provisions; the vast bulk of volunteering activity was directed to forming separate corps rather than raising voluntary recruits for militia service.

A striking aspect of the proposals is how much their intentions differ

⁷²London Chronicle, 5882, 10-12 April 1794, p.345, c.2-3.

⁷³Buckinghamshire Record Office, L/S.2 Bucks Armed Yeomanry Subscription Book.

⁷⁴Robert Potter Berry, *A History of the Formation and Development of The Volunteer Infantry*, pp.55-57.

from the response they evoked. Important differences were apparent between most proposals and the response. Intended as an addition to the militia, the volunteers developed independently of other forces; expected to be much smaller than the militia, volunteer membership later had to be restricted to six times its size; and while planned largely as a rural cavalry force, it developed as predominantly urban and an infantry force. The volunteer corps offered were often of much greater than anticipated size, and were from the start not confined to coastal defence, eventually extending throughout the country. The circular letters emphasised voluntary additions to the militia, and local corps for coastal defence; the response was to offer a large number of volunteer infantry and yeomanry cavalry corps. The volunteer system rapidly developed along lines completely distinct from the militia. There was relatively little interest in the augmentation of the militia by voluntary companies after 1794. By 1804, it was no longer legally even possible for volunteer companies to be added to militia regiments.⁷⁵

Volunteers formed several types of corps, of differing sizes and under a wide variety of regulations. Companies of volunteer infantry were the most common, each comprising a captain, lieutenant, ensign, and between 50 and 100 private men, under the terms of service of March 1803.⁷⁶ Most corps comprised several companies, and those totalling more than 500 infantry or 300 cavalry were entitled to a permanent adjutant and sergeant-major.⁷⁷ Adjutants and non-commissioned officers were entitled to permanent pay, and others to pay for exercises and when called on to active service. Most corps were entitled to allowances for clothing and contingencies, and were exempt some taxes and service in the militia and other auxiliary forces. The pay and allowances varied according to the time of the corps' foundation, and many corps had waived their rights to claim them.

Mounted volunteers were raised in troops of volunteer cavalry and of gentlemen and yeomanry cavalry, some of whom also formed dismounted companies. Exemption from the horse tax was allowed in return for providing a horse for the service; pay and allowances were offered, but not always claimed. A few corps of artillery volunteers were formed, and Sea Fencibles were considered part of the volunteer establishment. Occasionally, infantry, cavalry and artillery companies were combined in a single legion, usually very large and recruited in rural areas. Associated corps, both of infantry

⁷⁵HO 51/76, f.371, R.Pole Carew to Major Pierrpoint, Bristol, 13 April 1804.

⁷⁶Philip J.Haythornthwaite, 'The Volunteer Force, 1803-04', *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, Vol.LXIV, No.260, Winter 1986, p.194.

⁷⁷Cecil Sebag-Montefiore, *A History of the Volunteer Forces*, pp.89, 319.

and of cavalry, raised from 1798 onwards, were distinguished from the volunteers and yeomanry by their narrower territorial bases of service and their ineligibility for official pay. Armed associations of infantry were intended to comprise between 60 and 120 men, and cavalry between 40 and 80 men, who were resident within the same division of the county as the association.⁷⁸

The ministry's purposes in inviting voluntary enrolments in the manner it did and at the time it did are far from clear. If it had a clear intention to augment the militia and to raise three new forces as it suggested, then it is not obvious why it chose to favour the creation of a large volunteer force. The government accepted offers of corps differing from the terms of the circular, approving the formation of a large number of yeomanry cavalry troops and volunteer infantry corps, few of which were prepared to man coastal batteries. It is possible rather that the government, once it saw the types of volunteer organisation respectable gentlemen were willing to organise and fund, was ready to accept this new force as a valuable addition to its internal military resources. The variety of types of corps suggested in Dundas' circular suggests that the ministry was unsure what sort of response to expect, but was ready to use any voluntary military aid offered. The Volunteer Act a few months later made regular the shape of the response. More cynically, it may be conjectured that the intention from the first had been merely to test the likely public response to requests for voluntary service, and to exploit a favourable response as apparent evidence of public support for the prosecution of the war.

It is most probable that the circular letter was an attempt to test the likely response to a call for assistance in a more useful and manageable form than that provided by the Reeves associations or the local voluntary associations. Recruiting difficulties in late 1793 and early 1794 had made the increase in the size of the militia important, and such an augmentation could have been made either by inviting voluntary contributions or by balloting a supplementary militia, as was done in 1798. Calling for volunteers was likely to encounter less resistance, but it was thought likely to attract a response from a relatively small number of middle class men, those who were unlikely to have joined the militia. Raising volunteers was also potentially valuable as an indication of the support available for the ministry's policies for the continuation of the war. Both these considerations were important to the men who volunteered, and will be considered in greater detail later.

⁷⁸Robert Potter Berry, *A History of the Formation and Development of The Volunteer Infantry*, p.65.

Dundas' proposals aimed to form a force with the minimum of disruption to normal civil life. Volunteers were not subject to long periods of training and were not required to leave home except in an emergency. Yet ironically the effects of a huge voluntary force could have been profoundly disruptive to social relationships and the distribution of power on the national and local levels.⁷⁹ Large bodies of armed men were allowed considerable financial and organisational autonomy, and allowed to nominate their own officers and terms of service. That despite this, in practice the results were not on the whole socially disruptive is perhaps a measure of the political consensus they represented.

It is apparent from the start that the volunteer movement had controversial political overtones. Though the force itself was based on well-established precedents, the introduction of county subscriptions effectively turned involvement in the measure into a public declaration of support for Pitt's ministry and its war policies. The range of proposals for voluntary forces made to the Home Office makes it clear that such an organisation was widely expected to have political and social purposes, even if only subsidiary ones; the preservation of order entailed the subjugation of the reform societies and the politically disaffected. The connections that were apparent between the first volunteers and the loyalist associations, though perhaps not as prevalent as Dozier might suggest, still gave the force a loyalist tinge. It will be argued in greater detail subsequently that these political connotations, while still present, were of lesser importance after 1798. France then posed more a military than an ideological threat, and volunteers accordingly saw their role as primarily a military one.

Part Two: The Development of Volunteering

As the war progressed, the role of the volunteers became more clearly defined. Serious threats of invasion in 1797–1798 and 1801 brought the force into closer co-ordination with the regular army and militia in their defensive role. A significantly larger and more broadly-based force was formed after the resumption of the war in 1803, and its autonomy restricted the following year. Once the threat of invasion had receded, the government sought to convert volunteer service into a more regular form. The local militia was instituted in 1808 to replace and subsume volunteer corps, some of which survived until 1814. The yeomanry cavalry, however, continued beyond the

⁷⁹ John Cookson, 'The English Volunteer Movement', p.3.

end of the war.

The development of volunteering was closely linked with the state of the war and British defensive forces. The early years of the war had gone badly for Britain. The poor harvest of 1794 had led to serious grain shortages, and to rioting the following year. The conclusion of a disastrous campaign in Flanders was accompanied by petitioning for peace at the beginning of 1795. Continued fears of invasion and internal disaffection made the government introduce measures intended to restrict the activities of the seditious popular political societies — the Seditious Meetings and Treasonable Practices Acts — in late 1795. The war appeared to have reached a stalemate by early 1796, and in October peace negotiations were started with France. Yet in the same month Spain declared war and the danger of invasion revived.

In October 1796 an official warning was circulated of the danger of French preparations for invasion and recommended precautions. The ministry proposed, as in 1779, to deny an invading army provisions by removal or destruction of livestock and foodstuffs, and to this end required returns of the numbers and amounts involved.⁸⁰ Britain was isolated on the continent and threatened with insurrection in Ireland; a French invasion was only narrowly averted there in December, and a small French force landed in Pembrokeshire early the following year. Between March and June, mutinies broke out in the navy. The government introduced measures for a large increase in the size of the militia by the ballotting of a supplementary militia and the raising of a new force, the fencible cavalry. In Scotland, the militia was raised for the first time in 1797. Enrolments in cavalry troops were encouraged by the creation of the Provisional Cavalry in 1796, a force raised by compulsory levy on owners of horses, from which cavalry volunteers were exempt. In Buckinghamshire, for example, cavalry volunteers were raised in lieu of three quarters of the Provisional Cavalry quota, and the number of troops of yeomanry increased from six in 1794 to fifty in 1798. The yeomanry sometimes exercised with the paid Provisional Cavalry volunteers, but they seem to have remained distinct and separate organisations.⁸¹

Great Britain alone was at war with France after Austria agreed to peace in October 1797, and a large French invasion army was kept on the channel coasts until May 1798. Detailed plans were issued in April 1798 for

⁸⁰Hampshire Record Office, 65 M 85/1, 22 October 1796.

⁸¹Buckinghamshire Record Office, L/Y:13/18, Buckingham to Duke of Portland, 22 February [1798]; L/Y:13/11-12, A[cton] C[haplin], draft letters, April 1797; L/Y:13/21, resolutions of a general meeting of the lieutenancy, March 1798, dated 14 April 1798; L/Y:5/4, minutes of a general meeting of the lieutenancy, 6 March 1797.

evacuating the coastal districts and for enlisting the assistance of all adult males in the event of an invasion. It was a deliberate attempt to widen civilian participation in military preparations. The principal aspect of this was a direct appeal for volunteers to form armed associations of infantry or cavalry. First suggested in a circular letter of 1797, armed associations were again invited, with conspicuous success, in April 1798. A plan for the formation of general associations had been circulated to all parishes in May 1797. It was addressed to all inhabitants, in contrast to the 'Gentlemen of Weight or Property' of the 1794 circular, and 'Such of the nobility, gentry, and yeomanry ... as may approve the measure' of 1798 for offering private horses, waggons and carts for military purposes.⁸² Yet an emphasis on the role of householders sought to maintain the connection of property owners in internal defence. The plan was suggested as a general outline for associations of inhabitants for the mutual security and protection of themselves and their property. All householders, and other inhabitants recommended by two householders, were encouraged to enrol in classes of fifty men under a commissioned captain. Women householders had the right to recommend male inhabitants as members. The proposed associations shared many of the features later criticised in volunteer corps. They could not be compelled to serve outside their parish; prospective members could be rejected as unfit by a majority of the class; they were unpaid, though expenses were to be defrayed by limited, though unspecified, householder subscriptions.⁸³

The following year, Dundas suggested to the lieutenants of counties that they should encourage the formation of further volunteer corps or armed associations in any towns. He recommended that those willing to volunteer be organised under the guidance of the lords lieutenant in concert with gentlemen of property 'and aided by the respectable farmers with whom they are immediately connected.'⁸⁴ The associations, however, were to 'consist of none but known and respectable householders' or men who could produce at least two such householders to answer for their good behaviour.⁸⁵ The

⁸² *The Annual Register, or a View of the History, Politics, and Literature, For the Year 1798*, p.300.

⁸³ Robert Potter Berry, *A History of the Formation and Development of The Volunteer Infantry*, pp.66–68; *The Annual Register, or a View of the History, Politics, and Literature, For the Year 1797*, pp.377–378; Cecil Sebag-Montefiore, *A History of the Volunteer Forces*, pp.184–185; HO 51/105 Associated Corps correspondence.

⁸⁴ *To Escape the Monster's Clutches*, Compiled by M.Y.Ashcroft, pp.43–44; County of Hereford and Worcester Record Office, BA 2868/4 705:73, Henry Dundas to Coventry, 6 April 1798, (printed circular).

⁸⁵ Hereford and Worcester Record Office 705:73 2868(4) (lxxxix), Henry Dundas to [Lord

requirement that corps be formed by gentlemen of property was qualified by an insistence that captains commanding Armed Associations should, if not already holding a military commission, have an annual income in land within the county of £50 or more, should rent land valued at £100 or more, or should be sons of such qualified men. Local responsibilities were emphasised; officers and men were expected to have a residence in the same division of a county as their corps. Local administration was given much of the responsibility for raising this force. Lords lieutenant were asked not to recommend unqualified men as officers, which implies that the central government officials were unlikely or unable to check that the recommendations were suitable.

The conditions of service of the new armed associations were in general more strictly limited than volunteer or yeomanry corps. Armed Associations were to act only within a few miles of the towns in which they were raised.⁸⁶ They were intended to defend only their own immediate district and were not expected to serve to the limits of the county or military district, and undertook to serve without pay and to provide their own uniforms. The officers' commissions specified that they were not to take rank in the army nor were their associations to be subject to military discipline, except of their own accord.⁸⁷ The corps were intended to carry out the duties of regular troops or volunteers when these were called away, to preserve internal tranquillity and maintain a proper police in populous manufacturing and trading towns. Associations of rural workmen were intended to provide a trained force that could be directed against an invading army. Without such confidence and union among them, Dundas' circular letter declared, an invasion could be expected to produce general confusion and alarm.⁸⁸

Armed Associations were accepted from July 1797, and none appears to have been approved after August 1803; many reformed as volunteer corps on the resumption of war. The individual regiments of the Loyal London Volunteers of the early 1800s, for example, had started as independent ward-based

Coventry] Lord Lieutenant of the County of Worcester, Circular, [Westminster], 6 Apr. 1798, p.1.

⁸⁶Hereford and Worcester Record Office, BA 2868/4 705:73, Henry Dundas to Coventry, 6 April 1798, (printed circular), p.2.

⁸⁷Robert Potter Berry, *A History of the Formation and Development of The Volunteer Infantry*, p.64; HO 51/105, Associated Corps, p.9.

⁸⁸Hereford and Worcester Record Office, BA 2868/4 705:73, Henry Dundas to Coventry, 6 April 1798, (printed circular); *To Escape the Monster's Clutches*, Compiled by M.Y.Ashcroft, pp.43-46; HO 50/105, Associated Corps, p.9; HO 51/75, f.516, C.Yorke to Lord Teignmouth, 17 November 1803.

armed associations in the 1790s. By April 1797 offers of volunteer corps had become so numerous that the Home Office instructed the lords lieutenant to use their discretion in submitting further offers. New infantry corps were to be restricted to ports, the principal coastal towns, and the cities and great manufacturing towns where a permanent military force was judged necessary in case the magistrates should need them to aid the civil power. Cavalry troops and unpaid armed associations continued to be encouraged generally but all other offers were to be declined.⁸⁹

Dundas' invitation for the formation of additional volunteer corps and armed associations in April 1798 consciously set out to broaden the social scope of the movement and to strengthen existing social connections. In a circular letter to the lords lieutenant explaining the Act, he stressed the importance of extending 'as widely as possible that feeling of confidence which will naturally result from men of every description being placed in a situation to take in their respective stations an active part in the defence of the country'.⁹⁰ The proposals were specifically directed to the sort of men who were otherwise unlikely to join military bodies in substantial numbers: urban householders whose occupations prevented their absence, and rural husbandmen who could not readily be organised. Hopes were expressed that the formation of a socially comprehensive force could 'be accomplished without any material interruption to the various habitual occupations in which they are severally engaged.' The services of armed associations were to be accepted even if limited to the immediate vicinity of the town in which they were raised, in 'consideration of the great inconvenience and loss to which such persons (engaged as they are in extensive concerns of business) might be exposed if they were liable to be called away from the necessary superintendence of their respective avocations'.⁹¹

In rural areas, the intention of volunteer organisation was overtly the maintenance of connections between all ranks of society. The 'very valuable classes of men', country husbandmen and labourers, were thought unlikely to join associations on the plans of the town volunteers, because of their condition in life and their being widely dispersed. The allowance of a shilling a week was to be paid to country volunteers in consideration of the in-

⁸⁹HO 50/55 [draft] Circular to Lords Lieutenant, April 1797; Hereford and Worcester Record Office, BA 2868/4, 705:73, Portland to Coventry, 10 April 1797, (circular).

⁹⁰*To Escape the Monster's Clutches*, Compiled by M.Y.Ashcroft, p.43; Hereford and Worcester Record Office, BA 2868/4 705:73 Henry Dundas to Coventry, 6 April 1798, (printed circular).

⁹¹*To Escape the Monster's Clutches*, Compiled by M.Y.Ashcroft, p.43.

convenience they encountered in attending musters and training, 'and the difference between their situation in life and the circumstances of the persons composing volunteer corps in towns'.⁹² Increased popular participation was to be used to maintain the established social order. Dundas believed that it was essential to the security of the kingdom that the exertions of rural labourers and husbandmen should be directed 'in concert with the gentlemen of property and influence in the county, and aided by the respectable farmers with whom they are immediately connected.'⁹³

It was widely feared that the appeals for large numbers of volunteers and the subsequent attempts to limit the popular response showed that the ministry was riding a tiger of public favour. It could not afford to restrict the size of the volunteer force for fear of appearing to mistrust the populace and seeming to suggest that the military danger had been exaggerated. It appeared to the Duke of Northumberland in 1804 'that if Ministers do not take great care, they are in danger of burning their fingers with the Volunteer Corps.'⁹⁴ James Curry thought the question of how far it was advisable to check the general ardour among the numerous local volunteer corps was a serious one. Hostility to the common enemy had, he believed, by a natural association of ideas, aroused attachment to the British constitution and detestation of French politics even among those formerly indifferent. However, the government's restriction of limited associations in 1798 had been presented by evil designing persons as part of a ministerial attempt to disarm the people, having failed in an attempt to make them enrol on conditions identical to common soldiers by exaggerating the danger of invasion.⁹⁵

The call for armed associations and additional volunteer corps in April 1798 was linked with extensive preparations against the possibility of invasion. Half the supplementary militia of 60,000 men was embodied in February 1798, and the remainder in April. Returns were required of all males aged from fifteen to sixty, who were asked to provide voluntary service if they were not already engaged in a military capacity. Proposals for raising by prerogative a force comprising all able-bodied men appear to have originated in 1797. Suggestions to raise the posse comitatus were made in Dorset in

⁹² *To Escape the Monster's Clutches*, Compiled by M.Y.Ashcroft, pp.44, 46.

⁹³ Hereford and Worcester Record Office, BA 2868/4, 705:73, Henry Dundas to Coventry, 6 April 1798, (printed circular), p.2.

⁹⁴ *The Correspondence of George, Prince of Wales 1770-1812*, Edited by A.Aspinall, (London, 1965-1968), Vol.IV, p.489, No.1802, Duke of Northumberland to Colonel [Sir John] McMahon, Alnwick Castle, 5 February 1804.

⁹⁵ HO 50/42, [Doctor] James Curry to Earl of Northampton, Kettering, 25 May 1798.

May 1797 and widely publicised, Northumberland and Buckinghamshire following Dorset in gathering information on manpower and resources.⁹⁶ The Defence of the Realm Act in April 1798 required lords lieutenant to provide returns of all males aged from fifteen to sixty, who were asked to provide voluntary or paid service if not already 'engaged in any military capacity.' They were to be asked in which way they were willing to serve. They were encouraged to join volunteer corps, armed or unarmed associations, or to act as guides, pioneers, labourers, boatmen or drivers of waggons or cattle to help an evacuation of the aged and infirm in the event of an invasion.⁹⁷

The response was overwhelmingly favourable; between May and August 1798, probably 264 volunteer infantry corps, 80 yeomanry cavalry troops, and 275 armed associations were approved by the crown. The encouragement of volunteering was part of wider plans for enlisting civilian help against an invasion. Lords lieutenant were authorised to order the removal of boats, waggons, horses and provisions in the event of an invasion, and the destruction of anything which might be an advantage to the enemy. Labourers were to act as pioneers to destroy roads and bridges in order to impede the enemy, and to help remove food and drive livestock from the coasts.⁹⁸ Information was collected by parish officers about the amount of grain produced, the production capacity of bakeries, the numbers of livestock, and the horses, waggons and boats available to transport them.⁹⁹ Returns were compiled of horses, cattle, sheep, hay, straw, corn, meal, flour, boats, barges, waggons and carts, with a view to their removal or destruction. Productive capacity was assessed by returns of the normal and maximum output of mills and bakeries.¹⁰⁰ A further schedule was returned of the number of aged and infirm people who would need to be evacuated in the event of an

⁹⁶I.F.W.Beckett, *The Buckinghamshire Posse Comitatus 1798*, Buckinghamshire Record Society No.22, (n.p., 1985), pp.xi-xiv; Hampshire Record Office, 65 M 85/1, 26 January 1798; W[illiam] M[orton] Pitt, *Thoughts on the Defence of this Kingdom, &c.*, (London, 1803), quoted in Clive Emsley, *British Society and the French Wars*, p.73.

⁹⁷Hereford and Worcester Record Office, 705:73 2868(4) (lxxxix), Henry Dundas to [Lord Coventry] Lord Lieutenant of the County of Worcester, Circular, [Westminster], 6 Apr. 1798, pp.2-3; *To Escape the Monster's Clutches*, Compiled by M.Y.Ashcroft, p.44.

⁹⁸Hereford and Worcester Record Office, BA 2868/4 705:73, Henry Dundas to Coventry, 6 April 1798, (printed circular), p.5.

⁹⁹Hereford and Worcester Record Office, BA 2868/4 705:73, Henry Dundas to Coventry, 6 April 1798, (printed circular), pp.2-3.

¹⁰⁰*The Statutes at Large, From the Thirty-fifth year of the Reign of King George the Third, To the Thirty-eighth Year of the Reign of King George the Third, inclusive*, Vol.17, pp.721-724, 38 Georgii III Cap.XXVII.

invasion.¹⁰¹

In 1801 when invasion again seemed probable, the plans to drive the country, first circulated in 1796, were revived and the invasion returns of 1798 were revised.¹⁰² Increased French activity in the channel ports, though a bluff, led the Home Secretary to issue a circular letter in July 1801 requesting volunteer corps to assemble frequently for exercise and remain ready for immediate service. Precautions were not relaxed until the signing of the preliminary articles of peace in October.¹⁰³ There was some reluctance to put the provisions for driving the country into force. By early August 1801, seven of the fourteen maritime counties had still not held lieutenancy meetings to consider the plans.¹⁰⁴ At Crondall in Hampshire a vestry was called in September 1801 to make arrangements for evacuation, but only the vicar and churchwardens attended. Approached individually, the farmers declined to provide information to clergymen on livestock and crops to be evacuated or destroyed, suspecting that it would be used to assess tithes, and professing full confidence in the intrepidity of the army and navy.¹⁰⁵ Later, fears would be expressed that the destruction would be irreversible even if the result of a false alarm.¹⁰⁶ Lord Bolton, Lieutenant of Hampshire, became increasingly convinced of the impracticability and the probable mischief of carrying out strictly every part of the plan to drive the country.¹⁰⁷ In Sussex it was calculated that insufficient men, carriages and draft animals existed to evacuate the coast, and the lieutenancy concluded that it was best to avoid attempting what could not be achieved.¹⁰⁸ The lord lieutenant, the

¹⁰¹For example, Bodleian Library MS.Top.Berks.b.14, ff.18–19, The Actual State of preparation in the county of Berks, 1798.

¹⁰²See Hampshire Record Office, 65 M 85/1, 22 October 1796.

¹⁰³Hampshire Record Office, 11 M 49/234, ff.14–15, Hobart to Lord Lieutenant of Hampshire, 23 July 1801, (circular; another copy PRO 30/3/2); ff.15–16, Hobart to Lord Lieutenant of Hampshire, 10 October 1801, (circular).

¹⁰⁴WO 1/879, ff.125–127, Brook Watson, Commissary General, memorandum to Lord Hobart, London, 3 August 1801.

¹⁰⁵Hampshire Record Office, 11 M 49/231, John Washington to Lord Bolton, Crondall, 1 September 1801; Thos.Salmon to Lord Bolton, 26 August 1801; H.Dyson, Baughurst, 13 August 1801; Thos.Clemens to Lord Bolton, Alton, 18 September 1801; HO 50/42, Richmond to Henry Dundas, Brighton, 21 May 1798; Hampshire Record Office, 11 M 49/241, ff.85–86, Robt.Clerke to Lord Bolton, Newport, 4 November 1803.

¹⁰⁶*To Escape the Monster's Clutches*, Compiled by M.Y.Ashcroft, pp.73–74, Ralph Creyke to William Wilberforce, 22 November 1803; *The Correspondence of William Wilberforce*, Edited by Robert Isaac Wilberforce and Samuel Wilberforce, Two volumes, (London, 1840), Vol.I, p.288.

¹⁰⁷HO 50/51, Bolton, Cuffnells, 28 August 1801.

¹⁰⁸Hampshire Record Office, 11 M 49/231, Proceedings of a General Meeting of Lieu-

Duke of Richmond, became the principal critic of the impracticality of the plans; the Commander-in-Chief, the Duke of York, recommended changes to the plans, to destroy waggons and foodstuffs only when in danger of capture. Although eventually allowed to lapse, the plans were never officially retracted.¹⁰⁹

French invasion plans of 1801 were resurrected on the renewal of war in May 1803. By the end of the year, more than 100,000 troops were stationed on the northern coast of France and the low countries. Up to 2000 invasion craft were believed to be assembled in channel ports in March 1804, and landings in Kent or Sussex planned. Open preparations for invasion were apparent until August 1805, and home defence dominated British strategy throughout 1803 and 1804.

The volunteer movement had grown in size and extent through the 1790s in response to invasion threats and militia ballotting. The movement's revival in 1803 was on an even larger scale, encouraged by the threat of a compulsory 'levy en masse'. On the resumption of war, the principle of the *posse comitatus* was revived, but given a more organised military form. An act requiring returns on the same lines as that of 1798 was accompanied by the reformation of the auxiliary forces and preparations for a compulsory array which eventually was organised as the *levy en masse*.¹¹⁰ This required the compulsory parochial military training of all able-bodied men. By providing exemption for a district if sufficient men joined volunteer corps, the levy was used to encourage volunteering, particularly in hitherto under-represented rural areas. New conditions were set out for the acceptance of volunteer corps, which had to engage to serve within their military district and perform 85 days' paid exercise each year. In August, after the introduction of the *levy en masse*, volunteer allowances were restricted to 20 days' pay and territorial limits widened to the entire country.

The *levy en masse* was accompanied by information gathering on defensive capabilities: returns were required of livestock, foodstuffs and productive capacity on the lines adopted in 1798 and 1801. 'Proposals for rendering the Body of the People Instrumental to the General Defence, in case of Invasion' were sent to all Lieutenants of maritime counties on 24 June 1803.

tenancy, Sussex, Lewes, 13 August 1801.

¹⁰⁹ Hampshire Record Office, 11 M 49/231, Hobart to Bolton, 25 August 1801; Erin McCawley Renn, 'British Civil and Military Preparations Against Napoleon's Planned Invasion 1803-1805', Ph.D.thesis, Florida State University, 1971, pp.60-62.

¹¹⁰ *The Statutes at Large*, Vol.19, pp.747-749, 43 Georgii III Cap.LV; HO 50/357, Returns for Subdivisions of County of Kent, 22 July 1803.

As before, the plans made provision for driving the country within fifteen miles of the coast in the event of a successful enemy landing. Returns were prepared for each parish of the numbers of livestock and amounts of agricultural produce that were to be removed or destroyed. The nobility, gentry and yeomanry were asked to subscribe offers of waggons and carts, with horses, conductors, drivers and fodder, for evacuating the coasts. Proprietors and masters of barges and boats were asked to aid the public service by the conveyance of troops or stores. Millers and bakers engaged to ensure a regular supply of flour and bread. All able bodied men not already in volunteer associations were encouraged to offer their personal service in return for indemnification of property destroyed to prevent it falling into enemy hands. Bodies of 25 to 35 men aged 15 to 60 were to be formed once an invasion had taken place 'to act in a desultory Warfare in Aid of the Regular Force'. Unarmed inhabitants were encouraged to form companies of pioneers or labourers. Small mounted corps of guides were to be 'chosen from amongst the most intelligent Residentees in the Parish'. In August 1803 plans were issued to coastal counties to enrol seafaring men under the direction of the Admiralty as Sea Fencibles.¹¹¹

It was, however, the levy en masse which provided the major impetus to volunteering on a much wider scale than before. Under its provisions, all adult males not already in military corps were to be liable for compulsory military training. The act rested on the King's prerogative in requiring the military service of his liege subjects in an invasion. Parish constables were required to compile lists of men aged from seventeen to 55, slightly narrower limits than the acts of 1798 and 1803 that required returns for the basis of defence preparations. The annual lists were to distinguish ranks and occupations, exemptions were on occupational and conscientious grounds, and fines took differences in personal wealth into account, but the effective division into four classes was made according to age and number of children only. The first two classes comprised unmarried men, aged seventeen to thirty, and thirty to fifty respectively, without young children. The third was composed of married men between the ages of seventeen and thirty with two children aged ten or under. These three classes were to be exercised for two hours a week and given military training, paid in the case of journeymen labourers. All other men were assigned to the fourth class, from which

¹¹¹[House of Commons], *Papers, Presented to the House of Commons, Pursuant to Orders of the 9th and 10th Instant, By Mr. Secretary Yorke, respecting the Volunteer System*, (London, 1804), pp.12-30, 37-39; National Army Museum 8108-15-15, Newcastle upon Tyne Orders and Regulations, 15 March 1804.

special constables were to be appointed. Service under the levy did not provide exemption from the militia or Army of Reserve.¹¹²

The stated intention of the threat of a general levy was to induce the men to form volunteer corps in order to escape the compulsory provisions of the act. Provision was made for suspending the arrangements for compulsory training if the number of volunteers in any district equalled three quarters of the men in the first class. The Home Office's explanatory letter on the levy en masse stated that every encouragement should be given to the formation of volunteer corps, 'such an arrangement being calculated to concentrate the force, to promote the convenience of the public, and to render it unnecessary to have recourse to the compulsory clauses of the act.' The earlier Array Bill had allowed for the suspension of the compulsory levy if volunteers equal to six times the number of the old militia were to come forward. The lieutenants and magistrates of the Three Hundreds of Aylesbury 'feeling most Sensibly the pressure of the Array Bill on these truly Loyal and deserving Hundreds' suggested that each parish raise sufficient volunteers as the only means of avoiding the unpleasant operation of the array.¹¹³ In Tetbury, newspaper advertisements and the town crier were employed to emphasise the threat of the levy to encourage volunteering. They claimed that an insufficient number of volunteers enrolled, men in all classes would be liable to be drafted into regular regiments. Anyone aged between 17 and 55 would, however, 'be a good volunteer'.¹¹⁴

The lieutenancy of the North Riding similarly concluded that 'it appears to be the opinion of the legislature that a much smaller body of men acting as volunteers will be equally or more efficacious than the greater number acting under the provisions of the act.' The deputy lieutenants for the Bulmer wapentake distributed a printed circular letter in August 1803 to all the gentry and clergy in the district setting out the obligations imposed by the General Defence Act and advocating the enrolment of a sufficient number of volunteers in order to escape the compulsory clauses of the act. The clergy and gentlemen were asked to exert their personal influence to encourage volunteering, and to explain to the inhabitants in their vicinity the merit and advantages that would result 'from so gallant and patriotic a measure.' They

¹¹² *The Statutes at Large*, Vol.19, pp.942-950, 43 Georgii III Cap.96; J.W.Fortescue, *The County Lieutenancies and the Army*, pp.30-34.

¹¹³ Buckinghamshire Record Office, L/P:17/2, [n.d., c.August 1803]; *To Escape the Monster's Clutches*, Compiled by M.Y.Ashcroft, pp.65-66.

¹¹⁴ Gloucestershire Record Office, D566 Z 13, Tetbury Volunteers, J.W.Lettall to Henry Hall Sloper, 28 August 1803.

were urged to excite 'the manly ambition of rescuing their Country from Slavery and Destruction' by a combination of threats of the consequences of inactivity and the benefits of volunteering. Other patient victims of the 'insolent and blasphemous Invader' had met the doom of 'being *sold to dig for ever* in the dark and dismal mines of Mexico and Peru.' Volunteers would have the advantage of acting with those in whom they could place confidence and in being 'arrayed under Officers whom they know, and who will share their labours, their difficulties, and their dangers'. The levy also provided an opportunity to identify the disaffected or disloyal. Gentlemen were asked to point out men of suspicious character, whose movements the magistrates undertook 'to watch with a scrutinizing and jealous eye ... to prevent the Contagion from becoming infectious'.¹¹⁵

The act made detailed provision for the training of the levy, but the provision that its operation was to lapse if sufficient numbers of volunteers were to offer themselves strongly implies that the principal aim of the act was simply to raise a large defensive force, and the tried arrangement of volunteers was preferred to the possible risks of arming a much more varied selection of the populace. Fears were expressed by several lords lieutenant, among others, of arming the people indiscriminately. Earl Fitzwilliam claimed to echo the feelings of 'every considerate man' in warning that the act would create an army under no control. The command would devolve on men of inferior characters because no-one of respectability, rank and weight would submit to take commissions.¹¹⁶ Charles Yorke, Home Secretary, agreed that in some circumstances putting arms into the people's hands might be dangerous, but the threat of invasion was greater. He claimed that he would rather have run the chance of his countrymen misemploying the arms entrusted to them than the risk of submission to the enemy. Pitt, conversely, told parliament that he believed no-one who knew the British character could fear a patriot army composed of the bulk of the people. If it were to contain disaffected men, they would be in such a small minority as to be incapable of doing mischief. Mixing the disaffected with the loyal would cause patriotic zeal and submission to authority to pervade the whole body.¹¹⁷

Addington's ministry, which succeeded Pitt's in 1801, consolidated and amended legislation concerning both the militia and the system of volunteering that had developed in the 1790s. A new additional force, the Army

¹¹⁵ *To Escape the Monster's Clutches*, Compiled by M.Y.Ashcroft, pp.66-69.

¹¹⁶ HO 50/91, Wentworth Fitzwilliam to Lord Hobart, 13 August 1803.

¹¹⁷ *The Parliamentary History of England*, Vol.XXXVI, Cols.1630, 1644, 18 July 1803; Ian R.Christie, *Stress and Stability in Late Eighteenth-Century Britain*, p.242.

of Reserve, was raised by ballot in 1803 to supplement the regular army and militia for home defence. The volunteers, reconstituted in mid-1802 before the renewal of war, were raised under several different sets of regulations and allowances. At the end of 1803 the Home Secretary, Charles Yorke, introduced a bill to consolidate volunteer legislation and to limit corps' autonomy, principally with respect to the appointment of committees, the election of officers, and the enforcement of discipline. A bill to suspend the Army of Reserve passed with so small a majority in April 1804 that Addington was obliged to resign. On Pitt's return, the auxiliary forces were reformed by replacing the Army of Reserve with a Permanent Additional Force as a reserve for the army, and Yorke's Volunteer Consolidation Act was passed, both in June 1804.

The volunteer force as it was revived in 1803 was formed on a distinctly more systematic basis, with fewer of the anomalies that characterised the variety of volunteer organisations in the 1790s. The government initially accepted all offers of volunteer service recommended by lords lieutenant, but in August 1803 limited numbers to six times the size of the militia quota. Yorke explained that the limit had been set with a view to set bounds to the already enormous public expenditure on volunteer corps, to narrow exemptions from the militia and Army of Reserve, and because sufficient arms could not be provided for a larger force. Yorke expressed the fear that 'infinite embarrassment' would have resulted from pushing the volunteer system to an unlimited extent; he wished to limit the already enormous expenditure on the service. All offers of volunteer corps continued to be accepted, but those that exceeded the county quotas became unpaid supernumeraries, unable to claim exemptions.¹¹⁸ In order to limit the force to the quota, the selection of corps was based on their respectability, situation and composition, while in order to choose those least likely to join the militia or Army of Reserve.¹¹⁹

From its peak at the beginning of 1804, the movement began to decline, a process that accelerated under the combined influence of official hostility, financial troubles and a lack of enthusiasm once the invasion threat had receded. The first major changes to the volunteer system as established in 1803–1804 were introduced by William Windham, who became Secretary of State for War and Colonies in Grenville's Ministry of All the Talents af-

¹¹⁸HO 51/75, ff.14–16, C.Yorke to Lord Romney, Whitehall, 27 August 1803; ff.42–43, C.Yorke to Lord Bolton, Whitehall, 1 September 1803; J.W.Fortescue, *The County Lieutenancies and the Army*, pp.76–77.

¹¹⁹HO 51/75, f.92, C.Yorke to Duke of Richmond, 7 September 1803.

ter Pitt's death in 1806. Windham had for long been severely critical of the volunteer system as organised by Pitt and Addington. He advocated a national system of compulsory military training, and favoured a volunteer system that was not dependent on government allowances and exemption from militia service. Windham's intention was to return the volunteers to what he believed were their original principles, and to induce the volunteers to finance themselves and to reassert the gentry's leadership by shedding the movement's lower-class membership. The Training Act of July 1806 provided for the compulsory military training of all adult males, but was never enforced. Plans were devised to combine the militia with the regular army and to raise a new militia on its original principles.¹²⁰ In 1806, Volunteer pay was reduced, clothing allowances withdrawn, and Inspecting Field Officers seconded from the regular army were removed; more than 11,000 volunteers and 10% of their officers resigned in consequence, although this had no major impact on the long term decline in numbers evident since 1803.¹²¹ The imminence of the invasion threat had receded by this time, and many volunteer corps met only irregularly and were encountering financial difficulties. Some corps were thought to have continued only because of the threat of the levy en masse.¹²² The decision to resign was probably made easier for others because the apparently lessened military threat. The officers of the Christchurch Volunteer Artillery resigned in July 1806 after twelve years' existence because they were unable to support the expenses of the corps on reduced allowances. They insisted that there was no lack of loyalty, and they would immediately come forward again if any real danger reappeared.¹²³

In 1807 a fundamental change in the nature of the war became apparent. The Treaty of Tilsit, isolating Britain, and the formation of the Continental System, with the British response, the Orders in Council, made a war of attrition likely and revived the threat of invasion. The numbers of vol-

¹²⁰ S.C. Smith, 'Loyalty and Opposition in the Napoleonic Wars: The Impact of the Local Militia, 1807-1815', D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1984, pp.13, 18-19; *To Escape the Monster's Clutches*, Compiled by M.Y. Ashcroft, p.92; Suffolk Record Office, Grafton Archives, HA 513/5/144, p.152, Euston to Brigadier General Elwes, Margaret Street, 27 April 1806.

¹²¹ J.W. Fortescue, *The County Lieutenancies and the Army*, pp.173, 198; John Cookson, 'Patriotism and Social Structure: the Ely Volunteers, 1798-1808', p.13.

¹²² Hampshire Record Office, 11 M 49/238, Brigadier General Porter to Lord Bolton, 20 July 1806.

¹²³ Hampshire Record Office, 11 M 49/238, f.99, Edmund Walcot to Lord Bolton, Winton Ringwood, 28 July 1806.

unteers had declined markedly by 1807 and many corps lacked adequate funds, although allowances were restored and Inspecting Field Officers reappointed by the new ministry in April and July 1807 respectively.¹²⁴ It has been argued that Portland's ministry saw the necessity of reviving a dormant and sluggish loyalism which, however, allegedly 'still represented majority opinion'.¹²⁵ Viscount Castlereagh, one of Windham's foremost critics, succeeded him on the resignation of the ministry in March 1807. He was responsible for the introduction of a permanent county-based Local Militia in 1808, which largely supplanted the volunteers in their local defence role. Castlereagh planned to reduce the volunteers only to the most efficient corps, while envisaging their eventual disappearance. The Local Militia was intended 'to lay the foundation of a military establishment into which the volunteers may be gradually melted down'.¹²⁶ The local militia has been called 'the first comprehensive attempt to alter national attitudes to military service', and one of its provisions 'perhaps the most notable point in the whole of our administrative military history' before the Great War.¹²⁷

Permanent county regiments, six times the size of the regular militia quota, were to be raised by ballot for three years' service from men aged between eighteen and thirty, unless sufficient men enrolled voluntarily for bounties, or the members of volunteer corps offered to transfer to the new force. Unlike the regular militia, ballotted men could not provide substitutes to serve in their stead, nor join insurance societies, but could pay a fine, graduated according to income. Volunteers not receiving government allowances received remission of half the fine if ballotted, but were encouraged to transfer as a corps to the local militia. Bounties of two guineas were paid on transfer, although this was restricted the following year. Volunteer officers retained their rank on transferring, though remaining junior to regular militia officers. Soon after the passage of the act, volunteer corps were warned that those failing to muster sufficient numbers would be declared ineffective, would lose their privileges and would become liable to the local militia ballot.

¹²⁴S.C.Smith, 'Loyalty and Opposition in the Napoleonic Wars', D.Phil.thesis, University of Oxford, 1984, pp.v, vi, 1-2, 43; V.R.Ham, 'Strategies of Coalition and Isolation: British War Policy and North-West Europe, 1803-1810', D.Phil thesis, University of Oxford, 1977, pp.166-168.

¹²⁵S.C.Smith, 'Loyalty and Opposition in the Napoleonic Wars', p.vi.

¹²⁶Wendy Hinde, *Castlereagh*, (London, 1981), p.131.

¹²⁷S.C.Smith, 'Loyalty and Opposition in the Napoleonic Wars', p.42; J.W.Fortescue, *The County Lieutenancies and the Army*, p.215.

Despite the pressure exerted, volunteers generally were reluctant to transfer to the new force. No further new volunteer corps were accepted after 1807, none was placed on permanent duty in 1809, and clothing allowances were withdrawn in June from all volunteer infantry corps.¹²⁸ Castlereagh thought it well known that the expenses of some corps were greater than necessary and would 'produce some embarrassments with respect to funds, which it would be desirable to escape, by turning to a service which required no stock purse.'¹²⁹ By 1811, the volunteers were no longer called on permanent duty; they were described the following year as a purely nominal force. Most of the remaining infantry corps were disbanded on the grounds of expense in March 1813.¹³⁰ No such pressure to disband was placed on the yeomanry cavalry, which the government was ready to retain in peacetime. Nevertheless, many corps were run down gradually, and in general the smaller ones resigned. By 1810 Charles Herries, commanding the Light Horse Volunteers, was keeping up only a skeleton of the regiment, not expecting the privates to attend exercises and musters unless actual service was required.¹³¹ Many of the surviving cavalry corps resigned at the conclusion of peace because they thought that their original purpose had been accomplished. The Bere Forest Rangers believed that with the establishment of 'Universal peace' in November 1815 there was no need for the continuance of their services. Only the war with America and Bonaparte's return from Elba had prevented their resigning a year before.¹³²

Initially, it was mostly the volunteer corps with the weakest finances which offered to transfer to the local militia. Volunteers in the extensive manufacturing areas of Cheshire, Warwickshire and the West Riding were readiest to join the new force, while the greatest reluctance was evident in predominantly rural counties like Lincolnshire, Oxfordshire and Surrey. No

¹²⁸ *To Escape the Monster's Clutches*, Compiled by M.Y.Ashcroft, p.92; J.W.Fortescue, *The County Lieutenancies and the Army*, pp.211-218, 228-230; HO 51/84, f.245, Liverpool to Earl of Berkeley, 16 March 1809; HO 51/84, f.264, Liverpool to Earl of Berkeley, 22 May 1809; HO 51/82, f.389, Hawkesbury to Earl of Mount Edgcumbe, 5 August 1807.

¹²⁹ J.W.Fortescue, *The County Lieutenancies and the Army*, p.230; *The Parliamentary Debates from The Year 1803 to the Present Time*, Published under the superintendence of T.C.Hansard, Vol.XI, col.47, quoted in S.C.Smith, 'Loyalty and Opposition in the Napoleonic Wars', p.43.

¹³⁰ J.W.Fortescue, *The County Lieutenancies and the Army*, pp.258, 269; HO 51/120, ff.294-295, Sidmouth, 17 March 1813, (circular).

¹³¹ PRO 30/3/1, C.H[erries] to Lt.Gen.Brownrigg, Gray's Inn Lane, 11 April 1810; HO 50/283, Ducie to Duke of Beaufort, 6 July 1812.

¹³² HO 50/309, John Butler [to Lord Fitzharris], Havant, 13 November 1815.

volunteers at all had transferred their services in Bedfordshire, Kent, Surrey or Sussex by April 1810.¹³³ Although pressure was exerted, volunteers could not be forced to transfer their services. Sir George Cayley, commander of the Pickering Lyth Volunteers in the North Riding, though he believed that it would be greatly to the advantage of the corps to volunteer into that service, felt it his duty and 'inclination to abide by the decision of the majority of the corps'. Around a quarter of the corps had offered to transfer by August 1808, and many of these had offered conditionally without committing themselves to serve in the new force if the rest of the corps did not transfer. Several of the officers threatened to resign if the corps did not transfer, interpreting the majority required as one of the commissioned officers, not of private men. Cayley declared the corps disbanded, in the belief that the government intended the local militia to supersede the volunteers in any event.¹³⁴

A range of motives has been suggested for volunteer officers' enthusiasm for the local militia. One important attraction was that the new force was entirely funded by government, so relieving officers of much of the financial burden of maintaining a corps.¹³⁵ Some volunteer officers allegedly transferred in order to take the opportunity of acquiring greater professionalism in an internal security role. They apparently wished to escape an outmoded and inefficient system. Prospects for promotion in the new regiments were good, and commissions carried greater status than volunteer rank.¹³⁶ Yet it is by no means proven that volunteer officers wished to be professional; many went to great lengths to emphasise their amateur status. There had been several opportunities open to them to join more regular forces in the past, and among the many reasons for forming or joining volunteer corps, a desire for military professionalism was never foremost. Internal opposition to proposed transfers sometimes seriously divided corps.

Much of the success of the measure depended on the lead given by the officers, who occasionally differed on the issue. The Colonel of the North Worcester Volunteer Infantry opposed the wishes of his junior officers to transfer to the local militia, so one of the captains on his own initiative mustered three companies and tried to convince them to transfer their ser-

¹³³ S.C.Smith, 'Loyalty and Opposition in the Napoleonic Wars', pp.45, 86; *To Escape the Monster's Clutches*, Compiled by M.Y.Ashcroft, p.94; Parliamentary Papers, Vol.XIII, p.405, 22 April 1810, *Establishment of the Several Corps of Local Militia*.

¹³⁴ *To Escape the Monster's Clutches*, Compiled by M.Y.Ashcroft, pp.92-94.

¹³⁵ John Cookson, 'Patriotism and Social Structure: the Ely Volunteers, 1798-1808', pp.10-11.

¹³⁶ S.C.Smith, 'Loyalty and Opposition in the Napoleonic Wars', pp.45, 48-49.

vice. He was thwarted by another captain walking in front of his company 'saying all the discouraging things he could' and claiming that local militia men would be sent abroad. In the event, many of the officers and men withdrew from the corps.¹³⁷

Elsewhere, the question of transfers involved important local political rivalries. Pittite volunteers wished to be seen to support Portland's ministry by joining the new force. Foxite Whigs were believed to have incited opposition to the local militia among volunteers in Kent on the principles of liberty and independence. They advocated general universal military training in preference to regular military units or volunteer corps. In Worcester, a rival reconstituted volunteer corps was proposed when more than 500 members of the original Loyal Worcester Volunteers agreed to transfer to the local militia. The officers threatened to resign and many volunteers withdrew their engagements, and the issue provoked handbills, advertisements and canvassing parties. Proposals for the Royal Edinburgh Volunteers to transfer to the local militia similarly resulted in controversy, generating at least four pamphlets.¹³⁸

The decision to supplant the volunteers with a local militia has been attributed to the ministry's inability to establish satisfactory control over the popular movement that had developed since 1803. Critics claimed that the volunteer system was inherently inefficient and the corps undisciplined. Local militia battalions had weaker ties with local communities than did volunteer corps, and could be more readily used outside their own localities and in concert with regular troops.¹³⁹ Linda Colley argues that the fact that

¹³⁷HO 50/205, John Lucas [to Lord Deerhurst], Sheepcote, 10 August 1808; see S.C.Smith, 'Loyalty and Opposition in the Napoleonic Wars', p.46.

¹³⁸S.C.Smith, 'Loyalty and Opposition in the Napoleonic Wars', pp.46-48; A Fellow Soldier, *Observations, Addressed to the First Regiment of Royal Edinburgh Volunteers, on the expediency of transferring their services to the Local Militia*, (Edinburgh, 1808); An Old Blue-Coat, *A Swatch of the Old Blue; being An Attempt to Prove, That 'the Fellow-Soldier' has Misunderstood the meaning of the Local Militia and Volunteer Acts; and that it is not necessary, just, or expedient, for the First Regiment of Royal Edinburgh Volunteers to transform themselves to the Local Militia. In an Address to the Corps*, (Edinburgh, 1808); An Old Volunteer, *An Address to the First Battalion Royal Edinburgh Volunteers upon the Proposed Transformation of Their Body into a Regiment of Local Militia*, (Edinburgh, 1808); A True Volunteer, *An Address to the First Regiment of Royal Edinburgh Volunteers, by way of Answer to the Observations of 'a Fellow Soldier': containing an advice to the privates of the regiment, Regarding the Line of Conduct they ought to pursue upon the present Occasion*, (Edinburgh, 1808).

¹³⁹John Cookson, 'Patriotism and Social Structure: the Ely Volunteers, 1798-1808', pp.13-14.

no volunteer service was reinstituted after 1814 until the 1850s indicates 'how volatile and potentially subversive' the volunteers were perceived to be.¹⁴⁰ Significantly, the yeomanry cavalry survived the peace.

Conclusion

The nature and organisation of the volunteer force changed markedly over the more than twenty years of its existence. Initially it appears to have been almost an *ad hoc* response to the need for additional defensive forces and served as a useful demonstration of public loyalty and support for the ministry's prosecution of a controversial war. The force was a logical development of traditional anti-invasion measures, but carried with it overtones of loyalist political associations. The influence of the Reeves associations was important, since they set a political agenda within which the volunteers had to work. Yet the volunteers were not primarily an anti-radical movement, nor were they a politically active one; volunteer corps did not as a rule engage in pamphleteering, prosecutions or the vigilante activities of the loyalist associations.

By 1798, the war was much less ideologically charged; the ministry felt able to invite voluntary service on a much broader social scale than before, and the force was transformed, both in size and composition. This apparent modification of official attitudes towards the arming of large numbers of civilians was dictated by the imminence of the threat of French invasion and possibly influenced by the experience of the usefulness of the broadly-based volunteer force against recruiting and food riots in 1794 and 1795. The volunteer force was deliberately re-established as a mass movement in 1803, but attention was paid to restricting its potential for independence, and to widening its terms of service so that it could be employed on a national scale like the militia.

Throughout the period, the recruitment of the force was closely related to the pressure of a prospective invasion. Increasingly, the volunteers were linked to the raising of other defensive forces: as an alternative to the supplementary militia in 1797 and to the levy en masse in 1803. Brought into closer co-ordination with military planning for an invasion from 1798, the large independent and disparate force created in 1803 was hard to manage and unsuited to government plans, so successive ministries accelerated the movement's natural decline by restricting funding and eventually instituting

¹⁴⁰Linda Colley, 'Whose Nation?', p.115.

the more centralised and regular military local militia. These topics, of the growth and decline of volunteering, both the process itself and the reasons for it, are further considered in the next chapter.

The question of the extent to which the volunteers had a political role is best answered by clarifying the distinction between the different strands of loyalism. The case for direct connections between the early volunteers and the loyalist associations has been overstated, and the force did not act in such a directly interventionist and anti-radical way. The volunteers were, however, loyalist in the broad sense of supporting the existing constitutional order, which was possible despite comprising a range of political opinion. The fact that the volunteers were seen as a Pittite measure implied some support among the volunteers for the ministry and its prosecution of the war, which remained controversial until at least 1798. Yet the matter was not so simple; the complexities of volunteers' political adherences, and the question of their loyalty, will be dealt with in the fourth chapter.

Chapter Two: The Pattern and Organisation of Volunteering

Part One

Volunteering was a large, varied movement on a national scale and inherently difficult to characterise without allowing for major exceptions. The force developed along lines and grew to a size unanticipated by the official invitation of 1794, and went through major changes during its existence. Successive governments tried to adapt the volunteers to national military requirements, and finally supplanted them with a more dirigible force. The stages in the development of the volunteer force and its variety can be traced by examining the geographical disposition of individual corps and the dates of their formation. In the first section of this chapter, the chronological and geographical development will be analysed, and conclusions drawn about what they indicate the main purposes of the force to have been, not only from the government's point of view but also from that of the men who volunteered. The pattern of volunteering makes evident the close connection between volunteering and both the prospect of invasion and the imminence of ballotting for auxiliary forces, particularly the militia.

The second section identifies the characteristics common to most corps in order to identify the features of what contemporaries saw as the volunteer 'system'.¹ Principally, it is concerned with how volunteering was organised at the local and national levels. County lieutenancies could only encourage and co-ordinate the formation of corps, which remained essentially the product of local and individual initiative, on the part of corporate bodies or of private individuals. The manner of raising a corps largely determined the nature of its organisation and membership.

The chronological and geographical development of volunteering offer important clues to the motivation for the formation of corps. Three main motives can be identified for a locality's decision to raise a corps: the threat of invasion, the desire to avoid the local disruption caused by raising the militia, or the apparent revolutionary threat posed by the political activity of the popular reform societies. The first two motives are difficult to disentangle. If the volunteer force was primarily a response to the perceived threat of invasion, it could be expected to have been concentrated in those coastal areas most exposed to attack, and to have attracted most support

¹ *Cobbett's Political Register*, Vol.IV, col.852, 10-17 December 1803.

during the periods of greatest threat, 1794, 1797–1798, 1801 and 1803–1805. If, however, as some contemporaries alleged, volunteering was largely a response to the threat of ballotting for the regular and supplementary militias, then a major response would again be anticipated during periods of threatened invasion, because new auxiliary forces were raised at these times, but would have been fairly uniform throughout the country, as ballotting was conducted according to quota for all parishes, most importantly for the militia in 1794, 1797 and 1803. Alternatively, a markedly different pattern of response would be expected if volunteering was conceived primarily as an anti-revolutionary force. Corps could be expected to have been concentrated in areas of known reformist political activity and where disorder was anticipated — in the metropolis and large industrial and manufacturing towns and cities — and during periods of political or social unrest: during the reformist agitation of 1793–1795 and the food rioting of 1795 and 1800–1801.

In the event, the pattern of volunteering conforms more closely to the former two than to the latter model. The two periods of the most rapid growth in volunteering, 1797–1798 and 1803–1804, correspond to the periods of greatest apparent threat of invasion and insurrection, and even more closely to the consequent periods of ballotting of other auxiliary forces from which volunteer service provided exemption. Geographically, the force developed on a national scale but with concentrations in the more exposed coastal counties and strategically important cities, but not notably in areas of political disaffection. This suggests that volunteering as a national phenomenon was as much a response to militia ballotting and the government's other compulsory measures against invasion, which affected all counties roughly equally, as it was a response to the invasion threat itself. Volunteering motivated by the need for internal policing appears to mirror neither the geography nor the chronology of the radical political movement, but rather the threat of disorder during an invasion or periods of food shortage. Despite the official encouragement of corps to preserve order in populous districts,² volunteering was in general not predominantly directed towards large inland industrial towns and cities.

The changing nature of the volunteer force is partly accounted for by the changes in its purpose over time, as conceived by both its members and the government. Robert Dozier contends that the movement started with conservative political intentions as the final phase of the loyalist association movement, and became a general 'patriotic' movement only when the ide-

²HO 51/75, ff.467–468, R. Pole Carew to Samuel Smith, 8 November 1803.

ological threat from France and the radical societies receded at the end of 1794. Alternatively, John Cookson argues that the volunteers had a social purpose which held them together until they were integrated into official invasion planning in 1798.

The pattern of volunteering does not support these interpretations assigning primacy to political or social purpose. Initially principally intended against invasion, the volunteers acquired in addition responsibility for public order, and a social role in the unification of local communities in a common loyal purpose. Early corps were formed in those areas clearly most threatened by invasion, while by 1798 volunteering had become a much more general movement. More corps were formed in inland districts with limited areas of service, and these were principally concerned with internal peace-keeping requirements. The food rioting of 1795 had demonstrated the value of local military corps when regular forces were unavailable, though significantly they were not to be formed in large numbers until the invasion scare and militia augmentations of 1797–1798 gave them a military justification. The introduction of armed associations served to create a force that was more widely distributed throughout the country, and reached into a wider range of communities than before. The phrasing of official invitations to form corps also changed perceptibly: in 1794, voluntary corps were invited to form for the defence of the coasts and populous coastal towns, while by 1798, armed associations were suggested for all parishes. Their purposes combined defence against invasion with the need for internal policing and elements of a social role.

These developments can be analysed in greater detail by compiling statistics on the dates of formation of corps and their geographical disposition. It is possible to trace the formation of volunteer corps and armed associations in the lists of commissions published in the *London Gazette* and compiled annually in lists of the officers in the militia, yeomanry and volunteer corps published by the War Office. It is difficult to find comprehensive and consistent information about the formation and disbandment of every corps and association. Little record survives of many of the hundreds of corps formed in the 1790s, especially those raised without government support and those which disbanded after a short period. Even the lieutenancy clerks at the time could be uncertain how many and where volunteer corps existed in their counties.³

Despite the limitations of the statistical evidence, it is nevertheless clear

³ *To Escape the Monster's Clutches*, Compiled by M.Y.Ashcroft, pp.41–42.

that the response to the government's invitation to form corps was far greater than anticipated. General Alexander Dirom believed that the success of the volunteers had exceeded the most sanguine expectations by March 1797.⁴ Yet much greater growth was to be experienced the following year, and in 1803 the force was to reach a total of almost 400,000. Henry Dundas then said that he would have greatly preferred a much smaller force, one half the size but of more uniform efficiency.⁵

The most striking long-term characteristic of volunteering is not steady growth but prolonged periods of little activity alternating with relatively short periods in which large numbers of corps were formed. No comprehensive returns of the entire force were made before the end of 1803, so the exact extent of volunteering during the revolutionary war is not known. After the initial enthusiasm of mid 1794, the numbers of new commissions for volunteer officers tailed off to very low levels throughout 1795 and 1796. From May till August 1796, for example, only one cavalry corps was formed. Early the following year numbers began to rise markedly, reaching peaks between March and July 1797 and April and October 1798. From nineteen corps started in 1796, the number formed rose to 190 in the following year, and 419 in 1798. The latter total was supplemented by 290 armed associations. Very few more volunteers came forward before the peace in 1802. Only 68 new corps were approved in 1799 and thirteen in 1800.

The cumulative effect was to bring about a change in the order of magnitude of the volunteer organisation in 1797 and 1798. From a probable total of 227 corps in 1796, the size approximately doubled in each of the succeeding two years, to 417 and then 836 corps. With the armed associations, the volunteer force probably contained 1128 individual corps, and remained above this level until the end of the war in 1802, taking into account a small number of disbandments. The proportion of yeomanry cavalry corps in the total remained fairly consistently between 20% and 30%, except in 1799 when it fell to just under 6% of new corps.

The pattern of the growth of the force strongly supports the premise that volunteering was a response to invasion scares and militia ballotting. All the periods of greatest growth of volunteering correspond to apparently imminent threats from France, although the invasion scare of 1801 had little obvious impact on an already large force, most likely because no additional

⁴Dirom commanded the North Britain military district; National Library of Scotland, MS7, Melville Papers, Alexander Dirom to [R. Dundas] Lord Advocate for Scotland, Edinburgh, 27 March 1797, f.154; another copy: ff.162-167.

⁵PRO 30/8/157, Chatham Papers, ff.265-267, Melville to Alexr., 16 December 1803.

forces were then ballotted.

The total number of effective volunteers on 9 December 1803 was listed in the first parliamentary return of the size of the force as 380,193, organised in 3,976 infantry companies, 604 cavalry troops and 102 artillery companies varying between 50 and 100 men each.⁶ This was considerably more than the combined total of 220,418 in the regular army and the militia; of these, 88,519 were regular soldiers stationed within Great Britain. Volunteers formed 63% of the home forces in January 1804, excluding the artillery, engineers, fencibles and armed associations.⁷ After 1804 the imminence of prospective invasion waned and the numbers of volunteers declined steadily, accelerated by the formation of the local militia in 1808. By December 1807, 296,669 effective volunteers remained, falling to 90,545 in March 1812.⁸ Many infantry corps transferred to the new local militia corps or broke up, and the infantry force was disbanded in 1814. Yeomanry troops remained in existence into the 1820s.

The link between volunteering and preparations against invasion is also clearly shown in the geographical disposition of the new corps. The geographical pattern of volunteering, like its chronological development, was not uniform. The initial response to the government's invitation for volunteers in 1794 was widespread, but overwhelmingly from those counties most exposed to French attack. The south-west and south-east coasts of England and much of Scotland were over-represented for reasons related to the likelihood of invasion and the availability of regular forces to deal with it. Throughout the decade, Devon, Cornwall and Kent were, almost without exception, each year among the counties in which more than the average number of infantry and cavalry corps were formed. Kent and the Cinque Ports together formed about a third of all corps in 1794; coastal counties

⁶[House of Commons], *Return, Presented to the House of Commons, In pursuance of an Order of 10th August 1803, of all Volunteer and Yeomanry Corps, whose services have been accepted by His Majesty; describing each corps. Ordered to be printed 9th December 1803*, (London, 1803).

⁷[House of Lords], *Papers, Presented to the House of Lords, Relating to The Army and Volunteer Corps, Pursuant to Addresses of the 31st March 1806. Ordered to be printed 16th April 1806*, (London, 1806), p.125.

⁸[House of Commons], *The Journals of the House of Commons*, Vol.59, 1803–1804, p.502, Abstract of Return of all Volunteer and Yeomanry Corps, 9 December 1803; Vol.63, 1808–1809, p.614, 18 March 1808, Effective number of volunteers in Great Britain, 1 December 1807; Vol.65, 1810, p.618, 3 April 1810, Return of Yeomanry and Volunteers in each county at December 1809; Vol.67, 1812, p.671, Return of Yeomanry and Volunteers, 6 March 1812.

formed 70% of the total that year, rising to over 80% and more than 75% in the two subsequent years. Scottish counties became prominent in 1797 when the militia was introduced there.⁹ Practically all except the border and central counties formed more than the national annual average of corps; those on the Firth of Forth and the north east coast raised more than double the average. This was comparable only with Cornwall and Devon, and the north-west coasts of Cheshire and Lancashire.

When volunteering took off on an altogether greater scale in 1797 and 1798, the coastal counties remained significantly more likely to form corps, despite the appeal for volunteers and armed associations having been directed to all counties. In 1798, eight of the nine counties where significantly more than the average number of new corps were formed were on the southern and eastern coasts, from Cornwall to Suffolk. Together they represented over 40% of the 419 corps formed that year. Next most active were Northumberland, Durham and the North and West Ridings. Even in the areas most exposed to invasion there was much variation, however. In Sussex, only two corps were formed, compared to neighbouring Hampshire and Kent, where 22 and 20 respectively were founded. Nevertheless, the overwhelming impression given by the growth of the force during the 1790s is that volunteer corps were formed in areas most exposed to an invasion, and those corps were formed at times when invasion seemed most likely, or when militia ballotting encouraged men to seek alternative forms of military service.

Thus both the chronological and geographical pattern of volunteering in the 1790s support the conclusion that volunteers joined in response to invasion threats and militia ballotting rather than radical political activity. The organisation of volunteering on its revival at the renewal of war with France in 1803 was notably more systematic than before. The publication of the first comprehensive parliamentary return of corps and their terms of service in December 1803 demonstrates that volunteering was by then treated as a regular system. Corps^{were} no longer left to set their own conditions of service but instead were invited on condition of accepting a set of requirements in return for official allowances, privileges and exemptions. The earlier wide

⁹All subsequent information unless stated otherwise is calculated from the War Office lists of yeomanry and volunteer officers for 1795–1801 and *Return, Presented to the House of Commons, In pursuance of an Order of 10th August 1803, of all Volunteer and Yeomanry Corps*; Coastal counties formed 55 of the 93, or 59%, of the administrative divisions used by the Home and War Offices with regard to the volunteers; J.R.Western, 'The Formation of the Scottish Militia in 1797', *Scottish Historical Review*, Vol.XXXIV, No.117, April 1955.

variety of regulations and pay was not allowed to develop to such an extent.

The response under the initial regulations of June 1803 was relatively slow. Only 362 corps were formed under the condition of performing 85 days' paid training each year, serving anywhere within their respective military districts; more than half of them agreed to more extensive service. Volunteering suddenly acquired popularity when the levy en masse was introduced in August. It provided for compulsory military service but allowed exemption for volunteers on new and less accommodating terms of service. By the end of the year, 1165 corps had formed under more restricted conditions of service that provided for only 20 days' annual paid training and a commitment to serve anywhere within Great Britain. The numbers accepted in each county were restricted to six times the militia quota on 18 August 1803, but in response to complaints, unpaid supernumeraries were allowed. Six counties had more than 2000 men more than their quotas, while only one fell short by a similar number. Volunteering reached its greatest size and extent at this time.¹⁰

The distribution of volunteer corps was not that which the military authorities would have chosen had they been able to control it. The distribution of corps fell very unevenly, and not always in the more strategically valuable places. The value of the volunteers against a prospective invasion was further restricted by their geographically limited terms of service. The variety of terms of service has been blamed for having made co-ordinated defence planning difficult. Unlike regular troops and militiamen, volunteers could not be ordered away from home without their consent except in an emergency. When the force was reformed in 1803, those limitations were relaxed, as outlined above. New corps were committed to serve the limits either of their military district or the country as a whole, depending on whether they were accepted under the June or August allowances respectively. The distribution of corps was made less uneven by the introduction of quotas calculated on the county militia quotas. Some corps agreed to serve only in their own counties or within specified distances from home; a few were limited to their own hundreds or parishes. The component troops of large formations were sometimes themselves engaged on different terms of service, but in practice corps were expected to abandon limitations on their service in the event of an invasion. The implications of the variety of terms of service should not be accorded undue significance, for the overwhelming majority of corps were willing to serve anywhere in Great Britain: 1322, as

¹⁰Philip J.Haythornthwaite, 'The Volunteer Force, 1803-04', pp.193-194, 196.

opposed to 152 limited to their military districts.¹¹

The reasons for the long-term dominance of the coastal counties in volunteering are difficult to disentangle. The government emphasised the formation of coastal corps while encouraging volunteering in populous inland districts. The response from the former was greater both because the invasion threat there was more clearly evident and because the presence of regular and auxiliary troops pointed out the need for an additional force to take on local defensive and policing duties when the other forces were needed to face an invasion. Yet inland counties also justified the raising of corps by pointing to the likely absence of regular soldiers during an invasion, and the need for volunteers to keep order in such an event. The pattern of the distribution of volunteer and yeomanry corps can to an extent be attributed to administrative policies. There was a strong urban and coastal emphasis in the official encouragement of volunteering. In April 1797 the Duke of Portland announced that since volunteer corps had already become very numerous, future infantry companies should be restricted to cities and those principal coastal and manufacturing towns where a permanent military presence was considered necessary.¹² Volunteering generally was less successful in large counties with dispersed populations in any case because of the inconvenience of exercises. An anonymous and probably Scottish 'Yeoman' complained in 1795 that most members of his troop had to ride up to twenty miles to learn the exercise because the place of rendezvous was at a large town. The inconvenience and expense was alleged to have caused many resignations and deterred more from joining.¹³

Superficially, it appears that coastal counties offered more volunteers than inland districts because they were most immediately threatened by an invasion. Worcester, for example, displayed little interest in raising volunteers as it was believed to be relatively safe from attack. By 1800, 42 individual companies had been formed in Inverness-shire, all infantry, a number surpassed only by Cornwall and Kent. This apparently reflects Inverness-shire's scattered population and the vulnerability of its western coasts and islands to attack, and most importantly, the absence of a Scottish militia before 1797. However, the pattern of the force does not necessarily reflect the relative desire of districts to form corps. It was deliberate government

¹¹ Philip J. Haythornthwaite, 'The Volunteer Force, 1803-04', pp.196-199.

¹² Hereford and Worcester Record Office, BA 2868/4, 705:73, Portland to Coventry, (circular), 10 April 1797.

¹³ National Library of Scotland, MS 1048 Melville Papers, f.50, Home Defence, 'a Yeoman' [to Dundas], 9 February 1795.

policy to discourage the formation of volunteer corps in all but the most populous inland districts. Armed associations in inland towns of fewer than 2000 inhabitants were rejected if they did not agree to serve to the limits of their counties.¹⁴ Robert Dundas, the Lord Advocate, told the gentlemen of the interior counties of Scotland that volunteer corps far from the coast were neither effectual nor agreeable to the government. He believed the rejection of such corps to be wise and proper.¹⁵

Furthermore, the raising of volunteer corps was closely related to the local disposition of other defensive forces. The militia and regular army were concentrated in coastal districts, particularly in southern and eastern England, and much of their usual duty involved maintaining civil order. The perceived need for volunteer corps was related as much to the direct prospect of invasion or civil disorder as to the likelihood of other military forces which normally maintained order being withdrawn from a locality in the event of an invasion. Many corps were formed with the express intention of maintaining public order and providing local defence in their district in the event of the withdrawal of the regular forces, or to enable their withdrawal. Armed associations in turn saw their role to be to provide more localised defence and peacekeeping when the volunteers themselves marched elsewhere to oppose an invasion. Conversely, many corps were formed where the regular military presence was never expected to be adequate. Volunteering was popular for instance in the remote and relatively defenceless highland counties of Scotland.

Though volunteering was predominantly coastal, the inland component was far from negligible. There, the priorities were significantly different, internal policing and peace keeping assuming a more prominent role than defence against invasion. This was in part a result of the ministry's discouragement of infantry corps in inland districts; cavalry were considered useful against civil disturbances, and the infantry corps more suited to facing foreign invasion forces. The relative number of cavalry troops was higher in the inland counties: 67% of the total number of associations in 1794, compared with 46% in the coastal counties.

The incidence of volunteering at the county level is clearly related not merely to the likelihood of invasion, but more specifically to the probability of the locality being left without other defensive forces in the event

¹⁴ *To Escape the Monster's Clutches*, Compiled by M.Y.Ashcroft, p.50; HO 51/75, ff.467-468, R.Pole Carew to Saml.Smith, 8 November 1803.

¹⁵ National Library of Scotland, MS7 Melville Papers, f.151, R. Dundas to Henry Dundas, Arniston, 29 Mar. 1797; another copy: ff.158-160.

of an invasion. The revival of interest in volunteering does not seem to have had any direct or immediate connection with the invasion crises. The clearest example of this is provided by the reactions to the crises of 1797: the French landing in Pembrokeshire and the naval mutinies. In December 1796 a French invasion fleet with 15,000 men had reached Bantry Bay, before being forced to return by bad weather. In February 1797 a small French force attacked shipping in Ilfracombe Bay and landed at Pencaern near Fishguard in Pembrokeshire. Three days later, it surrendered to forces which included militiamen, fencibles and the Pembrokeshire Yeomanry.¹⁶ Fears of other invasion plans remained current, and a run on the country banks led the Bank of England to restrict payments in cash. Yet it is an exaggeration to say, locally at least, that 'men flocked to the colours of the local volunteers'.¹⁷ Only one new corps was formed in Pembrokeshire that year, the Loyal Haverford West Fuzileers, but its officers' commissions were granted in February, too early for the corps to be seen as a response to the Fishguard landing. Throughout Wales, only six new infantry and three cavalry corps were formed, mostly on the southern and western coasts. The sixteen corps formed in Cornwall and Devon differed little from the pattern of preceding years, and tended to be on the southern coast in any case; only the Bideford Volunteers formed in June 1797 were near the area threatened earlier in the year. Nor did the English coastal counties generally appear to respond exceptionally to fears of French attack. Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex, for example, together formed only two infantry and two cavalry corps.

The naval mutinies of April and May 1797 at Spithead, Plymouth and the Nore in the Thames estuary seem to have had a more direct influence on volunteering than had the French landing in Pembrokeshire. Within two months of the settlement of the mutiny at Spithead, nine volunteer infantry corps had been formed on the Isle of Wight, where until then there had been none. In Hampshire, at least six corps were formed on the Solent coast in this period. However, in Kent, only two infantry corps were formed in the months following the Nore mutiny, at Ramsgate and Appledore, compared with three cavalry corps in February and March. No significant additional volunteering response to the mutinies is visible in the areas bordering the Thames estuary. The major naval ports of Rochester and Chatham acquired volunteer infantry corps only in April 1798. Yet if anything, the insurrectionary threat from the Nore mutiny had caused more concern than the

¹⁶E.H.Stuart Jones, *The Last Invasion of Britain*, (Cardiff, 1950), chapters II-IV.

¹⁷Clive Emsley, *British Society and the French Wars*, p.57.

earlier Spithead mutiny.¹⁸ The main reason for the difference in response between the two is likely to be that a substantial force already existed in Kent — at least eighteen corps at the beginning of 1797, sixteen of which had been formed in 1794 — while Hampshire had probably only eight corps, half of which were cavalry troops. New volunteer corps were only likely to be formed when existing associations or an augmentation of their establishments seemed unlikely to be sufficient to face the threat from France or when and where it seemed possible that regular forces either seemed unreliable or might be withdrawn in the case of invasion.

The revival of volunteering had a clear relationship with the levying of the new militias. Rather than being a direct consequence of the invasion and mutinies, the striking growth in volunteering from 1797 is instead clearly related to both the levying of the supplementary militia in England and Wales and the introduction of the militia in Scotland and the availability of new forms of association. Armed associations comprised a large proportion of the new corps; they attracted the participation of men who might not have joined the volunteers. The associations' conditions of service were less demanding, and allowed for service only in the corps' immediate locality. In Scotland, the numbers were so great as early as March 1797 the acceptance of volunteer corps was suspended until a general plan of defence for Scotland, which was to include the formation of a militia, had been settled.¹⁹ Even so, 52% of the counties forming more than the average number of infantry corps in 1797 were Scottish, whereas in the preceding two years, when only 71 corps had been formed, 39% were in Scotland. Many offers to form volunteer corps continued to be received, but some lieutenants of counties were reluctant to approve them in case they interfered with the recruitment of the militia. As a result, in 1798 Scottish counties represented only 18% of those forming more corps than the average.

Nonetheless, the concentration of volunteering in 1797 and 1798 does not rule out motives other than the fear of invasion and the avoidance of militia ballotting. Many associations were formed with a view to local policing considerations rather than national defensive concerns even though invasion or ballotting was often the immediate occasion for their formation. The Ely Loyal Association, formed in 1798, was concerned that an invasion would lead to the withdrawal of local military forces and leave the Isle defenceless;

¹⁸Roger Wells, *Insurrection The British Experience 1795-1803*, (Gloucester, 1983), p.89.

¹⁹National Library of Scotland, MS7 Melville Papers, f.150, R. Dundas to Henry Dundas, Arniston, 19 March 1797.

the food disorders in the district in 1795 were recalled, although they had prompted no volunteer activity at the time. 'Law and order' carried clear loyalist and, so John Cookson argues, anti-radical undertones: 'the Preservation of internal Tranquillity and the Maintenance of a proper Police' were accorded priority.²⁰

To summarise, three principal and closely related influences on the disposition of the volunteer force can be identified on the basis of the dates of the formation of corps and their geographical distribution: the militia, the invasion threat, and the state of local defences. Militia ballotting and other compulsory levies induced, and were sometimes designed to encourage, enrolments in volunteer corps which provided exemption from service. The apparent imminence of invasion was closely related to the enthusiasm shown for volunteering. Corps formed on the threatened coasts comprised a substantial proportion of the force, but their predominance was in part the result of official discouragement of volunteering inland, except for populous districts. A national view is perhaps misleading in any case. Individual corps formed not so much in direct response to the likelihood of invasion, but rather taking into account the defensive forces already available; corps tended to be organised with the intention of assuming the duties of regular forces in the expectation of their withdrawal.

Part Two: Localism

The variety represented by the volunteer force and the pressures that resulted in the formation of volunteer corps are most clearly evident at the local level. Comparison of the proportions of adult males of military age in each locality who joined volunteer corps reveals wide regional variation and a distinctly uneven distribution of corps throughout the country. This variation offers further evidence for the motivation for volunteering.

The volunteer force, as it was re-established in 1803, contained a wide variety of corps and incorporated considerable regional variation. Volunteer corps varied from a minimum establishment of forty cavalymen up to corps of more than a thousand men. The size of individual corps varied widely, from the 2484 men of the South Regiment of Devon Volunteers to the 24 men enrolled in the Norfolk Mounted Rifles in late 1803. Few corps had fewer than 40 men, and 42 had more than a thousand enrolled; ten of the latter

²⁰British Library, Add.MSS 35,670, f.69, Rev.C.Mules to Lord Hardwicke, 16 May 1798, quoted in John Cookson, 'Patriotism and Social Structure: the Ely Volunteers, 1798-1808', pp.2-3.

were 'legions', which combined infantry, cavalry and sometimes artillery. Companies of volunteer infantry were the most common, each comprising a captain, lieutenant, ensign, and between 50 and 100 private men, limits set by the terms of service of March 1803. Most corps comprised several companies, and those totalling more than 500 infantry or 300 cavalry were entitled to a permanent adjutant and sergeant-major.²¹ Adjutants and non-commissioned officers were entitled to permanent pay, and others to pay for exercises and when called on to active service. Most corps were entitled to allowances for clothing and contingencies, and were exempt some taxes and service in the militia and other auxiliary forces. The pay and allowances varied according to the time of the corps' foundation, and many corps had waived their rights to claim them.

Mounted volunteers were raised in troops of volunteer cavalry and of gentlemen and yeomanry cavalry, some of whom also formed dismounted companies. Exemption from the horse tax was allowed in return for providing a horse for the service; pay and allowances were offered, but not always claimed. A few corps of artillery volunteers were formed, and Sea Fencibles were considered part of the volunteer establishment. Occasionally, infantry, cavalry and artillery companies were combined in a single legion, usually very large and recruited in rural areas. Associated corps, both of infantry and of cavalry, raised from 1798 onwards, were distinguished from the volunteers and yeomanry by their narrower territorial bases of service and their ineligibility for official pay. Armed associations of infantry were intended to comprise between 60 and 120 men, and cavalry between 40 and 80 men, who were resident within the same division of the county as the association.²²

The volunteer movement, though on a national scale, was fundamentally a local affair. Its localism was one consequence of being predominantly an urban rather than a county based organisation, since urban corps could act without much reference to other areas, unlike corps organised on a wider scale. John Cookson argues that volunteering emphasised the autonomy and consequence of an urban community, enabling urban elites to act independently of the largely aristocratic county authorities.²³ The division was clearly evident from the beginning in the nature of the voluntary forces

²¹Philip J.Haythornthwaite, 'The Volunteer Force, 1803-04', pp.194-195; Cecil Sebag-Montefiore, *A History of the Volunteer Forces*, pp.89, 319.

²²Robert Potter Berry, *A History of the Formation and Development of The Volunteer Infantry*, p.65.

²³John Cookson, 'The English Volunteer Movement of the French Wars, 1793-1815: Some Contexts', pp.9-10.

raised. In general, county lieutenancies and defence committees encouraged the formation of small and easily managed troops of 'gentlemen and yeomen' cavalry under landed gentlemen; town-based volunteers tended to form large infantry corps commanded by prominent local businessmen or urban gentlemen, and not members of the large landowning country gentry. There were many exceptions to this pattern, most conspicuously the very large 'legions' formed by noblemen among their rural retainers. Yet it is difficult and potentially misleading to impose a strict division between urban and rural corps. Often a large proportion of the membership of nominally rural corps lived in substantial towns, not villages. The distinctive feature of such corps was not so much that their members lived in the countryside but that they came from a dispersed set of parishes. The allegiances of such corps consequently lay with their country gentlemen officers, and their loyalties to their locality or the county.²⁴

Even without taking into account their relative sizes, urban corps always outnumbered their rural counterparts, possibly by 96 to 32 by 1795. This urban dominance was reinforced by the government's invitation to form specifically urban armed associations in 1798, when two thirds of the new corps outside the south-west were based in towns, despite a restriction on infantry companies in the smaller inland towns. In 1803 the government appealed for the re-formation of corps in 'large and populous towns' which it claimed had been in general better trained and more useful. The revival of the volunteer force on an increased scale after the renewal of war was, however, characterised by a large number of small parish corps. Yet volunteer membership remained disproportionately urban. Outside London, 20% of the population of England and Wales in 1801, but about 30% of the volunteers of 1803–1804, lived in the 188 towns of more than 2500 inhabitants.²⁵

Volunteers in large counties were often dispersed in many, relatively small corps. In Aberdeenshire, for example, only five of the 31 corps in 1803 had more than eighty men; nineteen had sixty men each, and the remaining seven had eighty men each. The two Aberdeen corps between them represented nearly 40% of the county's 3400 volunteers. Smaller and more densely populated counties tended to organise their volunteers in a few large corps. A good example is Buckinghamshire, where in 1803 there were only three yeomanry and three infantry corps, organised as the Buckinghamshire Brigade

²⁴See PRO 30/26/94, Muncaster to Thos. Pierce, Muncaster House, 5 November 1804.

²⁵John Cookson, 'The English Volunteer Movement of the French Wars, 1793–1815: Some Contexts', pp.9–11.

with the lord lieutenant, the Marquis of Buckingham, as Colonel. The average membership of the six regiments was just under 600, but in practice they tended to meet as individual component companies of fifty to sixty cavalymen or eighty to ninety infantrymen, which was roughly comparable to other counties. Differing concentrations of volunteers usually, but not always, corresponded to population patterns.

Necessarily, most of the analysis of the volunteer force must concentrate on 1803. A parliamentary return was published in December giving details of nearly all known corps, their nominal and actual strengths, and their conditions of service. Though such information exists for scattered counties at other periods, for no other time is it possible to compile as comprehensive and detailed a picture of the volunteer force as for late 1803. The published returns show the force soon after its re-establishment and near its maximum size, so there must be some reservations to any conclusions drawn from its evidence alone.

The volunteers formed the largest single military organisation, comprising in 1803 perhaps nearly a fifth of the adult male civilian population. It is possible for the purposes of rough comparison of the proportions volunteering to use the figures published in abstract from the first official national census of 1801 and the totals of effective volunteers, as opposed to the fixed number of the establishment of the corps, returned to parliament in 1803.²⁶ Military age was defined by the Defence Act of 1803 to be from 18 to 45, and, although there is little information about the ages of volunteers, very few are known to have been outside these limits. One estimate of the male age distribution by back-projection has placed 37.4% of the male population in 1791 between the ages of twenty and fifty.²⁷ This can reasonably be taken as a rough guide to the number of adult males of military age, excluding those already in the army; a total of perhaps more than 1.8 million of the to-

²⁶ *Return, Presented to the House of Commons, In pursuance of an Order of 10th August 1803, of all Volunteer and Yeomanry Corps*; [House of Commons], *Abstract of the Answers and Returns Made pursuant to an Act, passed in the Forty-first Year of His Majesty King George III. Intituled, "An Act for taking an Account of the Population of Great Britain, and the Increase or Diminution thereof." Enumeration. Part I England and Wales. Part II Scotland*, ([London], 1802).

²⁷ W.A. Armstrong, 'La Population de l'Angleterre et du Pays de Galles (1789-1815)', *Annales de Demographie Historique*, 1965, Tableau 5, p.140; E.A. Wrigley and R.S. Schofield, *The Population History of England 1541-1871 A reconstruction*, (London, 1981), Appendix 3, Table A3.1, p.529, place 37.60% of the total population in the 'adulthood' age range of 25 to 59 (see also p.216). This age category is less useful because of the apparently significant number of volunteers under the age of 25.

tal male population of 4,979,694 reported in the census of 1801. The census total excludes men in the army, navy and merchant marine, an additional 263,635 for England and Wales alone.²⁸ The volunteers represented a national average of 18.4% of the adult male civilian population thus defined. The proportion was slightly lower in England, at 18.1%, and slightly higher in Wales and Scotland, at 19.2% and 19.7% respectively. In England and Scotland, around two thirds of the counties fell below this average, although there were eight counties with more than 26% of adult males as volunteers.

The force, as it existed in 1803, was not geographically homogeneous. The north of Scotland and the south-west of England show a high proportion of volunteers to the overall population, while the north-west of England and even parts of the south coast had a surprisingly low proportion of volunteers. Striking differences between counties emerge when the proportions of the adult male population involved in volunteering are compared. In general, there appears to be no consistent pattern to the numbers of men volunteering at parish, hundred or county level. In all cases there were wide variations in the proportion of infantry and cavalry volunteers to the total adult male population, excluding men already in the army, navy or regular militia. The county totals show unexpectedly high proportions of volunteers in the Scottish highlands, eastern Wales and the west country, as well as unusually low proportions in the northern English counties. Yet these comparisons fail to convey an accurate picture of the great differences in scale between the counties. Despite its high rate of participation, Flintshire had only 26 infantry and six cavalry companies; Dorset, with a strikingly low 12% of adult males volunteers, had 28 infantry and seven cavalry. London and Westminster alone had 266 infantry companies, fourteen more than all of Wales and Monmouthshire; the numbers of men in each company was roughly comparable.²⁹

In the south-eastern and coastal counties most exposed to invasion, volunteer corps were formed by 1803 in nearly all the ports and larger towns, and often in the rural areas immediately adjacent. In nearly all cases, though, the number of parishes where volunteers were found was only a small proportion of the entire county. London, Middlesex and the Tower Hamlets were an exception in having a very comprehensive coverage of corps. Even so, there were no volunteer corps west of Ealing and Isleworth other

²⁸E.A.Wrigley and R.S.Schofield, *The Population History of England*, Appendix 6, p.592.

²⁹Calculations from *Return, Presented to the House of Commons, In pursuance of an Order of 10th August 1803, of all Volunteer and Yeomanry Corps*.

than at Uxbridge and Spelthorne. The importance of the defence of London greatly influenced the disposition of the volunteer forces in the neighbouring counties to the east and south. A cluster of thirteen parishes on the south-east of Essex, bordering on Middlesex, formed corps. In contrast, volunteer corps were almost completely absent in the large and thinly-populated area south and east of Chelmsford; no corps existed anywhere on the Thames estuary or channel coast from Dagenham to Bradwell-on-Sea. Corps were instead based on major towns, in the vicinity of Chelmsford, Ipswich and Colchester. Similarly, Kent had a cluster of volunteer corps in the area closest to London, and other major concentrations around Rochester and the channel ports. The south-west of the county was initially almost entirely inactive, towns like Maidstone, Tonbridge and Sevenoaks having no corps by the end of 1803. More surprisingly, no corps then existed on the southern coast between Lydd and Dover, including the ports of Romney, Hythe and Folkestone. Elsewhere on the south coast, the disposition of volunteer corps reflected their primary concerns: to defend the coast and assist in its evacuation. In Sussex, one small cavalry unit was named appropriately the Corps of Guides.

The larger infantry corps were often organised on a regional basis. Each of the coastal rapes in Sussex had a large infantry regiment, the South Pevensey being the largest with an establishment of 840 in 1803. The arrangement left some coastal towns like Shoreham, Winchelsea and Seaford without corps specifically committed to their defence. Five others, including Brighton, Newhaven and Eastbourne, had only a volunteer artillery company. In Hampshire, volunteer corps were overwhelmingly concentrated on the coast and the Solent, but further west the pattern was much less comprehensive. Only three companies of infantry were formed on the entire Dorset coast, none with more than 100 members in 1803. Further inland, similarly small corps were formed in the principal towns, but there were no large regional units other than the single county yeomanry corps. Cornwall, also with a comparatively small population, developed a similar pattern of dispersed corps in individual towns. Although these corps generally were much larger than those in Devon, eleven of the 29 exceeding 300 members, some major towns like Bodmin, Lostwithiel and Liskeard were unrepresented in 1803. In the more populous Devon, volunteer corps based on towns and hundreds formed a striking agglomeration in the eastern third of the county. Along the southern coast and its hinterland from Axminster to Torbay, very few parishes had not raised corps by 1803. Conversely, north of Crediton and Tiverton, no corps existed other than 420 infantrymen at Barnstaple.

The north Devon and Somerset coast, including Bideford, Ilfracombe, Torrington, Porlock and Dunster, had no volunteers at this time.

In the eastern English coastal counties, volunteer companies were in comparison more widely dispersed, in each of the principal towns and on those towns on the main roads. No large concentration of volunteers in coastal parishes, as in Kent or Devon, was created, largely because there were few major ports on the coasts of Suffolk, Norfolk and Lincolnshire. Further inland, in east Anglia and the midlands, volunteer corps tended to be concentrated around the county town and the other large towns on major communication routes. Nottinghamshire was a typical example; all but four of its 22 corps were confined to the vicinity of the larger towns: Nottingham, Bunny, Southwell, Newark, Mansfield, Worksop and Retford. The predominance of urban corps was more marked in the north of England. In the West Riding of Yorkshire, Halifax, Bradford, Leeds, Wakefield, Sheffield, Rotherham, Doncaster and their vicinities dominated almost to the exclusion of the north of the riding. Predominantly rural counties were sparsely represented: apart from two large rural associations combining infantry and cavalry, there were no volunteers in Northumberland between Berwick in the far north and Hexham and Newcastle in the far south of the county. Similarly, the great majority of volunteers in County Durham in 1803 were concentrated in or near Gateshead, South Shields, Sunderland, Darlington and the city of Durham, to the neglect of significant ports and market towns like Hartlepool, Stockton-on-Tees, Bishop Auckland or Barnard Castle.

The clustered pattern of volunteering is well illustrated by the relative proportions of volunteers to the adult male population. Densely populated areas do not appear to have given rise to disproportionate numbers of volunteers despite the government's advocacy of large corps in populous urban areas. Rather, a district's exposure to invasion, isolation or state of regular defences had a more obvious relationship with the level of volunteering. Participation rates tended to be highest in rural parishes and lowest in large urban centres and manufacturing areas.³⁰ High proportions of volunteers were found in the southern coastal counties, with the notable exception of Dorset. There 12% of the adult males were volunteers, contrasting with 26% in Devon and 24% in Hampshire, and comparable rates throughout the south coast. Most of the east coast, in comparison, was below the average level of participation; only Suffolk and Lincolnshire exceeded it with 19% and 21% respectively. The whole area from east Anglia westward through

³⁰ John Cookson, 'Patriotism and Social Structure: the Ely Volunteers, 1798-1808', p.9.

the Thames valley and the south midlands to Herefordshire was generally one of slightly less than average participation. Notably low proportions of volunteers were to be found in some of the areas of highest population concentration and urbanisation: below 14% in the West Riding, Lancashire, Staffordshire and Warwickshire.³¹ The least active area of all was the west of Wales, only 7% of adult males volunteering in Cardiganshire. In contrast, south Wales and the northern coast were areas of high participation. Not surprisingly in view of the French landing in 1797, Pembrokeshire produced 23%, but the much less populous Radnorshire had 29%, and Flintshire 37%, volunteers.

Scotland in general lacked the variation in levels of participation that characterised England and Wales. Nevertheless five of the eight districts of the highest level of participation, with more than 26% involved, were in Scotland. Edinburgh, Midlothian and Peebles together had an average of one in three adult males in volunteer corps. Inverness, Sutherland, Cromarty and Caithness similarly were very active, the latter with 35% volunteering. The level of participation in volunteering in Scotland had more to do with the dispersal of population than it did elsewhere. The less populous counties tended to form corps centred on the major towns, but their small size alone did not dictate a high level of participation. Buteshire, with a total male population of only 5552, had ninety volunteers, the fewest of any county. Yet Peebles, with an even smaller male population of 4160, had 532 volunteers in 1803.

The wide regional variation in volunteering was in part symptomatic of the highly uneven distribution of volunteers within the counties. Corps tended to be clustered in relatively small areas of each county, which made the participation rate in some places remarkably high, while other districts had no volunteers. If the numbers in each hundred, rape or other subdivision of the county are considered in order to account for those volunteers from outside the parish but living in the district, a roughly consistent pattern emerges of about a quarter of adult males being involved in volunteering where a corps existed. In most cases it is possible to identify corps with specific localities, either at the parish, township or hundred level, since most took their name from the town, parish or division in which they were raised. Many corps required members to be resident in the immediate vicinity, so the geography of volunteering can be known fairly precisely. The 'catch-

³¹ W.A. Armstrong, 'La Population de l'Angleterre et du Pays de Galles', pp.142-3, 147, Tableau 8.

ment' area was typically about four miles around.³² Membership of the Old Buckenham Loyal Volunteers, for instance, was restricted to gentlemen and yeomen of Old Buckenham and adjacent towns in Norfolk.³³

In a few places, the number of volunteers almost reached the total adult male population of the parish in which they nominally were raised. In Tetbury, for example, 350 men offered their services in 1803, which was said to be almost all the inhabitants aged between 17 and 55, and compares with the militia quota of 11.³⁴ At Holdsworth in Devon, 480 men volunteered in 1803 in a parish with a total male population, in 1801, of 505. However, these totals almost certainly include men from neighbouring parishes, and only a proportion were likely to be selected to serve in the corps. These proportions were in any case exceptional — 60% or less of the adult males volunteered in 33 of the 45 parishes and towns in Devon for which population figures can be compared with the numbers volunteering, which represents 65% of the county's volunteers.³⁵ Within the county, the proportions in each parish volunteering varied widely, from 21% in Totnes to 90% in Lamerton, and included six corps, the membership of which exceeded the immediate parochial adult male population. Clearly, a comparison of parishes alone gives a highly misleading impression of the geographical concentration of volunteering.

Since volunteers, if not actually resident within their corps' eponymous parish, were almost always required to reside in the immediate vicinity, comparison of their numbers within each hundred or other broad administrative division should counteract most of the difficulties inherent in considering only parish totals. The usefulness of a comparison of participation levels between hundreds is however limited by the unsuitability of some corps and counties to this form of analysis. Aside from those counties where all the volunteers were organised on a county or regional basis, many other counties had a significant number of volunteers in corps organised on a regional scale, like the Percy Tenantry Volunteers. The number of counties where

³² John Cookson, 'Patriotism and Social Structure: the Ely Volunteers, 1798-1808', p.9.

³³ Norfolk Record Office, MS 5363, Townshend MSS, Old Buckenham resolutions, 23 April 1798.

³⁴ Gloucestershire Record Office, D566 Z13, Tetbury Volunteers, J.Saunders, 15 August 1803.

³⁵ Calculations from: *Return, Presented to the House of Commons, In pursuance of an Order of 10th August 1803, of all Volunteer and Yeomanry Corps*; [House of Commons], *Abstract of the Answers and Returns Made pursuant to an Act, ... Intituled, "An Act for taking an Account of the Population of Great Britain, and the Increase or Diminution thereof."*

all corps can confidently be assigned to particular administrative divisions is sufficiently small as to limit the representativeness of the sample.

Applied to Devon, this approach produces comparatively consistent proportions of volunteers in each hundred. An average of 25% of the male population was in some form of volunteer corps in the twenty of the 33 hundreds of Devon that had any corps at all in 1803. Only four hundreds fell outside the range 15% to 30%, of which the highest proportion was 61%, in Tavistock hundred in the west of the county. Since these figures represent only the 65% of volunteers whose corps can be identified with a specific parish or hundred, it is likely that an average of nearer to 40% of the adult male population, in those hundreds that were active, were volunteers.

This pattern of localised participation appears to have been the case in many other areas. In Gloucestershire, a county with slightly below the national average proportion of volunteers, at 16%, the proportion in the hundreds that actually produced volunteers was very close to the proportions in Devon hundreds. Corps were formed in sixteen of the 31 hundreds and towns in Gloucestershire; 92% of volunteers can be identified with a specific hundred. In these sixteen hundreds, an average of 27% of the adult male population were members of a volunteer or yeomanry corps. Again, this average disguises considerable variation, from 11% in the parish of Westbury on Severn to 60% participation in the town of Cirencester. Moreover, in Cambridgeshire, the proportion of volunteers in participating hundreds remained comparable to the other counties, at 23%, despite its relatively low population and the overall participation level of 16% being even lower than that in Gloucestershire and around only 60% of the level in Devon. All the Cambridgeshire infantry and yeomanry corps can be assigned to eleven of the sixteen administrative divisions of the county. Similarly, the average masks large variations in participation; in Flendish hundred, east of Cambridge, possibly 96% of males aged twenty to fifty who were not already in the regular forces, were members of volunteer corps. Such concentrations were highly localised: Isleham enrolled 139 volunteers out of 145 men liable for military service, while nearby Littleport and Downham provided none.³⁶

A similar level of participation is found in the active wards of County Durham; an average of 22% in five of the eight wards and towns, although only 73% of the volunteers could positively be identified with particular wards. The geographical imbalance there was one of the more significant: slightly less than 40% of these infantry and cavalry volunteers were in Sun-

³⁶John Cookson, 'Patriotism and Social Structure: the Ely Volunteers, 1798-1808', p.9.

derland and the city of Durham. Sussex, however, where volunteer and yeomanry corps were formed in all six rapes, and where the overall ratio of volunteers to adult males was 21% compared to Durham's 16%, still had a comparable average proportion of volunteers within each rape, at 23%.

This apparent overall consistency of the level of volunteering in individual localities at around a quarter of adult males is, however, upset by the pattern of the Welsh and Scottish counties. In Pembrokeshire, the average proportion of adult males volunteering in the four of the eight hundreds where corps were formed was 38%, although the overall proportion for the county was less than that of Devon, at 23%; in Flintshire, the hundred and county proportions were 37% and 36% respectively. Similarly, in Aberdeenshire, where corps were formed in six of the eight divisions, the average participation in those hundreds, 16%, was close to the county average of 17%.

Nevertheless, the relatively consistent average proportion of volunteers in English hundreds, although disguising wide variation, probably reflects the indirect regulation of volunteering in terms of county population. The county volunteer force was limited to six times the size of the regular militia, the size of which was in turn determined by the estimated population of the county. Only reluctantly were volunteer numbers allowed to exceed the county quotas, additional men being accepted as supernumeraries. Because of the large number of proposals for armed associations, Henry Dundas issued instructions in May 1798 to the lieutenancies to refuse new offers when forces were already considered adequate. Proposals for associations from inland towns of fewer than 2000 inhabitants, or made on limited conditions, were rejected. Lords lieutenant tended not to propose any further corps once the county quota had been reached. It is therefore more significant when the county's proportion of volunteers is substantially below the national average than when it is above average, for the latter may indicate merely that the lieutenancy was more willing than most to favour supernumary corps, although offers were probably made in other counties that do not appear to have been as active.

This localised clustering of many of the volunteer forces points to an essential characteristic of volunteering: infantry and yeomanry corps were often formed in response to similar activity nearby or as a result of consultation between neighbours, and seldom as a geographically inspecific response to a request for men from the government or county lieutenancy.

The timing and distribution of volunteering strongly suggests that it was predominantly a response to the threat of invasion and strongly influenced

by the contemporaneous raising of additional defensive forces, and not to any great extent a consequence of political considerations. It is difficult to explain why corps were formed or failed to be formed in particular localities at particular times. In each case, a mixture of motives was responsible, which in general gave most weight to the apparent danger of invasion and the likelihood of removal of regular troops, if these were already present. Second, the imminence of balloting for the regular or supplementary militia was a strong stimulant to voluntary enrolment to avoid the compulsory service. Third, volunteer corps were formed to help preserve internal order. That the disorder anticipated was that which would result from an invasion, not that allegedly planned by seditious political societies, is strongly suggested by the foundation of corps predominantly during invasion crises. Although seditious activity might be expected during an invasion, the places and timing of volunteering do not in general coincide with reformist activity, like the agitation over the two bills in late 1795. It is therefore fairest to characterise the volunteers as an anti-invasion and peace-keeping force, not as an anti-revolutionary force.

This picture may be modified by an examination of the individuals and organisations involved in organising and raising volunteer corps, some of whom had clear political considerations in mind. In the next section, the ways in which corps were raised, and who was involved in organising them will be examined, and the system of their administration at the local and national levels will be outlined. Then in the following chapters the individuals themselves who belonged to the force will be investigated, with their political and religious allegiances, and their motives for becoming volunteers.

Part Three: The Volunteer 'System'

Much of the regional variety in volunteering can better be understood when the organisation of the 'system' and the manner in which individual corps were raised is taken into account. Though appearing from the perspective of national defence to be an homogeneous organisation, the volunteer 'force' was in practice only a loose organisation of varied and disparate associations. The force was characterised by a mixture of central direction and independent local initiative. The volunteers were organised on three levels, at the level of individual corps, within counties by the lords lieutenant and county committees, and nationally by the Home Office. Apart from local co-operation in ceremonial and peace-keeping duties, there was little co-ordination between individual, independent corps other than that imposed

by the national and county administrations. Initially, central authority was relatively weakly exercised over corps raised on local initiative, which were self-governing and partially self-financed, and were not in general subject to military regulation or discipline. Volunteer autonomy was gradually restricted, and central control over the organisation of volunteers gradually extended, until by the time of the Volunteer Consolidation Act of 1804 it was possible to identify a coherent single volunteer 'system'.

The primary consequence of the variety of corps was that the volunteer force had more the appearance of a spontaneous popular movement than of a regularly-organised system. This variety will be examined by setting out the ways in which corps were raised, who was responsible, and with what results. The means by which official sanction for the formation of a corps was obtained will be set out first, and then the way in which several counties tried to control and direct volunteering centrally will be considered. It will be shown that although county committees and lords lieutenant were able to encourage or stifle the formation of corps, much remained dependent on local initiative. The principal ways in which the volunteers were raised are then outlined: corporate organisations which requisitioned the service of their members or employees, parochial bodies which invited enrolment at public meetings, and individuals or groups of gentlemen who raised volunteers from among their dependents and connections. The resulting corps will be contrasted: relatively small companies, often of cavalry, were formed by rural gentry, while large urban infantry corps typically resulted from public meetings called by parochial or municipal authorities or groups of local gentlemen.

The volunteers occupied an anomalous position as a military force under civilian control and largely free from military direction and discipline. The volunteer system was administered by the Home Office, and briefly by the War Office, working through the lords lieutenant and deputy lieutenants in each county.³⁷ The War Office was to assume control in the event of an invasion or the appearance of an invasion force, when the volunteers were to be placed under the authority of the general officers commanding the military districts. Arms were supplied by the Ordnance Office and pay was authorised by the War Office, but most other volunteer business was the responsibility of the Home Office. In 1803, Inspecting Field Officers seconded from the regular army were appointed to inspect volunteer training and exercises and report regularly on the condition of corps to the general

³⁷J.W.Fortescue, *The County Lieutenancies and the Army*, p.67.

officers.³⁸

The anomalous position of a military organisation under civilian control led to some difficulties in practice. Volunteers could be requested, though not ordered, on to service by a magistrate or the lord lieutenant. Except during an invasion, volunteers were not authorised to act at the requisition of military commanders even when they were willing to do so. Nor until 1804 were volunteers generally required to take an oath of loyalty. Many of the regulations to which the regular and the other auxiliary forces were subject applied to the volunteers only when they were embodied on permanent duty, either to repel an invasion, or, as in practice, for the suppression of riots and for exercise. Only then were volunteers eligible for pay at the same rates as the regular forces and subject to the Mutiny Act and the Articles of War and attendant military punishments. Courts-Martial were composed of volunteer officers only. Officers disabled on service were entitled to half-pay, and the other ranks eligible for Chelsea Hospital; officers' widows received a life pension. When not on service, volunteers were free to resign, subject to restrictions and financial penalties decided by their corps.³⁹

Before volunteers could be issued with arms and equipment and officers' commissions gazetted, all prospective corps had to be proposed to the lord lieutenant. Officers tended to be either the men who had instigated and raised the corps, prominent local gentlemen, or were elected from among the members of the corps. In most cases, the lord lieutenant was presented with a list of officers *fait accompli*, which he was asked to submit to the crown for approval. If he approved, details were sent to the Home Office which transmitted the proposed names to the Commander-in-Chief for his approval, and the commissions were confirmed by the King. Lords lieutenant were empowered to grant commissions in the King's name.⁴⁰

Proposals were very rarely rejected, apparently because unacceptable offers seldom reached further than the lords lieutenant. In effect, nearly all the screening of proposals was performed by the lieutenancy. Offers rejected by the Home Office tended to be those that proposed unusually restricted terms of service, or those that exceeded the quota for the county, and were not rejected because the proposed volunteers were thought untrustworthy.⁴¹

³⁸ Cecil Sebag-Montefiore, *A History of the Volunteer Forces*, p.300.

³⁹ *The Statutes at Large*, Vol.16, pp.522-523, 34 Georgii III c.XXXI.

⁴⁰ HO 50/5, Commander-in-Chief's correspondence, 1796, *passim*; Norfolk Record Office, MS 5363, Townshend Correspondence, unsigned draft letter, 1 June 1798; Berkshire Record Office, D/ERa 011, Royal warrant to Earl of Radnor, 22 May 1804.

⁴¹ See for example Hereford and Worcester Record Office, BA 2868/4 705:73, Henry

The lords lieutenant principally gave their attention to the selection of respectable gentlemen as officers, and the Home Office generally was content to trust in the lieutenants' judgement. Largely for this reason, landed gentlemen tended to propose a volunteer or yeomanry company in abstract to the county lieutenancy for approval before any recruits had been gathered, whereas units organised by corporate organisations or committees nearly always sought official sanction after the corps had been raised and officers selected. There was widespread ignorance of the official processes required to form a corps. In the early stages, some even assumed that no official sanction was necessary if the corps did not intend to claim government allowances or arms.

Overall, the force has more the appearance of a spontaneous popular movement than one imposed by central direction. Though the central government set the guidelines for volunteer service and granted approval for the formation of corps, the actual raising of volunteers was largely undertaken on local initiative. The county committees for internal defence, set up in 1794, decided the priorities for local forces and allocated the county subscriptions, but did not themselves raise corps. When known, the origins of nearly all corps can be traced, not surprisingly, to an individual or a small group who publicised their aims and invited enrolments and subscriptions. They then called public meetings to gauge likely support and to fix the regulations and raise a subscription. If sufficient support were forthcoming, the proposals were presented through the lord lieutenant to the Home Office. Offers of volunteer service were invited, and enrolment books made available in public places for men to come forward. The public expression of loyalty had two aspects; most propertied men were not expected to volunteer themselves, but were instead expected to contribute to the county subscription, as did some independent women. This process differed significantly from that adopted by military bodies, which were actively recruited by ballot, bounties or recruiting parties.

In most counties, defence committees were established by the lieutenancy and grand jury, in response to the March 1794 circular letter which invited volunteers and subscriptions, in order to manage and distribute the county subscriptions and to supervise the creation of voluntary corps and the augmentation of the militia. The organisation of the proposed volunteers was normally decided at county meetings, which set out the types of forces that

Dundas to Coventry, 18 May 1798; HO 50/44, J. Matthews, Belmont near Hereford, 12 August 1798.

were likely to be acceptable, but the actual organisation and location of corps was often left to local initiative. Aside from the general emphasis on urban and coastal corps, many of the differences in the number and distribution of volunteers can be attributed to differences in the approach of county authorities to the matter. The comprehensive organisation of volunteer and yeomanry corps in Hampshire and Buckinghamshire, for example, was principally due to thorough centralised county co-ordination.

Hampshire provides a particularly well-documented example of the mixture of central direction and independent local initiative that characterised volunteering. There, the High Sheriff called a county meeting of the nobility, gentry, clergy and freeholders in April 1794 in response to the government's invitation to form voluntary companies to augment the militia. As was the case with all county subscriptions, the application of the money raised was decided locally, not by the central government. A subscription was already in existence for assisting government measures for defence against invasion and domestic tumult, with the provision that these be legal and constitutional.⁴² A further subscription was raised and a committee of the largest subscribers decided itself how the money was to be allocated.

The general meeting set up sub-committees of subscribers in thirteen of the principal towns in Hampshire, which were to correspond with the general committee in Winchester. The general committee decided that its priority was to add one fifth to the total of private soldiers in the militia. The second application of the county fund was to enable individuals to raise bodies of cavalry, and the third to form volunteer companies for local defence in coastal towns.⁴³ A similar route was followed in Buckinghamshire, where a county meeting organised a general framework into which individual volunteer corps could be integrated. Following the lines of the Marquis of Buckingham's suggestions to the government, it was decided to invite individual offers from troops of cavalry formed by gentlemen, yeomen and the substantial inhabitants of various neighbourhoods, to be attached to a single general Armed Yeomanry of the county, under the command of Buckingham as lord lieutenant.⁴⁴ Again, a committee of the substantial subscribers was given wide powers to arrange measures for the force to preserve domestic

⁴²Hampshire Record Office, 65 M 85/1, 9 April 1794.

⁴³Hampshire Record Office, 65 M 85/1, Defence 1794.

⁴⁴Buckinghamshire Record Office, L/P:5/2, printed notice, Charles Clowes, Sheriff, Iver, 16 April 1794; L/P:5/3, printed resolutions of General Meeting, 3 May 1794; L/S.2, Bucks Armed Yeomanry Subscription Book.

tranquillity and resist invasion.⁴⁵ On a smaller scale, the Staffordshire committee divided the county into six districts, each to provide fifty-six men for the Staffordshire Volunteer Cavalry.⁴⁶ Centralised planning of cavalry troops was more common than co-ordination of infantry corps, because of their size and scattered nature.

Other county defence committees often accorded priority in the allocation of county subscription funds to yeomanry troops; many infantry corps received no external aid other than official allowances, funding themselves by local subscriptions. The Lincolnshire subscription raised more than £14,000, but the committee funded only yeomanry troops. It has been argued that the funding of the yeomanry, as the force most closely identified with the gentry's county loyalties, rural background and concern for order, is symptomatic of the tension between county and urban leaderships.⁴⁷ Yet the favour shown to cavalry troops may partly be explained by the difficulty encountered by small rural cavalry troops in raising subscriptions in comparison to urban based corps.

Even in counties with comprehensive central planning of volunteer forces, the numbers and distribution of volunteers was to a large extent dependent on the willingness of individuals to offer their services. County committees could not normally direct, as they could with the augmentation of the militia, the numbers to be raised in each area of the county. Instead, the committees tried to control the formation and likely survival of corps by the allocation of subscription funds.

In Hampshire, offers of corps seem largely to have been elicited by the general committee and the local sub-committees, some of whom offered to form volunteer corps themselves.⁴⁸ Lieutenancy officials probably could also be relied upon to promote volunteering in their localities; several became volunteer officers. In general, however, such offers were made by individuals to the committees. The support of volunteer corps soon became a much greater expense than the committee's priority, the voluntary augmentation of the militia. In July 1796, £1755/12/6 was awarded to the latter, while

⁴⁵Buckinghamshire Record Office, L/P:5/2, 16 April 1794; L/P:5/3, 3 May 1794; L/S.2 Bucks Armed Yeomanry Subscription Book, 3 May 1794.

⁴⁶Staffordshire Record Office, D1300/5/1, Staffordshire Volunteer Cavalry. Meeting of Committee, Swan Inn, Stafford, 8 August 1794.

⁴⁷John Cookson, 'The English Volunteer Movement of the French Wars, 1793-1815: Some Contexts', p.14; See for example, HO 50/342, Terms and Regulations for raising A Body or Bodies of Cavalry in the County Oxford for the Internal Defence of the Kingdom, 5 April 1794. (printed sheet).

⁴⁸Hampshire Record Office, 65 M 85/1, 19 April 1794.

£5147/19/3 went to seven volunteer and yeomanry companies. The Hampshire General Committee for Internal Defence in April 1794 requested its sub-committees at Lymington and Christchurch to form volunteer corps, and agreed to pay their expenses.⁴⁹ Offers of corps could be managed, and it is probable that the proposals of the two local members of parliament, Charles Shaw Lefevre and George Henry Rose, to raise two troops of yeomanry cavalry were prompted by the Hampshire committee. Rose, Pittite member of parliament for Southampton since August 1794, offered in January 1795 to raise a cavalry troop within Christchurch and its neighbourhood, and the general committee advanced £300 towards defraying its expenses.⁵⁰

The organisation of volunteering is unusually well documented in Hampshire, but similar county organisation seems to have been adopted in other, particularly the coastal, counties. Yet central direction was only one part of the process of raising volunteers; most of the business of forming corps was conducted at the local level.

Just as the nature of the force was determined by private initiative, the form of a corps was often dependent on the manner in which it was raised. Individual volunteer associations were in general formed in two ways, by individuals or by parochial or corporate organisations. Most frequently, an individual or group of gentlemen proposed to raise a corps from among the local inhabitants — their neighbours, friends or dependents — often on the understanding that the instigators were to become the officers. Alternatively, corporate bodies, whether parish vestries, commercial or manufacturing companies, or government departments, might offer to raise a corps from among their own members, employees or servants. In each case, regulations could be framed and enrolments invited either by the instigators alone or by a public meeting. The method adopted often depended on the planned size of the corps, whether infantry or cavalry, whether its intended membership was predominantly urban or rural, and the sort of men wanted. Rural associations tended to be raised by an individual landowner or a group of local gentlemen, while predominantly town-based corps in general were organised by parish vestries or other corporate bodies. Individual landowners or groups of gentlemen tended to form small, personal troops, often of cavalry; official or corporate organisations formed infantry corps for specific, limited tasks, while general public meetings called by magistrates often led to the

⁴⁹Hampshire Record Office, 65 M 85/1, 7 July 1796, 19 April 1794.

⁵⁰Hampshire Record Office, 65 M 85/1, 13 January 1795.

formation of relatively large urban infantry corps. Organisational preparations for rural corps often were made before enrolments were solicited; in towns, the decision to form a corps and the details of its organisation were left to public meetings and committees appointed by those meetings.

Proposals to form associations by corporate bodies not surprisingly were mainly confined to large towns. In small boroughs, the municipal authorities often took the lead; in larger towns, associations were organised by parishes and, in London, also by wards. In the capital, public and official bodies were active in organising associations of their officials and servants for the defence of their own institutions. The Bank of England, Trinity House, Somerset House and the Customs and Excise departments each formed its own volunteer corps from among its servants and officials. These corps engaged on much more limited terms than most others, but to criticise the Somerset House Volunteers, which was liable to serve only for the defence of the government offices in Somerset House, as a 'rather pathetic but very ridiculous case' is to misinterpret its purpose.⁵¹ Such corps were intended as permanent guards for strategically vital institutions or departments against the possibility of an invading force reaching the capital, or an insurrection on the pattern of 1780. The Excise Department volunteers were, like the peacetime regular army, expected to help maintain the security of the Revenue; several of its servants serving in other metropolitan corps were required to transfer to the Excise corps in 1803 for this reason and for the better discharge of their civil duties.⁵² More than 500 clerks of the Bank were enrolled for its defence in May 1798 on the suggestion of its governor. The field officers and captains were chosen from the directors; the porters were employed as pike-men.⁵³

Parochial or municipal authorities often took the lead in organising volunteering, but did so by calling public meetings to frame resolutions and invite enrolments and subscriptions. At King's Lynn in April 1794 the mayor, Edward Everard, submitted to a meeting of the inhabitants a plan for an association on the lines proposed by the government. He proposed a subscription both for an association to defend the town against invasion and to suppress riots, and for a volunteer corps to be formed on the terms of the recent act of 17 April.⁵⁴ Everard was made commander of what became

⁵¹ J.W. Fortescue, *The County Lieutenancies and the Army*, p.218.

⁵² HO 51/120, ff.37-38, C.Yorke, 29 October 1803, (circular).

⁵³ W.Marston Acres, *The Bank of England from Within 1694-1900*, (London, 1931), pp.291, 294.

⁵⁴ Norfolk Record Office, MS 2658, Townshend Correspondence, Samuel Baker [to Mar-

the Lynn Loyal Volunteers. When the corps offered to serve anywhere in the Eastern military district in 1798, the then mayor, John Cary, called a further meeting to consider local defence. He decided to form an armed association for local defence, the preservation of internal tranquillity and maintenance of police in the borough. Its members were to act as infantry, artillery, and occasionally as sea fencibles in armed boats. Their area of service was confined to the immediate vicinity of the borough.⁵⁵ Many small corps, and especially armed associations, were organised by vestries or other parochial committees; volunteering was considered to be part of the parish business. Clergymen not surprisingly assumed influential roles. The parish superintendent seems to have been responsible for calling a public meeting in the vestry of St. Anne's, Soho, in August 1803. The vicar, Joseph Jefferson, became a chairman of the committee appointed to raise and discipline a corps.⁵⁶

In general, once the decision had been taken to raise a corps and resolutions for its management had been drawn up, subscription books were kept in public buildings and committee members attended at advertised times to take enrolments. Membership of a corps was often divided into two classes: those who subscribed for the financial support of the corps, and those who were its active military members. In some instances, potential public reaction was tested before a corps was proposed. In early August 1803, the publication of a series of posters and handbills warning in lurid terms of the threat from France and the necessity of unity in the common defence was organised in Ealing. This campaign culminated in a public meeting at the chapel in Old Brentford to consider forming a voluntary armed association in the area of Ealing, Hanwell and Brentford.⁵⁷

The decision to form a corps seems to have been influenced less by central direction by county defence committees than the example of comparable or neighbouring towns or parishes, or that of friends or neighbours, which appear to have been a major determinant in the clustered geographical pattern of volunteer corps. The mayor of Richmond in Yorkshire explained in June

quis Townshend], Lynn, 22 April 1794; Borough of King's-Lynn, Norfolk, Meeting of Mayor and other inhabitants at the Guildhall, 21 April 1794.

⁵⁵Norfolk Record Office, MS 2658, Townshend Correspondence, Jn. Cary, Mayor, [to Marquis Townshend], Lynn, 11 May 1798.

⁵⁶Westminster City Library, St. Anne's Soho, A2303/12, pp.1-2; A2303/14, pp.1-3; A2303/9; A2301 St. Anne's Volunteers 1803, ff.2-3.

⁵⁷National Army Museum, 7805-72, Ealing and Brentford Volunteers: ff.34, 'British Bravery!!', 4 August 1803; f.35, (untitled), 2 August 1803; f.36, 'Short Advice', [n.d.]; f.37, 'VOLUNTARY Armed Association', 4 August 1803.

1794 that neither men nor a subscription had yet been raised there because there appeared to have been no idle discontented men to pose a threat to order. The example of Leeds rather than the threat of disorder had prompted the respectable inhabitants of Richmond to propose a corps of 60 or 100 men for self defence.⁵⁸ Direct evidence for the process of formation of corps in contiguous parishes is rare, though most associations followed the mode of organisation of existing corps to ensure acceptance and success. When a group of farmers in the neighbourhood of Eccles in Norfolk associated to form cavalry corps for local defence and to aid the civil authorities in May 1798, they avowedly based their plans on that formed for the villages near Bury St. Edmunds and also adopted at Botesdale. In response to the rejection of their proposals, the Eccles associators alluded to having compared the various types of association already established, before forming their plans.⁵⁹ Corps raised on private initiative tend to fall into two broad types, those planned and recruited by an individual or group of gentlemen, and those organised by a public meeting and an elected committee.

Corps raised by individual gentlemen tended to be small and rural cavalry troops.⁶⁰ Typically, the instigator's brothers, sons or neighbours would take the subaltern commissions and recruit the troop among their tenantry. Influential gentlemen would seek the support of fellow landowners in raising men. The Marquis of Buckingham asked a neighbouring landowner Sir William Lee in May 1794 to notify those of his friends or tenantry who might be inclined to enrol in the armed yeomanry that his brother Thomas Grenville would be receiving enrolments for his troop early the following month at Aylesbury.⁶¹

Often the proposal to form a corps took the form of a set of resolutions, presented to the lord lieutenant by a chairman who usually became the commanding officer, and in many cases was the prime mover of the enterprise. Charles Shaw Lefevre of Heckfield in Hampshire, from 1796 Member of Parliament for Newtown on the Isle of Wight, headed the list of signatories to

⁵⁸North Yorkshire County Record Office, ZQH 11/3/36, William Chaytor's lieutenancy papers, James Hutchinson, Mayor of Richmond, to [William Chaytor], Richmond, 15 June 1794.

⁵⁹Norfolk Record Office, MS 5363, Townshend correspondence, Wm. Woodley, Eccles, 30 May 1798.

⁶⁰Bodleian Library, MS Dep. Bland Burges 22, f.19, A.W. Trollope to Sir James Bland Burges, Ugley near Bishop's Stortford, 23 May 1798.

⁶¹Buckinghamshire Record Office D/LE/D.1/49 Nugent Buckingham [to Sir William Lee], London, 27 May 1794; see also Northumberland Record Office, ZSW 595, Swinburne MSS, [Sir] J[ohn] E.S[winburne] to General Musgrave, 13 May 1798.

the resolutions of a meeting of gentlemen, yeomanry and farmers of Basingstoke and its neighbourhood, agreeing to enrol as volunteer cavalry in April 1794. Lefevre became the captain of the Basingstoke Yeomanry.⁶²

To all appearances, most corps were formed by the decision of a public meeting called by magistrates to consider measures to be adopted for local defence. Such meetings, however, were carefully managed. The organisers normally had drawn up a plan of organisation, regulations and a declaration to be approved by the meeting. Those present frequently were described as the 'respectable' inhabitants: nobility, clergy, gentry, farmers and yeomen. Those planning a volunteer corps commonly sounded out prominent local gentlemen before calling a public meeting.⁶³ Busick Harwood, Professor of Anatomy, commanding officer and organiser of the Cambridge corps, put down six or seven names of the most respectable inhabitants, out of which the members chose the two subaltern officers by majority vote.⁶⁴ At Musselburgh in 1797 the meeting in the Council House was called earlier than originally intended, when notice had been sent to the 'better class' of inhabitants only. It was assumed that the respectable tradesmen would follow their lead and subscribe to become volunteers.⁶⁵ Public meetings were unpredictable, and some organisers, expecting opposition, went to unusual lengths to avoid calling one. A small group of the instigators of the Kelso Volunteers met in 1797 to discuss the men they wished to admit to their projected corps. Proposals were framed and presented to approved individuals, thereby avoiding the need to call a meeting of the inhabitants. It was feared that one would have given the disaffected an opportunity to raise objections.⁶⁶

Public meetings, having decided to raise a corps, commonly appointed a committee to raise recruits and a subscription. The resolutions of the public meeting were normally printed, inserted in the country newspapers

⁶²Hampshire Record Office, 38 M 49/7/101, Wickham MSS. Resolutions of a Meeting of Gentlemen Yeomanry Farmers and others resident within the Division of Basingstoke and neighbourhood, White Lyon Inn, Hartfordbridge, 24 April 1794; R.G.Thorne, *The History of Parliament The House of Commons 1790-1820*, (London, 1986), Vol.V, pp.135-137.

⁶³Robert Potter Berry, *A History of the Formation and Development of The Volunteer Infantry*, p.68.

⁶⁴British Library, Add.MS 35,670, Hardwicke Papers, Vol.CCCXXII, f.36, B.Harwood [to Hardwicke], [Cambridge], 8 May 1798.

⁶⁵Scottish Record Office, GD 224/687/2, David Burn to Mr.Cuttrell, Fisherton, 12 February 1797: taken to refer to Musselburgh because Burn became Ensign in the Musselburgh Volunteers.

⁶⁶Scottish Record Office, GD 224/685/1, William Smith to David Crichton, Kelso, 12 February 1797.

and distributed to subscribers, magistrates, deputy lieutenants, constables, clergymen and propertied men.⁶⁷ Enrolment books were made available in public places at advertised times for men to come forward, whereas subscriptions tended to be solicited actively from each household. Enrolments were solicited widely: the Buckinghamshire Yeomanry enrolment and subscription books were kept by ten bankers and private gentlemen throughout the county, and by the clerk to the lieutenancy, and at Westminster.⁶⁸ Two gentlemen of the St. Anne's, Soho, association attended the vestry room daily from eleven till two with a parchment roll for recording offers of enrolment. The entire committee, however, was divided into parties according to ward to solicit in person subscriptions for defraying the expenses of the corps.⁶⁹ The implication seems to have been that all men were not obliged to volunteer, but that financial support was expected from all parishioners. The resolutions for raising a corps in Diss in Norfolk recommended that gentlemen, clergy, substantial tradesmen and farmers in the hundred who did not serve personally should subscribe towards the cost of uniforms.⁷⁰ Not all voluntary associations formed were organised as military corps. Dundas' proposals of 1798 suggested unarmed as well as armed associations for local peace-keeping. Lord Aylesford's Cambridgeshire tenants in 1798 proposed the formation of an unarmed association to keep good order in their district.⁷¹

Some corps interpreted their purpose broadly, combining all voluntary exertions for internal defence. Membership was divided between the active, able-bodied military members and those subscribers unable to serve because of infirmity or age. The Oxford Loyal Volunteers was divided into two classes, the first or military class comprising the armed corps and the second class the subscribers, each class electing its own committee. In some corps the latter class was intended to form bodies of special constables, pi-

⁶⁷Buckinghamshire Record Office, L/P.10, Buckinghamshire Armed Yeomanry Committee Book, 3 May 1794.

⁶⁸Buckinghamshire Record Office, L/S:4, Subscription for the defence of the kingdom, 3 May [1794].

⁶⁹Westminster City Library, A2301, St. Anne's Volunteers 1803, ff.2-3; A2303/9 St. Anne's, Soho, (printed handbill); See also B1473/4 St. Clement Danes; National Army Museum, 8108-15-6, Coleman-street Ward, 20 July 1803, (printed handbill).

⁷⁰Norfolk Record Office, MS 5363, Townshend Correspondence, Resolutions for raising a Volunteer Corps in the Hundred of Diss, [n.d.].

⁷¹British Library, Add.MS 35,669, Hardwicke Papers Vol.CCCXXI, f.359, Chas.Wedge to Earl of Hardwicke, Westley Bottom, Newmarket, 28 April 1798; f.357, White Hart, Borough Green, 27 April 1798.

oneers and guides in the event of an invasion. In St.Clement Danes, the association of 1803 was intended to be a select body of men, each recommended by two householders and approved by the committee. Books for enrolling volunteers' names were left at the committee room, and committee members, who included John Reeves, were requested to solicit volunteer services in each ward. A separate book was opened for enrolling any other inhabitant or housekeeper who was exempt military service but willing to act as a special constable under the Defence Act.⁷²

When corps were raised by an individual gentleman, he tended to set out the conditions of service before inviting volunteers. Sir Isaac Pocock appears to have intentionally sought to form a corps from poor agricultural workers in the neighbourhood of Maidenhead Bridge, having called a meeting by handbill at seven in the morning on 21 August 1803 on account of the harvest. At the meeting, he read a prepared agreement three times, each article separately, and took 336 enrolments. He wanted to call them 'The single-hearted Volunteers', but in the event the corps was not formed, apparently because the terms of service were unacceptable to either the lord lieutenant or the Home Office.⁷³ Thomas Grenville, in contrast, drew up a printed set of articles for his troop of Buckinghamshire Yeomanry and agreed to consult recruits on the rules they wished to draw up for their regulation.⁷⁴ Even very large corps like the Percy Tenantry Volunteers and the Muncaster Mountaineers followed a similar method of organisation.

A detailed example of the way in which a corps was raised by an influential landowner is provided by William Windham's Felbrigg corps in Norfolk. Windham believed the proper course of action was first to propose to the lord lieutenant such forces as he had enrolled, and to ask to be recommended to the King for a commission. He presumed reluctantly that he would be expected to become the commanding officer, that his friend William Lukin would be the next officer, and 'whoever pleases' the third. Once the corps had been accepted and admitted to the usual allowances and exemptions, Windham then planned to raise the private men. He believed the correct procedure was to collect in the contiguous parishes as many young unmar-

⁷²Westminster City Library, B1370, St.Clement Danes; B1332, pp.13-16.

⁷³Berkshire Record Office, D/ERa 08/1, Radnor Papers, Isaac Pocock [to Lord Radnor], Maidenhead Bridge, 21 August 1803; see also HO 50/58, Radnor, 8 October 1803; HO 50/58, Isaac Pocock to Charles Yorke, Maidenhead Bridge, 12 October 1803; HO 50/58, Sir Isaac Pocock, Maidenhead, 21 August 1803; Radnor to Charles Yorke, 26 August 1803.

⁷⁴Buckinghamshire Record Office, D/LE/D.1/49, Nugent Buckingham [to Sir William Lee], London, 27 May 1794.

ried men as would equal six times the militia quota for the parishes, the number at which the government had set the maximum size of the volunteer force. The best way of proceeding, he thought, was if possible to get all men to enrol, and only then to select those most fit for service on the grounds of their age or situation. If sufficient numbers enrolled, three divisions could be formed which would be called out on service progressively according to the degree of emergency.⁷⁵

The Felbrigg corps was, however, unusual in being one of the few without any administrative or financial committee. Moreover, Spencer Perceval alleged that this corps embodied all the imperfections of the volunteer system that Windham had himself condemned. The corps allegedly had no staff or field officers and insufficient sergeants to train the men, while Windham took the unjustifiably exalted rank of colonel; Perceval charged that 'If at any time he saw in Hyde Park, or anywhere else, such an appearance of discipline as staggered his opinion, he immediately comforted himself with the recollection of his own corps in the country, and of their indiscipline and want of subordination.'⁷⁶

A more typical example of the procedure adopted in raising a parochial corps by a group of gentlemen is provided by the Titchfield and Fareham corps in Hampshire. Each used his private influence and attachments to form a company. When the parochial officers were required to prepare returns of all able bodied men in August 1803, they called a parish meeting and appointed a committee with a prominent local gentleman, Edward Otto Ives, as chairman. They decided that the best way of raising men was to get several respectable gentlemen to offer themselves as leaders, and to use their private influence and attachments to encourage enrolments; Ives became the commanding officer.⁷⁷ Groups of neighbouring landowners often combined to form a corps. In 1798 several gentlemen, yeomen and other property owners in the neighbourhood of Watlington in Oxfordshire proposed a cavalry corps to defend their possessions in the event of an invasion, and to maintain peace and good order. The committee included the Earl

⁷⁵Norfolk Record Office, WKC 7/84/9, Ketton-Cremer MSS, W[illiam] W[indham] to William [Lukin?], Pall Mall, 25 August 1803; In War Office, *A List of the Officers of the Gentlemen and Yeomanry Cavalry, and Volunteer Infantry of the United Kingdom*, ([London], 1804), William Windham was also listed as Lieutenant Colonel Commandant of the Fourth Battalion of the Norfolk Volunteer Cavalry, with George Windham as Lieutenant Colonel and William Lukin as Major.

⁷⁶Quoted in Richard Glover, *Peninsular Preparation*, p.243, 6 June 1806.

⁷⁷Hampshire Record Office, 11 M 49/235, Edwd.Otto Ives to Lord Bolton, Titchfield, 16 August 1803.

of Macclesfield, who became the commanding officer of the Oxford Loyal Volunteers, Lord Charles Spencer, son of the lord lieutenant, John Fane, one of the county members and later captain of the Lewknor Volunteers, and General Cartland.⁷⁸ In other cases, the gentlemen who formed cavalry troops appear to have been known to each other through hunting.⁷⁹

Even when the initiative to form a corps came from a group of men other than major landowners, they found it necessary to seek a local notable to lead them in order to make likely the acceptance of their proposals. Whereas urban parochial corps like the Loyal Mancroft Volunteers in Norwich could be proposed to the lord lieutenant by a committee of householders,⁸⁰ rural volunteers needed at least the sponsorship of a local gentleman. In rare cases a corps was organised and received official approval before a gentleman was found to lead it. The residents of Winchcombe in Gloucestershire gathered 83 subscribers for an infantry corps in 1798, but needed a gentleman to command them. Several local gentlemen were approached to take the command, on the understanding that the duty could soon be delegated to the two lieutenants.⁸¹

In some cases the need for the sponsorship of a local gentleman meant that a clergyman was the only suitable gentleman available to lead a corps. The Reverend Benjamin Wymberly Salmon of Ormesby near Great Yarmouth agreed to command the district's Flegg Associated Cavalry in April 1798. Salmon explained to the lord lieutenant of Norfolk that the hundreds of East and West Flegg had only one resident magistrate, and he was subject to gout and the decrepitude of old age. He believed that a magistrate was not necessary to command the corps, but the presence of one was necessary for volunteers to act against civil disturbances. Henry Woodcock similarly argued that he should be allowed a volunteer commission because there were no country gentlemen or leading men in his parish, Michelmersh near Winchester. He further believed that having a young and unmarried clergyman in command would allay fears that the volunteers might be made actual soldiers.⁸² Membership of the commission of the peace was thought

⁷⁸HO 50/342, Macclesfield, 23 May 1798; Henry Dundas to Marlborough, 29 May 1798.

⁷⁹See David C. Itzcowitz, *Peculiar Privilege A Social History of English Foxhunting 1753-1885*, (Hassocks, Sussex, 1977).

⁸⁰Norfolk Record Office, MS5363, Townshend Correspondence Loyal Mancroft Volunteers 24 April 1798.

⁸¹Gloucestershire Record Office, D 214 F.1/94, Powell Snell to John Parsons, 1798.

⁸²Norfolk Record Office, MS 5363, Townshend Correspondence [Rev.] B.W.Salmon [to Marquis Townshend], Ormesby near Yarmouth, 28 April 1798; Hampshire Record Office, 11 M 49/234, f.227, [Rev.] Henry Woodcock to Lord Bolton, Michaelmarsh Romsey, 8

to be sufficient qualification for acting on the committee of the Rotherham Volunteers, regardless of the sum subscribed.⁸³

Clergymen had considerable local influence and were often already active in local government. In some counties, up to a third of justices of the peace were clergymen.⁸⁴ The lord lieutenant of Buckinghamshire believed the clergy to be a very great interest, peculiarly valuable for their local knowledge. If the militia and yeomanry were to be withdrawn, he claimed that there was no-one sufficiently respectable other than the clergy capable of commanding and guiding the armed array.⁸⁵ In Denbighshire, the number of resident gentlemen was said to be so small, and so many of them in the militia and other forces, that it was claimed to be impossible to find proper men to act as volunteer officers without recourse to the clergy.⁸⁶ A Hampshire clergyman and magistrate argued that 10,000 clerics could do a great deal for the general defence by their example, influence and connections. He thought that it would be prudent for the clergy to make a common cause with the people, because further clerical exemptions and privileges would excite jealousy and reduce general willingness to volunteer. Clergymen would be obliged to fight in the case of an invasion, in any case.⁸⁷

Generally, the enrolment of volunteers in England was firmly based on the Anglican parochial system, both in the country and the major towns. Parish vestries were active organisers, and occasionally formed a volunteer corps themselves. The vicar of Horsley in Gloucestershire offered the services of his parish vestry as a volunteer corps of infantry in 1803.⁸⁸ Clergymen played a very prominent part in promoting and organising volunteering, some going so far as to join corps themselves in positions other than that of chaplain. Five clergymen were officers in Derbyshire volunteer corps. Major the Reverend Joseph Bradshaw of the Belper corps reputedly would read prayers to his troop in uniform from horseback at Sunday morning musters, having held a service an hour earlier than usual in order to attend.⁸⁹ Clerics, like Benjamin Salmon and Henry Woodcock, usually justified their mem-

August 1803.

⁸³HO 42/31, f.60, Richd.Holden to F.F.Foljambe, Rotherham, 1 June 1794.

⁸⁴Ian R.Christie, *Stress and Stability in Late Eighteenth-Century Britain*, p.189.

⁸⁵HO 50/41, Nugent Buckingham, Stowe, 22 April 1798.

⁸⁶HO 50/65, W.Williams Wynn [to Charles Yorke], Wynnstag, 20 November 1803.

⁸⁷HO 50/42, James Cookson, Petersfield, 14 May 1798.

⁸⁸HO 50/71, Rev.Tho.Dudley Fosbrooke to Earl of Berkeley, August 1803.

⁸⁹Rev.J.Charles Cox, *Three Centuries of Derbyshire Annals, as illustrated by the Records of the Quarter Sessions of the County of Derby, from Queen Elizabeth to Queen Victoria*, (London, 1890), p.199.

bership in terms of expediency in the absence of suitable laymen. Richard Carveth of Elmore Court offered a corps in the parishes of Elmore, Hardwick and Longney near Gloucester in August 1803. Although a clergyman, he accepted the command because of the absence of another local resident whose property, age and influence fitted him for the commission. Carveth revealed that he had long studied and taught the theory of field fortification, and hoped to render himself serviceable.⁹⁰

Some Buckinghamshire clergymen were reported to have enrolled in the yeomanry cavalry and to have attended exercises regularly in uniform. Most, however, were apprehensive that the church authorities would disapprove of such activity, when an invasion had not taken place, as a deviation from clerical character.⁹¹ The Reverend Lord George Murray resigned his commission as Captain of the Hunton Volunteers in June 1800 when it appeared there was no longer a danger of invasion. As a clergyman, he thought there would be some impropriety in continuing to hold a commission.⁹²

The Archbishop of Canterbury had clearly stated in April 1798 his opposition to clergymen joining military forces. He believed that it would interfere with the proper duties of the profession and would not add considerably to the defence of the kingdom if clergymen learned the use of arms, enrolled in military corps, or accepted commissions in the army. They should, however, assist in repelling an invasion or a dangerous insurrection. Similar resolutions were reached by a meeting of the two archbishops and eleven bishops which considered the danger of invasion in September 1801. Clergymen were warned not to abandon the proper business of their profession in order to take up the soldier's occupation. Yet if the French were to land, clerics were expected to help oppose those blasphemous champions of anarchy and irreligion.⁹³ Clerical associations to act only in the event of an invasion were thereby effectively sanctioned. In April 1798, fifteen clergymen of the Deaconry of Newport, Buckinghamshire, in the Diocese of Lincoln formed a clerical association. They planned, in the event of an invasion, to lead a body of their parishioners in the absence of the volun-

⁹⁰HO 50/71, Rd.Carveth to Earl of Berkeley, Elmore Court near Gloucester, 1 August 1803.

⁹¹HO 50/41, Nugent Buckingham, Stowe, 22 April 1798.

⁹²HO 50/47, Rev.Lord George Murray, Hinton, 9 June 1800; HO 50/47, [Lord] Romney, 17 June 1800.

⁹³HO 50/51, J.Cantuar, Lambeth House, 2 September 1801; HO 50/42, Bishop of Winchester, Chelsea, (printed circular), 28 April 1798; Robert Potter Berry, *A History of the Formation and Development of The Volunteer Infantry*, p.61.

teer and yeomanry corps, if called out of the county.⁹⁴ Some clergymen argued that there was no rule in canon law against enrolling in a military corps.⁹⁵ Government policy by 1803 was to decline to grant commissions to clergymen, but the attitude of the church authorities varied between dioceses. Samuel Horsley, the reputedly dictatorial Bishop of St. Asaph, told the clergy of his diocese in 1803 that they could accept military commissions. His son, the Prebendary Heneage Horsley, was very active in raising the Chirk Volunteers, but his recommendation to a commission, and those of two other clergymen, was rejected by the government.⁹⁶ Lords lieutenant in general appear to have discouraged clergymen from volunteering, but left the decision to reject offers of service to the government.⁹⁷

Attitudes towards the role of clergymen in volunteering are indicative of the differences in the perception of the movement by the government and by the civil population. The government saw the volunteers primarily as a military force in which clergymen could play no useful role, while the people saw it as principally a civilian force in which clergymen could act without compromising their spiritual role, just as they acted as magistrates. The wider pattern of the organisation, formation and raising of volunteer corps reinforces this conclusion.

Volunteering maintained a resolutely civilian face. Corps were raised on local initiative by landed gentlemen or parochial, municipal or corporate organisations, not by the central government. Volunteers' concerns were predominantly local, and their acceptance of a military role was vitally qualified by their separation from the permanent regular forces. Corps from their inception demonstrated the need to consult the local community and to include subscribers as well as active members.

It seems reasonable to conclude that the volunteers were more a military than a political force, both in their aims and in the circumstances that brought about their formation. Though a national force, it had none of the uniform distribution of a ballotted force, so is more revealing of the

⁹⁴HO 50/41, Rev. Archibald Hamilton Cathcart, Clifton Rectory, near Olney, Buckinghamshire, 18 April 1798.

⁹⁵HO 50/42, James Cookson, Petersfield, 14 May 1798.

⁹⁶HO 50/65, W. Williams Wynn [to Charles Yorke], Wynnstag, 20 November 1803.

⁹⁷HO 50/330, Thos. J. Robinson to Earl of Radnor, Milton near Abingdon, 18 May 1798; HO 51/75, ff. 154–155, C. Yorke to Earl of Euston, 16 September 1803; Suffolk Record Office, Grafton Archives, HA 513/5/144, p. 31, Euston to Charles Yorke, Camp at Thorrington, 14 September 1803; p. 42, Euston to Dr. McLean, Camp at Thorrington, 9 October 1803; Buckinghamshire Record Office, L/Y:14/26, John Kipling to Acton Chaplin, Shabington, Thame, 16 March 1798.

of the concerns of the population. Both the geographical distribution of corps and the timing of their formation strongly suggest that the need for defence against invasion and the desire to avoid service in compulsory and non-local forces were the strongest motives for volunteering. Though the force was dependent on official sanction and financial support, it was in practice shaped by local initiative. Corps were formed in a variety of ways by individuals, groups, and parochial and corporate bodies; a geographically clustered and organisationally varied force resulted. Having discussed the means by which volunteers were raised, the next two chapters will consider who the volunteers were, and how, if at all, their loyalty was ensured.

Dates of the Earliest Commissions in Volunteer Corps

From War Office lists of officers, 1795-1801.

Volunteer Infantry

	1793	1794	1795	1796	1797	1798	1799	1800	Total
Jan.	0	0	7	3	3	1	11	2	
Feb.	0	0	1	0	4	0	10	0	
Mar.	1	1	6	0	32	3	11	1	
Apr.	0	2	4	2	14	8	1	0	
May	0	28	6	0	27	94	9	1	
June	0	17	3	0	43	57	5	1	
July	0	14	7	0	12	58	4	1	
Aug.	0	13	0	0	8	55	2	1	
Sep.	0	10	1	2	3	24	2	1	
Oct.	0	8	2	0	4	6	4	1	
Nov.	0	6	4	5	1	11	2	0	
Dec.	0	5	0	1	1	5	3	1	
Totals	1	104	41	13	152	322	64	10	706

No dates available for 14 corps

Yeomanry Cavalry

	1794	1795	1796	1797	1798	1799	1800	Total
Jan.	0	2	1	0	1	1	0	
Feb.	0	1	0	2	2	0	0	
Mar.	1	1	0	9	0	3	0	
Apr.	3	2	1	6	4	0	0	
May	12	2	0	9	20	0	0	
June	8	1	0	5	23	0	1	
July	11	1	0	2	24	0	1	
Aug.	7	1	1	2	13	0	0	
Sep.	5	0	1	2	4	0	0	
Oct.	1	1	0	1	6	0	1	
Nov.	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	
Dec.	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	
Totals	50	12	6	38	97	4	3	210

No dates available for 4 corps

Armed Associations: infantry(cavalry)

	1794	1795	1796	1797	1798	1799	1800	Total
Jan.	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	
Feb.	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	
Mar.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Apr.	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	
May	0	0	0	0	74(14)	5	0	
June	0	0	0	0	81(25)	5	0	
July	0	0	0	0	42(17)	2(1)	0	
Aug.	0	0	0	1	16(6)	0	1	
Sep.	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	
Oct.	0	0	0	0	4(1)	2	0	
Nov.	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	
Dec.	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	
Totals	0	0	0	2	227(63)	18(1)	1	248(64)

No dates available for 7 infantry and 5 cavalry associations

Cumulative Totals
(not accounting for attrition)

	1793	1794	1795	1796	1797	1798	1799	1800
Volunteer Infantry	1	105	146	159	311	633	697	707
Yeomanry Cavalry	0	50	62	68	106	203	207	210
Armed Associations (Inf)	0	0	0	0	2	229	247	248
Armed Associations (Cav)	0	0	0	0	0	63	64	64
Volunteers and Yeomanry	1	155	208	227	417	836	904	917
All Corps	1	155	208	227	419	1128	1215	1229

<i>English Counties</i>	1793	1794	1795	1796	1797	1798	1799	1800
Bedfordshire	0	0	0	0	0/1	0	0	0
Berkshire	0	2/2	0	0	0	0/1	0	0/2
Buckinghamshire	0	0	0/1	0	0	1/1	0	0
Cambridgeshire	0	0	0	0	3/1	1	0	0
Cheshire	0	1	0	0	4/1	0/2	0	0
Cornwall	1	6/1	2	1	6/2	21/1	4	0
Cumberland	0	0	0	0	2	0/1	0	0
Derbyshire	0	0/1	0	0	1	1	0	0
Devon	0	10/1	0	2/1	7/1	32/4	9	1/1
Dorset	0	2/2	0	1	0	13	0	1
Durham	0	0	0	0	3	3/3	1	0
Essex	0	1/1	0	0	1/1	6/7	0	0
Gloucestershire	0	0	0/2	0	1	7/1	0	0
Herefordshire	0	0/1	0	0	1	1	0	0
Hertfordshire	0	0/1	0	0	0	1	1	0
Huntingdonshire	0	0/1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kent and Cinque Ports	0	11/5	0	1/1	2/3	17/3	0	1
Isle of Man								
Lancashire	0	2	0	0	5/2	12/1	1	1
Leicestershire	0	2/1	1	0	0	1/1	1	0
Lincolnshire	0	0/2	2	0	2	3/2	0	0
London, Westminster, Middlesex and Tower Hamlets	0	2/1	1	2	3	2/3	0/1	0
Monmouthshire	0	0	0	0	0	1/2	1	0
Norfolk	0	1/4	0/2	0/1	1/1	3/5	0	0
Northamptonshire	0	0/1	0	0	1	2/1	0	0
Northumberland	0	1	1	0	0/2	3/3	1/1	0
Nottinghamshire	0	1/1	0	0	0	3/1	0	1
Oxfordshire	0	1	0	0	0	2/3	0	0
Rutland	0	0/1	0	0	0	1	0	0
Shropshire	0	0	1/2	0	0/1	1/4	0	0
Somerset	0	3/4	0	0	0	9/3	0	0
Hampshire and Isle of Wight	0	1/2	1/1	2/1	14/2	24/6	2	1
Staffordshire	0	0/1	0	0	1	1/3	0	1
Suffolk	0	1/1	0	0	0	14/2	1	0
Surrey	0	3/1	2	0	0	1/2	0	0
Sussex	0	1/3	1	0	1/1	2	1	0
Warwickshire	0	0/1	0/2	0	3/2	1	1	0
Westmorland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wiltshire	0	0/1	0	0	0	5/1	1	0
Worcestershire	0	0	0	0/2	0	2/1	0	0
Yorkshire: East Riding	0	5/2	0	0	0	0/1	0	0
North Riding	0	1/1	1	0	0	4/2	0	0
West Riding	0	7/1	1	0	0/1	6/1	0	0

<i>Scottish Counties</i>	1793	1794	1795	1796	1797	1798	1799	1800
Aberdeen	0	1	1	0	1	5	5	0
Argyll	0	1	0	0	1	1/1	0	0
Ayr	0	0	1	0	4	4	0	0
Banff	0	0	2	0	4	3	0	0
Berwick	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0
Bute	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
Caithness	0	0	4	0	2	0	3	0
Clackmannan	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Cromarty	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dumbarton	0	0	0	0	0	4	0/1	0
Dumfries	0	0	1	0	0	1/1	2	0
Edinburgh and Midlothian	3	0	0	6/2	0	0	0	0
Elgin (Moray)	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0
Fife	0	0	0	0	8/3	3/1	3	1
Forfar	0	1/1	1	0	5/1	3	1	0
Haddington (East Lothian)	1	0	0	1/1	0	0	0	0
Inverness	0	5	6	2	17	6	6	0
Kincardine	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Kinross	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kircudbright	0	0	0	0	3	0	1	0
Lanark	0	1/1	0	0	3/1	2	0	0
Linlithgow	0	0	0	0	4/1	0	0	0
Nairn	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Orkney and Shetland								
Peebles	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Perth	0	0	1	0	1	9/1	0	0
Renfrew	0	3	0	0	2	0	0	0
Ross	0	2	6	0	2	0	0	0
Roxburgh	0	1/1	0	0	0	1	0	0
Selkirk	0	0	0	0	0	0/1	0	0
Stirling	0	1	0	0	0	0/2	0	0
Sutherland	0	0	2	1	2	0	0	0
Wigtown	0	0	0	0	0/1	0	2	0

<i>Welsh Counties</i>	1793	1794	1795	1796	1797	1798	1799	1800
Anglesey	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Brecon	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cardigan	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
Carmarthen	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0
Carnarvon	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Denbigh	0	0	0/1	0	1	1	0	0
Flint	0	1	0	0	1/1	0	0	0
Glamorgan	0	0	0	1	1/2	8/1	0	0
Merioneth	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Montgomery	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pembroke	0	2/1	0	0	1	4	0	0
Radnor	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Totals	1793	1794	1795	1796	1797	1798	1799	1800
Unidentified	6	0/1	0	10/3	51/17	12	2	0
Totals	6/0	104/50	41/12	13/6	152/38	322/9	764/410	3706/210

(excluding 14 volunteer and 4 yeomanry corps of unknown date)

Calculated from: War Office, *List of the Officers of the Several Regiments and Corps of Fencible Cavalry and Infantry: of the Officers of the Militia; of the Corps and Troops of Gentlemen and Yeomanry; and of the Corps and Companies of Volunteer Infantry*, (London, 1795); *List of the Officers of the Several Regiments and Corps of Fencible Cavalry and Infantry: of the Officers of the Militia; of the Corps and Troops of Gentlemen and Yeomanry; and of the Corps and Companies of Volunteer Infantry*, Fourth Edition, ([London], 1796); *A List of the Officers of the Several Regiments and Corps of Fencible Cavalry and Infantry: of the Officers of the Militia; of the Corps and Troops of Gentlemen and Yeomanry; and of the Corps and Companies of Volunteer Infantry*, Fifth Edition, (London, 1797); *A List of all the Officers of the Fencible Cavalry and Infantry; the Militia; the Gentlemen and yeomanry Cavalry; the Volunteer Infantry; and the Cavalry and Infantry Associations*, Eighth Edition, ([London], 1801).

Chapter Three: The Membership of Volunteer Corps

A consideration of the social composition of the volunteer movement entails not only an examination of the membership of individual corps, the differences between different types of corps, and a comparison with other forces, but also a view of how these relationships varied over time.

This chapter will first consider the composition of volunteer corps and yeomanry troops and the differences between them: their members' social status and occupations, and the differences, if any, within each of these categories between officers and men. The evidence provided by the volunteers themselves is considered, and then compared with statistics compiled from membership lists, muster rolls and other nominal lists. It is concluded that the volunteers, and particularly the yeomanry, comprised a wider social range than is sometimes suggested: predominantly artisans, skilled workmen and retailers in towns; rural workmen as well as landowners and their tenants in the country. This was the result of conscious policy, to strengthen the social bonds between propertied men and their dependents by uniting them in common defence against French revolutionary principles; what Henry St. Paul called 'a connexion of loyalty'. Volunteers in general were of a higher social standing than other military forces, whether the militia or the regular army. Volunteer officers, though, were sometimes the social inferiors of their regular counterparts. They nevertheless formed a distinct social group, more respectable than the private men.

The consequences the nature of this membership had for the force will then be examined. Two major consequences can be identified: the large numbers of poor volunteers meant the government was obliged to provide substantial financial support, and the settled occupations of the men caused them to be very reluctant to leave their neighbourhoods, so restricting the force's wider defensive role.

The picture of social differences between and within the volunteer infantry and yeomanry cavalry has hitherto largely depended on anecdotal or unsubstantiated assertion. The yeomanry are characterised frequently as the élite of county society, comprising gentlemen farmers and their tenants united with the intention of keeping labourers in subjugation.¹ Since the membership of volunteer corps varied widely, it has been possible to portray them variously as the sons of attorneys, squires and manufactur-

¹ Clive Emsley, 'The Military and Popular Disorder in England 1790-1801', *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, Vol. LXI, Nos. 245-246, Spring and Summer 1983, pp. 106-107; Ann Hudson, 'Volunteer Soldiers in Sussex', pp. 166, 175.

ers, or as the urban middle class, or as mostly from the working classes.² Sometimes attempts are made to distinguish the types of men in different varieties of corps. The membership of the force can be divided into the aristocracy, farmers and prosperous tradesmen in the yeomanry, the better-off middle classes in the small armed associations, and poor working men in the large rural infantry corps, coastal artillery and sea fencibles.³ None of these descriptions alone is entirely satisfactory, and contemporary evidence is available both for what the composition of the force was intended to be and for a more comprehensive analysis of membership in practice.

It was a commonplace among contemporaries that members of yeomanry cavalry corps were of higher social standing than volunteer infantrymen, and that volunteers in general were socially respectable. The original intentions for the composition of the cavalry force were evident in the resolutions published by the county committees established to co-ordinate internal defence in 1794. The conditions for membership of cavalry troops were unusually consistent between different corps: men were expected to be of good character, accustomed to riding, and with a fixed residence within the county. They were not to include men whose situation made it probable that they would enlist in the army, navy or militia. Even with the provision for substitutes equipped at the expense of subscribers, the number of potential recruits was restricted significantly. The Oxfordshire committee for internal defence specifically stated that the requirement of a fixed residence effectively excluded menial servants as improper, as they were liable to change their situation.⁴

Nevertheless, the membership of yeomanry corps comprised a wide social range: landed gentlemen, their tenants and servants, as well as tradesmen. In Coventry, the volunteers were 'composed of the best & middling orders of the people', whereas the Portsdown Yeoman Cavalry were all tradesmen.⁵ Cavalry officers were considered to be a class of men whose personal services would not otherwise have been obtained.⁶ The Duke of Richmond described his coastal Sussex troop of light horse artillery as comprising chiefly his own

²E.P.Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, pp.495-496; A.Temple Patterson, *Radical Leicester A History of Leicester 1780-1850*, (Leicester, 1954), p.80.

³Ann Hudson, 'Volunteer Soldiers in Sussex', p.166.

⁴HO 50/342, Terms and Regulations for raising A Body or Bodies of Cavalry in the County of Oxford for the Internal Defence of the Kingdom, 5 April 1794.

⁵HO 50/89, W.Wilberforce Bird, Coventry, 27 July 1803; Hampshire Record Office, 11 M 49/236, f.75, Members of the Portsdown Yeoman Cavalry [to Lord Bolton], Portsmouth, 13 December 1803.

⁶HO 50/61, 'Volunteer Establishment', Grenville to Yorke, 25 November 1803.

tenants and neighbours, who were considerable farmers or reputable tradesmen whose occupations confined them to service within the county only. He contrasted them with most yeomanry troops, composed of the younger brothers, sons and servants of farmers who were not considerable and independent, or 'in business'.⁷ General Vyse believed the yeomanry cavalry generally to be composed of men of superior rank, but not so elevated as to be ignorant of the lower classes. They were individually respectable because each had a stake in property, 'a Ticket in the general Lottery'. In comparison, the infantry were said to 'hang looser on Society', since many of them had little to lose.⁸ Yet they were not from the lowest ranks of society: the Dundee volunteers were said not to deprive the army of recruits, because its members were in rather a better line of life, and unlikely to become soldiers.⁹ The fact that a corps was one of infantrymen rather than cavalry does not imply that its members were necessarily of lower status. The Mayor of Maidenhead and several reputable tradesmen in June 1794 asked permission to assemble as a corps of infantry because they found it inconvenient to engage as cavalry, not because they were not able to. Conversely, the cavalry were not necessarily wealthy; it was claimed in 1798 that the expense of the horse tax would force many members of the Westminster Volunteer Cavalry to give up their horses if not granted an exemption.¹⁰

Many men of influence and property belonged to either volunteer or yeomanry corps. Charles Herries, commander of the London and Westminster Light Horse Volunteers, insisted that attention to the composition of volunteer cavalry corps was of primary importance. His own, exceptional, corps was composed of noblemen, gentlemen, merchants, lawyers and heads of manufactories. Most other corps, Herries claimed, comprised the yeomanry or their social equals: respectable tradesmen, mechanics, stable keepers and others who kept horses for work or pleasure. He saw the possession of a horse and the ability to afford the expense of attending exercises as a sufficient test of property, and, by implication, guarantee of loyalty.¹¹ A large proportion of the rural yeomanry corps were formed among tenant farmers who could provide their own horses. Sir Thomas Parkyns in March 1798 proposed to

⁷Cecil Sebag-Montefiore, *A History of the Volunteer Forces*, p.236.

⁸HO 50/52, [Lt.Gen.] R.Vyse to Lord Hobart, Edinburgh, 21 December 1801, pp.7-8.

⁹HO 50/48, f.52, James Mylne to Lord Douglas, Dundee, 5 July 1799.

¹⁰PRO 30/8/244, Chatham Papers, f.199, Mayor of Maidenhead to W.Pitt, 3 June 1794; ff.241-242, Capt.H.Cosser to George Rose, 9 December 1798, (copy).

¹¹HO 50/50, 'Cursory Thoughts on Volunteer Corps', enclosed in Charles Herries to Earl of Roplin, 2 May 1801.

gentlemen in the neighbourhood of his seat, Bunny Park, the raising of a troop of cavalry among their tenants for the protection of Rushcliffe hundred in case the regular forces should be withdrawn.¹² The Edenside Rangers in Cumberland consisted principally of owners of small estates, farmers and their sons.¹³ The future radical orator Henry Hunt belonged to a yeomanry troop in Wiltshire comprising mostly tenant farmers and their sons.¹⁴

The members of the volunteer infantry are generally characterised as the social inferiors of the yeomanry. Among the infantry, urban corps were often more respectable than their rural counterparts. Richard Sheridan said the government preferred to have associations of the higher classes in large towns, and of the lower classes in the country and villages.¹⁵ This appears often to have been the case, particularly in rural corps which included men who would not have been able to provide horses of their own. The Loyal United Pikemen of the North Ormskirk division of the West Derby hundred in Lancashire were intended to comprise 200 volunteers, largely the sons and servants of respectable farmers.¹⁶ In the case of urban corps, the characterisation of the infantry as the inferiors of the yeomanry was not always accurate. Several corps considered exclusive and highly respectable were formed as infantry, and recruited on a limited professional or territorial basis: the St. James' Volunteers, the Bloomsbury and Inns of Court Association, and the St. George, Hanover Square, Armed Association. Particularly in London, the stabling and exercising of large mounted corps was prohibitively expensive. Dismounted cavalry corps nevertheless carried more cachet than infantry; the Light Horse Volunteers had both mounted and dismounted troops, while the Eton Cavalry was entirely dismounted.

Many volunteer officers attested to the social range of the membership of their corps, but the evidence is entirely anecdotal. The commander of the Pontefract Volunteers described its membership as farming men, labourers and mechanics, and not the usual shopkeepers and tradesmen.¹⁷ Several corps fitted this latter description: The Laystone Association, chiefly shopkeepers and labouring mechanics; 300 volunteers in the neighbourhood of Atherstone, most of them manufacturers; and in the Gloucestershire clothing

¹²HO 50/40, Sir Thos. Parkyns, Bunny Park, 24 March 1798.

¹³HO 50/65, Henry Howard [to Viscount Lowther], 7 May 1803.

¹⁴[Henry Hunt], *Memoirs of Henry Hunt, Esq. Written by Himself, In His Majesty's Jail at Ilchester, in the County of Somerset*, (London, 1820).

¹⁵E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, p. 496.

¹⁶HO 50/40, Wm. Hill, Blythe Hall near Ormskirk, 29 March 1798.

¹⁷HO 50/48, f.302, Teesdale Cockell to Dundas, Pontefract, 31 December 1800.

districts, corps comprising the principal masters and tradesmen.¹⁸ Yet possibly more volunteers were described as labourers and unskilled workmen. The Gloucestershire clothing manufacturers were in April 1798 also said to be preparing to associate their shops of men into infantry companies.¹⁹ The Falmouth corps was entirely composed of labouring men and mechanics, while the magistrates and deputy lieutenants for Lichfield described many local volunteers as poor housekeepers with large families, subsisting by daily labour.²⁰

A social hierarchy was inherent within corps formed among men employed in the same business or on an estate. The military relationships between officers and men reinforced their civilian relationships as masters and servants, employers and employees. Infantry associations were formed from among the directors, clerks and servants of the Bank of England, Somerset House and the Trinity House in London. The Oxford University Armed Association included both college servants and undergraduates, and was officered by professors and heads of houses.²¹ The builders working on the Foundling Hospital and adjacent estates in 1798 offered their services as a corps of artificers similar to the St. George's Volunteers.²² Thomas Telford, Engineer of the Ellesmere Canal, proposed a Band of Artificers and Pioneers from among his workmen in Shropshire, who included engineers, artificers, mechanics and 'Men of great ingenuity' who could construct machines and build or destroy roads.²³

The Pontefract volunteer corps included many of the Earl of Mexborough's and his brother's tenants, and tenants' servants.²⁴ William Beckford

¹⁸HO 50/44, John Gilbert Franklyn to Marquis of Salisbury, Aspenden-hall, 12 November 1798; HO 50/89, Earl of Warwick to Charles Yorke, 12 December 1803; HO 50/41, George Paul, Hill House, Hampton, Gloucestershire, 27 April 1798; see also HO 50/45, William Turner to Henry Dundas, Kingston upon Thames, 24 February 1799; HO 50/40, Earl of Warwick, Warwick Castle, 30 March 1798.

¹⁹HO 50/41, George Paul, Hill House, Hampton, Gloucestershire, 27 April 1798.

²⁰HO 50/47, Burgess to Earl of Mount Edgcumbe, Falmouth, 16 June 1800; HO 50/85, Fras. Wooley, John Webster, Fairfax Moresby, Charles Simpson, Stephen Simpson, William Gill to Lord Talbot, Lichfield, 19 November 1803; see also HO 50/48, f.155, F. Bayley to Duke of Portland, Hope near Manchester, 3 November 1800.

²¹MS. Top. Oxon. e.478, Oxford University Volunteers 1798, ff.2-21.

²²HO 50/41, James Burton to Marquis of Titchfield, Bloomsbury, 25 April 1798.

²³HO 50/43, Thos. Telford to Earl of Powis, Shrewsbury, 11 June 1798; Similar proposals: HO 50/41, Wentworth Fitzwilliam to Henry Dundas, 26 April 1798; HO 50/330, Marquis of Buckingham, 18 June 1797, (enclosure); Hampshire Record Office, 11 M 49/235, p.53, Edward Otto Ives to Lord Bolton, Titchfield, 11 August 1803.

²⁴HO 50/50, Teesdale Cockell, Pontefract, 9 April 1801.

proposed a loyal association at Fonthill consisting of his neighbour's tenants and workmen in 1798.²⁵

Family connections and influence were important also in predominantly urban corps. Many businessmen who were householders and heads of families brought their sons, clerks or connections into the Royal Aberdeen Volunteers.²⁶ Several members of the Penryn Volunteers in 1799 were master tradesmen, with their journeymen and apprentices, although there were also several apprentices and labourers in the service of men not in the corps.²⁷ The contractual position of apprentices joining volunteer corps without their masters' consent was doubtful, but not all corps were willing to discharge them on those grounds.²⁸ Volunteer corps were understandably willing to enrol former regular soldiers or militiamen, particularly as non-commissioned officers. At least one of the sergeants in the Sheffield Volunteers had been in the regular army.²⁹ Gamekeepers were prized as sharpshooters or cavalry scouts; one company of the New Forest Rangers was intended to be composed entirely of gamekeepers and their men.³⁰

Most such corps limited to one occupation were formed as armed associations rather than as volunteer corps, and so could offer their services in a relatively limited area. The pilots, watermen and lightermen of Greenwich formed an armed association, the Water Fencibles of Greenwich, principally to protect the Royal Hospital at Greenwich, the dockyards at Deptford and Woolwich, and the Gravesend and Tilbury forts.³¹ Nearly all such single-occupation corps contained all social ranks; only when an occupation had a relatively narrow social base were such corps socially exclusive. The Law Association proposed initially to serve only in case of invasion, and then only

²⁵HO 50/41, Lord Pembroke [to Home Office], 25 April 1798.

²⁶HO 50/44, [Lord] Gordon to Henry Dundas, 5 August 1798; See also Northamptonshire Record Office, Clarke of Welton MSS, C(W)147 Lord Spencer to John Clark, 24 July 1800; C(W)233, Northampton to John Plumer Clarke, 11 February 1805; Buckinghamshire Record Office, L/V:5/22, J.O.Oldham to Rev.Sir George Lee, Missenden Abbey, 29 July 1803.

²⁷HO 50/45, Geo.Chap.George [to Earl of Mount Edgcumbe], Penryn, 21 May 1799.

²⁸Gloucestershire Record Office, D566 Z13, Tetbury Volunteers, J.W.Lettall to H.H.Sloper, 24 October 1803; H.Sloper to J.W.Lettall, [n.d.]; J.G.Goodwin to Henry Hall Sloper, [n.d.].

²⁹*Peeps Into the Past being passages from the diary of Thomas Asline Ward*, Edited by Alexander B.Bell, (London and Sheffield, 1909), pp.23, 24.

³⁰Buckinghamshire Record Office, L/P:5/9, minutes of a general meeting of magistracy and lieutenancy, Aylesbury, 14 July 1803; Hampshire Record Office, 11 M 49/234, pp.181-182, W.S.Rose to Lord Bolton, [n.d., August 1803].

³¹HO 50/42, Meeting at Buffalo's Head, Garden-stairs, 1 May 1798.

within London. Its secretary described the members as the first characters and heads of the law, practising barristers and attorneys.³² A 'Miner Corps' existed in Devon, while one near Portsmouth was known as 'the Peasantry Corps'.³³

Large corps composed of men in the same occupation could be either more dangerous or more reliable than other corps, depending on whether the men were accustomed to subordination. Associations officered by the men's employers, or their superiors in civil offices, were favoured over large groups of men unaccustomed to subordination. An Edgbaston physician who offered his advice on the arming of the populace in 1798 based his assessment of reliability almost entirely on occupation. William Withering principally warned against arming manufacturers, miners and colliers, on the grounds that they were too much accustomed to acting together in large bodies.³⁴

On balance, the evidence provided by contemporary description suggests that some modifications should be made to the picture of yeomanry troops of landowners and their tenants, and volunteer corps of urban workmen. The picture appears more complex, and the movement more socially comprehensive, partly because of the territorial basis of the force, and partly as a result of the desire to strengthen links between propertied men and their dependents, employers and their employees.

Little or no direct evidence is normally provided by historians to support assertions about the social composition of volunteer or yeomanry corps. Sir John Fortescue believed that, apart from some corps in the larger towns, volunteers were chiefly ordinary labouring men, the same class as the rank and file of the army. However, he conceded that 'There are no statistics to show actually that this was so'.³⁵ Yet it is possible to compile such statistics from a range of disparate and incomplete sources, and they demonstrate that the volunteers were far from an homogeneous force of labouring men.³⁶

³²HO 50/78, J.E.Watson, Inner Temple Hall, 14 July 1803; HO 50/78, J.E.Watson to Lord Hobart, Temple, 25 July 1803; another copy: HO 51/103.

³³HO 50/49, W.Bray to Henry Dundas, Tavistock, 14 March 1801; Hampshire Record Office, 11 M 49/239, Portsmouth Volunteers, f.259, Brigadier General Porter to Lord Bolton, 29 August 1804.

³⁴Scottish Record Office, GD 51/931, Wm.Withering, Edgbaston, 26 April 1798; Hampshire Record Office, 11 M 49/240, p.59, Brigadier General George Porter to Lord Bolton, 25 January 1805; 11 M 49/234, p.20, G.H.Rose to Lord Bolton, Cuffnalls, 26 October 1801.

³⁵J.W.Fortescue, *The County Lieutenancies and the Army*, p.110.

³⁶See John Cookson, 'Patriotism and Social Structure: the Ely Volunteers, 1798-1808',

Direct evidence for the composition of volunteer corps instead supports the claims of volunteer officers concerning the nature of the membership. Many lists survive of the members of nearly all volunteer corps that received government allowances, but very few of these provide any information other than names; only rarely were volunteers' occupations recorded. The major record of the membership of volunteer corps is in the nominal pay rolls sent regularly by commanding officers to the War Office. The rolls list those members who had fulfilled the minimum period of exercise and so were entitled to official allowances. Necessarily, these lists do not exist for the many corps that did not claim, or were ineligible for, government allowances, which includes all armed associations. It is difficult to draw any unequivocal conclusions about membership from the nominal rolls because there is no additional information about each individual with which to make confident correlation with other sources of personal information. Only in the rare cases where other lists exist in which individuals' parishes or even addresses are supplied can individual volunteers be identified with much degree of certainty. Even in quite small towns some surnames were very common and the same christian names recurrent within a family. Some militia ballot lists and lists compiled for the posse comitatus distinguish volunteers because of their exemptions.³⁷

Comprehensive occupational lists for the entire population, for direct comparison with volunteer membership, are not available. Few census enumerators' books survive from 1801, and they rarely specify occupations. The most comprehensive and accessible sources of additional personal information available for a wide range of corps are the poll books published after an election as a record of how each elector voted. There are grounds to expect it to be possible to identify a high proportion of volunteers in constituencies for which poll books exist. Members of volunteer corps, and especially yeomanry troops, frequently were required to be property owners, householders or sometimes freemen of a borough, which should have meant that a high proportion of volunteers were electors in borough or county constituencies. Unfortunately, in practice surviving poll books rarely coincide with unambiguous lists of volunteers who were qualified to vote. When they do, only a small fraction of the total can be identified confidently. The Windsor Loyal

pp.4-10.

³⁷John Cookson, 'Patriotism and Social Structure: the Ely Volunteers, 1798-1808'; I.F.W.Beckett, *The Buckinghamshire Posse Comitatus 1798*, Buckinghamshire Record Society No.22, (n.p., 1985); *Exeter Militia List 1803*, edited, with an introduction, by W.G.Hoskins, (London and Chichester, 1972).

Volunteers are typical. Of seventy-one members in 1803, seventeen can be identified with any degree of certainty in the poll books of 1802 and 1804 for the borough of New Windsor. These included three of the four officers and all three sergeants.³⁸ Identification of voters in pay lists is made uncertain by the general absence of qualifying information. It is often necessary to rely upon place of residence to confirm a connection. Frequently several voters are found with the same name as a volunteer, and no further information exists to enable them to be discriminated; these names have had to be ignored. The information gathered on voting behaviour therefore excludes an unquantifiable number of volunteers who cannot be identified with confidence.

Another major but localised source of personal information is the collection of returns of adult male inhabitants made in 1798. Easily the most complete is the 'Posse Comitatus' return for Buckinghamshire. It comprises a comprehensive collection of parochial lists of males aged between 15 and 60 who were not engaged in any military capacity, compiled as part of preparations against invasion in February 1798.³⁹ Although the return excludes volunteers and yeomen cavalry, its usefulness is not thereby greatly diminished, as the lists were compiled before, and became a factor in, the great expansion of volunteering later in the year. The usefulness of these lists is limited by the organisation of the volunteers in Buckinghamshire by region rather than by parish or town. Unless something is known of the residence of volunteers, in many cases no positive identification can be made with any particular individual in the Posse Comitatus lists.

The third and potentially the greatest source of information would be the

³⁸WO 13/4195, Windsor Loyal Volunteers Pay List and Return 1803; *A Copy of the Poll, taken on Monday the 5th, and Tuesday the 6th of July, in the year of our Lord, MDCCCII at the Guildhall in the Borough of New Windsor, in the County of Berks, at An Election of Two Representatives to Serve in Parliament, For the Said Borough*, Second Edition, (Windsor, 1802); *A Copy of the Poll taken on Wednesday the 22d Day of February, in the Year of Our Lord MDCCCIV, at the Guildhall, in the Borough of New Windsor, in the County of Berks, at An Election of a Representative to serve in Parliament for the said Borough*, (Windsor, 1804).

³⁹The Buckinghamshire Record Office copy has been published in I.F.W.Beckett, *The Buckinghamshire Posse Comitatus*; British Library, Stowe MSS 805, *Buckinghamshire. A Register Of the Names and Occupations of all Persons residing within the County of Buckingham (not engaged in any Military capacity) between the Ages of 15 and 60 years ... Returned to John Penn Esqr. High Sheriff Pusuant to a precept issued by him For the better ascertaining the Posse Comitatus Carefully examined and arranged from the said returns by Acton Chaplin Undersheriff MDCCXCVIII.*; Allan B.Crossman, 'The Buckinghamshire Posse Comitatus, 1798', M.A. thesis, University of Leicester, 1971.

compilation of names, addresses and occupations of all volunteers planned in 1804 by Thomas Pierce, a clerk in the Examiner's Office of the Court of Chancery. With the patronage of the Commander-in-Chief, he wrote to all commanding officers asking for membership lists recording places of abode, professions, trades and callings of officers and private men, with a contribution towards the costs of the project proportional to the size of their corps. The compilation appears never to have been completed, and very few commanding officers appear to have kept a record of their response to Pierce's enquiry.⁴⁰

The extreme rarity of personal information, and occupational information in particular, suggests that the general nature of the membership of the volunteer force was not a concern of the administration either at the local or national level. The additional work involved in recording more than nominal information need not have been prohibitive, had the administration wished to know about the composition of volunteer corps. It appears that this was not one of its concerns; the records that were kept by the War Office show that official relations with individual corps were largely concerned with finance. Thomas Pierce, like the House of Commons, wanted to record volunteers' addresses and occupations simply as a patriotic example for the sake of posterity.⁴¹

To attempt an adequate analysis of the social composition of the volunteers would require much more information about individuals than is known for any corps. The best social indicator for which sufficient detail is available for comparison is occupation. Categorising occupations is necessarily imprecise and potentially misleading, but it is a reasonable means of achieving an approximate idea of the composition of some volunteer corps.⁴² The surviving lists of volunteers contain a large variety of occupational descriptions, many of which are assigned to only one or two individuals. Listing each of these as a basis for comparison with other corps and organisations would be inconclusive, not least because every person might adopt different criteria for describing occupations. The same men could appear on different lists

⁴⁰PRO 30/26/94, Muncaster to Thos.Pierce, Muncaster House, 5 November 1804; British Library, Add.MS 38,241, Liverpool Papers, Vol.LII ff.45-46, Thos.Pierce to Lord Hawkesbury, Examiner's Office, Rolls Yard, Chancery Lane, and Penton Place, Walworth, 26 July 1804.

⁴¹Berkshire Record Office, D/ERa 08/1 (11), Speaker of the House of Commons to Earl of Radnor, 10 August 1803.

⁴²See John A.Phillips, *Electoral Behaviour in Unreformed England Plumpers, Splitters and Straights*, (Princeton, New Jersey, 1982), pp.259 ff.

as farmer or yeoman, attorney or gentleman, and brazier or ironmonger.⁴³ Further uncertainty arises in the nature of some descriptions: 'brewer', for example, provides no indication whether the man worked in the brewing process or was the owner or manager of a brewery. Grouping occupations in larger categories minimises many of these problems. The framers of the first census in 1801 considered the relevant major occupational division to be that between manufacturing and agricultural activity. It is impossible to categorise volunteers in this way without making some assumptions based on place of residence.⁴⁴ There is no difficulty in the few obvious cases of men described as 'farmer' or 'yeoman', but 'labourer' provides no indication whether the man was a rural or urban worker. Neither lists of volunteers nor poll books normally distinguish between masters and journeymen in the same trade. Yet this implies that contemporaries thought they were much the same kind of people and the distinction not as important as that between different trades.⁴⁵ It is consequently reasonable, and useful for the sake of comparisons, to use categories based on occupational description alone; conclusions about social status are avoided because supplementary economic information is unevenly available for only a very small proportion of volunteers.

The occupational categorisation adopted here follows that used in a study of late-eighteenth century borough elections.⁴⁶ It seeks to avoid the conflation of occupation with social rank inherent in attempts to identify a middle class among professional men, merchants, large tradesmen and the self-contradictory classification 'rural bourgeoisie'.⁴⁷ Seven categories are

⁴³The examples are from *O[xford] L[oyal] V[olunteers]* (membership list, c.1804); *Poll of the Freemen of Oxford*, 1796; *Poll of the Freemen of Oxford*, 1802.

⁴⁴But see John Cookson, 'Patriotism and Social Structure: the Ely Volunteers, 1798-1808', pp.4-10.

⁴⁵John A. Phillips, *Electoral Behaviour in Unreformed England*, pp.179-180; J.R. Vincent, *Pollbooks How Victorians Voted*, (Cambridge, 1968), pp.52-53.

⁴⁶John A. Phillips, *Electoral Behaviour in Unreformed England*, pp.176-185; but see Elizabeth Baigent, 'Bristol Society in the Later Eighteenth Century with Special Reference to the Handling by Computer of Fragmentary Historical Sources', D.Phil.thesis, University of Oxford, 1985.

⁴⁷S.C. Smith, 'Loyalty and Opposition in the Napoleonic Wars', pp.153-154. The categorisation adopted in studies of the army was not found to be useful, as it is based on a relatively narrow range of craft trades and labouring activities, reflecting the distinct social composition of the regular army: Glenn A. Stepler, 'The Common Soldier in the Reign of George III, 1760-1793', D.Phil.thesis, University of Oxford, 1984, Appendix I, p.227; Samuel F. Scott, *The Response of the Royal Army to the French Revolution The Role and Development of the Line Army 1787-93*, (Oxford, 1978).

used, which reflect more the nature of daily activities than wealth or social position.⁴⁸ Labouring men, however, are separated from specifically rural workers like husbandmen and farmers. Skilled workmen and artisans are distinguished from retailers, although some of the latter, principally bakers and butchers, were also normally involved in the production of their goods. The division between retailers and large merchants and manufacturers is less precise, being dependent to some extent on the scale of their activities. Manufacturers are here defined as large-scale producers, although in contemporary usage the term included manual workers; managers and agents are included in this category because their activities were on a broadly similar level to those of manufacturers and merchants. Furthermore, professional men are grouped with gentlemen, on the grounds that the profession of surgeon, writer or barrister seems frequently to have been considered synonymous with the non-occupational rank of gentleman. The occupational category, however, includes attorneys, who were not in general considered gentlemen. Finally, a seventh category comprises those who do not fall comfortably within the other descriptions. Typically, these are civil clerks, office-holders or academics, which covered a large social range despite functional similarities.⁴⁹

Although the number of volunteer corps for which occupational information is readily available is small, it comprises a reasonable variety of sizes and types. Not unexpectedly, the membership of each corps seems roughly to reflect the occupational structure of the area in which it was raised. Much more information is available on volunteer infantry corps than on the less numerous yeomanry cavalry troops. Nevertheless, the membership of the Devizes troop of the Wiltshire Yeomanry Cavalry qualifies the picture of the yeomanry as a force comprised of gentlemen and their retainers. Of 27 enrolments recorded between September 1802 and October 1815, nearly 60% were engaged in agricultural pursuits, while only two men could be classified as artisans. However, more than a fifth of its members were retailers in country towns. However, it is dangerous to draw wider conclusions from one example since there could be wide variation between corps.

Substantial variation in membership could exist even within a single corps.⁵⁰ For example, the ten companies of the Bristol Volunteer Infantry

⁴⁸ John A. Phillips, *Electoral Behaviour in Unreformed England*, pp.180–181.

⁴⁹ For more detail, see John A. Phillips, *Electoral Behaviour in Unreformed England*, pp.181–185; see below for the list of occupational categories employed.

⁵⁰ Calculated from Gloucestershire Record Office, D1571/X169, Devizes Troop Wiltshire Yeomanry Cavalry, enrolments 1802–1815.

in 1798 had a wide variety of occupational compositions. The proportion of gentlemen and professional men ranged from 7% to 19%, of retailers from 16% to 32%, and of artisans from 29% to 47%. In the first two cases, the figures straddle the proportions of the population of Bristol, about 13.4% and 21.2% respectively, in roughly similar occupational categories for 1774–1775, while the proportion of artisans in the population as a whole was possibly around 55%.⁵¹ There appears to have been little relationship between above or below-average proportions of gentlemen, retailers, artisans or labourers, however. A high proportion of artisans in the third and eighth companies served with correspondingly low proportions of labourers, yet in general the inverse relationship was not marked.⁵² The pattern is more likely to result from residential variations than conscious choice on the part of volunteers.

It might be argued that the variation in the composition of volunteer corps in general can be attributed to variations in the social composition of the district in which the individual corps were raised. The Corbridge corps, for instance, in 1804 had, at 12.9%, more than seven times the proportion of agricultural workers of its neighbour, the Hexham Volunteer Infantry. The abstract of the census returns in 1801 classified 16.5% of the population of Corbridge as principally engaged in agriculture, compared with 6.0% in Hexham.⁵³ The evidence for occupations is too fragmentary, and the census' division of occupations into agriculture and handicrafts is too crude, to make the basis of comparison sound. The argument that a corps' social composition mirrors the district in which it was raised is therefore virtually untestable.

Yet it is possible to identify some common characteristics among the various types of corps. Volunteer corps in middle-sized provincial towns characteristically were dominated by artisans and skilled workmen. The Ely Association was 'drawn almost exclusively from the artisanry with hardly a labourer in the ranks.'⁵⁴ The single largest occupational group in all four companies of the Musselburgh Volunteers was that comprising artisans and skilled workmen. Consistently between 50 and 60%, no other category

⁵¹Elizabeth Baigent, 'Bristol Society in the Later Eighteenth Century', pp.143–146, 161.

⁵²James Brown, *The Rise, Progress & Military Improvement of the Bristol Volunteers; with an Alphabetical List of the Officers and Privates, correctly arranged*, (Bristol, 1798; reprinted 1916).

⁵³*Abstract of the Answers and Returns Made pursuant to an Act, ... Intituled, "An Act for taking an Account of the Population of Great Britain, and the Increase or Diminution thereof."*, pp.266, 269.

⁵⁴John Cookson, 'The English Volunteer Movement of the French Wars, 1793–1815: Some Contexts', p.5.

alone had more than 7% of the total.⁵⁵ In 1803, 87% of the membership of the Hexham Volunteer Infantry could be classified as artisans or skilled workmen. In the neighbouring, smaller Corbridge Volunteer Infantry in the following year, 58% fitted this category.⁵⁶ Much of the difference between the latter two can be accounted for by the greater proportion of men in labouring and agricultural occupations who belonged to the latter corps. In both, the proportion of merchants and retailers remained negligible.

The occupational pattern of urban corps was strikingly different from that of predominantly rural corps. The difference is clearly illustrated by the volunteers raised in the Ely and South Wichford subdivision of Cambridgeshire. Labourers dominated the two village companies, but formed only a large minority alongside craftsmen and artisans in the two urban corps.⁵⁷ One rural corps, the Muncaster Mountaineers in Cumberland, was comparable in size to the Musselburgh volunteers, with 241 members in 1804. Yet 56% of the Muncaster Mountaineers were engaged in agriculture, virtually the same proportion as were artisans in the Musselburgh corps. Artisans comprised just under 16% of the Muncaster volunteers, surpassed by nearly 23% of labourers. However, a large proportion of labourers cannot be considered a determining factor in the composition of rural corps, since the category of labourer is ambiguous. The members of the Walls End Volunteers predominantly lived within the town; about half were labourers of various types, and less than 5% were agriculturalists. Of the remainder, 35 to 40% were artisans or skilled workmen. Conversely, no labourers at all were recorded among the largely rural membership of the Winchcombe and Sudeley Loyal Volunteer infantry in Gloucestershire. More than 35% were in agricultural occupations, while surprisingly high proportions, 21.4% and 29.5%, were retailers and artisans respectively.⁵⁸ Urban volunteer infantry corps are characterised more by a large proportion of artisans than by an absence of agricultural workers or the presence of a significant number of retailers. Rural or 'village' corps in contrast characteristically were dominated by the working poor.⁵⁹

⁵⁵Scottish Record Office, GD 224/687/2.

⁵⁶Calculated from Northumberland Record Office, Duke of Northumberland's Lieutenancy Papers.

⁵⁷John Cookson, 'The English Volunteer Movement of the French Wars, 1793-1815: Some Contexts', p.9.

⁵⁸HO 50/42, Winchcombe & Sudeley Loyal Volunteer Infantry, 5 May 1798.

⁵⁹John Cookson, 'The English Volunteer Movement of the French Wars, 1793-1815: Some Contexts', p.9.

Although there appear to be more artisans and fewer labourers in volunteer corps than might be expected, it is difficult to demonstrate conclusively that any particular occupational group was either under- or over-represented in the volunteer system or any corps in particular. If, for the purposes of rough comparison, the occupational composition of volunteer corps in similar middle-ranking provincial centres is considered, it is clear that artisans and skilled workmen were more likely to volunteer than their share of the total adult male population suggests they might, and labouring men significantly less likely to volunteer. The Buckinghamshire 'Posse Comitatus' returns of 1798 show that in both the borough of Buckingham and the town of Aylesbury, labouring men were the single largest occupational group, almost 40% of the adult male population. Skilled and artisan workers comprised about 30% of the remainder. The proportions of retailers and agricultural workers in both the Musselburgh and Oxford volunteers fell within the range shown in the two Buckinghamshire centres. The significant divergences were in the proportions of artisans and labourers: the former had at least a 10% greater share in the composition of the two corps than the Buckinghamshire figures would lead to expect. By the same comparison, labourers were greatly under-represented, at 21% of the Oxford and 5.5% of the Musselburgh corps, when they composed around 38% of the adult males in Buckingham and Aylesbury. In the major urban centre of Bristol, not surprisingly there were few agricultural workers in the volunteers. The corps, strikingly, also excluded virtually all labourers of any kind.⁶⁰ A low proportion of labourers, however, may simply be the result of the official injunction to accept none but known and respectable householders as members of corps.

Volunteer corps could be selective, and in the larger cities with several corps, were sometimes plainly based on a restricted occupational or social grouping. Joseph Farington, landscape painter and Royal Academician, and several other artists, belonged to the St. Pancras Association in 1798. Its first company was said to be jealous of the second, believing the latter considered themselves the gentlemen's company.⁶¹ The Royal Edinburgh Volunteer Light Dragoons were said to be almost non-existent during the summer when those members who were lawyers left the city.⁶² A striking example of such a select corps is provided by an undated list of gentlemen who agreed to form a company of artillery, very probably in Edinburgh also.

⁶⁰ James Brown, *The Rise, Progress & Military Improvement of the Bristol Volunteers*.

⁶¹ *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, edited by Kenneth Garlick and Angus Macintyre, (New Haven and London, 1978-1982), Vol.III, pp.1038-1039, 1072.

⁶² J.R. Western, 'The Volunteer Movement as an Anti-Revolutionary Force', p.613 n.1.

Although no occupation is given for a quarter of the names, 60% of the 71 members were professional men, including 38 advocates and writers. The remainder included Dugald Stewart, Professor of Moral Philosophy in the University of Edinburgh, and John Playfair, Professor of Mathematics.⁶³ The Royal Edinburgh Volunteers were reported in 1795 to be composed of the most respectable young and middle-aged men: many of the principal surgeons, lawyers, writers, bankers, merchants and the principal tradesmen and shopkeepers.⁶⁴

For a few unusually well-documented corps, it is possible to ascertain not only the occupational composition but also how it varied between troops and differed overall from the force originally proposed. Membership lists exist for four individual troops of the Musselburgh Volunteer Infantry in 1797. Even though they drew on the same population, labouring men comprised an average 10% of two of the companies, while the remaining two had none. More than 6% of Captain Burnet's company can be classified as gentlemen or professional men, whereas all the others each had less than 2%. Generally, however, the differences in composition within the corps were not of great magnitude. Only for the Musselburgh corps is it possible to compare those who had initially offered to form the corps with those who actually became members. A significantly smaller proportion of professional and gentlemen, and a notably greater proportion of retailers, were recorded as members in 1797, in comparison to those offering their services in a slightly smaller undated list of inhabitants.⁶⁵ These differences were probably due to the non-attendance of retailers and an over-representation of gentlemen at the meeting which proposed the corps in 1797. David Burn, who later became an ensign in the corps, explained that the initial meeting was called prematurely when notice had been sent only to about forty of the better class of inhabitants. He expected that twice that number of respectable tradesmen would also be willing to volunteer.⁶⁶ In view of this, there could reasonably be expected to have been a similarly significant discrepancy in the proportion of men in agricultural or labouring occupations, but these

⁶³Scottish Record Office, GD 224/685/2, List of the Gentlemen who agreed to form themselves into a corps ... to serve as a company of Artillery, (n.d.).

⁶⁴Scottish Record Office, GD 267/1/18/14, [George Home], Edinburgh, 23 March 1795.

⁶⁵Calculated from Scottish Record Office, GD 224/687/2 Musselburgh Volunteers, Roll of Capt. Burnet's Company, Capt. Cunninghame's Company, Capt. Charles Stewart's Company, Capt. George Young's Company, 31 March 1797; List of Officers chosen by the Musselburgh Volunteers, 6 March 1797; Resolutions of the Inhabitants of Musselburgh, [n.d.].

⁶⁶Scottish Record Office, GD 224/687/2, David Burn to Mr. Cuttrel, Fisherton, 12 February 1797.

were, in the event, a remarkably consistent proportion of both proposed and serving membership.

Some contemporaries believed that there had been a substantial change in the nature of volunteer membership when the force was re-established in 1803. The invasion crisis of 1803 transformed the volunteers from an 'armed bourgeoisie' into a much larger popular movement. A large influx of labourers into the Ely volunteers was evident at this time.⁶⁷ Though in some circumstances pay was expected to attract better volunteers, the more general allowance of official pay after 1803 was widely believed to have encouraged poorer men to join, and this allegedly more plebeian force consequentially was less tractable than before. Thomas Howes in Norwich complained that 'when pay was allowed, a new set of men joined, who found that when work was short the Volunteer's pay, added to casual employment, would enable them to live.'⁶⁸

It is in some cases possible to trace the turnover in the membership of a corps and to demonstrate whether the corps became more plebeian as a result. Many corps had a high turnover in membership, particularly in contrast to the militia, in which men engaged to serve for five years or the duration of the war.⁶⁹ The Ely Volunteers lost by resignation on average a seventh of its members every year between 1803 and 1808, which was probably higher than the wartime desertion rate in the army.⁷⁰ Two days' pay a week for training was allowed in 1798 expressly because of the frequent changes occurring in the composition of corps.⁷¹ It might be expected that the expense of resigning from a corps and the attendant liability for militia service may have induced poorer volunteers to remain members longer than their wealthier comrades. Alternatively, men in settled occupations may have been more likely to remain in their corps than those not tied to any one place, like labouring men. The latter expectation appears to be confirmed by the mobility of the membership of the fifth company of the Oxford Loyal

⁶⁷ John Cookson, 'Patriotism and Social Structure: the Ely Volunteers, 1798-1808', pp.7, 9.

⁶⁸ J.W.Fortescue, *The County Lieutenancies and the Army*, p.199; John Cookson, 'Patriotism and Social Structure: the Ely Volunteers, 1798-1808'; possibly the Reverend Thomas Hows (sic) listed in *The Universal British Directory*, [c.1794], Vol.4, p.11.

⁶⁹ Hampshire Record Office, 11 M 49/239, W.Garrett to Lord Bolton, 23 May 1804; J.W.Fortescue, *The County Lieutenancies and the Army*, p.17.

⁷⁰ John Cookson, 'The English Volunteer Movement of the French Wars, 1793-1815: Some Contexts', p.11.

⁷¹ British Library, Add.MS 35,669, Hardwicke Papers Vol.CCCXXXI, Portland to Earl of Hardwicke, Whitehall, 17 February 1798.

Volunteers, Captain Baker Morrell's. The existence of a printed membership list makes possible the identification of the occupations and parishes of all but nine of the 81 members of the company who appear in the pay list and return of 29 March 1804 and in decreasing numbers each December until 1810, when the membership changed drastically on its becoming the Light Infantry Company. A quarter of all the original volunteers remained members for six or more years, into 1809 at least, only a slightly lower proportion than those who had left after a year's membership or less. Half had been volunteers for three years or less.

Significant variations emerge when the company's turnover of membership is broken down by occupation; the company's membership was representative of the corps as a whole. Gentlemen, professional men and retailers in general tended to stay for relatively short periods, while labourers either left within a year or two or remained members for five years or more. Of the eighteen labourers in the original company, eight stayed a year or less, while seven remained members for five years or more. In contrast, skilled tradesmen and artisans were much more likely to remain volunteers for long periods. More than half of the 33 in the corps remained for five years or more, and 42% for more than six years, while only a tenth left within their first year of membership. Nor were these proportions merely a reflection of the preponderance of artisans in the company: two thirds of all those remaining six years or more were artisans, although they had composed only slightly more than 40% of the company in 1804. Labouring men conversely were over-represented among those leaving after a year's membership or less, while the numbers of retailers, professional or gentlemen are too small to be conclusive.⁷²

It is difficult to avoid the inference that among urban volunteers, or at least those in the Oxford corps, men in settled occupations were more likely than others, and particularly than labouring men, to remain members for relatively long periods. If labourers can be considered in general the economic and social inferiors of skilled artisans, then it is misleading to argue that as time passed, and especially after the creation of the local militia, only the poorer volunteers remained.⁷³ As no occupational information is available on anything like such a comprehensive scale for those who joined the company after 1804, it is impossible to say whether the relative propor-

⁷² Calculated from WO 13/4489, Pay-List and Return of Captain Morrell's [Fifth] Company, Oxford Volunteers, 29 March 1804; 24 December 1804, 1805; 31 May 1806; 24 December 1807, 1808, 1809, 1810; O[xford] L[oyal] V[olunteers], (membership list, c.1804).

⁷³ S.C.Smith, 'Loyalty and Opposition in the Napoleonic Wars', pp.44-45.

tions in the several occupational categories changed significantly. However, simply on the basis of the numbers of original members remaining in later years, it is possible to contradict the picture of respectable volunteers being driven out by poorer labouring men.

The nature of the new men who joined the Oxford corps in subsequent years is, however, more difficult to establish. The scarce information available for other corps suggests that in the longer term the number of artisans and skilled workmen as a proportion of the total membership rose, largely at the expense of the unskilled and labourers. The changes in the generally small proportions of professional and gentlemen were too minor to enable any conclusions to be drawn. The muster rolls of the Walls End Volunteer Rifle Corps provide rare information on the change in occupational composition over time. Between 1804 and 1809, the proportion of labourers fell by more than 7%, with a corresponding rise in the proportion of artisans and skilled workmen. The proportions in each of the other occupational categories changed only slightly. The changes in two companies of the Musselburgh Volunteers over probably no more than a year, however, exhibit contradictory tendencies. Only the proportions of labourers showed significant developments, rising by almost 3% in Captain Stewart's company and falling by 3.5% in Captain Burnet's.

Elsewhere, it was believed that the relatively high turnover among labourers did not lead to a decline in their proportionate membership. The lord lieutenant of Midlothian believed that the constant turnover of the membership of the nearby Edinburgh corps was among the same sort of men, and a consequence of their occupations. Many of the first members, apprentices, masons, carpenters and other young artificers, had by mid 1798 left the corps, and new ones continually filled their places. The Duke of Buccleuch explained that a constant change in membership was inevitable, as many of the men had come to Edinburgh to improve themselves, and eventually returned to the country or went south for further improvement in their trades.⁷⁴ Some at least were willing to join the local corps when they settled elsewhere. Arthur Prudden moved from Hitchin to Hertford in 1804 and wrote to his parents asking for a pass from his former commanding officer in order to join the Hertford corps.⁷⁵ In other cases, the member-

⁷⁴Scottish Record Office, GD 51/905/2, Buccleuch to Duke of Portland, Dalkeith House, 4 July 1798, (copy).

⁷⁵Hertfordshire Record Office, 1/67, Records of the Hitchin Loyal Volunteers, Box I, Arthur Prudden to J.S.Prudden, Bucklersberry (*sic*), Hitchin, Hertfordshire; Hertford, 16 April 1804.

ship of corps changed noticeably over a short period. The Northwood Rifle Corps on the Isle of Wight consisted almost entirely of householders in good circumstances when first established in 1803. By 1805, most of them had been obliged to leave because they were unable to perform the severe duty required when serving with line regiments, and they were expected to be replaced by 'active young men' if pay was allowed.⁷⁶

It has been argued that the increased scale of the revived volunteer force and its being brought under closer military control and dependence on government funding were symptomatic of a change in the social structure of membership. The 'democratisation' of the volunteers had profound effects on the manageability and trustworthiness of corps, and eventually to their displacement in favour of a compulsorily ballotted local militia. Nor was it a necessary consequence of a more plebeian membership that corps should become less easy to discipline. Middle-class corps were frequently considered to be less amenable to management than corps of labourers or artisans. Most assertions of the increasing proportion of plebeian volunteers are made with only anecdotal evidence, or none at all; as has been shown, it is difficult to establish for more than a handful of corps whether such a change took place.

In general, volunteer corps were remarkable for the wide social range of their membership. This is particularly obvious when compared with other, more regular, military forces. The regular army recruited in the larger towns from among the least skilled working men, but not vagrants. In a study of three line regiments between 1779 and 1792, labourers were found to have comprised between 35 and 55% of those recruits whose occupation before enlistment was recorded.⁷⁷ Weavers, shoemakers and tailors were prominent among the skilled workmen and tradesmen recruited.⁷⁸ A similar occupational pattern appears among militia men, both ballotted men and substitutes, most of whom were illiterate manual workers.⁷⁹ The membership of the Local Militia, the successor to the volunteers which many former volunteers joined, was more closely comparable to that of some volunteer infantry corps. Unskilled labourers comprised 44%, while artisans and shopkeepers

⁷⁶Hampshire Record Office, 11 M 49/241, pp.143-144, Henry Bowen to Lord Bolton, West Cowes, 8 March 1805.

⁷⁷Glenn A.Steppler, 'The Common Soldier in the Reign of George III, 1760-1793', pp.35, 38, Appendix I p.227. In contrast, three fifths of all soldiers in the French line army in 1789 were artisans and shopkeepers: Samuel F.Scott, *The Response of the Royal Army to the French Revolution*, pp.16-17.

⁷⁸Glenn A.Steppler, 'The Common Soldier in the Reign of George III, 1760-1793', p.36, Appendix I p.227.

⁷⁹J.R.Western, *The English Militia in the Eighteenth Century*, pp.271-272, note; p.256.

together represented 51% of a sample of levies in the Prescott subdivision of Lancashire between 1808 and 1815.⁸⁰ Few volunteer corps had as high a proportion of members in both categories; of those for which membership is known, the Walls End Volunteers were closest, with 46% of its members labourers, and 41% artisans in 1809. Part of the difference can be accounted for by the far greater geographical comprehensiveness of the Local Militia, which drew from every parish, whereas each volunteer corps normally was raised in a specific town or a limited group of parishes. The former's mixture of balloting and volunteer recruiting was likely to produce an occupational distribution closer to the pattern of the overall population.

Ironically, the organisation with an occupational structure closest to some urban volunteer corps was the London Corresponding Society. Dominated by artisans and skilled craftsmen, and to a lesser extent by retailers, its membership was comparable to that of the Musselburgh Volunteers. The Corresponding Society similarly contained few labouring men.⁸¹ This lends some weight to assertions of critics, considered in a later chapter, that the organisation of the volunteers was little different from the democratic debating societies.

Since the election of officers was one of the principal features of volunteer organisation criticised as democratic, and officers frequently criticised for their allegedly low social status, it is significant that they nevertheless formed a distinct social group and that it was more respectable than the membership in general. Although not as narrowly based as the officer corps of the army or militia, the higher volunteer commissions disproportionately were held by gentlemen, professional men and larger merchants. In a sample of 165 officers in eight English corps of various sizes, just over 40% can be identified with any degree of certainty in poll books for borough and county elections in 1802, 1806 and 1807.⁸² More than 70% of those identified held the rank of lieutenant or above, and identification is in itself in many cases a sign of propertied status. The sample indicates that higher

⁸⁰S.C.Smith, 'Loyalty and Opposition in the Napoleonic Wars', pp.153-155.

⁸¹*Selections from the Papers of the London Corresponding Society 1792-1799*, Edited with an introduction by Mary Thale, (Cambridge, 1983), p.xix, n.12.

⁸²War Office, *A List of the Officers of the Gentlemen and Yeomanry Cavalry, and Volunteer Infantry of the United Kingdom*, ([London], 1804); The sample comprises the officers of the Shrewsbury Volunteers 1806, St.Albans Volunteers 1807, Colchester Volunteers 1806, Lincoln Cavalry 1806, Lincoln Volunteers 1806, Lancaster Volunteers 1802, Liverpool Volunteers 1802, Rochester Volunteers 1802. When present, chaplains are not included in the calculations as clergymen unless they also appear in the poll books, in order to prevent the sample over-emphasising the proportion of clergymen.

ranking officers were likely to be gentlemen or professionals: 46% of captains or higher ranks. A further 26% of these higher officers classified themselves as merchants at the polls. Almost a third of lieutenants considered themselves merchants, while retailers and artisans each comprised 22% of the total of 23. When all officers, including chaplains, paymasters, adjutants and surgeons, are considered, however, more than half can be categorised as gentlemen or merchants. Almost a third of the remainder was shared by shopkeepers and artisans.

The higher ranks were not dominated by the greater county gentry, nor were the major gentry families necessarily widely involved in volunteering. In the East Riding, for example, eighteen corps had 75 officers of the rank of captain or above in 1805. Although 68 gentlemen possessed seats worthy of mention in a 1792 gazetteer of Yorkshire, only three of them were officers in corps within their own parish or wapentake, and a further four were officers in corps outside their immediate district. Only nine others possibly had volunteers as close family members.⁸³

The occupational range of volunteer officers was not as narrow as the officer corps of the army, but equally it does not support the charge of opponents that they were not sufficiently socially respectable. Higher-ranking field officers tended to be selected for their military experience and corps were encouraged to select their adjutants from the half pay list. Earlier service in the army was thought to be a particular recommendation for adjutant and field officers.⁸⁴ Of the seven field officers of the rank of captain and higher chosen by the officers of the companies comprising the Bath Military Association, four had held commissions in regular regiments, and one in a militia regiment, while only two of the eight lieutenants had held regular commissions.⁸⁵

It is evident that the membership of the volunteers comprised a wide social range, apparently more comprehensive than any other military force. Some variations can be identified tentatively, between urban and rural volunteers — the former with more artisans and fewer labourers than the latter

⁸³ Calculated from *An Alphabetical Index of all the Towns, Villages, Hamlets, &c. in the County of York, being a second edition of Nomina Villarum Eboracensium, With Many Improvements, And References to find each Place in Tuke's Map of the said County*, (York, 1792), War Office, *A List of the Officers of the Gentlemen and Yeomanry Cavalry, and Volunteer Infantry of the United Kingdom*.

⁸⁴ HO 50/71, Earl of Berkeley, 8 July 1803.

⁸⁵ HO 50/55, Lord Poulet, 22 June 1798; see also Scottish Record Office, GD 224/687/2, List of Officers chosen by the Musselburgh Volunteers, 6 March 1797.

— and between infantry and cavalry — the latter more likely to form a closely-knit unit of landowners and their dependents. It must now be asked what the consequences were of this pattern of membership.

The principal consequences of the varied membership of the volunteer force were its expense to the government and the constrictions on the military uses to which it could be put. The state was obliged to subsidise the force because not all volunteers were able to sustain the expense of membership themselves. Even those volunteers who were not comparatively poor expected allowances for clothing and equipment. Pay for attending exercises was seen both as an incentive to join and as a compensation for lost time and earnings.

Second, the membership of a large proportion of men in settled urban occupations meant that volunteer corps could not be sent anywhere in the country or abroad, or expected to serve on full-time duty. Because many volunteers were in settled occupations that required their regular attendance, they were often reluctant to serve away from their homes, even for short periods of full-time training. The force was as a result neither thoroughly trained nor readily usable; the military authorities could not assume that corps would agree to act beyond the local limits of their terms of service in an emergency, and could issue only invitations, not orders, to corps to train for extended periods on permanent duty away from their localities.

Much of the circumstantial evidence for the composition of volunteer corps comes from the statements of commanding officers who were often trying to gain financial allowances for their men or to explain their reluctance to extend the limits of their corps' service. Consequentially, their assertions of loyalty and social respectability must be treated with some reservations. The officers for various reasons were at pains to point out either that their men were poor and so dependent on official allowances, or that their corps consisted of respectable men in settled and skilled occupations.

Most protestations of the poverty and lowly social rank of volunteers had the granting of allowances in mind. The government was asked to pay for the uniform clothing of the Hanley and Shelton Volunteers because they chiefly consisted of poor labouring people and artisans living in a very remote part of the country, who would be put to serious inconvenience if required to provide their own uniforms.⁸⁶ The Fishguard Volunteers asked

⁸⁶HO 50/85, Talbot to Charles Yorke, 11 December 1803; See also HO 50/45, John Hamilton, Sandrum, 25 February 1799; HO 50/116, Report of meeting of heritors, merchants and other inhabitants of Lerwick and vicinity, 25 October 1803.

for an allowance of a guinea a month for medicines and attendance, claiming that most of them were very poor and had large families. When ill, poverty prevented them from seeking medical assistance.⁸⁷

The inadequacy of pay provided in compensation for time spent at exercise or on permanent duty was another common complaint. It indicates that many volunteers were not among the lowest wage-earners. The privates of the Berwick Loyal Volunteers were principally artificers, day labourers and the lower orders of tradesmen whose occupations required their regular attendance. They were said to be readier to leave the corps than to attend volunteer duty because official pay bore no comparison with what they could earn normally. Their Lieutenant-Colonel said he had been compelled against his interests to grant many indulgences and pay men who did not attend in order to ensure that they would not resign, and would be available when needed on actual service.⁸⁸ Loss of earnings was also an important consideration for rural workmen. When allowances were restricted to pay for one day's exercise a week in 1798, the 500 men of the Tivy Side Volunteers each made a personal declaration that they could not serve with less than the two days' pay for which they originally engaged. They were mostly farmers' servants and labouring men who had made agreements with their masters and employers at lower rates of pay in return for permission to attend the days of exercise.⁸⁹ The allowance of a shilling a day when called out to suppress disturbances was said in Cornwall to be less than what the volunteers earned as labourers.⁹⁰

Another consequence of volunteers' occupations, whether rural or urban, was that they were sometimes unavailable for service away from home. Exercises were often curtailed in harvest time because many rural corps were composed of agricultural workmen. The Muncaster Mountaineers consisted chiefly of yeomen's sons and agricultural people, and most were reported busy with the harvest in September 1804.⁹¹ The King's Lynn Volunteers

⁸⁷HO 50/46, F.Wood to Henry Dundas, Fishguard, 3 October 1799.

⁸⁸HO 50/47, Thos.Wall, Berwick, 28 June 1800.

⁸⁹HO 50/55, Thos.Lloyd to Earl of Lisburne, 30 January 1798.

⁹⁰HO 50/50, [Earl of] Mount Edgcumbe to Lord Hobart, 25 April 1801; for wages, see John Rule, *The Labouring Classes in early industrial England, 1750-1800*, (London, 1986), pp.107-126.

⁹¹PRO 30/26/94, Lord Muncaster to Col.Harris, Muncaster, 3 September 1804; See also Shropshire Record Office, 146/28, Orders and Fines for the Regulation of the Corps of the Pimhill Light Horse Volunteer Yeomanry Cavalry, [n.d.]; Buckinghamshire Record Office, L/Y:13/3, Acton Chaplin, Aylesbury, 12 September 1795; L/Y:13/10, [Acton Chaplin], (n.d.).

would not be inspected on Tuesdays or Saturdays, because as market days they were inconvenient to many of the officers and privates who were in business.⁹² Some corps were reluctant to leave their homes even for short periods of permanent paid duty. The commanding officer of the Royal Oak Volunteer Infantry in Shropshire claimed that it would be extremely injurious to his men, their families and their parishes if they were to be sent away even for only ten days. The majority were farmers, labourers and servants employed in agriculture, with some journeymen, blacksmiths and wheelwrights.⁹³ Similarly, the tradesmen and large farmers comprising the Wotton under Edge yeomanry troop made it clear that it would be very inconvenient for them to be kept long from their families. The men had enrolled in order to keep the peace in a populous manufacturing district in the event of the army being withdrawn to face an invasion, but were ready to leave their district if invasion made it necessary.⁹⁴

A related but more serious consequence of the nature of the occupations of many volunteers was their reluctance to extend their service beyond their original offers. In 1798 Henry Dundas asked volunteer corps to agree to march, in case of invasion, to any part of the military district which usually comprised several adjacent counties. The Home Office received a large number of replies in March 1798 expressing the reluctance of volunteers to leave their localities except in a major emergency. The Mountsbay Volunteers based in Penzance agreed to extend their services to the Western military district, comprising Devon, Somerset and Cornwall, in case of invasion, but asked not to be called away from their families, professions and trades unless absolutely necessary.⁹⁵ Most other corps explained that their similar reluctance was due to the nature of the men's occupations.⁹⁶ The commander of the Kingston upon Thames Volunteers pointed out that volunteer corps were mostly composed of mechanics and labouring men, whose families were dependent upon their labour, and would be destitute if the volunteers were called upon to march. He suggested provision for volunteers' families under

⁹²Norfolk Record Office, MS 2658, Townshend Correspondence, Edward Everard to Marquis Townshend, Lynn, 1 May 1797.

⁹³Shropshire Record Office, Viscount Bridgeman Lieutenancy Papers, 1310/62, George Baylis to Lt.Col.Chayter, Neashill near Shiffnal, 16 April 1804.

⁹⁴Gloucestershire Record Office, D1770/7, Captain H[umphrey] Austin to Lord Lieutenant [Earl of Berkeley], [Wotton under Edge], 17 March 1798.

⁹⁵HO 50/40, Jno.Fremenheere to Henry Dundas, Penzance, 23 March 1798.

⁹⁶HO 50/40, Robert Harvey Jun., Norwich, 28 March 1798; Gloucestershire Record Office, D 4920/1, Royal Gloucester Yeomanry Cavalry, p.11, 19 March 1798.

the poor law would resolve the problem.⁹⁷ The Birmingham Light Horse Volunteers agreed to march anywhere the King directed them in case of invasion, if it were consistent with the welfare of themselves and their families. Because most of them were principals in mercantile manufacturing and trading houses, it was argued by their commanding officer, Thomas Aris Pearson, that their absence for any time would bring great inconvenience to the trade of the town, and cause the shutting of manufactories, putting many out of employment, and leading to the ruin of many volunteers.⁹⁸ The Earl of Warwick enlarged on this argument, concluding that, because many volunteers were masters, the necessary consequence of compelling them to march away would be the total suspension of their manufactures or businesses. The hands thereby put out of work might then form a formidable body susceptible to the views of the evil disposed.⁹⁹ A few corps rejected outright the request to extend their services, but felt it necessary to explain that this was not due to disloyalty.¹⁰⁰

In conclusion, the variety of volunteer membership is apparent in several differences, between cavalry and infantry, among infantry corps, and between the force and other military bodies. The cavalry were more likely to comprise landowners and their dependents, while the volunteers were socially more varied. Within volunteer corps, a broad division is apparent between rural corps with more labourers and urban corps with proportionately more artisans. In contrast to other forces, the volunteers as a whole were more heterogeneous, the private men in general being of a higher status than those in the army, militia or local militia. Volunteer officers also comprised a socially varied group, and were not in general the leading county gentry but instead substantial landowners and prominent urban gentlemen. The nature and pattern of volunteer membership restricted the role of the force effectively to that of a local defence force, reliant on public subsidy. The wide participation of middle and working class men gave rise to fears for the force's loyalty and political reliability, concerns that are discussed in the following chapter.

⁹⁷HO 50/45, William Turner to Henry Dundas, Kingston upon Thames, 24 February 1799.

⁹⁸HO 50/40, T. Pearson to Earl of Warwick, [Birmingham], 22 March 1798.

⁹⁹HO 50/40, [Earl of] Warwick [to Henry Dundas], Warwick Castle, 30 March 1798.

¹⁰⁰HO 50/40, Felix Doran to Earl of Derby, Liverpool, 20 March 1798; HO 50/40, Tho. Earle to Earl of Derby, Liverpool, 20 March 1798.

Social Categorisation of Volunteer Membership

Classifications used for Occupations

I. Gentry and Professions

advocate	attorney	baronet	clergyman
esquire	gentleman	J.P.	lawyer
medical man	M.D.	surgeon	surgeon's apprentice
writer	W[riter]E[dinburgh]	W[riter to the]S[ignet]	

II. Merchants, Entrepreneurs and Managers

agent	banker	bargemaster
brandy merchant	broker	cheese factor
china dealer	coal dealer	coal merchant
corn factor	cotton manufacturer	cyder merchant
dealer in ashes	dealer in earthenware	dealer in fish
flour merchant	fringe manufacturer	grieve
hair merchant	hirer	leather factor
linen merchant	mercier	merchant
manager	manufacturer	orange merchant
overseer	pawnbroker	quill merchant
raff-merchant	sacking manufacturer	ship broker
stocking manufacturer	supervisor	tea dealer
timber merchant	tin warehouse	tripe merchant
viewer [of a colliery]	wine and cider merchant	vinegar merchant
wharfinger	wool manufacturer	wool merchant
wool stapler		

III. Retailers

apothecary	auctioneer	baker	barber
biscuit baker	bookseller	butcher/flesher	chandler
cheesemonger	china man	chymist	confectioner
draper	druggist	earthenware man	fellmonger
fishmonger	fruiterer	gingerbread baker	glass man
goldsmith	grocer	haberdasher	huckster
innkeeper	ironmonger	jeweller	leather seller
linen draper	liquor merchant	livery stable keeper	millener
monger	newsman	oilman	optician
pedler	perfumer	poulterer	publican
racket-court keeper	salesman	shopkeeper	shop man
silk mercer	silversmith	soap chandler	stable keeper
stationer	tobacconist	tallow chandler	tavern keeper
tin man	traveller	upholder	victualler
vintner	watchmaker	wine merchant	woollen draper
worsted man			

IV. Agriculture

badger	countryman	cow keeper	farmer
grazier	husbandman	mealmaker	mealman
miller	portioner	seedsman	servant in husbandry
yeoman			

V. Craft Trades, Artisans and Skilled Workmen

anchor smith	band maker	bankman [mining]	basket maker/corver
billiard marker	blacksmith	block maker	boatbuilder
bookbinder	brassfounder	brass maker	brazier
breeches maker	brewer	bricklayer	brick maker
breeches cleaner	breeches maker	brewer	brush maker
buckle maker	builder	button maker	bricklayer
cabinet maker	callenderer	candle maker	cap maker
carpenter	carver	carver and gilder	cassimere printer
chair maker	clock maker	cloth glosser	clothier
clothworker	coachmaker	coachsmith	coach wheeler
coalman	coating glossser	collar maker	comb maker
cook	cooper	cordwainer	cork cutter
currier	cutler	distiller	dry salter
dyer	engineman	engine wright	engraver
farrier	file smith	fireman	fish hook maker
flax dresser	fuller/tucker	furrier	gardener
gilder	glass cutter	glazier	glover
grinder gunmaker	gunsmith	gun-stock maker	hairdresser
hallier	hat maker	hatter	heel maker
hemp dresser	hooper	horner	horse keeper
hosier	house carpenter	ironfounder	ivory worker
japanner	joiner	last maker	lath maker
lath splitter	leather cutter	leather dresser	lime burner
machine maker	malt mill maker	maltster	marble mason
mason	master tailor	mast maker	measurer
mechanic	milkman	millwright	musical instrument maker
nailor	nurseryman	off-putter [mining]	organ builder
painter	paper maker	paper stainer	patten board maker
patten maker	patten ring maker	pattern maker	pavier
pen maker	pencil maker	peruke maker	pewterer
pipe maker	plaisterer	plane maker	plumber
pocket-book maker	potter	press man	presser and packer
printer	pump maker	razor grinder	rectifier
rope maker	roper	saddle tree maker	sadler
sail cloth maker	sail maker	salt maker	sawyer
serge maker	shipbuilder	ship joiner	shipwright
shoe black	shoemaker	sickle maker	sieve wright
silk dyer	sinker [mines]	skinner	slater/tiler/bellier
sleecker	smith	soap boiler	soap maker
starchmaker	stay maker	stocking cleaner	stocking maker
stone mason	store keeper	sugar refiner	tailor
tanner	thatcher	tilemaker	tin plate worker
tinsmith	trunk maker	turner	twine spinner
tyler	umbrella maker	upholsterer	vinegar maker
waggonman	waggonway wright	water man	weaver
wheelwright	whitesmith	wine hooper	wool comber
wool sorter	wire drawer	wright	

VI. Labouring Men

butler	carrier	carter	chairman
chaise driver	coach driver	coachman	college bedmaker
college servant	ferryman	footman	groom
house servant	labourer	manciple	mariner
miner	ostler/hostler	pitman	porter
servant	shopman	stable boy	waggoner
waiter	wherry-man		

VII. Others

accountant	alderman	apprentice
architect	arithmetician	articled clerk
artist	assistant to clergyman	assistant at grammar
school	assurance office	bailiff
banker's clerk	book keeper	clerk
college treasurer	comedian	commoner of college
Custom House officer	dancing master	Deputy Chamberlain
discharged sailor	dissenting minister	Excise officer
ex-militia-man	ex-soldier	fellow of college
gaol keeper	gravel walk	half pay officer
house holder	house keeper	landscape painter
law student	librarian	licensed teacher
lodger	lodging house [keeper]	mail guard
mariner	market keeper	musician
music master	naval officer	organist
parish clerk	pensioner	permit writer
portrait painter	post boy	post master
post office clerk	preacher	professor
rector of grammar school	repository	road surveyor
schoolmaster	sheriff's officer	surveyor
surveyor of taxes	tide waiter	town clerk
turnkey	turnpike gate keeper	undertaker

No.	Corps	Date	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	None
226	Musselburgh inhabitants offering services ¹	(n.d.)	5.8	5.8	6.6	3.1	56.2	4.4	6.6	11.5
274	Musselburgh Volunteers: all four companies	1797	2.9	4.7	15.7	3.6	58.8	5.5	3.6	5.1
62	Captain Burnet's Company	(n.d.)	8.1	4.8	11.3	3.2	56.5	11.3	3.2	1.6
77	Captain Burnet's Company	1797	6.5	5.2	10.4	3.9	57.1	7.8	6.5	2.6
75	Captain Stewart's Company	(n.d.)	1.3	4.0	10.7	5.3	53.3	9.3	6.7	9.3
74	Captain Stewart's Company	1797	1.4	6.8	10.8	4.1	52.7	12.2	6.8	5.4
63	Captain Cunningham's Coy.	1797	1.6	4.8	23.8	4.8	65.1	0	0	0
60	Captain Young's Company	[1797]	1.7	1.7	20.0	1.7	61.7	0	0	13.3
1006	Bristol Volunteer Infantry: all ten companies	1798	11.5	6.6	23.0	0.2	36.1	0.2	36.1	10.0
93	1st Company	1798	14.0	5.4	32.3	0	33.3	0	10.8	4.3
96	2nd Company	1798	10.4	13.5	21.9	2.1	38.5	0	11.5	2.1
97	3rd Company	1798	9.3	7.2	21.6	0	47.4	0	6.2	8.2
85	4th Company	1798	7.1	4.7	31.8	0	32.9	1.2	8.2	14.1
104	5th Company	1798	10.6	6.7	25.0	0	35.6	0	13.5	8.7
101	6th Company	1798	11.9	5.9	22.8	0	43.6	0	8.9	6.9
102	7th Company	1798	14.7	9.8	22.5	0	29.4	0	14.7	8.8
99	8th Company	1798	9.1	5.1	16.2	0	42.4	0	11.1	16.2
95	9th Company	1798	18.9	4.2	18.9	0	33.7	0	7.4	16.8
100	10th Company	1798	13.0	5.0	26.0	0	36.0	1.0	11.0	8.0
913	Oxford Loyal Volunteers	[c.1804]	2.7	3.0	16.6	0.9	41.4	21.0	8.5	5.8
241	Muncaster Mountaineers ²	1804	1.2	0.8	1.7	56.0	15.8	22.8	1.2	0.4
156	Walls-End Volunteers ³	1804	1.9	3.2	0.6	4.5	34.6	53.8	1.3	0
151	Walls-End Volunteers	1809	0.7	5.3	0	6.0	41.1	46.4	0.7	0
62	Uffculme Volunteers ¹⁵	1801	1.6	0	0	41.9	46.8	3.2	1.6	4.8
63	Grenadier corps	1801	1.6	0	0	36.5	35.0	15.9	1.6	9.5

No.	Corps	Date	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	None
116	Hexham Volunteer Infantry ¹⁶	1803	1.7	0.9	2.6	1.7	87.1	5.2	0.9	0
112	Winchcombe and Sudeley									
	Loyal Volunteer Infantry ¹⁷	1798	7.1	1.8	21.4	35.7	29.5	0	3.6	0.9
27	Devizes Troop, Wiltshire Yeomanry Cavalry ⁷	1802– 1815	7.4	3.7	22.2	59.3	7.4	0	0	0
64	Loyal King-Stanley Rifle Corps ⁸	1803	0	3.1	3.1	9.4	46.9	0	10.9	26.6
71	Company of Artillery [probably Edinburgh] ⁹	(n.d.)	60.6	1.4	4.2	0	1.4	0	7.0	25.4
70	Corbridge Volunteer Infantry ¹⁰	1804	4.3	0	1.4	12.9	58.6	17.1	0	5.7
	Buckinghamshire lists, probably of local corps:									
30	Dinton Volunteers ¹¹	[c.1803]	0	0	13.3	16.7	13.3	43.3	0	13.3
109	Dinton Posse Comitatus	1798	1.8	0	1.8	8.3	17.4	69.7	0.9	0
27	Princes Risborough offer to train ¹²	[c.1803]	0	0	25.9	18.5	29.6	22.2	3.7	0
137	Princes Risborough									
	Posse Comitatus	1798	3.6	2.2	13.9	5.1	22.6	46.7	5.8	0
24	Stone Volunteers ¹³	[c.1803]	0	0	0	8.3	4.2	79.2	4.2	4.2
81	Stone Posse Comitatus	1798	1.2	0	1.2	17.3	11.1	66.7	2.5	0
	Posse Comitatus returns: ¹⁴									
485	Borough of Buckingham	1798	1.4	1.4	10.5	5.8	27.0	39.8	7.2	6.8
546	Aylesbury town	1798	2.9	2.2	18.1	0.9	33.0	36.4	5.9	0.5
373	Bullington Division, Oxfordshire Local Militia ⁴	1811– 1814	0	0	5.4	1.6	31.1	57.9	0.8	3.2
137	Bullington Division, Oxfordshire Militia ⁵	1807– 1813	0	0	0.7	0.7	36.5	39.4	0	22.6
358	London Corresponding Soc. ⁶		7.3	2.5	22.6	0.3	59.5	1.1	6.7	0

1. Scottish Record Office, GD 224/687/2.
2. PRO 30/26/94, Muncaster to Thomas Pierce, Muncaster House, 5 November 1804.
3. Northumberland Record Office, 1812/17, muster roll of the Walls-End Volunteer Rifle Corps, 4 December 1804.
4. Oxfordshire R.O., L/M II/iii/1 Militia Inrolment Book: Local Militia Bullingdon division, 21 December 1811-16 April 1814.
5. Oxfordshire R.O., L/M II/iii/1 Bullingdon Division Militia enrolment book, 31 December 1807-27 April 1813.
6. *Selections from the Papers of the London Corresponding Society 1792-1799*, Edited with an introduction by Mary Thale, (Cambridge, 1983), p.xix n.12.
7. Gloucestershire Record Office, D1571/X169, Devizes Troop, Wiltshire Yeomanry Cavalry, enrolments 1802-1815.
8. HO 50/71, Loyal King-Stanley Rifle Corps, 8 August 1803.
9. Scottish Record Office, EX GD 224/685/2.
10. Northumberland Record Office, 1812/21, muster roll of the Corbridge Volunteer Corps of Infantry, [January 1804].
11. Buckinghamshire Record Office, L/V:2/4, resident volunteers of the parish of Dinton, [c.1803].
12. Buckinghamshire Record Office, L/V:2/1, offer to train, parish of Princes Risborough, [c.1803].
13. Buckinghamshire Record Office, L/V:2/4, list of volunteers for Stone, [c.1803].
14. I.F.W.Beckett, *The Buckinghamshire Posse Comitatus 1798*, Buckinghamshire Record Society No.22, (n.p., 1985).
15. Devon R.O., Fortescue MSS, 1262 M/L46, Articles of the different corps of volunteers, 17 May 1801.
16. Northumberland Record Office, 1812/21, muster roll of the Hexham Volunteer Infantry, 16 July 1803.
17. HO 50/42, Winchcombe and Sudeley Loyal Voluntary Infantry, 5 May 1798.

Chapter Four: A Connexion of Loyalty

Having established who the volunteers were, it will now be asked whether they could be trusted. Not only did the varied membership of volunteer corps have consequences for the expense of the force and its military usefulness, but it also had important consequences for its loyalty and political reliability. This chapter will further examine the question of the extent to which, if at all, volunteering can be considered a political movement, and if so, whether its politics can be considered loyal. Loyalty is here taken to mean allegiance to the crown and constitution in its general sense, as distinct from political adherence to the ministry. In practice, it was frequently difficult to distinguish loyalty from support for the ministry. The volunteers were generally assumed to be ministerialist, and anti-ministerial volunteers felt obliged to deny any support for Pitt's measures.

The nature of the membership was one of the most important determinants of the usefulness of the force. Because volunteers were not full-time military men and were not subject to the articles of war, they expected to be allowed unusual independence in their organisation and terms of service. While retaining a large degree of autonomy, volunteers were given military training and trusted with arms. The careful selection of men allowed to join the corps was therefore vital. Loyalty and social respectability were the main criteria for membership. The reliability of corps was ensured by the careful scrutiny of proposed officers, who could then be trusted to ensure that only trustworthy men were admitted. Loyalty among volunteers was further guaranteed by requiring oaths and by occasional investigation of political principles and membership of seditious societies. Yet the volunteer movement was not politically or religiously exclusive, although there were some Pittite overtones to the force and the orthodox Anglican clergy played a prominent role. Political allegiances and religious denomination appear to have become subsidiary considerations in relation to the concern for loyalty to the crown and the established constitution.

The first section will consider the process by which loyal men were identified and volunteers selected. Great importance was attached to the choice of reliable officers, because they and not the county authorities or the Home Office were largely responsible for the selection of the private men. The potential unreliability of the common people, especially when organised in large armed bodies, was widely feared. It was believed that seditious and insurrectionary organisations would use the volunteer system as a means to acquire weapons. The government therefore sought to make a connec-

tion between loyalty and propertied status, and to use the volunteers as a way of strengthening social connections between propertied men and their dependents. An apparently paradoxical compromise was reached between selecting only loyal men and admitting men who might otherwise have been disloyal.

The means used to check the reliability of the volunteers varied widely. Often, informal enquiries were made by officers, and membership of political reform societies or public opposition to 'patriotic' measures like the Voluntary Contribution were sometimes sufficient grounds for exclusion. From 1804, an oath of loyalty to the crown was legally required, as in other military forces. The results of this process of selection are set out in the second section in an examination of the political and religious allegiances of the volunteers. Overall, they were not a partisan or sectarian force, although where it is possible to compare them to the population as a whole they were a little more likely to support the government and to be members of the established church.

Volunteering in general avoided overt party political allegiances and controversy. Other than in the largest cities, few corps could afford to antagonise potential supporters by adopting a partisan stance. A large number of politically disparate members of parliament were volunteers, yet no parliamentary interest group appears to have developed from among them as it did later in the nineteenth century. Sometimes volunteers followed the political line set by their commanding officers, which helped determine who was willing to join the corps, but overall, it was volunteers' political principles rather than their partisan allegiances that were considered important. Acceptable political principles appear to have included the range of allegiances that claimed to adhere to the principles of 1688. This definition of principles was held by those who were attached to the constitution as it existed in church and state, but was not necessarily rejected by those who believed the system needed radical reform. Volunteering was however avowedly opposed to revolutionary republicanism, the system inherent in what were known broadly as 'French principles'. A similarly broad range of religious allegiances was tolerated among volunteers. Dissenters and even Catholics had little trouble joining corps, even though the legality of granting commissions to Catholics was doubtful. The general presumption made was that if a volunteer was loyal and his political principles sound, then religious considerations were largely immaterial.

Finally, some of the reasons for the authorities' concern for the loyalty and reliability of volunteers will be considered. Volunteers were given arms

and military training, but no close supervision could be kept over them when they were off duty and when they eventually were disbanded. Volunteer corps seemed to offer an attractive way for seditious societies to acquire arms, either by infiltrating established corps or by setting up their own. Cautionary examples of both courses of action help explain the government's wariness in dealing with the volunteers.

Part One: Loyalty and the Selection of Volunteers

Considerable importance was attached to the loyalty of volunteers, particularly because they were to be given arms and military training and yet were not under direct army control. Fears that the disaffected might take the opportunity to arm themselves were widely expressed. The national and county administrations adopted several approaches towards ensuring that only trustworthy men were allowed to become volunteers. The principal aim was to ensure the appointment of loyal officers, as they would then be vigilant in the admission of private men. A landed qualification was required for a commission in an armed association, though not in volunteer or yeomanry corps, but the suitability of officers was further scrutinised by the lords lieutenant, largely informally and in social terms. Oaths of allegiance and declarations of loyalty were required from private volunteers, and occasional enquiries were made into their political principles.

In practice it was difficult to identify loyalty unambiguously and to differentiate it from support for the government. The intention of the volunteering system was to attract the participation of a wide selection of society in order to gain the service of men who were unlikely to act in any other capacity, but in practice volunteering provided the substance to demonstrate an apparently wide and substantial backing for the ministry's war policies. Loyalty to the crown and attachment to the constitution were by this means implicitly linked with support for the ministry's handling of the war. Government supporters were able to link opposition to the volunteer system or refusal to volunteer with disloyalty. The Earl of Fife, for instance, identified as disaffected in Banffshire all those who neither joined the volunteers nor came forward for local defence. He believed they were all democrats, ready to do mischief if it was in their power.¹ Yet it does not necessarily follow that all men who volunteered were by that fact presumed loyal. Widespread concern was manifested that some volunteers might not have loyal motives

¹HO 50/44, [Earl of] Fife, Mar Lodge, 22 August 1798.

or intentions, and much attention was devoted to the exclusion of such men.

The wide social range of those involved in the volunteers caused concern about the sort of men who could be trusted with arms and military training. In practice, two unreconciled policies were adopted towards the selection of men. The government insisted that only known and reputable householders, or men nominated by such householders, should be accepted. Most lords lieutenant and volunteer officers took property and respectability as guarantees of loyalty in the absence of evidence to the contrary. Conversely, it was argued by some lords lieutenant that service in the volunteers made potentially unreliable men loyal. Both approaches presumed the political danger from the mass of the common people. They differed over whether it was safer to try to bring such men on to the side of government, and risk a future armed insurrection if this failed, or to exclude them in order to ensure the creation of a loyal force which could deal with internal opposition. In effect, both Pitt's and Addington's ministries tried to do both, by granting allowances and exemptions to encourage the formation of large volunteer corps of working men, while also inviting the establishment of other corps, particularly among the yeomanry cavalry, by propertied men serving without pay or allowances.²

Because the government wanted to suppress radicalism and intimidate potential adherents of radical societies, it has been suggested that the volunteers were intended to be an 'exclusively middle-class movement' uniting men of property in a common front against disorder. This, however, conflicted with the wider social base needed for the government's other alleged objective, the inculcation of an 'active political faith' among the middle and lower classes. In the event, neither course was adopted, but, John Western has argued, an 'uneasy compromise' between the two objectives was maintained instead.³

The extent to which such a compromise between a select loyal force and the use of volunteering to make men loyal was a matter of conscious policy, let alone whether it existed in practice, is open to question. It is not apparent that the ministry sought to create a dualist force of unpaid gentlemen and paid working men. Allowances were available to all infantry corps that required them; whether they were accepted or not was a matter for the volunteers themselves. Captain Robert Forbes of the Gosport Volunteers complained in 1804 that the principal defect of the volunteer system was

²J.R. Western, 'The Volunteer Movement as an Anti-Revolutionary Force', p.607.

³J.R. Western, 'The Volunteer Movement as an Anti-Revolutionary Force', p. 607.

that it failed to discriminate between the master mechanic and shopkeeper or tradesmen on one hand, and working mechanics and labouring men on the other. He believed the former should consider it a degradation to receive pay, whereas the latter should receive pay as they could not afford to serve without it, but in practice, both were paid.⁴ Nor were the unpaid armed associations and cavalry troops necessarily of higher social status. The division between broad socially mixed volunteer infantry and an elite mounted yeomanry was not clearly defined in practice. The government's ability to ensure that a proportion of the corps were composed mainly of men of property was largely notional. Though it did insist that the yeomanry cavalry pay most of their expenses, many members of such corps were labourers, servants or tenants subsidised by men of property. The major expansion of the force in 1798 and in particular 1803 effectively established the broadly-based character of the force, whatever the original intentions of the ministers had been.

By inviting the formation of voluntary military corps the government seemed to be taking a calculated risk. To Lord Westmorland, arming the people seemed 'rather a dangerous experiment'. His experience as Lieutenant of Ireland had shown him that when the middling rank of people were in possession of arms, the laws could not always enforce their obedience.⁵ Wariness of arming the populace indiscriminately was widespread. Three considerations were thought important before such a 'strong' measure as arming the people was taken: whether it was necessary, whether safe, and whether practicable.⁶ Putting arms into the hands of many, or leaving them with any men after danger had passed, was thought likely to lay the foundation of much evil, particularly in village associations.⁷ As early as 1792, the Home Office had received warnings that the progress of republican ideas among the lower orders had made it unwise to put arms into the hands of the people, following the example of France.⁸ A correspondent in Essex warned the Home Office in 1798 that an indiscriminate levy could not be

⁴Hampshire Record Office, 11 M 49/240, pp.73-74, Captain Robert Forbes to Lord Bolton, Gosport, 16 January 1804.

⁵Cambridge University Library, Copies of Pitt Correspondence, f.1437, Lord Westmorland [to Pitt], 8 May 1794.

⁶National Library of Scotland, MS 1048, Melville Papers, 'W.O.', 43 Harley Street, [n.d.]; This is possibly William Ogilvie, who suggested raising voluntary associations in 1794.

⁷HO 42/43, f.16, W. Watson, Farnsfield, 21 May 1798.

⁸HO 42/22, ff.612-613, Benjamin Vaughan, Billiter Square, 30 November 1792.

made without considerable risk.⁹ The Earl of Warwick, lord lieutenant of Warwickshire, concluded that 'Large Bodies of Men are soon directed by Evil designing persons'.¹⁰

Though these fears were most often expressed about plans to arm all able-bodied men under the General Defence Acts and the Levy en Masse, they were also prompted by the prospect of large and numerous volunteer corps and armed associations. With volunteers, however, proper regulation and trustworthy officers were thought sufficient to guard against potential problems. The lord lieutenant of Gloucestershire was 'cautious (and it is very necessary) of Arming the lower order of the Clothing manufactory in too Great Numbers', and so took 'care to have proper Gentlemen answerable for their Corps in the Clothing parts'.¹¹ The Earl of Warwick repeatedly expressed his concern lest the disaffected among the lower orders be given arms. In August 1803 he told Lord Hobart that although 'The Spirit of Loyalty & public Zeal was never higher than it now is in this County ... I by no means consider it to be a prudent Measure to put arms in the hands of all indiscriminately ... Colliers, & manufacturers of various kinds are not such as I wish to see with Arms in their hands unless under the Command of Men of tried Loyalty & Prudence.'¹²

The contradictory wishes both to enrol only trustworthy and loyal men in volunteer corps, and to enrol men who might otherwise be a danger, were never completely resolved. The government faced the dilemma of being unable to encourage volunteering without also encouraging popular political awareness, which might have proved difficult to handle and have caused problems in the future. Consciousness of popular political power may have led to greater readiness on the part of the masses to use it.¹³ Volunteer participation in food rioting in 1800 showed the unreliability of some plebeian corps, but nevertheless the principle of universal military training was adopted by the government in the Levy en Mass Act in 1803. Yet the intention remained to admit to volunteer corps only men who had property, however little, or those who had close ties of dependence, clientage, family or employment with propertied men.

The identification of property and nature of employment with loyalty

⁹HO 42/42, f.225, John Rowland Sproale, Great Bardfield near Braintree, 25 February 1798.

¹⁰HO 50/89, Earl of Warwick to Lord Hobart, 12 August 1803.

¹¹HO 50/71, [Earl of] Berkeley [to Home Office], Berk[eley] Castle, 3 November 1803.

¹²HO 50/89, Earl of Warwick to Lord Hobart, 12 August 1803.

¹³J.R.Western, 'The Volunteer Movement as an Anti-Revolutionary Force', p.610.

was assumed, and stressed, possibly because there were few other acceptable ways of excluding the disaffected. William Withering, an Edgbaston physician, warned against arming manufacturers, miners and colliers. Manufacturers, he believed, were the most ignorant, corrupt and unprincipled of mankind, and through living in large towns were accustomed to associate, so could not be trusted with arms. Brigadier-General Porter similarly believed that tradesmen, whether of high or moderate respectability were always the least manageable of men, and the least likely to obey the orders of their officers. Withering thought miners and colliers were less debauched than manufacturers, but were numerous, and accustomed to defy the law. Those men who could be trusted were generally those with some attachment to propertied men and with little opportunity to associate. Withering believed that all domestic servants could be armed safely as they were in general attached to their masters, and had respect for persons and property. Labouring peasants, similarly, had little opportunity to associate, so 'preserve much of that untainted simplicity of human nature' and had better morals than other labourers. One Hampshire officer moreover believed that yeomen were a more manageable and handy set of men than the opulent farmers.¹⁴

Volunteer corps were seen as a mechanism by which existing social bonds could be strengthened against internal and external threats. Careful selection of officers would reinforce their social connections with common men, and would provide a politically reliable military force. Henry Dundas emphasised the need to create and sustain into peacetime the spirit of yeomanry corps, thereby forming a connection between the gentlemen of rank and the yeomanry in England, and the persons of rank and the substantial farmers in Scotland. He envisaged a specifically rural force, formed from men of property and substance living in the country and not infected with the 'Poison' of large towns.¹⁵ Sir John MacPherson insisted that effective security could only be formed on the basis of a combined anti-revolutionary defensive system. Such a system necessarily rendered the proprietors and cultivators of land armed co-operators in its defence.¹⁶

¹⁴Scottish Record Office, GD 51/931, Wm. Withering, Edgbaston, 26 April 1798; Hampshire Record Office, 11 M 49/240, p.59, Brigadier General George Porter to Lord Bolton, 25 January 1805; 11 M 49/234, p.20, G.H. Rose to Lord Bolton, Cuffnalls, 26 October 1801.

¹⁵Scottish Record Office, GD 51/887/1, Henry Dundas to Duke of Buccleuch, Wimbledon, 10 June 1797, (copy).

¹⁶*The Correspondence of George, Prince of Wales*, Edited by A. Aspinall, Vol. V, p.23,

John Western believed that corps formed by landlords and factory owners among their dependents and workmen both sprang from and strengthened, while advertising, the existing social ties between superior and inferior.¹⁷ Workmen in settled occupations were considered most suitable. One Hampshire company commanded by a boat builder and composed of men from his yard was rejected on the grounds that the men working with him one day might be gone the next.¹⁸ Lieutenant-Colonel Colyear Robertson offered the services of the highland clans of Robertson and Stewart, most of whom were his relatives, for preserving peace in lowland Perthshire. The gentlemen and their tenants, Robertson ambiguously reassured the Home Office, had always showed the greatest zeal for what was, or what they believed to be, the cause of royalty.¹⁹

Rural corps in particular feared what they saw as a potential insurrectionary threat from manufacturing areas. The large farmers and men in trade who composed the Wotton under Edge yeomanry troop lived in a populous manufacturing area. They had enrolled, according to their commanding officer, in order to keep peace among the numerous lower order of the people should the army be removed.²⁰ Elsewhere in Gloucestershire, the Earl of Berkeley took 'care to encourage all the great *land Proprietors* with their People, and have no doubt of further encreasing their Corps if necessary, so that *those Corps* have the command of the Arms in the case of any internal commotion amongst the lower orders of the Manufactory'.²¹ He probably had been influenced by the example of the resolutions of the Hundreds of Longtree, Bisley and Whitstone of August 1803. The resolutions similarly had recommended that the masters of manufacturing servants should engage the younger men, on whom they could best depend, to act with them in local defence. Masters and servants, they believed, should act together in a relation most consonant with their usual connections.²² Arguing for the continuation during peace-time of the extensive Cheviot Legion in Northumberland, its Lieutenant-Colonel claimed that the corps tied

No.1877, Sir John MacPherson to Earl Camden, Frant [near Tunbridge Wells], 27 May 1804, (copy).

¹⁷J.R.Western, 'The Volunteer Movement as an Anti-Revolutionary Force', p.611.

¹⁸Hampshire Record Office, 11 M 49/235, Wm.Champn.Crespigny to Lord Bolton, 21 September 1803.

¹⁹HO 42/23, f.540, W.Ph.Colyear Robertson, London, 6 December 1792; HO 42/23, f.134, W.Ph.Colyear Robertson, Wells Street, Cavendish Square, 5 December 1792.

²⁰HO 50/41, H.Austin to Earl of Berkeley, Wotton under edge, 17 March 1798.

²¹HO 50/71, Earl of Berkeley [to Home Office], 3 November 1803.

²²HO 50/71, Sir George Paul to Lord Berkeley, 31 August 1803.

common men to the interests of the county as a whole, in a 'Connexion of Loyalty'. Although widely dispersed, each company had the same interest; each man serving was an example to his family and connections. An entire district of the county, he claimed, was thereby united with the same view under the same principles, and acted against the introduction of other principles.²³

Without the social cohesion provided by volunteering, it was feared there would be little to prevent the spread of French principles among the common people. Henry St. Paul made explicit that the alternative to his 'Connexion of Loyalty' was the adoption of French republican principles by the volunteers and the common people, who had 'learnt to think' during the war, but were 'as incapable of judging as ever'.²⁴ Others agreed that volunteers could be relied upon only as long as they remained enrolled; corps were a means to ensure the loyalty of potentially dangerous men.

Labourers and domestic servants were pointed out as a numerous class of people who might become very useful or very dangerous depending on how they were managed. George Holme Summer of Hatchlands at East Clandon found his servants practising the sword exercise in 1798, so he proposed providing them with horses and leading them as a volunteer company.²⁵ Earl Fitzwilliam feared in 1798 that the panic of an invasion would suspend all work, and canal workmen would be thrown out of employment. Navvies were stout, strong and usually licentious, but would never enlist as regular soldiers. If not usefully employed as pioneers, Fitzwilliam warned, they would be mischievously employed.²⁶ Teesdale Cockell, commander of the Pontefract Volunteers, thought his most necessary task was implanting dutiful and loyal principles into the whole corps.²⁷ Considering the food shortages of 1800 and the composition of the two major volunteer battalions in Dorset, Baron Rivers concluded that their enrolment converted 'Insurrection into Defence'. The same men who from a sense of duty became the guardians of tranquillity and order, might otherwise have been engaged in riots and tumults.²⁸

The relationship between loyalty and volunteering is not as clear-cut

²³HO 50/54, H[enry] H[eneage] St. Paul to Lord Hobart, 31 May 1802.

²⁴HO 50/54, H[enry] H[eneage] St. Paul to Lord Hobart, 31 May 1802.

²⁵HO 50/41, George Holme Summer, Hatchlands near Guildford, 15 April 1798. The corps does not appear in the War Office lists of volunteer officers for 1800 or 1801.

²⁶HO 50/41, Wentworth Fitzwilliam to Henry Dundas, 26 April 1798.

²⁷HO 50/54, Wentworth Fitzwilliam to Lord Hobart, 8 May 1802, (enclosure).

²⁸HO 50/47, [Baron] Rivers to Henry Dundas, Stratfieldsay H[ouse], 16 May 1800.

as has been presumed.²⁹ Volunteer corps that were predominantly middle class were not by virtue of that fact necessarily politically reliable. Yet membership of a volunteer corps was often in itself considered evidence of reliability and a mark of loyalty to the constitution. The mayor of Liverpool in 1798 was considered a respectable and independent man in his property and sentiments, but it was his command of a local regiment of volunteers that confirmed his loyalty.³⁰ When recommending gentlemen of reliable principles and good character to act as justices of the peace in Croydon and to counteract the existing 'factious' magistracy, Lord Liverpool favoured John Brickwood, commanding officer of the local cavalry and infantry corps. Liverpool thought him to have been of great public service in commanding the corps and excluding all 'improper' men from it.³¹

Loyalty was seldom defined in terms of overt adherence to constitutional, political or philosophical tenets. Most often, these were assumed to be the natural concomitant of social standing, independence, respectability and character. Outward signs of loyalty could not always be relied upon; those most enthusiastic to volunteer and expressing the greatest public zeal were least to be trusted. The Earl of Warwick warned that the most dangerous men were those who expressed the greatest public zeal and endeavour. He believed they would abuse their command whenever an opportunity arose. As Lieutenant of Warwickshire he was primarily concerned with the character of the officers, not the men; he rejected the offer of the Coventry Legion of volunteer infantry and cavalry because the proposer had gained 'the Sanction of a Party' among the members to make him commander, and had published the names of officers before submitting them for approval. Warwick accordingly refused to sanction what he saw as the efforts of a faction which would have put arms into 'improper' hands.³²

Lords lieutenant placed great importance on the selection of officers, many of whom they knew personally, believing that they could then be trusted to ensure the reliability of the rank and file. Informal and discreet inquiries were made into the rank and principles of officers when they were unknown to the lieutenants.³³ The Home Office appears to have accepted the word of lords lieutenant, and the latter took the word of commanding

²⁹See H.T.Dickinson, 'Popular Conservatism in Late 18th Century Britain'.

³⁰HO 42/45, f.260, R.Stathan to Wm.Wickham, Liverpool, 18 October 1798.

³¹British Library, Add.MS 38,310, Liverpool Papers, Vol.CXXI, ff.226-227, Liverpool to Onslow, Addiscombe Place, 19 June 1798.

³²HO 50/89, [Earl of] Warwick to Lord Hobart, Warwick Castle, 12 August 1803.

³³See HO 42/42, f.30, Thos.Curry, Gosport, 13 March 1798.

officers, that volunteers were considered to be respectable men. Normally only when there was strong evidence to the contrary was any investigation made into the reliability of officers or the membership of a corps. The lords lieutenant or the Home Office were seldom involved in the selection of private men or non-commissioned officers. In small corps, prospective members were known to the officers, whereas in large associations two respectable householders had to vouch for each new member. The vital check on reliability was thus performed by the officers, not the county administration. It was widely held that only by placing proper officers at the head of corps would sufficient attention be paid to the men admitted. Earl Fitzwilliam, lord lieutenant of the West Riding, believed his principal object was to get proper leaders at the head of corps, who would then pay due attention to the persons admitted. He admitted to a predilection for large scale corps, and believed that a man of consideration at the head of a district would give the commanders of widely dispersed corps a superior to look to, and would encourage the principle of subordination.³⁴

The importance of the careful selection of officers made the membership of the committees that elected and recommended members for commissions of vital importance. In view of the influence committees held in appointing the officers of armed associations in London, it was suggested that aldermen should pay pointed attention to the men nominated for the committees. Without appearing to interfere, they were to recommend inhabitants known to be well affected. Once nominations of officers were presented to the government, it would then be easy to trace the districts where such precautions to exclude the disaffected had not been taken.³⁵

The necessity of appointing reliable men to command corps was widely accepted, but there was less agreement on the sort of men who were considered to be suitable for commissions. Property, respectability, residence and local influence were the prime attributes sought in volunteer officers. The nice selection of officers, according to Lord Bolton, lieutenant of Hampshire, required due regard to distinction either in professional skill or respectability of character and place in society.³⁶ A recommendation of the two gentlemen proposed as officers of the Doddington Cavalry Association in 1798 emphasised their respectability, property in the Isle of Ely, popularity and good

³⁴HO 50/91, Wentworth Fitzwilliam to Charles Yorke, 24 August 1803.

³⁵Scottish Record Office, GD 51/934, John Fordyce and J. Atkinson, Aldermanbury, [London], 3 May 1798.

³⁶Hampshire Record Office, 11 M 49/238, p.178, Lord Bolton to Major General Sir George Prevost, 30 March 1807.

character. Captain Owen Gray was reported to have great influence from his property and his business as a common brewer.³⁷ The Earl of Warwick assured the Home Secretary that he would unhesitatingly refuse to recommend any corps that was not commanded by men of acceptable and tried characters, and independent fortunes if possible. He acknowledged that this made the choice very limited.³⁸

Many corps could not afford to insist on admitting only landed gentlemen to commissions when few such gentlemen were available. It was normally enough that volunteer officers were sufficiently respectable to associate with the gentry. The gentlemen of the Hampshire parishes of Beaulieu, Dibden and Exbury told their lord lieutenant that they wanted volunteer commissions, at least those above subaltern rank, to be held by reputable men, fitted by education to associate with gentlemen.³⁹

Inquiries into the suitability of officers, when they were made, were unsystematic and generally informal. Sometimes anonymous warnings of the unsuitability of an officer were received by the authorities from a member of his corps.⁴⁰ With volunteer commissions, as with the appointment of deputy lieutenants, lords lieutenant were placed in an awkward position. They could not be expected to know all the candidates, yet felt pressed to accept them all. Lord Bolton found it very awkward to talk about qualifications, yet believed they ought not be overlooked.⁴¹ The lieutenant of Buckinghamshire thought himself fortunate that he had not been obliged to question the propriety of any recommendation for a commission. He worked on the principle of accepting whenever he was able the recommendations made by the corps themselves.⁴²

Elsewhere, this was more problematic. William Crespigny, commander of a battalion of New Forest volunteers and a deputy lieutenant, recommended a candidate to the lord lieutenant for a commission in the Dibden company despite his being almost completely unknown to him. Crespigny had employed Mr. Richards occasionally to repair boats, and had no per-

³⁷British Library, Add MS 35,670, Hardwicke Papers, Vol.CCCXXII, James Foster [to Hardwicke], Doddington near Chatteris, 16 May [17]98.

³⁸HO 50/89, [Earl of Warwick] to Charles Yorke, 13 Nov. 1803.

³⁹Hampshire Record Office, 11 M 49/234, p.191, Wm.Champn.Crespigny to Lord Bolton, 15 August 1803.

⁴⁰HO 50/78, Leonard Pope to Secretary at War, Fetter Lane, 30 August 1803.

⁴¹Hampshire Record Office, 11 M 49/235, pp.59-60, Lord Bolton to George Garnier, 14 August 1803.

⁴²Bodleian Library, MS D.D.Dashwood (Bucks) c.14 F2/1/7, Nugent Buckingham to Sir John Dashwood King, Stowe, 14 May 1797.

sonal objection to him. However, at a lieutenancy meeting, another deputy lieutenant thought it his duty as a man of property in the county to make a most pointed objection to Richards, as both his situation in life and other unspecified circumstances made him objectionable. Crespigny was obliged to make further inquiries of other gentlemen in the neighbourhood, which further condemned Richards. Lord Palmerston was proposed as commanding officer instead.⁴³

Respectable and qualified gentlemen were not always willing to accept the command of a corps. The Earl of Warwick expressed doubts in September 1803 that a 'proper Corps' could be established in Warwick, as the few gentlemen of the town would not take any lead and the volunteers would be entirely under the guidance of Dissenters and manufacturers.⁴⁴ Particular investigation of the characters of officers recommended for promotion in the Musselburgh Volunteers were made on behalf of the Lord Lieutenant of Midlothian in 1798. Enquiries were made into allegations that one candidate had used improper influence in soliciting votes to name him as ensign. The allegations proved unfounded, and the officer involved was reported to bear 'a good character in the place'.⁴⁵

There were no legal qualifications for volunteer or yeomanry commissions, but captains of armed associations were required to possess a minimum income of £50 in freehold land, or renting twice that value.⁴⁶ This was, in relative terms, a very low qualification; the minimum taxable income under the Income Tax of 1799, for example, was £50. The lord lieutenant of Buckinghamshire felt that in his county a farmer so qualified was of a class and description much too low for such a trust.⁴⁷ Even if such a man could be trusted with a commission, this did not mean that he would be an effective officer. A lieutenant declined the command of the Brockenhurst Volunteers in 1799 because he thought he would be considered as having insufficient landed property, and believed the men would not pay as much attention when they did not find it so much in their interest to do so.⁴⁸ The qualification was probably required for armed associations but not for

⁴³Hampshire Record Office, 11 M 49/235, pp.110-111, Wm.Champn.Crespigny to Lord Bolton, 21 September 1803.

⁴⁴HO 50/89, Earl of Warwick to Charles Yorke, 28 Sept. 1803.

⁴⁵Scottish Record Office, GD 224/687/2, And.Wauchope [to Duke of Buccleuch], Niddrie, 15 July 1798.

⁴⁶*To Escape the Monster's Clutches*, Compiled by M.Y.Ashcroft, p.45.

⁴⁷HO 50/41, Nugent Buckingham, Stowe, 22 April 1798.

⁴⁸HO 50/47, Edward Marrant Gale to Dundas, Honington, 13 February 1800.

volunteer or yeomanry corps because officers of the former did not hold commissions from the crown and so there was greater difficulty in ensuring their reliability. A common complaint was that men who were not gentlemen were becoming officers, particularly in armed associations. There, the £50 qualification was insufficient to exclude wealthy tradesmen and professional men, whose presence deterred landed gentlemen from taking commissions. 'Camillus' complained in 1804 that one of the great errors of the volunteer system was to suppose that it was under the command or influence of the landed interest. Noblemen and gentlemen were in such a small proportion in volunteer corps that they were lost in the multitude and had no effect on the general spirit of the mass.⁴⁹ Gentlemen in the West Riding were seen in 1803 to be reluctant to take commissions in yeomanry corps because of the lack of situations suitable to their rank.⁵⁰ The gentry generally did not consider volunteer officers to be their social equals. The officers of the Sheffield Volunteers invited to an assembly at the Mansion House at Doncaster were studiously ignored by the local gentry, 'having much pride and little civility', as one of the corps' lieutenants recorded.⁵¹

Most of the objections made to proposed officers appear to have been on the grounds that the men in question were not landed gentlemen and so could not command the adherence of their subaltern officers and men, and were unable to deal with the county hierarchy on equal terms. Nothing could be faulted in the conduct of a prospective officer who had in 1803 lately acquired landed property in the form of a large farm in Hampshire. Yet the Earl of Malmesbury did not feel able to recommend him for a commission because he still thought him 'not a sire in point of rank'.⁵² Doubts were expressed about the propriety of appointing to a volunteer command a former cavalry officer who had inherited a sack-making business in Romsey, because he was not known to possess any property other than the house he lived in.⁵³ In 1803 Lord Hobart hoped that by refusing pay to volunteer officers he could prevent 'the struggle for commissions among persons of an inferior station which the small emolument annexed to them frequently occasioned, and of

⁴⁹ *Cobbett's Political Register*, Vol.V cols.237-238, To the Editor, Camillus, 10 February 1804.

⁵⁰ HO 50/91, Wentworth Fitzwilliam to Lord Hobart, Milton, 18 July 1803.

⁵¹ *Peeps Into the Past*, Edited by Alexander B.Bell, p.26.

⁵² Hampshire Record Office, 11 M 49/236, p.11, [Earl of] Malmesbury to Lord Bolton, 13 November 1803.

⁵³ Hampshire Record Office, 11 M 49/234, William Heathcote to Lord Bolton, 7 July 1802.

inducing others of a more independent class to come forward, whose situation rendered such an aid unnecessary, and who consequently would possess in a greater degree the respect of those whom they were to command.⁵⁴ The lord lieutenant of Sussex grudgingly approved the nomination of Nehemiah Wimble, an ironmonger but later highly respectable, as commander of a company in Lewes: 'I should have preferr'd an Independent Gentleman, but as there is none to be got, we must be content with Mr. Wimble.' In the event, Wimble was rejected by the commanding officer on the grounds of 'his not being of sufficient property and situation in life to ensure subordination and good discipline'.⁵⁵

Objections to a proposed officer on the grounds of inadequate social rank or lack of landed property were, however, normally insufficient for his rejection. A butcher became commander of the Honiton Volunteers despite the objections of the volunteer committee.⁵⁶ Objections were made against tradesmen and professional men, many of them attorneys, becoming subaltern officers of the Hereford Volunteers, and the officers of the volunteer companies in Fareham thought a respectable wine merchant and mercer an improper person to be a second lieutenant because he was a shopkeeper. Yet in most of these cases commissions were granted.⁵⁷

Officers with inadequate social standing and insufficient influence were seen to be unable to command respect. Disputes arose over the command of the Portsmouth Battalion because James Carter, although in military terms the fittest of the captains, was only a custom-house officer and so unable to command the allegiance of the other captains.⁵⁸ Similarly, the civil situations of the non-commissioned officers of the Cambridgeshire Local Militia were thought 'a great impediment to their commanding their inferiors with sufficient firmness. For they are either publicans or little shopkeepers selected on account of their being able to read or write, or after their military duties are finished, become fellow labourers and perhaps inferior to those

⁵⁴Hobart to Lt.-Gen. Vyse, 17 May 1803, quoted in Cecil Sebag-Montefiore, *A History of the Volunteer Forces*, p.241.

⁵⁵Ann Hudson, 'Volunteer Soldiers in Sussex', pp.176, 178.

⁵⁶Devon Record Office, 1262M/L9 Fortescue MSS, F.Buller to Countess Fortescue, Exeter, 15 March 1796; F.Buller to Earl Fortescue, Dorchester, 28 February 1796.

⁵⁷HO 50/106, John Winston and seventeen others, Hereford, 31 January 1804; Hampshire Record Office, 11 M 49/236, p.30, Thos.Stares to Lord Bolton, Titchfield, 16 November 1805 [really 1803].

⁵⁸Hampshire Record Office, 11 M 49/238, p.206, Capt. James Cater to Lord Bolton, 16 May 1807; p.212, Major Wm. Garrett to Lord Bolton, 28 May 1807.

very men whom the day previous they were commanding.⁵⁹

Objections could be raised on grounds other than social rank and respectability. A foreigner, understandably, was considered unsuitable as a lieutenant, but sometimes the objections were less easily defined: objections were raised to one officer's candidacy because he was considered too eccentric, and he operated on the worst principle, pure naked selfishness.⁶⁰

Only rarely was it stated how 'proper persons' to be volunteers could be identified.⁶¹ Indications of such attachment or of loyalty to the crown were often sought in the occupations, social rank or property of the prospective volunteers. John Brooke of Birmingham believed the middling class of people could be trusted to form a military association in May 1794 because they had property to protect.⁶² In 1803 the Home Secretary gave instructions for the selection of corps according to their respectability, situation and composition.⁶³ The captains of the Gosport corps told the lord lieutenant that they would be 'extremely circumspect' in selecting only members who had families and property in the town.⁶⁴

Little information exists on the means of selection of members, as it was apparently normally informal. Some corps required letters of recommendation from respectable local householders, or made enquiries of their own. When William Place applied to join the St.Clement Danes corps, Stephen Cullum, one of the lieutenants, undertook to enquire respecting his respectability.⁶⁵ A letter of recommendation addressed to the St.Anne, Soho, Volunteers, survives in which three candidates for admission are declared to be young men of good morals who were willing to defend their King and country. In another, Thomas Vardon recommended his servant as a proper person to serve in the corps, and agreed to provide his uniform.⁶⁶

Corps tended to be recommended by lords lieutenant for official approval in similarly general terms. The Duke of Richmond offered the renewed ser-

⁵⁹HO 42/106, Black to Ryder, 4 April 1810, quoted in Clive Emsley, *British Society and the French Wars*, p.145.

⁶⁰HO 50/42, Amherst to Dundas, 17 May [1798]; Hampshire Record Office, 11 M 49/236, p.20, C.S.Lefevre to Lord Bolton, 16 November 1803.

⁶¹HO 50/91, Wentworth Fitzwilliam to Charles Yorke, 24 August 1803.

⁶²HO 42/30, f.21, John Brooke, Birmingham, 6 May 1794.

⁶³HO 51/75, f.92, C.Yorke to the Duke of Richmond, 7 September 1803.

⁶⁴Hampshire Record Office, 11 M 49/234, p.56, Robt.Forbes, Thos.Whitcomb, John Whitcomb to Lord Bolton, Gosport, 4 June 1802.

⁶⁵Westminster City Library, B 1332 St.Clement Danes, p.69, 14 September 1803.

⁶⁶Westminster City Library, A 2303/8, St.Anne's, Soho, 22 August [n.y.]; A 2303/5, St.Anne's, Soho, Thomas Vardon to Rev.Mr.Jefferson, 22 August [n.y.].

vice of his Sussex Light Horse Artillery to the Home Secretary in 1803 with the assurance 'that they are highly respectable in the Country from their Property Characters and Loyal Principles'.⁶⁷ The Duke of Marlborough in 1798 passed on to the Home Office a proposal for a troop of yeomanry cavalry 'by some very respectable Gentlemen of the County of Oxford'.⁶⁸ He presented proposals for a parish association earlier the same year with the assurance that he believed the association to consist of loyal subjects and well-wishers to the constitution. Marlborough pointed out that the offer was made by a magistrate and by a deputy lieutenant who was a major local property owner; nevertheless it was not accepted.⁶⁹ Marlborough accompanied the offer of the Oxford Loyal Volunteers, which was accepted, with a list of the officers and their occupations or professions. In a covering letter he stated his opinion that the commanding officer, Sir Digby Mackworth, was 'a Gentleman of excellent Principles, and I believe very fit for the Purpose'.⁷⁰

Henry Dundas had been urged by a pseudonymous correspondent in 1794 to make enquiries into the political principles of prospective volunteers.⁷¹ But the Home Office seems rarely to have actively sought such information; it normally came unsolicited, or from government agents investigating democratic societies. One correspondent had been asked to report 'of what cast & class of people' were the Sheffield Volunteers composed, in the light of riots over food shortages in early 1801.⁷² This enquiry suggests that the Home Office judged loyalty and reliability by the occupations and status of the men as well as by their characters and disposition. A volunteer corps at Swansea was offered to the War Office in peacetime in May 1802 with the assertion that its members included respectable tradesmen, not the most inferior order of mechanics and labourers. They could therefore be trusted with the protection of property.⁷³

The most common means by which volunteer corps attempted to exclude the disaffected was by requiring members to subscribe to an oath of loyalty and dismissing those who would not take it.⁷⁴ The members of one company

⁶⁷ Cecil Sebag-Montefiore, *A History of the Volunteer Forces*, p.237.

⁶⁸ HO 50/342, Duke of Marlborough, Blenheim, 16 June 1798.

⁶⁹ HO 50/342, Marlborough to Henry Dundas, 10 May 1798.

⁷⁰ HO 50/342, Marlborough, 22 April 1798, Blenheim, 22 April 1798, 8 May 1798.

⁷¹ HO 42/30, 'Rufus' to Henry Dundas, [n.d.], (received 8 May 1794).

⁷² HO 50/49, [signature and place cut out], 10 February 1801.

⁷³ HO 50/54, M.Lewis to J.Sullivan, War Office, 21 May 1802.

⁷⁴ For example, HO 50/61, Grenville to Lt.Col.Lloyd, [n.d.], (copy); John Cookson, 'The English Volunteer Movement of the French Wars, 1793-1815: Some Contexts', pp.2-3.

of the Loyal London Volunteers signed the undertaking: 'We do severally sincerely promise and swear that we will be faithfull and bear true Allegiance to his Majesty King George his Heirs and Successors'.⁷⁵ Members of the Royal Westminster Volunteers signed a printed declaration that they were neither members of, nor connected with, the Corresponding or other revolutionary societies.⁷⁶ The Royal Edinburgh Volunteers were required to sign an unusually comprehensive declaration of attachment to the King and both houses of parliament, reprobating universal suffrage and other French political principles, and resolving to counteract the efforts of those who endeavoured to subvert the constitution under the pretext of parliamentary reform.⁷⁷

Volunteers were not required to take an oath of loyalty until 1804 by which time, significantly, the force had been re-established on a much larger scale with a probably more markedly plebeian membership.⁷⁸ When a military oath was enforced, however, considerable opposition was encountered. This hostility is revealing of many of the attitudes of volunteers towards their service. Their amateur status was very important; volunteers were not to be bound by military regulations and were able to resign at any time, and could not be sent away from home without the consent of all, not merely the consent of their officers. Richard Cumberland warned that the imposition of an oath would be a revolting condition, as it would be interpreted as enlistment for the duration of the war. He believed it would not deter the disaffected, whom it aimed to exclude.⁷⁹ Volunteers repeatedly expressed fears that the oath would make them liable to be sent to any part of the country, or that it would make them real soldiers.⁸⁰

Often it took great efforts by officers and magistrates to overcome these objections. Reluctance to take the oath for fear of incurring military obligations was initially widespread among infantry volunteers in Buckinghamshire. Most of those in Iver and Denham persisted and were dismissed; the lord

⁷⁵Guildhall Library, MS 14,920, Seventh Company of the Fourth Regiment of the Loyal London Volunteers; see also National Army Museum, 7805-72, f.67. Ealing and Brentford Volunteer Corps, 10 September 1803.

⁷⁶HO 50/45, James Robertson, Gerrard Street, Soho, 9 January 1799.

⁷⁷Scottish Record Office, Buccleuch Muniments, GD224/685/4, Return of Royal Edinburgh Volunteers 1st Regiment, 19 October 1798.

⁷⁸See John Cookson, 'The English Volunteer Movement', pp.27-31.

⁷⁹HO 50/357, f.7, Rich.Cumberland, 14 May 1803.

⁸⁰HO 50/42, Stephen Rolleston, 5 May 1798; Scottish Record Office, GD224/685/2. R.Dundas [to Duke of Buccleuch], Edinburgh, 20 July 1797; Hampshire Record Office. 11 M 49/235, f.150, John Orde to Lord Bolton, Kingsclere, 13 September 1803.

lieutenant was obliged to explain that the situation arose from ignorance and foolish obstinacy, rather than disaffection towards the King.⁸¹ Several other corps disbanded rather than take an oath of allegiance, and for reasons that were inconceivable other than in a voluntary society: that it implied a breach of trust, or that all members ought to have been consulted before requiring the oath.⁸² The captain of the Tottenham Association without telling the members arranged for a magistrate to administer the oath of allegiance. This gave great offence, and almost all the members resigned. Last of all, the captain himself resigned. The lord lieutenant believed that the volunteers had refused to take the oath either because they thought the captain had no right to dictate to the corps, or that it was intended as a reflection on their loyalty. In either case, the loyalty of the volunteers was not doubted, but they were completely unreliable as a military force.⁸³

The exclusion of the disloyal was easier to manage than the identification of clear outward signs of loyalty. In practice, loyalty was presumed in the absence of signs of disloyalty. One of the principal grounds for rejection was membership of a seditious society, usually one of the corresponding societies or, later, the United Englishmen. Fears of radical infiltration of the volunteers were widespread, but hard evidence was rare. Volunteer associations seemed to be an attractive cover for the disaffected.⁸⁴ The discovery of the Loyal Lambeth Association, and the revelation of the London Corresponding Society's discussion of plans to form a corps in 1798, provided a serious warning of the possibilities. 'An Allegiant Female Volunteer' believed in 1798 that a secret order had been given for Jacobins to become volunteers, using their membership as a 'stalking horse' for loyalty. Many corps, she claimed, had become tainted with republican principles, although remaining far more loyal than the supplementary militia men, nine tenths of whom were allegedly rank Jacobins 'in their hearts'. In her exaggerated fears, Jacobins were everywhere: most parishes, particularly those in the vicinity of London, swarmed with rank Jacobins.⁸⁵

Despite the exaggeration, there was some substance to such fears. Sev-

⁸¹HO 50/61, John Campbell to Col.Lloyd, 19 September 1803; Grenville, Dropmore, 19 September 1803; Grenville to Lt.Col.Lloyd, [n.d.]; Grenville to Yorke, 6 October 1803.

⁸²See Berkshire Record Office, D/ERa 08/2/28, Charles Garth to Edward Golding of Maiden Earley, Hurst, 26 September 1803.

⁸³HO 50/45, Scott Titchfield, Welbeck, 23 January 1799.

⁸⁴Scottish Record Office, GD 51/934, John Fordyce and J.Atkinson, Aldermanbury, [London], 3 May 1798.

⁸⁵Scottish Record Office, GD 51/921, 'An Allegiant Female Volunteer, but unknown as Such', 22 April 1798.

eral men proposed as members of the Royal Westminster Volunteers in 1798 were known to belong to the London Corresponding Society, but the commanding officer felt unable to dismiss them himself. He sent a list of twenty names and addresses, including those of the suspects, to the Home Office so that the names of those dangerous men who belonged to revolutionary societies could be marked, without the appearance of accusing any individual.⁸⁶ A Home Office 'emissary', pursuing his enquiries into the state of Jacobinism in Lancashire, discovered that the proposed captain of the Leigh Voluntary Association was a United Englishman.⁸⁷ The following year, a member of the Battersea Armed Association was reported to have attempted to recruit a fellow volunteer for a secret society in Wandsworth that appeared to be part of the United Englishmen. The Home Office encouraged the man to join, in order that he might find out more about the 'mischievous institution'; clearly, it was less concerned about the potential subversion of the armed association.⁸⁸

Aside from actual membership of a seditious society, several political indicators were available to ensure the reliability of volunteers. Known radical views, opposition to public 'patriotic' causes and overt opposition to government policies or dominant local political interests were all used at various times as reasons to exclude or eject men from corps. The Portsoken Ward Military Association in London resolved to expel any member who 'mixt in any Crowd of riotous or Seditious People'.⁸⁹ Several men elsewhere were considered unsuitable because they were believed to be Jacobins or democrats, in this context more an indication of disaffection than a strict description of their political tenets. A group of men at Sutton Ashfield were described as 'the most double died villains — and rankest Jacobins that can be.'⁹⁰ Yet such terms were imprecise — even the disaffected used 'Jacobin' as a term of abuse.⁹¹ The lord lieutenant was warned of the disloyal political opinions of a prospective volunteer at Ely in 1798. The future chaplain

⁸⁶HO 42/43, f.224, Major James Robertson, Gerard Street, Soho, 14 May 1798.

⁸⁷HO 42/44, f.100, Thos.Bancroft to Duke of Portland, Vicarage, Bolton le Moor, Lancashire, 2 July 1798.

⁸⁸HO 42/47, f.18, Henry Thornton to W.Wickham, Kings Arms Yard, Coleman Street, 2 April 1799; See also Roger Wells, *Insurrection The British Experience 1795-1803*, (Gloucester, 1983), pp.194, 196, 198-199, 201, 217.

⁸⁹Guildhall Library, MS 9957/1, f.6, Minutes of the Committee of the Portsoken Ward Military Association, 5 May 1798.

⁹⁰HO 42/43, W.Watson, Farnsfield, 21 May 1798; see also HO 50/123, 'a Friend to King and Constitution', Wakefield, 25 January 1804.

⁹¹HO 42/28, f.34, Jas.Morgan, Mayor, to Henry Dundas, Bristol, 6 January 1794.

could not 'but Shudder at the consequences of having such a Democrat in our Association.'⁹² Refusal to contribute to the Voluntary Contribution of 1798 was used as a more concrete indication of unreliability. This had been introduced as part of an increase in assessed taxes whereby money given as a patriotic sacrifice could be subtracted from direct taxes owed.⁹³ Six officers of the Liverpool Volunteers were said by a general officer in the army to be 'avowed republicans'; 'a strong fact & proof of their opinions' was that none of them had come forward in aid of the Voluntary Contribution.⁹⁴ John Fenwick, commander of a volunteer corps and a friend of Christopher Wyville, was forced to defend his actions to the Home Office when at the peace celebrations in Durham in 1803 he displayed an illumination containing the exhortation 'No Income Tax'.⁹⁵

Political support for Pitt's and Addington's ministries and their measures was not a criterion for membership of a volunteer corps, but it is nevertheless significant that many thought it was. The two bills of late 1795, against seditious publications and restricting public meetings, were the occasion for the display of political divisions in several corps.

When a member of the London and Westminster Light Horse Volunteers signed a petition and called a meeting in his Ward to oppose the two bills, he felt obliged to defend his conduct in the press against the widely-held belief that volunteers' freedom to act on questions of public interest was narrowly circumscribed. Robert Kingston offered to resign, but argued that it was consistent with his duty to oppose the King's ministers when they were corrupt and wicked; Spencer Perceval, chairman of the corps' committee, agreed that Kingston's principles were perfectly consistent with his membership of the volunteers.⁹⁶ The commanding officer of the Nottingham

⁹²British Library, Add.MS 35,670, Hardwicke Papers Vol.CCCXXII, Charles Mules to Earl of Hardwicke, Ely, 16 May 1798; John Cookson, 'Patriotism and Social Structure: the Ely Volunteers, 1798-1808', pp.2-3; Roger Wells, '“Amidst these shaking times”; Britain's avoidance of revolution revisited', p.64 n.297.

⁹³D.G.Vaisey, 'The Pledge of Patriotism: Staffordshire and the Voluntary Contribution, 1798', *Essays in Staffordshire History presented to S.A.H.Burne*, Edited by M.W.Greenslade, *Collections for a History of Staffordshire*, Fourth Series, Volume Six, ([Stafford], 1970).

⁹⁴HO 50/41, Lt.Gen.W.Grinfeld to Gen.Sir Wm.Fawcett, Chester, 10 April 1798, (enclosure).

⁹⁵HO 42/67, f.148, Fenwick to Pelham, 11 April 1803, quoted in James Epstein, 'Understanding the Cap of Liberty: Symbolic Practice and Social Conflict in Early Nineteenth-Century England', *Past & Present*, Number 122, February 1989, p.91.

⁹⁶PRO 30/3/5, Bosanquet Papers, f.230, special meeting of committee; ff.231-232, Robt.Kingston to Lt.Col.Herries, Coleman Street, 2 December 1795; ff.232-233, Spencer

Yeomanry, Ichabod Wright, was criticised by members of his troop for his apparent inconsistency in signing petitions in Nottingham against the bills yet signing a county petition supporting the principle of legislative measures to protect the crown. Wright was obliged to defend his conduct against misrepresentation in a printed letter in which he pointed out that he had signed, along with the whole corps, an address to the King expressing allegiance.⁹⁷

Not all commanding officers would have agreed. The commander of the Rye yeomanry troop ordered his men to sign a petition in favour of the two bills in response to a local petition opposing the measures. Between twenty and thirty members refused to sign, returned their arms and uniforms, and later rejected offers of reinstatement.⁹⁸ Captain Collett of the Southwark Troop of the Surrey Yeomanry Cavalry dismissed one of his men for signing newspaper advertisements opposing the two bills. Samuel Ferrand Waddington, a well-connected hop merchant living near Tonbridge, was chairman of several London meetings to organise petitioning for peace in 1795.⁹⁹ Collett believed that Waddington, by opposing the government's measures, had championed the cause of designing, artful and disaffected men, and that this was totally incompatible with his remaining a member of a corps which had stood forward in defence of King and constitution. Waddington replied that the same principle that had induced him to enrol in the corps, to defend his country against invasion, had equally impelled him to stand forward in its defence against a domestic invasion of the constitution. Several years later, William Cobbett used this incident to illustrate what he claimed had been the terror of the times, resulting from the insolent power and domination of Pitt, which had broken all opposition.¹⁰⁰

The volunteers, though in general well disposed towards the ministry, were far from being a Pittite force. Many of the foremost opponents of Pitt were prominent in the movement, including Samuel Whitbread, James Tierney, and Richard Sheridan, who came to be seen as the principal apologist for the movement by 1803. This range of political sentiment was found at

Perceval to Robt.Kingston, 2 December 1795; f.233, Robt.Kingston to Chairman of Committee, Coleman Street, 14 December 1795.

⁹⁷Mark Pottle, 'Loyalty and Patriotism in Nottingham, 1792-1816', pp.37, 41-42, 63, 65, figs.I, II.

⁹⁸Roger Wells, '“Amidst these shaking times”; Britain's avoidance of revolution revisited', p.25.

⁹⁹*Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol.XX, p.411; Iain McCalman, *Radical Underworld Prophets, Revolutionaries and Pornographers in London, 1795-1840*, (Cambridge, 1988), p.269 n.16, not Samuel Waddington the 'unrespectable' radical shoemaker and painter.

¹⁰⁰*Cobbett's Political Register*, Vol.XI cols.137-138.

all levels of the force. The mayor and several other officers of the Liverpool Volunteers organised a meeting calling for peace and to dismiss the ministers in 1797, and on political questions they had, according to a general officer in the army, 'always publicly avowed the hackneyed opinions of Fox & his adherents'.¹⁰¹ Some anonymous signs of hostility towards Pitt among his fellow Mortlake volunteers persisted after his death in 1806.¹⁰²

For the prominent members of the county gentry, it was difficult to avoid some involvement in the volunteers, whether as officers or as subscribers or committee members. If gentlemen stood aside, their position was likely to be usurped by political or social rivals. Samuel Whitbread, an opponent of the war and claiming, like Fox, to be nauseated by the volunteer system, found it impossible to keep out of it in Bedfordshire because it provided an opportunity to maintain and build political influence. Whitbread believed that if he did not take advantage of the opportunity, his opponents would.¹⁰³ H. Wardell, an apothecary and protégé of the Grey family, promoted the formation for an armed association at Alnwick in 1797 despite his open opposition to the ministry's system of public measures. He stated that he was led to stand forward in the matter with a view to keeping out of the hands of many of 'Mr. Reeves's School'. In the event, the unexpected hostility of the lord lieutenant, the Duke of Northumberland, wrecked the plans.¹⁰⁴

The volunteer movement nationally appears to have been largely non-partisan, and one in which political rivals could co-operate. Other than in large cities, the volunteers could not afford to antagonise potential support by taking a party line. In Gloucestershire, the rival Beaufort and Berkeley interests worked together in organising the volunteers.¹⁰⁵ By the time of the invasion crisis of 1798, it has been argued, many opponents of the war, and

¹⁰¹HO 50/41, Lt.Gen.W.Grinfeld to Gen.Sir Wm.Fawcett, Chester, 10 April 1798, (enclosure).

¹⁰²Surrey Record Office, 2397/9/1, Mortlake Association Committee minutes, p.63, 23 November 1806.

¹⁰³Whitbread to Grey, 12 November 1803, quoted in Dean Rapp, *Samuel Whitbread (1764-1815) A Social and Political Study*, (New York and London, 1987), p.146.

¹⁰⁴Northumberland Record Office, ZSW 592, Swinburne (Capheaton) MSS, H.Wardell to Sir John Swinburne, Alnwick, 31 May 1797; Portland to Duke of Northumberland, 21 March 1797, (copy); [printed notice] Alnwick, 15 May 1797; [handbill] Alnwick, 24 May 1797; [Sir John Swinburne to] James Dormer, 28 May 1797, (draft); [Sir John Swinburne to Duke of Northumberland], (n.d., [1797]), (draft); [Duke of] Northumberland to Sir John [Swinburne], Bath, 2 June 1797.

¹⁰⁵B.C.Gerrard, 'The Gloucestershire Police in the Nineteenth Century', M.Litt. thesis, Bristol University, 1977, p.13.

Pitt's handling of it, felt able to join the volunteers. It was still necessary to point out that participation did not imply support for Pitt's ministry. One Cambridgeshire gentleman who had publicly opposed British involvement in the war found by 1798 that without altering his opinions or principles the question was 'now but of secondary Consequence when the Enemy is at our Gates', and in consequence he thought all party questions should be erased. Although he disagreed with most members of the troop on the propriety of the war, 'The peculiarity of the Times' induced him to offer to join the yeomanry cavalry, slightly misquoting Cowper: 'England with all thy Faults I love thee still'.¹⁰⁶ In 1798, the Duke of Northumberland raised a corps among his tenants at his own expense, despite his opposition to Pitt and his recent resignation from the lieutenancy.¹⁰⁷ The Percy Tenantry Volunteers received their commissions a month after the duke's reappointment as lord lieutenant. Thomas Coke claimed in May 1798 that the volunteers raised in the neighbourhood of Holkham, his seat in Norfolk, showed that it was possible for the same men to deplore and oppose Pitt's destructive measures and at the same time be willing to shed the last drop of their blood in defence of the House of Brunswick and their country.¹⁰⁸

Volunteer corps were in many cases not so much ministerialist or anti-ministerialist as closely associated with the various political interests of their commanders and the lords lieutenant. In comparison with the militia, however, volunteer officers were relatively independent of the lords lieutenant. The much greater number of commissions available and the facility for raising new corps on individual initiative reduced the lieutenant's power of selection that often determined the political character of the county militia officer corps. John Cookson argues that the lords lieutenant 'had a formal rather than effective authority' over the appointment of volunteer officers 'since these mostly chose themselves by doing the necessary recruiting and fund-raising'.¹⁰⁹ The hostility of the lord lieutenant, as at Alnwick, could however prevent the establishment of a corps in the first place. The Marquis Townshend, lieutenant of Norfolk, was obliged to deny that he had objected to, and had made insinuations of disloyalty against, an officer on

¹⁰⁶ British Library, Add.MSS 35,669, Hardwicke Papers Vol.CCCXXI, ff.350-351, P.Musgrave to Earl of Hardwicke, Cambridge, 23 April 1798; see William Cowper, *The Timepiece*, Book II, line 206.

¹⁰⁷ Clive Emsley, *British Society and the French Wars*, p. 68.

¹⁰⁸ Norfolk Record Office, MS 5363, Townshend Correspondence, Thos.Willm.Coke [to Townshend], Holkham, 6 May 1798.

¹⁰⁹ John Cookson, 'Patriotism and Social Structure: the Ely Volunteers, 1798-1808', p.6.

the grounds that he opposed the Townshend family interest. Voting at elections, the marquis disingenuously reassured Captain Barker of the Yarmouth Volunteers, had not been made a consideration in the recommendation.¹¹⁰

Political antagonisms could cause problems if opponents were forced to act together as volunteers. John Rawlinson declined the command of the Highclere Volunteers in 1807, suggesting to the lord lieutenant that the commission be given, with regard to local circumstances, to a local gentleman less politically hostile than he was to an unnamed prominent local peer.¹¹¹ The controversial nature of these cases implies that outspoken opposition to ministerial policies by volunteers was unusual. It is by no means clear that this quiescence can be attributed to support for the ministry's policies, rather than a belief that armed men should not be seen to act in a partisan fashion. The evidence of the way in which volunteers were selected suggests the latter is the more likely. Volunteers sought to exclude not so much their political opponents as those who they feared wished to overthrow the system: democrats and republicans.¹¹² Volunteers' first concern was political principles, not political allegiances.

Nevertheless, political considerations remained an important aspect of volunteer membership. The institution was not politically exclusive, but volunteers unsympathetic or hostile to the ministry usually felt it necessary to state that their membership of a corps did not imply support for government policies. The need to make such denials demonstrates that the inference of ministerial sympathies from membership of a corps was a plausible and effective weapon with which to embarrass anti-ministerial volunteers.¹¹³ Equally, refusal to join a volunteer corps carried connotations of opposition to the ministry and its conduct of the war. One delegate to the General Committee of the London Corresponding Society declared in April 1798 that he supported a proposal to enter into a volunteer corps, but was afraid to trust himself in a military capacity under the current ministry; 'He thought the Society collectively should have no concern with the business, lest it should appear like an approbation of the conduct of ministers'.¹¹⁴ In

¹¹⁰Norfolk Record Office, MS 5363, Townshend Correspondence, Townshend to Captain [Samuel] Barker, Weymouth Street, 3 July 1798.

¹¹¹Hampshire Record Office, 11 M 49/238, p.249, John Rawlinson to Lord Bolton, 11 July 1807.

¹¹²See for example British Library, Add MS 35,670, Hardwicke Papers, Vol.CCCXXII, Charles Mules to Earl of Hardwicke, Ely, 16 May 1798.

¹¹³Bodleian Library, Holkham MS 747 T.W.Coke to Prince of Wales.

¹¹⁴*Selections from the Papers of the London Corresponding Society 1792-1799*, Edited with an introduction by Mary Thale, (Cambridge, 1983), p.433.

July 1798 Johann Fuseli expressed anxiety at what to do with regard to the recently-formed St. Pancras Armed Association. Farington advised him that there was no necessity to do anything; his situation was 'perfectly safe as He always appeared as to Politicks prudent.'¹¹⁵ Failure to join an association was naturally more conspicuous in a Royal Academician, but it is nevertheless significant that Fuseli thought he needed to make a public stand on the matter.

Political adherences did not alone determine whether an individual chose to form or join a corps, but local political circumstances could make membership either useful or essential to the maintenance of a local interest. Most of the offers of corps in Herefordshire in 1803 were believed by the lieutenant, the Earl of Essex, to 'have originated with a view to meet the approach of the next General Election rather than the enemy.'¹¹⁶ As Samuel Whitbread found, prominent gentlemen had to consider whether a failure to become involved in the organisation would leave the field open to their political opponents. William Lowndes, member of parliament for Buckinghamshire and the unenthusiastic commanding officer of the Ewelme Hundred corps in Oxfordshire, claimed that his acceptance of the command was a matter of necessity.¹¹⁷

The varied and often informal processes of selection led to the formation of a socially and politically varied force. The following section will examine the nature of two major aspects of that variety: politics and religion.

Part Two: Political and Religious Allegiances

Volunteering was not predominantly a partisan or sectarian activity, despite its close association with Pitt's and Addington's ministries and with the Anglican clergy. In this section, volunteers' political and religious allegiances will be investigated, the former using the extensive information provided by poll books. It will be shown that officers were more likely to be ministerialist, but the political allegiances of private volunteers were little different from the rest of the voting population. Corps were generally non-partisan because, in smaller communities at least, they could not afford to antagonise potential support. Their political commitment was rather to uphold the established constitution against radical reform. Though few active steps were taken to

¹¹⁵ *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, edited by Kenneth Garlick and Angus Macintyre, Vol.III, p.1016, 4 June 1798.

¹¹⁶ J.W.Fortescue, *The County Lieutenancies and the Army*, p.78.

¹¹⁷ HO 50/142, W.Lowndes to Marlborough, 15 March 1805.

further this aim, the volunteer movement was widely credited with having overawed disaffection merely by its existence and ubiquity. The non-partisan emphasis on constitutional loyalty moreover serves to explain the tolerance of religious dissent within the movement. In particular, at a time when great controversy was generated by the admission of Catholics to the regular army and by proposals for Catholic emancipation, it is the more remarkable that Catholic volunteers were accepted without significant opposition.

The clearest indication of political allegiance available on a large scale for significant numbers of volunteers is their voting behaviour in parliamentary elections. Volunteer officers can be distinguished from their corps and from electors in general by their voting behaviour. A sample of 184 officers in twelve corps in seven constituencies suggests that volunteer officers were more likely to support sitting members of parliament, and significantly less likely to vote for reformist candidates, than was the electorate as a whole. Although in some cases the voting behaviour of officers was little different from other electors of the same occupational group, when they did differ, volunteer officers were the more conservative.

Around 42% of the sample of officers can be identified in poll books, although the identification is at best based only on name and parish.¹¹⁸ In the 1806 general election, most volunteer officers showed considerable reluctance to vote for supporters of Grenville's ministry, which was widely seen to be hostile to the volunteer system. In this, their attitudes were distinctly different from both their social equals and the electorate in general. The controversial 1802 Westminster election demonstrates clearly the distinction between the attitudes of volunteer officers and other electors.

¹¹⁸The sample comprises officers voting in elections at: Liverpool (1806), Shrewsbury (1806), Rochester (1802), Lancaster (1802), Middlesex (1802), St.Albans (1807). The following statistics derive from: *History of The Election, for Members of Parliament, for the Borough of Liverpool, 1806, containing the addresses of the Different Candidates, with a list of the freemen's names who voted*, (Liverpool, [1806]); *A Correct Alphabetical List of the Burgesses Who Voted, Also, of those who tendered themselves to vote, At The Election for the Borough of Shrewsbury, Monday, the 3d of November, 1806, and the following days*, ([Shrewsbury, 1806]); *The Poll of the Electors, for Members of Parliament, to represent the City of Rochester, Taken on Monday, the Fifth day of July, 1802, Before Samuel Baker, Esq., Mayor*, (Rochester, 1802); *An Alphabetical List of Freemen Polled for Two Members of Parliament, to represent The Borough of Lancaster, at the General Election, which commenced On Thursday the 8th July, 1802, before James Parkinson, Esquire, Mayor, Thomas Burrow, and W.Housman, Gentlemen, Bailiffs of the said Borough*, (Lancaster, [1802]); *A Copy of the Poll for Two Burgesses, to serve in parliament, for the Borough of St.Alban. Taken The 5th and 6th of May, 1807. Before John Samuel Storey, Esq. Mayor*, (London, 1807).

Sir Francis Burdett, the popular candidate and advocate of parliamentary reform, received 32% of the total votes but only 9% of volunteer officers' votes; only one officer plumped for him, a quarter of the proportion who did so in the electorate generally. William Mainwaring, Burdett's principal opponent, received a significantly higher proportion of officers' votes. More notably, George Byng, the uncontroversial sitting Whig member, received 30% of officers' single votes, but only 8% of those of the full electorate.

Volunteer officers elsewhere also appear to have favoured safe, uncontroversial candidates. They were more likely to adopt a course at variance with the electors as a whole than were the private volunteers. In some cases, the officers were simply mirroring the predilections of their social group. At the 1802 election in Lancaster, the eighteen officers whose votes are known voted in similar proportions to the rest of the electorate for the two successful candidates, who were supported by the Pittite interest of Viscount Lowther. The third candidate, who was said to have received his support from the 'rabble', received proportionally much less support from the officers than the electorate as a whole, and in this they were paralleled exactly by those electors who shared the same occupations as the officers.¹¹⁹ At the subsequent general election in Shrewsbury, support for the successful candidates among volunteer officers was roughly comparable to that among the voters at large, but significantly lower for Thomas Jones, the unsuccessful candidate whose principles were said to be those of Burdett and Paull.¹²⁰ A major exception to this pattern was at Rochester in 1802 where the seven volunteer officers gave disproportionate support to a radical, to the detriment of an independent Whig supporter of Addington's ministry.⁸⁶¹²¹

Volunteer officers' voting in 1806 seems to have been influenced by antipathy towards Grenville's ministry. In Liverpool, officers voted overwhelmingly for the two sitting members, both general officers in the army. Half of their votes went to General Banastre Tarleton, who received only 14% of the total vote. Conversely, William Roscoe, a supporter of moderate parliamentary reform, peace and retrenchment, and the ministerial Whig candidate, who headed the poll with 43% of the votes, not surprisingly did not receive any from the twelve officers in the Liverpool Volunteers.¹²² In

¹¹⁹R.G.Thorne, *The History of Parliament The House of Commons 1790-1820*, Five volumes, (London, 1986), Vol.II pp.224-225.

¹²⁰R.G.Thorne, *The House of Commons 1790-1820*, Vol.II, p.338.

¹²¹R.G.Thorne, *The House of Commons 1790-1820*, Vol.II, pp.220-221.

¹²²R.G.Thorne, *The House of Commons 1790-1820*, Vol.II, pp.228-230; War Office, *A List of the Officers of the Gentlemen and Yeomanry Cavalry, and Volunteer Infantry of*

this, the officers were at variance with those electors who were, like them, merchants, and who distributed their votes roughly equally to all three candidates. At Lincoln in 1806 and St. Albans the following year, supporters of Grenville's ministry again received significantly less support from volunteer officers than from other electors. At Lincoln, the Grenvillite William Monson had a strong local interest, polling 41% of all votes, 36% of the votes of men in the same occupations as the volunteer officers, and only 29% of the votes of the officers themselves.¹²³

When the entire membership of volunteer corps is considered, a similar pattern emerges, but with much less certainty and clarity than the pattern evident for the officers alone because a smaller proportion can be identified with certainty. In another sample of nine corps, of which only two are shared with the sample of officers' voting, only 22% of names could be linked with poll book entries with any certainty.¹²⁴ At Rochester in 1802,

the United Kingdom, ([London], 1804); 1806 *History of The Election, for Members of Parliament, for the Borough of Liverpool*, 1806.

¹²³R.G. Thorne, *The House of Commons 1790-1820*, Vol. II, pp. 253-254, 205-208; War Office, *A List of the Officers of the Gentlemen and Yeomanry Cavalry, and Volunteer Infantry of the United Kingdom*, ([London], 1804); *An Alphabetical List of the Freemen, Who voted at the Election holden at the Guildhall of the City of Lincoln, on Saturday the First of November, in the Year of our Lord, 1806, and in the 46th Year of the Reign of His Majesty King George the Third, — [Whom God Preserve] for two Representatives in Parliament for the said City*, (Lincoln, [1806]).

¹²⁴The following information is calculated from: *A Copy of the Poll, (in alphabetical order) Taken at the Guild-Hall, in the Town of Kingston-upon-Hull, On Monday the 5th, and Tuesday the 6th Days of July, 1802, Before Thomas Osborne, Esq. Sheriff of the said Town, By Virtue of a Writ for Electing Two Members, to serve in Parliament*, (Hull, 1802); *Hull and County and Sculcoates Volunteers, Capt. Bolton's Company 1803; A Complete Alphabetical List of the 2525 Burgesses & Freeholders who polled at the Late Nottingham Election; including Their Names, Occupations, Places of Residence, and to whom their Votes were given, From Monday, May 30th, 1803, to Monday, June 6th, 1803. (both Days inclusive) at the Election of a Burgess to represent the said Town in Parliament*, (Nottingham, 1803); *Loyal Nottingham Corps of Volunteer Infantry, Capt. Taylor's Company 1804; The Poll, at the General Election of Burgesses to represent the Town & Borough of Northampton, In Parliament; Faithfully digested Alphabetically from the Original Poll-Book, Taken the 25th, 26th, 27th, 28th and 30th Days of May, In the Year 1796*, (Northampton, 1796); *Northampton Yeomanry Infantry Volunteers, First Company 1805; A Poll of the Electors of the Borough of Aylesbury, in the County of Buckingham, And of such of the Freeholders within the Three Hundreds of Aylesbury, as are duly qualified to vote at Elections for Knights of the Shire for the said County; taken within the said borough, on Friday the 13th Day of July, in the year of our Lord 1804*, (London, 1804); *Aylesbury Infantry Volunteers 1802; The Poll, of the Burgesses, of the Borough of Warwick: Taken at Warwick, On the 17th and 18th of January, 1792*, ([Warwick], 1792); *Warwick Volunteers 1800; The Poll for Two Members to serve in parliament, for the Bor-*

the voting behaviour of two of the three companies of the volunteer corps was remarkably similar to that of the entire electorate. Compared with their officers, the Rochester volunteers appear to have been much readier to support Sir William Sidney Smith, a Whig supporter of the ministry, and less inclined to vote for James Hulkes, a respectable local brewer and banker, and the radical James Roper Head.¹²⁵ However, the apparent contrast probably is exaggerated by the small size of the samples; only 17% of the volunteers can be identified in the poll books with any certainty.

Nevertheless, in general the voting behaviour of the rank and file membership tended to mirror the behaviour of the entire electorate, unlike their officers, as would be expected from a group more representative of electors in boroughs with freeman or householder franchises. The voting behaviour of volunteers at Great Yarmouth in 1807 was almost indistinguishable from the rest of the freeman electorate; at Colchester in the same year the proportion of votes cast by each group was identical.¹²⁶ When differences were apparent, volunteers followed the same pattern as the sample of officers, favouring administration candidates. Thus at Warwick in 1792, Northampton in 1796, and Hull in 1802, the candidates with ministerial or corporation backing received more support from volunteers than the electorate generally, over their main opponents, who were in all these cases Whigs.¹²⁷

This pattern was even more clearly apparent at St.Albans, where the commanding officer of the corps, Viscount Grimstone, was a candidate in the by-election of 1807 and an opponent of Grenville's ministry. He received roughly a third of the votes of both the electorate in general and those voters with the same occupations as the officers; both officers and men, however,

ough of Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, taken on Friday and Saturday, the 8th and 9th of May, 1807, before William Fisher, Jun. Esq. Mayor, (Yarmouth, [1807]); Yarmouth or 6th Battalion Norfolk Volunteer Infantry 1807; The Poll for Members to serve in Parliament for the Borough of Colchester: taken On Tuesday and Wednesday, the 5th and 6th of May, 1807, before William Smith, Esq. Mayor, (Colchester, [1807]); Loyal Colchester Volunteer Infantry, Capt.Keeling's Company 1803; A Copy of the Poll for Two Burgesses, to serve in parliament, for the Borough of St.Alban.; St.Albans Volunteers, Abbey and St.Peter Company 1805; The Poll of the Electors, for Members of Parliament, to represent the City of Rochester, Taken on Monday, the Fifth day of July, 1802; Rochester Volunteer Corps, Capt.Pratt's Company 1806.

¹²⁵R.G.Thorne, *The House of Commons 1790-1820*, Vol.II, pp.220-221.

¹²⁶Ignoring plumping and split voting, for which the numbers of volunteers are too low to be statistically worthwhile; R.G.Thorne, *The House of Commons 1790-1820*, Vol.II, pp.289-291, 158-159.

¹²⁷R.G.Thorne, *The House of Commons 1790-1820*, Vol.II, pp.404-405, 300-301, 447-449.

gave Grimstone half their votes. Joseph Halsey, who supported Grenville's ministry, in contrast received 36% of all votes and 28% of volunteers' votes; volunteer officers gave him a mere 13% of their votes whereas those electors in the same occupations as the officers had given 22%.¹²⁸

A significant exception to this pattern was the very controversial election of 1803 at Nottingham. The previous year, Joseph Birch had defeated the sitting member Daniel Parker Coke in a contest involving serious intimidation. Birch's election was declared invalid, and despite the open support of the Whig corporation, he lost to Coke in May 1803. Mark Pottle claims that 'there is no way of knowing precisely what the political views of the volunteers were, beyond the fact that some certainly voted for the tory candidate in 1802' and that the range of opinion represented by the three senior officers was broad. Volunteers who voted for Coke in 1802 were singled out for physical attack.¹²⁹ At the second contest, Coke received 71% of the votes of one of the eight companies of the Nottingham Volunteers, although only 54% of the total vote was for him.¹³⁰ The reasons for the clear allegiances of the Aylesbury infantry Volunteers in 1804 are more obvious. Thomas Grenville was Lieutenant-Colonel of the Mid-Buckinghamshire Yeomanry, and brother of the lord lieutenant, the Marquis of Buckingham. He received 63% of the Aylesbury volunteers' votes, but only 46% of those of the entire electorate.¹³¹ It is perhaps more surprising that volunteers gave 37% of their votes to the successful candidate, William Cavendish. Except when the connection was so immediate, however, it does not appear that in general volunteers gave more support to those candidates who were themselves volunteers.

The later nineteenth century rifle volunteer movement went to great lengths to avoid party politics, but was drawn into becoming a potentially influential parliamentary interest group. Initially, extra-parliamentary agitation was employed to press for volunteer objectives, but there was no central co-ordinating body to act for the movement as a whole. By the end of the century, increasing numbers of volunteer members of parliament were

¹²⁸ War Office, *A List of the Officers of the Gentlemen and Yeomanry Cavalry, and Volunteer Infantry of the United Kingdom*, ([London], 1804); *A Copy of the Poll for Two Burgesses, to serve in parliament, for the Borough of St. Alban.*; R.G.Thorne, *The House of Commons 1790-1820*, Vol.II, pp.205-206.

¹²⁹ Mark Pottle, 'Loyalty and Patriotism in Nottingham, 1792-1816', pp.176, 203-204.

¹³⁰ Calculated from *A Complete Alphabetical List of the 2525 Burgesses & Freeholders who polled at the Late Nottingham Election*, (Nottingham, 1803); R.G.Thorne, *The House of Commons 1790-1820*, Vol.II, pp.317-318.

¹³¹ R.G.Thorne, *The House of Commons 1790-1820*, Vol.II, pp.19-20.

more closely associated with the Conservative party, and were believed to be a potentially powerful interest. However, although at a maximum of 130 between 1868 and 1880, never more than a proportion of volunteer members could be assumed to act with the interest group — roughly 26% could be considered effective in 1869. On issues unconnected with the movement, volunteer members' voting tended to follow party lines.¹³²

There was in comparison a very large volunteer presence in both houses during the revolutionary and Napoleonic wars, but the members were politically heterogeneous and much less likely than their Victorian successors to act in a cohesive interest. Of the 2143 members of parliament in the period 1790 to 1820, nearly 700 had been volunteers at some stage, compared with more than 300 militia officers and just over 400 in the army.¹³³ In a sample of slightly more than a quarter of all members of parliament, only 32% are not known to have belonged to any military force.¹³⁴ Among the remainder, 22% had been members of a volunteer corps only, compared to 12% in the army and 11% in the militia. It was quite common for a member to have belonged to several different military bodies during his career: 16% of the sample did so. Volunteers often had been, or subsequently became, militia officers: 9% of members of parliament had been in both volunteers and militia, whereas 4% had belonged to both a volunteer corps and the army. Members who had at some stage been volunteers were 36% of this group, while 17% and 21% had been in the army and militia respectively. It has been claimed that members of parliament generally preferred to join yeomanry cavalry troops.¹³⁵ Such a preference is not striking: just over half the sample joined the more numerous infantry corps, and 38% joined cavalry troops, while the remaining 11% belonged to both cavalry and infantry units.

As far as it is possible to impose a crude classification upon the political affiliations of volunteer members of parliament, it is clear that they encompassed a wide range of allegiances. The two dominant groups, as with the house as a whole, were ministerial supporters and Pittites. Members who

¹³²Ian F.W.Beckett, *Riflemen Form A Study of the Rifle Volunteer Movement 1859-1908*, pp.143, 150, 152-156.

¹³³R.G.Thorne, *The House of Commons 1790-1820*, Vol.I, pp.306, 313.

¹³⁴The sample consists of R.G.Thorne, *The House of Commons 1790-1820*, Vol.V *Members Q-Y*, 540 members of parliament, or 25% of all 2143 members in the period 1790-1820. Volunteers comprised 36% of the sample, but around 33% of all members; army officers were 17% of the sample and 19% of the whole.

¹³⁵R.G.Thorne, *The House of Commons 1790-1820*, Vol.I, p.313.

are described in the *History of Parliament* as consistent supporters of successive ministries, both Pitt's, Addington's and in some cases Grenville's in 1806-1807, comprise 28% of the sample of 193. The same proportion can be classified supporters of Pitt, for while supporting both his ministries they opposed the Addington and Grenville ministries. It would be going too far to conclude that the volunteer movement appealed to Pittite and ministerialist members of parliament because it was seen as one of Pitt's measures, however. The force as reconstituted in 1803 was equally a product of Addington's ministry. Furthermore, a very significant proportion, 19%, of volunteer members of parliament cannot be assigned to such political categories with any degree of certainty. A further 10% are described in general terms as Whigs; Grenville's and Fox's adherents accounted for another 5% each. The political affiliations of volunteer members of parliament were far from monolithic.

Membership of volunteer and yeomanry corps by members of parliament seems in general not to have had the intention of advancing a political interest but rather to have reinforced existing interests in their respective districts. Only two of the 193 volunteer members of parliament in the sample belonged to a corps which were in or near their constituencies, but not in the area of their known residences. Such membership implies a desire to establish an interest in the constituency by means of the volunteers; both men were volunteers before their election to parliament. In general, however, there were close links between a member of parliament's constituency, some or all of his places of residence, and the volunteer or yeomanry corps to which he belonged, frequently as a senior officer. Just under half the sample belonged to corps in the same county or immediate area as both their constituency and at least one seat or residence. Of these, nearly 60% were members of parliament before joining the volunteers, which may suggest that volunteering was in part a benefit in maintaining an electoral interest. However, a further 23% joined corps in the vicinity of one or more of their residences. Of these men, 43% were already members of parliament, and they chose to join corps that were near where they lived, not in their constituencies. Part of this was due to the local nature of the force, which expected active local gentlemen to play a leading role. A non-resident or only occasionally resident member of parliament would have been less suitable as an officer than a local gentleman who was not a member. Electoral interest can have been even less of a consideration to the 16% of volunteer members of parliament who joined corps that had no apparent connection with either their constituency or their seat. In 70% of these cases, the mem-

ber of parliament joined a London corps, presumably because much of his time was spent in the capital. Easily the most popular corps was the London and Westminster Light Horse Volunteers, with about eighty members of parliament belonging at some stage.¹³⁶ A further 5% joined metropolitan corps because of an obvious office-holding connection, as directors of the Bank of England or East India Company, or commissioners of the Excise, each of which institutions had its own corps.

It seems reasonable to conclude that volunteer members of parliament did not primarily see their membership of the volunteers in political terms. Membership was part of a local connection, but the volunteer system was sufficiently localised to make it difficult, or counter-productive, for a member or parliament, or a prospective one, to attempt to strengthen his political influence by the agency of a volunteer or yeomanry corps without the accompanying influence afforded by landed property. Sitting members of parliament tended to join, or form, volunteer corps, if possible, near both their place of residence and their constituency. The majority of those whose constituency was distant had been elected after becoming officers.

In summary, the political allegiances of volunteers were widely varied. Officers tended towards the ministerial or Pittite interests, although there were wide variations, especially where there was a strong local interest. Private volunteers in general did not form a politically distinctive group; it is not possible to characterise the force, or even many individual corps, as ministerialist.

Just as the volunteers politically were not uniformly partisan, though in some cases dominated by ministerialists, the movement was not religiously exclusive though the established church played a prominent role. It was closely associated with the volunteer movement, but not always to the exclusion of rival denominations. Religious allegiances were ignored in practice so long as the men were loyal. Suspicions of a link between religious and political dissent persisted, but the test of loyalty for volunteers was political, not religious. There were no formal restrictions on the religion of private men, who were in England generally assumed to be Anglican unless there was evidence to the contrary. A rare example of a religious test is provided, significantly, by the Arundel Independent Company, organised in March 1794 before the formalisation of volunteering. Members took the oath of allegiance, declaring that they were Protestants and would be obedient to their officers and superiors. The former provision was presumably

¹³⁶R.G.Thorne, *The House of Commons 1790-1820*, Vol.I, p.313.

made in deference to the wishes of the recently apostate Duke of Norfolk, whose relationship with the corps subsequently seems to have been cordial.¹³⁷

The close association of volunteer corps with the established church made it difficult, but not impossible, for members of other sects to participate in all volunteer activities. Most major corps had a chaplain, and volunteers usually were obliged to attend as a body sermons preached on fast days and Days of National Thanksgiving. On a thanksgiving day in November 1798 Adjutant Robert Mackay marched with the Thurso Volunteers as far as the church door, but declined to participate in the religious service. He professed to be a member of a sect which disregarded royal proclamations appointing public fasts or thanksgiving, and said his religious tenets would not allow him to go to the established church on any similar occasion. After his refusal to attend a fast day service in February 1799, the commanding officer ordered Mackay to discontinue his duty with the corps.¹³⁸ The request for Mackay's dismissal appears to have been based more on his repeated disobedience of orders than his being an Antiburgher. Non-Catholic dissenters in general do not seem to have been excluded from volunteer service.

Much more attention was given to the religious allegiances of those, like Mackay, who held commissions than to those of the private men. Catholics were not *de jure* ineligible for officers' commissions in the volunteers. Although they were subject to penalties under the Test Act after six months, Catholic officers were entitled to the relief of the annual Act of Indemnity, so they could in theory be promoted like any Protestant subject.¹³⁹ The early moves for the removal of legal disabilities from Catholics in England and Ireland were secretly connected with the need during the American war to recruit Catholics, who were debarred from bearing arms.¹⁴⁰ Though the recruitment of Catholic volunteers seems to have been uncontroversial by the 1790s, prospective officers encountered difficulties. It seems many Catholic officers were in practice allowed to join corps or even receive commissions as long as the crown was not informed officially of their allegiance; no active enquiries were made into religious affiliation. Lord Petre, one of the very few Catholic peers, repeatedly pressed the Home Office for the granting of a

¹³⁷ *Portsmouth Gazette*, No.37, 17 March 1794, p.3 c.3, Chichester, March 15; No.163, 15 August 1796, p.3 c.2, Chichester, August 13.

¹³⁸ HO 50/46, Earl of Caithness to Henry Dundas, Barragil Castle, 10 July 1799.

¹³⁹ HO 42/43, ff.269-270, John Scott, John Mitford to Duke of Portland, Lincoln's Inn, 13 June 1798.

¹⁴⁰ Robert Kent Donovan, 'The Military Origins of the Roman Catholic Relief Programme of 1778', *Historical Journal*, Vol.28, No.1, 1985, pp.84, 92-95.

commission to his son. He expressed astonishment that one could be refused when volunteer officers he knew to be Catholics were regularly Gazetted.¹⁴¹

A legal opinion requested by the Home Secretary concluded that although there was no law in force expressly prohibiting the appointment of Catholics to public and military offices, the appointment of men known to be Catholics was contrary to the intent of the legislation.¹⁴² Official knowledge of a nominee's religious beliefs was the vital point. When it was suggested that Thomas Havers, proposed in place of Petre's son, was also a Catholic, the Home Secretary implied that normal practice was to give the benefit of the doubt to nominees for commissions. The Duke of Portland claimed that unless a candidate for a commission insisted on making it known that he was not of the established religion, it was always taken for granted that he was, and his name submitted to the King without comment. Portland concluded that if Havers was prepared to risk his life for the laws and the constitution, he would be equally ready to conform to them. Lord Braybrooke, who had pointed out that Havers was a Catholic, had no objection to him, and similarly expressed his reluctance to obstruct the assistance of good subjects, whatever their religious allegiance.¹⁴³

Despite the absence of legal disabilities, many Catholics expected to encounter difficulties. The prominent Catholic landowner Thomas Weld planned to form a corps of riflemen from the gamekeepers and sharpshooters in his neighbourhood, and was anxious that his religion would not be an impediment. His father wanted to serve as a private in a yeomanry troop, and hoped that another son already in the troop would be allowed to be promoted to Cornet.¹⁴⁴ Others were less aware of the potential difficulties. One of the many proposals for volunteer corps received by the Home Office in 1798 was for a Roman Catholic Corps of Royal Independent Volunteers.

¹⁴¹HO 50/43, Petre to Henry Dundas, Thorndon, 12 July 1798; HO 50/43, Petre to Wm. Huskisson, Thorndon, 26 June 1796; see also HO 50/42, [Baron] Rivers to Henry Dundas, Stratfieldsay, 18 May 1798.

¹⁴²HO 42/43, ff.267-270, John Scott, John Mitford to Duke of Portland, Lincoln's Inn, 13 June 1798.

¹⁴³HO 42/44, f.72, Griffin Braybrooke to Duke of Portland, 11 July 1798; HO 50/55, [Duke of Portland] to Lord Braybrooke, 16 July 1798; see also Northumberland Record Office, ZSW 595, Swinburne MSS, Portland to Duke of Northumberland, Whitehall, 3 July 1798.

¹⁴⁴HO 50/42, [Baron] Rivers to Henry Dundas, Stratfieldsay, 18 May 1798; John Bossy, *The English Catholic Community 1570-1850*, (London, 1975), pp.325-327; Eamon Duffy, *Peter and Jack: Roman Catholics and Dissent in eighteenth century England*, Friends of Dr. Williams's Library, Thirty-Sixth Lecture, (London, 1982), p.7.

The body, which appears not to have been formed, was in addition to its military duties to have regularly attended divine service to implore the aid of the 'God of Armies' in favour of his Majesty's forces.¹⁴⁵ Catholic members of non-sectarian volunteer corps in areas with a substantial Catholic population seem not to have been considered exceptional. The Enzie companies of the Banffshire Volunteers could not be inspected in Holy Week 1798 because a great number of the members were Catholic.¹⁴⁶ Prospective Jewish volunteers in comparison encountered more resistance, despite their protestations of loyalty. An offer by the congregation in Portsmouth to serve in the different volunteer corps there was refused by both the governor and the mayor, who explained that it was not usual for the government to enrol Jews.¹⁴⁷

Though the widespread organisation of volunteers in England and Wales was on a parochial basis, often by Anglican parish officers and with the close support of the established clergy, the volunteer system was not as a result religiously homogeneous. Little is known of the extent of participation by dissenters, though the involvement of Protestant dissenters aroused no such controversy as did that of Catholics. Similarly, conclusions drawn from the voting behaviour of volunteers can be only tentative. The ministerialist and Pittite tendencies of volunteer members of parliament may have been echoed in a muted fashion by the officers of some corps, but the evidence has no solid base. There is little to suggest that voters in volunteer corps as a whole held political opinions significantly different from the enfranchised public in general. It is perhaps more remarkable that volunteers were not overwhelmingly pro-ministerial, given the close identification of the volunteer system with Pitt's and Addington's ministries. The distinction between loyalty to the crown and constitution, and attachment to the ministry, had become blurred.

Part Three: Arms and the Men

One of the vital reasons for careful scrutiny of corps' membership was that the men were to be entrusted with firearms and trained how to use them. The disaffected were expected to attempt to infiltrate all ranks of the loyal

¹⁴⁵HO 52/42, Proposals for Raising & Forming a Roman Catholic Corp of Royal Independant Volunteers (*sic*), [n.d.].

¹⁴⁶HO 50/41, Alexander Duff to Earl of Fife, Banff, 30 March 1798.

¹⁴⁷HO 50/42, S.Gasserlee, Mayor of Portsmouth, to Henry Dundas, 2 May 1798; HO 50/43, Jacob Levi, Grocer, 103 Queen Street, Portsea, 4 May 1798.

associations in order to procure arms and learn how to use them, so the Home Secretary was warned, which at any other time would have been very difficult.¹⁴⁸ A United Englishman in Salford in late 1797 was reported to have planned to advise all democrats to join the volunteers in order to acquire arms. William Cheetham believed that if every good democrat in Manchester took his advice, even if the expected French invasion miscarried, there would be sufficient armed citizens and democrats to bring about a revolution.¹⁴⁹ Under the game laws possession of a gun by a person unqualified to hunt was illegal, although after the middle of the eighteenth century, the summary seizure of weapons became increasingly rare; the populace in general was not disarmed by the game laws.¹⁵⁰ Opponents of the government believed in 1792 that it was not merely starving and oppressing the people, but that it also wanted to take arms out of their hands to leave them defenceless.¹⁵¹ That the seditious 'Loyal Lambeth Association' exercised with mop handles suggests either they were cautious about being discovered with arms, or that arms were difficult to procure illegally.

The supply of arms to volunteers was restricted for reasons of both efficiency and security. The Home Secretary explained in a confidential letter in 1804 that the ministry did not intend to allow corps to retain arms when they showed no prospect of becoming fit for military service. Still less were arms to be supplied when there was any well grounded cause to suspect a corps' loyalty or disposition to be serviceable.¹⁵² Approved volunteer corps, however, were given considerable freedom in acquiring arms. Great difficulty was encountered in supplying sufficient arms from government sources to volunteer corps in the initial months after the renewal of war in 1803. Sufficient for only a quarter of each corps was sent initially, except for some coastal counties and the metropolis. Volunteers were unwilling to accept pikes instead, and delays in providing firearms prompted several resignations.¹⁵³ The Home Secretary advocated the use of private

¹⁴⁸Scottish Record Office, GD 51/934, John Fordyce and J. Atkinson, Aldermanbury, [London], 3 May 1798.

¹⁴⁹HO 42/45, f.520, Examination of Saml. Patterson of Salford, Lancashire, Auctioneer, taken on oath at New Bayley, Salford, 17 April 1798.

¹⁵⁰P.B. Munsche, *Gentlemen and Poachers The English Game Laws 1671-1831*, (Cambridge, 1981), pp.79-82.

¹⁵¹HO 42/23, Mulgrave to Lord Grenville, 8 December 1792.

¹⁵²HO 51/80, ff.78-79, Hawkesbury to Earl of Berkeley, 24 December 1804.

¹⁵³J.W. Fortescue, *The County Lieutenancies and the Army*, pp.83-90; Berkshire Record Office, D/ERa 08/2 (23), Henry Addington to Earl of Radnor, 19 September 1803; National Army Museum, 6911-4-6, f.553, C. Yorke to Commander-in-Chief, 15 September

sporting guns by volunteers, believing that a good fowling piece and a bullet mould was very efficacious equipment for brave and active men.¹⁵⁴

It was a relatively simple matter to keep track of the allocation of arms at the corps level, and to follow up cases where they were not returned on resignation, dismissal or disbandment. On receiving arms and accoutrements from the committee, the members of the Cheap Ward Association in London were required to sign an acknowledgement of receipt, and to promise to return them on demand.¹⁵⁵ Periodic inspections of arms were carried out by the district Inspecting Field Officers, who also dealt with inquiries from the Ordnance Office about the state of volunteer arms.¹⁵⁶ At the national level, all corps received their arms from, and were answerable for their fate to, the royal armoury at the Tower of London. Some corps were given the freedom to buy arms on the open market. The Board of Ordnance would not supply rifles to volunteers in general, but only to corps of marksmen. Yet corps were allowed the contract price for muskets if they chose to provide the more expensive rifles for themselves.¹⁵⁷ In consequence, the Ordnance Office had reliable records only of those firearms it had issued, and not of all arms held by volunteers. Eventually the Ordnance Office found it necessary to discourage the purchase of arms by individuals because the practice interrupted government supplies.¹⁵⁸

Although they could pay for their arms, they were not allowed to order them or arrange for their delivery independently of the Board of Ordnance. The Home Office periodically collected information on the allocation of firearms, and the administration could be very persistent in the retrieval of arms issued to volunteers. At disbandment or the conclusion of peace, the Ordnance Office insisted that all arms, whether supplied by the government or not, be sent into store. As Henry Dundas was warned in 1798, even if all the men trained to arms were loyal, it would be impossible to control to

1803.

¹⁵⁴HO 51/75, ff.42-43, C.Yorke to Lord Bolton, 1 September 1803.

¹⁵⁵Guildhall Library, MS 11,987, Cheap Ward Association Receipt for Arms supplied, London, 19 August 1803; PRO 30/26/94, Muncaster Mountaineers, list of numbers of firelocks, November 1803.

¹⁵⁶Guildhall Library, MS 4951, Col.Harnage Letters I.F.O.London, ff.48-49, [Col.Henry Harnage] to General the Earl of Harrington, 24 July 1804; f.74, [Col.Henry Harnage] to R.N.Crew, Secretary to the Office of Ordnance, 30 March 1808.

¹⁵⁷HO 51/75, p.207, C.Yorke to Lord Duncannon, 26 September 1803; ff.29-300, C.Yorke to Duke of Leeds, 12 October 1803.

¹⁵⁸HO 51/76, f.98, Mr.Griffin to Mr.Carew, 3 January 1804; C.Yorke to C.W.W.Wynn, 3 January 1804.

whom their firearms would pass in the future.¹⁵⁹

Publicly, the administration appeared to be concerned less with disarming men trained in the use of firearms than for the good maintenance of the weapons and for restricting their use for non-military, and particularly sporting, purposes.¹⁶⁰ At the peace in April 1802, unspecified arrangements had been made by the Home Office for receiving the arms and accoutrements of corps that were disbanded. Where they were the property of individuals, firearms were kept in store for redelivery if needed on a future occasion.¹⁶¹ Yet in August 1803 Lord Hobart found it necessary to request the City wards of London to provide returns detailing all the arms issued by the royal stores to any volunteer corps formed during the preceding war, and not returned.¹⁶² If unchecked, arms could remain in unauthorised hands for long periods: arms distributed by the Governor of Plymouth among the inhabitants and those of neighbouring towns against the possibility of invasion during the American war were reported to be still in private hands more than a decade later, in 1792.¹⁶³

When volunteers were required to return all arms to store at the conclusion of peace, many complained that they were being required to surrender personal property. Volunteers occasionally became proprietorial when they had paid for arms and equipment, regarding them as their own property and keeping them after disbandment in case they were needed again. The members of the Gosport Rifle Corps asked to retain the arms they had paid for in case they were needed to assist civil magistrates in a future emergency.¹⁶⁴ Corps' committees appear to have been concerned to retrieve them only when arms were needed to equip new volunteers. Because committees were disbanded with their corps during the Peace of Amiens, they could not ensure the return of arms. Almost two months after the re-formation of the

¹⁵⁹Scottish Record Office, GD 51/934, John Fordyce and J. Atkinson, Aldermanbury, 3 May 1798.

¹⁶⁰HO 51/112, Newcastle under Lyme Volunteers Order Book, 27 October 1805.

¹⁶¹Guildhall Library, MS 5, Minutes of the Royal Exchange Division of the Loyal London Volunteers, f.44, Hobart, Downing Street, 19 April 1802.

¹⁶²Guildhall Library, MS 5785, Minutes of the Committee of the 9th Regiment of Loyal London Volunteers (Bridge Ward Association), 16 August 1803; See also MS 9958/2, Orderly Book of the 7th Regiment of Loyal London Volunteers or Portsoken Ward Association (1805-1810), ff.21-22, 9 November 1807.

¹⁶³HO 42/22, 'A Friend to the present Constitution in Church & State' to Sir George Yonge, Tavistock, 27 November 1792.

¹⁶⁴Hampshire Record Office, 11 M 49/234, p.37, N. March to Lord Bolton, Gosport, 25 March 1802.

Bridge Ward Association as the Ninth Regiment of Loyal London Volunteers in July 1803, a former member of the association was requested by the military committee to return his arms and accoutrements. He refused, on the grounds that he had paid for them.¹⁶⁵ Serious concerns were raised by the refusal of disbanded volunteers to return arms paid for by themselves or by subscription, particularly because the former officers no longer had any legal authority to control the members. Arms provided by subscription to the Severn Volunteer Rifle Corps were given to the inferior members of the corps, servants and working men, many of whom refused to return them on disbandment. The former commanding officer considered some of the rifles to be in dangerous hands once the men were no longer subject to control, yet he had only doubtful authority to institute proceedings for their restitution.¹⁶⁶

The issue and storage of firearms at the corps level remained unsystematic until relatively late in the war. In the wake of the Luddite disturbances, an official circular in December 1812 conceded that volunteer arms and stores were not in all cases kept in perfect security. Commanding officers were asked to report which corps kept their arms in depots, the nature of the buildings used, and the means of security they provided.¹⁶⁷ The expense of hiring a storehouse and appointing a storekeeper to care for firearms was paid from county funds, and parish buildings were sometimes used. The Portsoken Ward Military association used the tower of Aldgate church as an armoury to store its arms.¹⁶⁸

Regulations for the storage of volunteer arms were more concerned with the possibility of misuse by others than the fear that volunteers themselves could not be trusted unsupervised with arms. Mistrust of volunteers was only occasionally evident, in such regulations as those guarding against their secreting cartridges on field days instead of using them.¹⁶⁹ More usually, vol-

¹⁶⁵ Guildhall Library, MS 5785, Minutes of the Committee of the 9th Regiment of Loyal London Volunteers (Bridge Ward Association), 9 September 1803; C. Foulkes, 'General Order Book of the Royal Spelthorne Legion, Bedfont The "Home Guard" of 1803', *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, Vol. XXI, No. 81, Spring, 1942, p. 42.

¹⁶⁶ HO 50/298, Sam. Watson, New House near Stroud, 15 May 1813.

¹⁶⁷ HO 51/120, f. 293, Circular to all counties having volunteer infantry or artillery, Sidmouth, 11 December 1812; HO 50/45, J. Matthyson to Duke of York, Crown Street, Westminster, 25 March 1799.

¹⁶⁸ HO 51/80, f. 383, Hawkesbury to Earl of Berkeley, 13 June 1805; Guildhall Library, MS 9957/2, Minutes of the Committee of the Portsoken Ward Military Association or 7th Regiment of Loyal London Volunteers, 15 August 1803.

¹⁶⁹ Norfolk Record Office, Townshend Correspondence, MS 5363, Rules and Regulations

unteers were trusted to keep their arms at home. The General commanding the south western district thought it was immaterial whether the arms were kept in store or by individuals as long as they were issued to proper men in the first place, and kept in good condition.¹⁷⁰ Many corps allowed their members to keep their weapons at home, to enable easy and rapid assembly in the event of an emergency. In all the corps of the City of London except the Bank and East India Company volunteers and the Honourable Artillery Company, arms were kept by individual volunteers at their own homes. The Inspecting Field Officer for the district recommended that each corps provide an arsenal and magazine where arms could be kept under a proper guard. The reason given was not that volunteers could not be trusted to look after firearms but rather that in cases of real emergency the men could more easily and unmolested repair to their alarm posts without than with their arms.¹⁷¹ It was feared that arms kept in an insecure armoury might be taken by rebels in the event of an insurrection, which would prevent volunteers from acting against them.¹⁷²

A recurrent official fear was that the political motives for some men having joined the volunteers might be insurrectionary. Government spies regularly reported accounts of plans to arm, and secret military training by members of the London Corresponding Society during the first half of 1794. One military division was reported in April to meet in St. George's Fields to be trained in the use of firearms and military exercise by men formerly in the army. The same month, five men of the Holborn division were said to have met in an upstairs room of a bookseller's house to exercise with mop handles under the direction of a gunsmith. A large print illustrating the stages of the manual and platoon exercise was produced by a corresponding society member for the instruction of revolutionary armed clubs, but advertised as intended for the loyal armed associations being formed in April 1794.¹⁷³

In the more informal circumstances of the previous year, an insurrectionary armed society had been formed publicly under the guise of a loyal

of the Wells Loyal Volunteers, Wells, [Norfolk], 1800.

¹⁷⁰Hampshire Record Office, 11 M 49/239, Major General John Whitelocke to Captain Purvis, Portsmouth, 15 October 1803.

¹⁷¹Guildhall Library, MS 4951, Col. Harnage Letters, I.F.O. London, ff.16-17, [Col. Henry Harnage] to Lt. Col. Macquarie Assistant Adjutant General London District, 1 December 1803; See also Westminster City Library, B 1332, St. Clement Danes, Defence Act Minutes and Proceedings 2 August 1803, p.28.

¹⁷²HO 50/45, J. Matthyson to Duke of York, Crown Street, Westminster, 25 March 1799.

¹⁷³*Selections from the Papers of the London Corresponding Society 1792-1799*, Edited with an introduction by Mary Thale, pp.131-132, 149 and n.149.

volunteer association. The Loyal Lambeth Association printed resolutions and regulations that appeared little different from those of many later volunteer associations. One of its provisions, for the quarterly election of officers, was highly unusual, but had the respectable precedent of the London and Westminster Light Horse Volunteers in 1779. All the Lambeth association's other regulations were typical of later urban parish armed associations; its approximately 60 members elected a committee of seven to regulate the association's internal affairs. The rhetoric of the loyal associations was turned to use by the military front for a seditious society. Significantly, the association declared its intention, not of defending the King, laws and the church as was the practice of many corps, but more ambiguously to defend country, lives, and public and private property against all subverters and levellers of peace and good order. At the trial of Thomas Hardy for treason in 1794 it emerged that the Loyal Lambeth Association's aim had been parliamentary reform by force of arms. Its members trained at night in private houses, and most, if not all, had links with the London Corresponding Society.¹⁷⁴ The Lambeth Association presumably would not have slipped through the closer scrutiny given to volunteer associations from 1794 onwards by lords lieutenant and the Home Office.

Despite constant but informal and unsystematic checks on political loyalty, membership of a volunteer corps appeared an attractive way to acquire arms with official sanction. Superficially, the London Corresponding Society's consideration of a proposal to form a military corps appears such a case. Two divisions of the society brought before the General Committee on 5 April 1798 the question of what line to adopt regarding the then pending bill for preparations against invasion, which invited the formation of volunteer corps and armed associations. Thomas Evans, the Secretary, referred to the annihilation of liberty in France and the tyranny of the French occupation of neighbouring states. He argued that the members of the society ought to be advised strenuously to oppose the French invasion. When he 'mentioned, as the most signal way of avowing their sentiments, that they might collectively offer to form themselves into a military corps, dis-

¹⁷⁴TS 24/3/30B/1-4, Sedition Papers, Rules, Articles and Regulations; to be observed by the Members of the Loyal Lambeth Association; *A Complete Collection of State Trials and proceedings for high treason and other crimes and misdemeanours*, Compiled by T.B.Howell and Thomas Jones Howell, Vol.XXIV, (London, 1818), cols.693-708; Albert Goodwin, *The Friends of Liberty*, p.351; *Selections from the Papers of the London Corresponding Society 1792-1799*, Edited with an introduction by Mary Thale, p.161, p.91 n.75; Iain McCalman, *Radical Underworld*, pp.13-14.

approbation began to be manifested.' The President thought it the worst proposition that could have been imagined. Paul Lemaitre censured the idea 'both because the offer was likely to be rejected, and because if accepted, it would put the members at the disposal of men in whose good will they had no reason to confide.' After further discussion on 19 April, the question was adjourned for three months. Shortly after, a party of Bow Street runners and King's messengers arrived, arrested fifteen committee members and seized the society's books and papers. Richard Hodgson and his fellow prisoners later compiled a narrative of the debate for publication.¹⁷⁵

The motives for the proposal to form a volunteer corps are unclear. Evans was at the time engaged in armed republican plotting, and the tactic of using volunteer corps as covers for insurrectionary drilling was well established.¹⁷⁶ Alexander Galloway six months later from prison continued to claim that the Corresponding Society's object had been to contribute to the general defence of the country in resisting any foreign invasion either as individuals or as a collective body.¹⁷⁷ The printed *Proceedings of the General Committee*, however, though appearing disingenuous and self-justificatory after the arrest of the committee, made it possible to believe that the corresponding society had placed the defence of the country before political reform, an argument which may have seemed not entirely implausible in the context of the apostasy of several former opponents of the war when faced by the heightened threat of invasion by the no longer libertarian Directory. Whatever the case, the society knew that such an offer to serve would be rejected; the discussion of the proposal viewed it as a political statement of support for the war and national defence rather than a practical scheme to join the volunteers. Significantly, it was the autonomy of volunteer corps, their freedom to set their own regulations and their relative independence of official control, that made the corresponding society's proposal feasible in the first place, let alone plausible.

Conclusions

Unsystematic but constant and informal checks were made on the loyalty and political principles of volunteers. Particular emphasis was placed on the

¹⁷⁵ *Selections from the Papers of the London Corresponding Society 1792-1799*, Edited with an introduction by Mary Thale, pp.xviii, 429-435.

¹⁷⁶ Iain McCalman, *Radical Underworld*, p.13.

¹⁷⁷ HO 42/45, ff.278-281, Alexr.Galloway to Duke of Portland, State Side of Newgate, 11 October 1798.

choice of officers, since the vital checks on membership were performed at the corps level. Recommendations were required from respectable householders for membership of a corps, and informal enquiries appear to have been made into applications. Attempts to enforce a qualification in land for officers were not entirely successful. Barely qualified men were alleged to be driving out gentlemen or deterring them from joining. Oaths of allegiance were required from men, and support for patriotic enterprises, particularly the Voluntary Contribution of 1798, used as a test of loyalty, but generally loyalty was presumed in the absence of clear signs of disloyalty. Political allegiances were not formally a consideration for membership of volunteer corps, although outspoken opposition to government policies seems to have carried the implication that it was incompatible with volunteering. This apparent contradiction was no longer evident after the campaign against the two acts in late 1795, largely because the heightened threat of invasion and the rejection of peace terms by the French had by 1798 removed the qualms of those who feared support for the war effort would be interpreted as support for Pitt's policies.

The leaving of the important checks on the loyalty and reliability of volunteers to officers approved by the lords lieutenant is symptomatic of the general tendency to the autonomy of volunteer corps and the devolution of authority to local officials. On the whole, volunteer corps became an agency by which existing social connections were reinforced. Trustworthy, loyal and propertied gentlemen commanding corps were expected to inculcate loyalty among the potentially unreliable volunteers. The danger from the masses and the impolicy of arming them indiscriminately were widely presumed. Common men would be made loyal by membership of volunteer corps, by being kept out of idleness and contact with democratic ideas, and by being exposed to loyalist propaganda and activities. The test of whether a man could be trusted with arms was not primarily political, however. Reliability was indicated partly by social rank and occupation, but mainly by the legal requirement for officers of a landed income, as for all other military commissions. Loyalty among volunteers had more than a political base.

Chapter Five: 'An Insurrection of Loyalty':¹
The Motivation for Volunteering

Shortly before fifteen of its members were arrested in April 1798, the General Committee of the London Corresponding Society had dismissed a proposal to form a voluntary military corps. If volunteer organisation could be used as a legal cover for the arming of an insurrectionary force, questions are raised about the motivation for volunteering in general. This chapter will seek to explain why men chose to join or form volunteer corps. First, motive must be distinguished from opportunity, since not all men who wished to volunteer were able to do so. The variety of options available to volunteers must also be considered. Four broad motives can be identified, which will be considered in turn: a sense of patriotic duty, the avoidance of compulsory military service, the attraction of material rewards, and a variety of social pressures.²

Individuals' motives for volunteering provide a clear indication of the aims of the force in general: whether it had any overt political purpose, and if so, what its political role was; whether its military purpose was directed against invasion, internal disorder, or some combination of the two. It is not enough to take volunteers' pronouncements at face value and to presume that men joined for disinterested, 'patriotic' reasons, to defend the country against invasion. The same motives could be held for joining any other military force; the reasons why men joined the volunteers rather than other corps varied widely. Volunteering to many represented the least disruptive and unattractive of a series of military options. It has been alleged that most men joined to avoid the militia and other supplementary forces from which volunteer service provided exemption. Periods of rapid growth of the movement often coincided with militia ballotting. Insurance clubs were a cheaper and less arduous way of avoiding the militia, however.

The decision to volunteer was consciously one to join a military body, but a body that was relatively independent and with limited military organisation. Volunteer duties were light and not time consuming, and normally did not involve absence from home or business concerns. Pay was allowed for exercises, and uniform clothing was provided, though in many cases the

¹Addington to Simcoe, 4 September 1803, quoted in Philip Ziegler, *Addington A Life of Henry Addington, First Viscount Sidmouth*, (London, 1965), p.200

²See Clive Emsley, *British Society and the French Wars*, pp.73-74, 103; Roger Wells, '“Amidst these shaking times”; Britain's avoidance of revolution revisited', pp.24-25.

costs of membership exceeded official allowances. Volunteers were attracted by those aspects of corps which resembled military clubs: their convivial and social aspects and their collective control over the selection of members and officers. Volunteering could also be used as a mechanism for acquiring or confirming social status, particularly by officers. For working men, the attitude of employers was a vital determinant of whether they would be able to join a corps, or conversely whether they would be obliged to join their employer's corps.

Volunteering is usually interpreted as a patriotic and nationalist response to the defence requirements of the state. John Cookson, however, questions whether patriotism was the dominant ethos in volunteering, particularly once material rewards became important in the large scale mobilisation of 1803.³ Sir John Fortescue similarly believed that patriotic motives were only an initial influence in volunteering; pay and exemption from militia service became the dominant motives.

The question of motive is far more complex than this contrast between patriotism and material inducements would suggest. For many, volunteering involved a decision between a military force and a range of non-military options, including insurance clubs and the hiring of a substitute to serve in a ballotted force. Volunteering was not in general one of a series of military options for the men who joined, since volunteers in general were men who wished to avoid other military forces. The force was expressly intended to be one comprising men who would not otherwise have joined any military force.

Disinterested patriotic motives for volunteering are difficult to identify, not least because they were not unique to this force. Volunteers were always open to the accusation that they had joined the least dangerous of all means to carry out their patriotic duty: to Cobbett, they were 'corps of tame soldiers, never intended to see a foreign foe'.⁴ Other of their motives were just as ambiguous, and are set out in the first section. Though the wish to avoid compulsory military service, particularly in the militia and Army of Reserve, on the part of volunteers is well attested, some reservations must be made. Many men volunteered who either were not liable for military service or were capable of escaping it at a lower cost than membership of a volunteer corps. The attraction of pay and allowances was similarly

³ John Cookson, 'Patriotism and Social Structure: the Ely Volunteers, 1798-1808', p.1.

⁴ *Cobbett's Weekly Political Register*, 23 October 1819, cols.267-269, quoted in James Epstein, 'Understanding the Cap of Liberty', p.106.

equivocal. For those poor men attracted by the prospect of financial reward, counter-examples exist of men who volunteered despite what was for them inadequate compensation. In general, volunteer allowances acted less as an incentive to join than as limited compensation without which most men would have been unable to join.

The explanation of the willingness of men to volunteer must take into account both the desire to avoid the militia and the occasional financial disadvantages entailed. However, volunteering was a comparatively attractive proposition because its terms of service were much more accommodating than any other military force, and these are set out in the second section. Volunteers remained essentially civilians, serving part-time, and they were not treated as regular soldiers. They were not committed to a military career, could resign at will, and could not be ordered away from their neighbourhood without their consent. Volunteers had a larger share in the running of their corps than was normal, and elected their own officers.

Yet in themselves the volunteer corps' relatively light duties and discipline and club-like organisation do not explain the readiness to join. The final section of this chapter explores the social pressures that explain the membership of those not induced to join by militia balloting or financial reward. Pressure from friends, relatives, employers and social superiors was often important, and volunteering was, initially at least, to some extent fashionable. Exclusivity was a further inducement to membership, since middle-class volunteers were able to restrict membership to those with whom they wished to associate. Many corps simply did not accept men seeking to escape militia ballots. Membership, and particularly a commission, in such a corps could help confer, and was often necessary to confirm, social status. Volunteer rank alone was not enough to confer respectability, but it was often necessary to confirm pretensions to respectability, and to maintain local political influence.

Part One: 'To shield me from all harm': Motive, Opportunity and the Avoidance of Militia Service

Little direct evidence is available of the motivation for volunteering. Many volunteer corps were formed, and men joined them, because of the apparent threat of invasion from France, particularly in 1794, 1798, 1801, and from 1803 till 1805. Volunteers commonly gave patriotic reasons for having come forward in defence of their country. One Gloucestershire volunteer officer later claimed that he had enlisted in consequence of the immediate danger

that was apprehended by the government of invasion, and believed he had done what seemed to have been due from every loyal man to his country.⁵ Others claimed that they had joined in order to keep the peace at home in the event of the army being removed to face an invasion.⁶ The King's Somborne company of the Southampton volunteers came forward in order 'to be the first Men to have a shot at Buonaparte'.⁷

Readiness to defend the country was not unique to the volunteers, but patriotic motives were more likely to play a part in volunteering than in the other auxiliary forces. The volunteer movement became a means of securing the allegiance and military service of men who would not otherwise have considered becoming involved personally in military affairs. Sometimes men joined the volunteers as a patriotic gesture rather than buy exemption from another, compulsory, force. The system of exemptions meant that joining a corps was an effective equivalent to providing a substitute for the militia. In 1803 the inhabitants of Strathavon liable for the militia ballot met in a Militia Society to concert measures for raising a fund to procure substitutes for those ballotted. Considering the importance of defending the crown, constitution and their liberties, however, the meeting resolved instead to form a volunteer corps, supported by subscription.⁸

Other motives take into consideration the options available to men who volunteered. It is necessary to distinguish between the motives and the situation of those who joined. The reasons why the majority of men did not join are as important as what may have caused others to volunteer. At the broadest level, geographical circumstances were important in determining whether a corps was likely to be formed, and, if so, who was likely to join it. Corps based in cities and substantial towns were more common than rural corps organised around an estate or a group of village parishes. The constraints of distance meant urban inhabitants were more likely to become volunteers as they were best able to attend musters. The convenience of attending exercise was an important consideration, but not the sole one in the case of rural volunteers who travelled substantial distances as members

⁵HO 50/168, C.Codrington, Dodington, 17 February 1807; Berkshire Record Office, D/ERa O8/1 (32), Radnor Papers, [Sir] Isaac Pocock [to Lord Radnor], Maidenhead Bridge, 21 August 1803.

⁶Gloucestershire Record Office, D1770/7, Captain H[umphrey] Austin to Lord Lieutenant [Earl of Berkeley], [Wotton under Edge], 17 March 1798.

⁷Hampshire Record Office, 11 M 49/234, p.230, Wm.Powlett Powlett to Lord Bolton, Sombourn, 12 August 1803.

⁸HO 50/357, Geo.Hamilton to Marquis of Douglas, 13 June 1803.

of corps. In all but the major towns and cities, potential volunteers did not choose from a range of corps. As pointed out earlier, the geographical coverage of volunteer corps was neither uniform nor comprehensive. Nearly all corps stipulated a limit to the residence of their members beyond which men were admitted only exceptionally. Even in yeomanry corps organised on a county basis, the component troops were clustered in a limited group of parishes. The reasons were military, since a dispersed membership created difficulties in communication and in mustering the corps for exercise or actual service. In many areas of the country, therefore, many men who might otherwise have become volunteers had no local corps that they could join.

Where a corps did exist, the choice for most able-bodied men was not between volunteering and not volunteering, but between joining a volunteer corps and being obliged to serve, or find someone to serve, in one of the various auxiliary forces. Effective membership of a volunteer corps, though not of an armed association, gave exemption from service in the militia, the supplementary militia, the Army of Reserve and the several other forces raised by ballot. A paper listing the advantages of membership of the Cheviot Legion gave priority to exemption from the old and supplementary militias.⁹ Some corps that did not qualify for exemptions, particularly armed associations, made provision for substitutes if their members were ballotted.¹⁰ The expense subsequently forced some to abandon the arrangement.¹¹

It was argued at the time, and has been maintained subsequently, that many men volunteered in order to avoid militia service or the expense of paying a fine or of securing a substitute to serve in their stead. Great eagerness to form corps was evident in 1803 and 1804 once militia balloting had commenced and when the Levy en Masse was being organised, in counties which before then had been reluctant to volunteer. Sir John Fortescue believed the exemption of volunteers withdrew hundreds of thousands of men from the ballot, starving the militia and Army of Reserve of men, and had the immediate consequence of raising the price and lowering the quality of

⁹Northumberland Record Office, ZBU.B.8/12, Advantages to be derived from entering into the infantry of the Cheviot Legion of Volunteers, (n.d.[before 1801]).

¹⁰National Army Museum, 7805-72, p.67, Ealing and Brentford Volunteer Corps, 10 September 1803; National Library of Scotland, MS 10689, Orderly Book of the Second Regiment of Forfarshire or Montrose Volunteers, f.11, 7 October 1803; *Portsmouth Gazette*, No.178, 28 November 1796, p.3 c.3, Portsmouth, November 27; Surrey Record Office, 2397/9/1, Mortlake Association Committee minutes, p.20, 19 September 1803.

¹¹Surrey Record Office, 2397/9/1, Mortlake Association Committee minutes, p.50, 13 January 1804.

substitutes. Volunteers were exempt militia service by the provisions of the Volunteer Act of 1794, and this was gradually extended to other auxiliary forces. Fortescue thought the exemption granted in 1803 from service in the Army of Reserve and all other auxiliary forces an 'extraordinary blunder', and that exemption from the militia only was intended. He believed that by 1807 'the evasion of national duty was now become the sole object of Volunteering.'¹² The Duke of Richmond argued in early 1803 that no further volunteer corps should be formed except near the coasts, and that these should not be exempted from the militia.¹³ Volunteer service was the lesser of two evils; after initial training, duties were light, and volunteers were not required to leave their homes and employment except in emergencies.¹⁴ As Cobbett put it, volunteers 'put on a soldier's habit to avoid a soldier's duty.'¹⁵

One of the clearest examples of volunteering in order to avoid militia service is that of William Upcott, an assistant to a London bookseller and publisher of the *Anti-Jacobin* newspaper who had government connections, when aged 24. He confided to his diary in 1803 that he feared not so much a French invasion, which he thought would be folly, but the 'extraordinary' measures being adopted to repel one. The doubling of the size of the militia had placed him in a continual state of ferment and trouble, fearing the destruction of all his hopes and happiness, present and future, if drawn in the ballot. He claimed always to have held in abhorrence the very name of a soldier, and the great shame of becoming one grieved him considerably. The 'horrors of a military life' entailed the ruinous neglect of business, being cut off from all enjoyment, and being forced to associate with the outcasts of society. Of the two evils of militia and volunteers, he would have chosen the latter, had he been able to afford it: 'Entering into some Volunteer Corps would shield me from all harm'. A patron paid for him to enrol in the St. James's Loyal Volunteers. Upcott had been hired to make copies of all contributions to the *Anti-Jacobin* paper in order to disguise the writers' identities. It was probably one of these wealthy acquaintances who paid for his uniform, entrance fee and other expenses.¹⁶

¹²J.W.Fortescue, *The County Lieutenancies and the Army*, pp.65-66, 69-70, 198; HO 42/48, Plan for the Organisation of the Military Force of the United Kingdom, Clifton, Bristol, [n.d.].

¹³HO 51/114, Richmond to Hobart, 3 April 1804.

¹⁴Hampshire Record Office, 11 M 49/235, p.9, H.P.S.Mildmay to Lord Bolton, Dogmersfield, 31 July 1803.

¹⁵*Cobbett's Political Register*, Vol.IV, col.349.

¹⁶British Library, Add.MS 32,558 Diary of William Upcott, 1803-1807, ff.40-41;

The coincidence of rapid growth in volunteer recruitment and the imminence of ballots or levies tends to support the assumption that men volunteered to avoid compulsory service. The striking increase in the numbers of volunteers in mid 1798 coincided with preparations to ballot the supplementary militia in England and to institute the militia in Scotland. Yet much of this growth was accounted for by the armed associations, which did not provide exemption from the militia. The raising of volunteers was encouraged as an alternative to raising the *Levy en Masse* in 1803. The Act specifically enjoined parishes to raise volunteers in order to escape its compulsory clauses. One such corps, the volunteers of St. Anne, Soho, formed in the stated intention of anticipating the compulsive measures of the government for defence.¹⁷ At one stage, county lieutenancies were warned that men were joining volunteer corps shortly before a militia ballot was held, and resigning once it was over. Deputy lieutenants were told to be vigilant in suppressing such abuses of the system.¹⁸ Some lieutenants withheld proposals to form corps until militia balloting had been completed.¹⁹

The Home Secretary, Charles Yorke, was confident in 1803 that the initial problems and embarrassments of the General Defence Act would be resolved. He believed that many volunteer corps, which had been offered with a view to the advantages of exemption, would ultimately be withdrawn.²⁰ Yet in 1812 complaints could still be made that volunteers were a body of men who gladly shielded themselves under their exemptions and had become merely nominal soldiers.²¹ The commanding officer of the Winkfield Volunteers in Berkshire was not confident of filling the vacancies in his company in 1804 unless the militia balloting was to become severe.²² Seamen volunteered in the mistaken belief that they would be exempt the naval impress. A young seaman, Robert Wicker, of Weymouth, was discharged from the 'Greyhound' revenue cutter in August 1798 and entered into Captain Hors-

William Upcott, *A Bibliographical Account of the Principal Works relating to English Topography*, introduction by Jack Simmons, (East Ardsley, Wakefield, 1978), p.v; *Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol. XX, pp.36-37; Clive Emsley, *British Society and the French Wars*, pp.102-103.

¹⁷Westminster City Library, A 2303/9, St. Anne's, Soho; printed handbill, [n.d.].

¹⁸R.W.S.Norfolk, *Militia, Yeomanry and Volunteer Forces of the East Riding 1689-1908*, East Yorkshire Local History Series: No.19, (York, 1965), p.21.

¹⁹Suffolk Record Office, HA 513/5/144, Grafton Archives, Euston to Hobart, [n.d.].

²⁰HO 51/75, p.8, C.Yorke to Duke of Richmond, 26 August 1803.

²¹HO 50/357, 'a well wisher to my Country', October 1812.

²²Berkshire Record Office, D/ERa O10 (43), George VanSittart to Radnor, 25 May 1804, enclosing an extract of a letter from Captain Weyland, 7 May 1804.

ford's volunteer company in order to keep clear of the impress, and for the purpose of being exempted from service in the Sea Fencibles.²³ The clearest case of volunteering in order to gain exemptions involves abuses^{was} reported to be prevailing among volunteer corps in the neighbourhood of Oakhampton in late 1803. Their members were said to meet in houses at night, under pretence of exercising, but without arms, and merely for the purpose of entitling themselves to official allowances and to exemption from the militia and Army of Reserve ballots.²⁴

Nevertheless, by no means all volunteers had joined to avoid the militia. Men who were perfectly able to pay for a substitute, had they been required to, chose instead to volunteer. Men volunteered who were either not liable to the militia ballot, or not in a class that was to be called out under the levy en masse except in extremities.²⁵ Where information exists, it seems that very few corps were without married men with more than two children, who were in the fourth class and not liable for compulsory service. Poor men with more than one child were also exempt the militia ballot.²⁶ One Hampshire officer complained that married men with families could not be punished with expulsion because they were exempt both the militia and the Army of Reserve.²⁷ Some men even belonged to both an infantry and a cavalry corps.²⁸ Nor was volunteering necessarily cheaper than procuring a substitute. Many volunteers' estimates of the expense of their membership were significantly higher than even the prices for substitutes reached in the early 1800s. Men who had no intention of serving personally if ballotted were nevertheless prepared to volunteer rather than procure a substitute. One clergyman's son was elected into the St. James's Volunteers, though he intended to find a substitute for the Army of Reserve whatever the event.²⁹

In any case, there existed other ways of avoiding militia service which were both less arduous and less expensive than membership of a volunteer

²³HO 51/78, f.22, C.Yorke to Archd.Moore, 9 May 1804; HO 50/44, Capt.Ingram to Evan Nepean, Weymouth, 24 August 1798, (copy); Evan Nepean to Colonel Brownrigg, Admiralty Office, 27 August 1798; Evan Nepean to William Wickham, Admiralty Office, 30 August 1798; But see HO 51/78, f.22, C.Yorke to Archd.Moore, 9 May 1804.

²⁴HO 51/76, f.43, C.Yorke to Earl Fortescue, 21 December 1803.

²⁵For example, HO 50/44, J.Matthews, Belmont near Hereford, 12 August 1798.

²⁶J.W.Fortescue, *The County Lieutenancies and the Army*, p.16.

²⁷Hampshire Record Office, 11 M 49/236, p.127 Peter Serle to Lord Bolton, 17 February [1804].

²⁸Hertfordshire Record Office, Hitchin Loyal Volunteers Minutes, Box I.

²⁹*The Diary of Joseph Farington*, edited by Kenneth Garlick and Angus Macintyre, Vol.VI, p.2065, 27 June 1803.

corps. Some parishes organised their own schemes to provide substitutes, paid from the parochial rates. Insurance societies and clubs were set up expressly to procure substitutes for those of their members who were ballotted, in return for a moderate annual subscription. This course was not open to the poorest men, and was in any case not always infallible. Upcott discovered that despite subscribing two guineas at an office to insure himself against the ballot, he remained liable for both the regular and supplementary militias.³⁰

Unlike the provision of a substitute, which provided the principal or ballotted man with immunity from the militia ballot for three years, (the term of service), membership of a volunteer corps only provided exemption from militia service, not the ballot, and then only for as long as the volunteer remained an effective member of his corps. If ballotted while a member of a corps, a volunteer became liable to serve or provide a substitute as soon as he left his corps.³¹ It could be expected that the poorer volunteers who had been ballotted would be deterred from resigning, at least until the volunteers' privileges were removed in 1808. Yet the examples of the Oxford and Wallsend volunteers suggest that it was rather the men in settled occupations who were the most likely to remain members. Skilled workmen tended to stay volunteers for several years, while labouring men who were more mobile had a relatively high turnover. Some of them transferred to corps elsewhere; Arthur Prudden moved from Bucklersbury to Hertford in 1804 and transferred from the Hitchin to the Hertford corps.³²

Part Two: The Attractions of Volunteering

It is clear that the avoidance of militia service is alone insufficient to explain the wish to volunteer. The choice between volunteers and the militia must consider the attractions of the former and the repellant aspects of the latter. Militia service entailed full-time service away from home under conditions similar to those of the regular army, and under military discipline, for three years. Volunteers, in contrast, were liable for full-time service away from home and were subject to martial law only in the event of an invasion and

³⁰British Library, Add.MS 32,558 Diary of William Upcott, f.40.

³¹Thomas Edline Tomlins, *The Statutes of The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland*, (London, 1807), Vol.2, p.92, 44 Georgii III Cap. LIV, §.XVII; HO 50/298, Sam.Watson, New House near Stroud, 8 April 1813.

³²Hertfordshire Record Office, 1/67, Records of the Hitchin Loyal Volunteers, Box I, Arther Prudden to J.S.Prudden, Bucklersberry (*sic*), Hitchin, Hertfordshire; Hertford, 16 April 1804.

were free to resign.³³ Yet there was more to the membership of corps than the avoidance of militia service. Many volunteers were anxious to remain members of corps even when their pay and privileges had been withdrawn and service in the local militia had become in relative terms more attractive. Men were willing to volunteer despite the opposition of their employers. Volunteer corps provided the opportunity for military service without the possibility of being drafted into regular regiments or being sent abroad; militia regiments were sent to Ireland, and some even volunteered to be sent to France in 1814. One of the attractions of volunteer corps was that they were not treated as regular soldiers. Volunteers frequently expressed their anxiety that they were not to be regimented under any but their own officers, and that they were not to be ordered on to service without their consent. One of the initial resolutions of the Portsoken Ward Armed Association in London specified that its members were not to be considered as enlisted soldiers constituting part of the military establishment.³⁴

Duties were relatively light for volunteers after their initial period of training, and particularly once the threat of invasion had receded. Upcott regarded the initial three weeks of daily early morning drills as a necessary evil and looked forward to being judged fit to join the rest of the corps for whom regular attendance was unnecessary.³⁵ No more than half of the members of one Buckinghamshire yeomanry troop were attending any one exercise in 1798, while by 1800 some men were attending only three or four days out of the ten required for the spring exercise. Absenteeism varied widely even within the same corps: fewer than ten were absent on any one day from the Buckingham squadron while the Aylesbury squadron frequently had 60 missing.³⁶

The frequency of drills and musters tended to fall appreciably after the first year of the establishment of a corps. Prince William Frederick's Volunteers of St. Clement Danes drilled daily from December 1803 till April 1804, and again in June and July. By early 1805, the frequency had fallen to around ten drills each month, and in 1806 and 1807 to less than once a month; no drill is recorded after June 1808. No one volunteer attended all the drills. Even when held daily, it appears that each member had only to

³³See *Cobbett's Political Register*, Vol.IV col.287.

³⁴HO 50/78, Portsoken Ward Meeting of Inhabitants, 14 July 1803.

³⁵British Library, Add.MS 32,558 Diary of William Upcott, f.41.

³⁶Buckinghamshire Record Office, L/Y:14/57, Thomas Berry to Acton Chaplin, [October 1798]; L/Y:14/133, Thomas Grenville to Acton Chaplin, Stowe, 13 May 1800.

attend two or three times a week.³⁷ Initially each troop of the Northamptonshire Yeomanry met weekly for exercise, but once the corps was tolerably proficient it met irregularly, about once a month, as it suited the convenience of the officers.³⁸

Officers' duties were correspondingly light. The Ewelme Hundred corps in Oxfordshire did not muster between October 1804 and March 1805. William Lowndes, its commanding officer, told the lord lieutenant that his parliamentary business preoccupied him so that, except when the corps was mustered, he did not inquire into its concerns. The few duties that were necessary he carried out personally as he had no deputy.³⁹ William Windham thought the only significant question over his accepting a larger command in Norfolk than his cavalry troop was whether it would make him any more bound to attend.⁴⁰ Clearly, volunteering was not the primary concern of all officers.

If the duties expected of volunteers were relatively light and not time consuming, a further attraction was that volunteer corps could not be ordered on to permanent duty or away from home without their members' consent, except during an invasion. This was particularly important for corps substantially composed of skilled artisans and retailers. Upcott, as a bookseller's assistant, thought that the horrors of a military life led to the ruinous neglect of business.⁴¹ When Arthur Prudden moved to Hertford and planned to join the local corps of volunteers, he reassured his parents in Bucklersbury that there was 'no likelyhoods of going out at all'.⁴²

The availability of insurance schemes indicates that the decision to join a volunteer corps entailed a conscious choice of a military organisation. It will be argued that as a military option, the principal attraction of volunteering was that it was the least disruptive of those available. The terms of

³⁷ Westminster City Library, B 1310, Prince William Frederick's Volunteers Roll Book; see also Hertfordshire Record Office, 1/67, Records of the Hitchin Loyal Volunteers, Box I, W. Wilshire, Hitchin, 30 May 1805; PRO 30/3/25, p.26, Report of Colonel Herries to committee, 26 October 1804.

³⁸ Northamptonshire Record Office, Misc.Collections, YZ 4912, Robert Edmonds to Duke of Buccleuch, Boughton House, 12 June 1797.

³⁹ HO 50/142, W. Lowndes to Marlborough, 15 March 1805.

⁴⁰ Norfolk Record Office, Ketton-Cremer MSS, WKC 7/84/12, W.W. to William [Lukin?], Pall Mall, 25 November 1803.

⁴¹ British Library, Add.MS 32,558 Diary of William Upcott, ff.40-41.

⁴² (*sic.*): Hertfordshire Record Office, 1/67, Records of the Hitchin Loyal Volunteers, Box I, Arthur Prudden to J.S. Prudden, Bucklersberry (*sic*), Hitchin, Hertfordshire; Hertford, 16 April 1804.

service were less demanding than those of other forces, and official pay and allowances made it possible for poor men to join some corps.

Exemptions in addition to that from militia service were as attractive inducements to join as they were effective sanctions against resignation. Effective members of the yeomanry and volunteer cavalry, and field officers and adjutants of volunteer infantry were exempt duty for horses used at muster and exercise, as were all those who provided horses for their use. Farmers were accused of providing horses for their workmen to join cavalry troops in order to avoid the horse duty.⁴³ Uniformed volunteers riding to exercise were also exempt turnpike tolls. All members of volunteer and yeomanry troops were exempt the hair powder duty. Parochial allowances were granted to the wives and dependent children under ten years when volunteers were absent on permanent duty.⁴⁴ Some believed, incorrectly, that membership exempted them from service in civil offices.⁴⁵

Sometimes these privileges were publicised in order to attract recruits, which suggests that their value was taken seriously.⁴⁶ The threat of their withdrawal was sometimes the only means of leverage commanding officers had on their corps to enforce regular attendance. Setting a date for an exercise in June 1803, the commander of the Aylesbury yeomanry squadron told his men that he was confident that 'The particular situation in which the County is now placed will I am certain be the strongest inducement to you to attend at Aylesbury on that day', but went on to point out that without an attendance certificate they would not be entitled to exemptions.⁴⁷ Fears were expressed in 1800 that the government was planning to use the exemption from the hair powder tax in order to discriminate between individual corps. A meeting of metropolitan volunteers told Dundas that without the tax exemption, many corps would be considerably reduced by resignations,

⁴³R.T.Wilson, *An Enquiry into the Present State of the Military Force of the British Empire, with a View to its Re-organisation. Addressed to The Right Hon. William Pitt*, (London, 1804), p.22.

⁴⁴Cambridge County Record Office, P24/17/5, St.Andrew the Less, Cambridge, Parish Records, (printed forms), 23 July 1805, 27 July 1808.

⁴⁵HO 50/46 Wm.Smith and Fred.Breton to Henry Dundas, Southampton, 2 October 1799.

⁴⁶HO 50/90, Resolutions of the Bromsgrove Light Horse Volunteers, 14 December 1802.

⁴⁷Buckinghamshire Record Office, L/Y:14/159 Chandos Temple [to all members], 23 May 1803; Shropshire Record Office, 146/28 Orders and Fines for the Regulation of the Corps of the Pimhill Light Horse Volunteer Yeomanry Cavalry, [n.d.]; Buckinghamshire Record Office, L/Y:13/42 Acton Chaplin to Mr.Berry, [n.d., 1798], (copy).

particularly those composed of less opulent men.⁴⁸

Many corps offered benefits of their own, provided by common subscription rather than the state. Volunteering developed aspects of a social role similar to the benefit schemes of friendly societies. Members of the Renfrewshire Yeomanry infantry contributed their pay to a fund from which benefits were paid to those unable to work through sickness or other misfortune, and to provide for families left destitute by the death of a volunteer.⁴⁹ Advertising the advantages of membership, the Melvill Volunteers in Fifeshire added to the usual allowances of pay, clothing, exemption from the impress and the hair powder tax, the further provision of the best medical assistance and aid for volunteers and their families. Unusually, the Melvill corps also emphasised the belief that all volunteers were entitled to exercise their trades as freemen in any town in Great Britain except Oxford and Cambridge, an assertion that appears to have been groundless.⁵⁰

While the freedom to find work elsewhere was held out as an incentive to volunteer, the prevention of emigration was seen as one of the principal benefits of the volunteer system in the western isles and highlands of Scotland where landlords were concerned to maintain the labour force.⁵¹ The lord lieutenant of Inverness-shire thought the volunteers the most effectual means of checking an 'infatuated' spirit of emigration, especially to America, without the appearance of doing so. He believed it well worthwhile to keep the men at home by a little additional expense in the system of volunteers.⁵² Similarly, permanent pay was requested for volunteers on the Isle of Skye as 'it would hinder Emigration';⁵³ In 1801 the captains of the five companies of Badenoch Volunteers argued that the continuance of the corps would divert the Highlanders' minds from the then prevalent spirit of emigration.⁵⁴

The pay allowed to volunteers for attending exercise acted as an incentive

⁴⁸HO 50/47 Isaac Phipps to Dundas, 27 February 1800.

⁴⁹J.R. Western, 'The Volunteer Movement as an Anti-Revolutionary Force', p.609; see also National Library of Scotland, MS 5085, Erskine Murray correspondence, f.169, John A. Murray, Robt. Selby Cunningham, James Erskine, Henry Cockler, Wm. Berar, Edinburgh, 29 May 1804.

⁵⁰HO 50/48, f.237, (p.3), George Melvill Leslie to Henry Dundas, 4 December 1800, (enclosure).

⁵¹Bruce Lenman, *Integration, Enlightenment, and Industrialisation Scotland 1746-1832*, (London, 1981), p.123.

⁵²HO 50/51, Ja. Grant to Lord Hobart, Castle Grant, 8 September 1801.

⁵³HO 50/352, James Grant to Duke of Portland, Castle Grant, 17 September 1794.

⁵⁴HO 50/52, Don. Macpherson, Lach. Macpherson, Alex. Clark, Thos. Shaw to Lord Hobart, Pilmain, 30 December 1801.

to join, although its attractiveness varied throughout the country. Pay as an inducement to volunteer was considered more important in country areas than in towns, because rural labourers had to be encouraged to travel several miles for exercise.⁵⁵ In areas where wages were low, principally Scotland, volunteers were believed to have gone on permanent duty for the sake of the money, which was less a concern of their southern counterparts.⁵⁶ Many of the Midlothian and Stirling Volunteers were believed to have volunteered for the sake of the pay allowed for two days' exercise each week. The two shillings was an addition to the normal income of journeymen tradesman and artificers, since summer evening exercises did not interfere with their work, and in winter many masters engaged not to deduct time spent at drill from their wages.⁵⁷ In Inverness-shire, one of the advantages attributed to the volunteer system was that it was a great support to the people in bad seasons.⁵⁸ Where wages were higher, volunteer pay was considered inadequate and it was difficult to recruit volunteers. The vicar of Sproatley in the East Riding explained in 1794 that his parishioners were aware of the necessity of the volunteers, but were unwilling to join, objecting principally to the smallness of the pay offered, expecting a consideration adequate at least to their income as labourers.⁵⁹ The official allowance of one shilling a day when on permanent duty was reported to be less than what volunteers in Cornwall could earn as labourers.⁶⁰

When allowances were reduced in 1806, many volunteers resigned on the grounds that they could no longer afford to attend. When their pay was reduced, many volunteer labourers in the East Cowes Volunteers were reported to be no longer obedient or willing to serve; they became indifferent, exclaiming 'Oh! let Gentlemen be Volunteers, without Reward, for we are poor and cannot afford it.' Others transferred to another local company.⁶¹

⁵⁵ Hampshire Record Office, 11 M 49/234, p.199, Balthazer Adams to Lord Bolton, Beaulieu, 17 August 1803.

⁵⁶ *Cobbett's Political Register*, Vol.VI, cols.93-94.

⁵⁷ HO 50/46, Major James Mayne to Duke of Montrose, Penies Logie, 21 October 1799, (copy); Scottish Record Office, GD 51/905/2, Buccleuch to Duke of Portland, Dalkeith House, 4 July 1798, (copy).

⁵⁸ HO 50/51, Ja. Grant to Lord Hobart, Castle Grant, 8 September 1801.

⁵⁹ R.W.S. Norfolk, *Militia, Yeomanry and Volunteer Forces of the East Riding 1689-1908*, p.15.

⁶⁰ HO 50/50, Mount Edgcumbe to Lord Hobart, 25 April 1801.

⁶¹ Hampshire Record Office, 11 M 49/241, p.184, John Ward to Lord Bolton, Cowes, 16 September 1806, (extract); John Ward to Thomas Sewell, East Cowes, 9 September 1806; L.Lidiard to Lord Bolton, West Cowes, 17 September 1806.

This was just Windham's intention; he aimed to make the volunteers more socially respectable by reducing government allowances. In Denbighshire, volunteer corps competed with fencible regiments for recruits. One commanding officer was obliged to offer twenty shillings of the clothing allowance as a bounty to induce men to enrol. He thought there was little doubt that any man who volunteered for the sake of a pound would not be able to resist the bounties offered by fencible and other regiments.⁶²

Government allowances to volunteers in many cases were less an attraction than a prerequisite without which many labouring men could not have afforded to join corps. Pay was a compensation for lost time rather than a reward.⁶³ In some cases, employers undertook to pay volunteers their usual wages when some of their time had been occupied in volunteer exercises. An offer of service by more than 500 of the engineers, inspectors, foremen, flagmasters and working men employed on the Grand Junction Canal as a company of pioneers in 1797 was made in the expectation that the canal company would pay them their usual daily earnings when out on duty, so they could support their families. The lord lieutenant of Buckinghamshire recommended that the government indemnify the company for the men's wages when on public service.⁶⁴

In many cases, membership of a corps cost more than the possible financial benefits. Particularly in yeomanry corps and unpaid armed associations, an annual subscription was required in addition to an admission charge, to provide for the expenses of the corps. The allowances paid to yeomanry troops were normally sufficient only to pay the permanent sergeants and trumpeters.⁶⁵ Upcott paid a guinea entrance money on joining the St. James's Volunteers in order to defray the expenses of drill sergeants and drummers.⁶⁶ Frequently, volunteers were required to pay for their uniforms and some equipment, only arms and accoutrements being supplied by the government. In such cases it was claimed that membership cost more than insuring against the ballot would have done.⁶⁷ Some officers, like Captain Moris Ximenes of the Wargrave Rangers in Berkshire, took upon themselves the entire expense of clothing their troops.⁶⁸

⁶²HO 50/46, Kirkwall to Henry Dundas, Llavenny, Denbigh, 26 November 1799.

⁶³J.R. Western, 'The Volunteer Movement as an Anti-Revolutionary Force', p.609.

⁶⁴HO 50/330, Marquis of Buckingham, 18 June 1797, (enclosure).

⁶⁵Hampshire Record Office, 11 M 49/236, p.61, C.S. Lefevre to Lord Bolton, Cheltenham, 6 December 1803.

⁶⁶British Library, Add. MS 32,558 Diary of William Upcott, f.41.

⁶⁷J.R. Western, 'The Volunteer Movement as an Anti-Revolutionary Force', p.609 n.1.

⁶⁸Berkshire Record Office, Radnor Papers, D/ERa O10, p.64, M. Ximenes to Radnor,

The allocation of official allowances can be interpreted as a means of determining the social composition of a corps.⁶⁹ Only the relatively wealthy could afford to join, at their own expense, a corps that did not receive allowances. The respectable tradesmen who composed the Gosport Rifle Corps prided themselves on being above the rank of volunteers who received pay.⁷⁰ Occasionally, some poorer members were selected and paid for by subscribers, employers, or 'respectable well-wishers'.⁷¹ Upcott's case was typical: he was an assistant bookseller, not as wealthy as a former school-mate who was an attorney, and found the expense of joining a corps 'far beyond my poor purse'; his admission fee was paid by a wealthy patron.⁷²

Some corps waived subscriptions altogether for poor volunteers. The Portsoken Ward Military Association found in 1798 that many respectable men were initially deterred by the five guinea subscription. The committee proposed a circular letter to the members asking them to tell potential recruits who had kept back on account of the expense that the quantum of subscription was perfectly optional, and would be thankfully received, however small.⁷³ On re-forming in 1803, the association found many men offered their services who would have made very desirable members of the corps, 'but from their humble situation in life are utterly incapable of contributing to the Military Fund' enough even to cover the expense of clothing.⁷⁴ Some corps made formal provision for the admission of substitutes, men who were equipped at the expense of others but subject to the same regulations and conditions of entry.⁷⁵

28 November 1802.

⁶⁹J.R. Western, 'The Volunteer Movement as an Anti-Revolutionary Force', p.611.

⁷⁰Hampshire Record Office, 11 M 49/234, pp.36-37, N. March to Lord Bolton, Gosport, 25 March 1802.

⁷¹J.R. Western, 'The Volunteer Movement as an Anti-Revolutionary Force', p.611; Westminster City Library, A 2303/5, St. Anne's, Soho, Thomas Vardon to Rev. Mr. Jefferson, 22 August [n.y.].

⁷²British Library, Add. MS 32,558 Diary of William Upcott, ff.40-41; William Upcott, *A Bibliographical Account of the Principal Works relating to English Topography*, p.v; *Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol. XX, pp.36-37; Clive Emsley, *British Society and the French Wars*, pp.102-103; Erin McCawley Renn, 'British Civil and Military Preparations Against Napoleon's Planned Invasion 1803-1805', appendix.

⁷³Guildhall Library, MS 9957/1, Minutes of the Committee of the Portsoken Ward Military Association f.14, 18 May 1798; MS 9957/2, Minutes of the Committee of the Portsoken Ward Military Association or the 7th Regiment of Loyal London Volunteers, 3 August 1803.

⁷⁴Guildhall Library, MS 9957/2, Minutes of the Committee of the Portsoken Ward Military Association or the 7th Regiment of Loyal London Volunteers, 26 July 1803.

⁷⁵Buckinghamshire Record Office, TA/3/3, Autograph Roll of the Bucks Yeomanry.

Membership of a corps could be expensive, particularly for the officers, and the most that could be expected was that much of the expense would be defrayed by subscriptions or official allowances. Officers frequently were obliged to subsidise the inadequate finances provided by the government and subscriptions. Some became in effect bankers to their corps — the Hitchin Volunteers owed their commanding officer £444 in 1805, and a Suffolk yeomanry corps at one point owed its officers £1085.⁷⁶ It was a common practice for officers to pool their pay to provide for the general expenses of their corps. Officers in Midlothian contributed their official pay into a common stock purse, which with fines for irregular attendance defrayed the corps' contingent expenses. The officers also found it necessary to provide some clothing and accoutrements for which official allowances were inadequate, so that the corps would make a respectable appearance. These were advanced on six months' credit and five per cent. thereafter.⁷⁷ Even yeomanry officers were not always sufficiently wealthy to sustain the expenditure required. Richard Cumberland believed that 'They cannot do it; for they are not a description of men, (especially the Subalterns) that ought to undergo it; neither will they.'⁷⁸

In purely financial terms, volunteering bore no comparison with the high bounties offered for militia service. Yet the high bounties were a symptom of the difficulty of finding men willing to act as substitutes; no similar difficulty was apparent in volunteer corps until about 1808. Vacancies left by resignation were readily filled, at least in the early years. An Ipswich volunteer officer pointed out that his equipment together with some unexpected expenses had cost him nearly £100, for which exemption from the horse and hair powder taxes was little compensation.⁷⁹ Clothing alone was said to cost each member of a typical yeomanry troop £29.⁸⁰ Two friends of

Commenced April, 1795.

⁷⁶John Cookson, 'The English Volunteer Movement of the French Wars, 1793-1815: Some Contexts', p.34; Buckinghamshire Record Office, L/Y:5/14, Geo.Nelson to Luke Turner, [1800].

⁷⁷Scottish Record Office, GD 51/905/2, Buccleuch to Duke of Portland, Dalkeith House, 4 July 1798, (copy); Hampshire Record Office, 11 M 49/241, Isle of Wight Volunteers, ff.13-14, Robert Clarke to Colonel Oglander, Newport, 21 January 1802.

⁷⁸HO 50/357, f.6, Richard Cumberland, (probably the playwright) in a paper discussing volunteer corps, London, 14 May 1803.

⁷⁹*Cobbett's Political Register*, Vol.IX, col.569, 'A Country Gentleman and Volunteer Officer', Ipswich, 14 April 1806.

⁸⁰Hampshire Record Office, 11 M 49/236, p.61 C.S.Lefevre to Lord Bolton, Cheltenham, 6 December 1803; see also Scottish Record Office, GD 267/1/18/14, [George Home], Edinburgh, 23 March 1795; National Army Museum, 6807-268, Papers of Captain Humphrey

Joseph Farington provide an example of the contrasting financial commitments entailed in volunteer and militia service. William Nicol belonged to a corps of Westminster volunteers, at an initial expense of £50, and thereafter about £10 annually. In contrast, John Boydell, an Ensign in the London Militia, received about £80 a year.⁸¹ Volunteering clearly was not seen purely in financial terms.

It might be argued that volunteer corps and militia regiments were drawing on two different classes of men. Even those of moderate means who joined the volunteers were unlikely to have served in the militia personally in any event. The ministry, publicly at least, expressed the belief that some men inclined to volunteer were unlikely to offer their services in any other capacity. In a circular letter to the lords lieutenant in August 1803 recommending the acceptance of all corps up to the limit of the county quotas, Charles Yorke agreed to allow supernumary volunteers if 'it would contribute to the satisfaction of those who might by such limitation be prevented from manifesting their zeal for the public service'. Such supernumeraries were not exempt militia ballots.⁸² The Buckinghamshire Yeomanry insisted that substitutes were men of good character with a fixed residence in the county, and not likely to enlist in the army, navy or militia.⁸³ Yet there was a significant overlap in the nature of the membership of volunteers and other military forces. It was widely complained that the volunteers were taking men who might otherwise have joined the militia. Lord Bateman believed that exempting volunteers would make the militia ballot oppressive in small districts, and would force the price for substitutes in Shropshire to £30 or more.⁸⁴ For some Scottish artisans, volunteering was merely a transitional stage to a wider military career. Many former Edinburgh and Glasgow volunteers had enlisted in line regiments or the fencibles, though it is unwise

Hall, Regulations for a War Establishment, 17 May 1803; PRO 30/3/5, p.64, London and Westminster Light Horse Volunteers minute book, 4 September 1794.

⁸¹ *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, edited by Kenneth Garlick and Angus Macintyre, Vol.III, p.783, 1 March 1797.

⁸² C.Yorke circular letter to Lords Lieutenant respecting the Establishment of Volunteer Corps, 30 August 1803, quoted in *Cobbett's Political Register*, Vol.IV, cols.402-404; See also HO 50/41, Wentworth Fitzwilliam to Henry Dundas, 26 April 1798; HO 50/41, Christopher Pegge to Henry Dundas, Oxford, 20 April 1798.

⁸³ Buckinghamshire Record Office, TA/3/3, Autograph Roll of the Bucks Yeomanry. Commenced April, 1795; Staffordshire Record Office, D1300/5/1, Staffordshire Volunteer Cavalry meeting of committee, Swan Inn, Stafford, 8 August 1794; see also HO 50/298, Samuel Watson, New House near Stroud, 8 April 1813.

⁸⁴ HO 50/43, Bateman to Henry Dundas, Shobdon Court near Leominster, 30 July 1798.

to draw general conclusions from this, since corps were unwilling to allow resignations for other reasons.⁸⁵

Part Three: Social Pressures

While the relatively favourable terms of service made the volunteers more attractive than other military bodies, the decision to serve in a military capacity was itself often a result of social influences. The example, encouragement or expectations of relatives, employers or connections was frequently decisive. The attractions of fashionability and of opportunities for sociability in a socially exclusive organisation were secondary to the pressure of employers or landowners on their dependents to join, hopes of preferment or financial advantage, or the need for gentlemen to be seen to maintain local status and influence.

A strong *esprit de corps* is evident in many volunteer associations, which acted as a cohesive force against resignation, and presumably to make membership more attractive for potential volunteers. This collective spirit was reinforced by ceremonial and convivial occasions, uniforms, and the assumption by corps of some responsibility for the welfare of its members and their families. Volunteers formed cohesive groups readily because in most cases they were already known to each other, and had dealings outside the corps organisation. Some cavalry corps, like the St.Germans Yeomanry in Cornwall, were formed among men who hunted together. By the 1860s it was believed that 'Hunting . . . leads almost insensibly into mounted volunteering.'⁸⁶ The districts of at least seven yeomanry corps coincided with hunts; two successive masters of the Pytchley were yeomanry officers.⁸⁷ They had even greater reason to oppose French principles: the abolition of exclusive hunting rights was part of the radical programme. As Lord Milton warned in 1791, republicans made the game laws the object of abuse and detestation, and they had been the first to be attacked when the French began to overturn their constitution in August 1789.⁸⁸

⁸⁵Scottish Record Office, GD 51/905/2, Buccleuch to Duke of Portland, Dalkeith House, 4 July 1798, (copy).

⁸⁶David C.Itzcowitz, *Peculiar Privilege*, p.105; Charles Thomas, 'Cornish Volunteers in the early Nineteenth Century (1803-1808)', *Devon and Cornwall Notes & Queries*, Vol.XXVIII, p.170; John Belchem, *'Orator' Hunt Henry Hunt and English Working-Class Radicalism*, (Oxford, 1985), p.21.

⁸⁷Calculated from David C.Itzcowitz, *Peculiar Privilege*, *passim*.

⁸⁸P.B.Munsche, *Gentlemen and Poachers The English Game Laws 1671-1831*, pp.125-127.

Social pressures to join were in many cases decisive. Although social bonds had been stretched to their limits of cohesion by wartime circumstances, Major Francis Eliot of the Staffordshire Volunteer Cavalry was confident that the armed yeomanry would be the rallying point of the friends of loyalty and order. Volunteers, he hoped, would include the men with whom they lived in friendly interchange, with whom they transacted business, and in whose company they spent their moments of relaxation and enjoyment: their friends and neighbours.⁸⁹ Instances of fathers and brothers belonging to the same corps, and related officers in several corps, are far from uncommon.⁹⁰ Landed gentlemen were expected to volunteer to set a public example to their connections and dependents. The original government circular inviting offers of volunteer corps had presumed that 'It is naturally to be supposed that Gentlemen of Weight or Property in different Parts of the Kingdom will separately stand forward'.⁹¹ The Commander-in-Chief believed that many precipitate offers had been made from a desire to set an example to others.⁹² When one landed gentleman volunteered to serve in a subordinate rank, his sister commented approvingly that 'the example is an encouragement to the lower orders'.⁹³ Several volunteers attest to pressures from friends and relatives to join with them. One of the Daniell brothers seems to have suggested volunteering to Joseph Farington in April 1798. He attended an early meeting of the St. Pancras Association with Robert Smirke; John Downman, another acquaintance, proposed him as an officer. Farington demurred accepting a lieutenancy, but yielded on the advice of fellow Academicians Daniell and Nathaniel Dance; he resigned shortly after.⁹⁴

It was widely conceded that many volunteers had joined precipitately as part of a general enthusiasm or fashion for volunteering, and so could not be

⁸⁹Francis Percival Eliot, *Six Letters on the subject of the Armed Yeomanry, addressed to the Rt.Hon.Earl Gower Sutherland, Colonel of the Staffordshire Volunteer Cavalry*, (London, 1797), p.vi.

⁹⁰For example, Charles, John and William Offley in the Light Horse Volunteers: *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, edited by Kenneth Garlick and Angus Macintyre, Vol.VI, p.2104, 11 August 1803; Ann Hudson, 'Volunteer Soldiers in Sussex', p.176.

⁹¹*To Escape the Monster's Clutches*, Compiled by M.Y.Ashcroft, p.11.

⁹²HO 50/459, Duke of York to Charles Yorke, 12 November 1803; PRO 30/8/244, Chatham Papers, Frederick [Duke of York] to C.Yorke, 12 November 1803.

⁹³Cambridge University Library, Correspondence of William Frend, Add.7886, f.140, Mrs.Th.Lindsey to Rev.F.Blackburne, Brignal near Gretabridge; Morden, Surrey, 13 August 1803.

⁹⁴*The Diary of Joseph Farington*, edited by Kenneth Garlick and Angus Macintyre, Vol.III, pp.1002-1010, 24 April 1798-15 May 1798.

expected to maintain their loyal zeal beyond the immediate threat of invasion. Many commanders found that volunteers' enthusiasm waned rapidly if they were not promptly provided with uniforms and arms. Attendances at musters and exercises fell appreciably once the apparent threat of invasion receded, and the initial enthusiasm and novelty wore off. A typical response was the exhortation of the committee of the Royal Exchange Division of the Loyal London Volunteers in July 1799. It expressed a serious wish that members of the corps would feel the indispensable obligation, binding all who had so gloriously begun the patriotic work, to pursue it with unremitting diligence and unwearied activity, and not to succumb to a want of zeal and a relaxation of the necessary attendance.⁹⁵

Enthusiasm for volunteering was sometimes short-lived and dependent on the immediacy of the apparent threat of invasion. The offer of the Leigh parish volunteers in Lancashire was withdrawn at the end of 1798 because the parish committee had found the difficulties of providing for contingent expenses and for completing the corps on a permanent establishment too great. The general apprehensions of a threatened invasion had subsided, allaying the military spirit which was said to have existed throughout the parish at the time the offer was made.⁹⁶ The Duke of York recognised that zeal and loyalty had led many to volunteer without due attention to their age or physical strength.⁹⁷ William Cobbett concluded that many men entered the volunteers under the combined influence of interest, novelty and enthusiasm, when the natural resentment against the enemy was vigorous, and volunteering was new and fashionable. Once these were worn away, he expected few would remain patiently in their corps. Small tradesmen did not initially recognise the injury he believed would be done to their business by their absence, and saw volunteer service as less burdensome than the militia or Army of Reserve.⁹⁸ The printer of the *Leicester Journal* believed some volunteers had joined only as the result of a momentary impulse of duty, and ought not to be allowed to resign without just censure and reprobation.⁹⁹

The opportunities for sociability afforded by volunteer corps were unusually wide for a military organisation. Conviviality was superficially an

⁹⁵ Guildhall Library, MS 5, Minutes of the Royal Exchange Division of the Loyal London Volunteers, f.21a, 16 July 1799.

⁹⁶ HO 50/54, E.Gorsh to Lord Lieutenant of Lancashire, Leigh, 31 August 1798.

⁹⁷ HO 50/459, Duke of York to Charles Yorke, 12 November 1803; PRO 30/8/244, Chatham Papers, Frederick [Duke of York] to C.Yorke, 12 November 1803.

⁹⁸ *Cobbett's Political Register*, Vol.V, col.38.

⁹⁹ *Leicester Journal*, No.2656, 4 November 1803, p.3 c.5.

important motive for volunteering. Cobbett alleged that where volunteers had not enrolled for the sake of pay, they had joined instead for the sake of a frolic, or as a means of getting a solid drink without any risk to their lives or liberty.¹⁰⁰ Volunteer corps assumed many of the characteristics of political or convivial clubs, which mitigated their military aspect and made them more attractive to potential members than other military bodies. The opportunities for conviviality were probably similar to most civilian clubs and societies, apart from exercises and occasional reviews. For example, the committee of the Portsoken Ward Military Association wrote to two neighbouring London associations of the pleasure they anticipated 'in the Society of each other at Exercise'.¹⁰¹ Yet volunteer corps were not necessarily attractive as clubs in their own right. The apparent rarity of volunteer corps continuing after disbandment as non-military societies implies that their club-like organisation relied on a military purpose to attract and retain members.

For Victorian clerks, joining the volunteers provided an opportunity for meeting other men from similar occupational and social backgrounds, as well as employers.¹⁰² The opportunities for organised leisure activities were of lesser importance in inducing men to volunteer during the French wars than with their later nineteenth-century counterparts. Balls and musical entertainments provided a social counterbalance to purely military activities.¹⁰³ Widespread reluctance to leave home on permanent pay and duty suggests however that volunteer exercises and encampments were not the social attractions they later became. Clubs within volunteer corps catering for organised sports, which were an important attraction of the Victorian rifle volunteers, appear not to have existed in the earlier period. The sociable aspect of volunteer meetings and exercises most likely acted as a compensation for military duties than as a positive inducement to join for their own sake.

The attraction of volunteer uniform is similarly ambiguous. Volunteers were widely parodied and criticised for their fine and sometimes elaborate

¹⁰⁰ Cobbett's *Political Register*, Vol.VI cols.93-94; *To Escape the Monster's Clutches*, Compiled by M.Y.Ashcroft, p.66 ff.

¹⁰¹ Guildhall Library, MS 9957/1, Minutes of the Committee of the Portsoken Ward Military Association, f.45, 9 April 1799.

¹⁰² G.L.Anderson, 'Victorian Clerks and Voluntary Associations in Liverpool and Manchester', *Northern History A Review of the History of the North of England*, Volume XII, 1976, p.74.

¹⁰³ Ian F.W.Beckett, *Riflemen Form A Study of the Rifle Volunteer Movement 1859-1908*, pp.112-117.

clothing. Volunteers were accused of having joined merely to parade in attractive uniforms. Lieutenant-Colonel Dirom thought many volunteers had become soldiers through vanity. Ladies attending reviews were said to observe the agreeable alteration brought about by military uniform on the appearance of husbands, sons and lovers.¹⁰⁴ In Williams' print 'The Consequence of Invasion or The Hero's Reward', a fat and jovial volunteer is depicted with the head of Bonaparte on a pole. An onlooker comments 'I wish I had been a Soldier too then the Girls would have run after me'.¹⁰⁵ As 'Triolus' versified on the armed associations,

From many a window now in plumes display'd,
Beam the bright beauties of a blushing Maid;
Maria now, who holds yon *Mercer's* heart,
Vows her dear Jemmy never look'd so smart;
And Mrs.Dripping smiles in kindest glee,
That Mr.Dripping will a Soldier be!¹⁰⁶

Uniform, however, was an ambiguous attraction. A contrary tendency existed which advocated simple and cheap uniforms that displayed minimal differences between officers and private men. In practice, several corps had reservations about appearing in uniform at all, fearing that clothing similar to that of the regular army would commit them to additional services or render them liable to the same terms of service as regular soldiers.

A principal, and much criticised, attraction of volunteer corps over other military bodies was their members' power to choose with whom they would associate. Cobbett claimed that the first motive of volunteering was to keep out of low company. 'The merchant wishes to avoid the shopper, the shop-keeper to avoid the mechanic, and all of them to avoid the labourer and the servant'.¹⁰⁷ One of Upcott's main reasons for wishing to avoid the militia was that he believed that it would have forced him to associate with social

¹⁰⁴Lieut.-Col.Dirom, *Plans for the Defence of Great Britain and Ireland*, (Edinburgh, 1797), pp.19-20; George Cruikshank, *A Pop-Gun fired off by George Cruikshank, in defence of the British volunteers of 1803, against the uncivil attack upon that body by General W.Napier; to which are added some observations upon our National Defences, Self-Defence, Etc.Etc.Etc.*, (London, n.d.), p.31.

¹⁰⁵Mary Dorothy George, *Catalogue of Political and Personal Satires preserved in the department of prints and drawings in the British Museum*, Vol.VIII, ([London], 1947), pp.169-170, No.10047, 1 August 1803.

¹⁰⁶*Leicester Journal*, No.2373, 25 May 1798, p.4 c.1, Triolus, 'Armed Associations'.

¹⁰⁷*Cobbett's Political Register*, Vol.IV, col.214.

outcasts.¹⁰⁸ It was the 'intermixture of ranks', according to an Edinburgh volunteer, 'which renders the prospect of militia service so disagreeable'.¹⁰⁹ By regulating admission and the expense of membership, volunteers could effectively exclude those with whom they disliked to associate.¹¹⁰ In large cities, this sometimes led to the formation of several, socially distinct, corps. In Edinburgh, as many as 500 able bodied young clerks and apprentices to legal writers and shopkeepers were reported to be willing to enrol themselves as volunteers in 1797. They could not afford the expense of joining the Royal Edinburgh Volunteers, while at the same time did not like to associate with the journeymen tradesmen of another proposed corps.¹¹¹ The Royal Edinburgh Volunteers served without pay, which, as one of its members sarcastically pointed out, resulted 'in the purity of our ranks, which thus are freed from the contamination of the lower orders.'¹¹² The articles of enrolment of the Northamptonshire Yeomanry specifically stated that enrolments were controlled in order to exclude those with whom the members did not want to associate.¹¹³ The internal arrangements of the Light Horse Volunteers similarly were claimed to be calculated to accommodate gentlemen in in professional and mercantile pursuits by avoiding bringing them into contact with any new society or habits of life.¹¹⁴ 'A Country Gentleman and Volunteer Officer' asserted that, in Suffolk corps at least, there was no danger of a gentleman meeting at a mess table '*the man who in the morning had cut his hair, or sold his wife a wig.*'¹¹⁵

The practical effect of serving without pay, and expensive uniforms generally was to act as a bar to the enrolment of journeymen and labourers, whose exclusion, Cobbett alleged, had been one of the principal objects of those

¹⁰⁸ British Library, Add.MS 32,558 Diary of William Upcott, ff.40-41.

¹⁰⁹ An Old Volunteer, *An Address to the First Battalion Royal Edinburgh Volunteers upon the Proposed Transformation of Their Body into a Regiment of Local Militia*, (Edinburgh, 1808), p.17.

¹¹⁰ Cobbett's *Political Register*, Vol.IV, p.214; [Arthur Young], *National Danger, and the Means of Safety. By the Editor of the Annals of Agriculture*, (London, 1797), p.30.

¹¹¹ Scottish Record Office, GD 224/685/2, 'A Private of the R.E. Volunteers' to Duke of Buccleuch, Edinburgh, 20 February 1797.

¹¹² A Fellow Soldier, *Observations, Addressed to the First Regiment of Royal Edinburgh Volunteers, on the expediency of transferring their services to the Local Militia*, (Edinburgh, 1808), p.20.

¹¹³ PRO 30/8/244, Chatham Papers, f.198, Articles of Enrolment for the Proposed corps of Northamptonshire Yeomanry.

¹¹⁴ PRO 30/3/10, General Meetings Minutes, p.108, 14 March 1817.

¹¹⁵ Cobbett's *Political Register*, Vol.IX, col.570, 'A Country Gentleman and Volunteer Officer', Ipswich, 14 April 1806.

who had formed volunteer corps.¹¹⁶ The timing of exercises was another effective barrier to inferior men. One Aylesbury shopkeeper was unable to attend an inspection of his troop of the Buckinghamshire Yeomanry because the time arranged was when he was most needed in his shop.¹¹⁷ Even when a corps was not socially exclusive, it was thought necessary to point out that the members had no objection to serving with inferior men. Gentlemen in the neighbourhood of Alresford provided horses and equipment for their servants to join the local yeomanry troop in 1803; the lord lieutenant was assured that the yeomen had no objection to serving alongside such men.¹¹⁸

A desire to maintain professional exclusiveness formed the grounds for one of the principal objections to a proposal to form a volunteer Corps of Artists. A general meeting of the Royal Academy in August 1803 unanimously approved the plans, under which the members of the committee to direct the business, and captains of the corps, were to be Academicians or Associates only. Up to 500 members were anticipated, including 200 recruited in the interest of the Society of Engravers. Thomas Lawrence, however, objected that if it was to be called a Corps of Artists, every person enrolled would seem to be classed one, however miserable his attempts. This was thought to be detrimental to the honour of the profession, and the plans were dropped.¹¹⁹

Membership, and more importantly, office in a corps could confer some status on men who otherwise had no claim to a place in county or municipal society. Membership of a corps, as for their Victorian counterparts, was both a 'search for security' and expressed a volunteer's 'commitment to the social system'.¹²⁰ The 'search for respectability through participation' was an important motivation.¹²¹ A large proportion of the volunteer captains in Sussex were newcomers to the county, presumably in part using the force

¹¹⁶ *Cobbett's Political Register*, Vol.IV, cols.212-213.

¹¹⁷ Buckinghamshire Record Office, L/Y 14/192, John Gillashin to Mr.Huey, Aylesbury, 24 September 1807.

¹¹⁸ Hampshire Record Office, 11 M 49/234, p.117, D.Cunynghame to Lord Bolton, 2 June 1803.

¹¹⁹ *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, edited by Kenneth Garlick and Angus Macintyre, Vol.VI, pp.2090-2096, 28 July 1803-5 August 1803.

¹²⁰ G.L.Anderson, 'Victorian Clerks and Voluntary Associations in Liverpool and Manchester', p.74.

¹²¹ Ian F.W.Beckett, *Riflemen Form A Study of the Rifle Volunteer Movement 1859-1908*, (Aldershot, 1982), p.110.

as an introduction to county society.¹²² Aside from the honorific fiction that volunteer officers were thereby also gentlemen, their position put them in contact with magistrates and the county administration, while entitling them to some regard and condescension from the gentry.

Social climbing was imputed to volunteer officers of inferior status. In 1803 the St.Pancras Association elected a stockbroker as lieutenant-colonel, and as captains a surveyor, a watchmaker and a plasterer. Joseph Farington was told that the appointment of officers had 'been managed by a set of men in low situations ambitious of distinction', who opposed 'consulting the respectable part of the parishioners.'¹²³ In some rural parishes in Hampshire, the gentlemen of the neighbourhood wanted volunteer commissions to be held by reputable men with whom they could associate. Difficulties arose over the appointment of officers, though, because of the ambitious disposition of some 'very inferior' men.¹²⁴

Volunteer officers were particularly sensitive about being obliged to associate on equal terms with their social inferiors. William Garrett was appalled by the prospect of his respectable corps, the Havant Volunteers, being ordered into the garrison at Portsmouth. There he feared he would be commanded by, or confounded with, men who held the rank of captains but with whom he could not bring himself to associate. He claimed that they were taken from the lowest classes of society, including one who recently had been his servant, who then could neither read nor write.¹²⁵

A volunteer commission might be an important stage in the confirmation of genteel status, but was not enough alone to make a man respectable. Richard Minor, a lieutenant in the Evesham Volunteers, complained that General Amherst had shouted at him in front of the corps and said that he did not consider him to be a gentleman. Minor protested to the lord lieutenant that whatever his origin in life, which he did not disclose, he had conducted himself respectably and had spent his latter years in the company of gentlemen. His status appears to have been confirmed, in his eyes if not those of the General, by his holding a military commission.¹²⁶ Membership

¹²² Ann Hudson, 'Volunteer Soldiers in Sussex', p.176.

¹²³ *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, edited by Kenneth Garlick and Angus Macintyre, Vol.VI, p.2120, 31 August 1803; p.2140, 9 October 1803.

¹²⁴ Hampshire Record Office, 11 M 49/234, p.191, Wm.Champn.Crespigny to Lord Bolton, 15 August 1803.

¹²⁵ Hampshire Record Office, 11 M 49/235, ff.80-81, Wm.Garrett to Lord Bolton, Havant, 21 August 1803.

¹²⁶ HO 50/90, Richard Minor to Lord Lieutenant Worcestershire, 3 November 1803.

of the Wiltshire Yeomanry Cavalry gave Henry Hunt, then a young gentleman farmer, opportunities of associating with the county gentry and of shooting over Lord Ailesbury's land. A legal dispute over hunting ensued in which Hunt's counsel complained that Hunt had been portrayed as 'some low, vulgar, ill-bred or no-bred man'. The county establishment were riled most by the way Hunt had been 'passed off as a Gentleman'.¹²⁷ One reason for the sensitivity of volunteers to suggestions that some officers were socially unqualified was that participation was an indication of the confirmation of local social and political status. The members of the Linlithgowshire Gentlemen and Farmers Volunteer Cavalry pointed out that membership of the corps had given the larger farmers a political consequence they previously had lacked.¹²⁸ Furthermore, prominent members of the county gentry could not avoid some involvement in the volunteers, whether as officers, committee members or subscribers, without losing some social or political influence to rivals. William Windham, who opposed the brigading of small corps into larger regiments, was placed in a quandary when offered the command of one such a battalion in Norfolk. He concluded that if the force must be so formed, then he must be in it, however unpleasant it would be to deal with. Windham thought it better to command than to be commanded.¹²⁹

Volunteer rank also needed to be appropriate to a gentleman's status. Difficulties were allegedly encountered in finding sufficiently respectable gentlemen to fill the lower commissions because they considered it degrading to hold an inferior commission.¹³⁰ Sir Digby Mackworth repeatedly and at length questioned the official decision in 1803 to restrict his rank as the commanding officer of the Oxford Loyal Volunteers to Lieutenant-Colonel. Without a full colonelcy, the baronet believed he could not with honour to himself accept the command under a commission inferior to what the size of the corps entitled him.¹³¹ Some volunteers believed a commission would, by association, enhance the reputation of other societies to which the officer belonged. Joseph Farington was offered a lieutenancy in the St. Pancras

¹²⁷ John Belchem, *'Orator' Hunt*, p.21.

¹²⁸ Scottish Record Office, Buccleuch Muniments, GD 224/685/1, Royal Linlithgowshire Gentlemen & Farmers Cavalry, 15 March 1797.

¹²⁹ Norfolk Record Office, WKC 7/84/12, Ketton-Cremer MSS, W[illiam] W[indham] to William [Lukin?], Pall Mall, 25 November 1803.

¹³⁰ R.T. Wilson, *An Enquiry into the Present State of the Military Force of the British Empire*, p.12.

¹³¹ HO 50/82, Sir Digby Mackworth to Marlborough, 22 August 1803; Sir Christopher Willoughby to Marlborough, 22 August 1803; Marlborough to Charles Yorke, 1 September 1803; Sir Digby Mackworth to Marlborough, 7 September 1803.

corps 'to do credit to [the Royal] Academy'.¹³²

Prominence in volunteering could be used to attract official favour, but it is perhaps surprising how infrequently it can be identified as a reason for official patronage. Dr. Christopher Pegge, later Regius Professor of Medicine and Aldrich's Professor of Anatomy, was said to be 'the real father of all the Oxford armed associations', and was knighted in 1799. It has been suggested that he was drawn into the volunteer movement by the hopes of a knighthood, and his example has been used to suggest that others similarly joined for personal gain. Yet examples of personal honours as a reward for volunteering are difficult to identify. Pegge's knighthood itself was as much a reward for his loyal exertions as it was a result of his wish, so the Marquis of Buckingham believed, to have the same honour as had been recently awarded to his counterpart, Busick Harwood, Professor of Anatomy and commanding officer of the Cambridge Volunteers.¹³³

Major subscribers to volunteer funds could acquire public prominence and significant influence by membership of managerial committees; actual military activity was unnecessary. Volunteer subscriptions were used as a vehicle for the demonstration and maintenance of public standing. When in 1803 the fortune of John Horrocks, Member of Parliament for Preston and a large manufacturer in the cotton spinning business, was reduced by the stoppage of trade with Hamburg, he confirmed his credit by showing that he had an ample sufficiency for all purposes. One of the means he used was to contribute £1000 towards the support of the Royal Preston Volunteers of which he had been Captain from 1798 till 1801.¹³⁴

Activity in volunteer corps sometimes helped bring men to local political prominence. Occasionally, a volunteer might advance his political interests by making the affairs of a corps themselves an issue in an election. The conduct of the Chester Volunteers in a riot in 1804 became one of the major issues in a subsequent election for a sheriff. John Williamson, one of the

¹³² *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, edited by Kenneth Garlick and Angus Macintyre, Vol.III, p.1006, 4 May 1798.

¹³³ Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Report on the Manuscripts of J.B.Fortescue, Esq., preserved at Dropmore*, Vol.V, pp.86-87, Marquis of Buckingham to Lord Grenville, Stowe, 9 June 1799; J.R.Western, 'The Volunteer Movement as an Anti-Revolutionary Force', p.606; *The Later Correspondence of George III*, Edited by A.Aspinall, Five Volumes, (Cambridge, 1963), Vol.3, p.222, Lord Genville to the King, Cleveland Row, 26 June 1799.

¹³⁴ *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, edited by Kenneth Garlick and Angus Macintyre, Vol.VI, p.2126, 11 September 1803; R.G.Thorne, *The House of Commons 1790-1820*, Vol.IV pp.247-248.

volunteers, used the occasion to link the interests of the city and the corps, declaring that his candidacy was intended to give his fellow citizens an opportunity of deciding between the volunteers and their accusers. He issued a handbill claiming that both the city and the volunteers had suffered from illiberal, groundless and wanton attacks on their loyalty as a result of the riot. This contest was brought to wider attention by *Cobbett's Political Register*, which concluded that Williamson's candidacy represented not merely the opposition of one local interest against another; his appeal to support the volunteers made it fundamentally a struggle of the military against the civil power.¹³⁵

Business connections or the hopes of advancement and patronage were also influential in the decision to join a corps. Earl Spencer was told that many members of his Northamptonshire yeomanry had entered 'their names out of attachment to you & not to their country'.¹³⁶ Tradesmen were thought to have volunteered partly with a view to the prospects of the patronage of the corps and its members. Some associations went so far as to specify in their regulations that orders for supplies were to be placed first among their own members. Contracts for uniforms, particularly, could be very valuable, and volunteer corps could normally be relied upon to pay relatively promptly. The committee of the St.James's Westminster Loyal Volunteer Regiment resolved to enter into contracts with responsible persons for the supply of uniforms, if possible with members of the regiment. No committee member was to become a contractor for the regiment, however.¹³⁷ In one corps, commanded by a tailor, volunteers who resigned received their arrears of pay only if they were spent at his shop.¹³⁸ It was sometimes politic to place corps' orders with a range of local suppliers rather than awarding a contract to a single tenderer. The St.Clement Danes military committee printed a list of tradesmen who had agreed to make articles of uniform for the corps. The committee stressed that the list was only a recommendation, and was not obligatory upon members who wished to choose other suppliers.¹³⁹ An anonymous verse about Lord Egremont's Petworth troop

¹³⁵ *Cobbett's Political Register*, Vol.VI cols.704, 731.

¹³⁶ Roger Wells, '“Amidst these shaking times”; Britain's avoidance of revolution revisited', p.25.

¹³⁷ Westminster City Library, 767/1, Minutes of the St.James's Westminster Loyal Volunteer Regiment, 25 April 1815, 3 May 1815; *Peeps Into the Past*, Edited by Alexander B.Bell, p.28.

¹³⁸ J.R.Western, 'The Volunteer Movement as an Anti-Revolutionary Force', p.606 n.9.

¹³⁹ Westminster City Library B 1334 St.Clement Danes, p.23, 10 September 1803.

asked

Why does the grocer draw the ruthless sword?
 In hope to gain the custom of my lord.
 Why is the ploughshare to the cutlass bent?
 To bribe the steward to curtail the rent.¹⁴⁰

Cobbett refined his argument for the motivation of volunteering in the light of the provision for the suspension of the levy en masse if a quota of volunteers came forward. He claimed that masters were volunteering to keep the 'underlings *at work*', to prevent journeymen, apprentices, labourers and servants being forced out to drill.¹⁴¹ The attitude of employers was vital, as hostile masters could refuse workmen time off to attend exercise, refuse to hire volunteers, or even dismiss those who volunteered, although there is evidence of attempts to prosecute employers who took the latter course of action.¹⁴² The Chairman of the Staffordshire Quarter Sessions was reported to have threatened to indict for a misdemeanour those farmers and gentlemen who refused permission to their servants to volunteer, or who refused to hire volunteers.¹⁴³ A group of Hampshire farmers resolved not to employ volunteers and deducted two guineas from the annual wages of those of their existing servants who joined; many volunteers resigned in consequence.¹⁴⁴ One employer threatened to put his apprentice in Bridewell if he attended an inspection at Lyndhurst as a member of the New Forest Battalion, believing he should be able to direct his apprentices as he wished.¹⁴⁵

Nor were employers alone influential in decisions to volunteer. The hostility of the Reverend Richard Bingham to the Alverstoke Rifle Corps was thought likely to cause difficulty in raising volunteers in the district. Many

¹⁴⁰[John Osborne Greenfield], *Tales of Old Petworth*, (Petworth, Sussex. 1976), p.46; Ann Hudson, 'Volunteer Soldiers in Sussex', p.176.

¹⁴¹*Cobbett's Political Register*, Vol.IV, p.214.

¹⁴²A.Aspinall, (ed.), *Letters of George, Prince of Wales*, Vol.V p.35. No.1886, Earl of Moira to Colonel [Sir John] McMahon, Edinburgh, 10 June 1804; p.35 n.1; *Cobbett's Political Register*, Vol.V col.24; J.W.Fortescue, *The County Lieutenancies and the Army*, p.111; Berkshire Record Office, D/ERa O8/2 (28), Charles Garth to Edward Golding, Hurst, 26 September 1803.

¹⁴³*Cobbett's Political Register*, Vol.V cols.24, 798-799; J.W.Fortescue, *The County Lieutenancies and the Army*, p.111.

¹⁴⁴Hampshire Record Office, 11 M 49/238, p.60, Wm.Nevill to Lord Bolton, Easton, 21 January 1806; see also HO 51/75, f.516, C.Yorke to Earl Fitzwilliam, 14 November 1803.

¹⁴⁵Hampshire Record Office 11 M 49/236 pp.41-44, Wm.Champn.Crespigny to Lord Bolton, 19 December 1803.

members of the corps were tradesmen who were liable to be called before him in his capacity as a magistrate, and several others were publicans whose licences and livelihoods were dependent on his favour.¹⁴⁶

Contrary to what might be expected, men in official positions or in professions susceptible to official patronage or favour do not seem to have been significantly more likely to volunteer than others. The returns prepared under the provisions of the General Defence Act for Exeter in 1803 provide an unusually comprehensive guide to an entire adult male population and to individuals' willingness to join military organisations. Note was made of whether men belonged to volunteer or regular corps, or whether they were willing to serve in any force. No man directly employed by a government agency appears to have joined a volunteer corps in Exeter by this date, although a high proportion of those available offered to serve in some capacity. Five of the eleven customs and excise officers listed expressed their willingness to serve, and the remainder were either infirm or absent. No response was recorded from the three revenue officials or the fourteen Post Office servants, although among the latter the seven mail guards were presumably regularly absent from Exeter and so unavailable for service.

The level of military participation was higher in general among men whose livelihood was in part dependent on official favour, through licensing or patronage. Publicans, for example, could be threatened with the non-renewal of their licenses if they did not retain the favour of the local magistrates.¹⁴⁷ Six of the ten printers mentioned were volunteers, and two more were ready to serve; four of the six publicans and innkeepers, thirteen of the twenty-five victuallers and all but two of the fourteen attorneys and notaries were recorded as serving or willing to do so. This contrasts with an overall participation ration of 17% of the 3066 men listed. The small numbers involved mean that the volunteer corps cannot be said to have been dominated by men with indirect official connections, but it is clear that men with reasons to remain on good terms with local or national authorities were more likely to volunteer than were their less vulnerable townsmen. It is difficult to establish whether those in such occupations were in any case more disposed to favour volunteering. Although the lack of government officials in local corps indicates that no direct pressure was placed by the administration on its servants to join corps, it would not have been unclear in what

¹⁴⁶Hampshire Record Office, 11 M 49/238, ff.14-15, Geo.Porter to Lord Bolton, Portchester, 6 November 1805.

¹⁴⁷For example, Hampshire Record Office, 11 M 49/236, p.185, J.Missing to Lord Bolton, Titchfield, 4 April 1804.

direction official sympathies lay.¹⁴⁸

Similar pressure is apparent upon the county magistracy. Seventy-five men were appointed deputy lieutenants in Derbyshire between 1797 and 1803. In 1805, 22 of them were listed as officers in various Derbyshire volunteer corps, and a further 21 were very probably close relatives of men who were volunteer officers. Additionally, one deputy lieutenant was a Lieutenant in the militia; only 31 appear to have had no connection with volunteer officers in the county.¹⁴⁹

Conversely, membership of a corps organised among the workmen of a large manufactory or the employees of a government office was difficult to avoid.¹⁵⁰ Many Liverpool volunteers were reported to have joined under pressure from their masters.¹⁵¹ Samuel Harrison, a clerk at the Bank of England, recorded in his diary that he 'had to join the Bank Volunteers'.¹⁵² Servants of the Excise Department serving in other volunteer corps were required to transfer to the department's own corps in 1803 for the better discharge of their civil duties.¹⁵³

Membership of a corps could place men in a better position for professional advancement. Former Edinburgh volunteers were anxious to have characters from their former corps.¹⁵⁴ Having held an ensigncy in the Doncaster Volunteers was believed to have been responsible for one young man's success in getting a cadetship in the East India Company ahead of many others with superior recommendations.¹⁵⁵

Conclusions

Except for rare cases like William Upcott and Joseph Farington, it is difficult to identify the motives most men had for volunteering. Yet it is clear for

¹⁴⁸ Calculated from *Exeter Militia List 1803*, edited by W.G.Hoskins.

¹⁴⁹ Calculated from Rev.J.Charles Cox, *Three Centuries of Derbyshire Annals, as illustrated by the Records of the Quarter Sessions of the County of Derby, from Queen Elizabeth to Queen Victoria*, (London, 1890).

¹⁵⁰ For example, Hampshire Record Office, 11 M 49/235, Edw.Otto Ives to Lord Bolton, Titchfield, 11 August 1803.

¹⁵¹ National Library of Scotland, MS 1048, Melville Papers, 'Volunteer' to Henry Dundas, Liverpool, 3 May 1798.

¹⁵² W.Marston Acres, *The Bank of England from Within 1694-1900*, (London, 1931), Vol.I, p.297.

¹⁵³ HO 51/120, ff.37-38, C.Yorke, 29 October 1803, (circular).

¹⁵⁴ Scottish Record Office, GD 51/905/2, Buccleuch to Duke of Portland, Dalkeith House, 4 July 1798, (copy).

¹⁵⁵ *Peeps Into the Past*, Edited by Alexander B.Bell, p.97.

many that membership of a volunteer corps constituted a conscious choice of a military option, but one that was less arduous or disruptive than other military forces. Whether seeking to avoid militia service, attracted by material rewards, or under social pressures or ambitions, many of those who volunteered were unlikely under other circumstances to have joined any other military force.

The mixture of motivation is especially significant in relation to the duties which volunteers were called upon to perform. All corps had been formed with the intention of resisting invasion, but not all volunteers had joined with the intention of suppressing riots and internal disorder. Many joined expressly on the condition that they were not to be liable for service outside their neighbourhood and could not be regimented with regular forces without their consent. The corps they formed were deliberately autonomous, self-regulating and to some extent self-funded. These features were to have important consequences for the employment of the force, which will be considered in the following chapters. The corps' organisation and self-regulation raised serious questions about their potential usefulness and reliability, which will be addressed in the next chapter. The volunteers' reliability when confronted with actual duties will then be considered.

*Chapter Six: An Armed Democracy:
The Political Threat of the Volunteer Movement*

Potentially, the volunteers were as much a danger to the existing order as they were a bastion against invasion and insurrection. This argument is dependent on the degree of autonomy afforded the volunteers, and falls into two sections: whether the volunteers were able to manipulate their organisation for political ends, and, if so, whether those ends conflicted with those of the government. It is concluded here that although considerable scope existed for the exercise of volunteer autonomy, in general little advantage was taken of this freedom. The reasons are varied, but centre on an acute sense of constitutional propriety on the part of volunteers, and a close concern on the part of the central and local administration for the political reliability of corps' membership.

It is necessary to stress, however, that some contemporaries apprehended constitutional and social threats to both the state and society in what they saw as the democratic organisation of the volunteers, and that these fears were not without foundation. Principally, the volunteers were seen to be a threat to the established system of the state, and subversive of the civilian character of the populace. Corps' egalitarianism and democratic organisation appeared to embody those French principles Britain was fighting against. They were evident in four major aspects of corps' organisation. The first, management by committees, was unique among military forces and gave the volunteers a closer resemblance to many civilian clubs and societies. Committees were a central feature of such 'subscriber democracies'. They were considered democratic because equal power was given to all members and because this enabled common men to gain positions of authority. Committees threatened to become deliberative bodies, using their military and financial power to influence political events. Deliberation on internal matters threatened to undermine the subordination to officers thought necessary for the safe conduct of affairs.

The second, related aspect of volunteer organisation was the election of officers. This again exposed the force to kakistocracy by making the officers dependent on the favour of the private men. Officers had to manage their corps by exhortation and the use of their personal influence rather than risk antagonising the members and provoking resignations by demanding obedience and subordination. Third, corps were able to raise subscriptions for their own purposes without reference to the civil or military authori-

ties. While such subscriptions often became in effect a test of loyalty, they presented the countervailing threat that money might be raised for political purposes. The volunteers had the potential rare among military forces to become financially self-sufficient and so less exposed to official sanction. Finally, volunteer corps were not subject to regular military discipline, and were instead free to set their own disciplinary regulations. As a result, subordination had to be maintained by fines, humiliation, and threats of dismissal and loss of exemptions. Even these disciplinary powers were restricted by volunteers' freedom of resignation.

Each of these four broad areas of volunteer autonomy attracted criticism from contemporaries. Volunteer associations were not universally regarded as trustworthy defenders of the established order, but rather were widely criticised as democratic and potentially dangerous innovations. William Cobbett, foremost of the critics of the system, asserted that on the whole, the volunteers were 'a mass of newly-created armed democracy', with an organisation apparently intended for rapidly ending the war, and under which monarchy and aristocracy would sink without any exertion by the enemy being necessary.¹ Volunteer corps were also criticised as profoundly disruptive of the established social order. William Windham characterised 'the volunteer system as altering the civil character of the people of the country.' It disturbed the general relations of civil life and encouraged vain and extravagant pretensions among its members to bring down the high and exalt the low.²

Critics of the volunteer system attacked those aspects which were most like clubs and unlike military bodies. Principally, these were the corps' relative freedom to set their own terms of service, the system of management by committees, their practice of consultation and deliberation, the election of officers, their freedom to choose and reject members, and their partially independent financing by means of subscriptions.

In many respects the volunteer associations fit the model for urban voluntary societies in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries proposed by R.J.Morris. The characteristic form of the largely middle-class voluntary societies was a subscriber democracy funded by its members and organised by an elected committee and officers. As with the volunteers, elections normally resulted in rule by an oligarchy selected from the higher-

¹ *Cobbett's Political Register*, Vol.IV, col.789.

² *The Parliamentary Debates*, Published under the superintendence of T.C.Hansard, Vol.III, col.595, 21 February 1805.

status members of local society. The organisation of membership produced an elaborate hierarchy. The institutional arrangement formed a compromise between the middle class members' desire for independence and self-respect, and the hierarchical nature of society in general. Volunteer organisation owed much to the example of contemporary voluntary societies, particularly in its adoption of regulating committees, subscription funding and the election of officers.

Yet the volunteer movement's purpose, and particularly its relationship with the state, was completely different from the societies that conform to this model. Morris argues that the war years had demonstrated the increasing inadequacies of the state in matters involving the interests of the middle classes: finance, foreign trade and public order. Instead of seeking to take control of the major governmental agencies, they avoided or reduced their reliance on state power by creating a network of voluntary societies.³ The volunteer movement does not belong to such a scheme. While most societies sought to avoid recourse to state power, the volunteers were a direct expression of governmental authority, clothed in a voluntary form. Although corps were a response to recognised deficiencies in national defence and the policing of public order, they were entirely dependent on official sanction and largely reliant on official financial support. Volunteering was not a means for the middle classes to by-pass the machinery of national defence, but rather a supplement to it.

Linda Colley argues that the expansion of the volunteers and militia from 1794 was 'almost certain to have democratic implications'.⁴ Contemporaries were as ready to warn of the implications of volunteer organisation. Volunteers, by their subscriptions, handbills, advertisements, speeches, letters, and especially by their meetings and committees, declared Cobbett, were rapidly becoming 'a new order in the state.'⁵ General Picton warned in 1803 that the volunteers were 'of a democratic Construction, destructive of all discipline', without which armed bodies were simply mobs, 'more formidable to their friends than their enemies.' The volunteers were, he believed, an overflowing of the national spirit, but it was a volatile spirit supplied by fermentation.⁶ One of Joseph Farington's friends believed that

³R.J.Morris, 'Voluntary Societies and British Urban Elites, 1780-1850: An Analysis', *Historical Journal*, Vol.26, No.1, 1983, pp.96, 101-102, 110.

⁴Linda Colley, 'Whose Nation?', p.114.

⁵*Cobbett's Political Register*, Vol.V, col.48.

⁶Devon Record Office, Sidmouth Papers, 152M/C1803/OZ5, Gen.Picton on the means of national defence, London, 16 November 1803.

'the *Volunteer System* which was begun by Pitt had rendered this a more *Democratick government*, than Switzerland or Athens. That the power is now with the Poeples, who *armed* may demand anything.'⁷

National sentiment was on the continent widely seen as volatile, liberal, and tending towards wider civic rights. Criticisms of volunteering in Britain support the interpretation of national consciousness as a popular force, and not necessarily one imposed by the landed elite, or one conformist in intention or result. Linda Colley argues that, rather than seeking to replace plebeian political awareness with nationalism, the government intentionally chose not to promote and exploit popular national consciousness. Patriotic activity was taken up by the middle classes as a means of asserting their social position; to the ruling classes, 'nationalism was like Pandora's box: something which was best left alone.'⁸ To shift the emphasis slightly, it will be argued here that the government promoted the volunteers, just as with the Voluntary Contribution in 1798, in order to secure middle class support in the war effort; that the independent, egalitarian and democratic aspects of the force were tolerated as the necessary price of middle class co-operation, and then only as long as toleration was politically necessary.

The ministry was haunted by the prospect of the volunteer force creating a political role for itself as the Irish volunteers had done during the American war. Sharing similar organisation with the later British corps, they had been identified by Jeremy Bentham as an example of democracy based on universal suffrage. Officers were elected by all members of a corps, who, like their British successors, were not subject to religious or property tests.⁹ Volunteer corps, mostly small and overwhelmingly Protestant, were formed throughout Ireland in 1778 to counter the threat of invasion. They controlled crowds, suppressed riots, escorted prisoners, protected excise men and acted as special constables. They soon acquired a political purpose, although not all favoured intervention in politics. The volunteers became a mechanism for the expression of opinion by a political elite in which country gentlemen were prominent. In November 1779, 900 volunteers of the Dublin area paraded

⁷(*sic*), *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, edited by Kenneth Garlick and Angus Macintyre, Vol. VI, p.2196, 19 December 1803.

⁸Linda Colley, 'Whose Nation?', pp.103-115.

⁹R.B.McDowell, *Ireland in the Age of Imperialism and Revolution 1760-1801*, (Oxford, 1979), p.261.

outside the Parliament House and fired a salute by a statue of William III ornamented with slogans, including a demand for 'A short money bill: a free trade: or else'.¹⁰ The representatives of 143 Ulster volunteer corps met in February 1782 and agreed resolutions condemning the British parliament's claims to legislative power over Ireland, demanding free trade, a limited mutiny bill and an independent judiciary, and favouring the reduction of Catholic disabilities. Other corps expressed their support for parliamentary reform.

A committee of correspondence was formed by a provincial convention of volunteer delegates at Lisburn in July 1783 to establish contacts with English reformers. Several provincial conventions passed resolutions favouring parliamentary reform later in the year; in November, a national volunteer convention met in Dublin and formed a detailed plan for parliamentary reform and the extension of the franchise. Converted into a parliamentary bill, this plan was defeated by a large majority in the Irish House of Commons. The movement declined after the end of the war in 1784, but more recent volunteer activity was similarly threatening from the government's point of view. Both the Belfast and Dublin volunteers celebrated the anniversary of the fall of the Bastille in 1791 and 1792. Radicals revived the volunteers in Dublin and Ulster and made plans to form both a national reform convention and a very large corps on the model of the French national guard in December 1792. The government acted rapidly to suppress the volunteers. The Privy Council issued a proclamation against the disaffected forming under the mask of 'laudable associations', and several Dublin corps were dispersed by magistrates.¹¹

In Britain, the government eventually sought to restrict volunteer autonomy in order to avoid the consequences threatened by the Irish parallel. The Duke of Portland expressed the hope in 1798 that no British volunteer 'w[oul]d. suffer such an independent Corps to exist in the Kingdom as the Irish Vol[unteer]s'.¹² Yet ironically, many of the features of volunteer corps later criticised had developed as a result of the government's initial desire as much as possible to avoid responsibility for the management and financing of

¹⁰R.B.McDowell in *A New History of Ireland IV Eighteenth-Century Ireland 1691-1800*, Edited by T.W.Moody and W.E.Vaughan, (Oxford, 1986), Vol.IV, p.225.

¹¹R.B.McDowell in *A New History of Ireland IV Eighteenth-Century Ireland 1691-1800*, Edited by T.W.Moody and W.E.Vaughan, Vol.IV, pp.222-223, 225, 228, 230, 267, 269-271, 290-291, 293, 323, 328-330.

¹²Portland to A.H.Eyre, 17 December 1798, quoted in Mark Pottle, 'Loyalty and Patriotism in Nottingham, 1792-1816', p.187.

the military associations. Volunteers were encouraged to form self-governing and self-supporting corps on individual initiative by official circular letters in 1794 and 1798. Only later was volunteer autonomy significantly restricted, either because the potential dangers of independence were recognised belatedly, or because the need to augment the auxiliary forces was no longer allowed to over-ride considerations of political reliability. More probably, the rapid re-establishment of the volunteers on a much increased scale in 1803, in the light of the experience of the previous decade, made some form of control over volunteer autonomy more obviously important than before. Corps' original engagements to serve had been viewed in a contractual manner, to be altered only by common consent, so the re-formation of most corps in 1803 offered the first major opportunity for reforming the principles upon which the volunteer system operated.

It is perhaps remarkable how little was altered. The Volunteer Consolidation Act of 1804 effectively removed corps' rights to elect their own officers. A declaration in the bill against the election of officers aroused controversy on the grounds that it was a breach of faith. The Act instead provided that future rules and regulations would be valid only if not disallowed by the King, who could also annul any existing regulations, which had the same effect in practice.¹³ Volunteer autonomy was widely recognised as one of the force's major drawbacks. Colonel Vyse, commenting on the proposed volunteer regulations of June 1803, recommended the establishment of one system for all discipline, interior œconomy and clothing, to bring to an end committees, quarrels and insubordination.¹⁴ Charles Yorke, the Home Secretary, claimed in November 1803 that it had never been the ministry's intention to give volunteers the privilege of electing their own officers.¹⁵ Similarly in Ireland, the government was determined to prevent the yeomanry becoming an independent and politically-inspired force as the volunteers of the 1770s had been. Significantly, the conditions on which Earls Camden and Fitzwilliam encouraged yeomanry service were largely the same as those under which volunteer corps had been formed in Great Britain, except that officers were appointed and commissioned by the lord lieutenant.¹⁶

¹³ J.W.Fortescue, *The County Lieutenancies and the Army*, p.122; *The Statutes at Large*, Vol.19, pp.99-100, 44 Georgii III Cap.LIV Sections LVI, LVII.

¹⁴ J.W.Fortescue, *The County Lieutenancies and the Army*, p.60.

¹⁵ HO 51/75, ff.424-425, C.Yorke to Wm.Sharpe *et al.*, Lancaster, 1 November 1803.

¹⁶ R.B.McDowell, *Ireland in the Age of Imperialism and Revolution 1760-1801*, p.558; *A New History of Ireland IV Eighteenth-Century Ireland 1691-1800*, Edited by T.W.Moody

Although volunteer corps were at first free to set their own terms of service, their freedom in practice was limited by the need for official approval in order for commissions to be granted to the officers, and arms provided. Most corps' conditions of service were framed by a committee and approved at a public meeting, and in the event were relatively similar. They differed most in the extent of their liability to be called upon for permanent service. In the event of an invasion, some metropolitan corps were committed to defend only the immediate area of the government offices in which they were formed, while in contrast many provincial corps had agreed to be sent to any part of their military district, or even Great Britain as a whole.

Official attempts to alter conditions of service commonly concerned these geographical limits. Henry Dundas encouraged the formation of corps in April 1798 in sea ports and populous towns 'although the offer of their services should be limited respectively to the town in which they are to be raised and within a few miles thereof'.¹⁷ Yet within a few months a Home Office circular refused to accept any new corps that did not engage to act to at least the extent of their military district.

Heavy pressure could be exerted on corps to make them conform to the government's plans. This is well illustrated by the official response to an offer of a volunteer corps from the mayor and inhabitants of King's Lynn in April 1794. The plan submitted for approval included a provision that the committee responsible for the subscription money would decide on the propriety of obeying marching orders from the crown. The King objected and so the condition was dropped; Pitt suggested that the wording of the offer be changed so that the corps could be called out before an invasion force had actually landed.¹⁸ Pressure to alter regulations could also come from lords lieutenant. A group of associating farmers in the neighbourhood of Eccles found their proposal of a cavalry corps rejected by the lieutenant on the grounds that the service offered was too limited. The promoters of the association resisted suggestions to serve in any part of the county during invasion or insurrection, on the grounds that other Norfolk associations had

and W.E.Vaughan, Vol.IV, pp.343-344, 353.

¹⁷Quoted in *To Escape the Monster's Clutches*, Compiled by M.Y.Ashcroft, p.43.

¹⁸Norfolk Record Office, MS 2658, Townshend Correspondence, Samuel Baker [to Marquis Townshend], Lynn, 22 April 1794; Norfolk Record Office, MS 2658, Townshend Correspondence, Borough of King's-Lynn, Norfolk, Meeting of Mayor and other inhabitants at the Guildhall, 21 April 1794; Adjourned meeting of the Mayor and Inhabitants of King's Lynn, 24 April 1794; Copy of Mr.Pitt's answer to Lord T[ownshend] on the Mayor of Lynn's letter, 7 April 1794.

been accepted on even more limited conditions.¹⁹

Part One: 'Deliberative Regiments': Volunteer Committees

Despite the restrictions imposed by the need to obtain official consent, corps retained considerable autonomy. The principal features of this autonomy were management committees, the election of officers, the raising of subscriptions, and volunteers' freedom to resign. Of these aspects of volunteer organisation, the power of committees in the management of corps attracted the most criticism both for the 'democratic' nature of the system and the dissension and political activity it was thought to provoke. William Cobbett pointed to the baneful influence of volunteer committees, claiming that 'a system of government more republican and democratic never yet appeared in the world'.²⁰ There were two related aspects to this 'democratic' organisation. One was the principle that committee members were elected by all members of the corps and had authority over the officers; the other was that this advanced common men to positions of power. This power, it was feared, was most open to abuse with regard to the regulation of membership, both admission and expulsion.

The committees regulated the affairs of corps when they were not on actual service, deciding on membership, enforcing regulations, and managing finances. The committees, often in conjunction with the officers, set the times for exercises, settled the details of uniforms, invited tenders, and administered the provision of uniforms and accoutrements. Generally, these responsibilities were devolved to sub-committees answerable to the general committee of management. Frequently, general meetings called to consider forming volunteer or yeomanry corps would appoint a committee to decide on its regulations and constitution, and to superintend the raising of the corps. This entailed inviting and controlling the admission of members, supervising the election of officers, and presenting the proposals for the corps to the lord lieutenant in order to obtain royal consent, and eventually organising the acquisition of arms and the payment of official allowances. The raising and administration of a subscription towards the expenses of the corps was often sufficiently serious to warrant a separate committee. Though committees were important in the establishment and early stages of organisation of corps, gradually the officers, and especially the adjutants

¹⁹Norfolk Record Office, MS 5363, Townshend Correspondence, Wm. Woodley [to Marquis Townshend], Eccles, 30 May 1798.

²⁰Cobbett's *Political Register*, Vol.V, col.41.

employed by large corps, took more responsibility for the daily administration of the corps' affairs. Many committee minute books show a marked decline in the frequency of meetings after the initial few months after the corps' foundation.

Once a corps had been set on a permanent footing, the business of volunteer committees mostly involved only finance, the enforcement of fines, and the regulation of admissions and resignations. Exceptionally, some committees had wider powers over the direction of their corps. In the Royal Edinburgh Volunteer Light Dragoons, the commanding officer's orders were submitted to the Committee of Management and the entire corps for approval.²¹

The existence of committees and the principle of equal voting rights for all members of a corps was in itself considered by some to be dangerously democratic. They attracted considerable criticism as an unconstitutional development which tended to give excessive power to men of low status. One officer likened the committee system to a hydra in the constitution which needed to be stifled before it became too powerful.²² In practice, however, it was not so much the democratic principles embodied in committees as their composition that was considered to be the vital determinant of a corps' conduct. The members of committees could include officers and any other serving members of the corps, as well as substantial subscribers to the corps' funds. Clergymen were sometimes on committees, but women subscribers do not appear to have become members.²³

The relative proportion of officers to private men on these committees had important implications and attracted much attention. A high proportion of private men could be interpreted as a sign of democratic intent, whatever the political complexion of the members. Joseph Farington, briefly a member of the St. Pancras Armed Association, complained that the military committee had been reconstituted in October 1798 to consist of twelve privates and only three officers, the chairman always being a private, 'Such is the spirit of equality.' The officers contemplated resigning, but decided against doing so, to prevent the appointments falling into unfit hands. Each captain addressed his company on the impropriety and gross affront in excluding officers from the committee, and the resolution to reconstitute

²¹ Edgar Johnson, *Sir Walter Scott The Great Unknown*, Volume I 1771-1821, (London, 1970), p.132.

²² Hampshire Record Office, 11 M 49/240, Captain Robert Forbes to Lord Bolton, Gosport, 16 January 1804.

²³ *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, edited by Kenneth Garlick and Angus Macintyre, Vol. VI, p.2141, 12 October 1803.

the committee was reversed. The commanding officer determined to call out the corps as seldom as he pleased, in order to prevent abuses of the establishment.²⁴ Restriction of the numbers of officers might however have been intended as an attempt to effect a separation of powers and personnel between the regulatory committee and the executive commissioned officers. The St. James's Westminster Loyal Volunteer Regiment, which was seen to be highly respectable, annually re-elected its committee, which contained no more than three commissioned officers, with a private as president.²⁵

Cobbett frequently publicised examples of such dominance of committees by private men, attacking committees themselves as a French and democratic practice. Citing an instance of a corps in which six privates and one officer constituted a quorum of the committee, he suggested that the regulation could have been taken from those of the Corresponding Societies or the prolific constitutional pigeon-holes of the Abbé Sieyès.²⁶ The committee system frequently was associated with revolutionary, and particularly French, practice. Lord Grenville said it was by such a club system that the French monarchy had been overthrown. In both America and France, Cobbett agreed, it was such 'little parliaments' that had effected the revolution.²⁷

Critics not only attacked the committee system for its democratic construction, but also frequently pointed to the alleged low social status and concomitant lack of independence of committee members. One volunteer, asserting the impolicy and folly of committees, asked how it was possible for such people as hairdressers, tailors, shoemakers and pastrycooks to regulate the seniority of their officers, when they might be influenced by partiality for old customers.²⁸ Several corps had highly respectable committees; the Mortlake Association included among its 26 committee members William Pitt, Henry Addington, Viscount Castlereagh, Philip Francis, William Gilpin and

²⁴ *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, edited by Kenneth Garlick and Angus Macintyre, Vol. III, p. 1076, 26 October 1798; p. 1079, 1 November 1798.

²⁵ Westminster City Library, 767/1, Minutes of the St. James's Westminster Loyal Volunteer Regiment, 3 May 1815.

²⁶ *Cobbett's Political Register*, Vol. IV, col. 788; an allusion to Edmund Burke, *A Letter to a Noble Lord*, (1796), pp. 71–72, and J. Gillray, 'The French Consular-Triumvirate, settling the New Constitution, with a Peep at the Constitutional-Pigeon-Holes of the Abbé Sièyes in the Back Ground', 1 January 1800, No. 9509 in Mary Dorothy George, *Catalogue of Political and Personal Satires*, Vol. VII pp. 604–605 and frontispiece.

²⁷ *Cobbett's Political Register*, Vol. IV, cols. 927–928.

²⁸ *Cobbett's Political Register*, Vol. IV, col. 835, To the Editor, 'Mentor', London, 13 December 1803; *The Parliamentary Debates*, Published under the superintendence of T. C. Hansard, Vol. VII Col. 1106, 11 July 1806.

Brook Watson, the Commissary-General and a former Lord Mayor and member of parliament for London.²⁹

Yet even in a corps composed chiefly of gentlemen, Cobbett warned that there was nothing to prevent the agitation of dangerous and mischievous questions. If committees were dangerous even in such a patrician corps as the St.Giles and St.George, Bloomsbury Association, he suggested, they were even more dangerous in a corps of the opposite description, where sentiment could not compensate for a lack of discipline.³⁰ The most dangerous and unconstitutional committees were believed to be those in corps composed of tradesmen and shopkeepers. According to Captain Robert Forbes, those corps that trusted their officers did not need committees.³¹ There was no suggestion that volunteer committees were actually disloyal, but the danger was thought to exist in the possibility of less loyal men gaining positions of power, against which there appeared to be no safeguards.

Unlike in any other British military body, the officers were under the direction of men not commissioned by the crown. Officers were in many cases obliged to consult the committee and act by its decisions, a dependent position that was believed to be unique. When money was required from the Preston Volunteers' fund, the officers were required to state the purpose in writing to the committee, which was to consider the reasonableness and propriety of the request.³²

While critics warned of the potential for abuse by democratic committees of their control over admissions and discipline, they identified a second and potentially much greater danger to the political order implicit in the facility for political deliberation and discussion afforded by the committee system. The principal danger seen in the club-like organisation of many corps was that of an armed body converting itself into a deliberative body.³³ No man that had belonged to 'a *deliberative* regiment' could be fit to be a soldier, Cobbett claimed. His *Political Register* regularly published examples of volunteer corps' declarations and resolutions in which references to committees, sub-committees ballots, votes, and the consultation of private men were emphasised. Bodies of men, Cobbett asserted, 'who are governed

²⁹Surrey Record Office, 2397/9/1, Mortlake Association Committee minutes, p.3, 25 July 1803.

³⁰*Cobbett's Political Register*, Vol.V, col.966.

³¹Hampshire Record Office, 11 M 49/240, Captain Robert Forbes to Lord Bolton, Gosport, 16 January 1804.

³²WO 79/2, Preston Volunteers minute book, p.11, 1 May 1797.

³³HO 50/47, John Ford to Henry Dundas, Abbeyfield near Soadleach, 26 May 1800.

by committees, who occasionally form general meetings for deliberation and debate, and who take upon them to correspond and remonstrate with the government, are certainly better without arms than with them.'³⁴

The existence of committees enabled and encouraged consultation and deliberation within corps, which was thought undesirable in bodies of armed men. The possibility of volunteer corps combining for a common purpose, in the manner of the corresponding societies or the committees of the Parisian sections, presented itself. The committee system facilitated co-operation between corps, particularly within London, without reference to the intermediaries of the lord lieutenant, Lord Mayor or the Home Office. A military committee of nine was elected by the Ninth Regiment of Loyal London Volunteers in 1803 in order to communicate with the other military committees of the south-east London volunteers. They were to consult on uniform and other military concerns, and to report periodically to the regimental committee.³⁵ In 1800, a meeting of delegates of metropolitan corps made representations to the Home Secretary on the volunteers' exemption from the hair powder duty.³⁶ Three years later, delegates from metropolitan volunteer corps met in a general committee to consider raising a benefit fund for injured volunteers and their families. Cobbett pointed out that if committees could affiliate for a charitable purpose, they could do so for any other, and particularly a political, purpose. If the delegates could raise a fund, there appeared to be nothing to stop them addressing the King to remove his generals, the ministers, or to make peace. None had yet thought of using its power for disloyal purposes, but nor, he claimed, had the first clubs in France or the first town meetings in America, which in the end had heartily joined in destroying their governments.³⁷ A friend told Joseph Farington in 1803 that he believed that 'the military spirit now raised will produce the same effects that attended the formation of Volunteer Corps in Ireland, viz: That after the present danger is over they will demand a reformation in the state of Parliamentary representation.'³⁸

The main danger identified by Cobbett in such 'seminaries of indiscipline' was that they would deliberate on whether to obey orders, and the

³⁴ *Cobbett's Political Register*, Vol.IV, cols.287, 922-928, 416.

³⁵ Guildhall Library, MS 5785, Minutes of the Committee of the Ninth Regiment of Loyal London Volunteers (Bridge Ward Association), 27 July 1803.

³⁶ HO 50/47, Isaac Phipps to Dundas, 27 February 1800.

³⁷ *Cobbett's Political Register*, Vol.IV col.927, Vol.V, col.46.

³⁸ *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, edited by Kenneth Garlick and Angus Macintyre, Vol.VI, p.2149, 27 October 1803.

threat of volunteer discontent would thereby force the government to comply with their wishes. Cobbett believed that the ministers and other politicians already were pandering to the volunteers, proceeding on the maxim of keeping their places by following the humours of the people. Sheridan allegedly wheedled 'the shop-keeping throng', ingratiating himself with the volunteers by proposing a vote of thanks by the House of Commons in 1803. 'Mr. Pitt, the generalissimo of the shop-keeping army' was accused of courting popularity by allowing indulgences to the volunteers. William Windham warned that much injury could be done to society by volunteer committees giving votes of praise and censure to those of highest ranks.³⁹

Evidence of deliberation on political matters within volunteer corps is scarce, and confined to relatively uncontroversial matters. When the King survived an assassination attempt in May 1800, several volunteer corps were restrained from presenting loyal addresses by the belief that they would be improper and unconstitutional from men in their military capacity.⁴⁰ Henry Dundas declined to present one such address because he believed that addresses from men in arms, even from the most praiseworthy motives, were liable to abuse.⁴¹ Yet at least sixty addresses from volunteer corps had been presented in November 1795 following an attempted attack on the King.⁴²

Deliberation among members of corps was subversive of discipline and potentially a threat to the volunteer organisation itself. A curate preached a sermon at Halifax in 1804 condemning volunteers' drilling on Sundays, charitably consigning, so the commanding officer reported, the entire membership of the Halifax Volunteers and any spectator who attended their exercises to eternal punishment. While recommending obedience in general to the legislature, the Reverend Mr. Atkinson told the volunteers at a vestry meeting they should avoid Sunday drilling by petitioning their officers. The

³⁹ *Cobbett's Political Register*, Vol. IV cols. 287, 348, 213, 349, 852-854; *The Parliamentary Debates*, Published under the superintendence of T.C. Hansard, Vol. III Col. 595, 21 February 1805.

⁴⁰ PRO 30/3/10, Bosanquet Papers, General Meetings Minutes p. 59, 20 May 1800; PRO 30/3/2, Bosanquet Papers, Miscellaneous, Col. Herries to Duke of Portland, 20 May 1800; PRO 30/3/6, Bosanquet Papers, Light Horse Volunteers Minutes of Committee, Portland to Herries, 22 May 1800.

⁴¹ HO 50/47, Address to King from Officers, N.C.O.s and Privates of the Forse Corps of Volunteer Infantry, 4 June 1804; J.C. Sutherland to Henry Dundas, 4 June 1800; Henry Dundas to J.C. Sutherland, 17 June 1800.

⁴² *London Gazette*, Nos. 13835-13848, 21 November 1795-29 December 1795, pp. 1243-1482, *passim*.

lord lieutenant wanted Atkinson indicted for sedition, but the War Office's law officers advised against prosecution.⁴³

Deliberation on internal matters was far more common than attempts to use the volunteer organisation for external or political purposes. A Bloomsbury volunteer complained that the meddling, busy and interested conduct of the corps committee had given rise to differences. Seven men could call a meeting of the whole corps of 700; if seven unreliable men became members of the committee, 'Miles' speculated, nothing prevented them from agitating any dangerous and mischievous question.⁴⁴ Critics assumed that the interests of private volunteers were opposed to the good government of the corps. Even in a 'large and respectable' corps like the Bristol Volunteers, privates could elect a committee more sensitive to their wishes. When a disagreement arose over a minor change in the uniform, one volunteer was reported to have been overheard in a coffee room saying '*No matter, . . . we shall soon have a committee of our own stamp, and then we shall have things comfortable!!!*'⁴⁵

Unpopular officers could be removed by the combined pressure of private men, as happened in the St.Pancras Association in June 1798, shortly after its formation. A written complaint was made to the commanding officer of the conduct of a lieutenant, William Craig, both in the committee and the field. The major explained that several members thought Craig an improper person for an officer as he always took the lead in committees and was always pressing for committees. The committee system could give unwarranted influence to junior officers as easily as to private men. More than forty men threatened to resign if he retained his rank. An unsympathetic Joseph Farington told Craig, a fellow artist, that he had been unwise and indiscreet to direct before he knew his duty, and suggested that if harmony was to be affected by his continuing an officer it would be prudent for him to retire into the ranks. Craig returned his commission, but his resignation was rejected.

He circulated an address to all members of the association justifying his conduct, telling the captain that the attack made on his commission came from the captain's company alone, and had been carried on for more than a

⁴³HO 50/123, Thomas Horton to Earl Fitzwilliam, Nowroyde, 2 October 1804; HO 50/81, f.425, Hawkesbury to Earl Fitzwilliam, 8 October 1804; ff.482-483, Hawkesbury to Earl Fitzwilliam, 19 October 1814.

⁴⁴*Cobbett's Political Register*, Vol.IV pp.965-966, To the Editor, 'Miles', London, 31 December 1800.

⁴⁵*Cobbett's Political Register*, Vol.V cols.72-74, 'J.O.', Exeter, 11 January 1804; See also J.W.Fortescue, *The County Lieutenancies and the Army*, p.102.

month. Plans to circulate an answer to Craig's letter were dropped because it was thought imprudent to give him too much consequence by answering him publicly. A month later, a declaration was presented to the Major by 17 members of the corps, including Farington, threatening to secede if Craig remained in a position of authority. It argued that as Craig's conduct had been so assuming and improper, union and concord could no longer be expected. Craig had warned that every officer held his appointment only during the pleasure of the party that had brought about his removal; the corps had allowed itself to be governed by a cabal. Another volunteer told Farington that a party had been formed against Craig by two men, one of whom was a jacobin who belonged to the London Corresponding Society.⁴⁶

It is significant that Farington, Smirke and several other members of the corps approved of these proceedings, and were prepared to resign themselves if Craig was re-instated. There appears to have been little sense of collective responsibility among the officers as distinct from the private men. The separation of the powers of the officers and the committees had been breached by Craig, who was active in committees. The major's behaviour strongly implies that some officers were content to acknowledge their subservient position to the committee, and that their tenure of office depended on the good will of the men who had elected them, more than the holding of a commission from the crown. A well organised group of private men within the corps could gain significant power and influence.

It is evident that the democratic nature of volunteer committees had two main aspects, the egalitarian organisation itself and the consequences evident in their readiness to discuss political affairs. Committee organisation was considered democratic both because it enabled all members to participate in the management of their corps and because it gave executive power to men of low status. The feared consequences were that committees would become deliberative bodies concerned with political matters beyond their immediate internal concerns. Though no political intervention on the scale of the Irish volunteers took place, the administration was understandably alert to the dangers of volunteer political activity, even for loyal purposes. Other areas of volunteer autonomy also attracted the attention of critics: the election of officers, subscriptions, internal discipline and the power of resignation.

⁴⁶ *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, edited by Kenneth Garlick and Angus Macintyre, Vol.III, pp.1020-1024, 20-26 June 1798; pp.1037-1038, 25-28 July 1798; p.xvi.

Part Two: The Election of Officers

The democratic organisation of corps was more frequently evident in relation to the appointment of officers than in the rare cases in which they were forced to resign. Before 1804, many corps had made provision for the election by ballot of both commissioned and non-commissioned officers by all members. Occasionally each company elected its own officers independently of the rest of the corps; sometimes subsequent vacancies would be filled by promotion or appointment by the commanding officer.⁴⁷ The St.Clement Danes Volunteers held separate ballots for captaincies, lieutenantancies and ensigncies in September 1803, each member being sent a printed list of candidates recommended by the committee, which suggests that the ballot may have been secret, and required to vote for three candidates, but having the right to vote for any person not named in the list. Six candidates were proposed for captaincies, and votes were recorded for eight additional candidates, none of whom received more than six votes of a total of 449. Twelve names were added to the nine on the ballot paper for lieutenantancies, but again the vast majority of votes went to the recommended candidates. In each case, the number of votes for the first three, 71% and 61% for captains and lieutenants respectively, determined the order of seniority, subject to official approval.⁴⁸

The principal objections to this system of election included that it failed to give regard to military experience, seniority, military or social rank, and that it encouraged the dependence of officers upon the private men who had elected them. Lord Hobart drew a distinction between the initial election of officers, which he considered constitutional, because the corps were still civilian organisations, and subsequent elections, which he considered unconstitutional and mischievous because the corps had been by then constituted as military bodies.⁴⁹ Lord Rolle's objection to electing officers was simply that it was 'too much like the French.'⁵⁰ Elections were seen to be dangerously democratic, giving power to ambitious common men. One member of the St.Pancras corps complained that the appointment of officers had

⁴⁷ *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, edited by Kenneth Garlick and Angus Macintyre, Vol.III p.1068, 14 October 1798.

⁴⁸ Westminster City Library, B 1332, St.Clement Danes 50A, 55, 61, 66A, St.Clement Danes Volunteers, 2 September 1803, 8 September 1803, 13 September 1803.

⁴⁹ Hobart to Lord Auckland, Roehampton, 30 January 1804, *The Journal and Correspondence of William, Lord Auckland*, introduction by the Bishop of Bath and Wells, four volumes, (London, 1862), Vol.IV, p.190.

⁵⁰ Devon Record Office, 1262M/L9, Fortescue MSS, J.Rolle to Earl Fortescue, [n.d.]; John Bohstedt, *Riots and Community Politics in England and Wales*, p.51.

been managed by a set of men in low situations ambitious of distinction. Joseph Farington similarly objected to the manner in which the officers had been elected, in which men in inferior situations had been striving and had succeeded in obtaining rank improperly. A stockbroker was appointed major; Farington concluded 'The whole of the Military business of the Parish appears to be in low hands.'⁵¹

The system was consciously egalitarian in a manner unknown to other military forces. In practice, however, unobjectionable and respectable gentlemen, sometimes with some military experience, were normally elected. Yet from a military point of view, elections of officers further militated against the principle of subordination. In Scotland, General Vyse claimed, many corps had been rendered a chaos of anarchy and confusion as a result of the divisions, dissensions and disputes produced by elections.⁵² According to its commanding officer, the election of officers and non-commissioned officers had been the bane of the Stirling Volunteers. The 'Party Spirit' engendered by the election of a committee had put one company in a 'Mutinous State'.⁵³ One London volunteer compared the canvassing for votes for an ensigncy when a vacancy occurred to that at an hospital when the matron or apothecary retired or died.⁵⁴ Even in the Light Horse Volunteers, candidates for commissions were accused of canvassing for rank.⁵⁵ The price of a vote in the Stirling Volunteers was in one instance a dram and a bottle of porter.⁵⁶ The committee of the St. James's Westminster Volunteers tried to prevent this by ruling that any member canvassing for a vacant commission became ineligible for the appointment, and that it should be considered disgraceful for any member to canvas either for himself or a friend.⁵⁷

When the London and Westminster Light Horse Volunteers had first been formed in 1779, the officers served in rotation, each signing an un-

⁵¹ *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, edited by Kenneth Garlick and Angus Macintyre, Vol. VI, p. 2115, 26 August 1803; p. 2140, 9 October 1803; p. 2141, 12 October 1803.

⁵² HO 50/52, R. Vyse to Lord Hobart, Edinburgh, 21 December 1800.

⁵³ HO 50/46, Major James Mayne to Duke of Montrose, Penies Logie, 21 October 1799, (copy).

⁵⁴ *Cobbett's Political Register*, Vol. IV col. 966, To the Editor, 'Miles', London, 31 December 1800.

⁵⁵ PRO 30/3/7, Light Horse Volunteers Committee Minutes, 15 February 1805.

⁵⁶ HO 50/46, Major James Mayne to Duke of Montrose, Penies Logie, 21 October 1799, (copy).

⁵⁷ Westminster City Library, 767/1 St. James's Westminster Loyal Volunteer Regiment, 3 May 1815; See also Scottish Record Office, GD 224/687/2, And. Wauchope [to Duke of Buccleuch], Niddrie, 15 July 1798.

dertaking to resign twelve months after his election.⁵⁸ This provision was dropped on the corps' re-formation in 1794, but the volunteers continued to have no non-commissioned officers, the privates serving in this capacity in rotation. Herries claimed that every private gentleman in the corps was capable of serving as an officer. The corps' unusually egalitarian constitution was tolerated probably because of the respectability of the members, who were individually approved by the Commander-in-Chief. In the contrary case of the Loyal Lambeth Association, the provision for the elective rotation of officers had much more dangerous connotations.⁵⁹

Serious reservations were expressed about the democratic construction and plebeian membership of volunteer committees because they were entrusted with important responsibilities, among them the regulation of membership. Frequent practice was to leave subscription books open for enrolments in public places at advertised times for a limited period, after which a selection would be made of those thought suitable. The similarity in practice to civil societies or clubs was striking in the employment of ballots to decide on admissions. Anyone wishing to become a member of the St.James's Westminster Loyal Volunteer Regiment, for example, had to be proposed by two members, then his name, profession, and address were to be posted at the armoury for a week for the inspection of the corps. At the next meeting, the committee would ballot for the candidate, two black balls constituting exclusion.⁶⁰ In other corps, like the Royal Exchange Division of the Loyal London Volunteers and the Cheltenham Volunteer Infantry, all members ballotted candidates.⁶¹ The process had great capacity to cause offence; it was thought most politic to accept all 112 men who offered to join the Tetbury corps in 1803 because it seemed likely that if the planned

⁵⁸PRO 30/3/25, p.9, Report of Colonel Herries on the State of the Corps, 2 April 1798.

⁵⁹TS 24/3/30B/1-4, Sedition Papers, 'Rules, Articles and Regulations; to be observed by the Members of the Loyal Lambeth Association'; *A Complete Collection of State Trials*, Vol.XXIV, cols.693-708; Albert Goodwin, *The Friends of Liberty*, p.351; *Selections from the Papers of the London Corresponding Society 1792-1799*, Edited with an introduction by Mary Thale, p.161, p.91 n.75; PRO 30/3/25, Report of Col.Herries on the State of the Corps, 2 April 1798; PRO 30/3/2, Col.Herries to R.P.Carew, Extract of Regulations of corps, April 1804.

⁶⁰Westminster City Library, 767/1, Minutes of the St.James's Westminster Loyal Volunteer Regiment, 3 May 1815.

⁶¹Guildhall Library, MS 5, Minutes of the Royal Exchange Division of the Loyal London Volunteers, f.55, General Meeting, 7 July 1803; Gloucestershire Record Office, D149/X21/58, Cheltenham Volunteer Infantry, [n.d.]; Gloucestershire Record Office, Royal Gloucester Yeomanry Cavalry, p.13, 5 May 1798.

eighty were selected, the remaining 32 would take great umbrage.⁶² Lord Abercorn was proposed for the Light Horse Volunteers by a member of parliament and seconded by the commanding officer, but black-balled when ballotted for membership. To avoid embarrassment, he was told that his distant situation would make it inconvenient to have him as a member.⁶³ Not all corps were as egalitarian. The committee appointed to organise a military association in Oxford in 1798 met with two city magistrates to investigate and scrutinise the list of proposed members. Those considered respectable and proper to become members were approved, while those on any account deemed improper were struck off the list. Once the corps was established, the functions of the committee were taken over by one chosen by all members of the corps.⁶⁴

The system of election of officers from all members reinforced the tendency of corps to act as 'subscriber democracies'. Officers could not afford to antagonise the private men or their corps would become unmanageable; they were subject to the supervision of an elected committee on which officers were deliberately in a minority. Yet the limits in practice to this position must be acknowledged. Volunteers in general chose respectable and established local gentlemen as officers, who were unobjectionable to the county or national authorities. After the initial period of raising and establishing a corps, most of the management responsibilities devolved upon the officers, as in any other military body. Significant practical restrictions also existed with respect to the other major aspects of volunteer autonomy: finance and discipline.

Part Three: Financial Autonomy

Of all the responsibilities of volunteer committees, that with the greatest potential power was the control of finances. Not all corps received government allowances, which were in any case inadequate alone. Official pay and clothing allowances accounted for between a half and a third of most corps' expenditure.⁶⁵ Nearly all raised subscriptions to provide for the expenses of

⁶²Gloucestershire Record Office, D566 Z13, Tetbury Volunteers, H.H.Sloper to J.W.Lettall, 13 August 1803.

⁶³*The Diary of Joseph Farington*, edited by Kenneth Garlick and Angus Macintyre, Vol.III, p.999, 17 April 1798; see also Hampshire Record Office, 11 M 49/235, ff.213-214, Peter Serle to Lord Bolton, 24 October 1803.

⁶⁴Bodleian Library, MS Top.Oxon.e.241, Minutes of the Oxford Loyal Volunteers 1798-1801, pp.3, 5, 6, 22.

⁶⁵John Cookson, 'Patriotism and Social Structure: the Ely Volunteers, 1798-1808', p.10.

the corps; sometimes grants were made from a county fund. County subscriptions to provide for the expenses of volunteer and yeomanry corps had been invited by circular letters in 1794, 1798 and 1803. Individual corps' subscriptions were raised only in the parishes or towns in which the corps was formed. Only occasionally was money raised for a specific purpose, as for example the purchase of musical instruments, as opposed to the augmentation of the corps' general funds. Many corps encountered considerable difficulties once their subscription funds were exhausted, and this frequently contributed to their disbandment when major expenditure was required, typically for the renewal of uniforms.

The principal objections to this system were to both the relative financial independence it gave to a military body, and the way in which support of the subscriptions became almost a test of loyalty. The question of the constitutional propriety of raising money for military purposes independent of the legislature had been by far the most controversial aspect of Dundas' suggestions for augmenting the auxiliary forces in 1794. A bill legalising such subscriptions was passed shortly after, but some doubts remained about the wisdom and propriety of allowing armed, largely self-governing associations to raise money on their own initiative. As Cobbett warned in 1803, subscriptions taught the corps the way of raising money, an art which it was very dangerous to render familiar to men who were organised in an armed body. Little seemed to prevent a fund being raised for political rather than military purposes.⁶⁶

The non-military causes to which corps occasionally appropriated part of their funds were normally charitable. However, some corps subscribed to the Voluntary Contribution of 1798, which had strong political overtones, albeit loyal ones.⁶⁷ The main restraint on the use of volunteer financial resources for political purposes, aside from their loyalty to the crown and strict regard for constitutional propriety, was their restricted funds. Most corps had little money to spare once their regular expenses were accounted for. Once volunteers had been equipped, and after some initial extravagances, many committees found it necessary to appeal for a further subscription to supplement exhausted funds. Corps which had initially refused government allowances through a desire not to become a burden on the public funds

⁶⁶ *Cobbett's Political Register*, Vol.IV cols.927-928; Vol.V cols.46-47.

⁶⁷ D.G.Vaisey, 'The Pledge of Patriotism: Staffordshire and the Voluntary Contribution, 1798', *Essays in Staffordshire History presented to S.A.H.Burne*, Edited by M.W.Greenslade, *Collections for a History of Staffordshire*, Fourth Series, Volume Six, ([Stafford], 1970), pp.210-218.

often later found it necessary to request official financial assistance. The initial subscription for the Oxford Loyal Volunteers in 1798, like many others, fell short of expectations. Less than eighteen months later the fund was exhausted, and further subscriptions invited.⁶⁸

The manner of raising subscriptions combined self-righteous appeals to public spirit with mild intimidation. Volunteer corps believed that they were providing a public service, the expense of which they should not be expected to support alone. From 1803, when the provisions of the *Levy en Masse* were suspended if a quota of volunteers came forward, volunteers could claim that their efforts had spared their fellow subjects from service. When the Oxford Loyal Volunteers' subscription was not as generously assisted by the inhabitants as the corps had wished, the joint committees published a handbill for distribution throughout the city. The committees expressed strong feelings of the impropriety and hardship of subjecting the members of the corps to further expense while many others who shared in the benefits of the institution were exempt from sharing the burden. The association's object was the general defence and security of the city, and its members, the handbill pointed out, besides the sacrifice of their time and attention, incurred more individual expense for uniforms than even the wealthiest inhabitant would be expected to subscribe.⁶⁹

Wealthy and influential inhabitants were approached individually for contributions. When a further subscription was solicited less than sixteen months later in 1799, letters were written to the Duke of Marlborough, high Steward of the city, and to the city's members of parliament, outlining the exhausted state of the fund. The Common Council of the city subscribed 50 guineas to the general fund and up to £15 annually towards the rent of an exercise ground. A delegation of 43 gentlemen, three or four from each of the twelve parishes, was appointed to solicit subscriptions in their respective parishes.⁷⁰ Similarly, the chairman and committee members of the Bridge Ward corps of the Loyal London Volunteers personally went round the ward on three consecutive mornings in July 1803 to collect subscriptions. The inhabitants were requested to give their names and those of their inmates who

⁶⁸Bodleian Library, MS Top.Oxon.e.241, Minutes of the Oxford Loyal Volunteers 1798–1801, pp.29–30, 10 May 1798; pp.90–91, 23 September 1799.

⁶⁹Bodleian Library, MS Top.Oxon.e.241, Minutes of the Oxford Loyal Volunteers 1798–1801, pp.29–30, 10 May 1798.

⁷⁰Bodleian Library, MS Top.Oxon.e.241, Minutes of the Oxford Loyal Volunteers 1798–1801, p.86, 5 September 1799; pp.89–91, p.81, 4 April 1799; 23 September 1799; See also *Cobbett's Political Register*, Vol.V cols.193–194.

were willing to enrol in the association. A printed address was sent to all inhabitants, with a list of subscribers, pointing out that those few residents whose names did not appear had not been at home when the committee had waited upon them.⁷¹

Since subscriptions were solicited from door to door, those who did not wish to subscribe had to justify their refusal, rather than those who wished to support the volunteers having to make a positive effort. The presumption made was that all should support the force whether they agreed with its aims or not, and in fact having a greater duty to subscribe if they had made no personal exertion. From this premise, some corps developed the argument that those who refused to subscribe, since not subscribing had been made a positive decision, were not entitled to the assistance or protection of the corps, as for example in the case of a fire. While corps could with propriety ask their original subscribers for further contributions, not all volunteers thought they should expect the public in general to help defray their expenses. In a letter addressed to their commanding officer in 1795, 25 members of the Royal Dumfries Volunteers opposed 'the mendicant business' of soliciting further public contributions, and expressed their dissatisfaction that the 'Volunteers should go a begging, with the burnt out Cottager and Ship-wrecked Sailor'.⁷²

The public response to the soliciting of volunteer subscriptions was not always enthusiastic. The four collectors for the subscription in the Liberty of the Rolls recorded the responses of the inhabitants of 35 inhabitants of Bream's Buildings in Chancery Lane. Four were already volunteers, and three more offered to serve. Seven offered to subscribe, while the same number were unable or unwilling to contribute; fourteen were away or undecided when the collectors called. Only one woman was visited, and she was unable to subscribe anything but goods. Similarly, a printer could not afford pecuniary aid, but offered to print to the amount of £3 or £4 gratis. One resident who could contribute wanted to see what his neighbours of similar rank in life subscribed; a commercial partnership thought it more appropriate to subscribe to Lloyd's Patriotic Fund. Outright refusals were rare: Mr. Tockington would neither volunteer nor contribute, but had no objection

⁷¹ Guildhall Library, MS 5785, Minutes of the Committee of the Ninth Regiment of Loyal London Volunteers (Bridge Ward Association), 18 July 1803.

⁷² *The Letters of Robert Burns*, Edited by G. Ross Kay, Second Edition, Volume II 1790-1796, (Oxford, 1985), pp. 351-352, Letter No. 666, [18 May 1795]; William Will, *Robert Burns as a Volunteer some fresh facts which further help to confound the poet's critics*, (Glasgow, 1919).

to being drilled on the appearance of urgent necessity.⁷³

It is difficult to identify any pattern linking the economic status of the residents of Bream's Buildings with their response to the Rolls Liberty subscription. Of the 35 inhabitants listed by the subscription collectors, 16 can be identified with some confidence in the paving, lighting and cleaning rate assessment for the Liberty for 1803–1804. They comprised 15% of the ratepayers, but contributed just under 12% of the total rates assessed. John Fowler, described as a poor journeyman carpenter in the subscription list, had the second lowest rate assessment of the sixteen, at £30 rent. Yet relative poverty did not prevent volunteering; the two residents who offered to volunteer in the liberty and equip themselves were assessed at only £28 and £33, the two lowest rents of the eleven who were at home when the collectors called. The four who offered only to subscribe included the two highest rates assessments. The only subscriber whose assessment was lower than the average, John Anthony, subscribed 10/6d, compared to his rates assessment of 17/6d. The assessments of those who neither volunteered nor contributed were close to the average of slightly more than £41. Overall, however, willingness to serve or subscribe cannot closely be related to the apparent economic circumstances indicated by rate assessments, although placing volunteers among the lesser rate payers, and subscribers among the higher, would not be inconsistent with the evidence of this very small sample.⁷⁴

Part Four: Disciplinary Difficulties

Discontent within volunteer corps could find expression because of their club-like structure and the consequent difficulties in enforcing military discipline. Officers relied on their social influence to manage their corps, as they had few readily-enforceable penalties available as effective sanctions against indiscipline. Volunteers were not subject to the Mutiny Act unless they were on full-time paid military service. Only the permanent paid members of corps — the adjutant, sergeants, flugelmen, fifers, buglers, trumpeters and drummers — were liable to punishment under the Articles of War when the corps was not on service. Volunteers on permanent pay were subject to

⁷³Westminster City Library, K435, R[olls] L[iberty] Subscription, [n.d.]; Compare with: St.Clement Danes; B 1336, Church Ward; B 1337, Royal Ward; and with K401, Rolls Liberty — a loyalist petition solicited from door to door in 1792.

⁷⁴Westminster City Library, K 435, R[olls] L[iberty] Subscription, [n.d.]; E 1684 Liberty of the Rolls, Chancery Lane, Rate Assessment, 25 March 1803–25 March 1804.

the Mutiny Act, and so were not free to resign.⁷⁵ Only 114 corps had paid adjutants, and 51 had paid sergeants, in 1804.⁷⁶ Military punishment could not legally be inflicted in a volunteer corps. The Earl of Hardwicke believed that even if it could, the effect would be to cause disgust and produce more inconvenience than benefit.⁷⁷ Instead, nearly all corps enforced their regulations by threat of fines or expulsion, in the manner of a club. Each corps set its own, sometimes overtly egalitarian, regulations. In most cases the officers were subject to the same regulations as other members, but their fines were set at higher rates. The principal concern was for attendance and behaviour at exercises and musters. Absence, lateness, drunkenness, disobedience, swearing, laughing or talking on parade were fined at varying rates. Misbehaviour or dirty arms or uniforms occasionally were punished by not allowing the offending volunteer to attend the parade. Even the Commanding Officer of the Oxford Loyal Volunteers, Sir Digby Mackworth, paid fines for non-attendance.⁷⁸ The Light Horse Volunteers, conversely, made a point of not having fines; 'they trust to an *esprit de corps*, and point of honour, for attendance, which cannot be compelled when not on actual service'.⁷⁹ Such sanctions could be effective only in voluntary associations in which the members were sacrificing time and money to attend.

In matters of discipline, committees again had considerable powers over the corps and their officers. Fines and forfeits to ensure good behaviour were set and enforced by the committee. Issues of expulsion, though, generally were referred to the corps as a whole. A general meeting of the Loyal Leicester Volunteer Infantry was held to consider the case of eight members who had refused to attend a muster in 1800 when duty against food disturbances was anticipated. The eight were declared unworthy of remaining members

⁷⁵[Anonymous], *A Digest of the Whole Law Now in Force relating to Volunteer Corps in Great-Britain. By a Volunteer*, (London, 1803), p.7; HO 51/112, Newcastle under Lyme Volunteers Order Book, Regimental Court Martial, 15 November 1804; Shropshire Record Office, 81/323, Leeke Collection, Proceedings of the battalion court martial at Newport, Salop., 8 January 1805; HO 51/83, ff.226-227, Hawkesbury to Lord Bolton, 29 January 1805; f.269, Hawkesbury to Lord Bolton, 1 March 1805.

⁷⁶Philip J.Haythornthwaite, 'The Volunteer Force, 1803-04', p.201.

⁷⁷HO 50/331, Hardwicke to Wm.Wickham, 18 March 1799; HO 50/330, Roderick Gwynne to Lord Hawkesbury, Buckland, 5 June 1803.

⁷⁸Bodleian Library, MS Top.Oxon.e.241, Minutes of the Oxford Loyal Volunteers 1798-1801, pp.118, 120; HO 51/112, Newcastle under Lyme Volunteers Order Book, 2 October 1803.

⁷⁹*Standing Orders for The Light Horse Volunteers of London and Westminster*, (London, 1805), p.68.

by 'the unanimous Voice of the Corps' and were dismissed.⁸⁰ Complaints against the conduct of officers were in some corps dealt with by the commanding officer and in others by the committee. If an officer or private of the Oxford Loyal Volunteers considered the conduct of any officer harsh, ungentlemanlike or otherwise unbecoming, he could complain to the field officers, who were empowered to fine or reprimand the offending officer.⁸¹

Judgement on serious offences frequently was assigned to a majority vote of all members of the corps. Minor disciplinary matters tended to be dealt with by the non-commissioned officers, and fines enforced by the committee.⁸² Judgement on more serious offences was assigned to a majority vote of all members of the corps, or in some cases to a regimental court-martial composed of volunteer, but not regular, officers. A private in the Newcastle under Lyme Volunteers was tried by three lieutenants and an ensign for abusive language and refusal to obey orders. On the charges being proved, he was declared unworthy of serving with the rest of his townsmen and sentenced to be dismissed from the regiment with every mark of ignominy.⁸³

Social pressure was normally effective in securing conformity to corps' regulations. Financial penalties were in practice legally unenforceable until in 1803 an act provided for the enforcement of fines by distress on a defaulter's property.⁸⁴ Magistrates were not given the power of imprisonment or corporal punishment.⁸⁵ The lord lieutenant of Gloucestershire complained that as a result, there was no means to control the many volunteers who were day labourers, without distrainable property. Several of the 'Young Peasantry' had relied on their poverty to defy their officers and the

⁸⁰ *Leicester Journal*, No.2493, 12 September 1800, p.2 c.3, p.3 c.3-4.

⁸¹ Bodleian Library, MS Top.Oxon.e.241, Minutes of the Oxford Loyal Volunteers 1798-1801, pp.44-45.

⁸² HO 51/112, Newcastle under Lyme Volunteers Order Book, 2 October 1803; Gloucestershire Record Office, *Articles, Rules, and Regulations of the Tetbury Loyal Volunteers*, p.8.

⁸³ HO 51/112, Newcastle under Lyme Volunteers Order Book, 24 January 1804, 26 September 1804; Shropshire Record Office, 81/323, Leeke Collection, Proceedings of the Battalion Court Martial at Newport, Salop., 8 January 1805; See also *Peeps Into the Past being passages from the diary of Thomas Asline Ward*, Edited by Alexander B.Bell, pp.24-25.

⁸⁴ [Anonymous], *A Digest of the Whole Law Now in Force relating to Volunteer Corps in Great-Britain. By a Volunteer*, (London, 1803), pp.14-15; *Leicester Journal*, No.2655, Friday October 28, 1803, p.3 c.5.

⁸⁵ But see Devon Record Office, Fortescue MSS, 1262 M/L46, Articles of the different corps of volunteers, 17 May 1801.

magistrates, the Earl of Berkeley reported; they had caballed in alehouses, promising to stand by each other. Ironically, he considered these men the best of soldiers when kept under proper subjection.⁸⁶

In view of the voluntary nature of membership, it is significant that the strongest provisions were usually those made against resignation without the approval of the corps or its committee. Normally a large fine or some form of public humiliation was provided for. If a member of the Measham and Oakthorpe Association withdrew for reasons that the majority thought insufficient, he was to 'be deemed a *Coward* and voted to *Coventry*.'⁸⁷ If a member of the Oxford Loyal Volunteers wished to resign, he was required to obtain the agreement of the committee and officers. If refused, it was 'hoped that a sense of duty will secure his ready and chearful acquiescence in the decision'. If a member acting under the influence of an untoward refractory spirit was to withdraw in defiance of the decision, he was to be punished in what was considered a severe and exemplary manner: he would be proclaimed a deserter, and his name published as such in the *Oxford Journal* and in large posters throughout the city.⁸⁸

The selectivity of some corps made the expulsion of large numbers of men a practicable threat, as they could be replaced readily. The refusal of one of the three Helston corps to extend its services to the Western military district in 1799 was thought sufficiently serious for its commanding officer to expel all but four of the members. He advertised in the neighbourhood for volunteers and within four days enrolled 94 men.⁸⁹ Yet expulsion did not necessarily have the desired effect. In response to insubordination in one of the corps of the Ely Volunteers, Colonel Matthew Brackenbury thought 'it would be well if some mode of punishment by Fine could be adopted as I am inclined to think they will not consider their being broke as a misfortune.'⁹⁰ Disorderly

⁸⁶HO 50/106, [Earl of] Berkeley, Berk[eley] Castle, 15 January 1804.

⁸⁷Bodleian Library, Johnson Milit.8 Union Inn, Bowling Green, 6 June 1798, meeting of Measham & Oakthorpe Association, pp.1-2; Eighth Regiment of Loyal London Volunteers, 12 September 1803, p.1; see also Hertfordshire Record Office, Hitchin Loyal Volunteers, Box I, Engagement, and Articles entered into By the Corps of Hitchin Volunteers, upon their enrolment, August 31, 1803.

⁸⁸Bodleian Library, MS Top.Oxon.e.241, Minutes of the Oxford Loyal Volunteers 1798-1801, pp.40-41; see also Gloucestershire Record Office, D566 Z13, *Rules and Regulations to be observed by The Royal Bristol Volunteer Association*, (Bristol, 1803), p.7; Roger Wells, '“Amidst these shaking times”; Britain's avoidance of revolution revisited', p.26.

⁸⁹HO 50/45, Isaac Head to Henry Dundas, Helston, 1 March 1799.

⁹⁰HO 50/97, M.Brackenbury to B.Keene, 12 April 1804, quoted in John Cookson, 'Patriotism and Social Structure: the Ely Volunteers, 1798-1808', p.18 n.38.

behaviour and the refusal to pay fines were also sometimes punished by expulsion. The attendant publicity appears to have been effective, for when a private of the Oxford Loyal Volunteers was expelled in 1800 for refusing to appear before the corps and apologise for insulting the Adjutant, it was considered necessary for a serjeant's guard to attend the posting of the bills throughout the city.⁹¹ A large crowd was attracted by the expulsion of a private of the Gainsborough Volunteer Infantry for violating the corps' rules and resisting his duty. He was stripped of his clothes and burned in effigy in the market place.⁹² One member of the Cotswold Yeomanry was burned in effigy in the market place at Stow on the Wold, and had his jacket turned inside out while his former comrades danced round him to the tune of the 'Rogue's March' and the church bells ringing a muffled peal.⁹³

Dismissal and humiliation was, however, in practice seen to be an insufficient punishment for serious misconduct. Two members of the Tavistock corps who had acted improperly and made unspecified improper expressions when the corps disobeyed orders to act against a riot in 1801 could not be punished except by disgrace. Consequently, they were stripped of their coats, waistcoats, helmets and accoutrements, and were marched through the ranks as an example to the others.⁹⁴ Sometimes an alternative means of pressure was available to exact conformity. When a publican, sergeant in a Hampshire corps, refused to go on duty and objected to the volunteers using his meadow for target practice, the commanding officer suggested indirect pressure might be put on him when he applied for renewal of his licence from the magistrates.⁹⁵

In general, however, volunteer corps sought to avoid public scandal if it was possible. When an officer of the Eighth Regiment of the Loyal London Volunteers was shot at on parade, the commanding officer responded by sending a printed letter to each member of the corps. Diplomatically, he expressed confidence that the gentleman who unintentionally had fired his musket would be anxious to exonerate the rest of the corps by making a private acknowledgement, thereby avoiding the disgrace and inconvenience

⁹¹Bodleian Library, MS Top.Oxon.e.241, Minutes of the Oxford Loyal Volunteers 1798-1801, pp.109-112, 114-116.

⁹²*Leicester Journal*, No.2548, Friday October 2, 1801, p.3 c.4.

⁹³Gloucestershire Record Office, MI 15, H.B., 'The Cotswold Volunteer Yeomanry, 1797-1802', *Wilts and Gloucestershire Standard*, 28 September 1957.

⁹⁴HO 50/89, W.Bray to Henry Dundas, Tavistock, 14 March 1801.

⁹⁵Hampshire Record Office, 11 M 49/236, ff.162-163, J.Missing to Bolton, Titchfield, 20 March 1804; f.185, J.Missing to Lord Bolton, Titchfield, 4 April 1804.

of a public inquiry.⁹⁶ Discretion was desirable when attempting to identify the disaffected within a corps. After an incident in which several men of the Musselburgh volunteers threw down their arms when on parade, those involved were expelled. The officers were warned to watch the rising spirit of mutiny among the men, and were given instructions for 'by Degrees weeding out the Democrats'.⁹⁷

The lords lieutenants tended to view the volunteers as a body like the militia, to be kept under military control. Volunteers themselves emphasised the contractual and conditional nature of their service. Dismissal from a corps rendered a volunteer liable to service in the militia, effective immediately if he had been ballotted while a member of a volunteer corps. A volunteer also lost his entitlement to exemption from the hair powder tax, and a yeoman exemption from the horse tax in addition.⁹⁸ When the improper conduct of the officers of the West Meon volunteer company led to its disbandment in 1804, the Home Secretary directed that the names of the men be sent to the deputy lieutenants as subject to the militia and Army of Reserve ballots. If a new company was not formed, the parish was to be directed to turn out its quota of men required under the Levy en Masse Act.⁹⁹ Even so, one officer elsewhere in Hampshire found expulsion an insufficient punishment for men with large families, as they were exempt from both the militia and Army of Reserve.¹⁰⁰

Volunteers' freedom to resign, even in order to join other military bodies, was repeatedly questioned. One such legal challenge prompted the publication in January 1804 of Thomas Erskine's opinion that legislative changes since the formation of volunteer corps had not restricted their members' right to resign. He emphatically affirmed that the right applied to the ordinary classes of people, who he believed ought to be lifted up to the condition and feelings of their superiors by a liberal and honourable trust.¹⁰¹ In the

⁹⁶National Army Museum, 8108-15-11, Eighth Regiment of Loyal London Volunteers, 5 November 1803.

⁹⁷Scottish Record Office, GD 224/687/2, And.Wauchope [to Duke of Buccleuch], Niddrie, 15 July 1798.

⁹⁸Cecil Sebag-Montefiore, *A History of the Volunteer Forces*, p.325.

⁹⁹HO 51/79, ff.483-484, Hawkesbury to Lord Bolton, 4 June 1804.

¹⁰⁰Hampshire Record Office, 11 M 49/236, p.127, Peter Serle to Lord Bolton, 17 February [1804].

¹⁰¹[Thomas Erskine], *The Opinion of The Hon. Thomas Erskine, on the Volunteer Acts; more especially on the right of members of volunteer corps to resign, after having been regularly entered on the muster-roll*, (London, 1804), pp.5-6; *Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol.VI pp.858-859; the case was *Rex v.Dowley*, King's Bench; see also HO 51/76,

West Riding the following month, Erskine's arguments were said to have been read with great avidity by the common people, and had tended greatly to unhinge the minds of volunteers, who appear until then to have been unaware of their right to resign.¹⁰² Volunteers were required to provide good reasons for resignation, usually ill health or long-term absence from the locality, but it is nonetheless remarkable how many volunteers did resign. Attractions could be held out against large-scale resignations, as in the case of the Belper Volunteers in Derbyshire, paid a total of eight guineas in March 1804 'for drink on the Inspection Day, on being told they had the power to withdraw, but not one man would resign.'¹⁰³

Volunteer officers and the county lieutenancies were sensitive to signs of disaffection among volunteers because of the potential consequences of unreliable armed men facing invasion or insurrection. However, evidence of insurrectionary intent on the part of volunteers was very rare. The commanding officer of the Eling and Millbrook Volunteers in Hampshire reported that his drum major was French, but had seemed trustworthy. Recently, however, he had declared that if a French invasion proved successful, he would join his countrymen and have his share of the plunder of the Bank of England.¹⁰⁴ Most instances of disaffection were much less lurid, and were indications of internal dissent rather than revolutionary intent. Volunteers' unwillingness to submit to the practices of military subordination and readiness to remonstrate against what they believed to be unfair treatment caused some officers to conclude that their corps were disaffected or even mutinous. The non-commissioned officers and men of the Fishguard and Newport Volunteers thought that their commanding officer's attempts to encourage them to join the Cambrian Rangers in 1799 had forfeited him their confidence and esteem. They petitioned another local gentleman to take over the command, and remonstrated against their officers to the Home Secretary. The Lieutenant Colonel thought the charges unfounded and malicious, the result of an officer attempting to excite a mutiny in the hopes of succeeding to the command.¹⁰⁵ The captain commanding the Northallerton Volunteers

J.Beckett to Lord Stanley, 20 July 1808.

¹⁰²HO 50/123, B.Frank, Campsall, 3 February 1804.

¹⁰³Rev.J.Charles Cox, *Three Centuries of Derbyshire Annals, as illustrated by the Records of the Quarter Sessions of the County of Derby, from Queen Elizabeth to Queen Victoria*, (London, 1890), Vol.I, p.205.

¹⁰⁴Hampshire Record Office, 11 M 49/236, p.126, Peter Serle to Lord Bolton, 17 February [1804].

¹⁰⁵HO 50/45, Sgt.Edward Rogers, Corpl.William Vaughan, David Edward, Thos.Vaughan, Jas.James, Thos Wilcox, David James, and David Davids (for the whole

thought that the volunteers' belief in their power to change their commanding officers was not dissimilar to a desire to change the government. Such an alarming tendency, he believed, would lead to perpetual contention.¹⁰⁶

Nor was dissension within corps always between officers and men; disagreements between the officers themselves sometimes were made public. The lack of a higher authority, other than the lord lieutenant or Home Secretary, to appeal to, the small size of many corps and their close links with local communities meant that disagreements between officers were sometimes difficult to contain within the corps. Several allegations were made in 1798 that the commanding officer of the Mousehole Volunteers had attempted to force the resignation of his lieutenant by insults and threats of violence.¹⁰⁷ Such incidents were very public; the commander of the Stockport Volunteers complained of the abusive behaviour of one of the captains while on parade, which continued until they were surrounded by a crowd of bystanders.¹⁰⁸ Unlike most other military bodies, volunteer officers generally had to deal with each other frequently in non-military capacities. Edward Otto Ives, a captain in the Titchfield and Fareham corps, offered his resignation because he was no longer on speaking terms with the commanding officer due to a disagreement on family matters unconnected with volunteering.¹⁰⁹ The resignation of a commanding officer frequently led to the disbandment of the entire corps.¹¹⁰

The egalitarian and elective aspects of corps made officers readier to consult and co-operate with the private men than was sometimes considered best for discipline. Volunteers needed managing rather than commanding, it usually being felt prudent to keep them in good humour instead of enforcing strict discipline. Maintaining pay at two shillings a week when the government wished to halve it was thought by the lord lieutenant of Midlothian to be a trifling favour without which there was a risk of raising discontent and ill humour among the volunteers.¹¹¹ Officers frequently addressed

corps) to Henry Dundas, Fishguard, 18 April 1799; Wm. Bowen to Henry Dundas, Llwyn-gwan, 24 May 1799.

¹⁰⁶HO 50/46, Sam. Peat to Henry Dundas, 27 August 1799.

¹⁰⁷HO 50/331, [Earl of] Mt. Edgcumbe to [Duke of] Portland, 4 August 1798.

¹⁰⁸HO 50/331, Holland Watson to Earl of Stamford and Warrington, Stockport, 3 August 1798.

¹⁰⁹Hampshire Record Office, 11 M 49/236, p.145 Edwd. Otto Ives to Lord Bolton, Titchfield, 15 February 1804.

¹¹⁰HO 42/44, ff.266-267, John E. Swinburne to Duke of Portland, Capheaton, 2 July 1798.

¹¹¹Scottish Record Office, GD 51/905/2, Buccleuch to Duke of Portland, Dalkeith House,

their corps, exhorting and admonishing them, and remonstrating with them when unco-operative. Discontent was the reported result of a lieutenant in the Sheffield Volunteers punishing his company indiscriminantly when some members were talking on parade. The commanding officer addressed the men, telling them it was extremely improper to have disobeyed the lieutenant. The Colonel later called him aside and advised him that he would be more esteemed by the company if he apologised for confounding the innocent with the guilty, and gave a pint of ale to each; the lieutenant instead gave each man a guinea and apologised.¹¹²

Volunteer commanders were on occasion readier to consult and exhort their subordinate officers and the private men than to command obedience and subordination. One company of the Gosport and Alverstoke Volunteers refused to march with the rest of their battalion to an exercise on the king's birthday in 1805 without their colours. Although the refusal to march was contrary to orders, the commanding officer consulted the commanders of companies; they decided the company should march. Captain Cole consulted his recalcitrant company, which instead marched to his house, collected its colours, and attended the exercise late as a detached company; they were hooted and hissed, and this led to considerable enmity between the companies. Cole's willingness to consult his company was believed to be explained partly by his being of similar social standing to the men, as a magistrate's clerk. Although court-martial procedures could have been used, they were not. Even the Home Office made the dismissal of the disobedient company conditional, directing that Captain Cole and his company be dismissed unless there was a change in circumstances. The quelling of internal dissension appears to have had priority over the enforcement of military discipline.¹¹³

Dissent within volunteer corps normally was dealt with by consultation and attempts to relieve grievances. If this was unsuccessful, volunteers were given the opportunity to resign; dismissal was usually the final resort. Discontent and irregular behaviour on parade by the Finchdean Volunteers in 1800 was caused by their belief that the volunteer system was responsible for high prices of provisions. The commanding officer attempted to convince the corps that this was false; he then called the roll to give an opportu-

4 July 1798, (copy).

¹¹² *Peeps Into the Past being passages from the diary of Thomas Asline Ward*, Edited by Alexander B. Bell, pp.82-83.

¹¹³ HO 50/459, Thos. Whitcombe to Major March, Gosport, 5 June 1805; Report of the Conduct of the Gosport and Alverstoke Battalion of Volunteer Infantry, 4 June 1805; Hawkesbury to Lord Bolton, 24 June 1805.

nity for discontented men to resign by remaining silent. Only the principal spokesman hesitated, so he was disarmed and dismissed.¹¹⁴

Yet in most cases of internal dissension, there was no suggestion that the volunteers were politically disaffected. Indiscipline and insubordination were treated as military, not political, problems. In 1804 the disbandment of the Melton Mowbray volunteer company was considered because the officers did not have the authority to enforce obedience. The privates and non-commissioned officers were reported to have no confidence in their officers, and held them in contempt. Despite a total lack of discipline and subordination, there was considered to be no grounds for imputing disloyalty to the members or any lack of zeal for the defence of the country.¹¹⁵

Conclusions

William Cobbett repeatedly criticised the volunteer system for arming potentially untrustworthy men who were not under military discipline or law, and who could not be constrained to remain in their corps. They were 'seminaries of indiscipline, having in their nature just enough of the military to give a professional turn to the insubordination of common life.'¹¹⁶ Volunteer organisation emphasised the conditional nature of service; corps set their own, often consciously egalitarian, regulations and terms of service, and members were free to resign. The club-like structure made corps prone to internal dissension. In practice, many of Cobbett's fears appear to have been confirmed. Volunteers' self-regulation was sometimes inadequate to deal with disobedience or disputes. Nor could corps always be relied upon to suppress disturbances. Many volunteers, particularly in the south-west, were involved in riots themselves. Yet successive governments remained willing to sanction the existence and extension of the volunteer system, with only minor reform. Volunteer unreliability cannot be attributed solely to the nature of the institution, since under similar circumstances the majority of volunteers were ready to assist magistrates against civil disturbances. It seems to have been the nature of those disturbances that largely determined the volunteers' response.

Volunteer organisation was highly unusual for a military body, cloaking an egalitarian and club-like constitution in the forms of regular military practice. Considerable autonomy in activity and variety in organisation were

¹¹⁴HO 50/48, f.103, H.Hood to Henry Dundas, Catherington, 23 September 1800.

¹¹⁵HO 50/111, [Anonymous], Downing Street, 12 June 1804.

¹¹⁶*Cobbett's Political Register*, Vol.IV, col.287.

incorporated within what was recognisably a regular 'system'. Volunteer autonomy was in part a result of the ministry's recognition that in order to gain substantial middle class support for the war effort, considerable freedom needed to be allowed in the forms of military organisation permitted. The way in which volunteers bargained with the government is shown by the contractual aspects of their terms of service. Any change to those terms without mutual consent was likely to be interpreted as a breach of good faith and the volunteers were liable to resign.

Freedom of resignation was only one aspect of a system that was often consciously egalitarian. Power was divided between elected committees and officers who were also, at least initially, elected. Discipline and questions of admission and expulsion were frequently dealt with by ballot. Local subscriptions offered corps the possibility of relative financial independence without reference to central authority. Yet the practical result was far from Cobbett's feared 'system of *military democracy*.'¹¹⁷ Volunteers rarely used their facilities for deliberation or pressure on political matters. Much of the reason can be ascribed to the careful selection of membership. Volunteer corps were seen by Cobbett as a dangerous innovation, but it remains to be shown whether they were more dangerous to internal order or to the French.

¹¹⁷ Cobbett's *Political Register*, Vol.V col.158.

Chapter Seven: 'The Friends of Order': Invasion, Riots and Internal Policing

The response of volunteers to invasion and internal disorder is central to the argument that they constituted a 'force of order'. Though the primary objective of volunteer corps was defence against an invasion, in practice they were unlikely to see active service except against rioters. The varied responses of individual corps make it possible to portray the volunteers both as supporters of, and a challenge to, the existing social and political order.

The general readiness of volunteers to support the magistracy in the preservation of public order is qualified by several instances of their unwillingness to act against disorder and occasional involvement in riots themselves. Such instances of volunteer unreliability provide the basis for an assessment of allegations of the danger of their allegedly 'democratic' organisation and plebeian membership.

This chapter will consider the occasions on which volunteer corps acted in their military capacity in order to judge whether they can be characterised as reliable defenders against internal and external threats. Volunteers' aims were primarily military rather than political, to resist invasion and maintain civil order. Though in general corps sought to avoid partisan allegiances, their commitment to internal peace-keeping meant that the movement operated in a loyalist atmosphere. Volunteers' willingness to face an invasion was seldom questioned, but their commitment to public order was much more equivocal. Volunteers' activities against civil disorder and against invasion will be dealt with separately. First, instances of volunteers' involvement in riots or refusal to suppress disorder will be considered. Many volunteers, particularly during food rioting in 1795 and 1800–1801, refused to act, or avoided involvement in action, against rioters. Many resigned, and a few were involved in rioting themselves. Some corps objected to being used to protect and support what they believed to be the oppressive practices of farmers and grain dealers. It appears that many volunteers drew a clear distinction between policing duties, to which they did not believe they were committed, and anti-invasion duties, which they believed they were. This, rather than 'mutiny' or disaffection, explains the reluctance of some corps to act as a force of civil order.

This conclusion is then contrasted with the general reliability and willingness of volunteers to act against civil disorder. The circumstances in which they were employed, and the tactics they adopted, are considered.

When regular forces were available, the volunteers were sometimes employed in preference and sometimes not, depending on whether the aggravation of the situation was feared or the reliability of the volunteers doubted. It is concluded that despite the equivocal attitude of volunteers towards policing duties, magistrates in general were more willing to use their assistance than do without it.

No such equivocation is evident in the other aspect of the volunteers' military role, their response to invasion. The process by which corps founded for local defence were drawn into a national defensive strategy is explored. The primacy of defence against invasion in volunteers' plans is clearly apparent. Despite the widely publicised plans to employ the volunteers in evacuating the coasts, they continued to train for an encounter with an invading army, paying little attention to the problems of an evacuation.

Although they were fundamentally local organisations, volunteer corps combined local with national objectives. Volunteers were intended to keep the peace and to oppose invasion; the first they performed only occasionally and unreliably, and the second never took place. Their peace-keeping and anti-invasion roles were complementary rather than contradictory. The most common form of engagement entered into was to oppose both internal and external enemies, to repel invasion and quell insurrection, and to preserve internal tranquillity. It is possible to interpret the volunteers as an anti-revolutionary movement, but it was never solely or even principally one. The volunteers' opposition to French principles was inextricably bound with its anti-invasion role. Though subsidiary, the internal peace-keeping role should not be dismissed as merely one that helped give the volunteers an initial identity and purpose until they began to be integrated with national defence plans from 1798 onwards.¹ Volunteers were not always willing to perform police duties, and proved disturbingly unreliable in 1800 and 1801.² Civil authorities were reluctant to employ volunteers as a matter of course, but nevertheless continued selectively to use tried corps until the end of the war, and in some cases beyond.

The maintenance of internal order was an integral part of the planning for the employment of volunteers during an invasion. The intention of most of the changes made to volunteer organisation by succeeding governments was to make it an effective part of the armed forces and integral with preparations

¹John Cookson, 'The English Volunteer Movement of the French Wars, 1793-1815: Some Contexts', pp.7-8.

²Roger Wells, *Wretched Faces: Famine in Wartime England 1793-1801*, pp.271-273.

for national and internal defence. The first corps were raised essentially for local defence and to relieve regular forces of local duties.³ Most corps were willing to waive conditions of purely local service in 1798 in order to be incorporated in a national strategy against invasion. The rapid formation of several hundred strictly parochial armed associations, on very limited terms of service and without rights to official allowances, in 1798 acknowledged that the volunteers' military purpose had become a national one.

When the volunteer force was revived in 1803, it effectively was reconstituted by the conditions required under the regulations of the successive 'June' and 'August Allowances', that corps be willing to serve to the limits first of their military district, and under the latter, anywhere within Great Britain. The regulations of 1803 and 1804 changed the nature of the movement from one comprising relatively autonomous and self-supporting corps to a largely government-funded one under close official control and army inspection, committed to regular training and liable to act beyond their own districts. Volunteers remained free to resign and were not under army control and military discipline unless called on to permanent duty. Yet they were invited periodically to assemble for several weeks' permanent duty under regular military command, and were liable to inspection by Inspecting Field Officers seconded from the army. Regular army control was finally asserted in 1807 by the thorough reorganisation of the auxiliary forces to create 'a more efficient establishment'. The volunteers were largely supplanted by the Local Militia, raised by ballot and subordinate to military authority. Volunteers accepted their displacement with relatively little complaint; the organisation had outlived its usefulness, was generally considered inefficient, and was unable to meet the requirements made of it.⁴

The formation of volunteer corps was closely related to the need for the maintenance of local order. Many were formed in response to local threats of disorder rather than the general threat of French invasion. The Kettering and Rothwell Associations were recommended to the lord lieutenant of Northamptonshire entirely in terms of their usefulness against disturbances. A food riot in Kettering in 1795 pointed to the need for a volunteer military presence, while it was feared that an invasion would encourage an insurrection by the poor and escape attempts by French prisoners held in the district.⁵ Official policy initially encouraged volunteers to see their duties

³PRO 30/3/2, Herries to Sidmouth, 26 June 1815.

⁴John Cookson, 'The English Volunteer Movement of the French Wars, 1793-1815: Some Contexts', pp.7-8, 22, 24-27.

⁵HO 50/42, [Doctor] James Curry to Earl of Northampton, Kettering, 25 May 1798.

as primarily local. Commanding officers of volunteers and yeomanry were issued with copies of a proclamation in June 1797, specially directing them to assist civil magistrates in apprehending and securing persons concerned in treasonable and rebellious proceedings.⁶ Not surprisingly, when Henry Hunt looked back on his membership of the Wiltshire Yeomanry with a radical perspective in his memoirs written from prison in the early 1820s, he claimed to have joined the Everly troop in order to fight the expected invasion, but instead found that the yeomanry saw its purpose as conservative and domestic.⁷

Part One: The Aims of Volunteering

Since the volunteers' interpretation of the purposes of their force was occasionally to clash with what the government and local administration believed the force was for, it is important to identify the aims declared by the corps. The principal source is provided by the declarations and regulations formulated by most corps on their foundation, which sometimes define the volunteers' position with regard to political issues, the regular forces, and their civil status. In general, volunteers emphasised military rather than political objectives, although a repressive, anti-revolutionary tone was common.

The essential question is whether a commitment to suppress internal disorder constituted a loyalist and anti-radical measure. It will be argued here that it was not primarily designed to be so, though in effect it served to reinforce the repressive climate against political reform. In contrast to the Reevesite loyalist associations, the volunteers in general did not declare their opposition to constitutional reform or their intention of pursuing or prosecuting seditious activities. On the contrary, volunteers were in most instances studiously non-political, in their public declarations at least. Their commitment to maintain internal order was confined to the tumults and the insurrection that, it was feared, would accompany an invasion. Though in practice much of the disorder metropolitan corps in particular turned out to face was connected with radical political societies, there was disagreement among volunteers whether it was a suitable role for such a force. Whether the employment of the volunteers as a political repressive force was intended by the ministry is more difficult to establish. The intimidatory aspect of volunteer corps was credited by some contemporaries with having kept the disaffected inactive. However, it appears that in practice the authorities used

⁶HO 50/55, [draft] circular to Lords Lieutenant, April 1797.

⁷John Belchem, *'Orator' Hunt*, p.20.

the volunteers to maintain civil order irrespective of the nature of the threat; political attacks were conducted through legislation and the magistracy, and by countenancing individual loyalist activity, not by employing unwieldy military corps of uncertain reliability.

Initial public meetings of subscribers and volunteers settled the terms on which service was to be offered to the government, and these normally were set out in a published list of resolutions. Most, like the Bloxham and Banbury volunteer light horse, declared their intention of acting under the direction of the civil power in defence of the constitution, for the protection of person and property, the maintenance of quiet and good order, and for the support of justice.⁸ Eligibility for membership was set out, with regulations governing the selection of officers and the enforcement of discipline.⁹ Generally, volunteer declarations included a statement of the geographical limits of service and under what circumstances the corps undertook to act, which were usually in case of invasion or insurrection. Many corps stated specifically that they were not to be called on to service, subjected to military discipline or marched beyond their predetermined limits of service unless all members consented.¹⁰ Service was viewed in contractual terms, and volunteers were often wary of the government's intentions. Some were concerned that they might be forced to act under regular military command, so specified that they were not to be transferred to any other corps nor to serve under officers without their consent.

There was remarkably little variation in the regulations of the various corps. Resolutions tended to be formulaic because the Home Office occasionally issued suggestions for regulations and tended to reject or force the amendment of unusual provisions, while corps tended to follow the example of successful proposals. For example, the lord lieutenant of Norfolk recommended in 1798 that new offers of service should correspond with the terms of the existing yeomanry corps as much as possible, in order to make the force as a whole more effectual.¹¹ Yet at King's Lynn in 1794, despite the

⁸HO 50/342, Meeting of Gentlemen and Yeomanry, Banbury, 28 July 1798.

⁹See for example Norfolk Record Office, MS 5363, Townshend MSS, Old Buckenham resolutions, 23 April 1798; Gloucestershire Record Office, D 1571/X17, Wiltshire Cavalry Articles of Enrolment of the volunteer troop of cavalry in the district of Malmesbury, 20 September 1794; Buckinghamshire Record Office, L/P 10 Buckinghamshire Armed Yeomanry Committee Book.

¹⁰Norfolk Record Office, Townshend Correspondence, Resolutions for raising a Volunteer Corps in the Hundred of Diss, [n.d.]; MS 5363, Loyal Mancroft Volunteers, 24 April 1798.

¹¹Norfolk Record Office, MS 5363 Townshend Correspondence, unsigned draft letter, 1 June 1798.

intention to conform to official plans, objections were still raised to some of the conditions on which an offer of an infantry corps was made. These provided for submitting orders for marching out of the town to the consideration of the corps' committee for managing the subscription. This condition implies some wariness about the potential misuse of the force, and it was dropped when the King expressed his objection. Pitt suggested that the wording of the offer be changed so that the corps could be called out before an invading force had actually landed.¹²

The aims of volunteer and yeomanry corps expressed in their public declarations combined military, political and social aspects. Emphasis was placed on defence against invasion, and the maintenance of internal order. The volunteers of Wimbledon engaged 'to serve for the General defence of the Realm in Case of Invasion, to Assist the Civil power on Occasion of Invasion or Civil Commotion & for no other purpose whatsoever'.¹³ However, most declarations carried clear connotations of an intention to defend the existing political order against reformers. The declaration of the Mortlake Association was typical, declaring 'firm and hearty attachment' to King and constitution, associating to protect them 'against any foreign Invasion, or internal Tumult'.¹⁴ Internal disorder was widely interpreted as including both insurrectionary activity in response to an invasion and the seditious and treasonable practices of the republican and democratic societies.¹⁵

Since in the early 1790s even professedly non-political societies had felt obliged to declare their constitutional principles, it might be concluded that volunteer corps were placed in a similar position.¹⁶ The great majority of volunteer declarations are instead remarkable for the relative absence of political or constitutional statements, even though support for the existing constitution was strongly implied. The Dumfries Cavalry, unusually, expressed their belief that only by the preservation of the laws, religion and constitution could the blessings of the King's auspicious government be

¹²Norfolk Record Office, MS2658 Townshend Correspondence, printed paper: adjourned meeting of the Mayor and Inhabitants of King's Lynn, 24 April 1794; Copy of Mr. Pitt's answer to Lord T[ownshend] on the Mayor of Lynn's letter, 7 April 1794.

¹³Surrey Record Office, PS/20/7, Wimbledon parish records, John Castle, Clerk to the Committee, to Lord Onslow, Wimbledon, 27 August 1803.

¹⁴Surrey Record Office, 2397/9/1, Mortlake Association Committee minutes, p.8, 12 August 1803.

¹⁵HO 50/41, Meeting to form an association of respectable inhabitants, Oxford, 11 April 1798.

¹⁶British Library, Add.MS 16,931, Reeves MSS, f.13, 'Socials', Ship Tavern, Long Lane, Bermondsey, 13 December 1792, (printed notice).

secured.¹⁷

Retrospectively, the object of the volunteer movement in the 1790s was presented as in part to control the spirit of disaffection by 'the terror of its aspect'.¹⁸ Henry Dundas believed the protection of the form and substance of the constitution from combinations formed to disturb them was dependent on the maintenance of yeomanry corps.¹⁹ Volunteers were credited with the inculcation of loyalty and with the countering of dangerous political philosophies. Volunteers in Midlothian were seen to be 'hearty in the Cause of Government', willing to keep the peace of the county, and ready to oppose the foreign enemy. According to the lord lieutenant, they had become objects of great jealousy 'to Jacobins and wild people'.²⁰

Most public defence meetings published general patriotic and nationalist declarations to accompany their plans for raising and organising volunteer corps. The rhetoric of resolutions to form corps repeatedly stressed the need for all men capable of bearing arms to assist in the country's defence, although in practice volunteer corps were normally selective. The French were considered an unprincipled, rapacious and inveterate enemy, and by 1798 these characteristics frequently were attributed to Bonaparte personally. An undated draft declaration of the Liberty of the Rolls in London described him as a desperate and implacable foreign despot willing to sacrifice his own miserable existence and that of his mercenary banditti in an attempt to invade.²¹ The St. George's, Hanover Square declaration of 1803 was contemptuous of the threat, but considered supineness and overconfidence in military security might expose the country to the temporary mischief of an invasion. Every inhabitant capable of bearing arms should volunteer in order to strengthen the hands of government and enable it to free regular forces for essential services.²² Volunteers undertook to defend the kingdom and its constitution, religion and laws from attacks which could

¹⁷HO 50/52, Earl of Dalkeith, 14 November 1801, (enclosure).

¹⁸National Army Museum, 7805-72, Ealing and Brentford Volunteers, [Rev. Robert James Carr], (sermon), [n.d., 1803].

¹⁹Scottish Record Office, GD 51/887/1, Henry Dundas to Duke of Buccleuch, Wimbeldon, 10 June 1797, (copy).

²⁰Scottish Record Office, GD 51/905/2, Buccleuch to Duke of Portland, Dalkeith House, 4 July 1798, (copy).

²¹Westminster City Library, K435, Rolls Liberty Dr[aft] Declaration; See also for example National Army Museum, 7805-72, f.35, Ealing and Brentford Volunteers (printed poster), Ealing, 2 August 1803.

²²Westminster City Library, C1102, St George's Hanover Square, meeting of inhabitants, 11 July 1798.

include from domestic as well as foreign enemies. A Birmingham meeting in August 1803 declared its intention to fight for the constitution and system of society, and to preserve the world from the yoke of military despotism.²³ Sheridan's widely distributed *Address to the People* contrasted the French, fighting for power, plunder and extended rule under a hated adventurer, with Britons defending their country, altars and homes, while serving a beloved monarch.²⁴

Volunteers, presenting the purpose of their associations, emphasised military rather than political objectives. Defence of the country against foreign invasion and domestic insurrection was only rarely accompanied by the overt intention to defend the constitution against French political principles. The Loyal Hemel Hempstead Volunteers declared they would do their utmost to detect all traitors and traitorous conspiracies, but made no open statement of political intent.²⁵ Yet virtually no corps appears to have adopted the techniques the loyalist societies had used against the reform societies: prosecution, pamphleteering and intimidation. The Hitchin Loyal Volunteers were unusual in offering a reward of £50 in addition to the £50 offered by the other inhabitants for information regarding an inflammatory handbill posted in the market place in 1800.²⁶ Most corps went no further than offering to suppress unlawful disturbances. The volunteers may not have needed to adopt the techniques of the loyalist societies because they achieved the desired effect by their existence alone. In Scotland by 1797, the plan of the volunteer corps and the statutes against treason together were believed to have crushed anarchy and rendered the disaffected inactive.²⁷

The government made clear that the defensive and policing roles of the volunteer force were to be treated as two quite distinct objects.²⁸ On first proposing the armed associations in 1798, Dundas suggested that their pres-

²³Charles J.Hart, *The History of the 1st Volunteer Battalion The Royal Warwickshire Regiment And Its Predecessors*, p.57; Westminster City Library, K435, Liberty of the Rolls; B1472 St.Clement Danes, 28 July 1803.

²⁴Westminster City Library, B1472/3 St.Clement Danes, Sheridan's *Address to the People*, Price 1d or 9d per dozen; reprinted in Cecil Sebag-Montefiore, *A History of the Volunteer Forces*, p.247.

²⁵HO 50/73, C.J.Tower to Marquis of Salisbury, 8 August 1803.

²⁶Hertfordshire Record Office, Hitchin Loyal Volunteers, Box I, Portland, Whitehall, 25 February 1800, (copy).

²⁷National Library of Scotland, MS 22, Melville Papers, Secretary's Minute Book, p.36, Captain Alexander MacDonald [to Henry Dundas], Moidant, 22 July 1797.

²⁸Worcestershire County Record Office, BA 2868/4 705:73, Henry Dundas to Coventry, 5 March 1798, (circular).

ence in populous towns in periods of emergency, when regular forces were needed elsewhere, might be useful to relieve them in the preservation of internal tranquillity and the maintenance of a proper police.²⁹ The Old Buckenham Loyal Volunteers resolved to assemble if any apparently hostile assembly appeared within nine miles of the town.³⁰ The policing role had formed part of the early plans of the committee organising internal defence in Hampshire in 1794. An apparently non-military country-wide Association for assisting the Civil Power was suggested for the purpose of suppressing seditious tumults and dispersing unlawful assemblies, at the call of the civil magistrates.³¹ From the beginning, the volunteers were not actively a political movement, let alone the loyalist associations in arms. However, all carried to a greater or lesser extent some political connotations, and these were mostly loyalist.

Part Two: Volunteers and Rioting

Although sometimes accused of being unprepared or unsuitable, volunteers were not believed to be unwilling to face an invasion. Their readiness to suppress internal disorder was much more questionable, and in the instances of volunteers involved in rioting themselves, alarming. Volunteers' response to riots is a vital aspect of any assessment of their effectiveness, since the corps were formed with the aim of keeping the peace as well as that of resisting invasion. The widespread formation of volunteer corps and armed associations 'equipped the state with an unprecedented, tailor-made opponent of riot in almost every locality.' Frequent recourse to military force by local authorities during food disturbances from 1794 to 1796 encouraged dependence on the regular and volunteer forces as 'the most efficacious repressive agency.' However, confidence in the volunteers' policing capacity was partly undermined by incidents in which they were unreliable, but was allegedly destroyed by the desertion and involvement of urban infantry corps in riots in 1795–1796 and 1800–1801.³² Refusal to act against rioters was considered one of the most serious offences among volunteers. While members of

²⁹ Worcester County Record Office, BA 2868/4 705:73, Henry Dundas to Coventry, 6 April 1798, (printed circular).

³⁰ Norfolk Record Office, MS 5363, Townshend MSS, Old Buckenham resolutions, 23 April 1798.

³¹ Hampshire Record Office, 65 M 85/1, 11 June 1794.

³² Roger Wells, *Wretched Faces: Famine in Wartime England 1793–1801*, pp.254, 265, 268; Roger Wells, '“Amidst these shaking times”; Britain's avoidance of revolution revisited', pp.24–26.

the Malmesbury troop of Wiltshire Yeomanry Cavalry were liable to a fine of 10/6 for failing to attend training and exercise, the penalty for not attending when called upon to suppress riots and tumults was £20, and £50 for officers.³⁴ Widespread reluctance to act against riots was compounded by large scale resignations from volunteer corps. The ministry was largely unaware of the degree of disaffection among volunteers, as officers sought to conceal the extent of insubordination. In both the south-west and the industrial regions of the north of England in 1800 and 1801 volunteers resigned or were implicated in rioting.

It has been claimed that the northern urban volunteer establishment defected, but the evidence scarcely supports such a drastic conclusion.³⁵ In June 1800 one of the Sheffield corps disbanded, disingenuously claiming that no symptoms of riot were then apparent. The following September, many volunteers left town to avoid being called on to deal with food disturbances, and to avoid the 'Great inveteracy of the people'. In London, even the Light Horse Volunteers 'virtually collapsed as an effective force', large numbers resigning or failing to appear on duty. Yet absenteeism must be distinguished from disaffection. Low attendances were general from 1800 onwards, and appear to bear little relationship to the incidence of rioting.³⁶ To characterise the period as one of 'a crisis of control with the Volunteer movement' is to exaggerate the significance of their part in the riots of 1800 and 1801 in the country as a whole.³⁷ Volunteers could not be commanded to act against riots or insurrection except when called on to active service, so avoidance of policing activity is not a clear sign of insubordination or much less of disaffection, and was legally not mutinous. Nor was the scale of volunteers' non-co-operation sufficient to justify its description as a 'defection'.

Nevertheless, on a small but significant number of occasions, volunteers proved unreliable when faced with internal disorder. When required by magistrates to suppress rioting, a few volunteers refused outright to follow orders and returned their weapons; on other occasions they made excuses for non-attendance or simply did not attend the corps' muster. In a few instances, notably in Devon and Scotland, volunteers were themselves involved

³⁴ Gloucestershire Record Office, D 1571/X17, Wiltshire Cavalry Articles of Enrolment of the volunteer troop of cavalry in the district of Malmesbury, 20 September 1794.

³⁵ Roger Wells, *Wretched Faces: Famine in Wartime England 1793-1801*, pp.271-273.

³⁶ See, for example, Gloucestershire Record Office, D1571/X18, Bruce to Estcourt, 4 April 1801.

³⁷ Roger Wells, *Wretched Faces: Famine in Wartime England 1793-1801*, p.285, 270-271.

in election or food rioting, as participants and organisers. In Devon, where some volunteers were involved in organising riots, it has been argued that volunteer corps provided the most important county network that united rioters. The incipient social autonomy of volunteers and their experience in acting in disciplined bodies were important sources of volunteers' collective solidarity.³⁸ As local residents, volunteers were understandably more circumspect than militia or regular soldiers when required to suppress riots. After riots in Errol in which several local volunteers were implicated, many men resigned from the corps, claiming that they could not follow their vocations in peace and without fear of their lives from the violence of their neighbours.³⁹ Earl Fitzwilliam thought the Sheffield volunteers unreliable in September 1800 when required to suppress food riots because they might face 'their particular friends and mess mates, perhaps even their own wives and children, calling out for Bread'.⁴⁰ A few weeks after the Newcastle Volunteers had been called out against crowds of pitmen north of the Tyne, a bandsman in his uniform jacket encountered a group of pitmen who beat him so severely that he died.⁴¹ Not only did the volunteers fear the consequences of involvement in repression, they also were unsympathetic to the aims of the authorities. A distinction commonly was drawn by volunteers between their commitment to face foreign invasion and internal disorder that would result from invasion, and the magistrates' requirement for them to suppress food rioting. Lord Clifford complained in 1801 that 'An unfortunate distinction has taken place in the minds of many Volunteers. They fancy they have complied with their oath of allegiance when they declare they will fight for their King and Country against the Common Enemy, but think they have a right to withhold their assistance when called upon to support the Civil Magistrate in the execution of what they disapprove'.⁴² The members of the Dartmouth Volunteer Artillery expressed this distinction: their commander believed they were firmly attached to their King and country, and ready to come forward in their defence, but were unanimous in their

³⁸ John Bohstedt, *Riots and Community Politics in England and Wales*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1983), p.82.

³⁹ HO 50/52, Robt.Drummond to Lt.Gen.Vyse, Errol, 16 November 1801.

⁴⁰ HO 42/51, f.80, Wentworth Fitzwilliam to Portland, 8 September 1800, quoted in Mark Pottle, 'Loyalty and Patriotism in Nottingham, 1792-1816', pp.181-182.

⁴¹ Clive Emsley, 'The Military and Popular Disorder in England 1790-1801', p.105; Roger Wells, *Wretched Faces: Famine in Wartime England 1793-1801*, p.270; see also Mark Pottle, 'Loyalty and Patriotism in Nottingham, 1792-1816', pp.155, 259.

⁴² Lord Clifford, 1 April 1801, quoted in John Bohstedt, *Riots and Community Politics in England and Wales*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1983), p.51.

refusal to quell riots caused by high prices.⁴³ When the North Shields and Tynemouth Volunteers were asked if they would turn out against a riot, they told their commanding officer they would be damned if they would against their neighbours.⁴⁴ Some, like the Auchtermuchty Volunteers, believed that dealing with rioters was no part of their duty.⁴⁵

The government placed great importance on distinguishing those corps that could be relied upon for use against disturbances. Lords lieutenant were asked in March 1798 to determine how far volunteers' assistance could be called on against the invading enemy, and on the other hand to what extent they would be effectual for the police and internal tranquillity of the country. Henry Dundas thought it essentially important to discriminate between those two objects.⁴⁶ Some corps anticipated difficulties. The captains of the Gosport corps took care to select only resident propertied men as members in the belief that men who would readily march against a foreign enemy might not feel equally disposed to assist in the preservation of good order in a place where they were only itinerant or without family and property.⁴⁷ At its re-formation in 1794 the London and Westminster Light Horse Volunteers intentionally omitted any reference to '*Riots*' in its conditions of service, substituting '*Insurrection*'. Nevertheless, the commanding officer insisted, they had not refused to act against riots when requested.⁴⁸ When asked by the Lord Mayor to parade to forestall a riot in August 1794, the adjutant told him that it was not an occasion for which the Light Horse Volunteers had pledged their services, but he could depend on them to turn out in the defence of the peace of the city.⁴⁹ Yet when asked to assemble against rioters in September 1800, many members 'either paid no attention to the summons, or chose to judge for themselves the urgency of the service'.⁵⁰

⁴³Devon Record Office, Fortescue MSS, 1262M/L52, Henry Studdy to Earl Fortescue, Walton Court, 7 April 1801.

⁴⁴HO 50/54, B.Harter to Lord Hobart, Tynemouth, 13 May 1802.

⁴⁵HO 50/47, Robert Meldrum to Earl of Crawford, 2 May 1800.

⁴⁶Hereford and Worcester Record Office, BA 2868/4 705:73, Henry Dundas to Coventry, 5 March 1798, (circular).

⁴⁷Hampshire Record Office, 11 M 49/234, f.56, Robt.Forbes, Thos.Whitcomb, John Whitcomb to Lord Bolton, Gosport, 4 June 1802.

⁴⁸PRO 30/3/5, p.290, Charles Herries to Nathl.Conant, Middlesex magistrate, 15 January 1797.

⁴⁹PRO 30/3/25, p.3, Light Horse Volunteers Commanding Officer's Reports to the Committee, 20-24 August 1794 Report of Adjnt.Dunlop.

⁵⁰Roger Wells, *Wretched Faces: Famine in Wartime England 1793-1801*, pp.270-271; Roger Wells, '“Amidst these shaking times”; Britain's avoidance of revolution revisited', p.34, p.74 n.414.

Volunteers occupied an ambiguous position with regard to food shortages. The institution, particularly that of the yeomanry, was widely seen as one designed to protect the interests of farmers and landowners. Henry Hunt claimed later that the other members of the Everly Troop were preoccupied with 'keeping up the price of corn, keeping down the price of wages, and at the same time keeping in subjugation the labourers, and silencing their dissatisfaction'.⁵¹ Yet poorer volunteers were believed to be sympathetic to the aims of rioters because they, too, suffered during food shortages. The extent to which they were the sufferers, if at all, is difficult to establish. Occasionally, they expressed sympathy with the sufferings of the poor, with the implication that they were not poor, or necessarily suffering, themselves. However, about eight married men of the Parkham volunteer company in Devon complained in April 1801 that they and their families were almost starving, as the farmers would not spare them any corn.⁵² An anonymous notice suggested that the private men of the West Bromwich Volunteers were 'poor fellows' who were being exploited by their officers: 'What they want you for is to protect their lives and their liver, and their ill gained property and to dam you to death, and when you have done all you are able you may go to hell for all they care'.⁵³

The assertion that the gentlemen farmers in the yeomanry were the very men the food rioters accused of hoarding and profiteering⁵⁴ is difficult to substantiate. More commonly expressed was the feeling that the farmers were taking advantage of the volunteers. Arthur Young criticised selfish landowners whose extravagant prices caused riots, from which they were protected by men of very different feelings.⁵⁵ The Finchdean Volunteers believed that the volunteers themselves were the cause of the high price of provisions.⁵⁶ The volunteers became known as 'the Farmers Bull Dogs'.⁵⁷ Several gentlemen, members of armed associations in the neighbourhood of Bilston, near Wolverhampton, declared in May 1800 that they had joined in order to protect their King and constitution, not 'to give Security to the

⁵¹ John Belchem, 'Orator' Hunt, p.20.

⁵² Devon Record Office, Fortescue MSS, 1262 M/L52, Evidence of John Bate, 15 April 1801.

⁵³ Clive Emsley, *British Society and the French Wars 1793-1815*, p.87.

⁵⁴ Clive Emsley, 'The Military and Popular Disorder in England 1790-1801', p.107.

⁵⁵ [Arthur Young], *National Danger, and the Means of Safety. By the Editor of the Annals of Agriculture*, p.22.

⁵⁶ HO 50/48, f.103, H.Hood to Henry Dundas, Catherington, 23 September 1800.

⁵⁷ Roger Wells, 'The revolt of the south-west, 1800-1801: a study in English popular protest', *Social History*, 6, October 1977, p.725.

*inhuman Oppressor, whilst the Poor are starving in the midst of Plenty.*⁵⁸ The Sheffield Volunteers met in companies during the summer of 1800 to discuss whether they should obey their officers and turn out at the requisition of the magistrates against food riots. Three quarters were reported to have decided against doing so.⁵⁹ Some Exeter volunteers declared simply that 'they would not protect the farmers', and returned their arms.⁶⁰

Even in cases where the officers were willing to act against riots, they could not always secure the co-operation of the private men. Typically, volunteers failed to attend musters when policing duties seemed likely. Because attendance was essentially voluntary, it was difficult to punish absence or identify it with disloyalty. The practice was common enough in Henry Hunt's Wiltshire yeomanry troop that it was known as 'going to Boreham', after the excuse given by the Captain when he wanted to avoid policing the market at Salisbury. On this occasion, the Lieutenant went to London so as to be away for the day, and the troop, arriving at the remaining officer's house, found him in a long flannel dressing gown and a pair of scarlet slippers, complaining of a violent pain in the bowels. The troop never reached Salisbury.⁶¹ Riot duty could lead to serious splits within corps. Few members of the Peterhead corps mustered when required to protect the shipping of a cargo of oatmeal in February 1800. Nearly all came instead in their working clothes, offering to return their arms and uniforms and abusing those who had attended in uniform. They would defend their officers, and all property in the town, they declared, but would not assist in shipping the meal.⁶²

More common than outright refusal to act on riot duty was absenteeism or persistent evasion. When in 1800 a sheriff requested a party of a sergeant and ten men from the Auchtermuchty corps to escort five food rioters to prison, the volunteers never arrived. Eight of them were seen in the streets in their working clothes, so the captain made them dress and get their arms. He decided to beat the corps to arms, but the drummer contrived to keep out of the way. The captain sent to Strathmiglo for another drummer, and

⁵⁸HO 42/50, f.49, A.B.Haden, Bilston, 10 May 1800; Clive Emsley, 'The Military and Popular Disorder in England 1790-1801', p.106.

⁵⁹HO 50/49, [signature and place cut out], 10 February 1801.

⁶⁰Devon Record Office, 1262M/L44, Fortescue MSS, Rd.Eales to Earl Fortescue, Exeter, 2 December 1800.

⁶¹[Henry Hunt], *Memoirs of Henry Hunt, Esq.*, pp.242-254.

⁶²HO 50/47, Minutes of a meeting of Deputy Lieutenants of the District of Deer held at Peterhead, 8 February 1800.

prevailed on more men in the streets to collect their arms, and eventually 38 volunteers were collected to form an escort. Later, 120 members of the corps disingenuously explained that they were ignorant of their duty because they had only recently joined the corps and the commanding officer had not been present.⁶³ The commander of the Sheffield Volunteers also was absent when his corps proved reluctant to turn out against a riot over corn prices. Fewer than 50 of the regiment of 500 men appeared; the commanding officer queried how long arms ought to be entrusted to men of such a turn of mind.⁶⁴ When smaller numbers were involved, the corps' own disciplinary procedures could be used. The local corps of volunteer infantry was called out to guard against a renewal of price-fixing disturbances in Leicester in September 1800. Eight men 'who *shabbily sneaked* from the muster' were dismissed by 'the unanimous Voice of the Corps', and their names advertised in the local newspaper.⁶⁵ Volunteers publicly announced their unwillingness to oppose food riots. After an incident in March 1801 in which the Dartmouth Volunteer Artillery was implicated in food rioting, its commander asked the men whether they were willing to defend their King and country against the Common Enemy. They all said they would. He then asked them if they were willing to repress and quell riots and keep the peace of the country, to which they replied, 'No, not to starve our own families'.⁶⁶

It was, however, of much greater consequence than reluctance to suppress rioting, when volunteers themselves actively were involved in riots. The role of volunteers in the food riots of 1800–1801 in the south-west has been described as crucial.⁶⁷ In Devon in particular, several volunteers as individuals or in groups joined or led riots to fix food prices. The corps structure itself provided the nucleus for some riots in 1800.⁶⁸ Sir Robert Wilson, Inspecting Field Officer of the south-western volunteers, reported in February 1804 that 'The Volunteers are resigning, disputing, and daily becoming a more fearful force for this country. If want should menace to

⁶³HO 50/47, Robert Meldrum, Sheriff Substitute of Fife, to Earl of Crawford, 2 May 1800.

⁶⁴HO 50/48, f.114, Michael A. Taylor, Park Hill, Bawny, 30 September 1800; HO 50/49, [signature and place cut out], 10 February 1801.

⁶⁵*Leicester Journal*, No.2493, Friday September 12, 1800, p.2 c.3, p.3 c.3–4.

⁶⁶Devon Record Office, Fortescue MSS, 1262M/L52 Henry Studdy to Earl Fortescue, Walton Court, 7 April 1801; Henry Studdy to Earl Fortescue, Walton Court, 30 March 1801.

⁶⁷Roger Wells, 'The revolt of the south-west, 1800–1801', p.741.

⁶⁸John Bohstedt, *Riots and Community Politics in England and Wales*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1983), p.49.

pinch them, it is my firm opinion that this immortal deed of the Doctor's will establish a maximum by beat of drum and cram the bellies of the land proprietors with cold iron.'⁶⁹

The ministry's fears that volunteer organisation could be used for subversive purposes gave volunteers' involvement additional significance and prominence. Specifically, it was feared that the volunteers would act as an group, armed and in an organised military fashion, and in military clothing.⁷⁰ Volunteers' experience in acting in disciplined bodies made them well suited to organising price-fixing crowds and their regular meetings provided opportunities for planning. The sergeant of one Devon corps was identified as the leader of a crowd which contained nearly all the members of the corps. Price fixing was also believed to be organised by correspondence among meetings in all the large towns of Devon. One of the officers of the Brixham Volunteers allegedly went to Dartmouth to get instructions on how to act from the leaders of a mob there.⁷¹ A crowd from Brixham was led by the two local volunteer officers in March 1801. One of the officers was reported to have requested a farmer to sign a paper that listed the prices fixed for different articles of produce. He was said to have copied the list from one prepared by a committee at Dartmouth, in which volunteers also were involved.⁷² The Black Torrington Volunteers took the opportunity of their weekly meeting for exercise on a Sunday to discuss assembling to lower the price of corn. The following Thursday, 2 April, four of the volunteers headed a crowd of men and women which intimidated farmers in the neighbourhood of Sheepwash. Their commanding officer nevertheless assured the lord lieutenant that none of his men except the two leaders of the riot knew of the plans or were involved.⁷³

Much volunteer involvement in Devon, as at Sheepwash, took the form of intimidation of farmers. Large meetings of the 'lower class of the peo-

⁶⁹ *The Correspondence of George, Prince of Wales 1770-1812*, Edited by A. Aspinall, Vol. IV, p. 511, No. 1819 Sir Robert Wilson to Colonel McMahon, 23 February 1804; The 'Doctor' refers to Henry Addington.

⁷⁰ See Devon Record Office, Fortescue MSS, 1262M/L59, J.G.S[imcoe] to [Earl Fortescue], Woodford Lodge, 26 March [1801].

⁷¹ Devon Record Office, 1262M/L59, Fortescue MSS G.W[elsford] to Mr. Rorden, 2 May 1801; Rd. Eales to [Earl Fortescue], Exeter, 23 March 1801; 1262M/L52, Henry Studdy to Earl Fortescue, Walton Court, 7 April 1801.

⁷² Devon Record Office, Henry Studdy to Earl Fortescue, Walton Court, 30 March 1801; 7 April 1801.

⁷³ Devon Record Office, 1262M/L59, J.I. Fortescue to Lord Rolle, Buckland, 4 April 1801 (copy).

ple' had assembled in Exeter daily for a week in March 1801, and allegedly were ignored by the mayor and justices of the peace. They had discussed compelling farmers to bring their corn to market at a reduced price, in the belief that shortages were caused by farmers hoarding their produce. Some city volunteers attended one of the meetings, and promised their support. Their Lieutenant-Colonel later called a parade, and insisted that those who approved of the meeting return their arms. The ten members who did so were supported by 'a Mob of between 2 and 300, huzzaing them.'⁷⁴ The next day, some of the volunteers attended a meeting of almost 2000, which approved a set of resolutions on the scarcity of provisions, and setting maximum prices for corn. About 40 uniformed volunteers joined a crowd of 700 to 800, which set off in divisions towards Crediton, Tiverton, Cullompton and other surrounding districts. They compelled farmers to sign an undertaking to sell their corn at the set prices, but only one instance of threats of violence was reported by the county clerk.⁷⁵

In some cases, then, volunteers played an important part in the organisation and co-ordination of price fixing, and in the direction of the crowds. Volunteer presence in these crowds probably helped imply future retribution on farmers if promises were not kept. Organisation by volunteers was highly visible, and the more alarming to the county administration in consequence, but volunteers were not the only, nor necessarily the most important, group involved. The riot in which the Black Torrington Volunteers were involved took place on Holy Thursday, the day a large friendly society, possibly a front for a union lodge, held its meeting at Sheepwash.⁷⁶

The question of who was involved in these crowds is particularly significant because the behaviour of the volunteers has been attributed largely to their social position. Most reports refer to the rioters as common men and women, and imply that the volunteers involved were their social equals: urban artisans and labourers, but presumably not farmers.⁷⁷ The majority of the riots were not rural, and mainly involved urban men and women who

⁷⁴Eales to Lord Rolle, 22 March 1801, quoted in Roger Wells, 'The revolt of the south-west, 1800-1801', p.722.

⁷⁵Despite the Axminster volunteers' threat to shoot an officer: John Bohstedt, *Riots and Community Politics in England and Wales*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1983), p.49; Devon Record Office, 1262M/L59, Rd.Eales to [Earl Fortescue], Exeter, 23 March 1801.

⁷⁶Roger Wells, 'The revolt of the south-west, 1800-1801', p.742; Devon Record Office, 1262M/L59 J.I.Fortescue to Lord Rolle, Buckland, 4 April 1801, (copy).

⁷⁷John Bohstedt, *Riots and Community Politics in England and Wales*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1983), p.50.

were dependent on town markets.⁷⁸ Women did not dominate food riots, though it was usually the only sort of riot in which they were involved.⁷⁹ Volunteer corps composed of urban working men included those hardest hit by food shortages, so could not be expected to remain willing to suppress food riots. Rural cavalry corps, recruited from farmers, landowners and their dependents, remained comparatively reliable.⁸⁰ Miners in the Tavistock Volunteers would not turn out against a group of miners who threatened to take corn from a store house at their own price. The other members of the corps, whom their Lieutenant-Colonel described as the principal inhabitants of the town and neighbourhood, did however assemble when required to by a magistrate.⁸¹

The connection between labourers and tradesmen and support for food rioters is suggested by other instances. Among the tradesmen assembled to fix corn prices at Dartmouth in March 1801 were reported to have been ten or twelve members of the Associated Corps.⁸² The men of both the Peterhead and Auchtermuchty Volunteers who disobeyed orders were described as wearing their working clothes, implying that they were artisans or labourers.⁸³ Tradesmen volunteers were prominent among the leaders of a crowd at Dartmouth, including three cordwainers, a master tailor, a wheelwright, a mason, a saddler, a woolcomber and a victualler. At Banbury, rioting volunteers included merchants and retailers: a coal merchant, a salesman, a baker, a grocer and a druggist.⁸⁴ Neither of these groups is untypical of what is known of the membership of the volunteer force in general, so it is unlikely that their social composition alone made these corps more likely than others to join riots.

The participation of officers in the Brixham disturbances was considered far more significant than cases where only private men were involved. The unreliability of the Brixham corps in general has been attributed to the inadequate influence and status of their officers. The commanding officer

⁷⁸Roger Wells, 'The revolt of the south-west, 1800-1801', pp.740-741.

⁷⁹John Bohstedt, 'Gender, Household and Community Politics: Women in English Riots 1790-1810', *Past & Present*, Number 120, August 1988, pp.89, 121, 113, 114.

⁸⁰Roger Wells, *Wretched Faces: Famine in Wartime England 1793-1801*, p.268.

⁸¹HO 50/49, W.Bray to Henry Dundas, Tavistock, 14 March 1801.

⁸²Devon Record Office, 1262M/L52, Henry Studdy to Earl Fortescue, Walton Court, 30 March 1801.

⁸³HO 50/47, Robert Meldrum to Earl of Crawford, 2 May 1800; HO 50/47, minutes of a meeting of deputy lieutenants of the district of Deer held at Peterhead, 8 February 1800.

⁸⁴Roger Wells, *Wretched Faces: Famine in Wartime England 1793-1801*, p.272.

was a tavern keeper and Post Office official, and was on the occasion of the riot absent on business. The other captain, a butcher, was forced to join the crowd by threats to pull down his house. Two other officers, both lieutenants, were implicated: a shopkeeper and a schoolmaster. However, many other volunteer corps appear to have had officers of similar social rank without adverse effects on their reliability.⁸⁵ Nearly all volunteer corps contained significant numbers of labouring men and artisans, who were on the whole reliable against riots. When such a corps was involved in a riot, usually only a small number of its members were implicated. No apparent social grouping distinguished them from the remainder of the corps. Nonetheless, social rank was at the time commonly taken to be an explanation for disorderly behaviour. For example, an anonymous correspondent complained to the Bishop of Durham in 1802 that the local volunteer corps had introduced great mischief and done incalculable injury to the police of Durham. This he attributed to the corps' lately having admitted apprentices, who appeared on Sunday nights staggering along the streets in a state of extreme intoxication.⁸⁶

The nature of the community within which the volunteers lived has been proposed as an explanation for their readiness to protest. The insubordination of some Devon corps has been contrasted with the reliability of their Manchester counterparts during the same period. Members of the latter were chosen for their political loyalty from all parts of a large town, whereas corps in Devon institutionalised existing social bonds of a small town's working men.⁸⁷ Most of the Devon corps involved in riots, other than those in Exeter, were small and from relatively small towns. Devon as a whole had a high proportion of volunteers to adult male population, and they were organised in a large number of small corps. Most of the volunteers throughout the country were in corps of around 100 men, although it is generally difficult to tell whether their members were urban or rural inhabitants. Yet too much can be made of the connection between the plebeian independence of the Devon volunteers and their propensity to riot. Small corps in country towns composed of labouring men and commanded by minor members of the urban middle classes were by no means unique to the south-west. Similarly

⁸⁵Roger Wells, 'The revolt of the south-west, 1800-1801', pp.725, 741; John Bohstedt, *Riots and Community Politics in England and Wales*, pp.34, 98; Devon Record Office, 1262M/L52, Henry Studdy to Earl Fortescue, Walton Court, 7 April 1801; Roger Wells, *Wretched Faces: Famine in Wartime England 1793-1801*, p.272.

⁸⁶HO 50/54, Anon. to Bishop of Durham, Durham, 22 March 1802, pp.3-4.

⁸⁷John Bohstedt, *Riots and Community Politics in England and Wales*, p.82.

constituted corps existed in many other parts of the country, and the vast majority did not become involved in rioting. Furthermore, the involvement of the Exeter volunteers cannot be explained merely by relating corporate independence to small urban communities.

The nature of the volunteers' communities should be considered in relation to the sense of corporate independence within the corps themselves. Habits of corporate independence probably help explain the readiness of some of the Devon corps to become involved in popular protest. A disproportionate number of the long-established corps were implicated in the disturbances. The Exeter, Teignmouth, Seaton and Beer, and Newton Abbot and Newton Bushell corps had all been first gazetted in 1794. Their long experience of autonomy, and possibly greater freedom in the choice of their officers allowed by earlier regulations, may have encouraged independence of activity, but presumably no more so than equally old corps elsewhere. Unlike several other counties, corps in Devon were not grouped in larger regional regiments. The consequent fragmentation of command and lack of co-ordination may explain why volunteers there found it easier to participate in food protests than volunteers elsewhere. It is unfortunately difficult to discover whether the corps implicated in rioting received official allowances or not. If not, they presumably would have felt their freedom of action less circumscribed than if reliant on official favour. None of these conditions — small corps of labourers and artisans not commanded by gentlemen, with several years' experience of collective activity and autonomy, and living in small, closely-knit communities — was unique to Devon, nor to the corps elsewhere involved in riots; this points to the justifiable wariness of the administration with regard to the reliability of volunteer corps in general.

Apart from the corps directly implicated in rioting, disbandments were few. Possibly it was felt that the value of volunteers in the event of an invasion outweighed the potential threat from their unreliability in the face of civil disorder. That unreliability was in any case not remarkably greater than that of the militia, although given the nature of volunteer membership and corps' autonomy, its implications were more worrying. Moreover, the central and local authorities feared that a disbanded corps of trained volunteers would be far more dangerous than one kept under regulation and employed with circumspection. Lord Rolle pointed out in 1797 that the volunteers had kept Devon quiet during a troubled period, but would be politically reliable only so long as they were kept together.⁸⁸ When enquiries

⁸⁸HO 50/55, Lord Rolle to Duke of Portland, Bicton, 28 December 1797.

were made into the reliability of the Sheffield Volunteers in the aftermath of food rioting in 1801, the Home Office was told they were not to be trusted. In this case, and several others, the action recommended was not to disband the corps, but to avoid calling it on active duty. It was probably preferable to keep them under military control than to attempt to disarm them.⁸⁹ Nevertheless, measures were taken to expel suspect members and to discourage the formation of potentially unreliable corps. On his appointment to the lieutenancy of the West Riding in 1798, Earl Fitzwilliam blocked suggestions for new infantry corps.⁹⁰

Volunteer rioting was only the most spectacular symptom of their readiness to take direct and sometimes violent action on behalf of the body. Their corporate independence was additionally evident in their response to external attacks on their members. When a naval press gang at Chester in 1804 pressed one of the town volunteers, 400 of his corps paraded to the gaol and demanded his return, threatening violence. Initial reports claimed mistakenly that when their commanding officer tried to stop them, some of the volunteers called out to have his sword broken over his head. They forced in the doors and windows of the gaol, released the volunteer, and chaired him through the city. The corps next attacked the naval rendezvous house; four companies of the Shropshire Supplementary Militia were called in to restore peace. William Cobbett used this incident to attack the volunteer system in general. Hyperbolically, he compared the Northgate Gaol of Chester to the Bastille, concluding that if nothing was done to prevent the repetition of such events, historians would record, 'here the revolution of England began.'⁹¹

Rivalry between different corps could lead to major controversy and public disturbances, particularly because the organisations were large and their activities public. The two volunteer corps in Reading were long standing rivals, and the first was considered to have acquired much *éclat* by volunteering into the local militia in 1809. After a parade of local corps for the King's birthday that year, a dispute arose over the payment of a guinea for

⁸⁹HO 50/49, [signature and place cut out], 10 February 1801.

⁹⁰Roger Wells, '“Amidst these shaking times”'; Britain's avoidance of revolution revisited', p.24.

⁹¹*Leicester Journal*, No.2668 Friday 20 January 1804, p.3 c.5; Erin McCawley Renn, 'British Civil and Military Preparations Against Napoleon's Planned Invasion 1803-1805', pp.53-54; and see also Frederick Leary, *The Earl of Chester's Regiment of Yeomanry Cavalry its formation and services 1797 to 1897*, (Edinburgh, 1898), pp.16-17; *Cobbett's Political Register*, Vol.V, pp.51-54, 7-14 January 1804; Vol.V, pp.86-87, 14-21 January 1804.

marching expenses to the local militiamen. Their commanding officer asked the Woodley Volunteer Cavalry to parade about to keep order. A crowd nearby, consisting mostly of volunteers, encouraged the local militiamen to resist their officers, lay down their arms, and 'stick out for your Rights, & have your Guineas'. The crowd pressed on the sentinels, and one of the volunteers was wounded by a militia sergeant, who was then pulled out by the crowd and had to be rescued by a constable. When two non-volunteers who were encouraging the riot were taken into custody, the volunteers drew their bayonets and declared their intention to rescue them. The Reading Volunteers were accused of inciting the local militia to mutiny, and consequently were disbanded by the Secretary of State for War. Yet the lieutenant of the military district could complain that the secretary of state's action was extraordinary and unnecessarily harsh, and his readiness to act on partisan and unofficial information was due to his eagerness to get rid of the volunteers in favour of the local militia.⁹²

On the whole, the picture of the volunteers as a force of order must take into account the occasional hostility of corps to peace keeping duties and the consequent reluctance on the part of civil authorities to employ them in such a capacity. Not all volunteers acknowledged that riot suppression was part of their duties, and it is difficult to interpret absenteeism as disloyalty. Cases of direct volunteer involvement in riots or their organisation were rare, but cannot be attributed to any feature not shared by many volunteer corps.

Part Three: The Maintenance of Order

The picture created by instances of volunteer involvement in riots must be qualified by the general reliability of volunteer corps when faced with civil disorder. The widespread employment of volunteers to suppress riots, mount patrols and assist revenue officers demonstrates that the force's usefulness and ready availability was sufficient to overcome any uneasiness about individual corps' unreliability. Concentration on instances in which volunteers

⁹²Berkshire Record Office, D/ERa O.25, Radnor papers: (2) Spencer Blandford to Earl of Radnor, 17 June 1809; (4) Liverpool to Radnor, 19 June 1809; (5) Radnor to Lt.Col.Newbery, 27 June 1809; (6) [unsigned] to Earl of Radnor, Reading, 29 June 1809, (copy); (8) Richd.Benyon to Radnor, 14 July 1809; (9) Rd.Benyon [Lieutenant South Western District, Berkshire] to Earl of Radnor, Castle Ashby, 18 July 1809; (19) E.F.Maitland to Radnor, 3 September 1809; (20) Liverpool to Radnor, 11 September 1809; (22) E.F.Maitland to Radnor, 19 November 1809; cutting from Reading Journal; S.C.Smith, 'Loyalty and Opposition in the Napoleonic Wars: The Impact of the Local Militia, 1807-1815', pp.239-241.

joined riots explains why magistrates were sometimes reluctant to call upon their assistance, but it gives a misleading impression contrasting with the general reliability of most corps. In most reported cases where volunteer corps were called upon to face civil disturbances, they were willing to act, and often proved effective. The numbers of volunteer corps actively involved in rioting was comparatively small.

Consideration must be given to the readiness with which magistrates called on the assistance of volunteers. If it appears that regular soldiers or militiamen, when available, were employed in preference to volunteers, and if the yeomanry were preferred to the volunteer infantry, then it may be concluded that in each case the latter were considered as either unsuitable or unreliable. The standing army had developed from being seen as a threat to the constitution to being accepted as playing a vital part in the maintenance of internal order by the time of the Luddite disturbances.⁹³ While the militia had been previously promoted as the 'constitutional' force in contrast to the standing regular army, by the turn of the century the distinction between the two had become less pointed. During its long wartime embodiment, nearly all the militia regiments were stationed away from their home counties and came to be treated as a source of recruits for the army.

In some senses, the volunteers took the place of the militia in its former territorial role, influential in local society and with social functions and responsibilities beyond its immediate military purposes. Volunteers increasingly were employed in a range of duties formerly usually performed by the regular army. In a published collection of essays, Captain Francis Eliot of the Staffordshire Volunteer Cavalry argued that the yeomanry were incomparably preferable to the militia and regular forces for internal defence because they were of use in more than their ostensible, military character. They also provided a 'preventive service' in their private situations; while pursuing their usual occupations in civil life, they would select the dangerous and designing from among their neighbours. By making them feel marked characters, the off-duty yeomen would repress the disaffected and awe the ill-disposed.⁹⁴

The usual response to civil disorder that could not be dealt with by local magistrates was to request the presence of regular soldiers. Throughout the eighteenth century, the army was employed to a wide extent in inter-

⁹³ J.A.Houlding, *Fit For Service The Training of the British Army, 1715-1795*, (Oxford, 1981), p.74.

⁹⁴ Francis Percival Eliot, *Six Letters on the subject of the Armed Yeomanry*, pp.65-66, 79.

nal policing and peace-keeping duties. The maintenance of civil order was given priority over the army's military requirements. Soldiers were regularly employed in the revenue service, and kept widely dispersed for much of the time.⁹⁵ With the embodiment of the militia and the raising of volunteers in 1794, two further types of force were available to civil magistrates for peace-keeping at a time when regular troops were less readily available. Of these, the volunteers and yeomanry were both the more widely available and the force specifically raised with the maintenance of internal order as one of its aims. In a compilation of 202 food-related disturbances in England and Wales during the years 1795, 1796, 1800 and 1801, volunteers appear to have opposed crowds on 86 occasions, while regular soldiers were used in 62 incidents, and both forces on 26 of these occasions.⁹⁶

In many instances, magistrates called on yeomanry cavalry corps rather than volunteer infantry. This may be interpreted as an indication that the infantry were considered to be less reliable than the cavalry. Such seems to have been the case when the Woodley Cavalry was called in to deal with the disorder involving the Reading Volunteers.⁹⁷ It seems however that in most cases yeomanry cavalry corps were employed against disturbances because they were more suited to the task, not because their infantry counterparts were unreliable. The experience of the Gordon riots showed that cavalry were more likely to be effective than foot soldiers. They were more useful for patrol duty and were better able to catch and disperse crowds. Combined forces of horse and foot soldiers were most successful against determined, armed rioters.⁹⁸ Small mounted troops were more manageable and could respond faster than foot soldiers, whose course of action against crowds was usually limited to threats to fire. Shootings often exacerbated a dangerous situation: when volunteers turned out against meal riots in parts of Scotland in March 1796, they shot a rioter in Inverness, and quelled disturbances at Peterhead with bayonets.⁹⁹

Ignorance of the law relating to riots was widespread, particularly with regard to the degree of force permitted. It was commonly believed, without

⁹⁵ J.A.Houlding, *Fit For Service*, pp.75, 78, 82–83, 395.

⁹⁶ Calculated from Roger Wells, *Wretched Faces: Famine in Wartime England 1793–1801*, pp.419–440.

⁹⁷ Berkshire Record Office, D/ERa O.25 (6), [unsigned] to Earl of Radnor, Reading, 29 June 1809 (copy).

⁹⁸ Tony Hayter, *The army and the crowd in mid-Georgian England*, (London, 1978), pp.41, 107, 151, 181–182.

⁹⁹ National Library of Scotland, MS7, Melville papers, f.109, R.Dundas [Lord Advocate], Edinburgh, 10 March 1796.

legal basis, that armed force could not be used against riots except in self-defence as a last resort.¹⁰⁰ Many volunteer officers, even when they were themselves justices of the peace, felt unable to act against disturbances unless ordered to do so by a magistrate. Some felt able to act on their own initiative to guard against the development of potential disturbances.¹⁰¹ R.A.Athorpe acted as both magistrate and colonel of the Sheffield Volunteers during a riot in Sheffield in August 1795.¹⁰² The Hambledon and Wickham Volunteers in Hampshire were ordered by their commanding officer to be in constant readiness in case of tumult over high grain prices in March 1800. Lieutenant-Colonel Palmer requested pay for a nightly patrol by his corps. He claimed to have received information that disaffected persons intended to carry out threats contained in a variety of anonymous papers scattered in the neighbourhood, five of which he sent to the acting magistrate for the Portsdown division. The lord lieutenant, however, thought Palmer alarmist. The inflammatory papers, Lord Bolton believed, should have created no more reasonable alarm in the area of Hambledon than had been felt in the many other areas of the county in which similar menaces had been made. The War Office's principal objection was not to the patrols themselves, but to providing pay for them.¹⁰³ Yet when the Hampton Lucy volunteers went on permanent duty without seeking authority, pay was allowed despite their action being thought highly irregular.¹⁰⁴

Volunteers commonly were called out to face such disturbances alone, but normally acted with other forces, the regular army or militia, where they were present. Magistrates usually requested volunteer assistance to forestall an anticipated riot, or to carry out policing after disturbances had been suppressed. Volunteers, because of their conditions of service, could not be directed to suppress riots, but could only be requested to act. As the commanding officer of the London and Westminster Light Horse Volunteers reminded the First Lord of the Treasury in 1810, the corps was liable to be called out only in the event of an invasion or the appearance of invasion or insurrection. For this reason, the Duke of Portland had confined his com-

¹⁰⁰Tony Hayter, *The army and the crowd in mid-Georgian England*, pp.9, 11.

¹⁰¹Robert A.Rizzi, 'The British Army as a Riot Control Force in Great Britain: 1811-1848', B.Litt.thesis, University of Oxford, 1974, pp.84, 88.

¹⁰²Clive Emsley, 'The Military and Popular Disorder in England 1790-1801', p.16; Roger Wells, *Wretched Faces: Famine in Wartime England 1793-1801*, pp.114-115.

¹⁰³HO 50/48, f.153, Thos.Palmer to Secretary at War, 30 March 1800; f.165, Thos.M.Palmer, Hambledon, 10 September 1800; f.209 M.Leurs[?] to Wm.Huskisson, War Office, 22 November 1800; f.246, Bolton to Dundas, 7 December 1800.

¹⁰⁴HO 51/86, Hawkesbury to Earl of Warwick, 7 October 1807.

mand for the corps to assemble to 'such part of them as may be voluntarily disposed to act in aid of the Civil Power at the present conjuncture'.¹⁰⁵

The majority of requests for volunteer service came from civil magistrates, not the military authorities. The survival of a large collection of papers means the example of the London and Westminster Light Horse Volunteers is unusually well documented. Between August 1794 and September 1800, the Light Horse Volunteers were called out, or asked to be in readiness, at least 26 times, almost half of these occasions in 1795.¹⁰⁶ Many of these requests were made at short notice by police magistrates or the Lord Mayor, and often in the evening. The Light Horse Volunteers and Honourable Artillery Company appear to have had close links with the Public Office in Worship Street, close to both the Artillery ground and one of the volunteers' stables. When disturbances were anticipated, as with the meetings of the London Corresponding society, the volunteers offered their services in advance.¹⁰⁷ The Home Office co-ordinated military precautions before the general meetings of the London Corresponding Society, directing the Lord Mayor to request the metropolitan volunteer corps, and requesting the Light Horse Volunteers and the St.James's Association directly, to maintain a state of readiness to assist the civil authorities.¹⁰⁸

A typical incident is one reported for July 1795. Patrick Colquhoun, one of the magistrates at the Worship Street office, heard from a witness that a crowd was assembling to demolish a public house in nearby Chiswell Street. He sent a note to the commanding officer of the volunteers, after nine in the evening, suggesting that a few of his corps would prevent the crowd's threatenings being put into execution.¹⁰⁹ The volunteers found that the crowd had fled on the arrival of thirty Life Guards, and that the Surrey Yeomanry Cavalry and some regular infantry and cavalry had assembled

¹⁰⁵PRO 30/3/1, Scott Portland to Colonel Herries, 7 April 1810; C.H[erries] to Duke of Portland, 7 April 1810; Scott Portland to Colonel Herries, 9 April 1810; Kenneth O.Fox, *Making Life Possible A study of the military aid to the civil power in Regency England*, ([Warwick], 1982), p.7, claims that troops were summoned always in response to a riot, not in anticipation of one.

¹⁰⁶PRO 30/3/2, List of correspondence with Secretary of State, August 1794–September 1800.

¹⁰⁷PRO 30/3/25, p.13, Report of Colonel Herries to Duke of Gloucester, 15 April 1799.

¹⁰⁸HO 65/1, Police Office, [p.15], Portland to Lord Mayor, Whitehall, 28 June 1795; [p.15], J.King to Colonel Brownrigg, Whitehall, 28 June 1795; p.17, J.King to Lt.Col.Herries, Whitehall, 24 October 1795; [n.p.], Portland to the Committee of the Association of St.James Vestry Room, 28 July 1797.

¹⁰⁹PRO 30/3/1, P.Colquhoun to Col.Herries, Public Office, Worship Street, Shoreditch, past 9 o'clock, 14 July 1795.

in St. George's Fields, so they were not needed. The officer in charge of the detachment reported that one of the objects of the crowd had been to harass and weary the military, rather than to confront them.¹¹⁰

It appears that the volunteers seldom knew in advance how much assistance, if any, they were to receive in such circumstances. When sufficient warning was received of potential civil disorder, the volunteer corps and armed associations in London formed an integral part of the Home Office's planning. When the London Corresponding Society advertised a general meeting at St. George's Fields for late June 1795, the Home Secretary, the Duke of Portland, asked the Lord Mayor to take steps to ensure the preservation of public peace and tranquillity. He suggested requesting the gentlemen of the volunteer cavalry and the Honourable Artillery Company to be ready to assist the civil authorities if called upon. The Quarter-Master General was also asked to prepare the regular forces at the Savoy, the Tower and Horse Guards. They too were asked to assist the civil magistrates, but the volunteers appear not to have been told of the regulars' likely presence.¹¹¹ In preparation for subsequent meetings of the London Corresponding Society, requests were made by the Home Office directly to the commander of the Light Horse Volunteers and the committee of the St. James's Volunteers for assistance.¹¹² Requests for aid from other corps were exceptional, as when during the disturbances at Reading in June 1809, the Marquis of Blandford, commanding the local militia, requested the Woodley Yeomanry Cavalry to parade about.¹¹³

Typically, magistrates would request a commanding officer to assemble his corps in readiness to act against anticipated breaches of the peace. In London, these requests came normally from the Lord Mayor or the magistrates of the seven Public Offices. The captain commanding the Knight Marshal's Volunteers received a note in October 1800 from the two magistrates of the Police Office in Queen Square. They explained that as there was reason to apprehend that attempts would be made to renew recent disturbances of the public peace, it was thought proper that the volunteers should

¹¹⁰PRO 30/3/2, Miscellaneous: [Anonymous] copy to Richard Ford, 15 July 1795.

¹¹¹PRO 30/3/1, Portland to Lord Mayor, 28 June 1795; HO 65/1, Police Office, p.15, Portland to Lord Mayor, Whitehall, 28 June 1795; J.King to Colonel Brownrigg, Whitehall, 28 June 1795.

¹¹²HO 65/1, Police Office, pp.17-18, J.King to Lt.Col.Herries, Whitehall. 24 October 1795; Portland to the Committee of the Association of St.James, 28 July 1797.

¹¹³Berkshire Record Office, D/ERa O.25(6), [unsigned] to Radnor, Reading, 29 June 1809, (copy).

be in readiness at their quarters to assist the magistrates if necessary.¹¹⁴ The response to such a request was sometimes rapid, since the volunteers nearly always lived nearby. The Loyal Leicester troop of Volunteer Cavalry was reported to have assembled fully armed and accoutred within about ten minutes of an instruction from the mayor in 1795.¹¹⁵ Rural cavalry troops, however, could take a few hours to assemble.¹¹⁶ An officer of the Light Horse Volunteers explained that the corps' constitution meant it could not be assembled as quickly as regular troops, but he claimed that they were more useful once assembled.¹¹⁷ By 1810, military planning envisaged metropolitan volunteer corps acting in concert with regular soldiers when dealing with riots. In the event of a serious tumult, 200 infantrymen were to be attached to the Light Horse Volunteers in Gray's Inn Lane, which would provide detachments for the Charterhouse and Lincoln's Inn Fields. Neighbouring military stations at the British Museum and in Finsbury Square and Worship Street, were to be manned by regular soldiers.¹¹⁸

Very few first-hand reports from officers survive of how regular troops were used against riots.¹¹⁹ For the London and Westminster Light Horse Volunteers, however, a substantial series of reports by officers to the corps' committee has been preserved.¹²⁰ They are particularly detailed regarding the measures taken during the 'crimp' riots of August 1794. These disturbances centred on public houses used as rendezvous by agents trading in recruits for the army and navy. Rumours of kidnapping by crimps added to hostility to militia balloting in summer 1794, and attacks on crimp houses started after a recruit was found dead outside one on 15 August.¹²¹ The Lord Mayor used magistrates and Horse Guards to prevent attacks, but on the 20th, 'finding the impossibility of quelling a further riot with the civil power only', he asked the Light Horse Volunteers and the Honourable Artillery Company for assistance.¹²²

¹¹⁴Bodleian Library, MS Dep.Bland Burges 22, f.127, Wm.Cruchley to [Sir James Bland] Burges, 13 October 1800; 91 ff.109-110 (copy).

¹¹⁵*The Northampton Mercury*, Vol.LXCVI, No.4, 4 April 1795, p.3 c.5.

¹¹⁶HO 50/330, Nugent Buckingham, 25 March 1796.

¹¹⁷PRO 30/3/2, Miscellaneous, [Anonymous] copy to Richard Ford, 15 July 1795.

¹¹⁸PRO 30/3/1, Robt.Brownrigg to Col.Herries, Horse Guards, 10 April 1810.

¹¹⁹Tony Hayter, *The army and the crowd in mid-Georgian England*, p.165.

¹²⁰PRO 30/3/25, Bosanquet Papers, Light Horse Volunteers Commanding Officer's Reports to the Committee.

¹²¹J.Stevenson, 'The London "Crimp" Riots of 1794', *International Review of Social History*, Volume XVI, 1971, pp.41-45.

¹²²J.Stevenson, 'The London "Crimp" Riots of 1794', p.45.

Detachments of the volunteers remained on duty for the next four evenings. Although a large corps, the Light Horse Volunteers acted in small divisions, usually of around a dozen men, which could be assembled relatively quickly. They were part of a much larger civil and military force under the direction of the Lord Mayor, who called for military assistance only if magistrates and constables alone were unable to stop riots. In addition to regular horse and foot soldiers, Patrick Colquhoun, one of the police magistrates, swore in 500 'respectable householders' around the Worship Street Public Office as special constables.¹²³

Volunteer detachments were directed to deal with rioters attacking specific crimping houses, which usually involved following the rioters to other houses in attempts to forestall further attacks. The Light Horse Volunteers' own published standing orders of 1805 contained a guide to '*Street Duty*' against rioters, or more ambiguously, 'the enemy', who were not expected to be armed except with stones. Patrols were recommended to prevent a mob from assembling or from rallying once it had been dispersed. Divisions were to move in threes, so that a column could charge in streets 'where it is desirable to disperse a mob without doing much harm.' As 'many tricks can be played them by a designing mob', cavalry were to keep moving when likely to be attacked, and not to enter barricaded streets without leaving a guard to secure the retreat.¹²⁴ No guidance was given to the degree of force to be used against rioters, nor to whether they could be taken prisoner.

In practice, the nature of confrontations with rioters had not been predictable. Rioters dispersed rapidly, to re-form once the volunteers had gone. The primary tactic of the volunteers seems to have been to intimidate rioters by their presence at a crimping house or by parading in the streets. The appearance of a troop was itself sometimes enough to disperse a crowd, and parading sufficient to prevent the crowd re-forming. The frequent failure of regular military intervention against riots has been ascribed to the ineffectiveness of troops when the rioters did not disperse, because officers were uncertain of their powers to act.¹²⁵ No such problems were encountered by the Light Horse Volunteers, who were accompanied by civil magistrates, and left the arrest of rioters to the constables. Nor did jurisdictional limits restrain the volunteers. The Lord Mayor used the Light Horse Volunteers to follow rioters who left the limits of the city and therefore his jurisdiction.

¹²³ J. Stevenson, 'The London "Crimp" Riots of 1794', pp.50-51.

¹²⁴ *Standing Orders for The Light Horse Volunteers of London and Westminster*, pp.165-172.

¹²⁵ Tony Hayter, *The army and the crowd in mid-Georgian England*, p.166.

Although these were the largest riots since 1780, no rioters were injured.¹²⁶

The officers' reports provide considerable detail of how the corps dealt with the riots. Captain Charles Herries of the Light Horse Volunteers reported to the corps' committee that on receiving the Lord Mayor's summons at eight in the evening of 20 August, he collected eleven members he found at the riding houses and more than two hours later joined a detachment of Guards accompanying the Lord Mayor. Sent to pursue a crowd attacking a public house, the volunteers were accompanied by a sheriff acting as magistrate. A very considerable crowd had beaten off the constables, and was found busily employed gutting the Sash public house in Moorfields. The small party of volunteers, though pelted by brickbats, formed in front of the building so the constables could enter, but they were unwilling to attempt it alone. Four volunteers with swords entered the house, and the constables arrested five of the principal rioters, who were taken to a watch house. The crowd was thought to have disappeared, but returned once the volunteers had gone. After clearing the house a second time, the volunteers moved on to another public house thought to be a target. After waiting half an hour in Jefferis Square, no attack seemed likely, so the detachment returned to Fleet Street by midnight.

A second detachment of eleven men, commanded by the Adjutant, had been sent by the Lord Mayor to deal with a riot in Fleet Street. The volunteers covered the street so as to prevent any rioters getting behind them, and marched at a trot towards Shoe Lane. A picquet of Coldstream Guards there stopped the crowd going any further. The volunteers then paraded up and down Fleet Street, from Holborn Hill to Holborn Bars (at the end of Gray's Inn Lane), before remaining at Holborn for several hours. The next day, the detachment made an extensive patrol of the western fringes of the City, and reported to the Lord Mayor that they saw 'no preparations for mischief unless it might originate with about half a Dozen ill-disposed fellows stationed in different parts of Fleet Street and Ludgate Hill, who loaded us with Groans Hisses and Cat-calls as we were coming along.' On that and two subsequent evenings, the Adjutant's detachment supported the Honourable Artillery Company against rioters or in readiness to face rioters.¹²⁷

The volunteers' handling of urban riots was not dissimilar to the activ-

¹²⁶J.Stevenson, 'The London "Crimp" Riots of 1794', pp.46, 50, 55.

¹²⁷PRO 30/3/25, pp.1-7, L.H.V. Commanding Officer's Reports to the Committee, 20-24 August 1794; Bryant Lillywhite, *London Coffee Houses a reference book of coffee houses of the seventeenth eighteenth and nineteenth centuries*, (London, 1963), p.518, No.1169.

ities of the metropolitan voluntary associations in 1780. The Billingsgate Association claimed to have assembled sixty men against a riot on 8 June 1780, patrolled the streets and lanes, and examined public houses. By arresting or pursuing suspicious persons found lurking in the ward, the association claimed to have prevented the recurrence of riots and tumults.¹²⁸

Outside the metropolis, magistrates had a much more restricted range of military assistance open to them. Only small forces could be collected at short notice, yet the resulting encounters were sometimes more violent than the London crimp riots. At Northampton in 1795, the yeomen who lived in the town joined a regular cavalry regiment in dispersing a food riot.¹²⁹ Normally volunteer corps had to act alone, particularly against food riots, which developed too rapidly for distant forces to be called in at first. At Stony Stratford in March 1796 a magistrate initially could call on only a sergeant and four men of the Newport and Buckingham United Squadron of Yeomanry to stop a violent and outrageous mob of several hundred from plundering a waggon load of wheat. The yeomen charged the crowd, disengaged the waggon, and escorted the waggon to its destination. At the same time in Fenny Stratford, twenty yeomen charged a crowd which had stopped a flour waggon, and took seven prisoners. The men in the crowd resisted the yeomen while the women plundered the waggon; the three prisoners escorted to Aylesbury Gaol by a sergeant and seven privates were all women, however. In both incidents, the corps were kept on duty to guard the prisoners and to protect the magistrates while they made their examinations.¹³⁰ Women were often treated as harshly as men in the repression of riots, and crowds containing women were just as likely as all-male crowds to be forcibly dispersed.¹³¹

The presence of yeomen, even in small numbers, tended to divert rather than prevent attacks on property. Hosiers' property had been attacked in Shepshed in Leicestershire in the night of 3 December 1811, so the following evening four magistrates assembled the few yeomen they were able to collect on short notice. Although a large number of suspicious persons were lurking about the town, so the magistrates reported, no mischief was done. Instead, a fire was started and two frames broken in neighbouring areas;

¹²⁸ British Library, Add.MS 16,929 Reeves MSS, Loyal Declarations Vol.I, f.10, Billingsgate Ward, 10 July 1780.

¹²⁹ *Northampton Mercury*, Vol.LXXVI No.5, 11 April 1795, p.3 c.5.

¹³⁰ HO 50/330, Nugent Buckingham, 25 March 1796.

¹³¹ John Bohstedt, 'Gender, Household and Community Politics', p.119.

the rioters dispersed before the yeomen arrived.¹³² Volunteers rarely seem to have been faced with armed and determined resistance. The Leicester volunteer corps of infantry and cavalry were sent to arrest two deserters from the Leicester Fencibles who had been liberated by a large number of canal workmen in April 1795. When the volunteer cavalry troop reached the Recruiting-Sergeant public house at Newton Harcourt, several of the workmen appeared at the door with long pikes, seemingly determined to resist. A magistrate read the Riot Act, and a party of volunteers dismounted and searched the house, arresting four of the most desperate of the rioters. The corps searched the countryside the next day, and arrested nine more, including Red Jack and Northamptonshire Tom, terrors to every county they had resided in, according to the printer of the *Northampton Mercury*.¹³³

Reading of the Riot Act did not always intimidate rioters. In Sheffield, 'that vile Sink of vice and sedition',¹³⁴ several thousand crowded around the Loyal Sheffield Regiment of the Line when it was on parade in July 1795, encouraging the men to desert. On the arrival of the Sheffield Volunteers the tumult increased, and the Riot Act was read by a magistrate, without effect. After ninety minutes in which several soldiers were hit by bricks and stones, they were ordered to shoot at the rioters. Similarly, after the reading of the Riot Act, a crowd at Barrow-upon-Soar assailed the Leicester troop of yeomanry cavalry with brickbats and some shots were fired from adjacent houses. The cavalymen fired back, killing at least two and wounding six or more.¹³⁵ At Nottingham in September 1800, a witness wrote that rioters 'attacked both Yeomanry and infantry with such fury . . . that they was their masters tho' armed with nothing but stones'.¹³⁶

Although their choice of action against rioters was limited, volunteers were as effective as regular troops. The Sheffield Volunteers had been called in because they could be relied upon not to side with the disaffected; the commanding officer of the line regiment feared that many of his men had been encouraged to desert by the Constitutional Society, a hot bed of

¹³²HO 50/460, Charles Tho.Hudson, W.R.Tyson, Ric.Hardy, Edwd.Dawson to Secretary of State, Loughboro', 5 December 1811.

¹³³*Northampton Mercury*, Vol.LXXVI No.4, 4 April 1795, p.3 c.5.

¹³⁴British Library, Add.MS 38,241, f.160, D.S.Cameron to Lord Hawkesbury, 3 July 1805.

¹³⁵*Northampton Mercury*, Vol.LXXVI, No.22, p.3 c.5, Leicester, August 7 1795; Roger Wells, *Wretched Faces: Famine in Wartime England 1793-1801*, p.112.

¹³⁶HO 42/51, Whitmore to Portland (enclosure), 17 September 1800, quoted in J.Stevenson, 'Food Riots in England, 1792-1818', in *Popular Protest and Public Order Six Studies in British History 1790-1920*, Edited by R.Quinault and J.Stevenson, (London, 1974), p.58.

sedition.¹³⁷ He characterised Sheffield as divided between the disloyal, who were organised by the corresponding Society, and the loyal, who had joined the regulars or the volunteers. A testament to the effectiveness of volunteers against riots was provided by 'A sincere Friend to Government' in Inverness. The local volunteer companies had turned out cheerfully against several riots in March and April 1796, on one occasion having fired at part of the crowd, killing one rioter. The following October, the Duke of Portland was warned that several men involved in the riots had proposed forming a volunteer corps of their own, in order to have the power to defend themselves against any attack by the other volunteers.¹³⁸

Volunteers were employed to suppress disturbances involving other military bodies, as when the Oxfordshire Militia rioted at Lewes in 1795. The volunteers of Gosport were later said to have intimidated riotous seamen and driven away lawless men during the mutiny at Spithead in 1797 simply by their formidable appearance when marching through the streets.¹³⁹ During the Luddite disturbances in Shropshire in 1812, it was considered inadvisable to call out any Local Militia regiment in its own neighbourhood, but instead magistrates readily sought the assistance of yeomanry cavalry troops.¹⁴⁰

Yet it cannot be inferred that volunteers were believed to be more trustworthy than regular soldiers or militiamen. The latter were regularly used against civil disturbances. When a range of military forces was available to civil magistrates, volunteers were not always their first resort.¹⁴¹ The Mayor of Banbury, which was threatened by Warwickshire colliers in 1800, believed that the yeomanry were sympathetic to the rioters, and that 'soldiers unconnected with the place are fitter than those immediately connected with it'.¹⁴² The Nottingham corporation considered the regular cavalry to be

¹³⁷British Library, Add.MS 38,241 Liverpool Papers Vol.LII, f.160, D.S.Cameron to Lord Hawkesbury, British Coffee House, 3 July 1805.

¹³⁸HO 50/352, 'A sincere Friend to Government' to Duke of Portland, Inverness, 21 October 1796.

¹³⁹Hampshire Record Office, 11 M 49/234, Robert Forbes, Thomas Whitcombe, John Whitcombe to Lord Bolton, Gosport, 26 April 1802; 11 M 49/234, Thos.Curry to Lord Bolton, Gosport, 20 May 1802.

¹⁴⁰HO 40/1/2, ff.310-311, C.Prescot, Stockport, 27 April 1812, (HO 40/1/1, ff.23-24 a copy); HO 40/1/2, ff.312-313, H.D.Broughton, Cheadle near Manchester, 27 April 1812, (HO 40/1/1, ff.25-26 a copy).

¹⁴¹Robert A.Rizzi, 'The British Army as a Riot Control Force', pp.114-115.

¹⁴²HO 42/51, f.116, quoted in David Stephen Eastwood, 'Governing Rural England. Authority and Social Order in Oxfordshire, 1780-1840', D.Phil.thesis, University of Oxford, 1985, p.221.

of 'superior utility' to the volunteer infantry, and to be more subservient to the purpose of apprehending rioters.¹⁴³ Militia and fencible regiments on occasion were employed rather than the local volunteer or yeomanry corps. Repeated riots in the neighbourhood of Windsor prompted the magistrates to request permission to levy an additional troop of fencible cavalry in the district, which they believed would immediately be filled by men of respectable character. The magistrates appear not to have taken the two local volunteer and one yeomanry corps into consideration.¹⁴⁴

Magistrates' willingness to call in volunteers or regular soldiers varied according to the apparent seriousness of the situation. At Oxford in September 1800 a crowd forced farmers to bring butter to market at a fixed price. The Vice-Chancellor had requested a troop of regular cavalry, but the Town Clerk and the city authorities complained that there was no occasion for the presence of soldiers.¹⁴⁵ The mayor and city association took their presence 'as a Reflection upon themselves'.¹⁴⁶ An anonymous diarist recorded that 'Things were not carried on with that violence as to be thought adviseable to call in the Horse Soldiers, or the Associations, who were also in readiness'.¹⁴⁷ The volunteers concluded that the soldiers had been sent because they could not be trusted to assist the civil authorities. The Home Office was obliged to express its complete confidence in the volunteers and to assure them that the cavalymen were intended to co-operate with them.¹⁴⁸ The implication seems to have been that the use of local armed associations was less unacceptable to the magistrates than the employment of regular soldiers. As the commanding officer of the Light Horse Volunteers pointed out, the volunteer force was free from the constitutional objections which might arise from the use of regular troops in support of magistrates.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴³Mark Pottle, 'Loyalty and Patriotism in Nottingham, 1792-1816', p.179; Roger A.E.Wells, *Riot and Political Disaffection in Nottinghamshire in the Age of Revolutions, 1776-1803: the Origins of Nottinghamshire Radicalism (sic)*, Centre for Local History Occasional Papers No.2, (Nottingham, 1983 [1984]), p.26.

¹⁴⁴Berkshire Record Office, D/ERa 08/2 (5), Wm.Warrington, C.W.Buckner, W.H.Fremantle [to Radnor], (n.p., [c.August 1803]).

¹⁴⁵E.P.Thompson, 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century', *Past & Present*, Number 50, February 1971, pp.129-130.

¹⁴⁶HO 42/51, f.59, quoted in David Stephen Eastwood, 'Governing Rural England. Authority and Social Order in Oxfordshire, 1780-1840', p.220.

¹⁴⁷Bodleian Library, MS Top.Oxon.d.247, Oxford MSS Diary 1739-1817, p.218, 6 September 1800.

¹⁴⁸HO 43/12, pp.106-107, J.King to W.E.Taunton, Town Clerk, Oxford; Whitehall, 8 September 1801.

¹⁴⁹PRO 30/3/10; General Meetings Minutes, p.107, 14 March 1817.

When suppressing disturbances in militia regiments, the employment of volunteers was probably due to a desire to avoid reliance on other militiamen. This was the case even when volunteers were involved in such disturbances. When the majority of three volunteer companies joined rioting crowds at Newton Abbott in 1801, the yeomanry of the neighbourhood were unwilling to come forward because they were unable to resist the volunteers who had been trained to arms.¹⁵⁰

Although they were committed to suppress riots only in the event of an invasion or insurrection, these instances suggest that magistrates generally could rely on volunteer corps to help keep the peace. With some exceptions, volunteers acted against crowds when they attacked property or seized food waggon, not when they sought to fix prices. When volunteers refused to act, or were themselves implicated in riots, the disturbances usually involved setting maximum prices, not the seizure of produce. When the Everly troop of Wiltshire Yeomanry failed to appear at the Salisbury market, it was due to their reluctance to police the enforcement of a new, smaller, grain measure.¹⁵¹ When faced with food riots, it seems that volunteers were in general willing to tolerate the practice whereby farmers could be obliged to sell their produce at fixed prices, but seizure was not condoned. Even when volunteers were prepared to suppress food rioting, they showed little enthusiasm. The admission of the commander of the Pontefract Volunteers was probably typical, that throughout 1800 he had 'trembled at the Idea of Marching out against the Starved Poor, I really felt my self a Coward, & yet I knew it was a Duty I must display Energy in. I only was out twice & thank God the Appearance of Corps threw a Panic upon the poor Starved People.'¹⁵²

The question remains why, if volunteers were potentially unreliable, they continued to be used by the authorities. Volunteers differed significantly in their willingness to take up a policing role. Many had engaged to suppress riots and insurrection in the case of invasion or appearance of an invasion; their peace-keeping activities were voluntary and conditional, and depended to a large extent on the enthusiasm of their officers. Many volunteers appear to have been sympathetic with the aims of food rioters, but, with some exceptions, those who joined riots apparently did so as individuals, not as organised corps. In comparison with the militia and regular army, volun-

¹⁵⁰Devon Record Office, Fortescue MSS, 1262M/L52, Memorial of Riots, April 1801.

¹⁵¹[Henry Hunt], *Memoirs of Henry Hunt, Esq.*, pp.237-253.

¹⁵²HO 50/50, Teesdale Cockell, Pontefract, 25 May [1801].

teers were much less likely to protest as a corps. The corps was only one of several local loyalties for the volunteers, who understandably often sought to avoid confrontation. Usually alone among those military forces used to keep the peace, volunteers and armed associations comprised men who lived in the immediate area of the disturbances. Often their livelihood depended on maintaining good relations with other inhabitants, although sometimes, as in Sheffield, the membership of military and political associations might mirror other and older antagonisms. In essence, magistrates could not presume volunteer assistance in keeping the peace other than during invasion or insurrection. Yet these reservations were in practice nominal; magistrates were much readier to accept volunteer assistance, even when their reliability was doubtful, than to do without it altogether. As Lord Rolle explained in 1797 regarding indications of political unreliability among volunteers, the question did not turn on the merits of the corps but on the necessity of keeping together such bodies of men ready, willing and capable of acting on any emergency.¹⁵³

Apart from the French landing near Fishguard in 1797, volunteers rarely faced armed opponents. Volunteer corps in practice were employed not against invasion, but instead for a wide variety of tasks in support of the civil authorities that were in peacetime performed by the regular army. Coastal volunteer corps commonly helped rescue cargoes from shipwrecks.¹⁵⁴ The Caithness Volunteers were sent to the Orkney Islands to deal with a wrecked Dutch frigate in 1807. The Military Secretary to the Commander-in-Chief complained that as they were employed against the enemy, they should have been commanded by a regular officer, not the magistrates.¹⁵⁵ Magistrates regularly used volunteers in a policing role, for which they were more readily available than militia or regular troops. Volunteers provided a military force which, unlike regular troops, could often be brought into action without reference to the general officer commanding the military district, or the Commander-in-Chief's office at Horse Guards. Even when acting in a military capacity, volunteers appear to have been directed by civil magistrates or officials. Volunteers, like the army, occasionally provided military backing for excise officers. In Penzance, the Collector of Customs asked the newly-formed volunteer company in February 1794 to help his revenue officers seize a large quantity of contraband goods on a beach seven miles away.

¹⁵³HO 50/55, Lord Rolle to Duke of Portland, Bicton, 28 December 1797.

¹⁵⁴HO 51/83, Hawkesbury to C.W.W.Wynn, 13 March 1805.

¹⁵⁵HO 50/459, J.W.Gordon, Horse Guards, 26 March 1807.

The detachment of about thirty volunteers found themselves confronted by smugglers with several cannon, offering every appearance of determined resistance. Three shots were fired before the volunteers captured the cannon, to be then assailed by showers of stones from a vast concourse of smugglers assembled on a nearby height. Only fourteen ankers of spirits could be carried away, so the volunteers destroyed the remaining 200. To this incident has been attributed the ministry's readiness to invite the formation of many more volunteer corps. It was not typical, but did demonstrate the willingness of volunteers to support local authorities at short notice on a relatively informal basis.¹⁵⁶ Despite the readiness of volunteers to assist local magistrates, when they carried out duties normally performed by regular forces, approval was required from the military authorities.

Some volunteer corps were formed specifically with a view to relieve regular soldiers from local military duties. Even in some coastal districts, regular troops were expected to be withdrawn to face an invasion elsewhere, and it was expected that volunteers would be called upon to carry out some of their duties, like escorting prisoners and deserters.¹⁵⁷ The proximity of the French prison at Stapleton prompted the principal inhabitants of the parish of Winterbourne to propose an infantry corps in 1803. The corps was to contribute to the 'Comfort of it's Inhabitants' by performing garrison duty at Bristol and mounting guard at the prison with the Bristol Volunteers if the government withdrew the regular troops from Bristol in the event of an invasion.¹⁵⁸ Volunteers replaced militiamen as guards at the Stapleton prison near Bristol, and were unable to prevent a riot breaking out on the news of the landing at Fishguard in December 1797.¹⁵⁹

Prison, guard and escort duty entailed the War Office, and required the assent of the general officer of the district, and made volunteers subject to the Mutiny Act and entitled to the pay and allowances of regular soldiers. Volunteers could escort French prisoners from Plymouth to Bristol only with the approval of the Commander-in-Chief. Volunteers' military

¹⁵⁶HO 42/29, John Tremenheere to Henry Dundas, London, 4 March 1794; Robert R.Dozier, *For King, Constitution, and Country*, p.137; Clive Emsley, 'The Military and Popular Disorder in England 1790-1801', p.10; see also Northumberland Record Office, St.Paul Butler (Ewart) MSS, ZBU.B8/4, G.Hughes, Middleton Hall, 9 January 1801.

¹⁵⁷HO 51/86, f.30, Spencer to Earl of Aylesford, 2 August 1806; HO 50/51, Jacob Nelson to Earl of Derby, Liverpool, 18 August 1801.

¹⁵⁸(sic), HO 50/71, H[ugh] Vaughan to Earl of Berkeley, Frenchay, 28 July 1803, (enclosure); Mayor and Aldermen of Bristol to Berkeley, 5 October 1803; David Evans, Mayor of Bristol, to Charles Yorke, 10 November 1803.

¹⁵⁹E.H.Stuart Jones, *The Last Invasion of Britain*, pp.135-136.

activity, then, was treated as quite distinct from their assistance of the civil magistrates.¹⁶⁰ During the trial of Arthur O'Connor at Maidstone in 1798, the town's volunteers formed a guard each night on the state prisoners.¹⁶¹

Most military activity on the part of volunteers was the result of purely local initiative. When in 1800 the mayor of Henley received an anonymous letter threatening to burn and pillage the town, he asked the local armed association to carry out nightly patrols.¹⁶² Even when no immediate threat was apparent, patrols were intended to have an intimidatory aspect. Exploratory parties of the London and Westminster Light Horse Volunteers were instructed not to separate before they reached their headquarters for the convenience of taking a shorter route home. Much of the effect the corps wished to produce arose from a formidable appearance in passing through the streets in which they probably would have to act in case of insurrection, and a half-manned party had an irregular and unmilitary appearance.¹⁶³

Preparations to face invasion and insurrection were treated as different facets of the same activity. The Light Horse Volunteers systematically organised exploratory patrols within twelve miles radius of St. Paul's. Each troop was to make four patrols during its month of duty. Parties of between ten and twenty men were instructed to explore outlying districts for three to six hours, and to report on the condition of roads and bridges, and the nature of the countryside and towns with a view to their defensibility. The 'country people' were consulted about whether rivers were fordable, potential strong-points, lookout-posts and places of ambush were identified, and maps of the routes explored were entered in a book of reports. On a circuit of 28 miles to Chipping Barnet, note was made of a windmill from which signals could be made, and Pember's Cave near Chislehurst in which robbers had until recently secreted themselves.¹⁶⁴ At convenient open spaces on the routes, patrols stopped to practice shooting at targets, without conspicuous skill. At Ham Common, fifteen men of the third troop lodged in the target only six pistol shots out of nearly seventy that were fired, but the first troop hit their target at Hampstead Heath with nearly half of their shots.¹⁶⁵ The

¹⁶⁰HO 51/81, ff.409-410, Hawkesbury to Earl Poulett, 2 October 1804; HO 51/81, f.473, Hawkesbury to Earl Poulett, 18 October 1804.

¹⁶¹HO 42/43, f.314, Lord Romney, The Mote, 25 May 1798.

¹⁶²HO 42/49, f.393, Jos. Jackson, Wimpole Street, 1 April 1800.

¹⁶³PRO 30/3/27, f.119 Report of the patrol of the dismounted L.H.V., 25 April 1799.

¹⁶⁴PRO 30/3/28, L.H.V. Orderly Book, General Regulations, pp.65-80; PRO 30/3/27, Reports of Patrols of L.H.V. 1799, pp.1-25, 64, 95.

¹⁶⁵PRO 30/3/27, Reports of Patrols of L.H.V., pp.4, 57, 125.

appearance of the troop was likely to make a greater impression than the accuracy of their shooting, however. It made preparation against invasion visible in country districts and gave the appearance of military planning and organisation. Military activity was still expected to spread alarm. The Light Horse Volunteers were instructed to march at a walk or a slow trot without noise, hurry or bustle, not to stop in villages, and to be careful not to create any alarm.¹⁶⁶

Part Four: The Volunteers as an Anti-invasion Force

The principal emergency anticipated by volunteers was an invasion and the insurrection that was expected to accompany one. Volunteers originally were intended as static defensive forces, invited in 1794 to man coastal batteries and defend the principal coastal towns against raiding or invasion attempts. Later, a defensive strategy developed. Part of the force was to reinforce the regular army against invasion while the remainder carried out evacuation, guard and police duties. Until 1798 official plans were to use the volunteers only for reinforcing coastal garrisons and to relieve regular troops for active service. From April 1798, volunteer corps were incorporated in national defence preparations. Volunteer corps were asked to extend their service beyond their respective home counties to their military districts, and to engage for periods of paid full-time duty and training. Inspecting Field Officers were appointed to report on corps' state of training and suitability to act with troops of the line. Armed associations were formed to take over the volunteers' local role. A clear distinction was made between unpaid armed associations which would remain at home in the event of an invasion, and mostly paid volunteer and yeomanry corps which would serve within their military districts. The rapid transformation in 1798 from localised corps to bodies committed to national defence made easier the final incorporation of the volunteers into a national strategy against invasion in 1803–1804.

At that stage, military planning for the event of an invasion assigned a subsidiary role to the volunteers. Official plans for the employment of volunteer and yeomanry corps in the event of an invasion did not foresee them primarily facing invading forces. In coastal districts immediately threatened, volunteers were to carry out the evacuation of civilians and livestock, and the destruction of crops and animals that could not be removed in time.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁶PRO 30/3/28, L.H.V. Orderly Book, General Regulations, p.65.

¹⁶⁷Hampshire Record Office, 11 M 49/231, G.H.Kore to Lord Bolton, Christchurch, 19 August 1801; HO 42/46, ff.132–133, Charles Grey, 16 February 1798.

In Hampshire, each yeomanry corps was assigned a district from which it was to drive cattle, and then return to help defend the coast. Nearly 1000 men from ten infantry corps were to be stationed at Portchester Castle, while the remaining corps were to preserve order and tranquillity in their own neighbourhoods.¹⁶⁸

The greater part of the volunteer force of the inland counties was to assemble on the capital or the threatened coasts in the event of a general alarm of invasion. Relays of waggons and coaches were to bring infantry from distant counties to a circle of stations in towns all but two of which were between 60 and 70 miles from London, from where they were to be transported by post carriages. The least efficient proportion of each infantry corps, varying from a fifth to a third and including men incapable of fatiguing marches and those with the largest families, was to remain behind for the internal defence of the country. All yeomanry cavalry was to remain stationary to assist the civil power by carrying out patrols and other police duties, by collecting carriages, escorting supplies and by conveying intelligence.¹⁶⁹

'Proposals for rendering the Body of the People Instrumental to the General Defence, in case of Invasion' were sent to all lieutenants of maritime counties on 24 June 1803. In the event of a successful enemy landing, the plans made provision for driving the country within fifteen miles of the coast. Returns were prepared for each parish of the numbers of livestock and amounts of agricultural produce that were to be removed or destroyed. The nobility, gentry and yeomanry were asked to subscribe offers of waggons and carts, with horses, conductors, drivers and fodder, for evacuating the coasts. Proprietors and masters of barges and boats were asked to aid the public service by the conveyance of troops or stores. Millers and bakers engaged to ensure a regular supply of flour and bread. All able bodied men not already in volunteer associations were encouraged to offer their personal service in return for indemnification of property destroyed to prevent it falling into enemy hands. Bodies of 25 to 35 men aged 15 to 60 were to be formed once an invasion had taken place 'to act in a desultory Warfare in

¹⁶⁸Hampshire Record Office, 11 M 49/231, Lieutenant General Edmund Stevens to Lord Bolton, 22 July 1801.

¹⁶⁹WO 1/629, ff.59-64, Commander-in-Chief, Horse Guards, 11 August 1804, (circular); Northamptonshire Record Office, Clarke of Welton MSS, C(W)231, Henry Warde to Lieut.Col.Clarke, Northampton, 10 September 1804, (circular); Buckinghamshire Record Office, L/V:5/45, Nugent Buckingham to Lieutenants of the middle regiment of Buckinghamshire, Stowe, 4 February 1804.

Aid of the Regular Force'. Unarmed inhabitants were encouraged to form companies of pioneers or labourers. Small mounted corps of guides were to be 'chosen from amongst the most intelligent Residentees in the Parish'. In August 1803 plans were issued to coastal counties to enrol seafaring men under the direction of the Admiralty as Sea Fencibles.¹⁷⁰

By October 1803, French invasion plans were believed to be sufficiently advanced for preparations to be made to put yeomanry and volunteer corps in coastal counties on permanent duty in coastal ports in rotation as a precaution for two or three months. Lords lieutenant were asked to give their opinion whether any corps 'may be inclined *voluntarily* to assemble themselves under Arms'. The King was empowered to invite volunteers voluntarily to assemble and march on the appearance of an invasion, but he could compel their service only when an enemy force appeared on the coast, or had invaded.¹⁷¹

The official emphasis on both keeping order and a direct anti-invasion role for the volunteers produced some confusion. The Sheriff of Inverness-shire told the lord lieutenant in 1797 that the government's intentions in establishing additional volunteer companies were not understood in the county. It was not clear whether the volunteers were intended to provide a sufficient force for repelling a serious invasion on any part of the coast, or whether it was intended only to defend the country against internal commotion or minor attacks by privateers. The Sheriff and local gentlemen did not anticipate a serious invasion on the western coast in either case.¹⁷²

In the event of an invasion, volunteer corps in inland districts were to march towards the coast to rendezvous at predetermined places. Only a proportion of each corps was to be left in its home county. Plans were considered by the War Office to divide the volunteers into moveable companies for active service and stationary companies for policing duties.¹⁷³

¹⁷⁰[House of Commons], *Papers, Presented to the House of Commons, Pursuant to Orders of the 9th and 10th Instant, By Mr. Secretary Yorke, respecting the Volunteer System*, (London, 1804), pp.12-30, 37-39; National Army Museum, 8108-15-15 Newcastle upon Tyne Orders and Regulations, 15 March 1804; HO 50/357, Returns for Subdivisions of the County of Kent, 22 July 1803.

¹⁷¹[House of Commons], *Papers, Presented to the House of Commons, Pursuant to Orders of the 9th and 10th Instant, By Mr. Secretary Yorke, respecting the Volunteer System*, pp.61-62; HO 51/120, pp.30-34, C.Yorke, 12 October 1803, (circular).

¹⁷²HO 50/352, James Grant to Duke of Portland, Castle Grant, 16 June 1797.

¹⁷³National Army Museum, 6911-4-6, Home Defence, f.550, Yorke to Commander-in-Chief, 19 November 1803; Shropshire Record Office, Viscount Bridgeman Lieutenancy Papers, 1310/61, Capt.Wm.Cox, Quarter Master General North Western District, to Lord

Contemporaries believed volunteers' preparedness and willingness to face an invasion was demonstrated by their response to the various alarms of French landings. Most of these false alarms were in late 1803 and early 1804, but as late as August 1805, the Rotherham Infantry assembled within twelve hours of receiving an alarm of a beacon mistakenly lit; mustered its waggons and marched more than 22 miles towards the coast. The Home Secretary expressed his satisfaction at the zeal and alacrity of the corps which had responded to the alarm. He believed it had shown the volunteers' state of preparation and eagerness to meet the enemy.¹⁷⁴

Though confusion persisted over plans for employing the volunteers in the event of an invasion, it was clear from the beginning that the role of volunteers was to be a subsidiary one.¹⁷⁵ The 'well-known Military & Literary character'¹⁷⁶ Alexander Dirom, Deputy Quarter Master General in North Britain, published in 1797 his apparently influential plans for defence against invasion. He assigned to volunteers responsibility for driving coastal districts, the destruction of supplies useful to an enemy, and for maintaining communications. Dirom thought it impossible that an invading force would get far inland if opposed by regular forces and pioneers in front, and by yeomanry cavalry and volunteer infantry, with light troops, 'to gall their flanks and harass their rear'. Each division of the army was to be backed up by the volunteers of the neighbouring counties. On the march of a division to oppose an enemy landing, part of the volunteer force was to join the regular forces, and part to help clear the country of whatever might be useful to the invaders.¹⁷⁷

The wide variety of corps' terms of service complicated plans for their employment, and was seen to be the principal limitation of their effectiveness against an invasion. Because many corps engaged to serve only in their immediate area or county, it was argued in Scotland that they could not be depended upon to repel invasion. The corps were chained like Prometheus

Clive, [n.d.].

¹⁷⁴HO 51/85, Hawkesbury to Bacon Frank, 22 August 1805; Erin McCawley Renn, 'British Civil and Military Preparations Against Napoleon's Planned Invasion 1803-1805', pp.318-321.

¹⁷⁵Erin McCawley Renn, 'British Civil and Military Preparations Against Napoleon's Planned Invasion 1803-1805', pp.64-65, 375.

¹⁷⁶*The Letters of Robert Burns*, Edited by G.Ross Kay, Vol.II, p.356, Letter No.670, R[obert] B[urns] to George Thomson, Edinburgh, [May 1795].

¹⁷⁷Lieut.-Col.[Alexander] Dirom, *Plans for the Defence of Great Britain and Ireland*, (Edinburgh, 1797), pp.14-15, 50-53, 58-59; Dundas' copy.

to their own rocks, at the mercy of the French vultures.¹⁷⁸ Official pressure was put on volunteers to agree to serve to the limits of their military district in the event of an invasion or the appearance of an invasion force. Even those corps that had not agreed to do so were widely expected to waive all limitations of service when an emergency arose.¹⁷⁹ The substance of all official and unofficial plans for the employment of volunteers during an invasion was that they were both to assist in driving the country and local policing, and to reinforce the regular troops.

Regulations for the preservation of good order to be adopted in the case of an invasion were issued by the Home Secretary in August 1804. Volunteers were to be assisted by trustworthy householders, enrolled as special constables, in preventing and quelling disturbances, escorting prisoners, and guarding gaols. Livestock and produce were to be escorted if necessary to ensure the regular supply of markets. Volunteers were to assist constables in policing districts at night, and in ensuring that public houses were orderly and regularly conducted.¹⁸⁰

Little consideration appears to have been given to the details of these duties by the volunteers, however. The Duke of Richmond believed that in the event of an invasion, gentlemen of the yeomanry cavalry would feel more gratified if they were employed directly against the enemy rather than retiring with the cattle.¹⁸¹ Corps were formed with the expectation that they would fight an invasion alongside regular troops and the militia and little consideration was given to their likely duties in driving the country. Volunteer training was in the manual exercise and shooting, not in co-ordinating evacuations. The manuals for volunteer corps of infantry and cavalry published by the War Office in 1803 recommended the same regulations for formations and exercise as the regular cavalry and light infantry. One unofficial set of rules addressed to yeomanry corps acknowledged that some deviations from the practice of the regular cavalry were unavoidable, because of the nature of the institution and their untrained horses, but such deviations were to be minimal.¹⁸² Suggestions were included for small corps to take advantage of natural features in order to obstruct an invading force,

¹⁷⁸Scottish Record Office, GD 51/897, Extract of a letter from Mr.Dempster to David Scott, Forfar, 6 January 1798.

¹⁷⁹*Portsmouth Gazette*, No.169, 26 September 1796, p.3 c.3, Chichester, September 24.

¹⁸⁰HO 50/121, pp.148–159, Lord Hawkesbury, Circular to all counties, 20 August 1804.

¹⁸¹Hampshire Record Office, 11 M 49/231, Duke of Richmond to Lord Hobart, 14 August 1801, (copy).

¹⁸²Sir W.Young, *Instructions for the Armed Yeomanry*, ([n.p.], 1798), p.6.

but these were equally applicable to the militia or regular troops.¹⁸³ The Light Horse Volunteers of London and Westminster published its standing orders in book form for internal use in 1805. Its regulations, to be followed when on service under arms or in uniform, briefly made provision for urban riot control and the escorting of prisoners, provisions or forage. The emphasis, however, was on military preparation against invasion. Regulations were set out for mounting guards and picquets, parade drills and manoeuvres, marches and rifle firing practice. Reconnoitring parties were sent out to report on the defensibility of the countryside within twelve miles of London.¹⁸⁴

Yet it was acknowledged that volunteers were more likely to be called on to deal with civil disorder than an invasion. Francis Eliot, a major in the Staffordshire Volunteer Light Cavalry, setting out field instructions for his corps, chose those most likely to be of use in quelling a riot in the streets and squares of a manufacturing town, 'where (if ever) we are most likely to be called into action'.¹⁸⁵ Because they would most probably act 'against casual and temporary mobs of foot people' armed with bludgeons, or unarmed, 'The volunteers should accustom themselves to aim their cuts low, on account of acting against adversaries below their own level.'¹⁸⁶

The question of the volunteers' effectiveness against potential adversaries was not usually addressed. Regular soldiers were inclined to be dismissive of the value of volunteer forces. A story was circulating in London in 1803 that Pitt, himself commander of the Cinque Ports Volunteers, had remarked to General Moore, who commanded the coastal forces from Dover to Deal, that the volunteers would be in aid of him. "Yes", replied the General, "I should place you on the heights to see us (*the regulars*) fight it out."¹⁸⁷ Joseph Farington later asked a former pupil, *aide du camp* to General Hewitt, what he thought of the volunteers. He replied that they might do very well for the home service, to keep the country quiet, and for subordinate purposes, but would be very inadequate to meet the enemy without further

¹⁸³[War Office], *A Manual for Volunteer Corps of Infantry*, (London, 1803), pp.103-108, figs.1-7.

¹⁸⁴*Standing Orders for The Light Horse Volunteers of London and Westminster*, pp.124-125, 128-131, 134-135, 138-139, 142-145, 152-158, 161-162, 165-172, 187-195, 204-207.

¹⁸⁵Francis Percival Eliot, *Six Letters on the subject of the Armed Yeomanry*, pp.60-61.

¹⁸⁶Francis Percival Eliot, *Six Letters on the subject of the Armed Yeomanry*, pp.121-122, 124, 224.

¹⁸⁷*The Diary of Joseph Farington*, edited by Kenneth Garlick and Angus Macintyre, Volume VI p.2140, 9 October 1803; Erin McCawley Renn, 'British Civil and Military Preparations Against Napoleon's Planned Invasion 1803-1805', p.227.

training.¹⁸⁸ A regular cavalry officer thought the City Light Horse, the élite of the metropolitan corps, would be useful to relieve the regulars by taking care of prisoners and baggage, and keeping the people in order, but were too loose and disorderly for duty against an enemy.¹⁸⁹

Volunteers themselves sometimes readily acknowledged their military weaknesses. Francis Eliot avoided comparing the yeomanry with regular soldiers, admitting that comparison on points of tactical science or general military utility would expose the former's weaknesses. To criticise the volunteers' military knowledge would be to '*break a butterfly upon the wheel.*' They were preferable to other armed forces solely for local and temporary defence, and were superior only for internal defence, preserving the peace and suppressing incipient riot and insurrection in their neighbourhood.¹⁹⁰

Conclusions:

An assessment of the effectiveness and reliability of the volunteers must take into account the purpose of the force and its responsibilities. Corps established principally to face the threat of invasion found they were integrated into a national defensive strategy that assigned them a subsidiary role, evacuating coastal districts and maintaining civil order. The administration saw peacekeeping and defence against invasion as aspects of the same role, but many volunteers made a clear distinction between opposing external enemies and maintaining an internal police. This division was reflected most clearly in the ambiguity in the civil responsibilities acknowledged by the force: 'the volunteers, in spite of the often counter-revolutionary tone of their articles of enrolment, were never seriously disposed to act in their localities as a vigilante or police force.'¹⁹¹

It is attractive to take the several examples of volunteer unreliability against rioting as symptomatic of the general disaffection of the force. Yet it is important to acknowledge that not all corps saw peace-keeping as part of their responsibilities, they having enrolled to defend their localities against insurrection and tumults resulting from invasion only. The spectacular nature of some volunteers' involvement in rioting should not obscure the gen-

¹⁸⁸ *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, edited by Kenneth Garlick and Angus Macintyre, Vol. VI pp. 2155–2156, 6 November 1803; Vol. VI, p. 2402, 2 September 1804.

¹⁸⁹ *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, edited by Kenneth Garlick and Angus Macintyre, Vol. VI, p. 2153, 1 November 1803.

¹⁹⁰ Francis Percival Eliot, *Six Letters on the subject of the Armed Yeomanry*, pp. 78–79.

¹⁹¹ John Cookson, 'Patriotism and Social Structure: the Ely Volunteers, 1798–1808', p. 5.

eral willingness of corps to act voluntarily for the maintenance of public order at the requisition of local magistracies. When volunteers were not called in to deal with disturbances, it is often dangerous to draw the conclusion that this was because they were thought unreliable. The willingness of local authorities to employ volunteers against public disorder most often simply reflected the severity of the situation and the availability of regular troops. The readiness of volunteer corps to act varied according to their perception of the justice of the cause.

Wide scale absenteeism or refusals to act were confined largely to requests for action against food rioters, with whom volunteers appear to have had some sympathy. Corps, however, rarely failed to assist in the maintenance of public order in the face of attacks on property.

If volunteer corps' response to demands made upon them to maintain civil order is made a test of the validity of the warnings about potential volunteer disaffection, then those fears appear to have been exaggerated. The allegations that democratic internal organisation and plebeian membership would lead to disaffection and readiness to resist the demands of the state do not in general seem to have been borne out. Even when food rioting is considered, the larger and less socially exclusive force of 1803 and subsequent years was much less unreliable than its predecessor, although by then closer attention was given to limiting volunteer autonomy.

Chapter Eight: 'Citizen-Soldiers': The Public Face of Volunteering

To place the attitudes and activities of volunteer corps in a wider perspective, this chapter will consider the place volunteering occupied in public life. It explores the relationship between the volunteers and their communities, including both the ideals and image they sought to project and the image they acquired. The relationship between the volunteers and their corps is also considered. This was based on a combination of professionalism, clientage, egalitarianism and conviviality. These two relationships are connected by the parallel concern of corps for their members' welfare and for what they believed was the public good. The volunteers' belief that they were carrying out a social duty, both in local defence and in contributing to public welfare, serves to explain many of their attitudes towards policing duties.

Volunteers' uneasy position between the military and civilian worlds forced them to define their position with regard to both. On the whole, they emphasised their civilian status. They adopted the ideal of the citizen-soldier, believing that it had been abandoned by the militia, which during the wars had weakened its territorial basis and had become increasingly a recruiting reserve for the regular army. Volunteers countered charges that they were based on the same principles as the French *Armées Révolutionnaires* by arguing that these had perverted the idea of the *citoyen-soldat*. Principal among the features of volunteers' self-image as citizen-soldiers was that, though carrying out the same duties as professional soldiers, they remained fundamentally civilians with all the liberties that entailed.

The public face of volunteering will be explored under three broad headings. First, the place of volunteering in public life is considered in relation to corps' public civil and military activity. Part of the explicit function of a corps was to impress the potentially disaffected with the strength of its military display. As a consequence, urban corps, as strongly communal organisations, played an important part in expressing and reinforcing local consciousness and identity. This is demonstrated most clearly in volunteer participation in the civic ritual surrounding the commemoration of royal anniversaries, military victories, thanksgivings and fast days. Many volunteer activities, including mass reviews, exercises and sham battles, were designed to combine public spectacle with the appearance of substantial support for the prosecution of the war and confidence in British defences.

Second, the relationship between the volunteers and their communities

is illustrated by both their self-image and the image they sought to project publicly. Volunteers frequently insisted that they were not military men, emphasising the fundamentally civilian and local nature of their corps. They stressed the voluntary and conditional nature of their service. The civil aspect of volunteer organisation was a vital part of its constitutional nature. The principal means by which the purpose and philosophy of volunteering were promoted publicly was by the publication of sermons addressed to individual corps. Many presented the volunteers as a non-partisan expression of national unanimity, uniting men of all ranks in a fraternal system against a threat to the survival of the nation. The image of corps as fraternal societies is clarified in the third section, which considers the relationship between volunteers and their corps. Volunteers adopted those aspects of military life that did not conflict with the essentially civil nature of their organisation. Messes and tattoos appear to have been adopted primarily for their convivial aspects rather than their military value. Uniforms both advertised volunteers' military pretensions and made clear the limits to them. Uniform attracted both the greatest ridicule from outsiders for failing to match the standards of real soldiers and the most concern from volunteers who wished to avoid too close an identification with the regular forces.

Finally, volunteers' relationships with their corps, and the corps' place in the wider community, are explained. Internal loyalties were often strong, combining ties of clientage with a sense of corporate egalitarianism. Corps often acted as if they were private societies under the patronage of their commanding officers, and expected considerate treatment and entertainment in return. Yet there was often also a marked absence of overt social stratification within corps. By convention, private men were addressed as gentlemen; it was assumed that they were literate and individually responsible. The acceptance of collective responsibility for volunteers' welfare was paralleled by concern for public welfare.

For the volunteer force to become a highly visible component of a 'party of order' it had to reconcile two distinct roles, military and civil. Corps were organised primarily to face an invasion, but in practice much of their visible public activity was linked with the maintenance of public order and largely ceremonial activities supporting municipal and governmental authority. Volunteers' civil activity was seen to be as important as their military role because both helped maintain civil order. The two anticipated functions of the yeomanry cavalry were to 'quell a sudden and unpremeditated riot; or by the known loyalty and steady appearance of the troops on their field

days, to keep in awe the discontented spirits of the kingdom'.¹

Because volunteering was predominantly urban until at least 1803, it 'was closely tied up with the concerns of urban elites and rulers and the growth of urban consciousness.'² Town corps had the appearance of communal organisations because they were organised by public meetings and partially funded by local subscription, but they had been initiated and were effectively controlled by local leaders. Volunteer associations were used for displays of communal solidarity while visibly bolstering the established order. Town corps played a prominent role in the civic ritual associated with anniversaries, victory celebrations, thanksgiving days and fast days. These were a conspicuous part of the eighteenth century development of patriotic civic ceremonial and public spectacle for the commemoration of political or military events and anniversaries.³

Volunteers' public activities had social and political connotations just as much as military purpose. The civil aspect of volunteer organisation was seen as an important part of its constitutional nature. The civil and military characters of these 'citizen-soldiers' were kept quite distinct. The Duke of York, Commander-in-Chief, thanking the volunteer corps reviewed in Hyde Park on the King's birthday in 1800, expressed the King's approbation of them as soldiers, but also testified to their merits in their civil capacities.⁴ A military character had been acquired by civilian men, but only for specific, limited purposes. The volunteers of Newcastle and Gateshead declared that they, 'to the Characters we respectively hold in Civil Life have united a Military one in Support of Order and Good Government'.⁵ The Bath Regiment of Volunteer infantry escorted the King on a visit to the city 'in their Military Capacity'.⁶ Observers emphasised the fundamentally civilian and local nature of volunteer membership. When the Oxford Loyal Volunteers returned from a review at Reading, an anonymous diarist recorded that they received the acclamations of their 'fellow Citizens'. After a breakfast provided by the mayor and corporation, they retired to their normal occupations.⁷ Civilian

¹ Francis Percival Eliot, *Six Letters on the subject of the Armed Yeomanry*, p.2.

² John Cookson, 'The English Volunteer Movement of the French Wars, 1793-1815: Some Contexts', p.12.

³ John Cookson, 'The English Volunteer Movement of the French Wars, 1793-1815: Some Contexts', pp.12-13; Kathleen Wilson, 'The Rejection of Deference: Urban Political Culture in England, 1715-1785', D.Phil.thesis, Yale University, 1985, pp.8-10.

⁴ *London Chronicle*, Vol.LXXXVII, No.6434, 5-7 June 1800, p.537 c.2.

⁵ *London Gazette*, No.13835, 21-24 November 1795, pp.1272-1273.

⁶ HO 51/85, p.80, Hawkesbury to Earl Poulett, Whitehall, 17 June 1805.

⁷ Bodleian Library, MS Top.Oxon.d.247, p.238, 30 July 1804.

and domestic responsibilities were emphasised in pointed contrast to volunteers' military duties. As one London volunteer rhymed,

Dismiss'd from duty, each his time employs
In urgent business, or domestic joys;⁸

Late Victorian volunteering similarly was portrayed in terms of domesticity. The morality and settled habits fostered by volunteering were contrasted with the dissoluteness and immorality of the regular army. It has been argued that late nineteenth century volunteer rhetoric took this line so far as to be predominantly opposed to the regular military forces.⁹ In a published collection of letters on the armed yeomanry, Major Francis Eliot of the Staffordshire Volunteer Cavalry depicted the volunteer cavalry 'not as a military corps, but as a body of arm'd constables; a sort of *Posse Comitatus*; exemplifying in real practice what the miserable jargon of French theorists has denominated *Citoyens-Soldats*.'¹⁰ The members of the Ely Armed Association did not believe themselves to be 'part of the military Force of the Kingdom, but only Inhabitant Householders associating for the Defence of each other'.¹¹ When a Local Militia sergeant appealed to the Reading Volunteers as 'Townsmen and Soldiers', he was told 'Damn you We are not Soldiers.'¹² Nor did others class volunteers with ordinary soldiers. The rules of a friendly society at Chenies in Buckinghamshire, which excluded soldiers and sailors, were amended to allow members to join the county volunteers or yeomanry.¹³

⁸ *Soldiers' Fare, or Patriotism and Hospitality. A Poem. Respectfully Inscribed to Robert Wigram, Esq. M.P. Lieutenant Colonel-Commandant of the 6th Regiment L[oyal].L[ondon].V[olunteers]. By A Volunteer*, (London, [1805]), p.10.

⁹ Patricia Morton, 'A Military Irony: The Victorian Volunteer Movement', *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies*, Vol.131, No.3, September 1986, pp.66-67.

¹⁰ Francis Percival Eliot, *Six Letters on the subject of the Armed Yeomanry*, p.79.

¹¹ British Library, Add.MSS 35,670, Hardwicke Papers, Vol.CCCXXII, Nathan Spooner [to Hardwicke], Ely, 16 May 1798.

¹² HO 50/210, Edw.Hawkins affidavit, 12 June 1809, quoted in S.C.Smith, 'Loyalty and Opposition in the Napoleonic Wars', p.240.

¹³ Buckinghamshire Record Office, Q/RSf.22, Orders to be observed and kept by a Friendly Society, Held at the Goat, at Chenies, 24 September 1797.

Part One: Public Activity

Volunteer activities attracted public attention and were sometimes designed to demonstrate support for the established order and the prosecution of the war. Volunteer corps were prominent in the commemoration of royal anniversaries, in the celebration of military and naval victories, and days of national thanksgiving and of humiliation. The great bulk of volunteer activity, however, involved regular training and exercise. Exercises and ceremonial were organised to provide a public spectacle in addition to their military purposes. Drills were held regularly in public squares and market places. Troops were trained in five elements of the drill: the 'manual exercise' — the sequence of movements involved in loading and firing, and ceremonial movements — in the 'platoon exercise' of firing volleys, in firing from different attitudes, in 'evolutions' — short, precise movements performed in rank and file, and in manoeuvres.¹⁴ Incidental references indicate these were often public spectacles, despite the injunction of one manual to hold meetings 'in some retired situation, so as to preclude idle spectators.'¹⁵ At Stockport in 1798 a crowd of men, women and children came to see the local corps exercise.¹⁶ The Oxford Loyal Volunteers made provision for finding any volunteer for 'appearing as a Byestander only' when the corps was on duty.¹⁷

¹⁴J.A.Houlding, *Fit For Service The Training of the British Army, 1715-1795*, pp.160-161.

¹⁵*The Soldier's Companion: containing Instructions for the Drill, Manual, and Platoon Exercise, as commanded by his Majesty: intended for the use of The Volunteers of this Country. To which are prefixed a few Observations on first forming a Military Corps.* (London, [1803]), 'General Observations for Military Corps Serving Gratuitously'; *Journal of a Somerset Rector 1803-1834 John Skinner, A.M. Antiquary 1772-1839 Parochial Affairs of the Parish of Camerton British Museum Manuscripts Nos.33635-33728 & EG.3099F-3123F*, Edited by Howard and Peter Coombs, Revised Edition, (Kingsmead, Bath, 1971), p.11; George Hanger, *A Letter to the Right Hon.Lord Castlereagh, Secretary of State, &c.&c.&c. from Colonel George Hanger; proving how one hundred and fifty thousand men, as well disciplined as any regiment of the line need be, may be acquired in the short space of two months; with Instructions to the Volunteers, informing them what they are, what they are not, and what they may very easily, and in a short time, be made. To which is added a Plan for the formation of a corps of Consolidated Marksmen; with a dissertation on light troops, regulars, marksmen, riflemen, and rifle shooting*, (London, 1808), p.49.

¹⁶HO 50/331, Holland Watson to Earl of Stamford and Warrington, Stockport, 3 August 1798.

¹⁷Bodleian Library, MS Top.Oxon.e.241, Minutes of the Oxford Loyal Volunteers 1798-1801, p.44.

Spectacular sham battles attracted large crowds; the hundreds who watched one at Portobello near Edinburgh in 1804 saw the volunteers reassuringly beat back an attack from 24 gunboats and a lugger.¹⁸ George Cruikshank recounted his involvement in a sham battle as if it were a convivial entertainment: 'Such fighting! such fun! such fine weather!'¹⁹

Frequently drills were held on Sundays after church, when the men were not at work and so most easily mustered, and when many bystanders were likely. Objections on religious and conscientious grounds were sometimes made. The Lutterworth, Shepshed and Mountsorrel corps agreed in 1803 not to exercise on Sundays except in cases of necessity. Instead, a subscription was raised to pay the members who could not afford to lose the time spent exercising on a weekday. The *Leicester Journal* was dismissive of such conscientious reservations, arguing that as Sunday exercise did not interfere with religious duties, even the most pious Christian could not find a fair objection.²⁰ One anonymous Christian, however, complained to Shute Barrington, Bishop of Durham, that volunteers were exercising during the hours of divine service, and tending to destroy every sense of devotion. Moreover, the evening tattoo on Sunday was followed by a large number of young people, dancing and singing in the most lascivious and wanton manner, so he complained, almost to the point of public riot. On these occasions, the correspondent told the Bishop, Durham seemed to exhibit one continued scene of the utmost profligacy, profaneness, immorality and vice. Nor were the volunteers themselves blameless. Their official allowance was paid on Sundays, so the alehouses became crowded with drunken men whose insolence was almost beyond control.²¹

The arrangement of musters implied a close connection between the volunteer organisation and the established church. The Loyal Lincolnshire

¹⁸National Library of Scotland, MS 735, Diary of Edward Kerr of Kilstay, pp.21-29; J.A.Houlding, *Fit For Service The Training of the British Army, 1715-1795*, p.287; Erin McCawley Renn, 'British Civil and Military Preparations Against Napoleon's Planned Invasion 1803-1805', pp.290-291.

¹⁹George Cruikshank, *A Pop-Gun fired off by George Cruikshank, in defence of the British volunteers of 1803, against the uncivil attack upon that body by General W.Napier; to which are added some observations upon our National Defences, Self-Defence, Etc.Etc.Etc.*, (London, n.d.), pp.31-32.

²⁰*Leicester Journal*, No.2646, 26 August 1803, p.3 c.5.; No.2647, 2 September 1803, p.3 c.4.

²¹HO 50/54, [Anonymous] to Bishop of Durham, Durham, 22 March 1802, pp.1-4; See also *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, edited by Kenneth Garlick and Angus Macintyre, Vol. V, p.1618, 13 September 1801.

Villagers ruled that attendance at divine service was part of their Sunday duty.²² The St.Andrew, Holborn, and St.George the Martyr Volunteers were ordered to attend St.George's church in full uniform with side arms on a general fast day in 1803. After the service, the regiment was to march back to the parade ground, to be dismissed for half an hour, then reassemble for a general muster and field day.²³

The presentations of standards to the corps were designed to attract a large audience with spectacle and entertainments; pavilions and refreshments were provided. At a ball at Cheltenham in 1800 'the chief of the fashionables' danced till six in the morning, then set off to attend the presentation of colours to the Cirencester corps.²⁴ As 'Anti-Charlatan' complained to *Cobbett's Political Register*, newspapers constantly reported the 'presentation of colours by Lady Somebody, to her husband, who commands the corps, with neat and appropriate speeches, and elegant breakfasts in marquees, afterwards, &c.&c.'²⁵ Tickets were sold for some ceremonies, so the audience expected to be entertained.²⁶ Two separate ceremonies were held in public meadows adjoining Oxford within three weeks of each other in July 1798 for the presentation of colours to the university and city volunteer corps. The university corps' colours were given by the Duke of Portland and presented by Countess Harcourt, while the Oxford Loyal Volunteers received a standard from the Duke of Marlborough, lord lieutenant, presented by Lady Mackworth, wife of the commanding officer. In each case, a sermon was preached, and then manœuvres were performed by the volunteers and the regular troops and armed associations also present. In the evening, the university corps held a ball attended by the Secretary at War, while the city corps provided an entertainment for more than 400 of the volunteers and their friends.²⁷

With only minor variations, the same form of ceremony was performed

²²Cecil Sebag-Montefiore, *A History of the Volunteer Forces*, p.221, p.399 Appendix H.

²³HO 51/113, St.Andrew and St.George's Volunteers Orderly Book, p.8, 13 October 1803; Cecil Sebag-Montefiore, *A History of the Volunteer Forces*, p.393 Appendix F.

²⁴*Bell's Weekly Messenger*, No.225, p.259 c.1-2, 17 August 1800, Cheltenham, August 14.

²⁵*Cobbett's Political Register*, Vol.IV, pp.676-677, To the Editor, 'Anti-Charlatan', Bristol, 5 November 1803.

²⁶National Army Museum, 7805-12, Ealing and Brentford Volunteers, f.99, W.Perkin to Col.Drinkwater, 19 October 1803; f.101, Ticket of Admission to Ealing Church, 20 October 1803.

²⁷Bodleian Library, MS Top.Oxon.d.247, Oxford MS Diary 1739-1817, pp.206-207, 5 July 1798, 27 July 1798.

elsewhere. Local connections repeatedly were emphasised. The Hertford Volunteers received their colours from the mayor, and the captain provided a dinner for about 100 trades people after the ceremony.²⁸ Eyewitness accounts tend to view these ceremonies primarily as social occasions. The colours of the exclusive Pimlico Volunteers were consecrated in the Rotunda at Ranelagh Gardens in Chelsea, to the accompaniment of theatrical singers and the choristers of both cathedrals.²⁹ The presentation of colours to the St. James's Volunteers by the Duchess of York in July 1798 undoubtedly was a fashionable event, attended by the Prince of Orange and, Joseph Farington reported, many other fashionable people. The following year, Farington went to Lord's cricket ground to see the presentation of colours to the Bank of England Armed Association by the wife of the governor of the Bank. A sermon was read by the chaplain, the corps performed many evolutions, and hundreds of spectators were provided with refreshments in 18 marquees beside the pavilion. Later, the corps of more than 400 dined in the rotunda and dividend rooms at the Bank. A company with its officers sat at each table, drinking patriotic toasts; such egalitarianism was unusual for a military body, but had much in common with political or convivial clubs or societies.³⁰

The practice of consecrating flags also made evident the close connection between volunteer corps and the orthodox Anglican clergy. The Chaplain to the Brentford Armed Association blessed 'the loyal, independent supporters' of the King's righteous cause, and solemnly consecrated their banners in the name of the lord God omnipotent, the God of the Armies of Britain.³¹ The ceremony of consecration was unfamiliar to some clergymen, and was criticised as a farcical innovation of a kind performed in Catholic countries but

²⁸ "Memorandums For ..." *The Diary between 1798 and 1810 of John Carrington Farmer, Chief Constable, Tax Assessor, Surveyor of Highways and Overseer of the Poor, of Bramfield in Hertfordshire*, Edited by W.Branch Johnson, (London and Chichester, 1973), pp.34-35, 29 November 1798; See also p.41, 28 August 1799.

²⁹ *Cobbett's Political Register*, Vol.V, pp.80-83, Clericus, 10 January 1804; *The British Volunteer: or, A General History of the Formation and Establishment of The Volunteer and Associated Corps, enrolled for the Protection and Defence of Great Britain, &c.*, (London, 1799).

³⁰ *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, edited by Kenneth Garlick and Angus Macintyre, Vol.III, p.1028, 5 July 1798; Vol.IV, p.1274, 2 September 1799.

³¹ George Henry Glasse, *A Sermon, preached in New-Brentford Chapel, before the members of the Brentford Armed Association, On Sunday, October 28, 1798, for the benefit of the Widows and Orphans of the seamen who fell in the glorious battle of the Nile. To which is subjoined, The Prayer used at the consecration of the colours, presented to the corps, October 18, 1798*, (Brentford, 1798), pp.22-23.

not in the Church of England. The gross superstition regarding consecrated colours was said to degrade the pure simplicity, and to be derogatory to the principles, of the established church.³²

Orthodox Anglican clergymen played a prominent role in the volunteer movement³³ but not to the exclusion of dissenters. John Rippon, a prominent dissenting minister and former opponent of the war, in 1803 delivered a fast day sermon to William Pitt's Cinque Ports Volunteers, and later to the different denominations of protestant dissenters forming the East Kent Association, and to his own congregation assembled with the volunteers of London and Southwark.³⁴ Even dissenters' reservations about the celebration of days of national humiliation seem to have quietened by 1803.³⁵ National fast days, proclaimed by the Privy Council, were an established wartime practice. In the 1790s they were used as part of an attempt to create and maintain a loyalist consensus, by organising the Anglican hierarchy in support of the war system and the state. The participation of volunteers in uniform gave weight to the appearance of loyalist consensus. Yet even liberal dissenters were able to observe fast days, which could be used as occasions to criticise the war and ministerial measures.³⁶

Celebrations of days of national thanksgiving are more revealing of volunteers' role in creating a loyalist consensus, if one can be said to have been created. It is notoriously difficult to demonstrate that attendance at celebrations signified support for the event being commemorated or for the established order. Participation in officially sanctioned celebrations was

³² *Cobbett's Political Register*, Vol.IV, p.676 To the Editor, Anti-Charlatan, Bristol, 5 November 1803; Bodleian Library, MS Dep.Bland Burges 22 f.19, A.W.Trollope to Sir James Bland Burges, Ugley near Bishop's Stortford, 23 May 1798; f.59, A.W.Trollope to Sir James Bland Burges, Christ's Hospital, 10 May 1799.

³³ Nancy Uhlar Murray, 'The Influence of the French Revolution on the Church of England and its Rivals, 1789-1802', D.Phil.thesis, University of Oxford, 1975, pp.28, 34.

³⁴ John Rippon, 'A Discourse, delivered by John Rippon, D.D., at the Drum-Head, on the Fort, Margate, 19th October, 1803, The Day of the General Fast, Before the Volunteers, commanded by The Right Hon.William Pitt; and also before the ministers and members of the different denominations of protestant dissenters who form The East Kent Association, at Folkestone, 26th October, 1803, and then addressed to The Volunteers of London and Southwark, assembled with the author's own congregation in Carter's Lane, Near London Bridge, 13th November, 1803', in Thomas Preston, *Patriots in Arms*; J.E.Cookson, *The Friends of Peace Anti-war liberalism in England, 1793-1815*, pp.179, 283 n.30.

³⁵ Roland Bartel, 'The Story of Public Fast Days in England', *Anglican Theological Review*, Volume XXXVII, Number 3, July, 1955, pp.195-199.

³⁶ Roland Bartel, 'The Story of Public Fast Days in England', pp.193-199; J.E.Cookson, *The Friends of Peace*, pp.53, 134.

made simple and encouraged by paid holidays and free entertainment.³⁷ In the case of volunteers, participation was in effect enforced by membership of the corps. The Scarborough Volunteers were granted an allowance of ten shillings for attending divine service and a sermon preached to the corps in 1804.³⁸

Expressions of opposition were rare, but it is difficult to judge whether this indicates a low level of discontent, because the press sometimes failed to report the lack of participation by volunteers when it is known from other sources that they were involved. Several of the Leicester Volunteers failed to attend a muster on the day of thanksgiving for the Battle of the Nile in November 1798, but the *Leicester Journal* reported that the places of worship were numerous attended, with those engaged in a civil or military capacity attending in uniform. However, in the next issue an anonymous volunteer assured the paper that the majority of the volunteers were disappointed and mortified at the sluggish apathy which had precluded a general muster. He censured the absentees' neglect and indolence, but in view of the general support for the celebrations apathy seems a less likely explanation than antipathy to the thanksgiving.³⁹ Volunteers in Devon the year before were explicit in their opposition to a day of public thanksgiving, declaring that it was returning thanks for murder and bloodshed, and the promotion of it. Lord Rolle reported that they were very circumspect and cautious through fear of punishment, but one volunteer, a dissenting teacher, did not attend, under the pretence of a cold. Rolle pointed out that the volunteer was a dissenting teacher, indicating that his motives may have been more religious than political.⁴⁰

Volunteers played a prominent role in the celebration of military and naval victories, and consequent days of national thanksgiving. The organisation of these occasions was normally civil rather than military. As the local volunteers were in many cases the only military force present in the locality, they had a prominent role, which they could occasionally adapt to the purposes of their own corporate solidarity by holding balls or dinners afterwards, among other events. Some corps could provide a band for the public commemoration. Food and drink were provided, and illuminations arranged. The volunteers often paraded in a public place and fired a *feu de*

³⁷Linda Colley, 'The Apotheosis of George III: Loyalty, Royalty and the British Nation 1760-1820', *Past & Present*, Number 102, February 1984, p.122.

³⁸*To Escape the Monster's Clutches*, Compiled by M.Y.Ashcroft, Appendix 3, p.105.

³⁹*Leicester Journal*, No.2400, 7 December 1798, p.3 c.5.

⁴⁰HO 50/55, Lord Rolle to Duke of Portland, Bickton, 28 December 1797.

joie. One of the manuals published for the instruction of volunteers devoted an entire, though short, section to this manoeuvre.⁴¹ Such celebrations could be organised at short notice. On the news reaching Oxford of Nelson's victory at Aboukir Bay in October 1798, the city and university volunteers fired several volleys, and a general illumination was arranged in the evening. The following day the officers of the Oxford Loyal Volunteers treated their corps to a dinner of the symbolic Old English fare of roast beef and plum pudding.⁴²

Preparations were able to be much more elaborate by the time the thanksgiving day was celebrated in December, particularly in Norwich, near Nelson's birthplace. There, seven local volunteer associations formed a procession around the market, the officers saluting the mayor and corporation on the steps of the Guildhall. Joined by the numerous loyal constitutional societies of the city and by nearly 100 freemasons, the volunteers proceeded to the cathedral. After divine service and a 'suitable' anthem, the procession returned to the market place to roast an ox and distribute six barrels of beer. The volunteers reassembled at five in the evening to fire a *feu de joie* by a large bonfire in the market place. They gave three times three cheers, and the Loyal Mancroft Volunteers fired three volleys in front of the mayor's house, in compliment to him as their captain. The Norwich Light Horse Volunteers then dined with the mayor and other invited gentlemen. Processions echoed the ritual of French revolutionary festivals, and the Norwich celebrations also offered symbolic parallels in the use of naval trophies for allegorical effect. A Spanish admiral's sword was suspended over the figure of Justice on the Guildhall; the bowsprit of Admiral de Winter's ship, presumably taken at Camperdown the previous year, was erected at one end of the market place, and surmounted by the union flag over the flags of France and Holland.⁴³

As on days of national humiliation, sermons were preached on thanksgiving days, and volunteers were expected to attend the services as a unit. The volunteers of Oxford attended two of the city churches in divisions on the day of thanksgiving for naval successes after the victory at Trafalgar in

⁴¹[Anonymous], *The Volunteer and Intelligent Soldier's Companion. Containing Instructions for Officers and Privates, the form of a Review, manner of performing The Eighteen Manoeuvres, The Manual and Platoon Exercises, as ordered for the Infantry of His Britannic Majesty; With other Military Information*, (Edinburgh, 1803), p.134.

⁴²Bodleian Library, MS Top.Oxon.d.247, Oxford MS Diary 1739-1817, p.208, 3 October 1798.

⁴³*The York Chronicle*, Vol.XXVI, No.2155, 6 December 1798, p.3 c.1-2.

December 1805; on a fast day two years earlier they had attended their individual parish churches.⁴⁴ The propaganda value of a military celebration was greater if the volunteers were kept together. Attendance was not compulsory, however, and absence did not necessarily imply political or religious dissent. On the thanksgiving day for the Battle of the Nile, the St. Pancras Association went to the Percy Chapel, where a collection was made for the relatives of the men killed. Joseph Farington, although still nominally a member of the association, went instead to St. Margaret's church, where the House of Commons attended.⁴⁵

The well-established 'political calendar' of public commemoration of royal birthdays and anniversaries which provided occasion for loyalist display appears not to have been adopted as comprehensively by volunteers. Of royal anniversaries, only the King's birthday on 4 June seems to have been commemorated regularly. As in 1745 and during the American war, volunteers played the most conspicuous part in urban commemorations.⁴⁶ The Ware Volunteers combined a celebration for the election of their captain with those for the King's birthday in 1805 by marching through the streets with a band playing and bells ringing. Outside the market house the band played 'God Save the King' and the corps fired three volleys, then were provided dinner by their new commander.⁴⁷ The Oxford Loyal Volunteers and the Burton Volunteer Infantry both chose to hold their first field day in celebration of the King's birthday in 1798.⁴⁸

Other royal birthdays seem rarely to have been commemorated, and newspaper reports imply that the volunteers provided the only organised celebration where these took place. The Earl of Moira presented a brace of bucks to the Loyal Loughborough Volunteers in honour of the Prince of Wales' birthday in 1799. The corps assembled in the market place with their colours, fired three volleys and the band played 'God Save the King'. A dinner was then prepared for the volunteers, subscribers to the corps, and local

⁴⁴Bodleian Library, MS Top.Oxon.d.247, Oxford MS Diary 1739-1817, p.243, 5 December 1798; p.235, 19 September 1803.

⁴⁵*The Diary of Joseph Farington*, edited by Kenneth Garlick and Angus Macintyre, Vol.III, p.1098, 29 November 1798.

⁴⁶Kathleen Wilson, 'The Rejection of Deference: Urban Political Culture in England, 1715-1785', pp.109-110, 156.

⁴⁷"Memorandums For ..." *The Diary of John Carrington*, p.116, 4 June 1805.

⁴⁸Bodleian Library, MS Top.Oxon.d.247, Oxford MS Diary 1739-1817, p.205, 4 June 1798; *Leicester Journal*, No.2375, 8 June 1798, p.3 c.5; See also *Leicester Journal*, No.2427, 7 June 1799, p.3 c.5; *Portsmouth Gazette*, No.153, 6 June 1796, p.3 c.2, Petersfield, June 4.

notables. The celebrations at Loughborough appear to have been centred entirely upon the volunteers.⁴⁹ The Queen's birthday and the anniversary of the coronation were commemorated by only a few corps.⁵⁰ Royal anniversaries celebrated by volunteer corps were otherwise confined to those associated with the King personally; the long-standing practice of commemorating the martyrdom of Charles I, the restoration or the protestant succession does not seem to have been taken up. This coincided with the general tendency during this period to focus patriotic and public ceremonial upon the monarch.⁵¹

Volunteer corps were important participants in the celebration of George III's jubilee on 25 October 1809. In a compilation of reports of festivities in 181, mostly English, villages and towns extracted from eight London and 79 provincial newspapers, 101 mentioned the participation of volunteers or other military forces; 40 of these specifically reported the presence of volunteers alone.⁵² Few of the places in which volunteers were not reported present appear to have neighbouring corps; rather, it is remarkable how active corps appear to have been at a period when the force had been greatly reduced. Friendly societies and masonic lodges also participated widely, but on a much smaller scale than the volunteers.⁵³ Such a sample of newspaper reports, however, is likely to exaggerate volunteer participation, since military involvement probably made a celebration more likely to be reported. Typically, volunteers paraded, attended sermons, ate dinners, and fired *feux de joie*, while their bands played 'God Save the King'. Some were induced to make charitable donations, the First Surrey Volunteers subscribing for the benefit of the children of the Philanthropic Institution.⁵⁴

Major volunteer reviews were also held on royal, rather than military, anniversaries. The first great review, of 8000 men from 65 London corps,

⁴⁹ *Leicester Journal*, No.2439, 30 August 1799, Leicester, August 30, p.3 c.5; see also *The Correspondence of George, Prince of Wales 1770-1812*, Edited by A.Aspinall, Vol.III, p.450, No.1375, Colonel [Sir] J[ohn] McMahon to Prince of Wales, Cheltenham, 12 August 1798.

⁵⁰ Emily Hargrave, 'The Leeds Gentlemen Volunteer Cavalry, 1799', *Thoresby Miscellanea*, Vol.XXVIII, Part III, 1926, p.288; *Portsmouth Gazette*, No.117, 28 September 1795, p.3 c.2, Portsmouth, September 26; No.186, 23 January 1797, p.3 c.3, Portsmouth, January 22.

⁵¹ Linda Colley, 'The Apotheosis of George III', p.110.

⁵² Calculated from Thomas Preston, *Jubilee Jottings. The Jubilee of George the Third. 25th October, 1809. A record of the festivities with the proclamations, congratulatory addresses, etc.*, (London, 1887), pp.1-252, 257-258.

⁵³ See Linda Colley, 'The Apotheosis of George III', p.118.

⁵⁴ Thomas Preston, *Jubilee Jottings. The Jubilee of George the Third*, pp.153-154.

was held in Hyde Park on the King's birthday in 1799. More than 100,000 spectators attended, although 'the evolutions were considerably hampered by a high wind and heavy rain.' More than 11,000 London volunteers were reviewed on the same day a year later, and two even larger reviews, of a total of 27,000 volunteers and 500,000 spectators, were held immediately following the anniversary of the King's accession in 1803.⁵⁵ These reviews made a great impression; Lord Eldon thought the latter the finest sight he had ever seen, while the Hertfordshire farmer John Carrington recorded 'I never saw such a Sight all my Days.'⁵⁶ Several prints were produced of the reviews; John Boydell, engraver, print publisher and a former Lord Mayor, engraved a plan of the 1799 review, surrounding it with portraits of all the commanding officers and figures representing a private from each corps. Egalitarianism had its limits.⁵⁷

Part Two: Public Image

The public conception of volunteering drew upon not only ceremonial displays but also the dissemination of material associating the movement with loyal and patriotic causes. Ironically, pamphlets and prints critical of the force shared a similar perception of its limited military achievements with the apologists, who principally used sermons to publicise the purpose and philosophy of volunteering. While prints frequently parodied volunteers for their amateurishness and military pretensions, sermons pointed out that the only partial commitment of volunteers to military life and duties was a fundamental aspect of their purpose as citizen-soldiers. This view of volunteering was presented not only to the civil population but also to the volunteers themselves. Though existing in large numbers, they were dispersed in many individual corps and volunteering was not their primary daily concern. The central organisation was too weak to impose a sense of unity in itself, so the public presentation of an ideology of volunteering was an important influence on the volunteers' perception of their own organisation.

A broad variety of publications appeared, both to cater for wide public interest in volunteering and to take advantage of the large market offered

⁵⁵Cecil Sebag-Montefiore, *A History of the Volunteer Forces*, pp.222-223, 291-292; Linda Colley, 'The Apotheosis of George III', p.119; *Annual Register for 1803*, pp.*35-*42.

⁵⁶Cecil Sebag-Montefiore, *A History of the Volunteer Forces*, p.292; "Memorandoms For ..." *The Diary of John Carrington*, p.91.

⁵⁷*The Diary of Joseph Farington*, edited by Kenneth Garlick and Angus Macintyre, Vol.IV p.1249, 6 July 1799.

by the volunteers themselves. They ranged from books of coloured engravings to cheap song and ballad sheets. Such productions had royal sanction: George III was portrayed at the head of a volunteer army, and *Cupid Turned Volunteer*, a series of patriotic prints and verse about volunteering published in 1804, was advertised as designed by Princess Elizabeth.⁵⁸ Thomas Rowlandson's *Volunteers of the Metropolis* had overtones of society portraiture. Each brief account of a fashionable corps was faced by a portrait of its commanding officer in uniform.⁵⁹ Later publications stressed the convivial aspects of volunteering. John Lockhart had his hero Reginald Dalton join the Oxford Loyal Volunteers with a view to adding variety to the dissipation of an academic life.⁶⁰ George Cruikshank gave a similarly frivolous account of his time as a volunteer, but sought to counter charges that the force lacked a serious military purpose.⁶¹ Patriotic plays, usually with a military theme, were performed for the benefit of volunteer funds; 'Edward the Black Prince' was performed in 1804 for the Sheffield Volunteer Fund.⁶² The officers and gentlemen of the Loyal Chichester Volunteers patronised a performance of 'The Jew and Poor Soldier' in 1795, while the following year, the Gosport Volunteers commissioned a performance of the 'Battle of Hexham' and 'Lock and Key' at their local theatre.⁶³

Volunteers generally took their task seriously, but were not unaware of their ridiculous aspect. The unaccustomed and inappropriate spectacle of civilians attempting to follow military practices was an attractive subject for satire. Describing to his brother the organisation and respectable

⁵⁸ *Cupid Turned Volunteer: in A Series of Prints, Designed by Her Royal Highness The Princess Elizabeth; and engraved by W.N. Gardiner, B.A. with Poetical Illustrations, by Thomas Park, F.S.A.*, (London, 1804); 'A view of the volunteer army of Great Britain in the year 1806 designed to commemorate the great & united spirit of the British people armed for the support of their ancient glory and independance (*sic*) against the unprincipled ambition of the French Government', reproduced in *To Escape the Monster's Clutches*, Compiled by M.Y. Ashcroft, pp.80-81.

⁵⁹ Thomas Rowlandson, *Loyal Volunteers of London & Environs, Infantry & Cavalry, in their respective Uniforms. Representing the whole of the Manual, Platoon & Funeral Exercise, In 87 Plates.*, (London, 1799).

⁶⁰ [John Gibson Lockhart], *Reginald Dalton, By the Author of Valerius, and Adam Blair*, Three volumes, (Edinburgh and London, 1823).

⁶¹ George Cruikshank, *A Pop-Gun fired off by George Cruikshank, in defence of the British volunteers of 1803*.

⁶² *Peeps Into the Past being passages from the diary of Thomas Asline Ward*, Edited by Alexander B. Bell, p.30.

⁶³ *Portsmouth Gazette*, No.178, 28 November 1796, p.3 c.3, Portsmouth, November 27; No.103, 22 June 1795, p.3 c.2, Chichester, June 20.

membership of the Edinburgh Volunteers, which included many of the principal surgeons, George Home added 'you will perhaps laugh at this'.⁶⁴ The surgeon who volunteered in order to kill others than his patients became a stock joke. Caricatures were common, of which Gillray's depiction of the St. George's Volunteers charging down Bond Street is perhaps the best known. Volunteers were frequently satirised for their incompetence and self-importance, and depicted as corpulent yokels or portly townsmen, often in mismatched uniforms.⁶⁵ Caricatures of unsoldierly volunteers were common from 1794 till 1800, but when the invasion threat became serious in 1803, most prints glorified them.⁶⁶ Volunteers wrote and published their own songs; the most famous of these, Robert Burns' ballad 'The Dumfries Volunteers' of 1795, asserting the volunteers' anticipated success against tyrants and invasions, was widely reprinted. A retitled version appeared, with 'God Save the King', in a cheap collection of popular songs titled *The British Volunteers*.⁶⁷ Large numbers of loyal and patriotic verses were printed by the *Gentleman's Magazine* among its 'Poetry, Antient and Modern' in late 1803, many of which centred on the volunteers. One was composed by a private in the Squerries Yeomanry and intended to be sung by men from the troop at the presentation of their colours.⁶⁸

A voluminous literature had long existed catering for military training and tactics, much of it privately published. Many provided instruction and commentary to expand upon the official regulations and to describe tactical

⁶⁴Scottish Record Office, GD 267/1/18/14, [George Home], Edinburgh, 23 March 1795.

⁶⁵Mary Dorothy George, *Catalogue of Political and Personal Satires*, Vol. VII, pp.337-338, No.8991, James Gillray, St. George's Volunteers Charging Down Bond Street, after clearing the Ring in Hyde Park, & storming the Dunghill at Marybone, 1 March 1797; Vol. VII p.110-111, No.8503, G.M.Woodward, Village Cavalry Practising in a Farm-Yard, 18 December 1794; [Anonymous], 'Early Images of the Yeomanry 1794-1803', *Army Museum '83*, (London, 1984), pp.25-34.

⁶⁶Mary Dorothy George, *Catalogue of Political and Personal Satires*, Vol. VIII, p.885.

⁶⁷[Anonymous], *The British Volunteers. To which are added, God Save the King. Molly Bann. Tippling John. Johnny Faa, the Gypsy Laddie*, (Glasgow, 1799), pp.2-3; *The Poems and Songs of Robert Burns*, Edited by James Kinsley, Volume II, (Oxford, 1968), No.484, pp.764-766; Shropshire Record Office, 146/24, Song, for the Pimhill Light-Horse Volunteers, Rowland Hunt of Boreatton, Esq. Captain Commandant At the presentation of The Standard, 4 June 1799; 146/25, Song, (imitated from that of the Knights Marshal) addressed to the Pimhill Light Horse Volunteers on His Majesty's Birth-Day, 4 June 1801; 'The Oxford Loyal Volunteers', inserted in a copy of *Epithalamia Oxoniensia*, (Oxford, 1734), p.85; Gloucestershire Record Office, MI 15, H.B., 'The Cotswold Volunteer Yeomanry, 1797-1802', *Wilts and Gloucestershire Standard*, 28 September 1957.

⁶⁸'W.B.', Westerham, November 22, *The Gentleman's Magazine: and Historical Chronicle*, 1803, Part II, pp.1161-1162.

situations in which manœuvres would be employed.⁶⁹ Several manuals for volunteers both official and unofficial were published around this time to take advantage of the presumably large market among the newly-formed corps; seven were available from Egerton's Military Library at Charing Cross in 1801 alone.⁷⁰ They were aimed at the private men as well as the officers — 'a Troop of respectable and well educated men'⁷¹ — unlike the majority of other military manuals, which were intended for the officers only. Most summarised the drill, manual and platoon exercises of the regular forces, on the presumption that the volunteers were to be employed in the same way. One, *The Soldier's Companion*, had reached its sixty-fifth edition by 1803.⁷²

By far the most common form of publication addressed to, or commissioned by, volunteer corps, were printed sermons. They were one of the principal means by which the purpose and philosophy of volunteer corps could be made public, and are particularly revealing of the image of volunteering put forward by its apologists. The idea of volunteer service bringing positive benefits into civilian life was prevalent, emphasising a disinterested citizen duty. Because they were preached at the invitation, and printed at the request, and apparently also at the expense, of the corps, and bought by individual volunteers, published sermons provide an indication to the way volunteers viewed their institution, and wished others to see it. Usually delivered at the presentations of colours, a thanksgiving day or day of national humiliation, or on a royal anniversary, these sermons are a valuable indication of the image of their institution the volunteers wished to project. A large number survive, commonly preached on occasions like the presentation of colours and national fast days. A relatively high proportion of published volunteer sermons were delivered by members of the Society for Promoting

⁶⁹ J.A.Houlding, *Fit For Service The Training of the British Army, 1715-1795*, pp.166-172, 241-252.

⁷⁰ 'Books printed for T.Egerton, At the Military Library, near Whitehall', in *The Soldier's Companion: containing Instructions for the Drill, Manual, and Platoon Exercise, as commanded by his Majesty: intended for the use of The Volunteers of this Country. to which are prefixed a few Observations on first forming a Military Corps.* (London, [1803]).

⁷¹ Sir W.Young, *Instructions for the Armed Yeomanry*, ([n.p.], 1798), p.11.

⁷² *The Soldier's Companion: containing Instructions for the Drill, Manual, and Platoon Exercise, as commanded by his Majesty: intended for the use of The Volunteers of this Country*; [Anonymous], *The Volunteer and Intelligent Soldier's Companion*; [Anonymous], *Military Instructions for the Drill, Manual and Platoon Exercises, intended for the use of the Volunteers of the United Kingdom*, (Edinburgh, 1803); Sir W.Young, *Instructions for the Armed Yeomanry*; J.A.Houlding, *Fit For Service The Training of the British Army, 1715-1795*, pp.241-252; Bodleian Library, MS D.D.Dashwood (Bucks), c.14 F 2/3/3, *Common Exercise*, (n.d.).

Christian Knowledge. Of a sample of 22, nine were by subscribers to the society in 1794.⁷³ Clergymen took their duties seriously; after the presentation of standards to the Rutland Yeomanry in August 1794, 'The Rev.T.Greatley then preached, but fainted under the exertion.'⁷⁴

The apparent conflict between the military and civilian aspects of volunteer organisation was resolved by asserting its voluntary, conditional and temporary nature. Volunteers emphasised that they were not military men, despite aiming to perform military duties as competently as their regular counterparts. The civilian and constitutional nature of their service was emphasised, partly in order to justify the existence of the volunteers as a force independent of the militia and regular army. Since volunteers could not hope to become superior to the regular forces in military terms, their apologists claimed that the system retained the benefits of a military body without the inherent vices.

The members of the Armed Association of Christ Church, Surrey, were reminded by their Rector, Thomas Ackland, 'ye are not military men, by profession. Ye have all *other* duties which demand your attention.'⁷⁵ They were exhorted to acquire the good military habits of diligence, sobriety, vigilance, œconomy and frugality. The hardness and fatigues of a military life produced those virtues appropriate and peculiar to the military character: magnanimity, alacrity, fortitude, generosity, frankness, compassion, valour and true Christian courage. However, the vices, failings and evil habits incidental or imputed to military men were to be shunned by volunteers: dissipation, idleness, intemperance and extravagance.⁷⁶

Implicitly, military service was presented as valuable in as much as it benefited civil society. The principal virtue that Ackland believed would be inculcated by military discipline was obedience. Submission and respect to officers was important because, by extension, without discipline, civil as well as military society would collapse. Volunteers' loyalty, he argued, should not be wholly, or even principally, to the corps. Duties to the church, to

⁷³Calculated from [Anonymous], *An Account of the Society for promoting Christian Knowledge*, (London, 1794), pp.18-64.

⁷⁴Colonel G.R.Codrington, 'Yeomanry Cavalry', *The Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, Vol.IX, No.37, July, 1930, p.136; *Peeps Into the Past being passages from the diary of Thomas Asline Ward*, Edited by Alexander B.Bell, p.61.

⁷⁵Thomas Ackland, *Religion and Loyalty Recommended; and a Caution Against Innovations. A Sermon preached at Christ-Church, Surrey, on Sunday, September 30, 1798, before the Corps of the Armed Association of the said parish*, (London, 1798), p.19.

⁷⁶Thomas Ackland, *Religion and Loyalty Recommended; and a Caution Against Innovations*, pp.21-22.

masters and employers were not to be neglected; young volunteers' first regards were to their parents. Most important, volunteers were not military men by profession. As soon as all danger of war and rebellion was over, they would resign and relinquish all military duties and ornaments.⁷⁷

The volunteer movement was presented as an expression of national unanimity in the common cause of defence against French armies and principles. Volunteers claimed to be a national force which united men of all opinions against the common threat to their personal, civil and religious liberties. By defending their country, volunteers were fighting for their own laws, lives and liberties.⁷⁸ They undertook to defend their King, country, property, religion, wives and children against invaders.⁷⁹ Unanimity in these causes would make Britain invincible⁸⁰ but the presence of internal discord was widely acknowledged. The Loyal Hackney Volunteers were told in 1795 that the dangers faced by the country made unanimity in measures of defence a duty and a necessity. Yet it remained necessary to rebut insinuations that the alarm of internal disorder had been raised by the ministry to serve its own designs. The promoters insisted that the association was unconnected with the administration; 'It serves not the narrow purposes of party. It disdains to be the tool of any set of men.'⁸¹

This unanimity was in part believed to be the result of the war no longer being controversial. Bishop Watson argued that however the war had begun, by 1798 it had 'become *just*' because France would not treat equitably for peace.⁸² The dream of perfect unanimity may not have been achieved,

⁷⁷Thomas Ackland, *Religion and Loyalty Recommended; and a Caution Against Innovations*, pp.18-23; See also Frank Simpson, *The Old Chester Volunteers and their Colour*, (Chester, 1911), p.12.

⁷⁸Rev.Edward Drewe, *The Duty of Defending our Country. A Sermon, preached at the Cathedral Church of St.Peter, Exeter, On the Nineteenth of August, 1803*, (London, 1803), p.24.

⁷⁹W.Finch, *A Sermon, preached before the Oxford Loyal Volunteers, On Friday, July 27, 1798, at the presentation of their colours by Lady Mackworth, as proxy for Her Grace the Duchess of Marlborough*, (Oxford, 1798), p.20.

⁸⁰Cornelius Miles, *A Sermon Preached in a Country-Village, previous to the Enrolment of Volunteers*, (Bath, 1803), p.20-21; Rev.C.Blackstone, *A Sermon, preached before the Oxford University Volunteers, at the presentation of their colours by the Right Hon. The Countess Harcourt, on Thursday, July 5, 1798*, (Oxford, 1798), p.8

⁸¹J.Symons, 'A Sermon Preached at Hackney, on Thursday, April 23, 1795, on the presentation of the colours to The Loyal Hackney Volunteers', in Thomas Preston, *Patriots in Arms*, p.55.

⁸²Thomas Preston, *Patriots in Arms. Addresses and Sermons by celebrated preachers of the last century in praise of the Volunteer Movement*, (London, 1881), 197-198.

but by 1803 James Round could claim that all party spirit seemed hushed and buried, and men of differing political and religious opinions had united in one common cause under the ægis of the volunteers.⁸³ The disaffected no longer had any pretext to oppose the war now that France also opposed democracy, argued Lord Rolle's chaplain.⁸⁴ Political distinctions were unimportant when the existence of the form of government itself was at stake.⁸⁵

Volunteer apologists, in common with many others, argued that the threat in 1798 and 1803 was to the survival of the nation itself.⁸⁶ The Oxford University volunteers were told in 1798 that their existence as an independent people was at stake.⁸⁷ Britain's enemies intended to destroy not only the constitution, religious and civil rights, but also national independence.⁸⁸ Some clergymen went even further: Sydney Smith told the Mary-le-bone Volunteers they were 'not fighting the battle of England alone,' but to decide 'whether there should be any more freedom upon the earth.'⁸⁹ Waxing millenarian, the Chaplain to the Reading Armed Association pointed out in 1798 the recent fulfillment of some prophecies of the Revelation. Richard Valpy hoped that his fellow-countrymen would be the special people chosen by God, and that the Reading Armed Association would become the instrument of extending His knowledge to all the world.⁹⁰

⁸³Rev.Edward Drewe, *The Duty of Defending our Country*, p.31; James Round, 'Sermon preached before the Loyal Colchester Volunteers, in the Parish Church of St.James, Colchester, On Wednesday, 19th October, 1803, (Being the Day Appointed for a General Fast)', in Thomas Preston, *Patriots in Arms*, pp.100-101.

⁸⁴Rev.Edward Drewe, *The Duty of Defending our Country*, p.31.

⁸⁵Rev.C.Blackstone, *A Sermon, preached before the Oxford University Volunteers*, pp.8-9.

⁸⁶James Round, 'Sermon preached before the Loyal Colchester Volunteers', p.100; George Henry Glasse, *A Sermon, preached in New-Brentford Chapel, before the members of the Brentford Armed Association*, p.10; George Gaskin, 'Christian Patriotism. A Sermon delivered in the Parish Church of Stoke-Newington, on the occasion of the Attendance of the Armed Association of Stoke Newington and its vicinity, at divine service on Sunday, October 21, 1798', in Thomas Preston, *Patriots in Arms*, p.35.

⁸⁷Rev.C.Blackstone, *A Sermon, preached before the Oxford University Volunteers*, p.14.

⁸⁸[Thomas S.Curtis], *A Sermon preached at the Time of the Subscriptions for Voluntary Contributions, set on foot under sanction of parliament, and when a proclamation was read for a General Fast Day, By a Clergyman of the county of Kent. A True, Sincere, and Firm Friend to, and Lover of, His King and Country*, (London, 1798), p.10.

⁸⁹[Sydney Smith], 'A Sermon on Invasion: preached by the Rev.Sydney Smith, A.M. Late Fellow of New College, Oxford, before the Mary-le-Bone Volunteers in Portman Chapel, Baker Street', in Thomas Preston, *Patriots in Arms*, p.14.

⁹⁰Richard Valpy, *A Sermon, Preached Aug.13, 1798, before The Reading and Henley Associations, The Woodley Cavalry, And the Reading Volunteers, at the Consecration*

Volunteer sermons emphasised the importance of the mutual dependence of church and state.⁹¹ The church and the constitution had the same enemies, and would stand or fall together.⁹² In comparison to other sermons, those to volunteers set out the most uncompromising of views of a war between savages and men, atheism and religion, of all sermons on the war.⁹³ French atheism, blasphemy and attacks on churches and the clergy were thereby linked to the threat to the British constitution. Alleged and potential French atrocities were emphasised, and the fate of a defeated Britain conjectured from the example of Switzerland and the Netherlands.⁹⁴ Frequent allusion was made to the fate of women and infants at the hands of a brutal soldiery.⁹⁵ The Stoke Newington Armed Association was told that the atheist French state had persecuted the clergy, desecrated churches and mocked religion in blasphemous and indecent rites in honour of Reason and the personification of the Republic. They had declared a war of extermination against England, to destroy the constitution, desolate the land, 'and to erase us from the list of independent states.'⁹⁶

Yet French principles were thought more dangerous than French arms.⁹⁷ Democracy and atheism had shaken the foundations of religion and virtue, and loosened the principles of civil subordination and government.⁹⁸ Both

of the Colors of the Reading Association, (Reading, 1798), pp.59–60; See Nancy Uhlar Murray, 'The Influence of the French Revolution on the Church of England and its Rivals, 1789–1802', p.374.

⁹¹Cornelius Miles, *A Sermon Preached in a Country-Village, previous to the Enrolment of Volunteers*, p.19.

⁹²[Thomas S.Curtis], *A Sermon preached at the Time of the Subscriptions for Voluntary Contributions*, p.8; George Gaskin, 'Christian Patriotism. A Sermon delivered in the Parish Church of Stoke-Newington, on the occasion of the Attendance of the Armed Association of Stoke Newington and its vicinity', p.37.

⁹³Nancy Uhlar Murray, 'The Influence of the French Revolution on the Church of England and its Rivals, 1789–1802', p.35.

⁹⁴George Gaskin, 'Christian Patriotism. A Sermon delivered in the Parish Church of Stoke-Newington, on the occasion of the Attendance of the Armed Association of Stoke Newington and its vicinity', pp.34–37.

⁹⁵Cornelius Miles, *A Sermon Preached in a Country-Village, previous to the Enrolment of Volunteers*, p.19.

⁹⁶George Gaskin, 'Christian Patriotism. A Sermon delivered in the Parish Church of Stoke-Newington, on the occasion of the Attendance of the Armed Association of Stoke Newington and its vicinity', p.35; [Thomas S.Curtis], *A Sermon preached at the Time of the Subscriptions for Voluntary Contributions*, p.10.

⁹⁷J.Symons, 'A Sermon Preached at Hackney, on Thursday, April 23, 1795, on the presentation of the colours to The Loyal Hackney Volunteers', p.48.

⁹⁸Thomas Ackland, *Religion and Loyalty Recommended; and a Caution Against Inno-*

foreign and domestic enemies were animated by 'false Opinion' and wicked principles.⁹⁹ The duty of volunteers, the 'friends of peace and order', was to guard against these delusions, and to check licentiousness.¹⁰⁰ They were credited with having preserved the community from the contagion of the destructive system of French philosophy.¹⁰¹

Apologists pictured volunteer corps as representatives and guardians of a community, emphasising the comprehensive, non-partisan nature of their membership. Men differing in political and religious opinions had voluntarily enlisted;¹⁰² men of all ranks united in armed associations to stem the torrent of profligacy and licentiousness.¹⁰³ The chaplain to the Prince of Wales claimed in 1798 that the new mode of association had united in a general cause and a common bond of amity and friendship many otherwise careless or disaffected persons.¹⁰⁴ The volunteer spirit had re-animated the genuine character of British honour.¹⁰⁵ Volunteer corps were likened to a 'band of brothers, an association of friends', part of a 'system of true and genuine fraternity', which implicitly was contrasted with French republican *fraternité*. They united in the purest and most honourable motives, the best and bravest throughout the kingdom.¹⁰⁶

ventions, pp.16-17.

⁹⁹George Henry Glasse, *A Sermon, preached in The Parish Church of Hanwell, in the County of Middlesex, On Sunday, July 22, 1798, before the Members of the Voluntary Armed Association, formed within the parishes of Hanwell and Ealing, including New and Old-Brentford*, (Brentford, 1798), pp.6-7; W.Finch, *A Sermon, preached before the Oxford Loyal Volunteers*, p.7, 17; John Lowe, 'The Duties of the Christian Soldier. A Sermon preached at Huddersfield, On Thursday, the 1st of January, 1795, before the Royal Huddersfield Fusileers', in Thomas Preston, *Patriots in Arms*, p.106.

¹⁰⁰[Thomas S.Curtis], *A Sermon preached at the Time of the Subscriptions for Voluntary Contributions*, p.10; Thomas Preston, *Patriots in Arms*, p.192 n.7.

¹⁰¹Rev.Richard Sandilands, *An Address to The Gentlemen of the Hans Town Association, delivered in the field, upon the presentation of their colours*, ([London], 1798), pp.19-20.

¹⁰²James Round, 'Sermon preached before the Loyal Colchester Volunteers', pp.100-101.

¹⁰³George Gaskin, 'Christian Patriotism. A Sermon delivered in the Parish Church of Stoke-Newington, on the occasion of the Attendance of the Armed Association of Stoke Newington and its vicinity', pp.38, 40.

¹⁰⁴Rev.Richard Sandilands, *An Address to The Gentlemen of the Hans Town Association*, p.19.

¹⁰⁵National Army Museum, 7805-72, Ealing and Brentford Volunteers, f.102, [Robert James Carr], Sermon, [October 1803].

¹⁰⁶George Henry Glasse, *A Sermon, preached in The Parish Church of Hanwell, in the County of Middlesex, On Sunday, July 22, 1798, before the Members of the Voluntary Armed Association, formed within the parishes of Hanwell and Ealing, including New and Old-Brentford*, (Brentford, 1798), pp.13-14; David Eastwood, 'Fading Visions? Patriotism, Loyalist Enthusiasms, and the English State in the 1790s', p.14.

Fraternal considerations were indeed evident in the public conduct of many volunteer corps. The social role performed by volunteer associations went far beyond participation in official ceremonial and anniversaries. Military occasions in general were adapted to public display and celebration. Corps acted in many respects like clubs or convivial societies, and maintained close connections with county or municipal notables and the church. The presentation of standards was a frequent occasion for public display and the demonstration of these connections. Colours frequently were provided by subscription or a local peer, presented on a royal anniversary or during a race week by a local peeress, and consecrated by the parish priest or corps' chaplain. Flags were not only an important part of regular military practice, but also common among purely civil societies and clubs.¹⁰⁷ The design of volunteers' flags emphasised both national and local allegiances, combining local arms or symbols with the national ensign. The Abingdon Armed Association considered superimposing either their patron's arms or those of the borough on the union flag.¹⁰⁸ Volunteer standards commonly carried mottoes similarly expressing love of country and attachment to home and religion: 'pro aris et focis' and 'pro rege et patria' were popular. The sentiments of classical authors were favoured; the Hitchin Loyal Volunteers even considered using Horace's 'altumque præcedes, supremum carpere itei comites parati' on its standard, which cost £11.¹⁰⁹

The identification of corps with their locality implicit in the designs adopted for standards is also evident in the symbolism of uniforms and the practice of naming public houses after local corps. Within the uniformity imposed by military clothing, volunteers asserted their local allegiances by commissioning specially designed buttons. Sometimes incorporating a local emblem or the municipal arms, and nearly always with the name or initials of the corps and a motto, they were normally ordered from specialist military suppliers in London. A prospective Sussex churchwardens' yeomanry corps designed buttons with a church on them.¹¹⁰ Decorated buttons had a wider political context in addition to their ordinary military purpose. Specially

¹⁰⁷Berkshire Record Office, D/EP 7/143(5), Sam.Sellwood to [Thomas] Metcalfe, 29 August 1798; (7), [Anonymous] to Captain Sellwood, [n.d.]; *Peeps Into the Past being passages from the diary of Thomas Asline Ward*, Edited by Alexander B.Bell, p.28.

¹⁰⁸Berkshire Record Office, D/EP 7/143(5), Sam.Sellwood to [Thomas] Metcalfe, 29 August 1798.

¹⁰⁹Hertfordshire Record Office, Hitchin Loyal Volunteers, Box III, (unsigned note), August 1799; G.C.D'Almaine & Son to W.Wilshire, 12 August 1799.

¹¹⁰Ann Hudson, 'Volunteer Soldiers in Sussex during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, 1793-1815', p.179.

designed buttons were worn as a means of making a political statement, and usually a radical one. Two Cornish shopkeepers were reported in 1792 to be selling 'Liberty Buttons' made from yellow metal with a white sprig and the word 'Liberty' over it.¹¹¹ The volunteers' use of symbolic buttons can be interpreted as a means of asserting their links with the political establishment and their home town or country.

The extent to which the community identified with their local volunteer corps is difficult to assess. The decision to name or rename an alehouse after the volunteers presumably involved some calculation of the degree of public sympathy with the connotations implicit in the name. By 1822 at least 16 towns had a public house named the 'Volunteer' out of a total of 280 of the principal towns in a sample of 17 English counties and Wales. This was not a remarkably low number, given the relative scarcity of identifiably recent names; in these 16 towns, for instance, 12 public houses were named after the Duke of Wellington and eight commemorated the Battle of Waterloo.¹¹²

The image that volunteers seem to have acquired was one of earnest, amateurish and occasionally self-righteous imitators of the regular army. Critics stressed the distance between volunteer pretensions and the barely adequate level of competence and discipline often achieved. Volunteers themselves considered the system incapable of producing corps to the same military standard as the regular army. Apologists emphasised that the volunteers were not intended to be true soldiers; theirs was the ideal of the citizen-soldier, who adopted a temporary and conditional military character in order to serve his fellow-subjects. Volunteers, it was hoped, would acquire the beneficial virtues of discipline and loyalty without the attendant vices of military life.

¹¹¹HO 42/23, f.634, P.Tender to Mr.Bevan at Lincoln's Inn, December 1792, [postmark Truro]; f.659, W.A.Bevan, Lincoln's Inn, [n.d., 1792].

¹¹²Calculated from *Pigot & Co.'s London & Provincial New Commercial Directory, For 1822-3*, (Manchester, 1822). The counties were Cheshire, Derbyshire, Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Lancashire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Monmouthshire, Norfolk, Nottinghamshire, Rutland, Shropshire, Somerset, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, Wiltshire, Worcestershire, Yorkshire and north and south Wales. Taverns and public houses named 'Volunteer' were to be found in Chester, Knutsford, Macclesfield, Cirencester, Bolton, Bury, Lancaster, Manchester, Loughborough, Grimsby, Bridgenorth, Crewkerne, Lichfield, Doncaster, Leeds, and Wakefield.

Part Three: volunteers and their corps

Volunteers did not view their relationship with their corps in the disinterested, patriotic fashion portrayed by the apologists. Volunteering was only one of several loyalties for many men. Most corps had the features of fraternal and convivial societies, with strong local, rather than national, loyalties. Their purpose was fundamentally military, but the regular military practices that were adopted were those that could most readily be accommodated within the structure of a consciously egalitarian civil society.

Much of the public activity of volunteer corps combined military exercise with fraternal and convivial aspects characteristic of civilian clubs and societies, to which many volunteers also belonged. Annual and commemorative dinners were a common practice. All current and former members were invited to regimental anniversary dinners, which in some cases continued several years after the disbandment of the corps.¹¹³ Such dinners were parodied in a list of regulations for the 'Eleventy-'leventh Regiment of Light Dragoons, or Loyal Gotham or Stroud-water Legion' in 1810. A fund raised from fines and forfeitures was to be expended monthly in a morning repast of either rum and milk, strawberries and cream, syllabub or some other 'mild and grateful beverage'.¹¹⁴

Reviews provided another opportunity for feasting. The Hitchin Volunteers came to a review of Hertfordshire corps 'in waggons and a Dray with Beer & a waggon full wth Eating'.¹¹⁵ A dinner held at Market Deeping for the Ness Volunteers lasted almost six hours; 54 men consumed 126 bottles of port, 48 of sherry, 64 bowls of punch and 20 of negus, in addition to ale and porter.¹¹⁶ Even in their choice of toasts, volunteers were often indistinguishable from non-military societies. At a grand dinner at Gosport for the Queen's birthday in 1797, the reported list of toasts included the royal family, the army, navy, the Irish Volunteers and the local volunteer corps. In these, the volunteers' public loyalties were almost identical to those of the subscribers to the Portsmouth and Portsea Fishery, whose dinner had

¹¹³Westminster City Library, 767/1, Minutes of the St.James Westminster Loyal Volunteer Regiment, 19 June 1815, 13 October 1815; Bodleian Library, MS Top.Oxon.d.247, Oxford MS Diary 1739-1817, pp.241, 243, 317, 323; Buckinghamshire Record Office, L/Y:13/6, Acton Chaplin, 23 June 1796.

¹¹⁴Gloucestershire Record Office, D4693/14, Reliques of Gloucestershire, between pp.42 and 43.

¹¹⁵"Memorandums For ..." *The Diary of John Carrington*, p.115, 29 May 1805.

¹¹⁶Charles J.Hart, *The History of the 1st Volunteer Battalion The Royal Warwickshire Regiment And Its Predecessors*, p.81.

been reported earlier the same month. However, the volunteers made some more pointedly political toasts, drinking to the value of good order and good government, and to 'The land we live in — and those that do not like it, the sooner they leave it the better'. The landlord of the inn displayed a large allegorical transparency, depicting three volunteer officers, crowned with laurels by Britannia, trampling envy and the French tricolour.¹¹⁷

Volunteer corps sometimes acted more like private societies under the patronage of their commanding officers than military bodies under the direction of central authority. In some cases, troops were composed largely of the officer's tenants; this was explicit in the Percy Tenantry Volunteers in Northumberland. Some troops were identified by their commanders' names rather than their formal titles, even by county lieutenancy clerks.¹¹⁸ Two anonymous diarists, apparently independently, referred to Oxfordshire yeomanry cavalry troops at a review in 1799 by their commanders' names only.¹¹⁹ At the Oxford Assizes in 1806, the High Sheriff arrived in procession with representatives of two trade companies, several carriages filled with friends, and 'The Sheriffs Tenants and Troop on Horseback'.¹²⁰ Although most troops were not treated like their commanding officer's retainers, ties of clientage remained clear. The arrangement was a reciprocal one: privates were reported to exclaim 'let us have none for officers who can't give us good dinners'.¹²¹ George Stratton provided a dinner for his tenantry, yeomanry troop and the Cordwainers' company, but later gave a separate dinner for a large party of his friends.¹²² The Hon. Edward Spencer Cowper, Captain of the Hertford Volunteers, gave a lavish dinner to the corps at the town hall in 1806; they took his horses off his carriage to draw him home themselves.¹²³

¹¹⁷ *Portsmouth Gazette*, No.186, 23 January 1797, p.3 c.3, Portsmouth, January 22; No.184, 9 January 1797, p.3 c.3-4, Portsmouth, January 8.

¹¹⁸ Bodleian Library, MS.Top.Berks.b.14, The actual State of preparation in the County of Berks as well under the Regular permanent Laws of the Kingdom as under the measures, exertions, and enquiries, thought necessary by His Majesty's Command to be taken, used, and made in the Spring, and Summer of the Year 1798, Compiled by Jas.Payn, clerk of the general lieutenancy meetings, fol.15.

¹¹⁹ Bodleian Library, MS Top.Oxon.d.247, Oxford MS Diary 1739-1817, pp.212-213, 17-19 June 1799; MS.Don.d.138 [Anonymous], Antiquarian notebook concerning Oxford, 18th century, p.29, 18 June 1799.

¹²⁰ Bodleian Library, MS.Top.Oxon.d.247, Oxford MS Diary, p.247, 23 July 1806.

¹²¹ *Cobbett's Political Register*, Vol.IV, col.835, To the Editor, 'Mentor', London, 13 December 1803.

¹²² Bodleian Library, MS Top.Oxon.d.247, Oxford MS Diary 1739-1817, p.247, 23 July 1806.

¹²³ "Memorandums For ..." *The Diary between 1798 of John Carrington*, p.137, 22

Sir John Dashwood King gave the men of his Desborough troop of yeomanry a total of £5/11/6 one Christmas.¹²⁴ The Newport troop of Buckinghamshire Yeomanry considered meeting Earl Temple, one of the majors in the corps, on his way to Stowe on his marriage, which would have involved riding up to twenty miles and taken a day at the members' own expense.¹²⁵ At the celebrations on the twenty-first birthday of the Duke of Rutland in 1799, the Grantham Volunteer Infantry provided a guard at Belvoir Castle, checked tickets, and prevented brawls among drunken guests.¹²⁶

Ties of clientage were also readily apparent in the common practice of corps presenting commemorative silver plate or swords to their commanding officers on resignation or retirement. The St. James's Westminster corps commissioned a portrait and paid 30 guineas in 1815 for an illuminated address to their former commander, Lord Amherst.¹²⁷ The forms of presentation, however, made explicit the members' expectations of considerate treatment as respectable individuals. Captain Clarke of the Daventry Volunteers was given a sword by the non-commissioned and private men as a token of their respect and affection, and in recognition of his polite attention to the corps. Lieutenant Watkins was thanked for his regular attention to his duty and his 'uniform politeness' to the members.¹²⁸ One of the more dramatic expressions of gratitude was a Greek revival temple erected at the expense of the volunteers of Kent as a tribute to their lord lieutenant, Lord Romney, at Mote Park, his seat near Maidstone.¹²⁹

One of the most powerful means of creating a collective identity among volunteers was the wearing of uniform clothing. As with other aspects akin to regular military practice, volunteers were equivocal about uniform, some mimicking the more exclusive regular regiments, while others sought to avoid the appearance of military clothing altogether. Volunteer uniform was worn

November 1806.

¹²⁴Bodleian Library, MS D.D.Dashwood (Bucks) c.14 F 2/2/8, Moneys paid on Act. of the Col.'s company.

¹²⁵Buckinghamshire Record Office, D/U/9/53/28, Uthwatt MSS, J.B.Praed to Mansel, London, 3 May [n.y.].

¹²⁶*Leicester Journal*, No.2406, 11 January 1799, p.3 c.5.

¹²⁷Westminster City Library, 767/1, Minutes of the St. James Westminster Loyal Volunteer Regiment, 23 October 1815; 23 November 1815.

¹²⁸Northamptonshire Record Office, Clarke of Welton MSS, C(W)63, Meeting of N.C.O.s and privates of the Daventry Volunteers, Wheatsheaf Inn, Daventry, 3 December 1798; C(W)64, 65, J.C[larke], Wilton Place, 4 December 1798.

¹²⁹John Newman, *The Buildings of England West Kent and the Weald*, second edition, (Harmondsworth, 1976), pp.413-414.

on occasions where normally only regular officers would be seen in military dress, by men who would otherwise would not have been entitled to wear official uniform clothing. Ostensibly many corps insisted that uniform was only for military purposes, and urged on economic grounds that it be worn as little as possible at other times. Volunteer officers were expected to wear uniform at all times when on permanent duty, but had to be discouraged from following the regular army practice of wearing uniform on non-military public occasions.¹³⁰ The regulations against this practice appear to have been widely ignored; it was thought very well known that many young volunteers put on regimentals 'to make a smart appearance at wakes and other merry meetings', and the boots and breeches used to ride to markets and fairs.¹³¹ Henry Hunt later ridiculed the officers of his troop of yeomanry for parading in their newly-acquired uniforms at inns on the return journey from the tailor's in London.¹³²

Volunteer corps gave a great deal of attention to the details of their uniforms, often in the initial stages of their formation appearing to devote more attention to them than any other area of activity. Clothing constituted the single greatest cost of membership, for while arms and accoutrements were supplied free, under the allowances of June 1803, one guinea was provided every three years for a private's clothing.¹³³ An expensive uniform would deter poorer men from joining, and was in some cases used as a mechanism to restrict membership. Some corps' uniform was considered so expensive as to 'preclude altogether a certain class of individuals from joining the ranks'.¹³⁴ In under a year, 1700 yards of silver braid was supplied to one squadron of the Buckinghamshire Yeomanry; Colonel George Hanger complained that 'some are gilt all over like the gingerbread soldiers at Bartholomew Fair.'¹³⁵ The Reverend Thomas Robinson, offering a corps of twenty riflemen in 1798, announced that they intended to furnish themselves with a handsome uni-

¹³⁰ Shropshire Record Office, 81/321 Leeke Collection, G.Castle and Richard Morgan to Lieut.Col.Leeke, Liverpool, 6 July 1804; Shropshire Record Office, 146/28, Orders and Fines for the Regulation of the Corps of the Pimhill Light Horse Volunteer Yeomanry Cavalry, [n.d.].

¹³¹ Francis Percival Eliot, *Six Letters on the subject of the Armed Yeomanry*, p.70; PRO 30/3/1, Brook Watson to Colonel Herries, Mansion House, 8 April 1797.

¹³² [Henry Hunt], *Memoirs of Henry Hunt, Esq*, pp.199-204.

¹³³ Cecil Sebag-Montefiore, *A History of the Volunteer Forces*, p.389.

¹³⁴ *The Times*, 12 August 1803, quoted in *The Letters of R.B.Sheridan*, p.202 n.1.

¹³⁵ Buckinghamshire Record Office, L/Y 14/194, J.Carter to Acton Chaplin, London, 5 July 1808; George Hanger, *A Letter to the Right Hon.Lord Castlereagh, Secretary of State, &c.&c.&c.*, p.51.

form for 'the appearance of the Thing'.¹³⁶ Following an occasional military fashion, Captain William Handley commanding the Newark Volunteers had twin portraits painted of himself and his wife, both in the corps' uniform.¹³⁷ The Highland Association in London distinguished itself with Scottish national dress and music, believing in the efficacy of military distinctions in inspiring a spirit of generous emulation.¹³⁸

In the 1860s, an unattractive uniform was sometimes thought responsible for a failure to attract recruits to rifle volunteer corps. Conversely, an ornate uniform tended to attract ridicule.¹³⁹ Volunteers in the earlier period were frequently parodied for their concern for appearance, as 'Jessamin Soldiers' ... '*afraid of spoiling their Cloathes and chatching cold*'.¹⁴⁰ Yet in 1797 a newspaper correspondent in Southampton took pride that the local corps was acknowledged to have the richest and most showy uniform in the country.¹⁴¹ One officer asked that his troop be allowed to wear a uniform more elaborate than Lord Sheffield had instructed as 'it is necessary to keep them in good humour even at the expense of a little *finery*'.¹⁴²

There was a countervailing tendency among volunteers towards simplicity and cheapness in uniform, sometimes to their complete omission. Sheridan's widely recommended advice to volunteers was to adopt plain and frugal uniforms 'such as could be used by men in their business as well as in their military character'.¹⁴³ Members of the Bloomsbury and Inns of Court Association initially were not required to wear any particular uniform, but were encouraged to adopt a decent uniformity of dress. Resistance to the adoption of a uniform of more military appearance in 1798 was based on fears

¹³⁶ HO 50/330, Thos.Js.Robinson to Earl of Radnor, Milton near Abingdon, 18 May 1798.

¹³⁷ William Y.Carman, 'Captain Handley and his Wife, Newark Volunteers', *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, Vol.LXVI, No.268, Winter 1988, pp.191-192.

¹³⁸ HO 50/43, Lawrence Dundas Campbell to Marquis of Titchfield, Jermyn Street, St.James's, 23 July 1798.

¹³⁹ Ian F.W.Beckett, *Riflemen Form A Study of the Rifle Volunteer Movement 1859-1908*, pp.52, 95-96, 108.

¹⁴⁰ (*sic*), Mary Dorothy George, *Catalogue of Political and Personal Satires*, Vol.VII, p.454, No.9221, S.W.Fores, 'Lobsters for the Ladies i.e. Jessamin Soldiers or a Veteran Corps going on duty', 2 June 1798; Vol.VII, pp.114-115, No.8513, I.Kay, 'Edinburgh Royal Volunteers', 1794; Vol.VIII, p.245, No.10215, Laurie and Whittle, 'Loyal London Volunteers, preparing for a field day', 1 November 1803.

¹⁴¹ *Portsmouth Gazette*, No.190, 20 February 1797, p.3 c.2, Southampton, February 18.

¹⁴² Thomas Bradford to Lord Sheffield, October 1803, quoted in Ann Hudson, 'Volunteer Soldiers in Sussex during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, 1793-1815', p.179.

¹⁴³ *The Soldier's Companion*, (1803), 'General Observations for Military Corps Serving Gratuitously'.

that it might render the corps liable to more extended service than they had originally engaged for.¹⁴⁴ A troop of pikemen attached to a Worcestershire volunteer corps proposed in 1803 to serve without uniform. The Home Office patiently pointed out in response that wearing a uniform was of considerable importance for discipline and security, as it served to distinguish friend from foe.

Sometimes a plain uniform was intended to serve an egalitarian ideal. The officers' uniform of the Boston Independent Armed Association was distinguished from the privates' only by a sash worn when on duty.¹⁴⁵ Most resolutions of frugality were made with the intention of staying within the limits of the official allowance provided for uniforms, or of sparing the government expense. Instead of 'gorgeously attired but awkward' volunteers, Alexander Dirom advocated plain and cheap uniform.¹⁴⁶ Lord Bolton similarly favoured one general plain uniform dress. He believed that competition in dress would lead to expensive finery and would be 'fatal in a thousand ways.'¹⁴⁷ One commanding officer claimed that he refused admission to his corps to anyone who objected to wearing the clothing that the allowance would procure.¹⁴⁸ Lord Pembroke saw the necessity for cheap dress because without it the peasantry would not be able to join, and he believed them to be the best sort of volunteers. Yet he conceded that a plain, sensible 'soldierlike' uniform would not satisfy those who had to wear it, as 'there seems to be such a childish love of finery prevalent'.¹⁴⁹

In the later nineteenth century, many corps were reluctant to adopt scarlet clothing, for fear of being entrapped into enlistment, or of being too closely identified with the regular army.¹⁵⁰ These reservations do not seem to have been widespread in the 1790s and early 1800s. Isolated instances exist of corps being unwilling to adopt uniform clothing for fear of being thereby enlisted into the regular forces,¹⁵¹ but in general volunteers sought

¹⁴⁴HO 50/55, Jam. C. Cox, 9 February 1798.

¹⁴⁵HO 50/55, Ancaster to Duke of Portland, 1 June 1798, (enclosure).

¹⁴⁶Alexander Dirom, *Plans for the Defence of Great Britain*, 1797, pp.19–20; see also Gloucestershire Record Office, D149/X21/58, Cheltenham Volunteer Infantry, [n.d.].

¹⁴⁷Hampshire Record Office, 11 M 49/235, f.60, Bolton to Geo.Garnier, 14 August 1803.

¹⁴⁸HO 51/75, p.373, R.Pole Carew to Rev.H.Dannett, Hopton Wafers, Bewdley, 25 October 1803.

¹⁴⁹Gloucestershire Record Office, D1571/X18, Lord Pembroke to T.Estcourt, 24 August 1803.

¹⁵⁰Hugh Cunningham, *The Volunteer Force A Social and Political History 1859–1908*, (London, 1975), pp.94–94.

¹⁵¹Gloucestershire Record Office, D 1571/X18, Lord Pembroke to T.Estcourt, 24 August

to dress as much like the regular, and particularly the elite, corps as possible. Corps established after August 1803 were restricted by official regulation to the same colour uniform as the corresponding branch of the regular army: red for all except artillery in blue and rifle corps in green.¹⁵²

The principal means by which greater professionalism was encouraged among volunteers was by inviting corps to undergo an annual period of full-time training. Corps' purely local concerns were eroded by the requirement that permanent paid duty be undertaken away from their home town if it was not a garrison town. Permanent duty was intended to be analogous to the annual exercise of militia regiments when not embodied.¹⁵³ Between November 1803 and February 1804, 23,792 volunteers in 109 corps had been placed on permanent duty for periods ranging from seven to sixty days, but most commonly for a fortnight or three weeks. All but one corps were in coastal counties; five Dorset corps were stationed at Poole and four at Weymouth in November 1803, while 21 Norfolk corps were at Great Yarmouth at different times during November and December.¹⁵⁴ In Scotland, the corps offering to go on permanent duty were selected with regard to the distribution of forces and the probability of attack in each district.¹⁵⁵ Many volunteers protested that they were unable to leave their businesses unattended for so long; this had been their reason for choosing to join a volunteer corps in the first place.¹⁵⁶ Only those wives and families left unable to support themselves were entitled to allowances when a volunteer was on permanent duty. The Home Secretary thought it prudent in late 1803 to avoid calling on to service any volunteer who had a wife or family likely to suffer in his absence.¹⁵⁷

Permanent duty was intended to give volunteers experience of acting in a military fashion with other corps and with regular soldiers. Regularity,

1803.

¹⁵²Cecil Sebag-Montefiore, *A History of the Volunteer Forces*, p.322; Hertfordshire Record Office, Hitchin Loyal Volunteers, Box III, The Regulation Regimentals of the Bloomsbury and Inns of Court Association.

¹⁵³HO 51/80 f.418, Hawkesbury to Lord Dynevor, 20 June 1805.

¹⁵⁴[House of Commons], List, Presented to the House of Commons, By Mr. Secretary Yorke, of Volunteer Corps in Great Britain, who have been placed on permanent pay and duty, since first November 1803; as far as the same can be made out. Ordered to be printed 20th February 1804, (London, 1804).

¹⁵⁵HO 51/79, ff.155-157, C.Yorke to Earl of Moira, 10 April 1804.

¹⁵⁶*Leicester Journal*, No.2367 13 April 1798, p.3 c.5.

¹⁵⁷HO 51/75 p.537 C.Yorke to Earl of Carlisle, 19 November 1803; See also HO 51/79, ff.302-303, C.Yorke to Wm.Chaytor, 14 May 1804.

discipline, correctness of dress and military appearance were emphasised. Volunteers were treated like militiamen, receiving pay, allowances if injured on duty, franking privileges at the Post Office, and with allowances provided to their wives and children from county funds.¹⁵⁸ When on fifteen days' permanent duty at Doncaster in 1804 the Sheffield Volunteers were exercised each morning for about six hours, and paraded each evening. A daily guard was appointed to protect stores and ammunition. On separate occasions the corps was reviewed by an Inspecting Field Officer and the vice-lieutenant of the West Riding, who both later dined with them. The seventh lieutenant, Thomas Ward, recorded that many of his comrades 'found their time hang heavy on their hands.' The officers organised a regular afternoon mess, attended assemblies and dinners at the Mansion House with the local gentry, and some took tea with the vicar. The corps' band played at parade, and beat the tattoo each evening. Occasionally, the bandsmen would remain after parade to amuse themselves and the inhabitants. The military life, for volunteers, was not disagreeable. Thomas Ward was ready to 'esteem the military as one of the most eligible professions. If you are gay, opportunities are rarely wanting for introduction to genteel and good company; and if grave, I know not any profession which affords so much leisure for study and literature, if you except the professed scholar.'¹⁵⁹

'Soldier-like' appearance when on service was repeatedly stressed. The Newcastle under Lyme Volunteers, on permanent duty at Leek in June 1805, were ordered always to appear on the streets clean and correctly dressed as soldiers, and to keep their firelocks and accoutrements in good order. No volunteer was allowed to leave the town without a pass, and those found out of quarters at night were to be confined. Their commanding officer expressed particular anxiety that volunteers' hair be cut in a soldier-like manner. On being inspected by a Brigadier-General earlier the same year, the corps had been told that 'a Volunteer Should Consider himself a Soldier in the proudest Sense of the Word'.¹⁶⁰

Volunteers did not regard themselves primarily as military men, despite

¹⁵⁸HO 51/79, C.Yorke to Earl Poulett, 27 April 1804; HO 51/80 ff.417-420 Hawkesbury to Lord Dynevor, 20 June 1805; HO 51/79, ff.302-303, C.Yorke to Wm.Chaytor, 14 May 1804.

¹⁵⁹*Peeps Into the Past being passages from the diary of Thomas Asline Ward*, Edited by Alexander B.Bell, pp.22-29, 82-84.

¹⁶⁰HO 51/112, Newcastle under Lyme Volunteers Order Book, Stourbridge, 29 January 1805; Newcastle, 29 May 1805; Leek, 6 June 1805; Gloucestershire Record Office, D1571/X18, Bruce to Estcourt, 6 September 1798.

the use of 'soldier-like' as a term of approbation. The voluntary and conditional nature of their service were repeatedly emphasised. Even when volunteers consciously adopted aspects of regular military practice, those aspects contributed to the club-like nature of the institution because they were not strictly necessary for part-time corps. Volunteer corps adopted military display more readily than less attractive aspects of regular army organisation, like military discipline. Especially when on permanent duty, they took every opportunity to express their patriotic purpose and participation alongside the regular forces. Even the passwords — both parole and countersign — given to the daily patrols of the Montrose Volunteers reflected this by linking the names of military and naval commanders with place names with military associations: Grey and Guernsey, Dundas and Fort Augustus, Pitt and the Cinque Ports, Cambridge and Hanover, Howe and Berwick, Duncan and Bombay. The St. Andrew and St. George's Volunteers in London emphasised military virtues: Glory, Victory, Attention, Energy and Courage.¹⁶¹

Some military practices were inappropriate for part-time corps and had effects contrary to their intention. Several corps adopted the military custom of beating an evening tattoo following Sunday exercises. In regular corps, soldiers were not permitted out of quarters after tattoo, but this did not apply to volunteers when at home. As at Durham, it was complained that the ceremony encouraged violations of public order rather than helping preserve the peace.¹⁶² Some corps were reported to have established a quarterly mess with the object of bringing together gentlemen to form an acquaintance with the habits and sentiments of each other, and to discuss proposals for promoting the discipline, co-operation and harmony of corps.¹⁶³ In practice, the motivation for forming a mess appears to have been convivial. Soon after its re-formation, the London and Westminster Light Horse Volunteers arranged for a mess at the London Tavern and British Coffee-House, where gentlemen subscribing could meet and dine at moderate expense.¹⁶⁴ While on fifteen days' permanent duty at Doncaster in 1804, the officers of the Sheffield Volunteers established a mess for which each contributed ten days'

¹⁶¹National Library of Scotland MS 10689 Orderly Book of the Second Regiment of Forfarshire or Montrose Volunteers, ff.43-49, 28 February-3 April 1804; HO 51/113, St. Andrew and St. George's Volunteers Orderly Book, ff.11-15, 19-20.

¹⁶²HO 50/54 [Anonymous] to Bishop of Durham, Durham, 22 March 1802, pp.2-3; Norfolk Record Office, 17616 88 D 6, Diss Volunteers Order Book, 21 December 1803.

¹⁶³*Leicester Journal*, No.2432, 12 July 1799, p.3 c.5.

¹⁶⁴PRO 30/3/5 Minute Book L.H.V. Vol.I, p.57, August 1794.

pay. The penalty of a bottle of port was enforced for swearing or references to trade.¹⁶⁵ Volunteer corps appear not to have imitated fully the practices of militia and regular army officers' messes. Some of these, like betting on a wide variety of competitions, may have been the product of lengthy inactivity through confinement to garrisons, or the equivalent in civil societies.

Duelling as part of the pretensions to officer status appears to have been rare among volunteers, and was dying out in both civil and military society during this period. Most disputes between volunteers were unconnected with volunteering. Lord Bruce, commanding the Wiltshire Yeomanry, was able with propriety to decline a challenge from Henry Hunt over a dispute concerning the shooting of game, unconnected with volunteering.¹⁶⁶ In the duel between Pitt and Tierney in 1798, both were only incidentally volunteer commanding officers.

The club-like nature of volunteer activity was evident even in competitions organised within corps. Shooting matches for prizes were a common useful diversion that incidentally helped to reinforce internal loyalties. Captain Knowles of the St. Andrew and St. George's Volunteers presented a sword to the corps in 1804, to be shot for by privates and non-commissioned officers. By so doing, Knowles explained that he wished to testify to his attachment to the members of the corps and to offer a tribute of acknowledgement for the kindness and regard they had manifested for him.¹⁶⁷ The proprietors of Ranelagh commemorated the Prince of Wales' birthday by organising a shooting match between the 'Gentlemen Members' of the metropolitan volunteer corps. The event attracted an audience of more than 1500 ladies and gentlemen, and concluded with fireworks and dancing.¹⁶⁸

Volunteers, unlike nearly all other military bodies, normally did not segregate private men, officers and non-commissioned officers. Formal internal social organisation is evident in large corps, but social differences between ranks were not as marked as in other military forces. Volunteers formed corporate organisations; they were addressed as a whole, and not the officers alone. Notices and important orders were in some corps routinely printed

¹⁶⁵ *Peeps Into the Past being passages from the diary of Thomas Asline Ward*, Edited by Alexander B. Bell, pp. 22, 27.

¹⁶⁶ John Belchem, 'Orator' Hunt, p. 21; Donna T. Andrew, 'The code of honour and its critics: the opposition to duelling in England, 1700-1850', *Social History*, Vol. 5, No. 3, October 1980.

¹⁶⁷ HO 51/113, St. Andrew and St. George's Volunteers Orderly Book, ff. 84-85, 14 December 1804, 20 December 1804.

¹⁶⁸ *Bell's Weekly Messenger*, No. 225, 17 August 1800, p. 262 c. 2.

and addressed individually to each member. As has been pointed out, much of the published material intended for volunteers assumed that even private men were both literate and individually responsible for acquiring military knowledge. Sir William Young, a Captain in the Buckinghamshire Yeomanry, addressed his *Instructions for the Armed Yeomanry* to the private gentlemen, arguing that men of their situation and intelligence could be reasoned with to greater advantage than ordinary recruits.¹⁶⁹ Lord Muncaster abridged and had printed a small treatise for distribution to the members of his corps. He believed that the *Volunteer's Friend* would be of considerable use if they were called on to service.¹⁷⁰

Volunteers were drawn from an unusually literate section of the population. The basis of much evidence of literacy is the ability of adults to sign their names, usually in marriage registers, although the sources are biased in favour of males and some social classes. Signatures provide a very rough but nevertheless valuable guide to the maximum numbers able to write. Reading was taught before writing, so those able to sign documents almost certainly could read. The national rate of illiteracy of men at marriage was around 40% at the turn of the century, though usually lower in urban than in rural parishes. Commercial, administrative and market towns tended to have more literate populations than the expanding industrial towns. Even so, the 71%, 80% and 94% of respectively the Durham city, King's Stanley and Hitchin volunteers who signed documents rather than making a mark represent a significantly more literate section of their communities. The proportions contrast markedly with the literacy rates of 38% and 33% for regular militia substitutes and local militia enrolments respectively in the rural Bullingdon subdivision of Oxfordshire.¹⁷¹

By convention, all volunteers were considered gentlemen; membership of a corps was secondary. The Duke of Portland referred to the Light Horse Volunteers as the gentlemen composing the London Volunteer Cavalry.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁹Sir W.Young, Bart., *Instructions for the Armed Yeomanry*, ([n.p.], 1797), p.8.

¹⁷⁰PRO 30/26/94, Muncaster Mountaineers, Lord Muncaster to Captains of Companies, 8 February 1804.

¹⁷¹W.B.Stephens, *Education, Literacy and Society, 1830-70: the geography of diversity in provincial England*, (Manchester, 1987), pp.3-7, 9; HO 50/46, Durham City Loyal Volunteers, Petition to Duke of York, [n.d.]; HO 50/71, Loyal King-Stanley Rifle Corps, 8 August 1803; Hertfordshire Record Office, 1/67, Records of the Hitchin Loyal Volunteers, Box I, Hitchin, 17 June 1798; Oxfordshire Record Office, L/M II/iii/1 Bullingdon Division Militia Inrolment book: Local Militia 21 December 1811-16 April 1814; Militia 31 December 1807-27 April 1813.

¹⁷²PRO 30/3/1, Portland to Lord Mayor, 28 June 1795.

The egalitarianism and freedom of association of commissioned and private members of volunteer corps was in sharp contrast with the militia and regular forces. In 1800 a lieutenant of the Royal Cornwall Miners was dismissed from the regiment by a court-martial for familiarly associating and drinking with non-commissioned officers of the same regiment at a public house. He was considered to have conducted himself in a manner derogatory from the character of a gentleman, and to the prejudice of good order and military discipline.¹⁷³ In many volunteer corps, such an incident would have been unremarkable, largely because of their smaller size and relatively narrow social range between their officers and men, although exceptions existed to both conditions. Officers were careful to address all members of their corps individually and without apparent regard to military rank. Volunteer corps were exhorted to allow 'no idle distinction to any that serve'.¹⁷⁴ One Buckinghamshire yeoman addressed himself to his captain as 'Yr.Comrade'.¹⁷⁵

Volunteer officers appear to have been addressed by their civil titles, even when entitled to military forms of address when on duty. Administrative officials assigned the titles of 'esquire' or 'gentleman' according to military rank rather than comparative social standing, the former to commanding officers and the latter to the other officers, regardless of social rank outside the volunteers. The treating of inferior men as social equals for volunteer purposes had the potential for upsetting the civilian social hierarchy.

Many corps sought to minimise the differences between officers and men, whether by the adoption of only minor differences in uniform, or by organisational arrangements. Officers were distinguished from privates in the Boston Independent Armed Association only by a sash worn when on duty.¹⁷⁶ The officers of the First Regiment of Royal Edinburgh Volunteers were not permitted any further indulgence or accommodation than the privates. They were to march on foot, carrying their own baggage. While in camp or quarters, no distinction in tents or rooms was permitted. The horses provided for officers under military regulations were appropriated for general purposes.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷³HO 50/389, Judge Advocate General, Charles Morgan to Duke of York, 23 December 1800.

¹⁷⁴[Anonymous], *Military Instructions for the Drill, Manual and Platoon Exercises, intended for the use of the Volunteers of the United Kingdom*, (Edinburgh, 1803), p.4; *The Soldier's Companion*, (1803), 'General Observations for Military Corps Serving Gratuitously'.

¹⁷⁵Buckinghamshire Record Office, L/Y 14/221 Mr.Woodman to Mr.Russel, Sunday evening, [n.d.].

¹⁷⁶HO 50/55, Ancaster to Duke of Portland, 12 June 1798, (enclosure).

¹⁷⁷James Walter, *The Twenty-First Year of Embodiment. The Volunteer Force History*

When prominent gentlemen elected to serve in the ranks as private men, their example was praised. The printer of the *Leicester Journal* noted the presence of J.H. Franks, Esquire, of Misterton among the privates of the Lutterworth troop of cavalry. It was pleasant, the printer commented, to see men of fortune, superior to the consideration of rank, honourably discharging the duty of a soldier.¹⁷⁸

Military funerals were normally a highly visible expression of the primacy of membership of a volunteer corps, particularly as few deaths were directly related to volunteer service. Volunteers were expected to follow the elaborate regular army practice for '*Interments a la Militaire*'; at the first funeral for a member of the Oxford Loyal Volunteers, the whole corps attended, the band played the Dead March, and three volleys were fired over the grave.¹⁷⁹ At Robert Burns' funeral, his volunteer hat and sword were placed on his coffin, which was accompanied by the Dumfries Volunteers.¹⁸⁰

Membership of a corps was not to the exclusion of other interests; volunteering did not have an exclusive claim on members' loyalties. On occasion, this obliged corps to accommodate non-military associations, and to act alongside them on an equal footing. The funeral of Thomas Emmerson of Shepshed was attended by nearly 400 members of a club to which he belonged, but he was buried with military honours by a detachment of the yeomanry troop of which he was a member.¹⁸¹ Few friendly societies seem to have been reluctant to allow members to join volunteer associations, although they could have been thought more likely to be injured, and so eligible for benefits. A Chelmsford friendly society resolved to pay nine shillings weekly to those volunteers among its members injured in engagement with the enemy or in quelling disturbances.¹⁸²

Some corps themselves adopted the military aspects of social obligations that were characteristic of benefit or friendly societies. Subscriptions were raised to support the widows and dependent relatives of volunteers, al-

and *Manual, with Incentives to Permanence; together with Complete List of Officers*, (London, 1881), p.267.

¹⁷⁸ *Leicester Journal*, No.2374, 1 June 1798, p.3 c.4.

¹⁷⁹ Bodleian Library, MS.Don.d.138 [Anonymous], Antiquarian notebook concerning Oxford, p.29, 12 September 1799; *The Volunteer and Intelligent Soldier's Companion*, pp.130-134.

¹⁸⁰ Hugh Douglas, *Robert Burns — A Life*, (London, 1976), p.215.

¹⁸¹ *Leicester Journal*, No.2408, 25 January 1799, p.3 c.5.

¹⁸² *Leicester Journal*, No.2373, 25 May 1798, p.3 c.4-5; see also Buckinghamshire Record Office, Q/RSf.22 Orders to be observed and kept by a Friendly Society, Held at the Goat, at Chenies, 24 September 1797.

though they appear not to have been granted automatically. The Leicester Yeomanry Cavalry set up a subscription and appointed a committee to make permanent provision for the widow and numerous young family of their late adjutant in 1799; the two sons were given appointments in the regiment.¹⁸³ The unfortunate Mr. Dewey of the eighth regiment of Loyal London Volunteers while on a skirmishing party near Islington in 1803 was killed by a piece of wadding fired by a fellow volunteer. The Patriotic Fund at Lloyd's granted an annuity to his widow.¹⁸⁴

A few armed associations formally took up the functions of the specialised and often parochial subscription societies that had been formed to insure subscribers against the cost of securing a substitute, if ballotted to serve in the militia or Army of Reserve. Membership of an armed association, unlike that of a volunteer corps, did not provide exemption from service in the militia. The Mortlake Armed Association undertook to pay for substitutes but the expense soon forced it to retract this provision.¹⁸⁵

Corps sometimes acted like mutual benefit societies, by distributing common funds to all their members. The Newcastle under Lyme corps distributed the fines collected for misbehaviour and the proceeds from a seizure of salt equally among its members on the King's birthday and Christmas Day. The fines collected by the Stow Volunteers in Gloucestershire were appropriated to the maintenance of any member rendered incapable of following his usual occupation by an accident when on duty.¹⁸⁶

Volunteer corps also subscribed widely to public charities, particularly those that had patriotic connotations. Instances of Surrey volunteer subscriptions were provided by the district Inspecting Field Officer in 1811 as part of the evidence of their loyalty: £200 towards the relief of the British prisoners in France, and £300 towards the relief of the suffering Portuguese. The Royal Gloucester Yeomanry Cavalry voted to add the corps' fines to their subscription for the Patriotic Fund for the relief of widows and orphans of those killed at Trafalgar.¹⁸⁷ The social role adopted by many volunteer

¹⁸³ *Leicester Journal*, No.2452, 29 November 1799, p.3 c.3, p.3 c.5.

¹⁸⁴ *Soldiers' Fare, or Patriotism and Hospitality*, p.16 note; Herbert de Rougemont, *A Century of Lloyd's Patriotic Fund 1803-1903*, ([London], 1903).

¹⁸⁵ Surrey Record Office, reference; J.W.Fortescue, *The County Lieutenancies and the Army 1803-1814*, (London, 1909), p.42.

¹⁸⁶ HO 51/112, Newcastle under Lyme Volunteers order book, 26 February 1806, 27 May 1806; HO 50/71, Wm.Bricknell to Earl of Berkeley, Stow, 25 June 1803.

¹⁸⁷ HO 50/357, Joseph Hardy, Inspecting Field Officer, Surrey and Kent, 9 May 1811; Gloucestershire Record Office, D4920/1, Royal Gloucester Yeomanry Cavalry minute book, pp.54-55, 2 December 1805; PRO 30/3/2, Miscellaneous.

corps towards their own members can be linked to corps' wider social concerns. Volunteers' concern for public welfare was presented as simply an aspect of their duty to their communities.

The public face of the movement sought to equate concern for the physical safety of the populace with charitable works and concern for the poor. The *Portsmouth Gazette* noted that the attendance of the Chichester corps at a benefit performance for the poor demonstrated that they had taken up the weapons of defence in order to insure the blessings of social order, yet were still ready to soften the miseries of indigence.¹⁸⁸ Contribution to charity was presented as simply another aspect of concern for the general welfare and the public good that apologists believed the volunteers were already supporting militarily. As a wise response to high grain prices in mid 1796, Arthur Young recommended the yeomen of Suffolk both to relieve the necessities of the poor by liberal donations, and to prevent disturbances by joining a yeomanry cavalry troop.¹⁸⁹

Charitable contributions were relatively uncontroversial and provided a positive public face for a corps. Subscription to the Voluntary Contribution of 1798 was, in comparison, an overtly political act in support of Pitt's ministry and measures. Few corps subscribed as a body, apparently leaving the decision to individual members.¹⁹⁰ The Leicester Troop of Yeomanry Cavalry subscribed 100 guineas, and the Loughborough troop £75/1/-.¹⁹¹ The aim of the committee arranging the voluntary contributions in Leicester was in any case to make the subscription as general as possible. A large number of small subscriptions, it was believed, would show unity among all ranks of society, and demonstrate to the enemy that they had no partisans.¹⁹² Volunteers' concern for public welfare was presented as the civil aspect of their military commitment to defend the country against French invasion and ideologies. Their charitable activity was presented as an aspect of their concern for public welfare; as citizen-soldiers, they had a social duty to their community as well as a military duty. As fundamentally civil organisations, the corps maintained strong physical and symbolic links with their localities.

¹⁸⁸ *Portsmouth Gazette*, No.109, 3 August 1795, p.3 c.3, Chichester, August 1.

¹⁸⁹ [Arthur Young], *National Danger, and the Means of Safety. By the Editor of the Annals of Agriculture*, (London, 1797).

¹⁹⁰ See D.G.Vaisey, 'The Pledge of Patriotism: Staffordshire and the Voluntary Contribution, 1798', *Essays in Staffordshire History presented to S.A.H.Burne*, Edited by M.W.Greenslade, *Collections for a History of Staffordshire*, Fourth Series, Volume Six, ([Stafford], 1970).

¹⁹¹ *Leicester Journal*, No.2361 2 March 1798, p.3 c.5; No.2363, 16 March 1798, p.3 c.5.

¹⁹² *Leicester Journal*, No.2338, 30 March 1798, p.3 c.4-5.

While adopting many of the forms and practices of regular military corps, the volunteers were organised like many civil clubs. They were fraternal and convivial societies with strong internal loyalties and unusually egalitarian organisation. Many volunteers saw themselves not as military men but as armed civilians. They consciously adopted a position in public life between the civil and military worlds, and this accounts in part for many of the apparent ambiguities and inconsistencies in their actions. Some refused to take oaths of loyalty not through disaffection but because they feared being enlisted as soldiers. Similarly, volunteers refused to act outside their locality or to act as an internal peace-keeping force.

The nature of volunteer service was limited and contractual. Volunteers believed they embodied the ideal of the citizen-soldier, willing to act in a military capacity as long as the country was in danger, but unwilling to forego their rights as private individuals. Apologists sought to emphasise that volunteers' only partial commitment to military duties was a fundamental aspect of the force's constitutional nature, while enlarging on the attendant civic virtues. The mixture of professionalism and amateurism, however, provided critics with material for a picture of self-important vain-glorious incompetence. Volunteers' place in public life was much broader than criticism of the force's military value would allow. The impression of widespread public support for the war and the ministry's policies was implied by the presence of large disciplined corps on commemorative military and royal occasions; their physical presence was thought to deter political disaffection and give the impression of unanimity in the face of the threat from France and French principles.

Conclusions

To seek to characterise a volunteer movement which involved several hundred thousand men throughout the country for almost twenty years is inevitably to neglect the wide variation present in its almost every aspect. Yet it is perhaps valid to ask what the volunteers achieved, and to compare this with the purposes for which they were established and what they set out to do. The volunteers are often dismissed by historians because their military value was not commensurate with the numbers involved and amount spent on its maintenance. But they were of significant social and political value also; contemporaries gave less emphasis to their military achievements than to their political and social influence. Towards the end of the 1790s, several observers took stock of what they believed the volunteers had achieved in their first few years. The volunteer force, along with the regulars and the auxiliary forces, was credited with preserving the country from invasion. However, the force's more immediate achievement, it was suggested, had been the maintenance of internal order. In general, corps' value against civil disorder was stressed. Almost as often, the waning of political dissent was attributed to the influence and example of volunteer corps. This they were thought to have achieved by intimidating the disaffected or by their social influence, setting an example of non-partisan unity in the face of a common external enemy. The volunteers were thought to have formed a 'connexion of loyalty' which united all levels of society in a common purpose by strengthening deferential relationships.¹ In 1799 the Chiswick Armed Association claimed to have 'encouraged and restored a due principle of subordination amongst the different classes of the people ...induced the heedless to reflect fairly upon the advantages they actually enjoy and the doubtful issue of innovation ...rendered disloyalty unfashionable, sedition dangerous and insurrection almost impossible'.²

The political value of the force from the government's point of view was that it strengthened the impression of widespread popular support for its prosecution of the war, which was particularly important while the necessity of the war remained controversial, as it did until at least 1798. It is more properly classed with other schemes to extract voluntary and public expressions of allegiance and support for the war effort, like the Voluntary Contribution of 1798, than with other, more purely military forces. Volun-

¹HO 50/54, H[enry] H[eneage] St.Paul to Lord Hobart, 31 May 1802.

²HO 50/46, 2 July 1799; J.R.Western, 'The Volunteer Movement as an Anti-Revolutionary Force, 1793-1801', p.613.

teers also served to overawe the disaffected and make democratic societies more wary of public activity. Even though the force encompassed a range of political allegiance, its public face was ministerialist, and opponents of the ministry had to take this into account when contemplating membership. Volunteers, however, rarely engaged in political activity, whether loyalist or of any other kind. Their apparent political quietude can be attributed to a sense of constitutional propriety, or alternatively it may have been a result of their political influence having been exercised by indirect means: exercises, patrols and informal intimidation could each be used to impress a loyalist, anti-radical and anti-democratic line on local opponents. One observer thought that after only a few months' existence in 1795 the Royal Edinburgh Volunteers had already proved a most useful institution. George Home believed the volunteers had effectively extinguished all seditious clubs and private meetings, and had stopped 'the propagation of that Democratical nonsense so catching among the vulgar'. The corps had preserved the peace of the city merely by its reputation, and by its ready appearance at all hours on occasional alarms. It was even thought that the corps might have a beneficial influence on the sentiments of the rising generation when they saw all the principal characters of the city, those of fortune, rank and respectability, engaged in preserving peace and good order.³ The beneficial influence of volunteering was identified throughout civil society, not only in populous districts but also in remote areas. The Earl of Fife was convinced that the volunteer corps of Banffshire had been of 'infinite' service for both local defence and in ending the spirit of sedition and democracy that had been artfully fostered particularly in the most remote parts of England and Scotland.⁴

An apparent disparity exists between contemporaries' emphasis on the broad social and political effects of the volunteer system and the largely non-partisan nature of most volunteer activity. The two views can be reconciled by considering the breadth of political opinion within many corps, and emphasising constitutional rather than partisan allegiance: the volunteers were more a constitutional than a partisan force, supporting the existing system and working through established institutions. The movement provides a striking example of the way in which the British state faced the threat of revolutionary ideology and mass armies not by itself reforming

³Scottish Record Office, GD 267/1/18/14, [George Home], Edinburgh, 23 March 1795.

⁴HO 50/44, [Earl of] Fife, Mar Lodge, 22 August 1798; HO 50/50, [Earl of] Fife to Lord Hobart, Duff House, 21 June 1801.

but by adapting existing institutions and employing existing local power structures. They were used to raise a mass force relying essentially on local initiative and organisation. The government's problem was to raise a large defensive army without causing intolerable financial strains or social disruption, and without having to resort to the revolutionary French expedient of conscription. Volunteering was an ideal solution as it was relatively cheap and easily organised, it delayed the need for the reform of defensive forces, and it reasserted localism instead of a potentially dangerous nationalism.

Yet it is significant that a mass force did not develop, as it did in Ireland or in France, into a serious threat to the established order. While the Irish volunteers pushed for political reform, the later British movement was in most cases notably circumspect about involvement in partisan matters. Corps generally did not petition for parliamentary reform or for peace, but they also had reservations about loyal petitioning and loyalist intimidation of the radical societies. From what has been seen of the informality and irregularity of checks on volunteers' loyalty, it is apparent that it was not close supervision and careful selection alone that made volunteers loyal, although both played an important role. To a significant degree, the reliability of the volunteers can be attributed to the comparative orderliness of those parts of civil society from which they were drawn, since the variety and breadth of volunteer membership made corps reasonably representative of their local populations. Though volunteers were untypical in their enthusiasm to participate actively in national defence, they represented around a fifth of the adult male population and most likely an even higher proportion of the politically active nation. Such an interpretation of the constitutional and contractual nature of volunteering, linked with the fundamental reliability of propertied men, serves to illuminate Henry Addington's comment in 1797 that the establishment of the yeomanry corps was 'a Pledge to the Country of a Purity of Intention in the Executive Branch of the Government.' He believed such corps could never be objects of jealousy to a free people, as their duties and interests were identified with the interests of the community.⁵

The volunteers provide an ideal opportunity to explore the hypothesis advanced by René Corvisier that divisions between military and civilian society in Europe were breaking down during the eighteenth century, and especially in the period of the revolutionary wars. This period is often seen as one in which mass citizen armies displaced the relatively small professional forces

⁵Devon Record Office, Sidmouth Papers, 152 M/C 1797/OZ 49, Henry Addington to Gen.Simcoe, Woodley, 10 October 1797.

of the eighteenth century.⁶ The conscript armies of the French republic introduced the concept of the 'citizen soldier'. The example of the volunteers demonstrates both that the ideal of the citizen soldier was inherent in the voluntary military tradition also, and that successive British governments, under the threat of invasion, were not afraid of resorting to appeals for mass civilian participation on the French model, despite their stated abhorrence of French political principles. The levy en masse of 1803 demonstrates that Addington's ministry was ready in effect to introduce conscription for auxiliary forces, yet this was done partly as a means of encouraging enrolments in volunteer corps. The measure can be seen as a resort to the well-established precedent of appealing to propertied men for voluntary armed assistance, while broadening the scope of who were considered fit propertied men.

The volunteer movement serves to illustrate the state's ability to mobilise large numbers of men without making concessions to popular demands, without making commitments to reform and without fundamental change to military organisation. Yet it is necessary in retrospect to appreciate how ambiguous were the volunteers as a force ostensibly designed for the defence of the established order. In allowing large numbers of men to raise and form corps in this way, the government was in some senses taking a calculated risk. Many commentators saw the true political danger to be from the middle classes, not the poor, and it was the former who were among the most active in the volunteer movement. The drawbacks and dangers of reliance on voluntary corps were readily apparent. They were of limited military value, often being reluctant to leave their own districts even for training. Volunteers were quick to take offence and had to be carefully managed. Corps' autonomy enabled them to defy central authority, and raised the possibility of independent political activity. The exigencies of 1798 and 1803 induced the government to risk arming the male populace as a whole, but steps were soon taken to restrict the numbers and autonomy of volunteer corps.

Despite the obvious drawbacks of arming voluntary civilian bodies, the government remained willing to countenance the force. Part of the explanation for this confidence is that the government appears to have invited their formation because it wished to channel the wider participation of the politically active classes into activity, if not favourable to the cause of government, then at least not opposed to it. The force directed voluntary endeavour into lines organised and easily controlled by the state, away from the less pre-

⁶ André Corvisier, *Armées et Sociétés en Europe de 1494 à 1789*, (Paris, 1976), pp.13-30.

dictable loyalist associations and local defence associations. The force was to be employed as an auxiliary to the regulars, carrying out policing duties normally assigned to the army. The volunteers were only one of a range of options considered by the government, and there are clear indications in the manner in which they were established that they were not necessarily the most favoured option. It was a force of uncertain loyalty and it possessed great potential to have become a political challenge. Many doubts were expressed about the wisdom of trusting arms to large sections of the population, however loyal their public sentiments. Nevertheless, the government persisted with the force because on balance it was thought best to have such men under discipline and on the government's side than to have them uncommitted or inactive, or worse, hostile and beyond official control.

This conclusion is dependent on a particular interpretation of the connection between the volunteers and the loyalists. One view holds that the volunteers represented Reevesite loyalism in a different form. The volunteers were preferred by the government because they represented a broader social group and their form of organisation both guaranteed their longevity and made them easier to incorporate into national defensive and policing forces.⁷ However, the evidence suggests instead that the volunteers were more than simply a development of the loyalist associations; their purpose was distinctly different, the evidence of their shared membership is inconclusive, and volunteers are not known to have engaged to a significant degree in anti-radical violence or prosecution. The continued existence of some Reeves associations into the later 1790s strongly suggests that the volunteers were not seen to have subsumed their role. The latter interpretation is most likely, as it goes some way towards explaining the relative lack of volunteer political activity.

The volunteers were not 'loyalist' in the sense of active opposition to democratic and republican societies and involvement in prosecution, intimidation and violence. Rather, the movement was loyal in its adherence to non-partisan principles of constitutional propriety and in its support for the established order. The volunteers interpreted these principles more strictly than the Reeves associations, eschewing all but the broadest of political declarations and avoiding partisan commitments.

The government's intentions for the force were sometimes at variance with the volunteers' conception of its purpose. Some corps were unwilling to serve except as strictly local defensive forces. Many more interpreted

⁷See David Eastwood, 'Fading Visions?', pp.3, 11-13, 20-22.

their defensive duties as extending only to the eventuality of invasion and insurrection, and so were unwilling to deal with food rioting or to act as peace-keeping or policing forces. Nor were the government's social intentions for the force either clearly defined or always borne out in practice. The wide variety in organisation and the practice of leaving most administrative matters to local initiative resulted in some corps being run by socially inferior men or those whom the government thought unreliable. Corps developed the egalitarian features of private societies; 'subscriber democracies' led to the possibility of independent political activity that would not necessarily be favourable to the government. Volunteer committees gave power to common men; though it was power within strictly constrained circumstances, it posed a potential challenge to local social hierarchies.

Yet local oligarchies were themselves using the volunteer movement to further their own local interests. The supersession and eventual disbandment of the infantry force raised relatively little serious opposition largely because local interests could equally well be accommodated by the new Local Militia. The yeomanry cavalry was not disbanded at the end of the war, and it retained close ties with the interests of the local oligarchies. The ambiguities and contradictions inherent in the volunteer system were as apparent in its end as they were during its lifetime. Its opponents argued that the force was too expensive and inefficient, though it was not significantly more so than at any point in the past and arguably neither expensive nor inefficient in terms of its size. The criticism that the volunteers drew upon men who would otherwise have joined the army is seriously undermined by the analysis of membership which shows many volunteers were men in settled occupations and demonstrates that corps were unwilling to accept men who might have become soldiers. In any case, concentration on military efficiency neglects the volunteers' wider purpose and value in gaining the active involvement of civilians and strengthening ties of social allegiance. It is most likely that the volunteer force was replaced because it had outlived its usefulness, which was related to the emergencies of 1798 and 1803. A ballotted force was less likely to arouse opposition than it had been before as it was by 1808 less controversial. Many corps were in any case experiencing financial and recruiting difficulties not entirely resulting from official hostility. The yeomanry cavalry survived the war largely because it had never become a mass force like the volunteer infantry; being small and more closely identified with the landed classes, it was relatively easily managed.

The volunteers of the French wars provided a precedent for the organisation of voluntary military activity well into the nineteenth century, though

they left few obvious legacies until their revival in the 1860s, when the government was willing to countenance such an infantry force in peacetime. Yet it was only the infantry which had outlived its usefulness after 1814; gentlemen of the Manchester and Salford Yeomanry were among the troops who attacked the crowd at Peterloo in 1819, arresting Henry Hunt, himself a former yeoman.

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L/V, Lieutenancy, Volunteers Correspondence.
L/Y, Lieutenancy, Yeomanry Correspondence.
Q/RP, Land Tax assessments.
TA, Auxiliary forces papers.
Uthwatt MSS.

Cambridge County Record Office:

Maynard Collection.
St.Andrew the Less, Cambridge, Parish Records.

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Add.6958, copies of Pitt Correspondence.
 Add.7621, Papers of William Smith, M.P.
 Add.7787-7886, Correspondence of William Frend.
 University Archives, Minutes of Syndicates.

Devon Record Office, Exeter:

1262M, Fortescue MSS.
 152M, Sidmouth Papers.

Durham County Record Office:

Londonderry Papers.
 D/X 678/1 Loyal Durham Rangers.

Gloucestershire Record Office:

D149, Cheltenham Volunteer Infantry papers.
 D566, Tetbury Volunteers papers.
 D1571, Papers of Thomas Estcourt, M.P., Devizes troop, Wiltshire Yeomanry Cavalry.
 D1770, Papers of Captain Humphrey Austin, Wotton under Edge Volunteer Cavalry.
 D4581, C.Hill, 'Historical Records relating to Stroud and Neighbourhood'.
 D4693, 'Reliques of Gloucestershire'.
 D4920, Royal Gloucester Yeomanry Cavalry minute book.
 PA328, Diary of Thomas Pike, The Younger, of Tetbury, 1752-1815.

Guildhall Library, London:

MS 4, 5th Regiment Loyal London Volunteers general orders.
 MS 5, Minutes of the committee of the Royal Exchange Division of Loyal London Volunteers.
 MS 4951, Papers of Col.Henry Harnage.
 MS 5785, Minutes of the committee of the 9th Regiment Loyal London Volunteers.
 MS 9957-9958, Records of the Portsoken Ward Military Association, 7th Regiment Loyal London Volunteers.
 MS 14,290, 4th Regiment Loyal London Volunteers papers.
 MS 14,489, Law Association Volunteers orderly book.
 MS 18,942, Light Horse Volunteers regimental record book.

Hampshire Record Office, Winchester:

11 M 49/231-241, Internal Defence and Volunteer Correspondence.
 38 M 49/7, Wickham MSS.
 44 M 69, 138 M 64, Papers of Civil Societies.
 65 M 85/1, Minutes of Internal Defence Committee.

County of Hereford and Worcester Record Office, Worcester:

BA 1043, South Worcester Volunteers papers.
 BA 2868, Lord Coventry's Lieutenancy Correspondence.
 BA 6832, Papers of Captain George Nash, Southrop Volunteers, Gloucestershire.

Hertfordshire Record Office:

Records of the Hitchin Loyal Volunteers.

Kent County Archives Office, Maidstone:

EKY, East Kent Yeomanry.
 TR 2253, Finn MSS.

U 24, Mann (Cornwallis) MSS.
 U 47/34, Mackeson MSS.
 U 269, Sackville MSS.
 U 442, Gordon Ward collection.
 U 471, North MSS.
 U 840, Pratt MSS.
 U 1300, Romney MSS.
 U 1350, Amherst MSS.
 U 1453, Cobb MSS.
 U 1473, Morgan collection.
 U 1590, Stanhope of Chevening MSS: Pitt MSS.

Lincolnshire Archives Office:

Ancaster MSS.
 Dawson MSS.
 Diary of Matthew Flinders, Sen., of Donnington.

National Army Museum, Chelsea:

6807-268, Papers of Captain Humphrey Hall, Light Horse Volunteers.
 6911-4-6-8, Home Defence, Southern and Eastern Districts.
 7805-72, Ealing and Brentford Volunteers papers.
 8105-15-5, Coleman-street Ward Military Association papers.

National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh:

MS 7, 22, Melville Papers, correspondence.
 MS 1048, Melville Papers, Home Defence.
 MS 3795, Rose Papers.
 MS 5407, Roll of Royal Edinburgh Volunteers.
 MS 10688, Montrose Loyal Volunteers Orderly Book.

Norfolk Record Office:

MS 2658, Townshend Correspondence: Lynn Volunteers correspondence.
 MS 5361-5364, Townshend Correspondence.
 WKC 7/84/9, Ketton-Kremer MSS.
 17616 88 D 6, Diss Volunteers Order Book.

Northamptonshire Record Office:

C(A), Cartwright (Aynho) MSS.
 C(W), Clarke of Welton MSS.
 YZ 4912-4913, Miscellaneous Collections.

Northumberland Record Office, North Gosforth:

NRO 1812 Northumberland Lieutenancy Papers 1768-1798.
 Delaval (Lord Waterford) MSS.
 Additional Delaval MSS.
 Swinburne (Capheaton) MSS.
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 QS D.L.216, Land tax assessments, St.Aldate's, 1826.
 QSM II/3, Quarter Sessions record book 1800-1815.
 Misc.Will.I/1, Diary of a North Oxfordshire Clergyman, probably John Russell Greenhill, 1793-1800.
 Wi X/22-23, Willoughby of Marsh Baldon MSS.

Public Record Office, Kew:

Home Office Papers:

HO 40/1/1-7 HO 40/2/1, Luddite Disturbances, 1812-1813.
 HO 42/21-50, Domestic and General Correspondence, 1792-1800.
 HO 50/40-357, Internal Defence, 1798-1814.
 HO 50/385, Secretary at War correspondence, 1794-1795.
 HO 50/389, Military correspondence, 1800-1801.
 HO 50/459-460, Military, supplementary correspondence, 1804-1812.
 HO 51/74-77, Volunteer correspondence, 1802-1804.
 HO 51/78-87, Secretary of State's Entry Book, 1804-1809.
 HO 51/103, Yeomanry and Volunteers, In-Letters, 1802-1803.
 HO 51/105, Associated Corps.
 HO 51/112, Newcastle under Lyme Volunteers Order Book.
 HO 51/113, St.Andrew and St.George's Volunteers Orderly Book.
 HO 51/114, Calendar of Volunteer Correspondence.
 HO 51/120, Circulars.
 HO 51/125, Training Act.
 HO 79/1, Miscellaneous Entry Books, Private and Secret, 1806-1812.

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IR 13/3, Board of Taxes, Treasury Letters, 1800-1803.

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 PRO 30/3/1-30, Bosanquet Papers.

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 WO 4/190, 1803, Secretary-at-War, Out-Letters.
 WO 6/13, 1805-1806.
 WO 7/112-116, Departmental Out-Letters to Clerks of Sub-Divisions, 1809.
 WO 13, Volunteer and Militia muster rolls and pay lists.
 WO 24/601, Establishments, 1796.
 WO 30/66, Papers concerned with Defence, 1796-1812.
 WO 40/19, un-numbered papers, 1803.
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Public Record Office, Chancery Lane:
Public Record Office (Gifts and Deposits):
PRO 30/26, Muncaster Mountaineers papers.

Treasury Solicitor's Papers:
TS 24/3/30, Loyal Lambeth Association.
TS 24/10/6-18, Sedition Papers.

Scottish Record Office, Edinburgh:
GD 51, Melville Castle Muniments.
GD 224, Buccleuch Muniments, Dalkeith House.
GD 267, Hume of Wedderburn MSS.

Shropshire Record Office, Shrewsbury:
81, Leeke Collection.
146, Records of Edwards family of Ness Strange.
245, Diary of Thomas Boycott.
1123, Correspondence of William Constable.
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2375, Lieutenancy correspondence.

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D 1300, Staffordshire Yeomanry and Volunteers general correspondence.
D(W) 1788, Newcastle under Lyme Volunteers papers.

Suffolk Record Office, Bury St. Edmunds:
HA 513, Acc.423, Grafton Archives.

Surrey Record Office, Kingston upon Thames:
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BA 8720/2(ii), 2 705:936, Loyal Worcester Volunteers.
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A 2303, St. Anne's, Soho, parish records.
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B 1332-1341, 1370, 1472-1473, St. Clement Danes parish records.
B 1359, 1364, St. Clement Danes Volunteers records.
C 1102, St. George's Hanover Square parish records.
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G 1003, St. Mary le Strand Vestry Book.
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