ALL FOR THE KING’S SHILLING

AN ANALYSIS OF THE CAMPAIGN AND COMBAT EXPERIENCES
OF THE BRITISH SOLDIER IN THE PENINSULAR WAR, 1808-1814

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy
in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

Edward James Coss, M.A.

The Ohio State University
2005

Dissertation Committee: Approved by:
Professor John Guilmartin, Adviser
Professor Mark Grimsley
Professor John Lynn

Adviser
Graduate Program in History
The British soldier of the Peninsular War, 1808-1814, has in the last two centuries acquired a reputation as being a thief, scoundrel, criminal, and undesirable social outcast. Labeled “the scum of the earth” by their commander, the Duke of Wellington, these men were supposedly swept from the streets and jails into the army. Their unmatched success on the battlefield has been attributed to their savage and criminal natures and Wellington’s tactical ability.

A detailed investigation, combining heretofore unmined demographic data, primary source accounts, and nutritional analysis, reveals a picture of the British soldier that presents his campaign and combat behaviors in a different light. Most likely an unemployed laborer or textile worker, the soldier enlisted because of economic need. A growing population, the impact of the war, and the transition from hand-made goods to machined products displaced large numbers of workers. Men joined the army in hopes of receiving regular wages and meals. In this they would be sorely disappointed.

Enlisted for life, the soldier’s new primary social group became his surrogate family. The shared hardship of campaign and battle forged bonds of extraordinary strength between the British soldier and the men with whom he fought, lived, and suffered. When the commissariat failed to feed him, the soldier plundered out of desperation, sharing whatever could be found with his comrades. With little in the way of
sustaining support on campaign, such as medals, chances for promotion, or the
appreciation of the British public, the men looked to each other for esteem. Group mores,
which put an emphasis on selfless acts that enhanced group survival, become the
paramount driving force. Such group values applied on and off the battlefield; the ranker
learned to lean on his group in order to face the physical and psychological demands of
campaign and combat.

No more a criminal than any other soldier of the Napoleonic wars, the British
soldier was common in most every respect, except in his ability to adapt and survive
under desperate circumstances. His victories in battle were the direct outcome of primary
group cohesion and shared privation, not his base nature.
Dedicated to David Chandler (1934-2004),
friend, mentor, and consummate historian,

and to Deb, Ben, and Brittany.
They know why.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am indebted to a number of exceptional people, each of whom has contributed significantly to this endeavor. Any spark of insight comes from the inspiration they collectively and selflessly provided.

First and foremost, I would like to thank, profusely, John Guilmartin and John Rule, my long-time mentors; I don’t have the words to express what their continued support, guidance, and infectious love of history have meant to me. Every graduate student should be so lucky as to have two such fine scholars and gentlemen as academic guides.

I would also offer my appreciation to John Lynn and Mark Grimsley for their advice and insight into military history. Having access to such first-rate intellects has been rewarding and epiphanal, not to mention down-right enjoyable.

As for support, I have had the great fortune to rely on Faith Anne Myers. It is her mathematical, statistical, and editorial abilities, combined with her unfailing confidence in me and the ideas underlying this dissertation, that have made much of this work possible. In addition, Judy Duguid, Phil Fry, and Tim Pray have provided editorial assistance as well as advice on content and approach; like Faith Anne, they have done yeoman work on my behalf, all the while offering unconditional support. Such extraordinary friends are priceless.
I also believe that the encouragement of David Chandler, a long-time friend and an unmatched genius when it came to military history, made an important difference over the years. From the genesis of this work, over a decade ago, to its now completed state, I have shared my ideas with him. When his health deteriorated, we exchanged letters and cards. I wrote this dissertation as if David were in the room reading over my shoulder.

A special thanks goes to Joby Abernathy. Without her care, advice, and efforts on my behalf, I never would have survived the harrowing waters of graduate school bureaucracy. Like an angel, she watched over me and guided me out of harm’s way.

Finally, this work would never have germinated beyond simple musings without the support and understanding of my wife Debra, and my two children, Ben and Brittany. My wife has traveled with me abroad and assisted me in gathering research, from the Public Records Office in London to Invalides in Paris. She also helped compile the demographic research contained herein. She has listened, bemused and tolerant, as I shared each aspect of my discoveries. Brittany was also pressed into service inputting data, much to her regret. Both she and Ben have put up with my seemingly endless streams of historical anecdotes and insights with an amazing degree of forbearance. The impact of my enthusiasm has not gone unnoticed: Ben has chosen architecture and Brittany medicine as their areas of academic interest. History was never in the running. Deb, Ben, and Britt have somehow understood my passion for military history and my need to comprehend and analyze the behavior of men in battle. They have put up with my absences, my need for solitude, and my piles of research notes and books without complaint. They have been my sustaining motivation throughout.

My gratitude to all these people knows no bounds.
VITA

January 25, 1954 .............................................................. Born - Toledo, Ohio

1976 ........................................................................ Bachelor of Education
University of Toledo
Toledo, Ohio

1984............................................................................. Master of Arts
History
The Ohio State University
Columbus, Ohio

PUBLICATIONS


“The British Soldier in the Peninsular War: The Acquisition of an Unjust Reputation,”


“Trial by Fire: The Combat Behavior of the British Soldier in the Peninsular War,”

FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: History
   Area of Emphasis: Military History

Minor Fields: History of Early Modern Europe
               History of Modern Europe
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract ........................................................................................................................................ ii
Dedication ..................................................................................................................................... iv
Acknowledgments ...................................................................................................................... v
Vita ........................................................................................................................................ vi
List of Tables ........................................................................................................................... x
List of Figures ............................................................................................................................ xiv

Chapters:
1. Introduction ............................................................................................................................ 1
2. Manufacturing the Myth of the Scum of the Earth ................................................................. 46
3. Gone for a Soldier: The Realities of Enlistment ................................................................. 72
4. Over the Hills and Far Away: Surviving on Campaign ....................................................... 137
5. Ordeal by Fire: The British Soldier in Combat .................................................................... 234
6. Into Hell before Daylight: Peninsular War Sieges ............................................................... 299
7. Conclusion ............................................................................................................................. 326

Appendix A: The British Soldier Compendium .................................................................... 333
Appendix B: Regression Analyses Using the British Soldier Compendium ......................... 363
Appendix C: Nutritional Analysis ............................................................................................ 378
Bibliography .............................................................................................................................. 403
### LIST OF TABLES

**Chapter 3**

1. Simplified distribution of sample for 1806 ................................................................. 77
2. Simplified distribution of sample as percent of 1806 sample ................................... 77
3. Percent of branch's enlistees from each country in 1806 ........................................... 77
4. Percent of country's enlistees in each branch in 1806 ............................................... 77
5. Simplified distribution of whole sample .................................................................... 79
6. Simplified distribution of sample as percent of whole sample ................................. 79
7. Percent of branch's enlistees from each country ....................................................... 79
8. Percent of country's enlistees in each branch ............................................................ 79
9. Age distribution of 1806 enlistees ............................................................................. 80
10. Age distribution of all enlistees ................................................................................ 80
11. Age distribution by country, all enlistees ................................................................. 81
12. Height distribution of 15 year old enlistees ............................................................... 84
13. Height distribution of all enlistees ............................................................................ 84
14. Height distribution by country ................................................................................ 84
15. Height distribution of enlistees aged 18 and older .................................................... 87
16. Enlistees not meeting recruiting standards ............................................................... 88
17. Enlistment per year as reflected in the BSC sample .................................................. 93
18. Regression comparing enlistment and bread prices ................................................ 98
19. Effects of independent economic variables on enlistment ...................................... 99
20. Distribution of trades in 1806 sample ...................................................................... 102
21. Characteristics of enlistees in poor economic years ............................................... 103
22. Characteristics of enlistees in good economic years ................................................. 103
23. Men with no trade across countries ........................................................................ 106
24. Men with no trade across countries as percent of whole sample ............................ 106
25. Trades across countries ........................................................................................... 107
26. Trades across countries as percent of whole sample .............................................. 107
27. Trades across countries as percent of each country .............................................. 107
28. Trades across branches as percent of branch ......................................................... 107
29. Ten most frequently listed trades in the BSC ......................................................... 108
30. Weekly wages for common professions .................................................................. 113

**Chapter 4**

31. Nutritional breakdown of standard rations for the British soldier in the Napoleonic Wars .................................................................................................................. 144
32. Nutritional breakdown of standard rations for the Roman soldier .......................... 145
33. Nutritional breakdown of standard rations for a common soldier serving in the English Civil War ................................................................................................................................. 145
34. Nutritional breakdown of standard rations for Venetian galley slaves ......................... 146
35. Nutritional breakdown of minimal standard rations for Spanish galley slaves .............. 147
36. Nutritional breakdown of rations for Spanish officers, soldiers, and sailors aboard galleys ................................................................................................................................. 147
37. Nutritional comparison of standard rations for various armies ........................................ 148
38. Percent of calories from each source ..................................................................................... 149
39. Dietary Reference Intakes (DRI) in percents ........................................................................ 151
40. Effects of micronutritional deficiencies on the British soldier ........................................ 152
41. Extraordinary caloric expenditures ..................................................................................... 158
42. Regimental courts martial records, 44th Foot, 1778-1784 .................................................. 197
43. Regimental courts martial records – types of cases .......................................................... 197

Chapter 5
44. British victories in the Peninsular War .............................................................................. 262

Appendix A
45. British Soldier Compendium sample and sources ............................................................. 335
46. Percent of regiment’s enlistees from each country ............................................................ 336
47. Simplified distribution of sample ......................................................................................... 336
48. Simplified distribution as percent of whole sample ............................................................. 337
49. Percent of country’s enlistees in each branch ................................................................. 337
50. Percent of branch’s enlistees from each country ............................................................ 337
51. Soldier dispositions when listed ......................................................................................... 338
52. Percent of country’s enlistees with each disposition ........................................................ 338
53. Age distribution of all enlistees ......................................................................................... 339
54. Age distribution by country ............................................................................................. 339
55. Age distribution by branch ............................................................................................. 339
56. Height distribution of all enlistees ..................................................................................... 341
57. Height distribution by country ......................................................................................... 341
58. Height distribution by branch .......................................................................................... 341
59. Height distribution of enlistees aged 18 and older ............................................................ 341
60. Men with no trade across countries ................................................................................... 344
61. Men with no trade across countries as percent of country ................................................ 344
62. Men with no trade across countries as percent of whole sample ..................................... 344
63. Trades across countries ..................................................................................................... 344
64. Trades across countries as percent of each country .......................................................... 345
65. Trades across countries as percent of whole sample ......................................................... 345
66. Men with no trade across branches .................................................................................. 345
67. Men with no trade across branches as percent of branch ................................................ 345
68. Men with no trade across branches as percent of whole sample ..................................... 346
69. Trades across branches ..................................................................................................... 346
70. Trades across branches as percent of branch ................................................................... 346
71. Trades across branches as percent of whole sample ........................................................ 346
72. Trades by type reported in the BSC...............................................................347
73. Comparison to 88th Foot general return: Nationality.................................351
74. Comparison to 88th Foot general return: Height...........................................351
75. Comparison to 88th Foot general return: Age..............................................351
76. Comparison to 6th Foot general return: Nationality....................................353
77. Comparison to 6th Foot general return: Height............................................353
78. Comparison to 6th Foot general return: Age................................................353
79. Comparison to 58th Foot general return: Nationality....................................355
80. Comparison to 58th Foot general return: Height...........................................355
81. Comparison to 58th Foot general return: Age.............................................355
82. Comparison to 58th Foot general return: Trade types...................................357
83. Comparison to 58th Foot general return: Most frequent trades....................357
84. Comparison to 20th Lt. Dragoons general return: Nationality......................358
85. Comparison to 20th Lt. Dragoons general return: Height...............................358
86. Comparison to 20th Lt. Dragoons general return: Age..................................358
87. Simplified distribution of sample for 1806....................................................360
88. Simplified distribution of sample as percent of 1806 sample..........................360
89. Percent of branch's enlistees from each country in 1806.................................360
90. Percent of country's enlistees in each branch................................................361
91. Trades in 1806 sample.....................................................................................361
92. Age distribution of 1806 enlistees...................................................................361

Appendix B
93. Enlistment per year..........................................................................................364
94. Regression comparing enlistment and bread prices........................................365
95. Regression comparing enlistment and multiple economic factors...............370
96. Effects of independent economic factors on enlistment..............................371
97. Characteristics of enlistees in poor economic years.......................................373
98. Characteristics of enlistees in good economic years.......................................373
99. Enlistees not meeting recruiting standards....................................................373
100. Regression comparing age of enlistees and multiple economic factors.........374
101. Effects of independent economic factors on age of enlistees.......................375

Appendix C
102. Nutritional breakdown of standard rations for the Roman soldier...............382
103. Nutritional breakdown of standard rations for a common soldier serving in the English Civil War.................................................................382
104. Nutritional breakdown of standard rations for Venetian galley slaves..........382
105. Nutritional breakdown of minimal standard rations for Spanish galley slaves......383
106. Nutritional breakdown of standard rations for Spanish officers, soldiers, and sailors aboard galleys.................................................................383
107. Nutritional breakdown of standard rations for the British soldier in the Napoleonic Wars.................................................................383
108. Nutritional comparison of standard rations for various armies....................384
109. Percent of calories from each source............................................................384
110. Vitamin and mineral analysis of Roman soldier diet ...............................................385
111. Vitamin and mineral analysis of the diet of a common soldier in the English Civil War .................................................................386
112. Vitamin and mineral analysis of Spanish soldier, sailor, or officer’s diet aboard a galley .................................................................387
113. Vitamin and mineral analysis of Venetian galley slave diet ................................388
114. Vitamin and mineral analysis of Spanish galley slave diet .................................389
115. Vitamin and mineral analysis of British soldier diet ............................................390
116. Dietary Reference Intakes (DRIs) in percents .......................................................391
117. Symptoms caused by dietary deficiencies .............................................................392
118. Amino acid contents of beef and wheat, compared to minimum requirements ....396
119. Total Energy Expenditure for average British ranker ..........................................399
120. Calculation of Total Energy Expenditure for all plausible body types and ages ...400
LIST OF FIGURES

Chapter 3
1. Age distribution of 1806 enlistees and age distribution of all enlistees ......................82
2. Age distribution by group of 1806 enlistees and age distribution by group of all enlistees .......................................................................................................................83
3. Height distribution of all enlistees..................................................................................................................87
4. Enlistment per year as reflected in the BSC sample.................................................................92
5. Graph of enlistment vs. bread prices .................................................................................................99
6. Number of enlistees per month........................................................................................................110
7. Age distribution of 1806 enlistees and age distribution of all enlistees ....................340
8. Age distribution of 1806 enlistees .............................................................................362

Appendix A
9. Age distribution of all enlistees ........................................................................................................340
10. Height distribution of all enlistees .........................................................................................342
11. Number of enlistees per month..............................................................................................349
12. Comparison to 88th Foot general return: Age ..........................................................352
13. Comparison to 6th Foot general return: Age ..............................................................354
14. Comparison to 58th Foot general return: Age ..........................................................356
15. Comparison to 20th Lt. Dragoons general return: Age ..............................................359
16. Age distribution of 1806 enlistees .............................................................................362

Appendix B
17. Enlistment per year .........................................................................................................................364
18. Enlistment vs. bread prices ...........................................................................................................366
One of the most neglected areas of research in the field of Napoleonic studies is the campaign and combat behavior of the common British soldier who fought against the French in the Peninsular War, 1808-1814. Largely ignored, except in asides derisively summing up the men’s character and worth, the exploits of the British enlisted men, the infantrymen in particular, are in fact remarkable both on and off the battlefield. Their experiences offer insights into human motivation in combat, men’s ability to withstand hardship, and the success of the British army as a whole. The British soldier, his achievements, and his reputation remain blanketed in myths, half-truths, and misjudgments, almost entirely untouched by examination and assessment. Thus, almost 200 years after their deeds, these men and what they accomplished still remain an enigma. If we are to assess the dynamics of the army that was instrumental in curtailing Napoleon’s aspirations and ending his empire, we must critically analyze the background and behavior of common British soldiers, who succeeded in doing what no other European army could: routinely defeat Napoleon’s armies on the battlefield.

The greatest hurdle involves looking past the contemptuous, oft-repeated quotation uttered by their commander, Arthur Wellesley, the first Duke of Wellington,¹ who called
these men the “scum of the earth.” This pronouncement has acted to obscure the actual backgrounds, experiences, and motivations of the enlisted men under his command. Wellington’s comment has also preemptively short-circuited investigation into the successes of the British infantry in combat. If we take Wellington at his word, and those of most historians who have followed Wellington’s supposition and cast only a cursory glance at the soldiers he commanded, we are led to believe that the British soldier’s superb combat performance was strictly related to his brutish, criminal nature. Not one historian, however, who has attempted to unravel the question of how men behave during battle—from the compact, face-to-face dynamics of hoplite warfare and the Roman cohort through the French Revolution, the American Civil War, and the various studies that emerged on the behavior of men under fire in the First and Second World Wars—has posited that sociopathic thugs make ideal warriors. None of the current work on combat psychology, in fact, supports the position that isolated men with psychopathic pathologies perform well on the battlefield. Rather, the literature has shown that a unit’s combat efficiency is dependent upon how well men adapt to and are shaped by small groups.

Criminals do not make good combat soldiers because they are unable to function as part of a unit; the British soldier, conversely, was nothing if not a social creature, dependent on his messmates as surrogate family. In the seminal work on the effects of primary and secondary groups on individual soldier morale, Edward Shils and Morris Janowitz found that deserters, the most dysfunctional men in the German army during the Second World War, had failed to be assimilated into groups because they had exhibited the same antisocial tendencies in military life as they had as civilians. “They were the
men,” Shils and Janowitz explain, “who…had difficulties with friends, work associates, and their own families, or had criminal records.” As will be shown, the literature on combat cohesion emphasizes the role of the group as the key motivating factor that allows men to function under fire.

Yet, oddly enough, the British soldier, an individual who functioned extraordinarily well under fire because of the mutual support he extended to and received from his comrades, is remembered as a social deviant and hardened criminal. It is to these alleged characteristics that his success on the battlefield is attributed. Such an assessment is a simplistic, misleading, and unsatisfactory explanation for the combat proficiency of the British enlisted man, one that runs counter to what we know about the connection between group cohesion and the behavior of men in battle.

That the British rank and file were consistently able to outperform soldiers from other nations in combat during this period has become a part of the collective memory, as accepted as Wellington’s derisive comment. The contradiction between the portrayals of the ranker as criminal and as a stalwart combat soldier, unwavering in battle, has never been fully explored. The first implies a nature of selfish solitude, rooted in personal gain at the expense of others. The latter, meanwhile, requires the selfless ability to function as a member of a small cadre of men whose collective interest is the survival of the group.

The success of the British army against the French armies of Napoleon was based on more than just Wellington’s strategic expertise and the supposed savagery of the men under his command. Wellington’s achievements, to a great degree, rested on the combat efficacy and tactical capabilities of the rank and file. It was their unit cohesion, their capacity to act as a unified force during battle, which worked in concert with
Wellington’s reverse-slope tactics to create the unique sharp-end dynamics of close volley-and-charge that set Britain’s infantry apart from all others that opposed Napoleon’s armies in the field. Unfortunately, the exploits of the British soldier, on the battlefield and on campaign, have only been considered against the background of Wellington’s damning characterization.

A careful examination of surviving army enlistment books, journals, letters, memoirs, and regimental records reveals a richer and more telling portrait of the British soldier and the stressors that acted on him. When reviewed in conjunction with relatively modern social-psychological studies of men in combat, models of combat motivation, and recent social histories focusing on the effects of cultural norms on human behavior, a broader and more nuanced picture of the British common soldier emerges, one that stands in direct contrast to the currently accepted portrayal.

The men who filled the ranks of the British army were drawn from the working class and were victims of demographic change. Unprecedented increases in population created a populace with a higher proportion of young people than had been the norm. Insufficient occupational opportunities in rural communities combined with years of poor harvests to drive the people toward the cities, where their hopes of employment were dashed by the rise of industrialization, the resulting labor surplus, and the economic dislocation of Napoleon’s continental embargo. The image that presents itself is of desperate men driven to enlist because of economic circumstances and the lack of social relief in England, Ireland, and Scotland. They were mostly manual laborers but also weavers, tailors, shoemakers, tinsmiths, and men of various other trades. Boys in their preteens through men in their fifties volunteered because they had few alternatives; that
they sought refuge in the army, a thoroughly unpopular institution that offered little in the way of long-term economic promise and advancement but much in the way of danger and toil, shows just how hopeless, miserable, and hard-pressed these individuals must have been to enlist. The enticement of regular pay, food, and the chance to find their self-worth, to belong to something and do a day’s work for a day’s pay, made the army appear promising to men who, through no fault of their own, were displaced and disconnected from society.

Once in the army and on the continent, men soon learned that the army had great difficulties providing the promised pay and rations. The themes of hunger and want weave their way through almost every enlisted man’s account. Pay was usually in arrears, and the soldier’s daily ration of one pound of meat (including the bone), one pound of biscuit, and a third of a pint of spirits, usually rum, brandy, or wine, was delivered sporadically and piecemeal. Men marched for days on next to no food. Such deprivation was the rule, not the exception. Often unfed, without shoes, and in uniforms so tattered and dirty that they were closer in color to black than red, the men discovered that in order to survive on campaign and on the battlefield they had no choice but to rely on each other. The key to understanding the behavior of the British soldier is an awareness of the rank and file’s reliance on what Charles H. Cooley, and later Shils and Janowitz, referred to as the primary social group. For the British ranker, perhaps more than any other soldier of the time, needed the emotional and physical support of the group; to him, the term band of brothers had greater meaning.

Unlike the men of other armies, the British soldier was a volunteer. And unlike the conscripted soldiers of other nationalities who had experienced varying degrees of social
value and stability, the British ranker—for economic reasons largely beyond his control—was also a societal outcast. Once in the army, his view of himself and the world were derived from his interaction with his messmates (the British equivalent of the French *ordinaire*⁶), his company, battalion, and his regiment, in decreasing order of intimacy and support. Soldiers of other nations understood that they would not end their days in the army; these men could look forward to a return to civilian society. The British soldier, on the other hand, knew he was probably never going home. And even if fate offered him a reprieve from the rigors of army life, such a return would only place him in the same circumstances that he enlisted to escape. He understood that his lot in life was never substantially going to change.

The psychological and physiological experiences of campaign and combat bonded the common British soldier to the men with whom he lived, suffered, and fought. Their ongoing desperation strengthened the ties that connected them, creating close relationships of unusual significance. For the British ranker, the primary group was something he clung to; it provided him a measure of self-esteem and allowed him to function. It was not an entity from which he wished to escape or from which expulsion was routine.

This mutual reliance is reflected in scores of primary-source narratives, and it is in these documents that we find repeated references to the effects of group dynamics as the fundamental mechanism that governed the men’s behavior. The soldier’s deep-seated need to belong to the group allowed the collective ethos of this small but essential social organization to establish acceptable norms of individual conduct. These standards applied
to intragroup dynamics, such as the sharing of food and combat behavior, and to group interactions with civilians and enemy soldiers beyond the boundaries of the battlefield.

As with all human behavior, simple explanations will not suffice. If we expect to understand how individual soldiers found the courage to participate in Wellington’s siege assaults, said participation taking many forms, and how the men worked as integrated groups on the battlefield to help make the two-deep British line capable of stopping French column and line attacks with greater success than the formations of other nations, then we must look beyond Wellington’s caustic appraisals and focus on the men and the factors that motivated them.

Two types of primary sources, properly juxtaposed, allow just such a substantive reevaluation of the British soldier: firsthand accounts and demographic data. Individually, both have their value; but when considered together, they present an altogether different portrait of the British soldier, one that contradicts Wellington’s over-quoted descriptions.

The words of Peninsular War participants, preserved in journals, letters, and reminiscences, offer the essential human perspective. Such accounts left by enlisted men, often partial in nature, exist by the score. While nowhere near as numerous as those left by soldiers in the American Civil War, these personal recollections provide a corpus of firsthand information regarding life in the British army. The number of these accounts is somewhat surprising, given the low estimated literacy rate among British soldiers. Francois Furet and Mona Ozouf have shown that there is a high correlation between signing one’s name and the ability to write, at least to a minimal level (+0.91). Using soldiers’ signatures as a guide, Alan Forest has concluded that just under half of Napoleon’s soldiers could read and write. Since Napoleon’s men were conscripts, drawn
from a much wider portion of the socioeconomic spectrum than were the British soldiers, one can reasonably surmise that the literacy rate of British common soldiers was probably lower than the 50 percent estimate for the French. Such a number is consistent with similar studies on literacy rates for British commoners, which registered in the 58 to 63 percent range for this period and the decade after Waterloo.⁹

A general word of caution is warranted regarding the use of personal chronicles. As Forest points out in his excellent analysis of the men who served Napoleon, such narratives are not written with a common purpose.¹⁰ Reflections in the form of memoirs are vastly different in design and value than hastily scribbled diaries or letters home. Memoirs can contain degrees of conceit and deceit, both unintentional and purposeful, as the writer often feels compelled to “set the record straight,” usually to his benefit. Concurring with Forest’s contention, Samuel Hynes, in his compelling work on how and why men preserve their memories of war, describes memoirs as “complex…reflective, selective, more consciously constructed.”¹¹ Forest correctly argues that memoirs are written for posterity, as historical records of sorts, with the final goal being one of acquired respectability.¹² This applies to the memoirs of enlisted men, but more so to the accounts from officers, who felt a greater need to enhance and protect their reputations.

Despite these qualifiers, memoirs still have value. Considering the words of not one but many men who experienced the same campaigns, battles, hardships, challenges, emotions, and horrors, allows for comparative evaluations to be made. The myriad perspectives and memories provide context and verification for one another. Like individual statistics, memoirs are suspect. Viewed collectively, though, memoirs have an
enhanced value. Even in their carefully constructed frameworks, memoirs thus offer a view of daily trials, tribulations, and triumphs.

Journals, diaries, and letters, on the other hand, have a kind of spontaneity, or as Hynes puts it, “the virtues of immediacy and directness.” While such first-person accounts can be empty, rambling narratives, they can also be intensely personal. Running the gamut of human emotions, they are often filled with aspirations, fears, grief, and more humor than one would imagine. While some are poignant and others inevitably trite and filled with misinformation, most are simple recollections of the reality of soldiering. As Forest articulately summarizes, such personal accounts, “unlike the more heroic of war memoirs, concentrate heavily on the immediate experience of soldiers, on their own units, the men around them, [and] the men with whom they shared so much more than they would ever have had to do in civilian life….Often, of course, the day-to-day experiences they describe are petty and banal, yet that very banality gives their accounts a degree of veracity which otherwise they would lack.”

Less fettered by the desire to voice an opinion of the events of the day and removed from any hope of glory, the journals, diaries, and letters of enlisted men supplement and confirm the insight into day-to-day existence provided by memoirs. The soldiers felt a psychological need to consign their thoughts to paper, with little intent beyond sharing and preserving these life moments; in the process, their writings left a record of their social and psychological experiences. Whether naïve or worldly, dull or witty, these personal chronicles reveal men stripped of their social veneer, allowing the forces that drive them to be seen more readily.
Yet it must be remembered that much of what can be gleaned from firsthand accounts, even the most reliable varieties, is not always that which the authors consciously wish to relate. An anecdote in a letter home describing the shame a soldier felt about stealing freshly baked bread from a Spanish household may reveal more about the commissariat’s inability to feed the troops than it does about the character of the individual composing the letter. Likewise, an officer’s journal entries that are dominated by descriptions of dinners and the countryside, but never mention the men under his command or the experiences of battle, tell much about the difference in campaign experiences between enlisted men and some officers; the letters would also help us understand how well-fed officers of independent means might fail to grasp why their men felt the need to steal. Again, the ability to compare scores of accounts allows a collective overview to emerge, one that looks past the intent of individual authors. It is from such a summative view that patterns of the soldiers’ prejudices, values, beliefs, and raison d’être become more obvious. Common concerns come to the surface, mostly dealing with survival and shared hardship, group demands and constraints, the relationships between men, the fear and recollections of battle, and the all-too-uncomfortable reminders of mortality. It is from this pool of collected thoughts and musings that much information can be harvested regarding how British soldiers viewed their experiences of army life on the continent, illuminating the factors that motivated their behavior as individuals and groups and adhered them to their comrades.

The second important type of primary source, demographic records on the soldiers’ backgrounds, adds quantitative support to the first-person chronicles described above. One of the keys to understanding the British soldier and his combat motivations lies in
the heretofore mostly ignored enlistment records housed in the Public Records Office outside London. Regimental description books that summarize battalion enlistment data, such as the country of origin, age at enlistment, previous occupations, and attestation dates for the men, provide a wealth of information on the backgrounds of the men who volunteered to serve King George III. These data, collected by the author in the form of a 7,300-man database, help dispel previously held suppositions about the men’s backgrounds and criminal natures, giving substantiating evidence to their portrayal as out-of-work men of many professions, mostly manual laborers but also skilled workmen, forced into the army because of economic necessity. The British Soldier Compendium, or BSC, compiled for this monograph includes information covering fourteen British line regiments, four cavalry regiments, and the artillery corps.

Unfortunately, information on the remaining British infantry regiments, originally over 100 in number, and on the numerous cavalry regiments, has been largely lost. The extant regimental data are of varying quality, as other researchers have noted. Glenn Steppler, one of the few historians to delve into these records in search of information regarding the British soldier, best sums up the idiosyncratic nature of regimental records. “The record keeping of the British army,” Steppler explains, “was an extremely haphazard affair, in which each regiment went its own way, good, bad, or indifferent.” Steppler’s portrayal is apt, as the battalion description books differ in the types of information recorded, in the organization of data, and even in accounting practices. The final records are as diverse as regimental histories; the British penchant for regimental individuality, with the regiment rather than the army being the center of army life, is most
evident here. Like the first-person accounts described above, regimental data are of
greatest value when compiled and considered comparatively.

In an effort to meld the collective first-person chronicles with the demographic
information contained within the BSC, the narrative of this monograph will revolve
around the life and memories of an actual soldier, William Lawrence. Though illiterate,
Lawrence was quick-witted, largely diligent in his duties, and possessed of a reflective
and keenly observant mind. Lawrence’s account was first dictated to a semiliterate
soldier. Its grammar was later polished by George Bankes and published in its present
version. In many ways the quintessential British soldier, Lawrence enlisted at a young
age due to family economic hardship and dissatisfaction with his apprenticeship.
Recruited in a year of high economic stress, Lawrence proclaimed his previous
occupation to be that of laborer, the stated vocation of the majority of British soldiers.
Lawrence worked the bounty system to his benefit and embarked on a long, eventful, and
often difficult military career. Lawrence rose to the rank of sergeant, surviving a lashing
of 400 strokes, a severe wound, and not one but two Forlorn Hopes. Army life forced him
to become equally as skilled a plunderer as he was a combat soldier. His recollections are
filled with the insights of a man who experienced both the ugliness of war and the
sustaining camaraderie of his fellow soldiers. Lawrence speaks repeatedly of his
messmates and the group-based values that guided his actions and theirs. The degree to
which he depended on these men is evident throughout his autobiography. His life of
endured privation as a member of a primary group encompassed over a decade of military
service. Lawrence fought in most of the major Peninsular campaigns and at Waterloo. He
was cast aside by his government soon thereafter. His age at enlistment, his occupation,
and his experiences in the army mirror those of the British soldiery writ large, making
Lawrence a more than adequate representative of common British rankers in general. The
breadth of his experiences, from a wayward young apprentice who initially found the
army more attractive than civilian life, to his days surviving long marches on short
rations, and even to his ordeals in combat, provide a framework against which other first-
person accounts can be compared. Many of Lawrence’s observations are confirmed in a
great many sources left by the British rank and file. Only the longevity of his career sets
Lawrence apart from the majority of his peers. Lawrence’s honesty and his willingness to
relate tales that often show his personal failings as well as those of his comrades, make
his chronicle a reasonably reliable source of information. Lawrence’s story will also act
as a guide through which demographic information can be presented and analyzed.¹⁸

One of the most prominent theme’s reflected in Lawrence’s musings is the degree
to which his primary group and its standards affected his army life. Behavioral norms
existed in all Napoleonic armies, varying by regiment and nationality due to campaign
experiences and cultural constraints. Men in war have an inherent need for the support
offered by their companions, the fellow soldiers with whom they endure the privations of
military life and share death. Thus, group-based values take on significance. But for the
British soldier, group norms may have carried a greater emotional weight. The men had
scant fond memories of their unsuccessful civilian life, and few envisioned a promising
future should they ever be released from army duty. Most likely enlisted for life, the
British soldier lived day-to-day as a member of the regiment and its more intimate
subdivisions. These formal and informal groups shaped his attitudes and self-image and
became the center of his world.
We cannot presume with any certainty that the ties binding British soldiers together were of greater emotional importance than those of soldiers in other European armies of the time, for it is impossible to quantify emotion. These bonds were, however, remarkably strong, so strong that they were rarely matched, as we can tell from comparing the redcoat’s behavior in the field and on the battlefield to that of his French counterpart.

The experiences and demands of war have the same relative emotional effect on all men. Group cohesion, however, is not an absolute, all-or-nothing concept; it is a sliding scale on a continuum of emotional attachments. There is, for example, a significant difference between the bonds of men who have shared battle and campaign experiences over an extended period of time and the ties between a veteran and a replacement. As Peter Kindsvatter explains in his book on the American soldier of the 20th century, “Veterans were slow to accept replacements, and even pitied or despised them for their lack of combat prowess.” Men kept their distance from new soldiers until it could be determined whether they were “shooters or shakers.”

During this process of assimilation, as in all other times in campaign and during battle, the cohesiveness of every unit is in a state of flux, dependent on shared experience, time, group standards, success in combat, and a number of lesser but still important, variables. Historian John Lynn convincingly argues, “Primary group cohesion is probably a universal military phenomenon; however it is crucial to consider the pattern of the group formed in a specific army at a specific time. The character, intensity, and significance of primary group cohesion are to a large degree determined by the group’s structures, practices, relationships, and standards.” Lynn goes on to write,
“Relationships between men are at the same time defined by the group’s structure and practices and shaped by the religious, ethnic, class, and other societal attributes typical of the men themselves.”

In other words, group cohesion is continually impacted by a number of factors, including personnel losses and the effects of extended time in combat. These variables allow the connections between groups of men to be tentatively compared. Clausewitz noted the difficulty in quantifying the morale aspects of cohesion, writing that forces contributing to morale “will not yield to academic wisdom. They cannot be classified or counted. They have to be seen or felt.” Although the ties between groups of men are complex and cannot be directly measured, the effects of the resulting cohesion can often be assessed by analyzing how different groups behaved in battle.

It cannot be argued that there was no difference in unit cohesion between the Duke of Cumberland’s hussars, who raced back to Brussels from the battlefield of Waterloo, fleeing before the battle began, and any of the cuirassier regiments under Marshal Ney, which repeatedly charged the formed squares of Allied troops on the same day. Likewise, it must be acknowledged that there was a significant difference in the ties and conduct of the British 27th Foot, a unit that Wellington placed on the forward slopes to anchor the center of his line on that day in June 1815, and many of the Dutch and Belgian units under Wellington’s command. The 27th withstood artillery fire for hours and never broke, despite suffering losses of 483 out of 698 men. In contrast, the Brunswick infantry retreated after sustaining only minimal casualties while defending the ground around La Haie Sainte.
Unit experiences, successes, fatigue level, and casualties combine with the factors listed by Lynn to create differences in unit cohesion and combat efficiency between units and even within the same unit at different times. Generalizations about army cohesion, though, are at best conjectures. The string of British army victories in Peninsula battles and at Waterloo can be best understood not at the macro level, but at the micro level, starting at the smallest primary group, the mess contingent of six to eight men. It is the strength of the bonds between these men, multiplied over companies, battalions, brigades, and finally the army itself, that helped make the difference during battle. Edward Shils, in his article explaining the primary group underpinnings of Stouffer et al.’s groundbreaking work *The American Soldier: Combat and its Aftermath*, describes how the group allows the individual soldier to function day-to-day: “Primary group relations help the individual soldier to bear threatened injuries and even death by increasing his self-esteem and his conception of his own potency. They help particularly to raise his estimate of his capacity to survive deprivations.”

In comparing the British soldier with other fighting men of the period, combat cohesion comes down to one crucial element: how much the men needed the group. For the British soldier, a societal cast-off with no other options, the group became his surrogate, albeit demanding, family. In the army, the British soldier found a permanent home and forged new primary group affiliations; for a man forever separated from home and family and sent to suffer hardship and experience battle in foreign lands, these groups were of paramount importance. It was the strength of the soldier’s attachment to the men around him that, in conjunction with tactics, leadership, and use of technology, determined how he behaved under fire. It was these group ties that allowed the British
ranker’s collective morale to consistently reach a level only occasionally matched by the fighting men of other nations during this period.

Yet, as Charles Moskos points out, “To describe effective combat motivation principally in terms of primary group ties leaves unanswered the question of why various armies—indeed, of training and equipment—perform differently in times of war.”

Morris Janowitz and Roger Little echoed similar sentiments in their work on the connections between sociology and the military establishment: “The goals and standards or norms that primary groups enforce are hardly self-generated; they arise from the larger environment and from the surrounding civilian society. Consequently, the empirical study of primary groups must extend beyond the factors that contribute to social cohesion in the smallest tactical groups.”

An in-depth, socially and culturally-sensitive investigation helps transform the British ranker from faceless thug into a man made of real flesh and blood, bringing to life his campaign and combat motivations. Such an approach is necessary in order to parse and dissect the separate but related aspects of solder motivation. It will assist us to understand better the factors that worked on the British civilian, causing him to enlist; it will clarify those variables that helped to sustain him on campaign; and it will identify the mechanism that allowed him to repeatedly face and withstand the demands of combat.

Here Steven Westbrook provides the analytical tool necessary to examine the entire range of variables that impact campaign behavior and combat efficiency. Westbrook’s three-tiered model of compliance theory breaks motivation down into three general categories: coercive, remunerative, and normative. Westbrook defines coercive force as “actual or threatened application of physical standards.” Remunerative power,
meanwhile, “rests on the control of material resources and rewards.” Finally, Westbrook describes normative power, also referred to as persuasive, manipulative, or suggestive power, as authority “based on the allocation and manipulation of symbolic rewards and deprivations.”

Westbrook’s methodology reveals that all three types of power shaped the motivations of the British soldier. Initially, the British recruit was drawn to service because of remunerative influence. His enlistment was most likely linked to economic stressors, although patriotic enthusiasm may have played a limited role, as did the potential to escape undesirable apprenticeships and the drudgery of everyday life.

While on campaign, the British soldier received little in the way of physical or psychological support. Meals and pay were infrequent, while rewards, advancement, and hopes of an improved situation were almost nonexistent. Thus, remunerative forces as wielded by his superiors soon lost their influence. Likewise, the ranker learned that the army was not interested in persuading him to behave in a certain fashion by providing medals, praise, or other norm-based rewards. Army life, in large part, was patterned by military authority on external, coercive discipline, the lash being a constant reminder to the soldier of what lay in his future should his conduct not measure up to the military code of behavior. Moreover, the kind of ideological indoctrination common in the French army, perpetuated by songs, pamphlets, and bulletins regularly distributed to the men, was unheard of in the British army. In addition, appreciation from the civilians he protected, be they British, Spanish, or Portuguese, was rarely, if ever, expressed. The British ranker may have been proud of his country, but he received little in the way of external support from it that could have contributed to his morale while on campaign.
The British redcoat soldiered on because his self-image and core values were tied to his primary social group. Isolated from civilian society, the common soldier reordered his world around the small cadre of men with whom he endured campaign life and combat. The standards of the group became the most compelling mechanism in his life, providing both guidelines and behavioral incentives. Westbrook’s most influential type of controlling force, normative power, is based on the distribution and denial of abstract rewards, such as group status, honor, and respect.\textsuperscript{35} Self-esteem, generated by the garnering of group-based incentives, drove men to adhere to strictures that enhanced the chances of group survival. By meeting the norms of the primary social entity, the British soldier was incorporated into this small family unit. Concern for and support from the group became the fundamental sustaining consideration, one that made life endurable.

Survival on campaign and success in combat created unit pride; the British ranker accepted rules of conduct, especially those that applied on the battlefield, because of the normative power of the group. Rewards and sanctions meted out by the group helped to dictate the bounds of acceptable behavior. Discipline, here defined as the willingness to submit to a system of rules and regulations, helped turn individual soldiers into competent fighting teams. The British soldier developed self-control on campaign, expressed in his efforts to endure hard marches without falling out and his acquiescence to military law, and in battle where he maintained his place in the ranks as French columns approached, because his personal needs and those of the group coincided with the behavior required of the soldiers by military leadership. In this way, a sense of honor and pride developed; the soldier’s self-image became entwined with that of his group, company, battalion, brigade, and the army in general. Such sentiments were often
expressed through unit rivalries. Perceived values related to courage, masculinity, and comradeship became internalized standards that worked to guide behavior. As Michael Hughes points out, works by Robert Nye and George Mosse contend that such characteristics and related norms, valued by European aristocracy, were slowly being transferred from males of the upper levels of society, especially members of the bourgeoisie, to lower socioeconomic classes throughout Europe. The degree to which these values were assimilated is, however, unknown.

Fear of the lash was but a secondary consideration to the British soldier; coercive, external discipline can act as a controlling mechanism, but its effectiveness during extreme conditions is limited. Fear of potential punishment pales as a motivating force when a soldier is faced with the immediate reality of shot and shell. Fear will not galvanize a man to take action. It might cause him to pause and consider the consequences of outright flight during combat, but only concern for the group and his place within it will cause a soldier to actively participate in battle. On campaign, self-preservation caused the redcoat to risk a flogging in order to procure food with the frequency and in the amounts denied him by the army; this act was sanctioned by the group.

As for the quality of leadership, the men at the top, John Moore and especially the Duke of Wellington, were talented and perceptive professionals who helped the British soldier discover his worth on the field. Wellington’s tactical nuances were particularly effective, building the men’s confidence in him and themselves in a string of battlefield victories. Other commanders, such as Rowland Hill, Thomas Picton, and Robert Craufurd, were also consummate professionals who knew how to instill pride and
motivate men. Lower-level leadership, however, ran the gamut from talented to incompetent, as the purchase system, a promotion method often based on the depth of the officer’s pocketbook rather than merit, allowed men of varying skills to rise to command. Many of these men had little professional understanding, and were of such a social level that they found the common soldier worthy of only contempt and the lash; this did little to add to the rank and file’s motivation.

Of all the factors mentioned, it bears repeating that group dynamics remains the key catalyst that gave the British soldier his combat edge. Army life forced the British soldier to rely on his primary social group for support. It is from the perspective of a group member that the British ranker perceived the world and himself. That he fought with unequalled ferocity to safeguard his adopted family and behaved in ways consistent with maintaining his place in it should hardly be surprising, for the regiment was all the family he would ever have. The soldier might take a Spanish, a Portuguese, or even a French wife while on campaign. He might even father children, who would become an extended part of the regimental retinue, following in the army’s wake as it tramped across the continent. But no matter what other attachments he formed, the British soldier would never be part of a social group more intrinsically tied to his survival and self-image than the one composed of his messmates, the core cadre of men he leaned on every day.

The primacy of the small group, particularly the six- to eight-man mess unit who ate together and stood side by side during combat, is most evident in the soldiers’ expectations of how men were to conduct themselves under fire. Accounts uniformly convey that each soldier understood that his actions during battle were founded on preserving the group during times of danger. Behaviors that enhanced the chances of
survival for the group, such as maintaining one’s place in line during battle, giving one’s best during the fight, and dissuading others from running, were reinforced. Other actions that endangered the unit, such as fleeing from combat and conveniently lagging behind under fire, were universally condemned, with the ultimate punishment being ostracism.

For the British soldier, the need for the social reinforcements offered by the group and the fear of losing status among his messmates were greater than his instinct for survival. Unflinching behavior during combat was required because such actions helped protect the group. To react otherwise brought forth the possibility of condemnation and rejection by the men of the soldier’s surrogate family. Such considerations drove men to extreme measures. For example, during battle Rifleman Benjamin Harris once came across a former sergeant named Mayberry who had been stunned by a cannon blast. Mayberry had previously stolen money while working for a commissary officer and had received 700 lashes as punishment, in addition to demotion. Subsequently, Mayberry was shunned by his fellow soldiers. At Badajoz he stormed the breech and behaved so bravely that Captain Hart told him that he had obliterated his disgrace and would be restored to his previous rank. Told to retire to the rear, Mayberry refused, even though he had been wounded numerous times. Harris offered to assist Mayberry to the rear, but Mayberry dismissed him, saying, “No going to the rear for me. I’ll restore myself to my comrades’ opinion, or make a finish of myself altogether.”

Harris voiced similar sentiments regarding his own battlefield conduct. His comments, though self-reported, seem credible. He stated to a fellow soldier, Private Low,
If you see any symptoms of my wishing to flinch in this business I hope you will shoot me with your own hand. Low as well as myself, survived the battle, and after it was over, whilst we sat down with our comrades and rested…Low told them of our conversation during the heat of the day…and the Rifles from that time on had a great respect for me. It is, indeed, singular, how a man loses or gains caste with his comrades from his behavior, and how closely he is observed in the field.38

Edward Costello of the 95th Rifles provides one further example of how the men feared losing status. A Sergeant Fairfoot of his company was robbed of £31 of the company’s money the first time he was ever entrusted with funds as pay-sergeant. Being that he was inebriated at the time of the robbery, Fairfoot felt he had let the men of his battalion down. He confided to Costello that he was going to desert out of despair, for he would lose and never regain the esteem and confidence of his comrades. Costello gave him £31 to cover his losses, the money coming from Costello’s share of the Vitoria spoils and looting of Joseph Bonaparte’s baggage. Costello proudly notes that the sergeant later won a commission in the regiment.39

Failure to fulfill group expectations during combat brought instant and often permanent loss of status and respect. Again, Rifleman Harris provides us with a prime example. He once “encouraged” a soldier in the front rank who had turned and tried to flee past Harris by telling him, “that if he did not keep his ground, I would shoot him dead on the spot; so that he found it would be quite as dangerous for him to return as to go on.”40 Harris stated that this was the only instance he could remember of someone within his battalion attempting to run away under such circumstances. Because of his failure to support his comrades, the man was viewed with such derision and contempt that the battalion commander eventually involuntarily transferred the man from the 95th to another regiment.
Adherence to group values was also the consistent catalyst underlying the men’s propensity toward looting. Firsthand accounts show that the British ranker tolerated and even encouraged plundering, what the men referred to as “reconnoitering,” because it played a large role in the primary group’s collective survival. Men stole because the army continually failed to provide for their basic needs, forcing them to look after themselves. The army’s neglect of the men, in the form of commissariat malfeasance, resulted in widespread food thefts by starving soldiers who had little choice; such acts were so prevalent that individuals gained respect within their primary group based on their abilities to gather various foodstuffs and other shared valuables. Major-General George Bell remembered infantryman Tom Tandy as being especially esteemed, for he carried his own reaping hook and always left room in his backpack “for anything Providence might send on the way.”41 William Grattan of the 88th Foot, a regiment nicknamed “the Devils’ Own” and one that deservedly earned a “taking away with them” reputation, recalled stealing items from abandoned Portuguese houses. “Every nook was searched with anatomical precision,” he wrote. He matter-of-factly called such theft “a slight breach of discipline.”42

Stories of the British soldier’s skill at plundering are legion; the soldiers’ reputation as consummate looters is well deserved. There are also countless tales of the toil and misery they faced almost daily, yet their looting is remembered while the reasons are not. There are two telling constants in all the narratives. First, as noted above, the men plundered because of the continual failures of the commissariat. William Surtees of the Rifle Brigade perhaps best explains the motivation behind these breaches of the army code of conduct. He describes how constant hunger drove the men to scrounge or steal
whatever food they could find and how they shared the spoils with each other. The consequence, Surtees reasons, was “innumerable robberies of potato fields and gardens…and many were the men that got punished for this crime, but it could not be put a stop to, for hunger is not easily borne.” On the subject of harshly judging the men because they chose to steal and live, rather than follow orders that ignored their plight, James Anton, a sergeant in the 42nd Foot, eloquently reminds us that:

Soldiers are not philanthropists, and the questioner would perhaps be inclined to relax a little from the laudable principle which may actuate his conduct when sitting comfortably at home, were he placed under similar circumstances in a hostile country, after months of half-fasting and half-feeding on bare bones and moldy ship biscuit. The British soldier stole because he was desperately hungry and because he sought escape from his unending daily misery in inebriation, however the liquor was procured and in whatever form. Drunkenness and the ability to plunder did, in fact, become two learned avocations in which the vast majority of enlisted men put great stock. In this, the British varied little from other soldiers of the Napoleonic Wars. These traits, however, must be considered within the context of the soldier’s life of hardship and with some understanding of how the soldiers’ shared values were shaped by behavioral constraints, as defined by the men’s primary and secondary social groups.

The second constant found in primary sources relates to the degree to which group mores applied to such actions as looting: the spoils were not secreted and consumed by the soldier lucky or enterprising enough to find them. Personal chronicles reveal that foodstuffs or apparel items were, with very few exceptions, routinely shared with the soldier’s messmates. This collective altruism was in effect even when it meant dividing a small portion of food into a half dozen or so minute shares. Grattan recalled how food
and spoils found in Fuentes d’Onoro after the battle were partitioned, noting “the scrupulous observation of etiquette” practiced by the men as they shared.\textsuperscript{45}

Equally revealing is the fact that great finds discovered while plundering were usually passed on to comrades. Costello, of the 95\textsuperscript{th} Rifles, stumbled across the baggage of Joseph Bonaparte and his wife, Spain’s surrogate king and queen, after the battle of Vitoria in 1813. Costello found £1,000 in coin and became very possessive of it, even threatening fellow plunderers from other units. Making it clear that the coins were his, Costello took all that he could carry and found his way to his company, which was elsewhere; he eventually shared the loot with many of his comrades, as has been mentioned.\textsuperscript{46} Costello went so far as to entrust his remaining treasure to a friend, Bandle, because Costello was not always able to keep his knapsack with him. Bandle never let him down or stole even a portion. At times, Bandle left his own knapsack behind in order to safeguard Costello’s.\textsuperscript{47}

It is significant to note that in all the firsthand accounts examined for this work, there are scores of references to men sharing their meager findings, but only three incidents in which a British soldier is accused of stealing from his compatriots.\textsuperscript{48} In one of these cases, the soldier awoke to find that his haversack had been pilfered and with it his remaining rations. He then stole bread from a drunken, unconscious comrade, but shared the spoils with another soldier who had been temporarily blinded. The soldier of the 71\textsuperscript{st} matter-of-factly explained his rationale, stating, “In relieving his wants, I felt less my own.”\textsuperscript{49} Thefts among comrades seem to have been remarkably few in number, a view confirmed by Anton.\textsuperscript{50} The penalty for such an action was almost always the permanent loss of one’s place in the group. For men who lived and functioned within the
concentric spheres of the mess group, company, and regiment, such a fate was the equivalent of being declared anathema to the British rank and file and it is difficult to avoid positing a causal relationship.

Behavioral norms not only governed conduct with respect to the group; they also extended to the soldier’s interactions with civilians and the enemy. A common thread running through a great many firsthand sources, one mostly ignored by historians rushing to condemn the character of the British soldier, is the existence of a limiting code of conduct among the rank and file related to what Grattan euphemistically described as slight breaches of discipline. The code was simple: stealing was acceptable; armed robbery or any accompanying acts of violence were not. (The exception to this rule was following assaults during sieges, as will be addressed below.) Men shunned comrades whom they saw commit such acts or were suspected of same. This restraining code applied to interactions with peasants as well as non-combat situations involving French soldiers. Anger, often tinged with collective shame, was directed at men who stepped outside the agreed-upon behavioral boundaries established by the group, violating the accepted code of conduct; these emotions are repeatedly expressed by many of the soldiers who preserved their thoughts on paper, marking such incidents as important enough to share.

That such a code existed and was operational is exemplified by an incident recalled by Joseph Donaldson, a sergeant in the 94th. Donaldson relates the story of how he and his mates were sharing wine with a French soldier and a few other stragglers after a cooperative looting of a Portuguese house. Donaldson and his men left, but discovered that one of their number was missing. Upon returning, they saw that the British soldier...
and the French private were amicably giving the Portuguese house one last search. When
the French soldier found a purse hidden in a chest, the British enlisted man demanded a
share of its contents. When the Frenchman balked, the British soldier suddenly produced
a knife and turned on his French counterpart, stabbing him to death. Donaldson and his
comrades rushed, too late, to the Frenchman’s aid. Appalled, Donaldson called it “a
horrid, cold-blooded murder.”52 According to his account, the men had nothing but
disdain for the assailant, for he “had perpetrated the murder for the sake of money. He
offered to share it with us; but not one of us would touch it; and from that time forward
he was shunned and detested by all who knew of the murder.”53

Another soldier, John Green of the 68th Foot, wrote of a similar incident involving a
captured French officer. When the officer refused to surrender his sword, a British soldier
sauntered over to him and ran him through with his bayonet. The soldiers with Green
vehemently objected to this deed, calling it a “savage act of cruelty” and the soldier a
“hardened monster.”54 As in the Donaldson event, the men would have nothing further to
do with the perpetrator of what they considered a heinous act.

The code applied to the treatment of civilians as well, as evidenced by the
protection offered to a young Spanish girl carrying a bundle down the road. The girl was
set upon by a Portuguese muleteer, whose attentions concerned both her person and the
bundle she was carrying. An anonymous soldier of the 71st intervened on her behalf and
attempted to fend the man off. The muleteer objected to this interference and drew a knife
on the soldier, who responded by knocking the Portuguese man down with his rifle and
escorting the girl beyond the muleteer’s reach.55
Such incidents were not isolated cases. The first-person accounts contain numerous stories of the British soldier exhibiting similar concern for civilians and French soldiers alike.\textsuperscript{56} Walter Henry, an army surgeon, even relates the tale of British soldiers showing “great kindness, tenderness, and inviolable respect” for a group of nuns passed on the road during the retreat from Mayo in 1813.\textsuperscript{57} That these episodes demonstrates that group standards did exist and that they affected soldier behavior. The men lived by a set of principles, albeit different from those held by civilians eating regularly and sleeping under a roof, as Anton reminds us, but ideals nevertheless. The soldiers expected each other to adhere to them and would not accept less from any other person they encountered. The British soldier might steal food or invade a home in pursuit of alcohol, but he would not tolerate armed assault and wanton acts of cruelty or violence. William Lawrence, who wrote a starkly honest and enlightening account of his many years as an enlisted man and sergeant of the 40\textsuperscript{th} Foot, flatly admitted that the men of his regiment stole; he also confirms that the British soldier would only go so far in his efforts to procure food and drink. “I am sorry to say,” Lawrence lamented, “that we ourselves were not quite free from the charge of depredations, though we did not carry them on to the extent of bloodshed.”\textsuperscript{58}

The legal records of the British army during its Peninsular and French campaigns substantiate the existence of such a limiting behavioral code. The records reveal surprisingly few trials and convictions for armed assault, murder, and rape, all of which were capital offenses. According to F. S. Larpent, the Judge Advocate General during the Peninsular War, only 41 men were shot or hung from 1812 to 1814,\textsuperscript{59} most for desertion, and this in an army whose numbers exceeded 230,000 men by 1813.\textsuperscript{60} No proof has yet
been uncovered that the British failed to prosecute serious crimes. Such a position taken by any regimental commander would have run counter to Wellington’s efforts to avoid the kinds of frictional relationships with the civilian populace that so inhibited French strategy and would have been dealt with severely by Wellington had he discovered officers turning a blind eye toward offenses committed by British soldiers.

While he admits that Wellington hung men in an effort to curtail plundering, Larpent understood the plight of the common soldiers and had much admiration for them; Larpent campaigned with them and experienced a small sampling of their daily hardship and circumstances. “Our fellows have had a miserable time of it lately,” he wrote, “and when uncomfortable and idle, I am sorry to say, they always make work for me.”

But despite the continued failure of the commissariat, the soldiers provided Larpent less work than their reputation would suggest. Between Christmas 1812 and 5 May 1813, Larpent tried only 80 cases total, or about four a week. Larpent’s journals contain numerous mentions of food costs, the men’s suffering, and the occasional plundering case, but they rarely contain references to soldiers being brought up on the more egregious types of charges for violent offenses.

Army courts martial records support Larpent’s journals. In his analysis of these records covering the six years of the war, Charles Oman found only 80 cases related to plundering. This figure matches the number of courts martial for all officers during this period. Oman also discovered that 57 enlisted men were condemned, and 24 hanged, for armed robbery with violence, a low enough total given the war’s duration and the number of British soldiers in the field. Oman noted that many of those executed had
taken comparatively little from the peasants and had done them little harm, recording that
“no more than a blow with the butt-end of a musket had been given in many cases.”

Certainly, rapes and murders were committed by British soldiers. Such crimes exist
in all societies, across socioeconomic boundaries. What has yet to be produced is
substantiating evidence for the claims that the British common soldier was a despicable
human being, unable to control his base urges for pleasures of every variety.

As an example of circumstantial evidence presented against the British ranker,
historian Charles Esdaille offers up one of the few firsthand accounts that provides
specific information about a crime and alleges that British soldiers were the primary
suspects. In his insightful and otherwise balanced book on the Peninsular War, Esdaille
contends that the British attitude of cultural superiority, founded on privation,
drunkenness, religious intolerance, and cultural frictions, was the reason why the men
supposedly found acts of pillage, rape, and plunder so easy to perpetrate. Esdaille’s best
example of British cruelty is an incident recalled by an army surgeon, Charles
Boutflower. In his account, Boutflower describes the gruesome double murder of a man
and his daughter, an attack that also left the wife clinging to life. Without explanation, he
singles out British soldiers as the culprits: “There is too much reason to suppose that the
perpetrators were British…A hatchet lay beside them with which the deed have evidently
been committed…the heads of the deceased were literally beaten to jelly.” Boutflower
then asserts that the motive for such a crime lay in the assailant’s need to remain
anonymous, “as Wellington invariably punishes Housebreaking with death.”

It should be noted that no real proof regarding the guilt of specific British soldiers is
ever produced and that Boutflower makes no mention of any final outcome. No men are
named and, as far as can be determined, no indictments returned or trials held. Neither is
the incident mentioned in any other account of the war. Boutflower’s assertion that
Wellington routinely punished soldiers convicted of breaking and entering offers
supporting evidence that such crimes were not ignored. One is left to assume that no
soldiers were tried in this case because there was insufficient evidence. Boutflower’s
claim must also be considered against the numbers of trials and executions cited by
Larpent, a figure that counters the implication that such cases were common.

The incident, a sad and ugly reminder of what can happen to civilians in the path of
war, could be attributed to many causes, not least among them the general breakdown of
civil law and societal restraints. The culprits may have been soldiers, locals, passing
vagabonds, or British camp followers. Larpent makes a corroborating statement to this
effect, commenting on the uncontrollable behavior of these masses. “All the vagabonds,
plunderers, and rascals, followers of the army,” Larpent complained, “stick to the rear
and look about to do mischief as soon as all the troops have passed.”68 In context,
therefore, the incident described by Boutflower does not provide evidence of rampant
criminality by the British ranker. Yet it is on such evidence, and much less, that historians
have tried and condemned the British soldier.

Considering Wellington’s appraisal and how historians have universally used his
words to condemn the character of the British soldier, there is more than a touch of irony
in comparing the campaign behavior of British and French troops. Their actions have
been interpreted in almost opposite fashions. The French routinely committed the kinds
of atrocities wrongly associated with British troops, while the British soldier showed
relative restraint. Oddly, historians have tended to excuse the behavior of the individual
French soldier while excoriating the British ranker. The resulting contradictory reputations have obscured the national differences in behavioral codes and injudiciously impugned the British soldier’s general character.

The French army stole, burned, raped, and sometimes murdered its way across the Iberian peninsula; their acts were recorded in a great many letters and diaries and recalled in memoirs by stunned British soldiers, shocked at the ferocity and repeated violence against civilians. In 1811, Donaldson of the 94th came across a chapel at Porto de Mos in which almost 200 townspeople, including children, had been herded and the chapel set afire, burning the people alive. Donaldson angrily noted, “The wanton cruelty of the French soldiers, on this retreat, defies description.” Donaldson later discovered a house in which the French had assaulted an entire Portuguese family, tying up the father, slitting his wife’s throat, then repeatedly beating and raping his daughters in front of him because he would not reveal where he had hidden the family’s money. Calloused by similar scenes all across Spain and Portugal, Donaldson commented that “such were the tender mercies of the French soldiery.”

John Carss, a lieutenant in the 53rd during the Peninsular campaign, wrote home in 1809 describing similar French barbarity toward Portuguese peasants. His letters also outlined the resulting escalation of cruelties exchanged by the Portuguese and the French occupying forces, detailing how the Portuguese gained revenge on captured French soldiers. “They burned them,” Carss recalled, “or hung them on trees naked. The French did the same with the Portuguese and burned almost every house on the retreat. Some villages they destroyed, and men, women, and children. No person would believe the cruelty of the French except they saw it.” Such excesses were verified by a French
cavalryman, Marquant, who questioned the effects of such a strategy of destruction. He was not surprised that Spain and other nations “take us for hordes of barbarians and brigands, that they should prefer their masters to our laws and that they should take every opportunity to defeat us….If we are defenders of humanity and property, let us not violate them on the soil of others whom we are seeking to convert to the status of free men.”

Esdaille, one of the most prominent scholars of Spanish efforts against Napoleon, confirms that such underlying hatred and related atrocities, based on gross mistreatment of civilians by the French as well as reciprocating acts by civilians, existed in Spain as well. He describes British soldiers discovering French soldiers mutilated and nailed to barn doors and angry mobs of peasants demanding the right to murder French prisoners under British guard. Such was the level of French violence that concomitant civilian retribution rose to levels that threatened French communication, affected strategic choices, and worked to lower French morale precipitously to levels that seriously threatened unit cohesion.

The French also plundered their own countrymen with the same zeal and ruthless efficiency during their retreat in 1814, although the soldiers did not savage the populace as they did the common folk of the peninsula. The letters of Arthur Kennedy, who saw much of Spain and France, while making the transition from infantry officer of the 24th to cavalry lieutenant of the 18th Light Dragoons, record his surprise at the degree to which the French mercilessly stripped their own people of every edible, potable, or salable commodity. Kennedy noted that the French had not been paid in 20 months; he, nevertheless, expressed great pity for the French peasantry, who were left with nothing.
Kennedy’s recollections are noteworthy in that they illustrate that the French could be selective with their violence, limiting their conduct with French noncombatants but not with Iberian peasants.

In contrast, Edward Heeley, a batman to Lieutenant-Colonel Sir George Scovell, the Assistant Quartermaster General to the army, recorded in his journal that during the British pursuit of the French army through southern France, “All the good behavior of the British soldiers quite endeared them to the inhabitants.” This was a time, no doubt, when the men regularly received their rations.

Unlike the vast majority of questionable evidence presented against British soldiers, there is a preponderance of documentation against the French, corroborated by numerous first-hand accounts, not only by British soldiers and Spanish and Portuguese survivors, but also by French soldiers. Rather than being circumstantial or vague, such evidence is considerably more substantial than that presented against the British ranker. Moreover, we have the visual weight of the paintings and drawings left to us by the Spanish painter Francisco Goya, an eyewitness to the events in Spain. Although a type of propaganda, Goya’s works forever captured the horrific essence of French cruelty in the series entitled The Disasters of War. His scenes vividly presented manifestations of French violence and Spanish retaliation, in all its disturbing barbarity, depicting butchery in a fashion never before put to canvas.

Despite the evidence to the contrary, historians have not applied terms such as *criminal, rogue, thug, or scum* to describe the French soldier. Often as in need of food as the British soldier he fought against, the French enlisted man stole to live; but in his looting endeavors, he was much more inclined than his British counterpart to rape and
murder to take what he needed. His behavior was predicated on a set of group standards markedly different than those of the British soldier, at least on campaign in foreign lands. This is especially evident in French army songs that implied that military service not only made French soldiers irresistible to women in other countries, but that coerced sex was an expected part of campaign life. As Hughes puts it, “In addition to the baubles awarded by Napoleon, songs offered sex in exchange for military service. They communicated an unmistakable message through the repeated descriptions of the sexual adventures of the grognards.”

The French soldier viewed violence off the battlefield as a tool necessary for his survival and, perhaps, one that granted him access to the spoils of war as he saw them, his rewards justified by his efforts and his position as conqueror. His offenses, though, are attributed to cultural frictions, privations, desperation, and the natural enmity that arises between victor and vanquished, played out with increasing angst and resentment over an extended period of time; they are never ascribed to the French soldier’s failings as an individual. In addition, it is worth observing that while such offenses against civilians were considered crimes in the French army, they were not likely to be prosecuted.

In contrast, the British ranker, constrained by group values much more strongly than by the threat of the lash and gallows, treated civilians with a comparatively high degree of respect. He plundered his Spanish and Portuguese hosts because the army failed to feed him on anything resembling a regular basis. He might have looted their hidden valuables and run off with their bread and wine, but he rarely accosted their persons, viewing such assaults as outside the norms of accepted behavior. But it is the British soldier, not the French, who has acquired a reputation as an unsavory and reprehensible
fellow, undaunted by either conscience or an appreciation of social norms. Admittedly, the French were at war with the Portuguese and Spanish, while the British were not. Yet the dichotomy between their reputations and their conduct toward noncombatants is striking; and despite Esdaille’s claim that British rank and file committed crimes “at least as bad as anything perpetrated by the French,” it becomes clear that there was a significant difference in how each side interacted with civilians.

It would be disingenuous, at this point, not to address the behavior of the British soldier after successful siege assaults. It is here that the behavioral constraints enforced by the group were abandoned during post-assault rampages, such as at Badajoz and Ciudad Rodrigo, both in 1812, and San Sebastian in 1813; and it is here that the British soldier committed the kinds of transgressions, such as assault, armed robbery, rape, and even murder, that deservedly earned them Robert Blakeney’s description as “a pack of hell-hounds vomited up from the infernal regions.” Blakeney, an officer of the 28th, is often unfairly critical of the men, but in this case his description is appropriate. The soldiers’ behavioral excesses during these limited and special circumstances are also the basis for much of the misjudgment and disapprobation of historians ever since.

In order to appreciate fully why usual standards of behavior were abandoned after siege assaults, it is necessary to understand what such attacks entailed. Siege assaults were dreadful, deadly, nighttime affairs in which soldiers stormed breaches in bastion walls, using zeal and numbers to overpower the defenders. The attacking force had to negotiate the glacis, the ditch, and then the breach. Casualty rates for assaulting troops were horrific, often approaching one hundred percent for lead units. It was for such assaults that the British utilized the Forlorn Hope, a designated company of volunteers
led by a single officer, whose task was to be first into the breach. Promotion and uniform patches, the latter to forever mark the courage of the wearer, were offered for those brave or foolish enough to volunteer as a member of the Hope or lead it.

Despite the terrible casualties among storming parties, the soldiers under Wellington made a series of sorties, usually forcing their way up and through the breaches and into the various citadels, gaining Wellington the quick, but costly, victories he needed to maintain his strategic initiative. That the soldiers did so in five different sieges says much about the courage of the men and the strength of the bonds that kept them at their comrades’ sides even when death seemed inevitable.

Knowing the price for such assaults, attacker and defender were supposed to adhere to an unwritten rule of siege warfare, one that had existed since the Middle Ages. When a practical breach was made, it became incumbent upon the defender to make a crucial choice: surrender and live or defend the breach and suffer the uncontrolled wrath of the attackers should the assaulting force be victorious. If they chose to surrender, the citadel’s defenders and townspeople would usually be entitled to military honors, meaning they would be allowed to leave unmolested, carrying both valuables and weapons. If, however, they decided to defend the bastion despite the breach, all standard rules of conduct would be suspended, with no mercy being shown to the defenders or the civilians inside the fortress.

It is against the backdrop of this understood agreement between besieger and besieged that the conduct of the British infantry during and after sieges must be considered, as the French steadfastly refused to surrender at any point during the peninsular sieges of 1811-1813. In every case, the slaughter of the assault cost the British
attackers dearly; and in the three instances in which the assaults succeeded, the British troops, once inside the walls, truly “let slip the dogs of war” unleashing their anger and satisfying their long-neglected physical needs in every manner imaginable.

Men who survived the ordeal of an assault, driven by fear, adrenaline surges, the emotional bonds between comrades, and the psychological onus of seeking retribution on those responsible for the experience and the death of their fellow soldiers, emerged into the fortresses in an extreme emotional state. Having withstood the horrors of the breach, the men felt jubilation, but also unbridled anger against all those who had killed their comrades and were responsible for their journey through hell. This meant that townspeople, as well as soldiers, bore the brunt of the redcoat’s fury. It is at this point that the restraining code of the primary group was set aside. The danger to the group’s existence had been surmounted, and the cost of entrance to the fortress seemed to merit a heavy hand to punish the defenders. This revenge required a release from established group mores.

The degree to which individuals strayed from their normal patterns of behavior varied greatly; their reactions were as diverse as their backgrounds. Some became the personification of evil, at least to the townspeople on whom they preyed. Others had internal gauges that even alcohol could not affect. There are a number of recorded incidents in which soldiers relate that individuals or small groups of soldiers, enlisted men and officers alike, protected inhabitants and sought to reestablish order, if only within the limited confines of their presence. No doubt the few psychopaths within the ranks found ransacking the towns and terrorizing civilians much to their liking. Such
men, however, were few, and the evidence suggests that most already existed on the periphery of or outside a primary group, beyond and immune to its limiting effects.

Wellington would later describe the post-siege episodes with disgust, but he used the circumstances and both the bravery and the unleashed desperation of his men to his advantage. Lacking a proper siege train and his army outnumbered and strategically pressed, Wellington chose to force the issue with assaults, spending his men’s lives to purchase time; he hoped that even more time could be bought if the defenders of other citadels knew of the ferocious consequences of British occupation should an assault be necessary. Unfortunately for the British soldiers, the French proved as stubborn in defense and in their refusal to follow siege etiquette as Wellington was with his use of storming parties.

Still, even at their worst, the misdeeds of the British soldier only approximated those of his French counterpart; the British ranker never engaged in the mass slaughter and ongoing depredations that vilified all French soldiers in the eyes of the Spanish and Portuguese. Rather than serving as proof of the base nature of the British soldier, the soldiers’ actions during post-assault rampages are the outcome of a series of complex, interwoven motivations based on group dynamics, siege assault rules, the experiences and expectations of the attacker, and the British soldier’s life of deprivation.

For almost two centuries, Lawrence and the British rank and file have unfairly carried the burden of Wellington’s scornful appraisal. A close examination of primary-source documents, in the form of background and enlistment demographics coupled with substantiating first-person evidence, presents a different perspective. It confirms that the British soldier of the Peninsula, despite his unjustly acquired reputation, was no more a
criminal than any other soldier of the Napoleonic wars. He was a man, common in most every respect except in his ability to adapt and survive under extremely difficult circumstances. The soldier, removed from a civilian society that had no need for him, found in the primary and secondary groups of the army a new home and family. Adherence to group norms enabled the soldier to garner esteem and personal value; the group also enhanced his chances of survival. That he desired membership in such groups, and was successfully able to function therein, is evidence that he was not an antisocial psychopath, alienated from his fellow soldiers and all those with whom he had contact. His actions, even when looting, were those of a man very susceptible to social constraints.

The British soldier lived and fought as a member of a small, tightly knit band of comrades. His need to give and receive support as part of this component of the regiment engendered exceptional cohesion, one that gave him a small but significant edge in battle. By adopting the group’s shared values, the soldier learned to fight to preserve himself and the integrity of his unit. The ability of the common British soldier to withstand the demands of close combat was predicated on group dynamics. It was not based on his flawed character, supposedly revealed in his plundering nature and fondness for drink. He may have earned his daily shilling in the service of the king, but his allegiance and his battlefield performance were grounded in the close relationships to the men with whom he lived, fought, and often perished. The British ranker’s need to belong, not his base nature, allowed him to become the steadiest and, perhaps, the most continuously successful combat soldier of the Napoleonic wars.
Wellesley became the Duke of Wellington in 1814. For uniformity and clarity, he will be referred to as Wellington throughout this monograph even though many of the references contained herein predate his elevation to the title.

Wellington’s comments will be cited and analyzed in detail in chapter 2. The work of historians regarding evaluations of the British will also be addressed in that chapter.


The social-psychological studies of men in combat will be cited later.

Edward Shils and Morris Janowitz, “Cohesion and Disintegration in the Wehrmacht in World War II,” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 12 (1948): 285. Shils conducted a similar study in 1977, looking at 20,000 young American men who were affected by President Ford’s 1974 clemency program. Shils found the same pattern he uncovered with Janowitz: “The deserter turned out to be the soldier who has not been integrated into society at large, into his family, or into his military unit.” Edward Shils, “A Profile of the Military Deserter,” *Armed Forces and Society* 3 (1977): 429.


The BSC consists of data drawn in 50- to 75- man groupings from randomly chosen pages within the regimental description books. See Appendix A for specific details and the War Office records used.


Lawrence’s story is quite similar to Claude Le Roy’s, the common soldier used by Lynn in his account of the French Revolutionary army. It was at men like Le Roy that the comte Saint Germain, the French minister of war from 1775 to 1777, directed his comments, calling them the bourbe (slime) of the nation. His remarks reveal that prejudices toward the rank and file were not restricted to the British army. Lynn, *Bayonets of the Republic*, 61-63.


22 Ibid. 33.
23 See Rush, *Hell in Hurtgen Forest*, for specifics on how severe losses affect cohesion.
26 Stouffer et al., *The American Soldier*.
28 The British soldier signed on for a life term until 1806, when a limited term of seven years was introduced for the infantry, ten years for the cavalry, and twelve for the artillery. In actuality, his life term was often less than that, as the government discharged soldiers *en masse* at the conclusion of conflicts. The key to understanding the psyche of the British soldier, however, is to realize that the soldier never knew when, or if, he would be discharged. As far as the soldier knew, day-to-day, the army was the last home he was ever going to have.
32 Ibid.
33 BSC, regression of economic indices and enlistment. See Chapter 3 and Appendix B.
34 See Michael Hughes’ fine work on the honors and remuneration accorded to the French soldiers under Napoleon. The author would like to thank Dr. Hughes for sharing his dissertation. Michael Hughes, “‘Vive la republique! Vive l’empereur!’: Military Culture and Motivation in the Armies of Napoleon, 1803-1808,” diss., University of Illinois, 2005.
37 John [Benjamin] Harris, *Recollections of Rifleman Harris*, ed. Henry Curling (New York, 1929) 86-87. Harris’s comrade did return to the fighting; he died shortly after reaching his mates, a cavalry saber cleaving his head almost in two.
38 Harris, *Recollections of Rifleman Harris*, 40-41.
40 Harris, *Recollections of Rifleman Harris*, 13.
41 Major-General George Bell, *Rough Notes by an Old Soldier* (London, 1867) 42.
45 Grattan, *Adventures with the Connaught Rangers, 1809-1814*, 71. Harris also writes of selling a shirt, his last, in order to by bread. He then shared the bread with a comrade. Harris, *Recollections of Rifleman Harris*, 154.
47 Ibid. 132-133.
48 John MacFarlane, Major Eric Robson, ed., “Peninsular Private,” *Journal of Army Historical Research* XXXII.129 (1954): 7. In this account, MacFarlane states that someone stole his beef ration. A *Soldier of the Seventy-First*, ed. Christopher Hibbert (London, 1975) 31-32 and John Cooper, *Rough Notes of Seven Campaigns* (London, 1914) 29. This is a reprint of the 1869 edition. Cooper’s story of theft involved a sheep’s head which he had begged from the cook and which was, somehow, taken from him without him noticing. It is presumed that alcohol may have played a part in the sequence of events.
In the British system, the regiment and battalion were essentially the same organizations. The regiment was, according to S. J. Park and George Nafzinger in their work on the structure of the British military, “an administrative unit which never took the field.” S. J. Park and George Nafzinger, *The British Military: Its System and Organization 1803-1815* (Cambridge Ontario, 1983) 25. The number of battalions per regiment varied, but most had only two. The second battalion of each regiment, in a greatly reduced form, was stationed in Great Britain and functioned as a recruiting depot of sorts.


John Green, *The Vicissitudes of a Soldier’s Life* (Cambridge, 1996) 33. This is a reprint of the 1827 edition.

Perhaps the most famous incident involved Harry Smith, an officer of the 95th, who rescued a 14-year-old Spanish girl after the siege of Badajoz. Juana Maria, her ears bleeding after soldiers tore out her earrings, was protected by Smith until the soldiers had thoroughly sacked the town and the men shepherded back to their battalions. Smith and Maria later married, and she became the darling of the Light Division. Years afterward, when Smith was governor of the Cape of South Africa, he named a town after her, calling it Ladysmith. The town became a focal point in the Boer War during which the Boer laid siege to the small city. The British defense of Ladysmith was reported in the popular press in England, with the conduct of the men being held up as an example of national grit in the face of adversity. The successful defense merited a distinct bar on the South Africa-Boer War campaign medal.

Walter Henry, *Events of a Military Life* (London, 1843) I 168-169. Henry comments that the men helped carry the nuns’ bundles and assisted them every way they could, noting that “assuredly it was a high compliment to the character and discipline of the British Army.”


F. Seymour Larpent, *The Private Journal of F. Seymour Larpent, during the Peninsular War, from 1812 to Its Close*, ed. Sir George Larpent (London, 1853) II 228. Charles Oman contends that of the 500 courts martial cases he examined, 200 were for desertion (40%). Oman found that 78 men were shot for desertion during the six years of the war (52 British and 26 foreigners). Charles Oman, “Courts Martial of the Peninsular War, 1809-1814,” *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution* 56 (1912): 1710.


Ibid. 164.

Oman, “Courts Martial of the Peninsular War, 1809-1814,” 1711.

Ibid. 1712.

Ibid. 1712-13.


Ibid. 220.


77 Hughes, “Vive la republique! Vive l’empereur!” 232. Hughes’ chapter on the possible effects of such values on the behavior of the French soldier is revealing and convincing.
CHAPTER 2

MANUFACTURING THE MYTH OF THE SCUM OF THE EARTH

The “scum of the earth” is how Arthur Wellesley, the first Duke of Wellington, referred to the British rankers who enabled him to defeat first Napoleon’s marshals in Spain and then the master himself at Waterloo. And contrary to Wellington apologists, who try to mitigate his derisive words, 1 Wellington did indeed believe that the character of the British soldier was of the vilest nature. He called the soldiers scum not once but three times, 2 and these instances only represent those in surviving records. We have no reason to believe that they do not represent his true sentiments and a good many reasons to suggest they do. Wellington also made additional, equally disparaging remarks, characterizations expressed in both letters and private conversations, leaving little doubt that Wellington meant what he said.

The earliest recorded occurrence in which Wellington expressed his contempt for the men under his command was in a letter to the Earl of Bathurst, written 26 June 1813 from Toloso, Spain. He lamented, “We have in the service the scum of the earth as common soldiers.” 3 He then complained of efforts in England to stop flogging, writing, “and as of late years we have been doing everything in our power both by law and publications to relax the discipline by which alone such men can be kept in order.” 4 Two
weeks later Wellington added to the insult, “It is really a disgrace to have to say anything to such men as some of our soldiers are.”

Writing almost 15 years after Waterloo, he expressed similar sentiments:

The man who enlists in the British army is, in general, the most drunken, and probably the worst of his trade or profession to which he belongs, or the village or town in which he lives.

In other letters, composed in April 1829 and March 1832, Wellington further impugned the rank and file, writing “In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, soldiers enlisted on account of some idle or irregular, or even vicious motive.” He went on to state that iron discipline alone could “remove those irregular or vicious habits.”

Wellington’s most infamous appraisal, however, came almost two decades after the conclusion of the Napoleonic wars. In conversations with the Earl of Stanhope, enthusiastically and surreptitiously recorded by the enthralled Earl, Wellington again derided the British soldier. He reiterated his position in an exchange on 4 November 1831, stating:

I don’t mean to say that there is no difference in the composition or therefore the feeling of the French army and ours. The French system of conscription brings together a fair sample of all classes; ours is composed of the scum of the earth—the mere scum of the earth. It is only wonderful that we should be able to make so much out of them afterwards. The English soldiers are fellows who have enlisted for drink—that is the plain fact—they have all enlisted for drink.

Wellington communicated his disdain in an even more scathing, though very similar, assessment during another conversation with Stanhope a week later. In that exchange, Wellington first spoke emphatically for a strong system of military punishment and then commented on the difference between the French and British armies:
Oh, they [the French] bang them about very much with ramrods and that sort of thing, and then they shoot them. Besides, a French army is composed very differently than ours. The conscription calls out a share of every class—no matter whether your son or my son—all must march; but our friends—I may say it in this room—are the very scum of the earth. People talk of their enlisting from their fine military feeling—no such thing. Some of our men enlist from having got bastard children—some for minor offenses—many more for drink; but you can hardly conceive such a set brought together, and it really is wonderful that we should have made them the fine fellows they are.\(^{11}\)

While reminiscing with Fitzroy Somerset in March of 1840, Wellington expressed the same low opinion of the men. Referring to his army at Waterloo, he called it an “infamously bad one—and the enemy knew it. But, however, it beat them.”\(^{12}\) This typifies Wellington’s attitude toward the men: he saw them as unsavory characters who somehow managed to win battles for him. The implication is that Wellington’s victories were in spite of, not because of, the combat capabilities of his men. It is doubtful that Wellington intended to garner a greater share of glory by such statements, but that has been the result. Wellington’s attitude toward the lower social classes reflects the prejudices of the affluent classes in Britain during Georgian England, and must be considered within this context.

Wellington’s evaluation of the men has shaped the perceptions of the great majority of historians ever since. While their descriptions vary, writers of British military history almost inevitably depict the British soldier as a thief, rogue, scoundrel, criminal, and undesirable social outcast. He is accused of being swept from the streets and jails straight into the army, where harsh discipline curbed his baser tendencies and allowed him to be of some use to his country. Historians who have written extensively on the British army in the Napoleonic wars have adopted this assessment into their works, as have generalists.
briefly describing the composition of the army. What is worth noting is the collective lack of proof offered to substantiate claims against the characters and backgrounds of British soldiers. Only Roger Buckley takes a counter position. Observing that aspersions against the British soldier have unsupported by evidence, Buckley contends that proof regarding the soldiers’ alleged criminal backgrounds has yet to be uncovered. The vast majority of historians, however, have been less circumspect in condemning the British redcoat.

Michael Glover, citing only two journal accounts as his evidence, posits that “with rare exceptions, those who joined the army were the very worst members of society.” He concludes that “all the evidence goes to show that the Duke spoke no more than the truth.” In another work on the British army, Glover reiterates his opinion using almost identical words: “The evidence is clear that, with rare exceptions, those who joined the army were ‘the very worst members of society.’” His evidence, interestingly, is one account by a sergeant of the 94th Foot and a comment from an enlisted man in the Third Guards.

Correlli Barnett also contends that the soldiers were generally recruited from the streets and jails and lashed into obedience. As to evidence, he offers nothing concrete. Richard Glover concurs with Barnett’s judgment and goes even further, describing the rank and file of the British army as “appalling thugs” who required flogging to control. He argues that they were successful on the battlefield because “these drunken thugs were tough with a ruggedness unknown and scarcely conceivable in the decorous modern England of today.” He further claims that men were willing to undergo a flogging for a bottle of rum and that “either men or rum are not today what they were in the robust
eighteenth century.”19 As a last judgment, Glover asserts that the soldiers regularly committed acts of “robbery and murder” when not in sight of their officers and that these officers had some effect only because their presence reminded the men of the lash and military justice.20

Glover’s contentions are as specious as they are colorful. He provides absolutely no evidence that men today are any less capable or have less grit than those of the 18th and 19th centuries; his conceptualization of combat success being dependent on the thuggish nature of the men runs against all the literature on the behavior of men in combat. His remark on the robustness of men and rum is clever but inane.

Arthur Bryant, a biographer and admirer of Wellington, also does not mince words in his description of the British ranker: “His [Wellington’s] regiments were still recruited from the national rag-tag-and-bob-tail: penniless, drunken Irish peasants, village bad characters, slum bullies and pimps, and balloted ploughboys with a penchant for drinking and roving.”21 C. T. Atkinson offers little in the way of rebuttal, arguing that Wellington’s “scum of the earth” characterization “was not without justification.” He then claims that the army showed its good character in France by its “abstention from plunder” only because flogging had “taught it how to behave.”22 The fact that the men were regularly being fed during their advance across France, the exception rather than the rule for the British army on the march, seems not to be a pertinent consideration to Atkinson.

Glenn Steppler also sees little of merit in the men who served during the reign of George III, although he comes closer to the mark than most. He summarizes the army as having “no shortage of men who were callous, brutal, and quarrelsome, men whose
dispositions were made worse through boredom, excessive drinking, poor diet and rough handling. They were not easily cowed, even by the threat of the flogging.”

He also argues that “They were freer, with a less constrained existence and there was little understanding of the ‘soldier-like’ behavior expected of them.”

Steppler calls them “disobedient children” and goes into the usual litany of offenses. The dichotomy between Steppler’s description of the men as “callous, brutal, and quarrelsome” beings unafraid of the lash, on the one hand, and as unsophisticated men and almost child-like creatures unaware of the exigencies of life, on the other, is never addressed.

In her otherwise incisive and even-handed work on the British soldier in America during the American Revolution, Silvia Frey also falls prey to following Wellington’s lead. She offers her portrait of the common soldier in this description: “Without doubt, some of the scum of society was netted by the press. Convicted criminals, highway robbers, sheepstealers, smugglers, ‘desperate rogues’ awaiting transportation to penal colonies, and the bottom of society wasting away in taverns, jails, and prisons.”

She goes on to say that men of diverse backgrounds were merged together in the army, mixing “paupers, fugitives from the law, deserters from other armies, [and] social undesirables of every description.”

To her credit, Frey offers up some of the first demographic work on the soldiers in question in an attempt to identify the backgrounds of these men. Ironically, her data on the employment backgrounds of recruits from Middlesex show that over 80 percent listed definable trades, a statistic that runs counter to her description of the men. In the British Soldier Compendium sample, 97 percent of volunteers avowed to having a previous profession. More demographic evidence of this type, gathered in the BSC, will provide insight in the chapters to come.
Richard Kohn, in his excellent study on the creation of the American military establishment, concurs with the general negative assessment of European soldiers of the late 18th century. “Most were the scum of society,” he writes, “sold or shanghaied into the service, rootless, lacking any class or national loyalties. To train them, to prevent desertion and violence against officers and civilians, and to push them into battle, eighteenth century armies practiced savage discipline.”

John Strawson holds the same low opinion, describing the Britons who fought against the French in the late 18th and early 19th centuries as follows: “The men for the most part were down-and-outs, jailbirds, and delinquents who had enlisted for drink as a last resort.” As proof, Strawson provides an anecdote about a cavalry recruit who could not ride and was later discharged as insane after his brother repaid the enlistment bounty.

David Gates also finds great fault with the men who swelled the ranks of King George III’s army. His appraisal is slightly less demeaning than most offered by historians:

In a lot of cases, those doing so [filling the ranks] were quality volunteers. However, the bulk of the rank and file continued to be trawled from among the dregs of society—the destitute, the drunkards, the desperate….Such ruffians, many officers reasoned, could only be animated and controlled by the threat of the lash and the gallows.

Charles Oman, a historian with great insight into the Peninsular campaign, offers a more measured evaluation of the British soldier, categorizing recruits as “restless spirits…town lads who lived on the edge of employment…runaway apprentices…sons of hard fathers…and still more frequently rowdy spirits who were wanted by the constable.” Oman, however, also writes that there was a substratum of criminals, drawn by the lure of the bounty. He describes them as “poachers, smugglers, and street corner
roughs…pickpockets, coiners and footpads.”

As in the previous examples, Oman provides no real proof to support his statements.

Other 20th-century authors have fallen into line with the consensus opinion that the British redcoat were feckless rogues. Like the accounts above, they offer no evidence other than Wellington’s disparaging remarks. Not surprisingly, Wellington’s words have even reached the ears of historical fiction writers. Bernard Cornwell, creator of the popular Richard Sharpe books and television shows, a largely sympathetic series that recounts the exploits of a line NCO raised from the ranks to become an officer and the hero of assorted British regiments (notably the 95th Rifles), presents a typical depiction. He writes: “The Light Company were no different to the rest of the army. They were failures, almost to a man, whose failings had led them to courtrooms and jails. They were thieves, drunks, debtors, and murderers, the men Britain wanted out of sight and mind.”

Despite overwhelming agreement on the part of historians, little is offered in the way of corroboration. Beyond reiterating Wellington’s words and a few brief first-hand appraisals, the soldier’s allegedly undesirable background and despicable character is unsubstantiated by evidence. This tradition of portraying the British soldier as a thug and brutish vagabond originates from Wellington’s remarks. The historical tendency has been to accept the perceived wisdom of his words and those of some of his officers while ignoring the insights of enlisted men regarding day-to-day life in the army. The majority of Wellington’s officers came from middle class backgrounds; a select two to three percent were from the aristocracy and the upper echelons of society. The social and economic differences between officers of even middle class backgrounds and the men they led made it often difficult for the officers to understand fully the men’s backgrounds.
and experiences. The struggles of men who could find no employment and were castoffs of the economy were foreign subjects to men who spent hundreds of pounds purchasing their commissions. This was especially true regarding the effect of commissariat failures on the lives of the common soldiers. The ranker suffered terribly when rations were not delivered; he learned to plunder rather than starve. Many officers, though, not only ate regularly but well in the officers’ mess, their food purchased locally with discretionary personal income.

In addition, the cultural separation of officers from the manor, or officers aspiring to such economic heights, and the soldiers from “downstairs” created a social barrier that few officers were willing to cross. Perceptions of their roles as defenders not only of culture but of the social caste system of Georgian England predisposed officers to perceive the men as social inferiors; in treating the rankers as wayward miscreants who required the occasional reminder of the lash to keep them in order and in their place, officers followed the established norms of British society, which regarded the lower classes as dangerous and corporal punishment necessary for their control. Such a perception reinforced the established values of English society and the officers’ places in it.

The collective memory of the ranker as an undesirable social outcast evolved, in part, because the memoirs, journals, and letters of the officers were considered more valuable than accounts by common soldiers. A 19th-century Britain, seeking perhaps to justify its colonial endeavors and its rightful place as the dominant world power, saw in the officers’ accounts a parallel with world events. The officers’ tales may have been perceived as an affirmation of sorts that the hierarchical British social system produced
leaders with a natural affinity for governing the less fortunate lower classes, a concept easily extended to exercising authority over indigenous peoples in foreign lands. The officers’ chronicles reflected the values of the upper levels of society and, thus, were granted distinction while the more telling first-person accounts of enlisted men were overlooked. Most British historians, inevitably, included the words of Wellington and his officers in their narrative histories of the Peninsular War. Over time, the repeated perceptions of British officers regarding the men under their command have coalesced into collective memory, with 20th- and 21st-century historians of all nationalities perpetuating the myth of the British redcoat as scum.

Yet this same soldier is also considered by many to have been the most reliable combat soldier of the Napoleonic period, renowned for his bravery, discipline under fire, professional competence, compassion for his comrades, and ability to endure hardship. Even Wellington, usually stinting when it came to praise, but not condemnation, did not deny their fighting capability. John Carss, a lieutenant in the 53rd Foot, related his pleasure in the infantry’s recognition by Wellington after the battle of Talavera, 28-29 July 1809. In a letter home, Carss proudly stated that “Sir Arthur sent down to General A. Campbell commanding our brigade to say we were the bravest fellows in the world and he had not the words to express how highly he was pleased with our conduct.”

In May 1811, Wellington further marveled at his soldiers’ abilities after the battle of Albuera, which was primarily a contest of infantry: “It is impossible by any description to do justice to the distinguished gallantry of our troops; but every individual nobly did his duty; and it is observed that they…were lying, as they fought in the ranks, every wound in the front.” He also commented, in a letter, on the costly nature of the battle and the
reason the British emerged victorious by saying, “Another such battle could ruin us, and
Soult claimed he had won a victory but, they [the British soldiers] did not know it and
would not run.”

In another letter, dated 18 July 1813, Wellington added to his praise: “It [the British
army] is, however, an unrivaled army for fighting.” Less than a week later, George
Woodbury, an officer in the 10th Foot and later the 18th Hussars, was gladdened to hear
Wellington express similar praise regarding the men’s fighting abilities. “Thank God we
are not stigmatized with cowardice,” Woodbury heard Wellington exclaim, “if we are for
plundering.”

Approximately two years later, Wellington expressed similar sentiments during a
conversation with the Radical MP Thomas Creevey at Lady Charlotte Grenville’s ball,
held in Brussels on 24 April 1815. During their talk, Wellington tried to allay Creevey’s
fears concerning Napoleon’s chances of victory in his Belgian campaign. When asked if
he might need the support of Louis XVIII’s royal French troops, Wellington scoffed and
replied, “Oh! Don’t mention such fellows! No: I think Blucher and I can do the
business.” Then pointing to a British infantryman in a nearby park, he said, “There, it all
depends upon that article whether we do the business or not. Give me enough of it, and I
am sure.”

Elizabeth Longford, Wellington’s most capable biographer, argues that these words
by Wellington were meant as atonement for his “scum of the earth” epithet. It is
unlikely, however, that Wellington intended to make amends. He was, most probably,
simply stating his opinion of their combat value, something he saw as having little or no
correlation with their character.
No less a figure than Napoleon agreed that the outcome of battles between the French and the British hinged on the steadiness of the British soldier. The Corsican held the British infantryman in high esteem, at least when it served his purposes to say so.

The emperor once told General Foy, sent to him in Paris by Massena to explain the series of defeats inflicted by the British, that the reason for French defeats was fairly simple: the French were afraid of the British soldiers. “Well, you see,” Napoleon commented, “the English have always beaten them.”

The record of British victories explains why Napoleon made disparaging remarks about the British soldiers and Wellington before the battle of Waterloo: his expressed sentiments were intended to boost the morale of his generals, who were cowed, to some extent, by the prospect of facing the British army on that last, desperate campaign in June 1815. During his final exile on the island of St. Helena, Napoleon was doubtless freer to express his true judgment; there he opined, “If I had had an English army, I would have conquered the universe.”

Sir William Napier, a man who attained the rank of general during the war against the French, who commanded the men in question, and who later wrote an extensive history of the campaign, vehemently disagreed with Wellington’s infamous “scum” evaluation. Napier openly praised and defended the British ranker:

The whole world cannot produce a nobler specimen of military bearing, nor is the mind unworthy of the outward man….he is observant, and quick to comprehend his orders, full of resources under difficulties, calm and resolute in danger, and more than usually obedient…It has been asserted that his [the British soldier’s] undeniable firmness in battle, is the result of a phlegmatic constitution uninspired by moral feeling. Never was a more stupid calumny uttered! Napoleon’s troops fought in bright fields, where every helmet caught some beams of glory, but the British soldier conquered under the cold shade of aristocracy; no honors awaited his daring, no
despatch gave him name to the applause of his countrymen; his life of danger was uncheered by hope, his death unnoticed. Did his heart sink therefore? Did he not endure with surpassing fortitude the sorest of ills, sustain the most terrible assaults in battle unmoved, and, with incredible energy overthrow every opponent, at all times proving that no physical military qualification was wanting, the fount of honour was also full and fresh within him! 47

Captain John Kincaid of the 95th Rifles perceived the same steadfastness and courage in the men under his command. He wrote proudly, amazed at “their constancy under the most desperate circumstances…though they might be destroyed, they were not to be beaten.” 48 Ned Clinton, a clerk in the commissary who saw the men withstand both hardship and the horrors of combat, echoed Kincaid’s sentiments, writing, “That to his [the soldier’s] undaunted courage every victory is due.” 49 He also added, “As to the bravery of the [British] soldier it is proverbial.” 50

An ensign in the 34th, Moyle Sherer, also found the British common soldier admirable. He believed soldiers were as virtuous as any other member of civil society. Sherer reflected:

It will be remarked by those who live among soldiers, that they are charitable and generous, kind to children, and fond of dumb animals; add to this, a frequent exposure to hardship, privation, and danger, make them friendly and ready to assist each other…the worthless characters who are to be met with in every regiment (and society) are generally shunned. 51

Sherer later waxed poetic on the British soldier’s sense of duty and determination during combat. He also captured the matter-of-fact attitude adopted by the British soldier regarding danger in battle. He confided:

I am one who suspects that three hundred British grenadiers would have held the pass of Thermopylae as stoutly as the Spartans; and would have considered it as the simple discharge of a perilous and important duty, to die on the ground on which they fought. 52
An appraisal of the men’s character not dissimilar to that of Sherer’s comes from a regimental surgeon, Dr. William Ferguson. He had seen the men in action and in camp and did not doubt their worth.

While a regimental surgeon I have been among the common soldiers, and I can vouch that I have never in any walk of life fallen in with better men; they certainly could not be sober men, but they were of excellent temper, cheerful, patient, always ready to assist, and bearing the severest hardships with equanimity that could not be surpassed.\textsuperscript{53}

Another Peninsular veteran, Lieutenant-Colonel John Leach, expressed the same belief in the British soldier and his behavior under fire. Describing the \(36^{\text{th}}, 40^{\text{th}}, 71^{\text{st}},\) and \(82^{\text{nd}}\) regiments of foot, the left flank of Wellington’s line at Vimerio (21 August 1808), Leach wrote, “The discipline and bravery of the different regiments...baffled the veterans of France.”\textsuperscript{54}

Ensign John Aitchison, like Leach, served in Spain. He recorded the following depiction of the British soldier lying on the reverse slope of a hill under heavy artillery fire in early September 1809 just after Wellesley was created viscount Wellington. The men could not see the fire, yet they did not break, move, or cry out. “That common men,” Aitchison mused, “could be brought to face the greatest danger, there is a spirit within me that tells it is possible, but I could not believe they could be brought to remain without emotion, when attacked, not knowing from whence. Such however was their conduct...and from this steadiness so few suffered.”\textsuperscript{55}

Major-General George Bell, who served under Wellington and rose from the rank of ensign in the \(34^{\text{th}}\) Foot, knew and understood the common soldier well. Bell described him in a perceptive and poignant passage, plagiarized in large part from Napier’s work on
the Peninsula campaign. His words, while not wholly his own, are included because such opinions are reflected throughout the text of his memoirs. Bell wrote:

> His life of danger and hardship was uncheered by hope, his death unnoticed; he endured with surprising fortitude the sorest of ill, sustained the most terrible of assaults in battle unnerved, overthrew…every opponent, and at all times proved himself worthy of England.

Bell also offered his explanation for the army’s success, wherein he gave full credit to the rank and file:

> We had the bravest, the best…army in the world; fighting was their daily bread—it gave them an appetite. No other soldier on earth had a chance against them in fair and open ground; the Duke knew it.

Bell’s memoirs stand out from other accounts left by officers because his writings are mostly unstained by the class and social considerations that are inherent in many officers’ recollections. The difference in social standing between the men and their officers, and the rampant classism usually exhibited by the latter in dealing with their men, is often forgotten or ignored by historians assessing the British army during the Napoleonic period. Negative attitudes regarding their “social inferiors” are revealed in most of the written accounts left to us by officers, particularly those of higher ranks and independent incomes. In his fine work on the armies of Revolutionary France, Samuel Scott provides a cautionary note. “It is more likely,” he argues, “that claims about the number of beggars and criminals in the [French] army are based on prejudice both contemporary and subsequent, and partly on the identification of the unemployed members of the lower classes with social derelicts.” Scott’s words certainly apply to most examinations of the British army, as well. When trying to reassess the behavior
and character of the British soldier, historians must keep the possibility of such prejudices in mind; this is why the evidence provided by firsthand accounts, especially from enlisted men, is so vital to the issue of examining the character and motivations of the British soldier.

In a letter home after the dreadful storming of Ciudad Rodrigo, 19 January 1812, Major William Ware used words similar to Bell’s to express his admiration for the men:

Nothing could resist the impetuosity of our Troops….It is quite out of my power to do justice to the heroism and gallantry of our troops. They seemed to surpass their wonted bravery and intrepid contempt of danger. Nor can I describe the awful feelings of suspense and anxiety before or during the storm.  

This extraordinary behavior, almost routine for the common British ranker, was not engendered by the base natures of these men. Courage, defined as the conscious and willing decision to face death in order to preserve themselves, their comrades, and their unit as a whole, was the source of their combat motivation. Courage and related cooperative actions have no meaning for vagabonds, rogues, and sociopaths disconnected from society. The behavior and character of the British soldier earned him the esteem of many observers who watched him on campaign and in the field. Observations of praise, recorded in so many different accounts, describe a combination of courage and group cohesion that belies the negative characterization of the enlisted man.

Sir Robert Porter, an officer under Sir John Moore in Spain and Portugal, was also an advocate of the British soldier; he praised the men’s eagerness to engage the French in battle and their steadiness under fire. As well, Porter related that the French officers with whom he conversed uniformly declared the British cavalry the best in the world, and the infantry “worthy to support them.” In an interesting aside, Porter wrote home about
a declaration by a Portuguese wife of an army muleteer. The woman proclaimed that she had seen “more charity exercised by heretics [the British soldiers] than she had ever met with in any religious assembly that Portugal produced.” Porter fully supported her assessment.

Robert Blakeney, who also served as an officer in the Peninsula War, did not always speak of the soldiers in such glowing terms. His depiction of them after sieges as a “pack of hell-hounds” is often quoted by historians seeking to validate Wellington’s denigrating assessment. Yet even Blakeney speaks matter-of-factly about the reliability of British infantry, “among whom no swerving takes place, each individual being aware that his greatest safety depends on his manfully facing and strenuously opposing the foe.” He later added, “That Britons will fight to the last…is well known.” Blakeney’s initial hell-hound judgment might appear to be inconsistent with these later two statements. His prejudices concerning the role and capabilities of men from the lower socioeconomic levels of society predisposed him to assume that such men were born to violence. His grasp of their true motivations, however, was lacking. Men who are capable of such steadiness in battle do not fight because they are driven by maniacal tendencies. They stand and fight because of their loyalty to the men around them.

A member of the 88th Foot, a unit notorious for its bravery as well as its skill at plundering, William Grattan provided a similar, measured assessment of the character of the British soldier, one that takes note of their superiority on the battlefield and at the same time acknowledges their fondness for drink:

Whether they be shown up as the men who were able to conquer the choicest legions of France, or as men who would sell the most essential part of their dress for a glass of brandy. No matter; they…have done both.
T. H. McGuffie, one of the few researchers in this period to disagree with the standard interpretation of the British ranker, found Wellington’s assessment shortsighted. He wrote:

His lack of sympathy failed to discern, under the filthy layer of their obvious vices, the deep, sincere and inherent virtues of loyalty, patience and courage which persisted in them even under the temptations of their enforced periods of idleness. Sir. G. T. Napier’s observations form a pleasant contrast. After describing how a private of his company, Jonn Dunn, an Irishman fond of drink and other vices (having lost an arm in an action when a brother had been killed by his side), had walked nearly seven miles to see him and inquire after his wound, he bursts out, ‘Could a brother have done more? By heavens! It makes my anger rise and my blood boil to hear people talk of soldiers as if they were a different race of being from themselves.’

Finally, Major-General F. M. Richardson, in his book on the fighting spirit of soldiers, concurred with these positive assessments of the British soldier, providing a distilled summation. He noted, “The British soldier…[was] judged by Napoleon to be the bravest in Europe and by Wavell to be ‘the finest all-around fighting man the world has seen.’”

These testimonials are offered as circumstantial evidence to cast doubt on Wellington’s “scum of the earth” assessment and similar judgments by historians who have conveyed Wellington’s words as accepted fact. Although the portrayal of the British ranker as a reprehensible individual lacking in values and bereft of a moral compass has become part of the sanctioned and recognized historical interpretation, that does not mean it is an accurate depiction. The collective memory of historians can be as fallible as that of the general public.

Collective memory, the culling, retaining, and public recollection of select portions of the historical past, is both a process and a result. It is how large, vague, and complex
events are melded with individual memories and preserved. A kind of distillation occurs, and the result is historical recollection. In their work on collective memory, Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan describe the process by which we collectively recall the past:
“Collective remembrance is public recollection. It is the act of gathering bits and pieces of the past, and joining them together in public.”70 The researchers go on to point out, “Through the constant interrogation of actors and actions, we separate ‘collective memory’ from a vague wave of associations.”71

But what if some of the significant bits are falsely presented, and what if, because of an overreliance on one man’s views, we have ceased our “interrogation of actors and actions” and settled on a comfortable but mistaken assessment of the British soldier? Then such a judgment will, in fact, be based on little more than vaguely misremembered details and subsequent, superficial evaluations.

For example, the battle of Bunker Hill, in June 1775 during the American Revolution, is vaguely recognized by most Americans as an important victory by the fledgling American army. The battle, in fact, was a tactical triumph for the British, although a near-run thing and costly in terms of casualties lost; the battle’s true import, that the American army could stand up to the British regulars, is largely forgotten. Moreover, the actual battle was fought not on Bunker Hill but on nearby Breed’s Hill. Although events may be misremembered, that does not alter what actually occurred. Pheidippides did not run the 25 miles or so from Marathon to Athens in 490 B.C. to announce victory, immortalizing himself by collapsing and dying of exhaustion. The Pheidippides story is an amalgamation of recollections, melding details from Herodotus, Plutarch, and other writers. Yet ask most anyone why the distance of a present-day
marathon is 26.2 miles and they are likely to regale you with a version of the Pheidippides tale. Likewise, George Washington’s teeth were not made of wood; the facts aside, that fallacy has been repeated so often that it is usually acknowledged as historical truth. Our accepted memory of the past, therefore, can be a distorted compilation, often simplified and based on inaccuracies repeated over time. This same caution applies just as well to the accepted assessment of the British soldier under Wellington.

Some of the primary source evaluations of the British soldier reflect a combination of national and self pride, but the collective weight of opinions other than Wellington’s, in conjunction with an awareness that collective memory can be misleading, must at least give the reader pause to reflect. Often it seems improbable that the writers of the firsthand accounts and historians are describing the same men. The contrast between the assessments and the strong consensus of each group puts them in almost direct opposition to each other. Given the lack of evidence presented by most historians to support their negative depictions of the British soldier and the mass of accounts espousing the worth of the British ranker, we must wonder whether the collective memory in this case has been formed incorrectly.

One example suffices to show how preconceptions on the part of even careful and astute historians have worked to perpetuate the mistaken image of the common British ranker, further burning it into the public consciousness. Charles Esdaille, writing about Moore’s retreat to Corunna in 1809, states, “From the very beginning of the retreat its passage was marked by a trail of burnt villages and homeless inhabitants. Brutalized stragglers [British soldiers] took what they wanted by force, whilst there were also
outbreaks of mindless vandalism.” Esdaille cites the accounts of a Rifleman, an infantry officer, and a cavalry captain as evidence. Examined in detail, however, these chronicles provide important additional information that presents the retreat incidents in a totally different vein. Robert Porter, the infantry officer, wrote of the unbelievable privation of the retreat and the fasting diet of the men, what he called “dieting with the gods.” Calling the British soldiers “starving wretches,” he described the friction between the soldiers and the Spanish people whom the soldiers had come to protect. Porter reveals the seething resentment felt by the soldiers against the Spanish, whom they believed ignored the men’s basic needs, failing to provide even the smallest portions of food to the fleeing army, abandoning the men to their fates and the pursuing French. “All these things,” he wrote, “excited an indignation in their breasts which, luckily, for the people we were amongst, wreaked itself on their chairs and tables instead of their heads.”

Alexander Gordon, the cavalryman, confirmed this, scribing in his journal that the Spanish secreted provisions and “pretended to be unable to supply our necessities.” He also asserted that the British soldiers knew this. While admitting that the men stole any food or drink they could find in order to live, Gordon also added a significant bit of evidence against Esdaille’s claim that the burning of houses was the result of the British soldier’s propensity to pillage, writing that the villages were intentionally destroyed to prevent the French from benefiting from them.

Lastly, the recollections of Rifleman Harris do not support Esdaille’s position. Filled with details of human suffering, Harris’ memoirs paint the forced-march retreat to Corunna as a desperate venture in which British soldiers and officers alike, and the wives and children of the former, fought the elements and the French cavalry, all the while
being without provisions; the soldiers and their loved ones perished by the hundreds in one of the most agonizing retreats in British military history. Harris’ descriptions are of “pallid men, way worn, their feet bleeding…now near sinking with fatigue…[reeling] as if in a state of drunkenness, and altogether I thought we looked the ghosts of our former selves; still, we held resolutely.” Harris’ chronicles do not depict the British ranker as a hardened criminal, intent on wanton destruction.

The Porter, Gordon, and Harris accounts illustrate how much of the testimonial evidence offered by historians against the British soldier is superficial. When more carefully inspected, these documents contribute subtle but significant details that attribute the British ranker’s behavior to factors other than those that have been repeated so often.

The common belief in the vile nature of the British soldier is also belied by the overwhelming agreement on the exemplary combat behavior of these same soldiers. Wellington’s successes were not based solely on his ability as a commander. His reverse-slope tactics protected the men from direct fire and often required the men to remain prone as they awaited the approach of the oncoming French columns. The men were expected to hold their positions with unswerving resolve until the last second when the columns were often only tens of yards away. As the columns began forming into line, the British soldier stood, fired, and charged, closing with the bayonet on the French formation suddenly stricken from the close-range British fusillade. The British employed variations of this same tactic even when facing advancing French columns on level ground. The steadfastness and courage required to execute such maneuvers successfully, so often lauded by observers of all kinds, are not characteristics of the social misfit and troublesome, self-concerned criminal described by most historians as the archetypal
British soldier. On the contrary, the British soldier’s desire and need to fight to safeguard himself and his primary social group enabled him to adopt these specialized tactics that Napoleon’s other adversaries were unable to duplicate.

This inherent disagreement between the accepted portrayal of the British soldier as a hardened thug and the evidence of his positive deportment on and off the battlefield has by and large escaped the notice of historians. More than enough counterevidence, however, exists to cast doubt on the negative evaluation of the British soldier that has become entrenched in historical memory. An examination of all the available documents, including quantitative studies of the men as well as a comprehensive review of firsthand sources, brings to light a more accurate depiction of the British soldier, his conduct, and the stressors that were part of his daily life, in combat and on campaign.

The inconsistencies between the existing characterization of the British soldier and the recollections presented in historical documents merit this reassessment of the character and behavior of the British soldier. As Christine Kinealy points out in her work on the Irish potato famine of the mid-19th-century, “it is the scholar’s role to intervene in the processes of memory in order to ensure that they are accurate.” In this case, perceptions in the form of collective memory do not seem to coincide with the actual behavior, motivations, and deeds of the British soldier. Historian Linda Colley is one of the few to recognize the need for an analysis that addresses this discrepancy. Colley writes, “Although the impact of mass arming in revolutionary and Napoleonic France has been analyzed with great skill…the hundreds of thousands of Britons who joined the ranks of the regular army and the militia and volunteer corps during these wars have been comparatively little studied…we still fail to see these men as they really are.”
The excuses offered to soften his words rarely agree. C. T. Atkinson writes that Wellington’s scum commentary “was spoken in reference to corporal punishment…and in opposition to flogging.” [C. T. Atkinson, “An ‘Infamous Army,’” Journal of Army Historical Research XXXII.130 (1954): 48.] Eileen Hathaway argues that Wellington’s pejorative words were the result of British soldiers stripping a French treasure convoy before he could confiscate the funds for army use. [Eileen Hathaway, Introduction, A Dorset Rifleman, by Benjamin Harris (Dorset, 1995) 9. This is a revision of The Recollections of Rifleman Harris.] Michael Glover claims that the comment referred “not to the soldiers but to the men who enlisted.” [Michael Glover, Wellington's Army (London, 1987) 24.] Philip Haythornthwaite, on the other hand, contends that Wellington “was not adopting a superior attitude by way of condemnation—He…used the term to indicate the social background from which they came.” [Philip Haythornthwaite, The Armies of Wellington (London, 1998) 44.] Two things become obvious: historians are unaware of the number of times Wellington expressed his views on the character of the British soldier, and the excuses of his defenders aside, Wellington’s opinion was unfiltered and unchanging.

These will be cited and presented in detail below.

1 The excuses offered to soften his words rarely agree. C. T. Atkinson writes that Wellington’s scum commentary “was spoken in reference to corporal punishment…and in opposition to flogging.” [C. T. Atkinson, “An ‘Infamous Army,’” Journal of Army Historical Research XXXII.130 (1954): 48.] Eileen Hathaway argues that Wellington’s pejorative words were the result of British soldiers stripping a French treasure convoy before he could confiscate the funds for army use. [Eileen Hathaway, Introduction, A Dorset Rifleman, by Benjamin Harris (Dorset, 1995) 9. This is a revision of The Recollections of Rifleman Harris.] Michael Glover claims that the comment referred “not to the soldiers but to the men who enlisted.” [Michael Glover, Wellington's Army (London, 1987) 24.] Philip Haythornthwaite, on the other hand, contends that Wellington “was not adopting a superior attitude by way of condemnation—He…used the term to indicate the social background from which they came.” [Philip Haythornthwaite, The Armies of Wellington (London, 1998) 44.] Two things become obvious: historians are unaware of the number of times Wellington expressed his views on the character of the British soldier, and the excuses of his defenders aside, Wellington’s opinion was unfiltered and unchanging.

2 These will be cited and presented in detail below.


4 Ibid. 496.

5 Ibid.


7 Ibid.

8 Ibid. VIII 235.

9 Realizing that his conversations with Wellington were of historical import, Stanhope moved quickly to his writing table each time Wellington left Stanhope’s home in order to record for posterity the words of the man he so admired.

10 Philip Henry, Earl of Stanhope, Notes of Conversations with the Duke of Wellington, 1831-1851 (London, 1998) 10. This is a reprint of the private (1886) and public (1888) editions.

11 Ibid. 13.

12 Ibid. 164. In fairness, Wellington may have been describing the quality of the Dutch and Belgian troops under his command, or even the discrepancy in experience between the British line troops and their Peninsular counterparts. I have included the quote here because it is just as likely that he was bemoaning the quality of the British soldier in general.

13 Roger Buckley, The British Army in the West Indies (Tallahassee, 1998) 105.


15 Michael Glover, Wellington’s Army, 24.


18 Ibid.

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid. 177.


24 Ibid. 122-23.

25 Ibid. 124.


27 Ibid. 7.

28 Ibid. 13.
See Appendix A, Tables 60 and 66.


Sir Charles Oman, *Wellington’s Army 1809-1814* (London, 1913) 211.

Ibid. 212.


In regards to the notion that most officers came from an aristocratic or extremely wealthy background, Michael Glover has shown that less than 140 out of the 10,000 officers on full pay during Wellington’s time were peers or sons of peers. This amounts to less than two percent. The majority were sons of professional men, lawyers, doctors, bankers, clerics, etc. Using educational background as an indicator of wealth, Glover also contends that only 283 officers, or three percent, attended one the major public schools, those being Eton, Westminster, Harrow, Rugby, and Winchester. Michael Glover, *Wellington’s Army* 36-37.


Wellington, *Dispatches VII* 591.


Wellington, *Dispatches X* 539.


Ibid.


Ned Clinton, *Ned Clinton; or the Commissary* (London, 1825) I 261.

Ibid. III 34.

Moyle Sherer, *Recollections of the Peninsula* (Kent, 1996) 132. This is a reprint of the 1824 edition.

Ibid. 241.


Lieutenant-Colonel John Leach, *Rough Sketches of the Life of an Old Soldier* (Cambridge, 1986) 53. This is a reprint of the 1831 edition.


See Napier’s original statement above. Bell’s description is a word-for-word reproduction of Napier’s account. This was not an uncommon occurrence, as some memoir writers lifted campaign and battle descriptions from Oman and Napier in order to add needed background to their own accounts.


Ibid. 165.


Ibid. 317.

Ibid. 232.

65 Ibid. 60.
66 Ibid. 63.
71 Ibid. 9.
72 Charles Esdaille, *The Duke of Wellington and the Command of the Spanish Army, 1812-1814* (London, 1990) 7. Esdaille’s works have been chosen for critical analysis, in this and the preceding chapter, because unlike most historians who provide summative evaluations of the British soldier based solely on Wellington’s various denigrating remarks, Esdaille takes the time to furnish evidence to back his conclusions. This allows for a more thorough critique of the proof offered against the character of the British soldier. That Esdaille is incorrect in his conclusions regarding the British ranker does not reflect on the quality of his scholarship.
73 Porter, *Letters from Portugal and Spain*, 238.
74 Ibid. 244. It is also worth noting that British soldiers were not immune from attacks by Portuguese civilians. In a letter dated 26 January 1813, Wellington requests Marshal Beresford to notify the Governor of Alentejo about the murder of a British sergeant and private of the 9th Light Dragoons “by banditti which infest the road from Abrantes to Alter do Chao.” Wellington, *Dispatches* X 35.
76 Ibid. 158.
79 Linda Colley, “The Reach of the State, the Appeal of the Nation: Mass Arming and Political Culture in the Napoleonic Wars,” *An Imperial State at War: Britain from 1689 to 1815*, ed. Lawrence Stone (London, 1994) 166.
In his thought-provoking work on the effect of culture on the behavior of fighting men across the millennia, Professor John Lynn contends that “the universal soldier does not exist; he is wholly an imagined being born of fear and projection, a cultural construction.”

Lynn goes on to advocate that we “replace that unchanging, faceless warrior with real flesh and blood.” He cautions historians “to question assumptions and [to] take care in generalizing about war and warriors.”

This is sage advice, for any attempt to create a model of combat and campaign motivation that reflects all men, in all wars, over all time, is likely to be oversimplified, and thus of questionable value in determining the motivation of a particular group of soldiers. Instead, Lynn states the need for analyses based on cultural norms and perceptions, social and economic considerations, technology, governmental structures and aspirations, and human considerations. “A cultural interpretation,” he argues, “is most likely to grant individuals and people their full personal, social, and cultural character.”

Lynn’s argument echoes the words of Richard Kohn, written more than two decades earlier. In an article outlining the need for a more inclusive approach when
analyzing the behavior of American soldiers in battle, Kohn cites the impact of social and economic factors on men’s conduct. He then praises the methods of the *Annales* school of French historiography, “its recreation of an entire world of an age or group, the totality of life through a consideration of climate, geography, vital statistics of the life cycle, migration, architecture, economic activity, and all the myriad facets of life in the past. By first asking the most basic questions and using the methods of other disciplines, military historians can recover the fullness of the military experience.”

Kohn goes on to argue for a new methodology along these lines, and cautions that the American enlisted man, as well as any other soldiers from any period of history, will remain unknown “until we, as historians, abandon both our stereotypes and our propensity to think in terms of stereotypes.”

Lynn’s and Kohn’s collective call for analyses sensitive to cultural determinants and based on an understanding of social, economic, “and all the myriad facets of life in the past” is especially germane when it comes to the British soldier of the Napoleonic period, an individual who has long suffered from the generalized universal soldier approach. This unsophisticated method, devoid of cultural variables and any of the nuanced considerations delineated by Lynn and Kohn, has resulted in an inaccurate, two-dimensional portrait of the British ranker which colors all the British soldiers who fought in the wars against Napoleon as rogues and thugs, miscreants by nature and by choice.

Historian Russell Weigley addresses this very issue. Praising John Keegan’s insight into the social history of the British soldier as one of the key elements in Keegan’s ground-breaking *The Face of Battle,* Weigley then acknowledges the impossibility of comprehending the British ranker’s behavior under fire without first understanding the
social backgrounds of the men. Especially pertinent to this study is Anthony Kellett’s concurring observation describing the kind of focused, cultural analysis needed to explore the behavior of men in battle. Kellett posits that “a holistic approach, combining individual, organizational, and social factors with situational ones, offers a more complete explanation of combat motivation.”

While it is, of course, impossible to extrapolate how such considerations affected countless individual soldiers, a slightly broader method of using one soldier’s experiences as a vehicle to introduce social, economic, physiological, and psychological particulars allows a composite picture to be created. William Lawrence of the 40th Foot, a soldier who survived years of campaigning in the Peninsula and France, will act as a guide of sorts in this endeavor. His background and military experiences, recalled in his autobiography, provide a frame of reference against which events, motivations, and the demographic insights provided by the British Soldier Compendium (BSC) will be considered and compared.

One of seven children, Lawrence was born in 1791 in the English county of Dorset. His father, an agricultural worker turned laborer, was forced to give up the family farm in order to provide for his burgeoning family. Lawrence began work at a very early age in order to help meet the needs of his family; he worked at various agricultural jobs for pennies a day until his teens. Given the circumstances, education was out of the question.

When Lawrence reached the age of 14, his father borrowed the rather large sum of £20 in order to pay a builder to accept his son as an apprentice. This seven-year commitment would provide Lawrence with room and board, training, and clothing, but no wages. Lawrence, however, soon found that his new master was difficult to please.
When the man started rationing Lawrence’s food, the apprentice began to consider ways of escaping the situation. Nine months after being apprenticed, Lawrence made an abortive attempt to flee. He was caught by the builder, who used a bullwhip to administer punishment.

Undeterred, Lawrence soon filched a seven-shilling coin and some food from his master and, though unable to find the documents detailing his indentured servant obligations, made another attempt at escape. Caught again, Lawrence was given a reprieve by his master’s wife, and off he went a third time. Unable to find work but for a few menial jobs, Lawrence was hungry and tired when he chanced upon a recruiting party of artillerymen. Lawrence was an easy mark for the recruiting sergeant’s palaver, and he willingly accepted the king’s shilling, as well as the five-guinea enlistment bonus. Paraded from one public house to the next, along with other recruits, Lawrence quickly spent most of the bounty. Unfortunately for Lawrence, an acquaintance revealed to the sergeant that the young man was an indentured apprentice. Unable to repay the recruiting sergeant the bounty, as he only had a bit more than 17 shillings remaining, Lawrence was remanded to his parents’ custody and the money confiscated. He was taken before a magistrate, who gave him the choice of fulfilling his apprenticeship or going to jail.

Given strict orders to conduct himself immediately back to his master, Lawrence exhibited the same kind of stubbornness and instinct for self-preservation that would later allow him to survive numerous years as a regular line infantryman. Rather than return to the untenable situation with the builder, Lawrence took himself to a near-by town and straight into a public house. There he found another recruiting sergeant, this time of the 40th Foot. He quickly enlisted again, accepting the sergeant’s word that he would merit a
16 guinea bounty. Lawrence was given coach fare to Somersetshire, where he signed his X, took the oath, and told the sergeant that his occupation was that of laborer, “for laborers made the best soldiers.” He was given two and a half guineas, rather than the promised 16. Dissatisfied, Lawrence considered enlisting in the Marines to collect the full 16 guineas. But unable to find a way to Portsmouth, where the Marines were quartered, Lawrence returned to the barracks of the 40th Foot and began a military career than would span over a decade. Although the dates in Lawrence’s account are imprecise, he would have been about 15 years old at the time, and the year was most likely 1806.

Lawrence’s apprenticeship situation, financial straits, and resultant recruiting adventure were not atypical of the time. BSC data show that recruits for 1806 were predominately English (Table 1), accounting for just over 77 percent of the sample for that year, with 88 percent of all nationalities going into the infantry (Table 2). The English (including the Welsh) alone accounted for almost 79 percent of the men enlisting in the infantry that year (Table 3).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Branch/Country</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Irish</th>
<th>Scottish</th>
<th>Foreign</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Artillery</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cavalry</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infantry</td>
<td>760</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>849</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1,097</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Simplified distribution of sample for 1806

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Branch/Country</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Irish</th>
<th>Scottish</th>
<th>Foreign</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Artillery</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cavalry</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infantry</td>
<td>69.3</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>87.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>77.4</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Simplified distribution of sample as percent of 1806 sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Branch/Country</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Irish</th>
<th>Scottish</th>
<th>Foreign</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Artillery</td>
<td>45.8</td>
<td>39.0</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cavalry</td>
<td>83.8</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infantry</td>
<td>78.8</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Percent of branch's enlistees from each country in 1806

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Branch/Country</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Irish</th>
<th>Scottish</th>
<th>Foreign</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Artillery</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cavalry</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>49.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infantry</td>
<td>67.7</td>
<td>84.9</td>
<td>80.6</td>
<td>49.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Percent of country's enlistees in each branch in 1806
The year Lawrence enlisted was a particularly grim one economically. Continued economic stress brought on by Napoleon’s continental blockade, the impact of increased industrialization on the hand-loom ing and hand-weaving trades, and the decision by the government to divest itself of the Volunteer system may have had a pronounced effect on English enlistment, particularly in the industrialized centers in the north around Manchester.

The BSC sample for all years, 1790-1815, offers a significantly different look at enlistment in general. The percentage of Englishmen, for example, constitutes slightly less than 53 percent of the total sample (Tables 5 and 6). Englishmen also comprised only 48 percent of the infantry, which means that the majority of infantrymen were of Irish and Scottish descent, although the English remain the largest single subgroup (Table 7). As would be expected, Lawrence’s enlistment in the infantry coincided with the choice of most recruits, although the percentages for Irish and Scottish recruits volunteering into this same branch were higher (Table 8). The number of Irish recruits is not surprising; it has been estimated that as many as 160,000 men of Eire may have served in the British army between 1793 and 1815.¹⁵
### Table 5: Simplified distribution of whole sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Branch/Country</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Irish</th>
<th>Scottish</th>
<th>Foreign</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Artillery</td>
<td>684</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cavalry</td>
<td>553</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>862</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infantry</td>
<td>2,590</td>
<td>1,821</td>
<td>923</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>5,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,827</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,145</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,145</strong></td>
<td><strong>133</strong></td>
<td><strong>7,250</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 6: Simplified distribution as percent of whole sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Branch/Country</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Irish</th>
<th>Scottish</th>
<th>Foreign</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Artillery</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>negligible</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cavalry</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infantry</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>25.1</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>74.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>52.7</strong></td>
<td><strong>29.6</strong></td>
<td><strong>15.7</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 7: Percent of branch's enlistees from each country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Branch/Country</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Irish</th>
<th>Scottish</th>
<th>Foreign</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Artillery</td>
<td>69.2</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cavalry</td>
<td>64.2</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infantry</td>
<td>48.0</td>
<td>33.7</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 8: Percent of country's enlistees in each branch

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Branch/Country</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Irish</th>
<th>Scottish</th>
<th>Foreign</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Artillery</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cavalry</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>49.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infantry</td>
<td>67.7</td>
<td>84.9</td>
<td>80.6</td>
<td>49.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lawrence’s age at enlistment is not as unusual as it may first seem. Boys as young as 14 appear to have been accepted as recruits in 1806 (Table 9) if they were of a minimum height, around five feet tall. The regimental description records on minimum age are sometimes difficult to interpret, as most boys were accepted as drummers and marked as such. Some boys of sufficient height, however, were listed as full recruits in the description books, with 11 being the youngest age in the army sample (Tables 10 and 11). A. W. Cockerill estimates that in 1811, at the peak of the Peninsular campaign, there may have been as many as 3,600 boys in the army under age 16.\(^{18}\) John Fortescue’s numbers from general army returns show that no fewer than 1,497 boys joined the army each year, with a high of 3,806 in 1807.\(^{19}\) Cockerill points out that the Royal Military Asylum, a home for orphans and the destitute families of soldiers killed on active duty, was established by Royal Charter in 1800; the asylum proved a constant source of boy volunteers, perhaps as many as 250 annually.\(^{20}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>6.71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9: Age distribution of 1806 enlistees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>22.44</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>6.12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10: Age distribution of all enlistees
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age by Country</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>21.71</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>5.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22.89</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>6.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scottish</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>23.68</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>6.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>25.35</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>6.96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11: Age distribution by country

Lawrence, at 15, was younger than most enlistees, the average age of recruits being between 22 and 23 (Tables 9 and 10), with the most common age for army enlistment being 18 (Figure 1A). Nevertheless, he was part of the most common age group of 15 to 19 years (Figure 2A). Both these patterns in 1806 are consistent with BSC army returns for the entire period (Figures 1B and 2B). In addition, Lawrence’s younger age is in keeping with the norm for English recruits, compared with those of other nationalities (Table 11). Approximately 72 percent of British recruits were less than 25 years old. This number aligns fairly well with Samuel Scott’s data on French line troops in 1793. While recording the ages of veterans rather than recruits, Scott’s figures still show that nearly 60 percent of French infantry privates were under the age of 25. Jean-Paul Bertaud’s work on the soldiers comprising the army of the French Revolution reveals that 50 percent of line infantry recruits from 1789 to 1791 were 18 to 25 years old; about 75 percent of the volunteers of 1792 were younger than 26, numbers very much in agreement with BSC figures. Corvisier’s data for French soldiers of all ranks in 1716 reveal that about 34 percent of the army was younger than 26 years of age.
Figure 1: A: Age distribution of 1806 enlistees; B: Age distribution of all enlistees
Figure 2: A: Age distribution by group of 1806 enlistees; B: Age distribution by group of all enlistees
Lawrence never provided any evidence as to his height at enlistment. Considering his age, he was probably between 60 and 70 inches, most likely around 63 to 64 inches (Table 12). If Lawrence’s stature was typical of that of other recruits, it would not have put him at a great disadvantage compared with older men, as the average height for British soldiers was only slightly over 66 inches or 5’6” tall. (Table 13). There was little national difference, with inadequate nutrition explaining the small Irish height deficiency (Table 14).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>63.5</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>2.41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 12: Height distribution, in inches, of 15-year-old enlistees (184 observations)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>66.32</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>2.36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 13: Height distribution, in inches, of all enlistees**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Height by Country</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>66.30</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>2.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>66.18</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scottish</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>66.60</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>2.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>66.74</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>2.39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 14: Height distribution, in inches, by country**
The heights reported in the BSC are consistent with other data on the heights of adult males from 1810 to 1819\textsuperscript{28} and those of urban and rural criminals from the decade after Waterloo.\textsuperscript{29} Both these estimates put the average height of men around 5’6” to 5’7”. Andre Corvisier’s very detailed analysis of the French army at the end of the 17\textsuperscript{th} century reveals a range in heights from 1.624 meters (64 inches) to 1.896 meters (77 inches), with the most common height being between 1.678 meters and 1.732 meters (5 feet 6 inches and 5 feet 8 inches) for soldiers in 1763.\textsuperscript{30} The slight height advantage of these French soldiers when compared with their British counterparts can be explained partially by noting that Corvisier’s numbers are for veteran soldiers, not recruits. The remaining discrepancy can be attributed to the French royal army’s higher enlistment standards.\textsuperscript{31} Corvisier’s numbers show that 60 percent of French soldiers in 1763 were less than 5’8” tall. Bertaud notes that even as late as 1791, height minimums for enlistment sometimes were as high as 5’10”. By 1792, however, 64 percent of recruits were smaller than 5’6”\textsuperscript{32}. The \textit{levee en masse} of 1793, however, brought a less-select cross section of the populace into the army. Heights dropped to 5’0” on average, with 65 percent of men entering the infantry being 5’6” or less.\textsuperscript{33} Scott’s figures on the heights of line soldiers in the French army circa 1793 provides data that substantiates Bertaud’s numbers and exactly matches the BSC sample: Scott’s data set and the BSC both indicate that approximately 70 percent of soldiers were less than 5’8” in height.\textsuperscript{34}

The heights for the British population and British soldiers in the BSC sample coincide with the estimated average stature for adult males in ancient times, being between 5’4” and 5’7”,\textsuperscript{35} although it should be noted that the Roman army had height requirements above this range.\textsuperscript{36} This comparison of heights from the time of the Roman
Empire to the Peninsular War also confirms Steckel’s hypothesis that medieval men were taller than has been assumed and that heights later declined during the 17th and 18th centuries. Steckel notes that heights of skeletons from the 9th through the 11th centuries averaged about 5’8”.

He argues that “average height measures a population’s history of net nutrition,” and contends that the warm period from AD 900 to 1300 and the benefits to health, nutrition, and height related to the isolation of villages and towns from each other, as noted by anthropometric historians, account for this increase in stature. Steckel then posits that urbanization in pre-industrial Europe, with the resulting increased exposure to disease, poorer diets, and more arduous working conditions, reduced the heights of European men.

By 1600, as Steckel notes, “when the coldest two centuries of the little Ice Age began,” irregular climate change resulted in lower food production: the fluctuations and warmer intervals caused people to continue to use standard agricultural methods, which proved unsatisfactory during the colder stretches. The outcome was a gradual decline in average heights. By the 18th century, heights for adult males had fallen to about 5’5”.

The gradual warming of temperatures, world-wide, at the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th centuries, however, worked to increase agricultural yields and helped contribute to a gradual recovery of height. A combination of factors, dealing with nutrition, a decrease in disease and disease virulence, and smallpox inoculation probably played a concomitant role.

The BSC confirms that heights were, in fact, on the rise by the 19th century: for all enlistees, aged 18 and up, the average height was 66.6 inches or about 5’6½” (Table 15 and Figure 3).
Recruiting regulations stipulated minimum height, minimum and maximum age, and nationality requirements: “none under five feet seven and a half except for growing lads,” and “no Frenchmen or deserters nor any man upwards of twenty five or under fifteen years of age.” The rules go on to specify that “growing lads [are] not to be under five feet five inches, and Certificates of their Age [must be obtained] from the Minister and Churchwardens of the parish they were born in.” Yet another regulation from 1796 stipulates that “all healthy lads under sixteen years of age, who are likely to
grow, may be taken as low as five feet one inch.” Recruiting sergeants were cautioned “not to enlist any man, whose height and Person does not correspond with the above Instructions in every particular, as he will be obliged to the disagreeable necessity of rejecting them.” The BSC evidence, however, illustrates that height and age restrictions were more of a suggestion than a rule. The need for soldiers superseded regulations; almost one man in four did not meet the age requirements, most of these men being too old, while more than one enlistee in five was beneath the height standard (Table 16). A recruiting poster for the 7th Light Dragoons under Lord Paget, dated 1809, confirms that men under the minimums were regularly sought after: the poster encourages lads that they “will be taken at Sixteen Years of Age, 5 Feet 2 inches, but they must be active.”

A Horse Guards’ memorandum from 1808 reveals that of 106 recruits, randomly chosen, 41 were shorter than 5 feet 5 inches. By 1806, the year Lawrence enlisted, the official height restriction had been lowered to 64 inches.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recruits less than 15 years old</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruits more than 25 years old</td>
<td>1,690</td>
<td>23.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruits less than 65 inches tall</td>
<td>1,507</td>
<td>20.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 16: Enlistees not meeting recruiting standards

Lawrence, underage and probably undersized, found his way into the ranks during a year of economic panic. The collapsing economy of 1803, three years before Lawrence enlisted, had been followed by two years of inadequate harvests, resulting in a dramatic rise in food prices. Fears of invasion rose and another bad harvest came on the heels of
the mechanization of the spinning, carding, and weaving industries.\textsuperscript{50} Five industrial textile mills housing about 100 shearing frames had been established in northern England by 1806; within a year, 72 such mills and between 1,000 and 1,400 such frames would be in existence,\textsuperscript{51} signaling another phase of the Industrial Revolution. Of equal importance was Napoleon’s continental blockade system, initiated in 1806. British exports would remain stagnant until 1808, when the combined effects of the French and American embargoes would drive them precipitously lower; exports would rise significantly in 1809 before falling off by 1811-12 due to the ongoing conflict with America, the related loss of American markets, and the tightening of the continental blockade.\textsuperscript{52}

The effect of the French blockade,\textsuperscript{53} coming as it did at the same time as much of the textile industry was making the transition to machines, cannot be underestimated. This confluence of variables created an economic dislocation that resulted in the continuous decline of real wages\textsuperscript{54} and increased unemployment, especially among hand-frame and hand-loom textile workers. In his work on the standard of living in Britain during the Industrial Revolution, Rufus Tucker presents price indices and real wages showing that when wages were considered against the cost of living, British workers suffered worst in 1805-1806.\textsuperscript{55} His numbers on the total diet cost in Oldham during this period reflect the struggle of workers to feed themselves in light of the rising costs of essential foodstuffs.\textsuperscript{56}

Real wages would rebound by the end of 1806, when fears of the effects of the blockade and another bad harvest proved to be exaggerated, but not before having a dislocating effect on urban and rural workers. As Geoffrey Best notes in his work on war and society, the outcome for many was economic misery. “In a country enormously
taxed,” Best argues, “with food dear, subject to common harvest hazards, undergoing a population explosion and all the jumps and jolts of the first industrial revolution at the same time, the results were awful and dramatic. For the work force of textile industries above all, but not for them alone, it meant unemployment, privation, humiliation, and a prospect of starvation.” The government responded to the glut of unemployed workers by increasing the numbers of army recruiting parties operating in Britain from 405 in 1806 to 1,113 a year later.

One further variable possibly affecting army enlistment in 1806 and the years that followed was the demise of the Volunteer force. This movement was an attempt to provide able-bodied citizens with military training and was, at first, an armed response to the events of the French Revolution, particularly the Terror. Originally conceived as a force capable of staving off local political uprisings, the Volunteer movement began drawing men to its ranks as early as 1793; by 1801, 100,000 men were serving.

Its secondary purpose was as a home-guard static defense against invasion, with the Volunteer system pitched to the masses as a kind of middle-class civic-mindedness. In his excellent article on the subject, J. E. Cookson calls it an “outgrowth of counter-revolutionary loyalty.” Training was minimal, far below militia standards, and responsibilities few. The need for such a force to be mobile, however, kept many men of property from participating, as most such men preferred to remain near their homes, farms, and businesses. The poor, naturally, took up the slack. Volunteers were paid for drill time as compensation for any lost wages, and they were made exempt from the militia lottery. The major problem with the Volunteer system was that service was not compulsory or for any specified term, meaning that men could resign at any time. The
effect this had on military discipline can be imagined. The threat of French invasion in 1803-04, however, brought more than 400,000 Volunteer enlistees into the ranks, as fear drove men from a wider social and economic spectrum into service. Vice-Admiral Horatio Nelson’s naval victory at Trafalgar in 1805 over the combined fleets of France and Spain, though, removed the immediate need for such a force. The government, realizing that funding an armed civilian force over which it had little control was less than ideal, allowed the system to fall slowly into disuse. From 1805 to 1807, the corps of Volunteers lost over 25 percent of its strength, and the system was gradually phased out over the remaining years of the war. At least a portion of the 100,000 men who left the Volunteers around 1806 may have found the army a viable option, especially considering the economic stressors at work in that particular year.

The crisis of 1806 was a continuance of the economic downturn and harvest problems that began to erode living standards in the years 1799-1800, the first back-to-back failed harvests of the Napoleonic wars. (The second occurred in 1811-12.) Inflated food prices reduced real wages in 1801 to a level only slightly less devastating than that of the crisis of 1555-57. For the masses, existing mostly on cereal-based diets, the rapid rise in grain prices from 1797 to 1801, when wheat went up 200 percent, barley soared 255 percent, and oats rose 231 percent, set the stage for a decade of fluctuating misery; for many, daily existence often slipped from subsistence to starvation. A four-pound loaf of bread, for example, went from six pence in 1792 to one shilling five pence by 1812. Skyrocketing food prices, increased taxation and unemployment, adverse trade balances, and near-famine conditions substantially, if temporarily, reduced living standards for the majority of British workers. Concomitantly, mortality rates soared through 1804 and
begging reached “monumental proportions,” as Roger Wells points out in his fine work on famine in England during this period. 69 “Desperation,” he suggests, “rather than exploitation, surely underlay the noted increase in belligerent, aggressive begging. Scavenging was seen on unknown scales with ‘children picking Potato pearings on the Dunghill to boil for Food’ at Wolverhampton. Manchurian urchins fought off stray dogs competing for bones thrown from the kitchens of the affluent.”70

Figure 4: Enlistment per year as reflected in the British Soldier Compendium sample
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Enlistments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1790</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1791</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1792</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1793</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1794</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1795</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1796</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1797</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1798</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1799</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1800</td>
<td>419</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1801</td>
<td>236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1802</td>
<td>315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1803</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1804</td>
<td>306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1805</td>
<td>558</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1806</td>
<td>1,097</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1807</td>
<td>468</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1808</td>
<td>315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1809</td>
<td>326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1810</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1811</td>
<td>532</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1812</td>
<td>492</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1813</td>
<td>396</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1814</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1815</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total** 7,250

Table 17: Enlistment per year as reflected in the British Soldier Compendium sample

The other spikes in enlistment (Figure 4 and Table 17) were also driven by economic catalysts. A poor harvest in 1808 in combination with a lack of imports led to rising prices. Working men rallied together to plead for a minimum wage. When none was forthcoming, strikes followed. Moreover, the American embargo against Great Britain, 1807-1809, had a substantial impact. The real value of imported goods from America declined 73.2 percent, from £6.5 million to £1.7 million. Exports to the United States, on the other hand, fell from £11.8 million to £5.2 million during this time, a loss of 56.2 percent. Most of this loss, however, was compensated for by increased exports to non-U.S. ports in the Americas, but the shock to individual industries was still felt. Cotton imports from the United States, crucial to Great Britain’s textile industry, fell from 44 million pounds to a little more than 12 million pounds. In the case of cotton, the difference could not be made up elsewhere. Because of the embargo, cotton imports from British plantations in the New World also fell almost 13 percent. The result was a devastating 32.8 percent loss of textile production. Textile factories were idled and
workers discharged. Added to this already devastating situation, the overall effect of the embargo on other commodity prices in Great Britain was not unsubstantial.\textsuperscript{77}

Two years of adequate harvests followed, in 1809 and 1810, and an industrial boom was spurred by the redistribution of trade to new ports and positive speculation based on the related potential of economic growth. The boom, however, peaked in 1810. When the blockade tightened in summer, goods became difficult to obtain, prices fell, and the boom collapsed. Unemployment on a grand scale followed, and the textile industry was hit especially hard. England experienced a true depression, which was exacerbated by two consecutive harvest failures in 1811 and 1812.

Another disruptive economic force was the introduction of machines on a large scale, especially in the textile industry. These machines were wonderful inventions, representing a real technological breakthrough, but they threw thousands out of work. The new machines became more than tools in the hands of workers; they replaced many workers altogether.\textsuperscript{78} The transition from handmade textile products, produced by thousand of independent knitters, weavers, and spinners, to machine-manufactured goods created on power looms is a complex story too involved to address here.\textsuperscript{79} It suffices to say that as workers lost their jobs, resentment grew.\textsuperscript{80} Those lucky enough to be employed in the mills found the harsh realities of factory work not to their liking.\textsuperscript{81} The work was unhealthy, dangerous, and low paying. Beginning as early as 1803,\textsuperscript{82} there were isolated incidents of people rising together to destroy the machines that took their jobs or made such occupations so ill-paying that life became unbearable. The first hanging related to destroying a mill took place in Salisbury that year.\textsuperscript{83}
The first large-scale riots began in 1811, the result of long years of suffering, declining wages, lost jobs, and hopelessness. Beginning in rural villages, the outbreaks were the manifestations of rioters’ dissatisfaction with their employment situations. Using violence to call attention to their plight, the machine breakers wanted what could not be: a return to the past. Machine breaking soon spread to Nottinghamshire and similar locales with long histories of hand-textile trades. Riots were spontaneous, and they evolved from break-ins to large-scale machine destruction. Owners were naturally outraged and offered rewards, but public sentiment always went with the machine breakers, who became known as Luddites. Machine destruction then spread to cotton mills. The army was soon called in to the three Midland shires of Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire, and Derbyshire to quell the disturbances. The poet Percy Shelley summed up the popular attitude toward such official reaction, lamenting to a friend that “the military are gone to Nottingham—Curses light on them for their motives if they destroy one of its famine wasted inhabitants.”

The presence of troops had little effect on the machine breakers, however, as the nocturnal groups easily evaded the soldiers and continued about their business. It is estimated that between November 1811 and January 1812, approximately two percent of all frames in the Midlands were smashed; about 175 machines a month were destroyed during this three-month period, amounting to about £100,000 of machinery and property damage. Machine breaking would continue throughout the war as the economy fluctuated and automation slowly replaced hand-textile workers.

At just this time, disagreements with the United States surfaced. Problems involving European trade and foreign impressments of American sailors would
eventually lead to war in 1812, resulting in the loss of important New World markets and further depressing Great Britain’s economy. The American Non-Intercourse Act of 1809 was the second of three American efforts to induce Britain and France to alter their policies toward impressments and neutral shipping. The act allowed American ports in the United States to admit ships from every country except Great Britain and France. The act failed to convince England and France that their policies were in error, however, and it was replaced with Macon’s Bill No. 2 in 1810, which banned trade with Britain and France altogether. These acts helped cut British exports a disastrous 33 percent by 1811, down to £26 million; exports to the United States fell to £2 million by that same year.

As Best again summarizes, between Napoleon’s blockade, American troubles resulting in the War of 1812, and the failed harvests, Britain’s merchants “now found supplies of raw materials irregular, stocks piling up unsaleable, and their credit…over extended. 1808 was a bad year, almost disastrous. 1811, after the temporary recovery year 1810, was entirely so.”

The loss of harvests was especially daunting given the increasing population of Britain. Economist B. A. Holderness provides the crucial comparison. He notes that while “broadly speaking, output from English agriculture rather more than doubled between 1750 and 1850,” the population of England and Wales rose approximately 165 percent. Thus, any disruption in agricultural output resulted in a bleak existence for numerous working-class men and women, many of whom were already existing on subsistence diets; fully blown crop failures were catastrophic under any conditions, but for the masses, already living day-to-day with little nutritional margin for error, the outcome was one of nightmarish proportions and forced starvation diets. In his work on the
connections between economic pressures and crime in 18th-century Britain, Douglas Hay notes that in good years about ten percent of the population could not buy enough bread for a whole year (given no other expenditures); in a bad year 20 percent could not purchase enough bread; and in a very hard year, the number rose to 45 percent.91

The consequences of these successive jolts to the British economy are reflected in Poor Law expenditures. While the population had grown an alarming 15 percent during the first decade of the 19th century, Poor Rates rose over four times this amount, increasing 65 percent.92 By 1812, for example, almost 15,000 persons in Nottinghamshire, totaling almost 50 percent of the population, needed economic relief.93 In Liverpool, the Poor Rate doubled to over 15,000 townsfolk; in Bolton, 3,000 of 17,000 inhabitants were in need, but only ten percent of that number received any aid.94 According to Parliamentary returns, of the estimated 200,000 persons living in manufacturing districts, “no less than 50,000 received only the two pence half-penny per day for food.”95 As Patrick O’Brien points out, unemployment statistics are unavailable for this period, but these increases in the numbers of Poor Rate recipients give some idea of the increasing scale of economic need during this time. It is estimated that nearly one million men, women, and children needed poor relief at the peak of military mobilization.96

One major question the British Soldier Compendium was designed to investigate is how economic factors in the United Kingdom at the time of the Napoleonic Wars affected army enlistment. The underlying hypothesis is that as economic conditions worsened, enlistment rates rose. A regression analysis of bread prices and enlistment, the
data drawn from the years 1790 to 1815, reveals the merit of such an argument (Table 18).

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>0.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coefficient of bread prices</td>
<td>38.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence level</td>
<td>greater than 99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard error of estimate</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 18: Regression comparing enlistment and bread prices

The $R^2$ value indicates that 29 percent of the change in enlistment can be explained by changes in bread prices. The coefficient shows that for every one pence rise in bread prices, 39 more men would have enlisted in the army in that year in the BSC sample. This result is statistically significant at a very high level of confidence. The results of this regression must be considered in the context of the BSC sample itself. The BSC contains 7,250 men who constitute a random sample of the army as a whole, which at its peak numbered more than 230,000 men. When considered against the entire army, a prediction of 39 more men joining the army in the BSC sample may mean as many as 1,237 men joined the actual army that year strictly related to a one-pence rise in the cost of a four-pound loaf of bread.

Figure 5 shows the relationship between enlistment and bread prices in graph form. The upward sloping line representing the predicted values of enlistment based on bread prices. Geoffrey Parker points out a similar connection between bread prices and enlistment in the French army during the early 18th century: “In 1710, after the worst winter in a hundred years, men enlisted without even asking for a premium: the price of
bread was so high that the army offered the starving poor one of their few chances for survival.”

When a more sophisticated regression is run, taking into account real wages, imports, and the anomalous economic stressors particular to 1806, an even greater correlation between economics and enlistment becomes clearer (Table 19).

![Figure 5: Graph of enlistment vs. bread prices](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Absolute value of t-statistic</th>
<th>Confidence level for one-tailed t-test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Real wages</td>
<td>-59.9</td>
<td>5.05</td>
<td>greater than 99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imports</td>
<td>-26.2</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>greater than 99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1806 variables</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>greater than 99%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 19: Effects of independent economic factors upon enlistment
An analysis of the coefficients from the regression shows the following:

- When real wages fell by one-hundredth of what they were in 1900, all else being equal, this model estimates that 60 more men would have enlisted that year. This translates to approximately 1,920 more enlistees in the army as a whole. (Data from Tucker.\textsuperscript{101})

- When imports fell by one million pounds per year, all else being equal, this model estimates that 26 more men would have enlisted that year, or approximately 832 more across the entire army. (Data from Gayer et al.\textsuperscript{102})

- When the continental blockade was initiated, the mechanization of the textile industry took hold, and the Volunteer system began disbanding (all in 1806), this model estimates that 231 more men would have enlisted that year, or approximately 7,392 more recruits in the whole army.\textsuperscript{103} (Binary variable.)

The economic stressors used in the regressions indicate hardships as they applied to the lives of everyday British citizens. They are not meant to imply that the war had a long-term negative effect on the British economy. Those industries geared toward the war effort prospered, particularly copper mining and production, gun making, and shipbuilding and related dock work. On the other hand, coal mining, brick making, iron making, hardware and plate goods manufacturing, and glass making bore the brunt of curtailed trade and increased duties; these industries experienced limited growth, if any. The building industry was also depressed as a result of taxes on houses (house, window, income, and local rates) and taxes on building materials.\textsuperscript{104} The textiles industry, though, more than any other, was hardest hit by the combination of war and industrial transition.
Wages collapsed and unemployment soared. Three examples illustrate this effect:

Weekly wages for hand weavers in Bolton were around 25 shillings a week in 1805; by 1809 weekly wages had fallen to 16 shillings. In 1812, they were down to 14 shillings.\textsuperscript{105}

Similar losses in earning power occurred at Stockport, where wages for weaving 24 square yards of cambric crumbled, dropping from 25 shillings in 1802 to 10 shillings in 1811.\textsuperscript{106} Likewise, wages for hand-loom weavers fell from 1 shilling 4 pence a day in 1802 to 8 pence in 1806 and 7 pence by 1807,\textsuperscript{107} a loss of 56 percent by the latter year.

Frank Darvall contributes data showing that weavers who once made 31 shillings had to be content with 10 shillings for a six-day week by 1812. He also notes that potatoes and oatmeal became the only dietary staples that many such men could afford,\textsuperscript{108} as bread prices ran 1 shilling 5 pence to 1 shilling 8 pence for a four-pound loaf.\textsuperscript{109}

Although unemployment data are unavailable for this period, the effect of falling wages and loss of occupational opportunities on weavers can be ascertained by noting that the weaving profession constituted the number one occupation in the BSC, other than laborer, nearly triple the number of the next occupation (shoemaker).\textsuperscript{110} For the year Lawrence enlisted, the number of textile workers nearly equaled that of laborers, making up a third of all listed occupations and more than all other professions combined (Table 20). For the entire BSC sample, 28.3 percent of soldiers listed the textile profession as their previous occupation.\textsuperscript{111} It is worth noting that 98.9 percent of 1806 enlistees listed a definable occupation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of trade</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laborers</td>
<td>418</td>
<td>38.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textile workers</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>33.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other professions</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>27.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>1,097</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 20: Distribution of trades in 1806 sample**

The overall long-term effect of the war was, nevertheless, positive, as Britain’s industrial lead over its European rivals was increased.\(^\text{112}\) Still, the economic fluctuations caused by the episodic, punctuated equilibrium progress of the Industrial Revolution in conjunction with war-related economic variables hit hardest the people on the lower end of the socioeconomic continuum, the unskilled workers and their families. Asa Briggs, addressing the impact of the war on the working masses, comes to a similar conclusion. “The continuity of working class discontent,” he writes, “suggests that changes in the industrial structure of the country and fluctuations in the means of livelihood were more important than the war itself in stirring both hand and machine workers.”\(^\text{113}\) The same factors that caused the “stirring” among workers also affected their need and willingness to enlist.

Rural and urban manual laborers, unemployed textile workers, and even tradesmen such as shoemakers, smiths, and carpenters found the downturns difficult to weather.\(^\text{114}\) For many men, unable to make adjustments or find a new employment situation, the army provided an option during what Flinn terms “short-term crisis peaks.”\(^\text{115}\) Again, the BSC provides insight. A comparison of enlistment during specific years in which such peaks were prominent with years in which the economic indices were positive illustrates that a
higher percentage of recruits listing an occupation other than laborer chose the army over penury, emigration, or crime in difficult years. These were men with real professional skills and experience. Moreover, such men were most likely older than the average enlistee, with a higher percentage being over 30 years of age (Tables 21 and 22). The idea that men of such skill and experience found their daily lives so untenable that army enlistment proved the most compelling alternative goes a long way toward dispelling the myth of the British soldier as a perpetually unemployed and unemployable rogue or street scum whisked from jails into the armed services.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of enlistees</th>
<th>Percent of enlistees with a profession other than laborer</th>
<th>Maximum age of enlistees</th>
<th>Percent of enlistees age 30 and older</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1800</td>
<td>419</td>
<td>67.8</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1806</td>
<td>1,097</td>
<td>60.8</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>13.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1812</td>
<td>492</td>
<td>59.1</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>12.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 21: Characteristics of enlistees in poor economic years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of enlistees</th>
<th>Percent of enlistees with a profession other than laborer</th>
<th>Maximum age of enlistees</th>
<th>Percent of enlistees age 30 and older</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1803</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>39.8</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1810</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>41.6</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1813</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>56.8</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 22: Characteristics of enlistees in good economic years
During the 18th and 19th centuries, seasonal unemployment was the norm for agricultural laborers and many other workers. It was the disruption in these seasonal patterns that drove many people from various levels of marginal existence to abject poverty. As previously noted, however, the lack of hard data on unemployment makes precise analysis difficult. As Flinn states, “Changes in the levels of unemployment and under-employment are probably doomed to remain among the imponderables of this problem.”

BSC regressions, however, illustrate that the sequence of economic variables outlined above did negatively impact seasonal employment, forcing men to choose between army enlistment and extreme poverty. Fred Anderson, in his work on the British army and society in provincial Massachusetts, is one of the few historians to recognize that British enlistment was often directly tied to economic conditions. Writing on the army of the late 18th century, Anderson argues that army ranks were filled with “people cast adrift by enclosure and industrialization: farmers and laborers from depressed rural areas, artisans whose skills were obsolescent, and other poor but respectable folk whose positions in society had been eroded in an era of rapid economic change. For such men military service offered an alternative to a bleak proletarian life—or even starvation.”

The BSC sample also provides data regarding the type of trades previously practiced by army enlistees as well as the numbers of men without an occupation. The number for the latter is remarkably small, given the pejorative descriptions by which the British soldier is usually, if unfairly, remembered. Less than three percent of enlistees did not provide a previous occupation (Tables 23 and 24), with the Irish making up the largest national segment; just over half of those without a previous trade came from
Ireland (Table 24). Of the soldiers joining from Great Britain, the Irish are half again more likely to lack a trade compared with English and Scottish recruits; just under five percent of Irish soldiers fell into the “no trade” category (Table 27). Excluding foreigners, the Irish also have the highest percentage of laborers, at almost 46 percent, reflecting the lack of industrialization in Ireland (Table 27). In choosing laborer as his previous profession, Lawrence fell into the largest single segment of enlistee population, that being men from England professing such a trade (Tables 25 and 26).118 This trade was the most prevalent across all branches of service (Table 28); the profession of laborer was more than twice as common as that of weaver, the next most frequently recorded occupation. (Table 29) It is interesting that almost one man in five was a weaver, and more than one in twenty was a shoemaker119 (Table 29). The BSC supports arguments put forth by Arthur Gilbert, who posits that “the recruiting records examined show that during wartime the army did attract men who had identifiable trades, men who had a vocation, but who…could not make a go of it.”120

The reliability of the process by which enlistees communicated the name of their occupation prior to joining the army is, naturally, a bit suspect. Revealing such information could be construed as intrusive or embarrassing by men who had experienced little occupational success. Thus it might be expected that some of these men, when pressed by the recruiting sergeant to give an occupation, may have exaggerated or falsified their occupation. This certainly applies to laborer, which may have been the default choice of men too ashamed to admit they had held no significant employment during their lifetimes. In addition, men who had achieved success as blacksmiths, schoolmasters, or tinsmiths may have been hesitant to admit that economics or
circumstances had caused them to become unemployed. Nevertheless, the total numbers and varieties of professions listed in the BSC, accounting for 230 separate occupations, in conjunction with the number of men who replied “none” when asked for their trade, lends a certain credibility to the sample. Given that no other data exist for this topic, the information in the BSC sample will be assumed to be a fairly accurate representation of army recruits during this time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trade/Country</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Irish</th>
<th>Scottish</th>
<th>Foreign</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No trade</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definable trade</td>
<td>3,773</td>
<td>2,047</td>
<td>1,111</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>7,055</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3,827</td>
<td>2,145</td>
<td>1,145</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>7,250</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 23: Men with no trade across countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trade/Country</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Irish</th>
<th>Scottish</th>
<th>Foreign</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No trade</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definable trade</td>
<td>52.0</td>
<td>28.2</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>97.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>52.7</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 24: Men with no trade across countries as percent of whole sample

121
122
123
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Trade/Country</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Irish</th>
<th>Scottish</th>
<th>Foreign</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Laborers</td>
<td>1,480</td>
<td>983</td>
<td>412</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>2,943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textile workers</td>
<td>1,044</td>
<td>593</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2,051</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other professions</td>
<td>1,249</td>
<td>471</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>2,061</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3,773</td>
<td>2,047</td>
<td>1,111</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>7,055</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 25: Trades across countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Trade/Country</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Irish</th>
<th>Scottish</th>
<th>Foreign</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Laborers</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>40.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textile workers</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>28.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other professions</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>28.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>52.0</td>
<td>28.2</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>97.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 26: Trades across countries as percent of whole sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Trade/Country</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Irish</th>
<th>Scottish</th>
<th>Foreign</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Laborers</td>
<td>38.7</td>
<td>45.8</td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>51.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textile workers</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>35.1</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other professions</td>
<td>32.6</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>33.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous trade (subtotal)</td>
<td>98.6</td>
<td>95.4</td>
<td>97.0</td>
<td>93.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No trade</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 27: Trades across countries as percent of each country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Trade/Branch</th>
<th>Artillery</th>
<th>Cavalry</th>
<th>Infantry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Laborers</td>
<td>37.6</td>
<td>46.5</td>
<td>40.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textile workers</td>
<td>33.1</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>26.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other professions</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>30.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>98.5</td>
<td>99.5</td>
<td>96.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 28: Trades across branches as percent of branch
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trade</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent of BSC sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Laborer</td>
<td>2943</td>
<td>40.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weaver</td>
<td>1307</td>
<td>18.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoemaker</td>
<td>377</td>
<td>5.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tailor</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>3.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>2.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smith</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpenter</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>1.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Servant</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>1.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spinner</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>1.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baker</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 29: Ten most frequently listed trades in the BSC

An analysis of monthly enlistments reveals a correlation to seasonal employment, a pattern similar to that presented by Andre Corvisier in his work on French soldiers of the late 17th century. Both Corvisier’s findings and the BSC data show increased recruitment during winter months, when little agricultural work was available, and declining enlistment during planting and harvesting seasons. The French army under Louis XIV recruited primarily when the army was in winter quarters, while the British army campaigned and recruited year round in the Peninsular War. Nevertheless, seasonal variables related to agricultural employment no doubt played a role in recruitment for both armies. This is important, considering that more than 40 percent of army enlistees in the BSC listed laborer as their trade (Table 26), but only 0.2 percent (21 recruits) listed farmer as their occupation. Since approximately 35 percent of workers were agricultural laborers during this period, it might be assumed that the BSC sample would reflect this proportion. While the data do not allow us to distinguish rural laborers from their urban counterparts, it is possible to surmise that the vast majority of those men
who told the recruiting sergeant that they were laborers were rural agricultural laborers; thus, perhaps as much as 80 to 90 percent of the laborers in the BSC may fall into this category. Corvisier shows that from 1753-1763, between 61 and 73 percent of French soldiers were from small, rural villages, a figure that would produce numbers of agricultural workers in line BSC estimates for farm-related occupations. Scott’s figures for French soldiers in 1793 corroborate Corvisier’s numbers, with almost 64 percent of the men coming from villages with populations less than 2,000 inhabitants. Using the numbers from three French provinces for the year 1793, Bertaud presents similar findings: approximately 63 to 68 percent of recruits were peasants, with half of them being agricultural employees, servants, or day workers.

The graph in Figure 6 shows that laborer enlistment rates remain low and fairly constant for summer months, not rising until the end of harvesting season in November. This confirms the concept that a large portion of the enlistees were dependent on agricultural work. The enlistment rates for laborers certainly mirrors the entire BSC sample and appear to help skew the graph toward the displayed seasonal enlistment peaks and valleys.
Lawrence was not a rural agricultural laborer, and his enlistment was not related to a dependence on seasonal work. Whether or not his situation was directly or indirectly related to the economic stressors at work in 1806 is open to debate. What is certain from his account is that he could find no suitable employment other than his apprenticeship. For him, like so many other men that year, the army seemed the only practicable alternative. Lawrence never mentions patriotism, ideals, or any other abstraction as the motivation behind his choice. The driving force behind his enlistment was simple economics, to which a dash of potential adventure likely played a role. Even at the tender age of fifteen, the thought of life outside the county parish in which he had lived his entire life offered a glimmer of hope and more promise than returning to a situation he
detested, one that provided the potential of financial remuneration only after six more years of labor as an apprentice.

Lawrence would have found little succor in the British system of poor relief. It was a patchwork of stop-gap measures stitched together across the centuries. The Poor Laws laid most of the responsibility of looking after the poor on local (parish) governments, and two principles guided all relief: relief should never be generous, and it should never be too easy to accept. Efforts to improve local conditions and encourage the needy to somehow rise above their troubles and remove themselves from the poor rolls included forcibly resettling them back to the parishes of their birth, “badging the poor” (making them wear two-letter badges designating the first initial of their parish and a “P” for poor), renting local houses where the penniless could be housed, supervised, and made to work, and instituting “outdoor relief” in the form of agricultural labor. The Poor Relief Act of 1782 also authorized groups of parishes to set up common workhouses for indigents. Able-bodied adults were ineligible, however. Perhaps the most useful of the Poor Laws was the Speenhamland system authorized by the Poor Relief Act of 1795. This initiative, again aimed at the local level, endeavored to supplement the wages of the poor, force local business owners to hire the needy, or, as a last resort, put the destitute on the public payroll doing roadwork or hauling gravel. None of the Poor Laws were intended to deal with emergency relief on the scale needed during the first decade of the 19th century; that they failed to make any substantial impact on the plight of the countless poor is not surprising.

Given this system of assistance, enlistment into the army offered a less demeaning variety of economic relief, though most men and their families viewed enlistment as a
desperate measure. The army was a thoroughly unpopular institution among all the
classes, and service therein was viewed as anything but desirable. For the propertied,
wealthy, and powerful, the army was an unpleasant reminder of the parliamentary threat
it posed: memories of Charles I and II, Cromwell, and James II remained fresh.

The typical commoner also had no love of the army, as it was seen as the tool of a
repressive government. Utilized as a surrogate constabulary force, the army protected
property and limited dissent among the disadvantaged. Its use in stemming the urban and
rural food uprisings beginning in 1800, the part it played in quelling the numerous
machine breaking incidents and rallies during the Luddite Rebellion (beginning in 1811),
and its later role in the Peterloo massacre of 1819 well illustrate just why the army was
resented by the people. More troops, for example, about 12,000 men, were used for
Luddite repression in 1811-12 than sailed for Portugal with Wellington in 1808 (about
9,000 men). The Riot Act of 1715 permitted the use of military force against crowds
that refused to disperse, and local magistrates were not hesitant to put the act to use. The
Irish, for obvious reasons, had even less affection for the British army and the
government it embodied.

Moreover, army life offered little in the way of enticements. For the common
soldier, army pay was low: one shilling a day minus deductions. Comforts were also
nonexistent, advancement potential limited, and the discipline harsh. Enlistment, at least
until 1806, was for life, which meant that an enlistee was accepting a lifetime of misery
with little hope of reprieve. As in Lawrence’s situation, enlistment was often the last
option for many men. The term “gone for a soldier” remained a mother’s or wife’s
lament, a short grief-tinged phrase describing the whereabouts of a son or husband likely lost forever.

Yet despite these failings, the army remained a viable alternative during hard times and bad harvests. It continued to be viewed as an option, in part, because of the promise of employment, but mostly due to the bounties used to entice men into taking the king’s shilling. The size of the bounty fluctuated with the economy, inversely mirroring living standards; the emolument ranged from two guineas in times of plenty to £12 in 1805 to a high of £23 17 shillings 6 pence by 1812.

To men facing continuing unemployment and unending want, any chance was better than none, and the size of the bounties was not an insignificant factor in their decision-making processes. This is especially apparent when the bounties are compared with typical weekly wages (Table 30). Wages varied, of course, by profession, time, and locale.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Weekly wages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural worker</td>
<td>8-10 shillings, 12 shillings by 1812</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silk worker</td>
<td>12 shillings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knitter</td>
<td>14 shillings or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clay digger</td>
<td>15 shillings (six days’ labor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpenters, masons, bricklayers, and plasterers in England</td>
<td>18-30 shillings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpenters, masons, bricklayers, and plasterers in Scotland and Ireland</td>
<td>15-18 shillings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printer in Scotland</td>
<td>20 shillings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hand weaver in Bolton or Lancashire</td>
<td>25 shillings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dockyard worker</td>
<td>28 shillings (six days’ labor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine-work hand spinner</td>
<td>18-44 shillings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 30: Weekly wages for common professions
it must be kept in mind, though, that the number of workers earning these wages was limited; finding work was the problem. to a man unemployed, down on his luck and with no money in his pocket, the £12 to £23 enlistment bounty must have seemed a fortune. for an unskilled laborer, agricultural or otherwise, such sums constituted anywhere from half a year’s to almost a year’s wages. even to a man with building-trade skills, the bounty equaled three to six months’ earnings.

it was in the environment of economic depression and hopelessness that the army recruiting officer plied his trade. recruiting parties, led at times by officers and on other occasions by sergeants, would frequent street corners and public houses, making their presence known. dressed in new uniforms sometimes fitted with more-than-regulation amounts of braiding and ribbons, the party was a striking sight to the unemployed and the near-starving inhabitants of whatever town through which the party paraded. charles o’neil, later of the 28th foot, recalled just how recruiting parties were perceived in ireland:

the sight of so many well-dressed soldiers presented strong inducements to the ragged, half-clad children of poor unfortunate ireland, to leave her shores at least for a season. then there was the hope of returning with a pension….these inducements carried desolation to many a home, but they filled our ranks.\textsuperscript{154}

those areas hardest hit by economic distress, such as manchester where by 1809 only nine of 84 cotton mills were in full operation, were prime targets for recruiting parties. “twenty thousand people are there [in manchester] said to be out of employ” read an article in the newcastle chronicle, “but recruiting sergeants stand ready day and night to offer them ‘ready pay and good quarters.’”\textsuperscript{155} william rowbottom, from oldham, left a wealth of information in his diaries about his district and its reaction to
war. He noted a “universal pant for glory” accompanied by stark economic distress as the reasons weavers enlisted. A commentary in *The Times* of London supports this position: “Men enter as substitutes in the militia, or as recruits in the Line, because they want employment.”

John Macfarlane, a weaver and son of a weaver, enlisted in 1807 because of unhappiness with his job and home. He described the presence of eager recruiters this way: “There was a great demand for the army. Drums and fifes were heard on every street in Glasgow. If a person was walking on the street or looking in through a window, you would not be there long till there was a soldier asking you to enlist.”

A Scottish recruiting sergeant corroborates the need to single out prospective recruits, but goes on to add a bit of sophistication to his method: “Set a Glasgow man, and a Glasgow weaver to that [recruiting] to lure recruits out of Glasgow mills.”

In those districts less economically depressed, the recruiting parties resorted to various methods of persuasion, most involving drink and false promises. A recruiting sergeant for the Royal Artillery, for example, plied Alexander Alexander in 1801 with numerous reasons to enlist:

> We [the Royal Artillery] have superior pay, superior clothing, little marching, always riding with the guns on expedition, &c. Then you always have marching money, no musket or kit to carry, just a sword such as you see the party wear. Besides there is no flogging in the Royal Artillery, but every encouragement is held out for young men of every description, and much more to such fine-spirited, well-educated, young fellows as you.

The sergeant then went on to promise that Alexander “would be a sergeant in six months, and an officer in a year or two at the very farthest.” Alexander took the man at his word and enlisted for life. He soon discovered that he had been sold a bill of goods and that army life was nothing as promised:
The first man I saw punished [flogged] my heart was like to burst. It was with difficulty I could restrain my tears, as the thought broke upon me of what I had brought myself to. Indeed, my spirits sunk from that day, and all hopes of bettering my condition in life fled forever. I had hitherto only seen the pomp of war—the gloss and glitter of the army; now I was introduced into the arcana of its origination, and under the direct influence of its stern economy. I felt how much I had been deceived.\textsuperscript{162}

When military spectacle and promises failed, recruiters resorted to less subtle means. One recruiting sergeant, Joseph Donaldson of the 94\textsuperscript{th}, was a Scotsman and an expert at his trade. He explained his approach to dealing with potential recruits:

Your last recourse was to get him drunk, and then slip a shilling in his pocket, get him home to your billet, and next morning swear he enlisted, bring all your party to prove it, get him persuaded to pass the doctor. Should he pass, you must try every means in your power to get him to drink [again], blow him up with a fine story, get him inveigled to the magistrates, in some shape or another, and get him attested; by no means let him out of your hands.\textsuperscript{163}

This same sergeant also took the time to explain his technique for dealing with men of different professions. While possibly exaggerated for effect, the sergeant’s words appear to reflect his acquired experience in dealing with potential recruits:

You could scarcely ever catch a weaver contented. They are always complaining. Ask him how a clever handsome-looking fellow like him could waste his time hanging see-saw between heaven and earth in a damp unwholesome shop, when he could be breathing the pure air of heaven and have little or nothing to do if he enlisted for a soldier. Ploughboys had to be hooked in a different way. When you got into conversation with them, tell how many recruits had been made sergeants, when they enlisted—how many were now officers. If you saw an officer pass while you were speaking, no matter whether you knew him or not, tell him he was only a recruit a year ago; but now he’s so proud he won’t speak to you. If this won’t do, don’t give up the chase—keep after him—tell him that in the place your gallant honourable regiment is lying, everything may be had for almost nothing. As you find him to have the stomach, strengthen the dose, and he must be overcome at last. You must keep him drinking—don’t let him go to the door without one of your party with him, until he is passed the doctor and attested….To be sure, some of the sentimental chaps might despise all this: but they were the easiest caught of all. You had only to get into heroics, and spout a good deal about glory…deathless fame…and all that and you had him as safe as a mouse in a trap!\textsuperscript{164}
The enterprising Duke of Gordon used his family and the beauty of his wife to lure recruits into the ranks in the late 1790s. Accompanied by bagpipes, his daughters would dance a reel for any man who joined the newly formed Gordon Highlanders (79th Foot). It was, however, the Duke’s wife, Bonnie Jean, who sealed the deal by placing the king’s shilling between her lips and offering it with a kiss to any man who would take the shilling and enlist.\textsuperscript{165}

Still, despite the financial lure of the bounty and all the machinations of recruiting parties, recruitment remained a problem. The demand for men always exceeded supply. Losses due to disease, battle, and desertion never fell below 16,000 men a year, reaching a peak of over 25,000 soldiers in 1812.\textsuperscript{166} Casualties during the Napoleonic Wars totaled approximately 225,000, or an average of about 20,500 men a year,\textsuperscript{167} when army size averaged about 144,000 men and the navy about 64,000.\textsuperscript{168} This total of more than 200,000 killed makes a higher ratio of killed per number serving than was the case in the First World War.\textsuperscript{169} Conversely, yearly enlistment numbers never exceeded much more than 15,000 men, with the lowest total being just over 7,300 in the short-lived economic boom year of 1810.\textsuperscript{170} The government considered a number of improvements to the army to encourage enlistment, but as Best notes, the only practical solution not attempted was to make “military life less forbidding and impoverishing.”\textsuperscript{171}

In an attempt to fill the ranks, a kind of conscription for limited, local duty was created. A series of militia acts in 1761, 1768 and 1802 effectively transformed the militia from a pseudo-constabulary and national home defense force into a functioning reserve for the regular army. A further series of militia acts between 1808 and 1812 made militia service compulsory for all men between 18 and 30 years of age.\textsuperscript{172}
It has been suggested that the quality of the English soldier improved dramatically when, in 1805 and thereafter, men were allowed to volunteer directly into regular army line units from the militia. The reasoning is that men from all walks of life and economic levels were drafted into the militia, and so a wider range of individuals, socioeconomically, educationally, and occupationally, should have entered the army from the militia. There are two fundamental flaws in this “upgrade” argument. First, as has been shown, the British rankers were not the dregs of society as has so often been asserted. Their average age and occupational backgrounds reveal a picture of decent and fairly young men, driven into the army because of economic circumstances. They were not criminals and thugs plucked from the streets and jails. Thus, while the militia theoretically drew on the entire spectrum of British males, the difference between the army regulars and those men who constituted the civilian sector was not as great as has been believed.

The second, and more telling, problem with the idea that the militia brought a better caliber of individual into the service relates to the allowed practice of substitution. A clause in each militia act permitted men being drafted into the militia to send a substitute in their place. Militia bounties were offered that usually exceeded the enticements to join line units. The cost to secure a replacement averaged £20-30, and in some districts it rose to the princely sum of £60. The substitutes who accepted these bounties came, naturally, from the disadvantaged classes, the same stratum of mostly poor and unemployed men who under only slightly different circumstances would have considered service in line units a viable alternative to civilian life. As John Fortescue points out, it was the substitutes who composed the militia, not the drafted men. In Bute in 1804, for
example, not a single balloted man entered the militia ranks; all were substitutes.\textsuperscript{176} The Middlesex militia, likewise, filled its 1803 quota with 4,499 substitutes and one originally drafted man. When the drafted man’s time expired in 1810, as Fortescue humorously recalls, “the Lord Lieutenant begged to be allowed to keep him as a curiosity.”\textsuperscript{177} The ballot for the year 1807 illustrates the widespread nature of substitution: for all of England only 3,129 principals were raised from a draft of 26,085 men, or a little more than 12 percent.\textsuperscript{178} All the rest were replacements. It is from such numbers that Fortescue concludes that “these substitutes were precisely the men, who but for the heavy bounty which they gain from serving comfortably at home, would gladly have enlisted in the army.”\textsuperscript{179} Thus it can safely be said that the influx of men from the militia into line units after 1805 had a negligible effect on the overall quality of the soldiers in the regular army.

Even allowing militiamen to transfer to line units did little to ameliorate the recruiting situation, and shortages remained an ever-present problem. Crimps, or middlemen in the recruiting process, soon rose to importance, especially during times when the economy improved and recruiting was hardest. The recruiting sergeants would pay the crimps a fee, and in return, the crimps would hand over a certain number of recruits. The crimps were often unscrupulous characters who shanghaied men by whatever means necessary, including knocking men unconscious or helping them drink their way into a similar state. Though similar to naval press gangs, the crimps did not have the legal authority to abduct and hold men; this legal obstacle, however, did little to inhibit crimps from procuring men for the army. Further pressing the legal boundaries, crimps sometimes worked deals to have men released from local jails; the men would be
shepherded directly to recruiting sergeants and into the army with little heed paid to the men’s wishes. Some crimps instructed men in the art of desertion and reenlistment, thereby increasing the profit margin for both, but exposing only the recruit to the threat of death should he be caught in the act. The crimps prospered even after Parliament passed the recruiting bill of 1796, which organized recruiting and assigned quotas to counties.180

It is here that the myth of the British recruit as criminal may have originated, as crimps did funnel a small number of men from local jails into the service. As a point of fact, the men released from prison and allowed to join the army were mostly jailed as debtors and had not been convicted of serious crimes, as Gilbert points out.181 Roger Buckley, in his study of the British army in the West Indies, argues against the accepted British-recruit-as-criminal supposition, noting that not a single study supporting this concept exists for the period in question (1792-1815).182 Historians often allude to the criminal background of the British ranker but rarely produce supporting evidence, perhaps, because as Buckley states, it does not exist. As has been shown in the previous chapter, the majority of historical assessments regarding the British soldier, his character, and his background have their origins in Wellington’s unfortunate remarks. The most substantial, if thin, proof offered against the soldier is provided by Philip Haythornthwaite. Citing the Edinburgh Evening Courant of 13 April 1812, he outlines a reference from 14 years earlier mentioning a published list of men “convicted before magistrates of the county of Cork, of being idle and disorderly persons, and ordered to serve in the army or navy.”183 This is hardly convincing evidence, for even if true, those released from jail were often characterized as “idle and disorderly,” the catch phrase for the unemployed masses. And while being unemployed brought with it a certain stigma
during the period, it is grossly unfair to apply the label of *criminal* to men who could not find work. The 18\textsuperscript{th} - and 19\textsuperscript{th}-century sensibilities of the English landed gentry and aristocracy toward debtors and the unemployed should not color 21\textsuperscript{st}-century analysis.

Buckley contends that such portrayals are inaccurate and demonstrates that convicted criminals and deserters were only accepted into the penal corps, the Royal West Indian Rangers (established in 1806) and the Royal York Rangers (1808), which were formed with drafts from the Royal African Corps\textsuperscript{184} and transported to India, West Africa, or, as was most often the case, the West Indies.\textsuperscript{185} He provides evidence that magistrates had the statutory authority to pardon criminals and paupers only if they would serve in the West Indies,\textsuperscript{186} a strategically important theater but, due to yellow fever, malaria, dengue, dysentery, and other diseases, a frequently lethal environment for soldiers sent to serve there. Of the 80,000 soldiers sent to the West Indies between 1793 and 1798, 40,000 men died.\textsuperscript{187} Data from 1793-1815 show an astounding 424,000 casualties, including 75,000 deaths.\textsuperscript{188}

Given the lack of evidence of the criminal backgrounds of British recruits, excepting the penal corps described above, Buckley asserts “that the army [on the continent] was maintained primarily with men untainted by crime.”\textsuperscript{189} He makes a special note to praise Silvia Frey for being one of the few scholars who has gone against the grain and questioned the evidence underlying the criminal background theory. Buckley cites Frey’s summation that “it is a misconception to suppose that such men [convicted criminals, highway robbers, thieves, smugglers, and rogues] were a majority in the British army.”\textsuperscript{190} Gilbert, on whose limited demographic work Frey based her argument, took the first position against the widely accepted characterization of the soldiers’
backgrounds. Referring to Middlesex enlistment records, he concludes: “These figures do suggest that when the army expanded during wartime, this was not accomplished simply by sweeping the jails and that when rewards of a reasonably attractive kind were offered workers would enlist.”\textsuperscript{191} Gilbert goes on to state that “a closer examination of the eighteenth century is in order, one that calls for close empirical work rather than simply accepting the comments of those whose views were coloured by the prejudices of the time.”\textsuperscript{192}

It is important to provide a context against which the label \textit{criminal} and the nature of crime in England 200 years ago can be properly considered. This is especially pertinent given the fact that the penal corps was derived from released felons and pretrial felons and that a small number of men who had committed misdemeanors were led by crimps from jails directly into the army. Much of the collective memory of the British ranker as criminal is founded in large part on this system of filling the ranks of penal battalions and the actions of crimps who supplied the army with an extremely limited number of men released from local prisons. This memory has been transformed, as most memories are, into something not in line with original events. The relationship between economic hardship and enlistment has become enmeshed with the collateral but separate issue of crime and economic stressors to form a single composite memory of the enlistee swept from jail directly into the service. An understanding of the British legal code and the relationship between crime and economic distress provides insight into what constituted crime in Great Britain during the Napoleonic period, how British society dealt with those who broke the law, and how the misperception of the soldier as criminal originated.
From the 17th century onward, the propertied classes of Great Britain caused to be enacted a plethora of capital crimes statutes, the vast majority of them related to crimes against property. This collection of crimes became known as the Bloody Code, and it was this code that underlay the English system of criminal law from 1688 to 1815. Under this code, there were 225 offenses that brought capital punishment, crimes such as sheep stealing, pick-pocketing more than a shilling, cutting down trees in an avenue, or maiming cattle. Even children could be hanged or transported for small thefts. The result was a steady increase in the number of convicted men and a rise in prison populations.

The rising crime rate in Great Britain during the late 18th and early 19th centuries, though, was directly related to economic hardship: as real wages fell and employment opportunities vanished, people stole to survive. While population increases must be considered when analyzing crime rates, Douglas Hay’s work in Staffordshire from 1800 to 1803 shows that spikes in prosecutions for theft were undoubtedly driven by economic pressures. Hay contends that “petty thefts were committed in dearth by people who were not committing them before, or that those who had done so were obliged to increase the frequency with which they stole because of the higher price of food.” Hay goes on to argue that evidence for these crimes shows that they were committed by families or individuals without planning and “for very small amounts of property, even food.” Thus, their increase during hard times makes sense. Other serious offenses, such as highway robbery and assault showed little fluctuation, being “insensitive to price changes.” These crimes “were often the work of men and women who committed such crimes with regularity, and who were exempt from the pressing concerns of the
necessitous poor.” J. M. Beattie supports this hypothesis by correlating patterns of prosecutions across time with the Schumpter-Gilboy Price Index. He argues that the correspondence between prosecution rates and increases in crime are tied to “fluctuations in the changing price of food and in other indicators of economic wellbeing.”

Robert Stewart, Lord Castlereagh, the Secretary of War under William Pitt and later the Foreign Secretary under Lord Liverpool, addressed the connection between dearth and crime rates. Speaking on the two types of crime as he saw them, crimes of “deep moral depravity” (such as murder, manslaughter, and rape) and crimes of property, Castlereagh noted that during the period of 1810-1818, the first did not rise, while the second did. “The causes of this undisputed rise in the incidence against property,” he argued, “were purely economic and transitory; more than half of all persons committed for trial in 1818 in England and Wales came from Lancaster, Warwick, York, Middlesex, and Surrey, notoriously the most populous and manufacturing districts in the kingdom.”

Such crimes of property increased during the winter, as fuel and shelter needs increased at the very time that seasonal employment dried up. Thus many of the “idle and disorderly” culled from the jails by crimps, and, it is to be supposed, a great many of the pretrial felons released by magistrates to serve in the penal corps, were men who were driven by such economic pressures to commit property crimes. Felonies, it must be remembered, included theft of wood, vegetables, fruits, and clothing.

Stephen Nicholas and Richard Steckel note that historians have by and large rejected the concept of a separate, underground criminal class existing during the 19th century. Citing works by George Rude and David Jones, Nicholas and Steckel make
a convincing summary of crimes and those who committed them during the late 18th and early 19th centuries: “These studies argue that the great majority of crime was committed by ordinary men who worked jobs…but who also stole articles on occasion. Though not ‘honest men,’ the convicts were employed people who supplemented their income by theft in times of stress.”

Rude’s superb work on crime in Sussex, Gloucester, and London during the 19th century confirms the relationship between economic downturns, the types of crime they engendered, and the people who committed criminal offenses. In Sussex, the most frequently stolen item was food, with clothing being the next most popular choice. In Gloucester, money or valuables were the most selected items, with clothing and food rounding out the top three items. Further data from Surrey and Southwark and the rural parishes outside Surrey corroborate Rude’s findings. In Surrey, clothes were stolen most often, with food being the second most pilfered item; these categories were reversed in the rural areas of Surrey. In Southwark, clothing, followed by household goods, worked metal, and food, constituted the stolen items of choice.

As Rude points out, this gives us “some preliminary idea of prisoners’ priorities.” He calls these offenses “survival crimes” and argues “that such crimes tended to respond directly to short-term economic factors such as a rise in prices, or a fall in wages whereas the more serious and more violent crimes, or those most susceptible to capital punishment, were not so responsive to economic motivation.” Rude noted that 75 to 80 percent of all the crimes in Sussex and Gloucester, right up through 1850, fell under the category of larceny. As his data show, it was not difficult to acquire the label of criminal: Of the 2,000 people tried in Sussex and Gloucester between 1805 and 1850,
70 percent committed to trial were found guilty. As to the types of people committing crimes, George Rude found that 89.2 percent of convicted criminals in Sussex from 1805 to 1850 were laborers and servants. For Gloucester it was 69.2 percent, and for London in 1810 it was 32.5 percent.

One further crime-related occurrence may have adversely affected perceptions of the British ranker as criminal, adding the final touch to the criminal stigma associated with soldiering. Crime levels dropped when men went to war, while indictments, particularly for theft, rose during the first years following peace. These patterns created general expectations that peace meant increased crime and that war caused crime rates to diminish. It was assumed that the logical culprits responsible for the change in crime rates were the men who enlisted. This natural, if skewed, perception was enhanced when crime rates jumped following the discharge of large numbers of soldiers back into civilian life. That the men who enlisted because they could find no employment came home by the hundreds of thousands to find the bleakest possible employment situation seems not to have been incorporated into public memory. With no means to support themselves, many of the men turned to begging and crime, as did many civilians in the depressed economic times following the war. Over 300,000 soldiers and sailors were released in 1815, flooding an already precarious economy with surplus laborers. As H. V. Bowen notes, “Not only did this represent somewhere between 1 and 3 percent of the entire population, but also it included a very significant proportion of the most vulnerable adult male laboring classes.”

Perhaps the most poignant display in the Napoleonic collection at the British Army Museum is the solitary mannequin of a former British soldier, one-legged and leaning on
an old crutch, reduced to mendicancy. Bedraggled and miserable, the soldier wears his
Waterloo medal pinned on what remains of his uniform tunic and stands, cup in hand,
begging to survive. That he was, and is, perceived to be a criminal by nature is both a
misperception and a travesty. As has been shown, the genesis of this negative portrayal
originates in the wealth of negative appraisals provided over the years by Wellington.
These summative and colorful recollections have been accepted and repeated by
historians so often that they have become part of the world’s collective memory.

The demographic information revealed in the BSC, however, presents a new
perspective on the British soldier, his age, background, previous occupation, and initial
motivations for joining the army. This viewpoint is substantially different from the
accepted portrayal that has become entrenched in the public memory. Rather than a
despicable rogue with criminal intent and a background to match, the typical British army
recruit during the period of 1803-1815 was more likely to be a physical laborer or an
unemployed textile worker. He was usually fairly young, often under 20 years of age, and
probably of English decent, although almost three in ten recruits were Irish and
approximately another two in ten were Scottish. His greatest initial motivation for
enlisting was typically economic in nature, as a combination of demographic,
technological, and political forces melded to create an untenable employment situation.
Unable to find work or even feed himself, he was driven to the army through sheer need.
The recruit may also have been unsatisfied with an apprenticeship, if he was lucky
enough to have one, and perhaps enamored enough with the opportunities purportedly
offered by the army to see the advantages of leaving home. Few men mention patriotic
ideals as the reason behind their choice. It was the bounty and the hope of employment
that appealed to most recruits, and this returns us to economic necessity as the primary
motivation; enlistees were mostly ordinary men forced to choose between the army and
destitution. The British recruits may not have been the “very flower of the nation,” as
Cockerill has asserted, but no proof exists that they were “scum” herded from jails and
forced to serve their country.

---

2 Ibid.
3 Ibid. xiv.
4 Ibid.
6 Ibid. 567.
8 Russell Weigley, *Foreword, American Soldiers*, by Peter Kindsvatter (Lawrence, 2003) viii.
10 See Appendix A.
12 Ibid. 14.
13 All BSC tables can also be found in Appendices A and B.
14 All table values are rounded to one decimal place, which may result in occasional rounding errors.
15 Joel Mokyr, “Has the Industrial Revolution Been Crowded Out? Some Reflections on Crafts and Williamson,” *Explorations in Economic History*, 24 (1987): 302. Cited in H. V. Bowen, *War and British Society, 1688-1815* (Cambridge, 1998) 13. Arthur Gilbert provides supporting data for the BSC numbers, showing that the numbers of Irish and Scottish soldiers in the British army in Ireland during the American Revolution ranged from 27.6 percent and 15.3 percent, respectively, to 50.3 percent and 19.4 percent in the three years of his sample. Arthur Gilbert, “Ethnicity and the British Army in Ireland during the American Revolution,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 1 (1978): 477. One aspect often neglected when considering an army filled with English, Irish, Welsh, Scots, and a smattering of foreigners (mostly German) is that of communication. While the common language was English, the dialects, accents, and residual use of native tongues made initial communication among recruits difficult, as a sergeant of the 43rd noted. Speaking of the soldiers, he complained, “Meantime, as they were unable to abuse each other in language mutually intelligible, exclamations profoundly jocular or absurdly rancorous ran through the building [barracks].” The sergeant also surmised that, as a result, fighting was common. T. H. McGuffie, ed. *Rank and File: The Common Soldier at Peace and War 1642-1914* (New York, 1964) 18.
16 Welshmen were included under the category *English* in the sample totals.
17 Edward Spiers notes that by 1830, the English constituted about 58 percent of the population and 43 percent of the army. For the Irish, the numbers were 32.2 percent of Britain’s population and 42.2 percent of the army. The Scots, meanwhile, made up about 9.5 percent of the total population and 13.6 percent of the army. Edward Spiers, *The Army and Society, 1815-1914* (London, 1980) 50-51. Linda Colley contends that about 17 percent of the army was of Scottish heritage by 1803, a number closely confirmed by the BSC total of 15.7 percent. Linda Colley, “The Reach of the State, the Appeal of the Nation: Mass Arming and Political Culture in the Napoleonic Wars,” *An Imperial State at War: Britain from 1689 to 1815*, ed. Lawrence Stone (London, 1994), 172.
18 A. W. Cockerill, *Sons of the Brave* (London, 1984) 74. Cockerill also observes that the Militia Amending Act of 1811 allowed one-quarter of all militia recruits to be aged 14-16. The total number of men raised that year exceeded 21,000, meaning perhaps as many as 5,000 boys entered the militia over one year. How many of these boys transferred to line units is unknown. Cockerill argues that given the young age of so
many recruits, the army was not filled with grizzled “scum” but rather the “very flower of the nation.” Cockerill, 80.

19 John Fortescue, *The County Lieutenancies and the Army 1803-1814* (London, 1909) 292. Fortescue’s category of “boys,” however, is never clearly defined. His numbers refer to ordinary recruiting only, not men or boys entering from the militia.

20 Cockerill, *Sons of the Brave*, 78.

21 Glenn Steppler offers limited confirmation of age ranges and mean age, illustrating that in samples of 128, 832, and 906 men (14th, 58th, and 96th Foot) the ages of soldiers (1779-1792) ran from 12 to 64, with mean age averaging 20.5, 18.4, and 23.6 years, respectively. Glenn Steppler, “The Common Soldier in the Reign of King George III, 1770-1793.” diss., University of Oxford, 1984, 228. Samuel Scott, dealing with men already in the French army during the French Revolution, found similar numbers reflecting the young age of soldiers. Excluding NCOs, Scott shows that half of the men were between 18 to 25 years of age, with another five percent being younger than 18. Ninety percent of the soldiers were 35 years of age or less. Samuel Scott, *The Response of the Royal Army to the French Revolution* (Oxford, 1978) 7-8.

22 Looking at just a small sample of recruits, Steppler admits that the youthful age of so many recruits makes it doubtful that most were hardened vagabonds or miscreants. Steppler, “The Common Soldier in the Reign of King George III,” 40.


26 Lawrence would eventually grow to 6 feet 1 inch tall, a height greater than 99.5 percent of British rankers. Numbers drawn from BSC data.


29 Ibid. 39.


31 A small portion of the discrepancy may be the result of France’s lack of a uniform measuring system, a problem that would not be addressed until the French Revolution when Pierre-Francois-Andre Mechain and Jean-Baptiste-Joseph Delambre were commissioned by the Assembly to establish an absolute value for the meter. Until that time, measurement systems numbered by the tens of thousands, varying by locale and purpose. For information as to problems stemming from the variance in French systems of measurement, see Ken Alder, *The Measure of All Things: The Seven-Year Odyssey and Hidden Error That Transformed the World* (New York, 2002).

32 Bertaud, *La révolution armée*, 36, 83.

33 Ibid. 138.


36 Ibid.


38 Ibid.

39 Ibid. 218-219.

40 Ibid. 216.
As further supporting evidence of Steckel’s hypothesis, Steckel and Robert Margo provide evidence showing that by the American Civil War, the average height of a soldier was 5 feet 8 inches. Robert Margo and Richard Steckel, “Heights of Native-Born Whites during the Antebellum Period,” *Journal of Economic History*, 43 (1983): 168.


WO 3/17. Cited in Cockerill, *Sons of the Brave*, 72. In addition, Cockerill cites an order of 17 January 1811 that allowed colonels to enlist boys under 16 years of age at the rate of ten boys per company.

Cockerill, 73.


In this chart, Tucker is using data provided by William Rowbottom from an unpublished manuscript, “The Chronology or Annals of Oldham.”

Geoffrey Best, *War and Society in Revolutionary Europe 1770-1870* (Gloucestershire, 1998) 140-141.


WO 3/584, 408.


The blockade was initiated 21 November 1806 with the Berlin decree. Theodore Ropp points out that some historians believe that the blockade could have starved the British into submission had Napoleon not preferred to sell French wheat for British gold. He goes on to argue that Napoleon considered British credit to be the British weak point and that the blockade was still effective given that focus. As a final note, Ropp brings up one important positive side effect of the blockade for the British: it drove them to find alternative overseas markets. Theodore Ropp, *War in the Modern World* (London, 1959) 122-123.


Geoffrey Best, *War and Society in Revolutionary Europe 1770-1870* (Gloucestershire, 1998) 140-141.

Haythornthwaite, *The Armies of Wellington*, 47.


Ibid. 886. Cookson argues that for these reasons, “volunteering most suited the poor.”

Western, “The Volunteer Movement,” 609.


Wells, *Wretched Faces*, 69.
While a portion of the increased 1806 enlistment can be explained, the reasons behind this increase remain unclear. A comparison of the BSC sample to general returns (see Appendix A, Section IV) appears to confirm the validity of the BSC. A sampling anomaly, however, may possibly account for a part of the 1806 enlistment jump. According to army records, 1807 had the single highest recruiting totals (ordinary recruiting) with 19,114 men. Fortescue, *The County Lieutenancies and the Army*, 292.


According to army records, 1807 had the single highest recruiting totals (ordinary recruiting) with 19,114 men. Fortescue, *The County Lieutenancies and the Army*, 292.


As a further example, the number of bags of cotton imported into Liverpool fell from over 100,000 in 1806 to slightly more than 25,000 within a two-year span. Eli Heckschler, *The Continental System: An Economic Interpretation* (Gloucester, 1964) 147.


As a further example, the number of bags of cotton imported into Liverpool fell from over 100,000 in 1806 to slightly more than 25,000 within a two-year span. Eli Heckschler, *The Continental System: An Economic Interpretation* (Gloucester, 1964) 147.


In addition, machine performance quickly improved to make use of these advantages. Early machines were not much faster than traditional handlooms, but by the mid-1820s, the technical advantage was approximately 7.5 to 1. This meant that one boy on two power looms could do the work of 15 handwork artisans. David Landes, *The Unbound Prometheus* (London, 1969) 85, 87.


By 1813 there were about 100 large-scale power looms in use in England. In 1820 that number rose to over 12,000 and by 1829 it would exceed 45,000 power looms. Edward Baines, *History of the Cotton Manufacture in Great Britain* (London, 1959) 235.


Ned Ludham, a Leicester stockinger’s apprentice, supposedly initiated machine breaking. After being reprimanded by his father-employer to better align his frames, Ludham allegedly took up a hammer and smashed them instead. Thus, those who followed his example became “Luddites.”


Best, *War and Society in Revolutionary Europe*, 140.


97 This is an ordinary least squares linear regression using bread prices as the independent variable and numbers of enlistments per year as the dependent variable. See the fuller explanation of this regression analysis in Appendix B.
99 This is an ordinary least squares linear regression with multiple independent variables. See the fuller explanation of the variables used and analysis of the results in Appendix B.
100 This was the year to which Tucker compared all real wage data.
103 The year 1806 also saw limited service introduced. This option, however, proved unpopular and should not be considered a factor in 1806 enlistment. As an example, J. M. Brereton shows that in 1814 approximately 75 percent of recruits signed on for life. Limited service was abolished in 1829 and not reestablished until 1847. J. M. Brereton, *The British Soldier: A Social History from 1661 to the Present Day* (London, 1986) 47. C. Dupin presents similar evidence in a small sample from 1814: only one Irishman took the limited service option, while 565 opted for life service. Similarly, 84 Scots signed on for limited service, with 226 enlisting for life. C. Dupin, *View of History of the Actual State of the Military Forces of Great Britain* (London, 1822) 305. Cited by T. H. McGuffie, “Recruiting the Ranks of the Regular British Army during the French Wars,” *Journal of Army Historical Research* XXXIV.139 (1956): 54-55.
105 Darvall, *Popular Disturbances and Public Order*, 54-55. Darvall shows that hand-weaver wages recovered by 1814, only to plummet to nine shillings a week by 1818 due to the influx of surplus labor caused by the mass release of soldiers back into the civilian population in 1815-1816.
106 Ibid. 55.
109 Ibid. 33. In his recent book on the history of the 95th, Mark Urban argues that the “fickle dictates of fashion” led to unemployment in the textile industry and was the causal factor behind much of enlistment. As has been shown, the economic stressors at work were far more complex than Urban contends. Mark Urban, *Wellington’s Rifles: Six Years with England’s Legendary Sharpshooters* (New York, 2004) 7.
110 See Appendix A, Table 72. Steppler, using a small sample, found that 12.5 percent of men in the 96th Foot (1779-1883) and 37.8 percent of the 58th Foot (1784-1792) were weavers. The percentage of laborers in these regiments was 50 percent and 35.8 percent, respectively. Steppler, “The Common Soldier in the Reign of King George III,” 34. Gilbert found that of 161 men enlisting from London and Middlesex during the later part of the 18th century, 19.25 percent were weavers, with 80 percent listing definable trades. Arthur Gilbert, “An Analysis of Some Eighteenth Century Army Recruiting Records,” *Journal of Army Historical Research* LIV.217 (1976): 41, 46.
111 See Appendix A, Table 63.
112 Best, *War and Society in Revolutionary Europe*, 143.
114 See Appendix A, Table 72 for a complete listing of pre-enlistment occupations recorded in the BSC.
116 Ibid. 410.
118 Patrick O’Brien estimates that approximately 38 percent of the civilian work force were laborers, a number very much in line with the BSC total of 40 percent for enlistees. Patrick O’Brien, “The Impact of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars,” 338.
119 Using a sample of 300 men from 1809-1816, McGuffie arrived at three conclusions, two of which support the BSC sample: 1) There was a “preponderance of laboring classes in the ranks” 2) There was a “considerable percentage of weavers and frame knitters” and 3) There was an absence of men “from the middle and trading classes.” The limited size of his sample prevented McGuffie from observing the breadth
and number of such occupations. T. H. McGuffie, “Recruiting the Ranks of the Regular British Army during the French Wars,” 126.


122 Crafts, citing Lindert and Williamson’s social tables for England and Wales in 1688, 1759, and 1801/03, estimates that in the latter year(s), 14.6 percent of men worked in the agricultural occupations and 15.5 percent were laborers, noting that laborer is a term “without any clear demarcation and includes ‘both agricultural and non-agricultural labourers.’” N. F. R. Crafts, British Economic Growth during the Industrial Revolution (Oxford, 1985) 13. Crafts later cites Deane and Cole’s calculations that in 1801, 35.9 percent of the work force were employed in agriculture, forestry, and fishing. Crafts, British Economic Growth, 15. Thus, it can be seen that without real employment and unemployment data, these summations are just estimates and, perhaps, no more reliable than the BSC.

123 In comparison, about 76 percent of the soldiers entering the French army between 1737 and 1763 listed a former occupation. Corvisier, L’armée française de la fin du XVIIe, I 393.

124 Ibid. 319-322.

125 Also see Appendix A, Table 72. It is conjectured that the small number of recruits listing farmer as their occupation must have owned the land on which they farmed, and that the acreage may have been of sufficient size to distinguish themselves from small-plot farmers or those who worked on other people’s land. In this case, the sharecropping farmers, listed as laborers in the BSC, would have been employed on the land of men similar to those who listed farmer as their previous occupation. Otherwise, the numbers of men who farmed should be about 2,500 in the BSC. Less than ten other enlistees stated they had a farm-related occupation.

126 Darvall, Popular Disturbances and Public Order, 15.

127 Corvisier, L’armée française de la fin du XVIIe, I 393. Corvisier’s numbers for 1763 reveal that the numbers of soldiers from rural settings increased from 1716. Ibid. 406-408.


129 Bertaud, La revolution armée, 103.

130 The New Settlement Act of 1622.

131 The 1697 Poor Act. This was not officially abolished until 1948.

132 Sir Edward Knatchbull's Act of 1722-3, “For Amending the Laws relating to the Settlement, Employment and Relief of the Poor.” This act created informal workhouses.

133 The 1782 Gilbert Act, also called The Poor Relief Act of 1782.

134 The Poor Relief Act of 1782, “An Act for the Better Relief and Employment of the Poor.” The much-hated formal workhouse system would not come into existence until 1834.

135 For a more in-depth look at the evolution and efficacy of English Poor Laws, see Lynn Lees, The Solidarities of Strangers: The English Poor Laws and the People (Cambridge, 1998), Anthony Brundage, The English Poor Laws, 1700-1930 (New York, 2002), and Michael Rose, The English Poor Laws (Devon, 1971). While treatment of the poor varied by locale, it is safe to safe that most of the unfortunates felt the system degrading. Poor Law administration was absolute and often harsh and arbitrary. The poor had to take what was offered and acquiesce to local officials. See Wells, Wretched Faces, for a good accounting of how the process worked and how the poor endured the various stipulations forced upon them.

136 A standing police force would not be established until 1829, when Wellington's government passed Home Secretary Sir Robert Peel's Metropolitan Police Act. This act raised a force only in the city of London, however. It was not until the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835, which mandated that all incorporated boroughs set up their own police forces, that a regular constabulary was instituted.

137 These incidents were usually spontaneous gatherings and varied by locale and circumstances. Almost all had one thing in common, though: the demand for affordable bread.


139 Originally, the Riot Act required a formal warning by a justice of the peace and a waiting period of an hour before action was taken. The policy, however, devolved into calling out the troops and using them at the commander’s discretion, even against passive demonstrators.

140 Army pay had been raised in 1797 from eight pence to one shilling a day, where it would remain for the next 70 years.
Added to this £12 offering were the additional expenses paid out to the person bringing in the recruit and the recruiting party itself. These sums added another £4 to the total.

Haythornthwaite, *The Armies of Wellington*, 47. This amount was for life service. Limited service merited a bounty of £18 12 shillings 6 pence. When Napoleon first fell from power in 1813, the bounty dropped to £3 14 shillings.


Ibid. 141


Ibid. 37.

Ibid. 111.


Ibid. 14-15.

Ibid. 96. The man received 279 lashes and died eight days later.


Ibid. 90-91


Haythornthwaite, *The Armies of Wellington*, 43. Losses do not include men who perished in the West Indies. Using data provided by John Fortescue, it can be calculated that the British army lost, on average, 20,526 men annually for the years 1803-1813. Fortescue, *The County Lieutenancies and the Army*, 291.

Rory Muir has compiled slightly different numbers than Haythornthwaite and Fortescue. Muir states that the army reached 260,000 men near the end of 1813. Deaths, or “wastage” as he calls the losses, rose from 17,000 men a year (1803 to 1807) to more than 24,000 annual deaths (1809, 1812, 1813). He lists total losses from 1803 to 1813 as 225,000 men. Rory Muir, *Britain and the Defeat of Napoleon 1807-1815* (New Haven, 1996) 14. When considered with men in the navy, the armed services held roughly between 11 and 14 percent of all male workers aged 15 to 40. Patrick O’Brien, “The Impact of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars,” 336.


Ibid. 135.
171 Best, *War and Society*, 42.
172 The militia existed until 1908 when its units were transferred to the Special Reserve.
175 McGuffie acknowledges this: “For only if a balloted man were too poor to pay for a substitute would he enlist; the substitutes belonged to the same class, for who else would take money to enter the army, and sell his liberty for ten or twelve guineas cash?” McGuffie, “Recruiting the Ranks of the Regular British Army during the French Wars,” 50.
177 Ibid. 47.
178 Ibid. 196.
179 Ibid. 4.
180 Gilbert, “An Analysis of Some Eighteenth Century Army Recruiting Records,” 44. Counties were responsible for raising their own bounty fees and for bringing the men before justices in order to officially confirm their enlistments.
181 Ibid. 42.
182 Roger Buckley, *The British Army in the West Indies* (Tallahassee, 1998) 105. No recent studies on the criminal backgrounds of the British soldiers were uncovered since Buckley made his assertion. This is not to assert that no criminals enlisted or that no men learned criminal skills in the army. Charles Oman, after all, reminds us that when Wellington need to create 5-franc coins after Waterloo, he had no trouble finding 40 coiners in the ranks to accomplish the task. Charles Oman, *Wellington’s Army 1809-1814* (London, 1913) 274. The supposition is that the numbers of such men were far fewer than has been surmised.
183 Haythornthwaite, *The Armies of Wellington*, 45. A second, but less relevant, example exists from 1704. In the newspaper *Postman*, 30 May-1 June of that year, an article states that a weaver and former deserter from the army was “newly let out of prison at Coventry for rape” to enlist in the army. One might assume that the uniqueness of the man’s story and related but unmentioned details regarding his release were the basis for its inclusion in the news. Godfrey Davies, “Recruiting in the Reign of Queen Anne,” *Journal of Army Historical Research* XXVIII.116 (1950): 151.
184 Buckley, *The British Army in the West Indies*, 100-101.
185 Ibid. 94.
186 Ibid. 58.
188 Roger Buckley, “The Destruction of the British Army in the West Indies: A Medical History,” *Journal of Army Historical Research* LVII.226 (1978): 81. Buckley’s data reveals that soldiers had about one chance in four of dying each year in the West Indies. Buckley, 90.
189 Buckley, *The British Army in the West Indies*, 105
192 Ibid.
193 The number of capital crimes rose from 50 in 1688 to 225 by 1815. It bears mentioning that the number of executions did not rise commensurately due to royal pardons. Executions averaged a high of 53 annually for 1788-89 and a low of 21 a year during the last decade of the 18th century. Douglas Hay, et al. *Albion’s Fatal Tree: Crime and Society in Eighteenth-Century England* (London, 1975) 23-24. Peter King provides further evidence that the percentage of persons actually executed for capital crimes in Essex, 1740-1805, was relatively low, ranging from no executions for petty larceny and 1.3 percent for grand and aggravated larceny to 20.6 percent for horse theft, and to a high of 45.2 percent for highway robbery. King’s data reveals that less than eight percent of convicted criminals meriting the death penalty in Essex were actually executed. Numbers for various capital property crimes on the Home Circuit, 1755-1815, were higher, ranging from no executions for larceny from a person to 65 percent for coining and 68.3 percent for forgery. Peter King, *Crime, Justice, and Discretion in England, 1740-1820* (Oxford, 2000) 262, 274.

Ibid. 121, 124.

Ibid. 135.

Ibid. 134.

Ibid.


Ibid. 205.


One basis of the underground myth originates with Patrick Colquhoun’s treatise on wealth and crime written during the Napoleonic wars. Colquhoun correctly concluded that poverty was at the root of crime. His estimate of the numbers of criminals or potential criminals in Britain, however, included indigent people; thus his oft-quoted guesstimate that one-eighth of the British people were criminals is inherently flawed. Patrick Colquhoun, *Treatise on the Wealth of the British Empire* (London, 1814) 111-112.


Nicholas and Steckel, “Heights and Living Standards,” 944. They compare offenders in Warwickshire with a convict sample of over 100,000 men, and come up with similar results: 48.8 and 53.4 percent were unskilled, respectively, leaving 38.4 and 43.6 percent skilled.

Rude, *Criminal and Victim*, 11. Food constituted 23.3 percent of stolen items, while clothing made up 21.2 percent of the sample.

Ibid. 18. Money or valuables made up 19.9 percent of the total, with clothing coming in a close second at 19.8 percent. Food was third at 13.9 percent.

Beattie, *Crime and the Courts in England 1660-1800*, 187. For Sussex, 1660-1800, the numbers were clothes 23.7 percent and food 14.0 percent. In Southwark, clothes were first at 27.1 percent, with food coming in fourth at 11.4 percent. The numbers for the rural parishes of Surrey were food, first, at 26.5 percent and clothes second at 21.4 percent.

Rude, *Criminal and Victim*, 11.

Ibid. 79.

Ibid. 118.

Ibid. 117. Haythornthwaite provides similar data showing that in 1803 about 4,600 persons in England and Wales were bound over for trial. Of those, 3,555 were charged with larceny. Haythornthwaite, *The Armies of Wellington*, 67.

Rude, *Criminal and Victim*, 41. Of these, 88.9 percent were males.

Ibid. 42, 48, 51.


Ibid. 35.

CHAPTER 4

OVER THE HILLS AND FAR AWAY: SURVIVING ON CAMPAIGN

If Lawrence’s experience after his recruitment was the norm, he quickly found himself parted from the two and a half guinea bounty. The first efforts to separate Lawrence from his money undoubtedly came from members of the recruiting party who shared with every recruit the traditions that must be upheld by each new soldier. Joseph Donaldson recalled the warning he received upon enlisting in the 94th Foot. When asked by one of the recruiting party, a fellow from Aberdeen, if he had received his bounty, Donaldson replied in the affirmative. “Then,” replied the soldier, “you’ll no want for friends as long as it lasts.” Donaldson’s experience confirmed the veracity underlying the soldier’s words of advice. Donaldson recalled:

So, I found; for every little attention was paid to me they could devise. One brushed my shoes, another my coat; and nothing could equal the professions of good-will and offers of service I received. There was a competition amongst them who should be my comrade, each supporting his offer by what service he could render me.

Donaldson was informed that it was the custom for new recruits to treat the soldiers of his new battalion who were present, so he did, even giving in to their pleas for loans. The men ordered rounds of whiskey, each offering to pay. When it came to paying the tab, each soldier made a half-hearted attempt to borrow from his comrades. In the end, the bill went to Donaldson. He was similarly besieged that evening, the next morning,
and the evening after, until his funds were spent. Moreover, each recruit was coerced to provide the sergeant conducting the party to barracks a dinner with an accompanying present, showing the recruit’s appreciation and good will. After his money ran out, Donaldson approached those whom he had loaned shillings. He was laughed at, ridiculed, and even threatened, but not repaid. “This,” he lamented, “opened my eyes a little.”

In addition to these overt methods of siphoning off the recruit’s bounty, the army had further surprises in store for the enlistee. A varying amount of the bounty, from £2 2 shillings to £4, had to be returned to pay for the soldier’s kit, which included shoes, socks, gaiters, shirts, cap, and knapsack. If the recruit had already spent the entire bounty, the cost for these necessities was deducted monthly from his forthcoming pay.

Lawrence undoubtedly went through a similar experience; he doesn’t mention this ordeal, perhaps because time, disappointment, or his possible state of inebriation prevented him from recalling details. Regardless, it was a common occurrence, and only the first hint that army life would prove harsher than expected. Future military experiences would differ in circumstance, but not outcome, as Lawrence would learn that daily life in the service of the king was anything but what had been promised and that nothing in the army was free. Burgoyne’s dictum, “The life of a soldier is the property of the king,” certainly applied, and the recruit soon understood that the king did little to preserve his royal property.

That the men’s lives were no longer their own first struck Lawrence when, after receiving his kit but no real training, he and his regiment were hurried to a ship leaving for Brazil. More than a little bewildered by events, Lawrence witnessed what he called “the most disheartening spectacle.” As the regiment was boarding, Lawrence could not
help but notice the heart-wrenching scene, played out again and again, of soldiers being separated from their wives and children, perhaps for the last time. As only six wives out of each company of 100 men were officially allowed to accompany their husbands, the magnitude of the distress greatly dismayed Lawrence. He recalled this brush with the realities of army life by noting, “I could not see a dry eye in Portsmouth, and if the tears could have been collected, they might have stocked a hospital in eye-water for some months… it was indeed dreadful to view.”

The misery of the men and their families was but a portent of things to come, as the British army proved itself just barely capable of supplying and sustaining an army in the field over the course of the next decade. Pay, clothing, and rations became irregular, even rare, commodities for the British soldier in the field. While on campaign, the British ranker had precious little to keep him going, either physically or psychologically. The British regimental system, with its ceremonies and traditions, existed during the Napoleonic period, but in a much limited form compared to later in the century. Ron Lock and Peter Quantrill, writing on the Zulu War, describe how the system was meant to function, and did, at times: “Rough humour and the camaraderie of fellow soldiers – his mates – were the core of the ranker’s comfort. Furthermore, his regiment, with its ancient traditions, history and the protection it afforded him against those elements which had forced him to join up in the first place, gave solace in the absence of family.”

Lock’s and Quantrill’s reference to ancient traditions, however, is a bit misleading. Many of the regimental traditions and histories stemmed in part from the Napoleonic Wars, a period only six decades before the Zulu War. Thus, the term ancient traditions can, in part, be considered hyperbole.
The British emphasis on the regiment, which acted as a secondary social group, worked to give men a sense of worth and bind them to each other. The positive effects of the system, however, were minor when compared to the soldier’s core needs of sustenance, warmth, proper clothing, and relief from chronic fatigue brought on by never-ending physical demands that his daily diet could not sustain. The value of the regimental system was muted, if not negated, by the inability of the army to look after the basic needs of the men.

In his work on the subject of soldier motivation, John Lynn delineates sustaining motivation as a separate factor acting on soldiers, one different from the initial motivations that brought them into the army and vastly dissimilar from the forces that act on men during combat. Lynn writes:

Sustaining motivation applies to military life, but not to combat. The soldier must exercise, train, march, and endure, but there is still time to talk things over. There may be danger, but even close to the front the greatest enemies may be discomfort and boredom. Although the soldier maintains contact with his civilian world through letters, his real family has become the small group of comrades around him. They are his ultimate judge and support….How well a unit performs in combat will depend heavily on how well it performed its duties before combat.¹⁰

Referring to the army of the newly-born French Republic, Lynn goes on to point out that “sustaining motivation demands emphasis and consideration in an army that had to survive and train under condition of extreme hardship. Endemic shortages of arms, equipment, and clothing, aggravated by faltering logistics which provided inadequate or uncertain food supplies, meant that the republican soldier had to endure more than war’s inevitable fatigues and dangers.”¹¹ Lynn’s perspective is especially useful for understanding how the daily army life of the British rank and file did little to enhance
their ability to function in battle. For the common soldier, usually existing on a subsistence diet far from home and with little hope of returning and few compelling reasons to do so, life was difficult. Poorly fed and constantly exposed to the elements, treated as a beast of burden, beaten savagely for his mistakes, and expected to fight in a series of seemingly never-ending battles and sieges, the British soldier somehow persevered and became an outstanding combat soldier in spite of having little in the way of the commonly accepted sustaining variables such as nutritional, ideological, financial, or external emotional support.

The most pressing issues for the ranker were those that sapped both his strength and his motivation during the daily grind of campaign life. Living in the field is rarely pleasant for any soldier, regardless of the time period, but the experiences of the British soldier are almost unparalleled in unremitting hardship. Lawrence was not long with the army before he began recalling daily tribulations, opining that the army greatly suffered during a march from Oropesa due to “the heat of the weather, the long exposure, the insufficient food, and bad roads, and illness being very prevalent.”12 This was not the last time that Lawrence would have reason to complain.

For much of the Peninsular War, the men camped under the stars with little for protection.13 Blankets were issued to the men in 1809 and tents to the officers; the men learned to make a tent of sorts with two blankets, two muskets, and four bayonets.14 The effects of exposure in severe weather, from storms to frigid cold, took their toll on the men. A soldier of the 1st Royal Scots, John Douglass, recalled that “numbers lost their toes, some their limbs, and not a few their lives.”15 He went on to write that “tis wonderful how hardened men grow when they are for a length of time exposed, or rather
Men, however, were frequently pushed beyond their endurance, as the sick and mortality rates of the British army in the Peninsula reveal. Men can only be hardened to a point; after that they simply wear out by degrees. The issuing of tents to the rank and file in 1813 helped reduce exposure, but the soldiers still found themselves without adequate clothing.

The lack of boots and replacement uniforms was a constant source of aggravation. Long marches, lack of shelter, and difficult terrain made short work of the soldier’s original issue. Large numbers of men quickly found their shoes disintegrating and no replacements to be found. Being without shoes was so prevalent that the men coined a term for it: “padding the hoof.” James Anton of the 42nd Highlanders stated, sadly, that it was “impossible to describe the painful state that some of those shoeless men were in, crippling along the way, their feet cut or torn by sharp stones or brambles.” Rifleman John [Benjamin] Harris offers a similarly vivid picture of these men on the march. He wrote: “I have seen officers and men hobbling forward, with tears in their eyes from the misery of long miles, empty stomachs, and ragged backs without even shoes or stockings on their bleeding feet.” In his letters home, Major-General F. P. Robinson asserted that being barefoot was the norm for the men. Writing in July 1813, near San Sebastian, Robinson declared that “Our whole Division are nearly barefoot....Many of my poor fellows have traversed the Pyrenees without either shoe or stocking to their feet; yet no complaint is heard…all we want is food and clothing.” The nightly slaughtering of bullocks offered the men some respite, as the men took the raw hides of the slaughtered beasts and wrapped them around their feet.
As for uniforms, the men wore them until they were threadbare, tattered, filthy, and closer in color to brown or black than red. Men found and wore any type of clothing in an effort to cover themselves. Their collective appearance was more that of a roaming band of stragglers or bandits than that of an army. William Grattan of the Connaught Rangers, described the men as being “without any distinguishing mark of uniform.” The soldiers learned to preserve what they did possess, while discovering such tricks as baking their tunics in ovens to remove the vermin. On the rare occasion when new clothes were issued, the cast-off uniforms were burned in an effort to rid the soldiers of their insect companions.

Often without other shelter, a soldier would count himself lucky if he found some type of hovel whose only occupants were vermin, which soon took up residence in the soldier’s hair or clothing. The men’s hair, daubed with dirty grease, soap, and flour for braiding, also proved attractive to rats and mice which, as Anton recalled, were often found at night “scrambling about our heads, eating the filthy stuff.” The men hated the queuing of hair and, for numerous reasons, were pleased when the standing order was discontinued in 1809. Even this caused distress, though, as the regimental wives feared for their status, since one of their responsibilities was dressing the men’s hair each day.

The difficulties of little shelter and lack of uniforms paled next to the greatest aggravation facing the British soldier: the inability of the commissariat to regularly feed the men. The regulation diet was intended to be one pound of meat, usually beef and including the bone, one pound of biscuit, and 1/3rd of a pint (five-plus fluid ounces) of rum or about 16 ounces of wine, but these varied considerably due to campaign exigencies. The quality was also uneven at best. Robert Knowles, a lieutenant in the 7th
Royal Fusiliers, was disconcerted when he examined his army meat. He wrote home that “the meat is so poor that it would be burnt if exposed for sale in Bolton Market.” John Kincaid, the Rifleman, grumbled that his meat ration was often “enough to have physicked a dromedary.” John Green of the 68th Light Infantry was also disgusted with the quality, and referred to the two pounds of meat he was given as “carrion.” Donaldson complained that the bullocks often went unfed and were marched to exhaustion, just like the men. As a result, the meat was “as tough and stringy as a piece of junk.” Its quality aside, the daily ration, when it was received, was remarkably low in essential nutrients, as the nutritional breakdown in Table 31 illustrates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Daily allowance</th>
<th>1lb biscuit</th>
<th>1lb meat, including the bone</th>
<th>5.3fl oz rum</th>
<th>15.9fl oz wine in place of rum</th>
<th>Totals with rum</th>
<th>Totals with wine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calories</td>
<td>1456</td>
<td>553</td>
<td>341</td>
<td>366</td>
<td>2350</td>
<td>2375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carbohydrates, grams</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fat, grams</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protein, grams</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 31: Nutritional breakdown of standard rations for the British soldier in the Napoleonic Wars

A dietary comparison of rations provided to soldiers of other periods reveals that the British soldier received far less than the norm. An Imperial Roman soldier, for example, received over two and a half times the calories, twice the protein, and almost three times the amount of carbohydrates and fat (Tables 32 and 37).
A further comparison to the rations of English commoners, enlisted as soldiers during the English Civil War, 1642 to 1646, illustrates that even previous versions of English armies were better fed than the British soldiers who stood against Napoleon. The men who fought in the English Civil War admittedly often went without rations, as did their late 18th- and early 19th-century counterparts; but when supplies arrived, they were at least more in line with the caloric expenditures of the English Civil War soldier. Their totals amount to roughly twice what Wellington’s men were given (Tables 33 and 37).

Table 32: Nutritional breakdown of standard rations for the Roman soldier

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Daily allowance</th>
<th>3lb bread</th>
<th>1lb meat</th>
<th>33.8fl oz wine</th>
<th>1.6fl oz oil</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calories</td>
<td>4368</td>
<td>829</td>
<td>770</td>
<td>381</td>
<td>6348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carbohydrates, grams</td>
<td>915</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>915</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fat, grams</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protein, grams</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 33: Nutritional breakdown of standard rations for a common soldier serving in the English Civil War

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Daily allowance</th>
<th>2lb bread</th>
<th>1lb meat</th>
<th>1lb cheese in place of meat</th>
<th>1 bottle of wine</th>
<th>2 bottles of beer in place of wine</th>
<th>Totals, averaged over different possibilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calories</td>
<td>2912</td>
<td>829</td>
<td>1830</td>
<td>578</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>4669.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carbohydrates, grams</td>
<td>610</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>623.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fat, grams</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protein, grams</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>177.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Even Mediterranean galley slaves of the 14\textsuperscript{th}- and 16\textsuperscript{th}-centuries were better provided for. The diet of a Venetian crew slave, circa 1310, contained about 1.5 times the calories, carbohydrates, and fat of the daily fare of Wellington’s men. Only in protein did Venetian galley slaves receive less the British soldier (Tables 34 and 37).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Daily allowance</th>
<th>25.2oz biscuit</th>
<th>1.1pt wine</th>
<th>1.41oz cheese</th>
<th>1.83oz salt pork</th>
<th>0.6cup garbanzo beans</th>
<th>Totals with wine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calories</td>
<td>2293</td>
<td>413</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>389</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>3417</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carbohydrates, grams</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>506.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fat, grams</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protein, grams</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 34: Nutritional breakdown of standard rations for 14\textsuperscript{th}-century Venetian galley slaves

Finally, a composite picture of the nutritional values of the diet of Spanish galley slaves, 1539-1580, presents evidence that the rations for these men exceeded the value of those provided to the British rank and file. The Spanish oarsmen received about seven percent more calories, daily, and just short of twice the grams of carbohydrates. Their diet, however, contained even less fat and protein than that of the British soldier (Tables 35 and 37). As John Guilmartin has noted in his seminal work on Mediterranean warfare of the early Renaissance, the carbohydrate-rich but protein-deficient diet of these men had unexpected consequences. While the high proportion of carbohydrates enhanced muscular endurance, the fat and protein deficiencies resulted in a high vulnerability to sickness and death, especially in cold weather. Spanish officers, sailors, and soldiers
aboard war galleys received a diet that included a meat ration six days a week. Again, when compared to the daily fare of the British soldier, this diet contained almost 50 percent more calories and a 60 percent greater allotment of carbohydrates. The Spanish men at arms aboard galleys also received slightly more fat and protein thanks to regular meat rations (Tables 36 and 37).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Daily allowance</th>
<th>26oz biscuit</th>
<th>0.6cup garbanzo beans</th>
<th>0.21fl oz oil</th>
<th>0.6fl oz vinegar</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calories</td>
<td>2366</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>2618</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carbohydrates, grams</td>
<td>496</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>539</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fat, grams</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protein, grams</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 35: Composite nutritional breakdown of minimal standard rations for 16th-century Spanish galley slaves

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weekly allowance</th>
<th>26oz biscuit, seven days</th>
<th>34fl oz wine, seven days</th>
<th>8oz beef, three days</th>
<th>6oz bacon, one day</th>
<th>6oz cheese, one day</th>
<th>6oz fish, one day</th>
<th>Daily average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calories</td>
<td>2366</td>
<td>770</td>
<td>414.5</td>
<td>920</td>
<td>686.25</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>3589</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carbohydrates, grams</td>
<td>496</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.6875</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>497</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fat, grams</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>56.25</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protein, grams</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>42.75</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 36: Nutritional breakdown of rations for 16th-century Spanish officers, soldiers, and sailors aboard galleys
When the percent of calories contributed by each macronutrient is calculated, based on the standard that carbohydrates and protein provide four calories per gram, fat nine calories per gram, and alcohol seven calories per gram, it is clear that the British soldier’s diet was insufficient, by modern medical standards, to maintain health in men exposed to the exertions and privations of the march and battlefield.

The current recommendations from the Institute of Medicine stipulate that men 14 years and older should receive between 45 and 65 percent of their calories from carbohydrates. The British soldier’s proportion of calories from carbohydrates is below this standard. Similarly, the institute recommends between 25 and 35 percent of calories come from fat for males between the ages of 14 and 18, and between 20 and 35 percent of calories for males aged 19 and up. While the percent of calories from fat was within this range for men over 18, the rations were barely adequate for boys between 14 and 19, who comprised more than a third of the army (Table 38).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Daily allowance</th>
<th>Roman soldier, English Civil War</th>
<th>Spanish officer, soldier, or sailor</th>
<th>Venetian galley slave</th>
<th>Spanish galley slave</th>
<th>British soldier, Napoleonic wars</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calories</td>
<td>6348</td>
<td>4669.5</td>
<td>3589</td>
<td>3417</td>
<td>2618</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carbohydrates, grams</td>
<td>915</td>
<td>623.25</td>
<td>497</td>
<td>506.4</td>
<td>539</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fat, grams</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protein, grams</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>177.5</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 37: Nutritional comparison of standard rations for various armies
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Daily allowance</th>
<th>Roman soldier</th>
<th>Soldier, English Civil War</th>
<th>Spanish officer, soldier, or sailor</th>
<th>Venetian galley slave</th>
<th>Spanish galley slave</th>
<th>British soldier, Napoleonic wars</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calories from carbohydrates (percent)</td>
<td>2720 (46)</td>
<td>1873 (43)</td>
<td>1480 (44)</td>
<td>1538 (48)</td>
<td>1648 (69)</td>
<td>908 (41)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calories from fat (percent)</td>
<td>1647 (28)</td>
<td>1422 (32)</td>
<td>684 (20)</td>
<td>909 (28)</td>
<td>477 (20)</td>
<td>576 (26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calories from protein (percent)</td>
<td>736 (12)</td>
<td>674 (15)</td>
<td>388 (11)</td>
<td>316 (9)</td>
<td>272 (11)</td>
<td>344 (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calories from alcohol (percent)</td>
<td>770 (13)</td>
<td>428 (9)</td>
<td>770 (23)</td>
<td>413 (13)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>341 (15)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 38: Percent of calories from each source**

The fact that 15 percent of the British soldier’s calories were provided by protein puts that macronutrient safely within the acceptable range of 10 to 35 percent of calories. This apparent adequacy is more a reflection on the overall meagerness of the British ranker’s diet, however, than an example of sufficient nutrition. The mere 344 calories provided by protein are easily equaled by the number of calories supplied by the daily alcohol ration. If the British soldier had been provided with calories sufficient to equal his daily needs, this protein allotment would have been much too small to comprise an adequate portion. As it is, Institute of Medicine recommendations show that boys aged 14 to 18 need at least 52 grams of protein per day and men aged 19 and older need at least 56 grams.\(^{45}\)

The World Health Organization provides a slightly more detailed analysis, assessing protein requirements by age and weight. Using their system, British soldiers
under 19 years of age would need from 53 grams of protein a day for 17- and 18-year-olds to 60 grams for 13- to 14-year-olds.\textsuperscript{46} Since only about 50 grams of protein per day were provided from animal protein, that is, a complete protein source, it is likely that the British soldier’s protein intake barely met the minimums for essential amino acids.\textsuperscript{47} Again, these sustaining amounts are provided for young men and boys whose lifestyle was nowhere as rigorous or physically demanding as that of the British soldier. Life in the field, as will be shown, was extraordinarily taxing physiologically and required nutrient levels far above the minimums listed.

Even more revealing are the data concerning micronutrients.\textsuperscript{48} The diet of the British soldier is deficient in 15 of the 21 of these dietary essentials that were examined (Table 39). Moreover, of all the soldiers’ rations examined, those of the British enlisted man ranked last or tied for last in 15 of 21 the nutritional categories (bold type on chart). Each set of standard rations were deficient in numerous micronutrients, with the Roman and English Civil War soldier faring the best: both their diets came up short in only 10 categories. In most instances, however, they were still receiving better than 50 percent of the recommended amounts for each of the below-standard micronutrients. The diets of Venetian and Spanish galley slaves, by comparison, came up short in 17 categories, but their individual category totals still exceeded those of the British ranker in almost every area.
### Table 39: Dietary Reference Intakes (DRIs) in percents

100 percent being the recommended level

The most glaring deficiencies of the British diet were calcium, sodium, copper, and vitamins A, C, E, and K, which are all essential nutrients. The long-term physiological effects of existing on such a diet are briefly described below (Table 40).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nutrient</th>
<th>Etiology and symptoms of deficiency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Calcium</strong></td>
<td>Calcium would be drawn out of bones to make up for dietary deficiency; eventually, this would result in weakness of the bones. If the body were unable to replace the needed calcium in blood plasma, the result would have been muscle cramps, weakness, and eventually psychological symptoms such as depression, dementia, and psychosis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Copper</strong></td>
<td>Clinically significant copper deficiency usually occurs only in individuals with genetic abnormality, so symptoms are almost never observed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Magnesium</strong></td>
<td>In cases of dietary deficiency, magnesium is conserved by the kidneys fairly efficiently, delaying the onset of symptoms, which include anorexia, vomiting, lethargy, weakness, and muscle tremors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Potassium</strong></td>
<td>The kidneys conserve potassium if there is not enough provided in the diet, but the conservation is less efficient than for sodium or magnesium. Hypokalemia is worsened by chronic diarrhea and leads to muscle weakness, muscle cramps, and the potential for cardiac arrhythmias.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sodium</strong></td>
<td>When sodium intake is insufficient, the kidneys restrict sodium output to maintain acceptable levels. Severe hyponatremia would result in decreased extracellular fluid and associated circulatory changes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Folate</strong></td>
<td>Deficiency of folate contributes to anemia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Niacin</strong></td>
<td>Severe deficiency leads to pellagra; initial symptoms include rashes and lesions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pantothenic acid</strong></td>
<td>Experimentally induced deficiency caused malaise and stomachaches.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Riboflavin</strong></td>
<td>Insufficient intake can cause pallor along with discolorations and lesions of the mouth and skin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Thiamin</strong></td>
<td>Deficiency causes mental symptoms including fatigue, irritation, poor memory, and sleep disturbances, along with physical symptoms such as chest pain, anorexia, stomachache, and constipation. Advanced deficiency causes various forms of beri-beri.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vitamin A</strong></td>
<td>Lack of Vitamin A leads to changes in the eyes, resulting in night blindness and eventually poor vision or blindness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vitamin B-6</strong></td>
<td>Lowered levels can cause anemia in adults.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vitamin C</strong></td>
<td>Consumption of less than 10mg of Vitamin C per day puts individuals at risk of scurvy if those levels are maintained for 3 to 6 months. In the absence of full scurvy, Vitamin C deficiency can make individuals bleed and bruise more easily, and make wounds fail to heal or old wounds break out again.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vitamin E</strong></td>
<td>In children, lack of Vitamin E results in loss of position sense, lack of reflexes, and muscle weakness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vitamin K</strong></td>
<td>Vitamin K is necessary for the synthesis of clotting factors; a deficiency in the diet causes easy bruising, increased bleeding, bleeding from the mucous membranes, and bleeding from wounds that will not heal.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 40: Effects of micronutritional deficiencies on the British soldier

152
Thus, without ever appearing on the battlefield, military life took its toll on the British rank and file. Their diet and daily exposure to the elements left them susceptible to various vitamin deficiency-related diseases, such as scurvy and rickets, as well as more common ailments such as cramps, dysentery, rheumatism, gout, stomach ulcerations, influenza, pneumonia, diarrhea, fevers of various sorts, and respiratory infections, in addition to the symptoms outlined above.

Of equal importance was the effect of nutrition on immune function, a crucial consideration for keeping a soldier at fighting strength and available for duty. Disease resistance and disease severity are directly related to nutrition, as recent medical literature confirms. As A. Marcos et al. write in their treatise on nutrition and disease, “the adequate functioning of this [immune] system is critically determined by nutrition, and, as a consequence, so is risk of illness.” Moreover, Marcos states that “nutritional deprivation, such as protein energy malnutrition (PEM), often causes immunodeficiency leading to increased frequency and severity of infection, thymus atrophy, and wasting of peripheral lymphoid tissue.” Marcos goes on to conclude that high-intensity physical activity works to “suppress immune response parameters…and that improper nutrition and psychological stress increase the negative effects of heavy exertion upon the immune system.” Research by Philip Calder and Samantha Kew supports this thesis. They write that “undernutrition impairs the immune system, suppressing immune functions that are fundamental to host protection against pathogenic organisms.” This is because essential nutrients “are involved in the molecular and cellular responses to challenges of the immune system.”
Another important consideration affecting the British soldier’s susceptibility to disease is the deleterious effects of physical and emotional stress on the body. The various stressors and individual responses make this a complex issue to untangle. It has been shown, however, that “chronic stress experienced by soldiers in wartime leads to immunosuppression,” as Danielle Merino has pointed out.\(^{71}\) Her study of French soldiers undergoing three weeks of conditioning and a five-day combat course provides evidence that extreme physical exertion “induces alterations in the immune system.”\(^{72}\) Merino also cites a study showing that a restricted diet enhances this effect.\(^{73}\) Immunosuppression can occur in a relatively short time: cellular immune responses were impaired in soldiers after just eight weeks of training.\(^{74}\) Stress also affects protein and electrolyte metabolism; adrenal hormones alter the rate of both these processes.\(^{75}\) Extreme fatigue, cramping, and diarrhea can result. Mention of these symptoms appears frequently in accounts of British soldiers. Additionally, basal caloric needs may increase 200 percent in times of stress and as much as 1,000 percent in severe trauma. Tissue repair and antibody formation may increase anywhere from 60 percent to 500 percent during stress and trauma.\(^{76}\)

While somewhat dated, medically speaking, and unlikely to be repeated for ethical reasons, the Ancel Keys et al. study of human starvation also provides further insight into the effects of slow starvation on the human body and psyche.\(^{77}\) They point out that increased morbidity from all infectious diseases was a byproduct of the starvation diets of concentration camp victims.\(^{78}\) This finding is corroborated by Chapman et al. who found that patients with fistulas who received optimal nutritional support had an 89 percent healing rate and just a 12 percent mortality rate, while those patients receiving minimal nutritional support had only a 37 percent incidence of healing and a 55 percent mortality.
rate.\textsuperscript{79} Linda Russell also provides evidence that proper nutrition is essential to wound healing; when such nutrition is absent, the healing process is slowed, and problems such as infection and scarring are more frequent.\textsuperscript{80}

The effects of ongoing nutritional neglect and physiological stress on disease rates is borne out by the British army medical records. Army medical department sick returns for the years 1810 through 1813 show that, on average, approximately one quarter of all effectives, 23.78 percent, were in regimental hospitals. Typhus, dysentery, and various fevers were particularly effective in laying men low;\textsuperscript{81} the men, weakened by malnutrition and hard campaigning, fell by the thousands. For those years, 1810 had the lowest rate with an average loss to all diseases of 18.8 percent; 1812, conversely, saw losses reach 29.43 percent of all soldiers in the Peninsula. During this period, British monthly sick rates dropped below 12 percent only once, in July 1810. Monthly rates exceeded 30 percent eight times, with the worst month being October 1812 when 37 percent of the men were on sick call.\textsuperscript{82} These numbers only include men who were incapacitated and in need of extended treatment. Those soldiers who were mildly ill and debilitated remained in the ranks and did the best they could, usually with the help of their comrades. The end result was 580,000 hospital admissions,\textsuperscript{83} from 1810 to 1814, leading to 55,000 disease-related deaths during the Peninsular War.\textsuperscript{84} Even when the effects were non-lethal, disease still removed men from frontline duty, and did so in surprising numbers.

Time in hospital, it should be noted, was not taken lightly or seen as a goldbricking method of avoiding campaigning. When a soldier entered the hospital, his pay stoppages were almost doubled to pay for rations and medical treatment.\textsuperscript{85} The soldier had precious
little pay after regular stoppages; giving up a large portion of what remained was not done unless a man had no choice. The condition of hospitals and the uneven level of care, highlighted by men’s experiences with purges, blistering, and bleeding, and surgeons’ work after battles, made hospital stays all that much more unattractive for the rank and file. Moreover, absence from one’s comrades could result in a loss of reputation. Prolonged time away from the unit could, as Anton elucidated, be imputed as “a desire of avoiding hard duty and field danger. Thus the absentee is considered a scheming dissembler…until death proves him a liar.”

When he managed to avoid succumbing to disease, the British soldier’s primary concerns were not the French, but the acquisition of food and drink. The key to understanding the British soldier’s well-earned reputation as a plunderer of every available foodstuff can be found in the nutritional analyses, above, and in the obvious consequences of near-starvation. The supplied rations of the British soldier were grossly insufficient from a nutritional viewpoint; this is readily apparent when compared to the various soldier diets described above. The British ranker marched, fought, and expended calories in a manner not dissimilar to that of the soldier in the English Civil, yet his diet was substantially less in every way. And while the Roman soldier used a portion of his energy expenditure fortifying his camp every night, such an effort would not require a diet that supplied almost three times the nutrients of the British soldier’s diet. Plain and simple, the rations of the Roman soldier were intended to keep him fit and available for active duty, while those of the British soldier were woefully inadequate and worked to debilitate him in relatively short order.
When total energy expenditures (TEE)\textsuperscript{90} are figured in, it becomes readily apparent that the British soldier’s diet fell well short of meeting his daily needs. When the caloric needs are calculated for men aged 15 to 40, of varying heights from 5 feet 1 and a half inches to about five feet 11 inches, and with body mass indexes of 20 to 22,\textsuperscript{91} the minimums needed to sustain weight range from 2,500 to almost 3,500 calories, with an average just under 3,000 calories.\textsuperscript{92} For the prototypical British recruit of 5 feet 6 and a half inches and 22 years of age weighing about 136 pounds,\textsuperscript{93} the minimum caloric requirements are 3,040, almost matching the average exactly.\textsuperscript{94} Thus, even when supplied, the daily rations for the British ranker fall almost 33 percent below the absolute minimums needed for men not facing the stresses and exertions of campaign and battle.

In regard to rations, two aspects stand out when considering primary source accounts of the British soldier on campaign: rations were delivered sporadically and the men lived anything but a sedentary existence. The diaries, journals, letters, and memoirs of enlisted men provide enough specifics related to the exigencies of campaign life and the continual breakdown of the commissariat that mini-case studies can be constructed; these examples of the nutritional demands placed on the British soldier while on campaign can be analyzed in conjunction with the caloric values of the partial rations received. Together, they illustrate the untenable nature of army life for the ranker and the impossibility of trying to sustain health on army rations alone. The table below (Table 41) reveals the kinds of experiences and physiological demands commonly shared by British soldiers in the field.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Campaign Experience</th>
<th>Total Energy Expenditure</th>
<th>Rations</th>
<th>Calories provided</th>
<th>Approximate caloric deficit</th>
<th>Potential weight loss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Five days in camp</td>
<td>About 15,000 cal. if at rest</td>
<td>One pound of biscuit and some acorns</td>
<td>1,294 cal. plus 110 cal. per oz of acorns</td>
<td>12,120 cal. assuming 8oz of acorns</td>
<td>3.4 lbs, plus effects of protein deficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marched 25 miles and then ran four miles into battle</td>
<td>2,438 cal. marching and 384 cal. running plus about 3,000 cal. normal daily expenditure</td>
<td>Standard</td>
<td>2,350 cal.</td>
<td>3,472 cal.</td>
<td>1 lb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One day without rations</td>
<td>3,000 cal.</td>
<td>One quart of roasted chestnuts</td>
<td>1,401 cal.</td>
<td>1,599 cal.</td>
<td>0.4 lbs, plus effects of protein deficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marching four and a half days</td>
<td>9,750 cal. marching plus about 12,000 cal. normal daily expenditure</td>
<td>A half allowance of biscuit</td>
<td>728 cal.</td>
<td>21,669 cal.</td>
<td>6 lbs, plus effects of protein deficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two days without rations</td>
<td>6,000 cal.</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>6,000 cal.</td>
<td>1.6 lbs, plus effects of protein deficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two days without bread or rum while pursuing French</td>
<td>3,900 cal. marching, and about 6,000 cal. normal daily expenditure</td>
<td>Two pounds of meat (with bone)</td>
<td>1,106 cal.</td>
<td>8,794 cal.</td>
<td>2.4 lbs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 41: Extraordinary Caloric Expenditures
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Campaign Experience</th>
<th>Total Energy Expenditure</th>
<th>Rations</th>
<th>Calories provided</th>
<th>Approximate caloric deficit</th>
<th>Potential weight loss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A march of 16 miles&lt;sup&gt;109&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>1,560 cal. plus about 3,000 cal. normal daily expenditure</td>
<td>Standard with 2oz. of rice</td>
<td>2,350 cal. plus 65 cal. for rice&lt;sup&gt;110&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>2,145 cal.</td>
<td>0.6 lbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 days on the march&lt;sup&gt;111&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>23,400 cal. marching plus about 36,000 cal. normal daily expenditure</td>
<td>Three pounds of biscuit and bean tops&lt;sup&gt;112&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>4,368 cal. plus bean tops</td>
<td>55,032 cal.</td>
<td>15.3 lbs, plus effects of protein deficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One day without rations&lt;sup&gt;113&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>3,000 cal.</td>
<td>Ground bark</td>
<td>None&lt;sup&gt;114&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>3,000 cal.</td>
<td>0.8 lbs, plus effects of protein deficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A 42-mile march over one day&lt;sup&gt;115&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>4,095 cal. marching plus about 3,000 cal. normal daily expenditure</td>
<td>Standard</td>
<td>2,350 cal.</td>
<td>4,745 cal.</td>
<td>1.3 lbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two-week march without bread&lt;sup&gt;116&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>27,300 cal. marching plus about 42,000 cal. normal daily expenditure</td>
<td>Meat and coarse flour mixed with bran and chopped straw&lt;sup&gt;117&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>7,742 cal. from meat, little to none from bread replacement&lt;sup&gt;118&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>61,558 cal.</td>
<td>17 lbs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Continued
Table 41 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Campaign Experience</th>
<th>Total Energy Expenditure</th>
<th>Rations</th>
<th>Calories provided</th>
<th>Approximate caloric deficit</th>
<th>Potential weight loss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A 30-mile march in a day and a half.(^{119})</td>
<td>2,925 cal. plus about 6,000 cal. normal daily expenditure</td>
<td>Standard</td>
<td>2,350 cal. plus 65 cal. for rice(^{120})</td>
<td>2,145 cal.</td>
<td>0.6 lbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A three-day march without any food(^{121})</td>
<td>5,850 cal. marching plus about 9,000 cal. normal daily expenditure</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>4,368 cal. plus bean tops</td>
<td>55,032 cal.</td>
<td>15.3 lbs, plus effects of protein deficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three days on minimum rations(^{122})</td>
<td>9,000 cal., if at rest; 5850 cal. additional if marching</td>
<td>2 oz. bread and 2 oz. flour</td>
<td>None(^{123})</td>
<td>3,000 cal.</td>
<td>0.8 lbs, plus effects of protein deficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marching 16 hours in a day(^{124})</td>
<td>6,240 cal. marching plus about 3,000 cal. normal daily expenditure</td>
<td>Standard</td>
<td>2,350 cal.</td>
<td>4,745 cal.</td>
<td>1.3 lbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marched 32 miles in two days over the mountains(^{125})</td>
<td>3,120 cal. marching plus about 6,000 cal. normal daily expenditure</td>
<td>Standard but with little or no water</td>
<td>7,742 cal. from meat, little to none from bread replacement(^{126})</td>
<td>61,558 cal.</td>
<td>17 lbs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Continued

Table 41
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Campaign Experience</th>
<th>Total Energy Expenditure</th>
<th>Rations</th>
<th>Calories provided</th>
<th>Approximate caloric deficit</th>
<th>Potential weight loss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Two days march^{127}</td>
<td>3,900 cal. marching plus about 6,000 cal. normal daily expenditure</td>
<td>Two pounds of biscuit and half rum ration</td>
<td>3,083 cal.</td>
<td>6,818 cal.</td>
<td>1.9 lbs, plus effects of protein deficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A routine of 18 miles in one day^{128}</td>
<td>5,070 cal. marching plus about 3,000 cal. normal daily expenditure</td>
<td>Standard</td>
<td>2,350 cal.</td>
<td>5,720 cal.</td>
<td>1.6 lbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three day march^{129}</td>
<td>5,850 cal. marching plus about 9,000 cal. normal daily expenditure</td>
<td>One pound of bread and meat, barley acorns, and small beans</td>
<td>2,009 cal. for bread and meat, 110 cal. per oz of acorns, 254 cal. per cup of beans^{130}</td>
<td>12,367 cal. with 2 oz acorns and 1 cup beans</td>
<td>3.4 lbs, plus effects of protein deficiency</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 41: Extraordinary Caloric Expenditures

These nutritional and caloric deficiencies (and the related potential weight losses), make it clear that without regular rations the men were forced to supplement their diets in any way they could in order to survive. They simply had no choice. The exertions outlined in the table above reveal the degree to which a soldier was stressed physically; the frequency with which the men went without food provides insight into how often the commissariat failed to feed the men adequately. The sporadic delivery of rations was the crucial element affecting the British soldier’s health and was probably the primary...
determinant in shaping his attitudes toward looting. Lynn argues that similar supply inconsistencies and failures led Bourbon troops of the mid 17th century to indiscriminately seize food and goods within French borders, a practice Lynn has labeled the “Tax of Violence.”¹³¹ Men simply will not willingly starve when food is available and can be stolen or taken by force.

The seminal point when considering the diet of the British soldier is the commissariat’s routine failure to deliver rations on a day-to-day basis. The protein ration is a case in point. Though the soldier’s daily fare provided a minimum level of protein, it must be remembered that a day’s rations would not have sustained the British ranker over more than a 24-hour period. Missing even one day’s rations meant would that the men, without a nutritional reserve, would have begun to feel the adverse affects protein deficiency almost immediately. The younger members of the army, in particular, would have borne the lack of rations, particularly protein, less well than the older men.

Somewhat surprisingly, the extraordinary caloric expenditure table shows that even difficult marches of 20 miles and more over multiple days had only a marginal caloric effect on the men if they received their rations daily. The micronutritional deficiencies, to be sure, remained constant, but if the men were fed as regulations required, the health issues related to energy depletion would have been minimized.

For this study of the British soldier, perhaps the most cogent aspect of Keys’ examination of starvation deals with the psychophysiological effects of chronic malnutrition. He notes that the first symptoms of food deficiency (semi-starvation) are languor, extreme fatigue, loss of coordination, muscle soreness, and general debilitation with instances of fainting and just giving up.¹³² All these terms closely resemble those
describing the British soldier on the retreat to Corunna, and elsewhere. The manifestations of physiological deterioration also included a lowering of the speed of autonomic functions, slowed reflexes, loss of sensation in the extremities, intolerance toward noise and cold, and a loss of ambition. These symptoms, too, made their way into soldier accounts. A summation of the near-starvation experience by a hospitalized survivor of the Warsaw ghetto of 1941-1943 also matches characterizations of the effect on the British soldier of the Peninsular War: “The strength melts away as the wax of a candle.”

Keys also contends that cognitive functions, beginning with perception but soon including the more complex thought processes that control moral reasoning and social interaction, are slowly altered during the stages of starvation. The thoughts and efforts of the starving turn increasingly toward the acquisition of food. A type of lethargy and apathy, usually first exhibited regarding personal appearance, gives way to irritability and outbursts of anger as food becomes the sole motivating force. As normal activities and pursuits are curtailed, meaningful social interactions are reduced and moral restraints are lost. As an example of this, Keys cites the general behavior pattern of many near-starving women. Even though nutritional deficiencies work physiologically to decrease sex drive, the numbers of women in such situations offering themselves for food increases. Key also points out that as demand for food escalates, so do instances of thievery and violence. G. B. Layton, a captured British medical officer who witnessed the short and long-term effects of slow starvation in a number of German prisoner-of-war camps during World War Two, confirmed the impact of prolonged nutritional deficiency on the human psyche. “None of the other hardships,” he recalled, “suffered by fighting men
observed by me brought about such a rapid or complete degeneration of character as chronic starvation."\textsuperscript{140}

While the British soldier only rarely reached the threshold of actual starvation, prolonged periods of nutritional deprivation certainly pushed him near enough to the edge to experience many of the physical and psychological symptoms. His actions regarding food and drink, and the extent to which he would go to obtain them, certainly make sense in this context. Driven by physiological and psychological impulses over which he had limited control, the British soldier had little choice but to become a consummate plunderer, forever on the lookout for food of any kind and drink if he could find it. It is obvious that without individual initiative in this regard, the ranker would have perished.

The British soldier was nothing if not creative and resourceful in his quest to acquire rations of the type and quantity denied him by the commissariat. In this regard, at least, the collective memory is accurate, for the British rank and file were as ingenious as they were thorough in their scavenging. John Macfarlane of the Highland Light Infantry fondly reminisced about the time he and his six messmates were boarded with a Spanish family near Astorga. The family made large loaves of bread daily but watched the soldiers carefully to guard against theft. The men contrived to divert them off their guard and successfully absconded with a six to eight pound loaf which was quickly divided into shares. Macfarlane’s account exudes the men’s joy at devouring the hot loaf.\textsuperscript{141} An officer of the 43\textsuperscript{rd}, Anthony Hamilton, found the men of his battalion equally enterprising. One or more of them would distract the regimental bakers while comrades, using their bayonets, would make holes in the backs of ovens and “liberate” loaves for personal use.\textsuperscript{142} Green adds an interesting side note to these capers, admitting that when
he was on sentry duty he was forced to chase such men. “I ran after the bread-stealers,” he commented, “without having the least intention of catching them, knowing myself what is was to be hungry.”

Green, a longtime veteran of the 68th, also wrote of how the men, carrying their camp-kettles, would assail the battalion butchers in hopes of procuring leftovers from the bulls slaughtered for the day’s meal: “It was a common practice with us to catch the blood, which we boiled…and this served as a substitute for bread.” Green goes on to describe the men, covered with blood, falling over one another, scrambling about to obtain a share.

Gathering where the bullocks were killed appears to have been a common method of attaining additional nutrition, if in less than usually desirable commodities. A sergeant of the 7th, John Cooper, wrote of jostling with other soldiers in order to obtain the liver, tail, and blood of the animals. Hard-pressed officers did the same; George Bell, an officer in the 34th who would rise to major-general, curried favor with the brigade butcher in order to gain access to these items without having to fight for them. Bell was occasionally rewarded by the butcher with a bullock’s or sheep’s head. He called these commodities “luxuries,” for the “army was long unpaid and our credit low.”

Douglass pitied the peasants who drove their flocks of sheep and goats through the town in which his unit was billeted, but that didn’t stop him from taking advantage of the situation. “We had nothing more [to do],” he pleasantly remembered, “than to stand at the door and choose either sheep or goat, lay hold of him and drag him in and pop him into the kettle.” Such days of easy pickings were rare, however, and exposed the soldier to possible disciplinary actions.
William O’Neil of the 8th remembered hunting wild pigs after a march; he knew it was against orders, “but we were literally starving to death.” Successful in his hunt, O’Neil carried the pig back to camp. His adjutant discovered the pig, but instead of reporting him, offered a doubloon for it. “But food, in our condition, was far more precious than money,” O’Neil recalled, “and we refused his offer.” Later, O’Neil wisely sent a quarter of the pig to the officer in appreciation for not reporting him.148

Feelings of shame, more than fear of punishment, surface in many of the first-person chronicles relating instances of food theft. William Surtees remembered his remorse for stealing a cabbage from a field: “It is impossible to justify such an act, but the reader will be convinced, I trust, that sheer hunger alone urged me to the perpetration of this crime.” Surtees also wrote of his embarrassment at having stooped to “such disgraceful means of satisfying…hunger,” and made clear that he was forced to steal because “hunger is not easily borne, accompanied by incessant fatigue.”149

Green also wrote of experiencing similar regret for stealing raw wheat from a Spanish peasant and fighting another Spanish commoner over a bag of flour. “Hunger often caused us to do things, “Green explained, “which we should have been shamed to do, if we had plenty.” 150 He also added:

I could not help reflecting on the misery and horrors of war: it was hunger, and that alone, that drove many of us frequently to take what was not our own. Had we been found, we should have been severely punished…but hunger is a sharp thorn, and few would have acted otherwise.151

In most circumstances, the soldier’s fate for plundering, should he be discovered, likely lay in how his officer interpreted the act, and as in O’Neil’s case, on how willing the officer was to share the spoils. Edward Costello of the 95th was often in the thick of
things when it came to plundering for food; he once shot a goat near a Spanish village, knowing his actions could be as fatal to him as they were to the goat. He was in the process of cutting it up when Wellington rode by. “I felt as if the noose were already around my neck,” Costello later recollected, still haunted by his close call. Wellington, for whatever reason, ignored him and his colonel then rode up and congratulated Costello, tacitly sanctioning the act. Much relieved, Costello shared the goat with him.152

This practice of sharing plunder with officers was so prevalent that Wellington complained to F.S. Larpent, the Judge Advocate General of the British army in the Peninsular. “How can you expect,” he asked angrily, “a Court to find an officer guilty…when it is comprised of members who are all guilty of more or less the same?”153

Lawrence also had a close call in this regard, one that could have led to his hanging. Having purloined a chicken from a nearby farm, Lawrence wrung its neck and put it out of sight under his regulation stovepipe hat. As he returned to camp, parade was called. Just as his captain was walking by Lawrence, the still-living chicken let out a terrible noise, to the astonishment of the captain and the horror of Lawrence. When asked for an explanation, Lawrence calmly explained that there was a chicken under his cap and then claimed that he had purchased it while foraging. Luckily for Lawrence, his officer laughed it off, commenting that he had no doubt that Lawrence “offered four, but took it for five,” meaning he knew that Lawrence had stolen it. Amazed at his luck, Lawrence wrote that “he was perfectly right, but I did not think it would have passed off so smoothly, as many in the Peninsula were hung for plunder.”154 Lawrence soon became an accomplished plunderer of pigs, wheat, sausages, bacon, and any foodstuffs he could search out.155 He was also not averse to stealing hidden money when he was lucky
enough to find it, as such money could be spent on food and drink, temporally relieving want.156

Those officers without a source of outside income often suffered in the same way as did the common soldier. Knowles, writing home in September of 1812, recorded that

The officers are extremely ill off, not having a farthing to purchase the comforts which are necessary to men nearly reduced to skeletons by wounds and sickness…[some] have sold their horses, asses, or mules; others their epaulettes, watches, rings, etc., and to the disgrace of John Bull, others have perished for want.157

Knowles’ letters include numerous requests for additional funds from home, pleading for money so he could buy necessities. In a little over a year he asked for £85.158 Douglass similarly asserted that many of the junior grade officers were financially unable to participate in the officers’ mess, commenting that in 19 cases out of 20 these young men “were, in respect of food, worse off than the private soldier.” He then implied that officers “whose eyes were not always open” would be taken care of by the men in a quid pro quo arrangement.159 Some less-affluent officers came to depend upon such a process to provide the food that the army could not. Captain John Harley, for example, openly relied on his servant, Pat Dolan, to provide contraband food. He wrote that this bothered his conscience, “but necessity had no law, and we could not starve.”160 Such arrangements, however, were not without peril to the officer and would not protect the soldiers from possible disciplinary action should they be caught scrounging by another officer.

The British soldier, meanwhile, received one shilling a day. From this meager amount, the army withdrew money for meat, bread, brushes, pipeclay, losses, and other sums, such as the mandatory contribution to the old soldiers’ homes at Chelsea and
Kilmainham. Fortescue figured that such stoppages left the British private the
dumbfounding amount of approximately six shillings a month,\textsuperscript{161} often not enough to
purchase even a loaf of bread, locally. An empty purse prevented the ranker from
supplementing his diet; instead he turned to more ingenious ways of procuring what the
commissariat failed to provide.

Desperate soldiers sometimes resorted to the “calms,” a type of confidence game
involving illegal trading with peasants. The scam entailed trading blankets or some
military-issue item for local currency. At some point during the exchange, a comrade, his
arm decorated with sergeant’s stripes, would interrupt the proceedings, declaring them
illegal and demanding that the soldier return the money. In the confusion, the soldier
would give back flattened uniform buttons, passing them off as shillings. The peasant,
feeling lucky to have avoided legal entanglement, would go on his way unaware that he
had been taken. The soldier and his comrade would then divide the loot and spend it on
food and drink.\textsuperscript{162} Using flattened buttons as shillings appears to have been a common
ruse, as Major Gordon of the Royal Scots discovered much to his regret. Gordon sent his
servant among the men to get change for a guinea and was shocked to discover that 17 of
the 21 shillings he received in exchange were soldiers’ buttons! He then paraded the men
and fined those who were missing any buttons.\textsuperscript{163}

Under such circumstances, even the presence of the French did little to stem the
men’s “reconnoitering.” James Gunn of the 42\textsuperscript{nd} describes gathering potatoes in a field
near Pamplona in 1812 just as a French picket was doing the same. They ignored each
other and took all the potatoes they could carry.\textsuperscript{164} Grattan also saw no reason to pass up
a meal just because the French were nearby. He related the tale of how a skirmish with
French light cavalry at Burgos in 1812 was interrupted when a large portion of the British army appeared to be retreating en masse. Grattan and the French turned and watched in amazement; they quickly realized that the British army was not in retreat, but in pursuit of hundreds of wild swine. Grattan called the pursuit a success, as “scarcely one in a hundred [swine] escaped unhurt.” After securing the pigs, the British contingent returned to the ranks and the skirmishing then resumed. Grattan described the episode as being “the most curious that came within my knowledge during the Peninsular campaign.”

Likewise, Robert Blakeney, an officer in the 28th, recalled being so desperately hungry that when he and his company discovered a small out-building filled with potatoes and fowls, the men sat down to dinner there and then, even though the French army was preparing to attack. Macfarlane also wrote of being so fatigued from want of food that he fell asleep in a house that was partially ablaze. He awake in time to scrounge hard potatoes in the ruins and sat down to scrape flour from a blanket, eating the flour and potatoes even as the French approached. He managed to escape, but noted, “I went forward, but very weakly, for the want of food….I could scarcely stand on my feet.”

Cooper provides an additional anecdote that illustrates how even a firefight did little to dissuade the men from searching for and sharing food and drink. During the battle of Othes, 27 February 1814, a house was broken into and a large store of wine discovered. It was quickly handed out, as Cooper explains, “so that the game was ‘Drink, Fire, and Drink.’” Other soldiers “engaged in stoning and bagging the wandering poultry.”

A Sergeant Johnson of the Scots Greys recorded in his journal that he and his comrades had been without food for two days before Waterloo. Writing the night before the battle, he stated that the “keen tortures of hunger” forced the men to pilfer pigs and
poultry from a nearby farmhouse whose owner had refused to sell them any food. He notes that his commanding officer, Colonel Hamilton, joined the Greys and men from a number of highland infantry regiments around the campfire and shared the plunder, with Hamilton supplying the brandy.\textsuperscript{169}

Like Colonel Hamilton, officers were often forced to ignore Wellington’s strict edicts regarding looting and look the other way as they realized that the men were in extremis. Macfarlane wrote, approvingly, of his colonel’s actions:

[The colonel] saw a field of turnips, he came back and called a man of each mess for turnips and water. Our Colonel knew that we had to have something to eat. Wood was sought after, and fires kindles. Afterwards, we got some flour served out. We made dumplings, or round balls, and boiled them. This was done as soon as possible for we were hungry.\textsuperscript{170}

Even officers who were strict disciplinarians, like “Black Bob” Craufurd, were forced to bend a little as they recognized the plight of the men was beyond human endurance. Harris recorded with amazement how Craufurd feigned ignorance at what the men were doing right under his eyes during the retreat to Corunna:

Craufurd was, I remember, terribly severe, during this retreat, if he caught anything like pilfering amongst the men. As we stood, however, during this short halt, a very tempting turnip-field was close on the side of us, and several of the men were so ravenous, that although he was in our very ranks, they stepped into the field and helped themselves to the turnips, devouring them like famishing wolves. He either did not or would not observe the delinquency this time.\textsuperscript{171}

Colonel John Leach wrote about the impossibility of surviving under the unremitting conditions of campaign life and little food. With a bitterness borne of experience, he wryly commented that “if any corpulent person despairs of reducing his weight….I strongly recommend a few week’s change of air and scene [with the army]…taking especially good care to observe the same rules and regulations for
diet….If that fails to have the desired effect, I give him up.” Cooper concurred with this assessment, remarking that “When a man entered upon a soldier’s life…he should have parted with half his stomach.” A friend of Costello in the 95th voiced a similar complaint after a bout of army-ration induced food poisoning: “when I came into it [the army] I had a stomach like any Christian; but now, oh God, have mercy on my poor stomach, that for want of Christian food is turned into a scavenger’s cart, obliged to take in every rubbish.” Another soldier, chosen to feed biscuits to Wellington’s hounds, realized just how far he had fallen. “I was very hungry,” he remembered, “and thought it a good job…as we got our own fill….I sighed, as I fed the dogs, over my humble station, and ruined hopes.” Two comments, one by Major Charles Napier and another by a common soldier, best sum up the soldier’s point of view regarding the trials of army life. In a letter to his mother, written in 1811, Napier complained, “We are on biscuit full of maggots, and though not a bad soldier, hang me if I can relish maggots. We suffer much in point of food.” The ranker, complaining to a mate, provides the viewpoint from the bottom. “Bill,” he grumbled, “the parliament and the great men at home…don’t know anything about individjals [sic]…they don’t know that you are damned tired, and that I hae [sic] got no pong [pao, which is Portuguese for bread].”

Men jokingly made references to their daily misery, but their letters, journals, and memoirs often contain resentful passages, complaining of their treatment, with the lack of food being their chief concern. The account of Moyle Sherer, an officer in the 34th, is representative. His explanation for why men plunder is surprisingly astute. Given that most officers had the financial means to buy supplemental food from the locals and, thus,
removed themselves from the common soldier’s daily food struggles, Sherer’s insight is that much more remarkable. He argued that

Setting aside assault or battles, the soldier is often harassed with toil and hunger, impatient and penniless…when troops are neither fed, clothed, or paid with regularity, they are tempted beyond their strength…the military man, who has served, learns how and when to make allowances for their disorders, which the world is ever too forward to characterize as barbarous and licentious.178

With the barest minimums of food, shelter, and clothing, key factors necessary to sustain physical health and morale, the soldiers were pushed to their limits. One alternative was desertion, a problem that plagued the British army throughout the French Wars. It constituted no less than 20 percent of punishable offenses in the British army for the year 1809, and as much as almost 52 percent in 1812.179 Using annual percentages, desertion made up approximately 37 percent of all offenses from 1800 to 1815. Desertion was also a bane to the French army throughout the war, despite Napoleon’s efforts to inculcate his soldiers with proper military ideals. This was because, as Michael Hughes points out, “One of the sentiments that emerges the most frequently in the writings of French troops is misery.”180 Only in their leniency toward deserters did the French experience with deserters differ from that of the British.181

Desertion, however, was a frequently fatal decision for the British soldier, due to the consequences of being caught or captured; it also stigmatized those lucky enough to run away and return without arousing official notice. The men in the deserter’s unit were rarely deceived, even if their officers occasionally were, and ostracism usually followed. Desertion was a difficult choice under any circumstances, but doubly so in a foreign land for men without the ability to speak the language. Many men deserted to look for food,
others because they became lost, were too inebriated to make their way back to their units, or a combination of both. William Surtees, a veteran of the 56th Foot, watched with great pity as seven such men were shot, all of them pleading that they were forced to desert from want of food and clothing. Surtees recorded that he “felt sick at heart; a sort of loathing [for the army] ensued.” Arthur Gilbert, in his study of the 18th-century British soldier, has discovered that approximately 30 percent of prosecuted desertion cases involved men trying to rejoin their units. This is certainly in keeping with the picture of men deserting to look for food, which is one motivation for desertion that Gilbert omits in his analysis. Deserting was an extreme measure, in any case. Most men, instead, reacted to the forces that seemed intent on sapping their wills and ability to survive by literally closing ranks and bonding with their messmates. Attempts to share what food there was and withstand the never-ending hardships of campaigning became a collective endeavor.

Those remaining in the ranks may have found some of their only comfort in alcohol, whether army-supplied or scavenged. In a life that mixed hardship, misery, fatigue, iron discipline, terror, and a certain amount of hopelessness in equal measures, alcohol was an escape. Men craved it and went to great ends to obtain it in any form. When it came to drink, the British soldier had an unerring ability to ferret out liquor hidden by the locals no matter how well concealed. A desire for temporary enjoyment and a release from daily privation drove the men to drink in excess. The result was, as cavalry commander General John Slade remarked, that “drunkenness may justly be looked upon as the chief source of almost every crime of which a soldier is guilty.” The British soldier’s penchant for hard drinking was both the cause of much of his
misbehavior and a symbol of army neglect. The horrors of war would have caused many men to seek succor in hard liquor for chronic stress works on every man. But had their lives on campaign proved less harrowing, with food, shelter, and adequate clothing being regularly available, the men’s propensity for drink might have been significantly diminished. T. H. McGuffie also argues, with good reason, that some of the responsibility belongs to the army that supplied alcohol as part of the soldier’s regular rations. Green adds an important note when he wrote that the rum ration was normally distributed around midnight, hours after the soldiers’ last meal. Given that the soldiers were often without adequate rations, Green was unsurprised at the effects of alcohol on men with empty stomachs.\textsuperscript{185} Drink became the British soldier’s greatest vice, dispensed to the men by the very government that wished to control them and that did so little to meet their needs.\textsuperscript{186}

When the British ranker found alcohol in abundance, such as at Villafranco, on the retreat to Corunna, and after successful sieges, discipline broke down as the men sated themselves. Alcohol worked to lower inhibitions; combined with privations and need, it had a deleterious effect on the men’s behavior. Men fell out on marches due to a combination of fatigue and intoxication, they fired houses, and they committed various crimes, mostly with food, more ardent spirits, or women as their objectives. These same behaviors were repeated and often exceeded after successful siege assaults.

The discrepancy between the men’s suffering, resulting in a need for drink, and officers’ perceptions is exemplified in one series of parallel incidents on the retreat to Corunna. Harris gives us the particulars. Towards dusk one night on the terrible retreat, he came across a man and a woman, clasped in each other’s arms, dying in the snow. He
knew them both and understood that the march, the elements, and lack of food had spelled their demise. He grieved that he could do nothing for them. Blakeney, an officer, saw a similar scene, this time with a man, woman, and child all expired in the snow and clinging to each other. Because there was a cask of some sort in their midst, Blakeney assumed the three had drunk themselves into a stupor. He chalked their deaths up to “exhaustion, depravity, or a mixture of both,” and exhibited neither concern nor compassion. Few officers grasped that privation and hopelessness were the real root causes of the soldier’s alcoholic excesses. Such excess evolved, in many cases, to alcoholism, which increased the men’s dependence on alcohol, driving them to extreme measures to obtain it.

The common soldier and the officers that led them were, for the most part, distinctly different types of men, with backgrounds and experiences divergent enough to allow coexistence without a real understanding of the exigencies of each other’s daily lives. British soldiers expected their officers to be gentlemen, with education, manners, incomes, and leadership capacity, all of which the rank and file assumed to be natural endowments of high-born men. Such was how common men viewed their social superiors within the stratified societal hierarchy of Georgian Britain. Most officers, in turn, were restrained by cultural norms from perceiving the common soldier as equals, and treated them accordingly. The social chasm between the officer corps and the enlisted men left most officers disconnected from the experiences, needs, and attitudes of the men they led. Thus, the ranker sought drink for pleasure and escape from the daily grind of military life while his officer marveled at what he perceived as folly and weakness of character.
Not all of the officers were inured to the men’s plight, but most considered the health and well-being of the men to be the responsibility of the army as a whole, and not something with which they should be overly concerned. Two exceptions stand out and speak to how the quality of the soldier’s lives could have been improved had concerted efforts been made. Surtees records, with gratitude, the efforts of a new officer who somehow procured for the men “plenty of oatmeal and milk” in place of the daily ration of bread and meat. The diet had a positive effect, as Surtees recalled. “Our wasted bodies,” he wrote, “began shortly to resume quite another appearance.”

An even more ambitious plan was put into action by Major Robinson, who was perceptive enough to note the sick rate differences between officers and enlisted men, and concerned enough to try to alter the men’s diets in order to remedy the problem. Taking his “Kitchin physick” solution to Wellington, Robinson boldly proposed it as feasible on a divisional level. Robinson proudly noted how improved nutrition made a difference:

The Army has been dreadfully sickly until within the last fortnight, the men are now recovering fast—One Battalion of Guards [1st Regiment], that joined the Army in October last in front of Salamanca, has buried near seven hundred men in the course of the winter [actually 800]—my old Regt [38th] buried 150 in this town, yet in no place are the Officers sickly, on the contrary they are very healthy, & therefore as young and old underwent the same hardships and privations as the men during the retreat, the cause of such a difference must be a striking one; I ventured my opinion upon Lord W—and I think clearly proved to him that Kitchin physick was what the men wanted to restore their constitutions, that the ration was not enough with men who required every possible means to recruit their strength, & who had not money to purchase little comforts—That all the cases were declared by the Medical Staff to arise from poverty of blood and debilitation, for which reason every patient died of putrid fever of the most fatal kind— —The first thing I did on joining my Brigade was to examine the state of the Men’s Messes, and the Hospitals.; and obliged the reluctant Commissary to issue good Wine, instead of bad Rum, Bread instead of Biscuit, and Two ounces of Rice per man each day to put in their soup….I have been reaping the benefit of these regulations for ten days at least—150
men have been restored to the ranks, and no more new cases have occurred….This will prove to you, that good feeding has been all wanting—The Commissary of my Brigade made many objections, all of which were easily overruled, and I see no reason why the whole division…should not have been fed from their first coming into quarters—Wine is so plentiful that you can get the very best for 50 Dollars a Pipe—and Bread is so plenty, and excellent, that the whole country for Twenty miles around is supplied from hence—and yet our men have been eating hard ship biscuit with jaws scarcely able to crack the live stock in them.¹⁹²

Unfortunately, Robinson does not record Wellington’s response. In the end, however, nothing changed and the soldiers’ diets and rates of sickness returned to the norm. Nevertheless, his efforts on behalf of the men were unusually humane and would have made at least some difference over the long haul. But, as always, it was a matter of economics, and as long as most officers were financially capable of ensuring that they did not suffer the same wants as their men, nothing was done to improve the quality of army life.

Access to outside income was truly the distinguishing feature that separated the experiences of the rank and file and upper-echelon officers. A man could not purchase, say, his majority or lieutenant-colonelcy, and participate in the officer’s mess without a source of income in addition to his army pay. When uniform, horses, baggage, food, and personal accoutrements were considered, all of which came from the officer’s own purse, an officer could expect expenses in the £400 to £500 range. In contrast, a subaltern made but £129 a year in 1804. Outside costs to maintain the lifestyle required of a gentleman officer were so onerous that in 1815 the colonel of the Scots Greys laid down the edict that in order to be eligible for a cornetcy in his regiment, a young man must have at least £200 per annum, besides his army salary, at his disposal.¹⁹³
Such outside income allowed officers of means to do what the common soldier could not: buy food on campaign. In 1814, two pounds of bread and one pound each of sugar and soap together cost almost seven shillings,¹⁹⁴ which would have constituted over one month’s wages for a ranker, after deductions. Larpent willingly purchased a turkey at 25 shillings, tea at 22 to 25 shillings a pound, butter and cheeses at four shillings a pound, and brandy at seven shillings a bottle.¹⁹⁵ Similarly, Captain George Woodbury of the 18th Hussars never hesitated to purchase a seven pound wheel of cheese for 73 shillings and two cow tongues for 27 more.¹⁹⁶ George Hennell, an infantry officer of means, writes of paying three to hour shillings each for hares, two for partridges, and one shilling a pound for mutton. Purchasing the type of food described above was beyond the means of every common soldier. Hennell’s biggest complaint was about the quality of the local Spanish cutlery. “Their cutlery,” he grumbled, “is infamous & most of their earthenware is very clumsy.”¹⁹⁷ Such niceties were hardly the concern of the British ranker, who was naturally more intent on supplementing his sparse diet than he was on the condition of eating utensils, cups, and plates.

There is no way of knowing the percentages of officers with independent means and those who were financially insolvent and forced to rely on the men for food. Many of the accounts left to us by officers, however, contain references to hunting, servants, leisurely life, and the full bounty of the officer’s mess.¹⁹⁸ Sherer wrote of doing frequent business with the sutlers that followed the army. “Thus we were often well…supplied with many comforts,” he recalled, “such as teas, sugar, brandies, wines, segars [sic], &c.” He said that army life only lacked “books and the society of women.”¹⁹⁹ Sherer and officers of his means also bought food from peasants: “We paid liberally for everything…[and the
peasants] brought us constant supplies of bread, milk, eggs, poultry, honey, and excellent country wine.”

Edward Fitzgerald, who rarely recorded any mention of the men in his care, wrote home pleased to have found a French servant to act as valet, cook, shoemaker, and tailor. Fitzgerald’s cost for the man’s service was a mere 30 guineas a year. This was almost twice the yearly wages of a British ranker before deductions; using Fortescue’s calculation of available funds after stoppages, or about six shillings monthly, the salary for Fitzgerald’s servant was roughly equivalent to nearly nine year’s wages for the common soldier.

Obviously, there was a definite divide, more financial than anything else, but also social and cultural, that separated the ranker from the officers that led him. One constant in the majority of first-hand accounts left by British officers is how infrequently concerns related to the care of the soldiers are voiced. Complaints as to the cost of supplemental food and wine needed for the officer’s mess, colorful descriptions of the countryside and occasionally of local women, requests for money from home, and similar personal considerations abound. Little interest, though, is regularly expressed regarding the failures of the commissariat to feed the men, about clothing inadequacies, sickness rates, or the general welfare of the soldiers. The British soldier was expected to obey, regardless of his circumstances and attitude, and that was all the officers believed they needed to know. The British army operated on the basis of coercive compliance as officers considered their men of an inferior nature. Most officers believed that the common soldier could only be controlled through strict discipline and the fear of punishment. This expectation was very much in line with civilian attitudes toward the
lower socioeconomic classes. That the ranker was, instead, compelled by normative compliance generated by loyalty to his primary group, helps explain why the majority of officers, Wellington included, failed to better understand the motivations that underlay the behaviors of the rank and file. Such a supposition might also help account for the conflict between the negative stories and appraisals of the British soldier, supplied by select officers, and the historical record of the rankers’ actions and accomplishments.

It was the officer corps, however, that provided an essential sustaining motivation that helped the British soldier to face the difficulties of campaign and battle. The combination of Sir John Moore’s training and later Wellington’s strategic and tactical capabilities meshed with the unusually strong group bonds between the British soldier and his comrades to create an army that knew its business on the battlefield. The string of victories that resulted gave the men tremendous confidence in themselves and the army as a whole, particularly under Wellington’s command. The British ranker might not understand the nuance of Wellington’s strategic retreats after battlefield victories, but he learned that the British army would not be defeated in combat. This was more than a simple matter of pride: combat success increased survival chances. The men were well aware of the role Wellington played in this regard. Although he might spend their lives in siege assaults, Wellington normally husbanded them in battle; his tactical doctrine and battlefield management offered the greatest chance of success at the lowest possible cost. A comment by Kincaid, a long-time veteran of the 95th, epitomizes how the common soldier viewed Wellington. “The sight of his long nose among us,” wrote Kincaid, “was worth ten thousand men any day of the week. I will venture to say that there was not a heart in the army which did not beat more lightly when we heard the joyful news of his
arrival.” A soldier expressed similar feelings to Wheeler upon hearing that Wellington was given command of the Allied force during the Hundred Days campaign: “Glorious news. Nosey has got the command, won’t we give them a drubbing now.”

As Oman has pointed out, Wellington did “everything that would win confidence, but little that could attract affection.” Quick to punish and reluctant to praise, Wellington said much neither to the men’s credit nor liking. His lack of sympathy for the men ensured that Wellington would never be popular; his aloofness and flinty hardness distanced him from the soldiers he commanded. Yet, as John Cooke, a sergeant in the Light Division, observed: “I know that it has been said that Wellington was unpopular with the army….Now I can assert with respect to the Light Division that the troops rather liked him than otherwise…the troops possessed great confidence in him, nor did I ever hear a single individual express an opinion to the contrary.”

Kincaid further praised Wellington for teaching his subordinate officers warcraft, arguing that Wellington never left anything to chance and that “his energy and unswerving perseverance” turned the officers and men into “the most renowned army that Europe ever saw.” Kincaid also makes special note to comment that Wellington’s efforts made the British ranker feel confident; it was this belief in self, melded with primary group cohesion, which supported the soldier on campaign and on the battlefield.

Individual officers enhanced this confidence. Those who led by example and treated the men fairly were respected. Costello wrote that “our men divided the officers into two classes, the ‘come on’ and the ‘go on’ types.” Costello expressed great admiration for Captain Uniacke, who was one of the former. “None were seen so often in the van as Uniacke,” Costello expressed with pride, “his affability and personal courage
had rendered him the idol of the men of his company.” For similar reasons, Harris had great respect for Generals Rowland Hill and Robert Craufurd. Harris especially admired Craufurd, despite his hard ways, because Craufurd toiled with the men, shared their troubles, and made them successful.

This faith in themselves, Wellington, and select officers was of crucial importance, given the grave difficulties of campaign life. Success and the thread of trust that developed between the men and certain leaders helped the ranker face the hardships that were such a large part of the British soldier’s life. This connection helped establish the standards on which group mores were based. Military virtues such as unhesitatingly following orders to the letter, maintaining one’s place in a formation to ensure its integrity, keeping one’s weapon in fighting condition, and not straggling during marches all begin as external demands, forced on the men by officers representing military authority. Initially, the expectations of command were often enforced with coercive discipline. Gradually, however, the British soldier developed self-pride in his capacity to meet the demands placed upon him. This satisfaction and belief in his own worth soon extended to the redcoat’s group, company, battalion, and the army as a whole.

This process by which behavior, at first externally enforced then internalized by the British soldier, formed the key to the army’s success. The ranker’s willingness to adhere to a code of conduct based on military values established the basis of discipline and esprit de corps, the foundation of British military success. This transition was successfully accomplished because the demands of the army aligned with the norms of the soldier’s primary social group. The former demanded discipline, boldness, and steadiness under fire in order to ensure victory in battle, while the latter required it because it enhanced the
group’s chances for survival. The soldier’s personal identification with and loyalties to the group combined with a set of behavioral standards to provide the British soldier’s fundamental motivation to endure the tribulations of army life.

The self-confidence and pride the men derived from their personal and collective ability to adhere to British standards of discipline is evident in the tribute paid by the 95th Rifles to their just deceased commanding officer, General Robert Craufurd. Killed during the siege of Ciudad Rodrigo in 1812, Craufurd was a formidable disciplinarian who had trained the Light Division never to break ranks to find the easiest march route, as he considered any diversion that caused a march delay to be unacceptable. Craufurd was known to flog men who straggled or stopped to fill canteens in a stream. On the return march from his funeral, the Light Division came upon a water-filled excavation that was part of the siege works at Ciudad Rodrigo. The trench lay directly across the division’s march route. The Light Division trod straight through the obstacle, emerging wet and muddy on the other side, but proud for having displayed the same discipline and ardor that Craufurd had instilled in them. Such self-discipline and group pride are the cornerstones of unit cohesion.

This alignment of army and group purposes sometimes failed, mostly on campaign, when two aspects of the soldiers’ day-to-day existence created a conflict of interest between the army and the soldiers’ primary groups. The arbitrary and harsh nature of army discipline and the constant failure of the army to supply adequate rations often interacted to make army life almost untenable.

To his credit, Wellington did his best to ensure that the men were fed. The largest share of his dispatches deal with either trying to convince the Spanish to fulfill their
stated obligation to provide the British troops with food and funds, or requesting additional money to feed and pay the army from a rather parsimonious Parliament. Portugal and Spain had difficulties providing food for their own people, let alone their British allies, especially after the depredations of French armies. Wellington’s strategy, therefore, involved supplying his army by sea and with whatever provisions could be purchased by the commissariat from locals. Lack of available funds proved to be the greatest obstacle, as war costs by 1810 had risen to over £9 million, of which £6 million was in bullion or bills of exchange. In addition, provisions from America cost another £300,000 and debt for upkeep of the Portuguese army not met by the Portuguese government totaled another £1 million. In the Peninsula, the specie that was needed to meet expenditures was always in short supply. Wellington was so cash strapped in 1810 that he had repeated exchanges with the Secretary for War, Lord Liverpool, concerning the possibility of withdrawing the army. The army remained, but when the money supplied failed, the burden naturally fell on the common soldiers as rations and pay were cut or stopped altogether.

Equally troubling was the inability of the commissariat to fulfill their duties even when funds were available. The inefficiency of this branch drove Wellington to distraction. The logistical branch of the British army was a chaotic arrangement of overlapping jurisdictions and responsibilities. The commissariat was a sub-department of the Treasury under the command of a Commissary-General, meaning that the Commissary-General was not directly subordinate to Wellington. In the field, commissariat officers, who were technically civilians, no doubt coordinated their duties with Wellington’s needs, but he had no authority to discipline them. The commissariat’s
assignment included the procurement, storage, and transport of food, which included the purchasing or hiring of all mules, carts, and teamsters, who were civilians. Somewhat oddly, the commissariat was also involved in intelligence gathering.\textsuperscript{214} Arms and ammunition, in contrast, came from the Board of Ordnance, while pay fell to the Paymaster-General, and clothing and equipment to the Adjutant-General. These supporting services, including the commissariat, funneled their requests through a Quartermaster General who authorized issue.\textsuperscript{215}

The \textit{ad hoc} nature of this essential bureau did not well align with Wellington’s penchant for order. Wellington assigned a quartermaster assistant, and later deputy assistants, to each division in an effort to expedite requests and improve efficiency. In an effort to quell on-going disputes between the Ordnance and Commissary branches, Wellington had money from Parliament sent directly to him.\textsuperscript{216} This made Wellington personally responsible for the funds, which was a decision few men would have made. Should the money have been lost, mismanaged, or his spending questioned by Parliament, all responsibility fell to Wellington. More importantly, from his standpoint, the arrangement allowed him to exercise some control over the Ordnance and Commissary branches. Nevertheless, both supply arms found fulfilling their responsibilities nearly impossible. Given their enormous tasks, the lack of money, and the difficulties inherent in campaigning in foreign lands where food and supplies were dear and suspicion high, it is easy to see how these various supply branches became overwhelmed. It should be remembered that it is often easy, but not always prudent, to criticize a service solely on whether or not it fulfilled its duties as specified in the regulations. The commissariat, in particular, had an extraordinarily difficult job. The
work of the commissariat men began only after the day’s march, as they fanned out in search of deliverable foodstuffs. So in addition to the hardships of the march, these men were required to exert themselves almost continually, snatching rest only after scouring nearby areas.

It is fair, however, to evaluate the effects of their failures, which had dire consequences for the men, as has been shown. The men certainly blamed the commissariat. John Aitchison, an officer in the Scots Guards, wrote with evident anger at the incompetence of Colonel Willoughby Gordon, a recently assigned quartermaster who was overwhelmed by the responsibilities and the logistical nightmares. On the retreat to Salamanca in 1812, Gordon, lacking transport and an understanding of the Spanish road network, sent supplies along the wrong route and eventually guided the food to the rear. The men were reduced to eating acorns and searching the woods for pigs. Aitchison recorded that two men were shot for being successful in the latter endeavor.

Wellington’s similar exasperation with the branch is exemplified by his handling of a complaint lodged by a commissary officer against General Thomas Picton. The story was recorded by Ned Clinton, a commissary sergeant who witnessed the incident and found it worthy of retelling. Picton, a man of fiery temperament with a colorful vocabulary to match, was always assertive men it came to his men; he also had little tolerance for incompetence. At the siege of Badajoz in 1812, Picton berated a commissary officer for failing to have rations ready for the men. When the officer replied that he had been busy, the general’s remarks became more caustic and inflammatory. Picton emphasized his comments by threatening to hang the officer if the rations were not issued within ten minutes. This was immediately done, but the officer, feeling he had
been grievously wronged, took his complaint directly to Wellington. Wellington listened and then asked the officer if the general had really threatened to hang him. The commissary assured him that Picton had. Wellington then replied, “Then sir….I recommend…you pay strictest attention to all your general’s orders….I know him well; and by G—, if he says he’ll hang you, he will certainly keep his word!”220 Clinton said this exchange made him more attentive to his duties.221

Wellington’s patience with commissariat incompetence wore thin quickly; by 1809 he was already well aware of the various supply problems and their effects on the men and horses of the army. In a letter to Lord Castlereagh, dated 21 August, Wellington’s anger is barely contained:

Since the 22nd of last month…the troops have not received ten days bread; on some days they have received nothing, and for many days together only meat…The cavalry…have not received, in the same time, three regular deliveries of forage….The consequences of these privations…has been the loss of many horses….The sickness of the army, from the same cause, has increased considerably.222

Wellington wrote to his brother, Henry, in 1812 complaining about the cyclical nature of the logistical problems as they related to the Spanish army. He could just as well been describing his own men:

I consider troops that are neither paid, fed nor disciplined (and they cannot be disciplined, and there can be no subordination amongst them unless they are paid and fed) to be dangerous.223

Yet despite Wellington’s machinations on behalf of the men and his displeasure with the performance of the commissariat, the army remained perpetually short of supplies and often months in arrears in pay,224 a fact often overlooked by historians looking to glorify Wellington and denigrate his soldiers.
Two of the most glaring such misperceptions are offered by Godfrey Davies and Jac Weller, both noted Wellington biographers. Davies writes that “Probably the bulk of the men ate as well as at home, and perhaps better in many instances.” He bases his statement on Wellington’s comment that rations were distributed daily, except on marches when the men were given three days rations up front. He then goes on to blame the men’s plundering on their inability to conserve march rations. Oddly, Davies later acknowledged the necessity of the British soldier receiving his pay and the inadequacy of his rations, writing “Pay was essential because a soldier’s rations were not sufficient for his subsistence…without it [pay] he would be reduced to the greatest distress and be obliged to imitate the French and plunder.”

Not to be outdone, Weller praises Wellington to an extraordinary degree, arguing that “No general of the first rank as a battlefield commander planned his logistics so carefully or carried out his plans so efficiently.” He then goes on to make a series of incredible claims. “Wellington,” Weller posits, “knew the amounts and types of food per day or week needed to keep a soldier or army efficient….Wellington contrived to provide full rations continuously. The few exceptions were due to momentary lapses of subordinates” In the advance from Portugal through Spain and into the Pyrenees, Weller opines that “no one missed a meal” and that “Wellington operated in the Peninsula for six years without a single critical shortage.” As a side note, Weller also states that “pay was seldom in arrears.”

It is on the strength of such statements, unfortunately, that the misperceptions of the British common soldier have been built. Even Clinton, the commissary sergeant, acknowledged the failure of his department and the related response by starving soldiers.
He wrote matter-of-factly that “the distressed state of the army made thieves of the soldiers, who stole provisions from wherever they could be found….The miserable conditions of things necessarily caused much illness in the army.” Larpent also adds further corroboration, commenting on the miserable state of the men upon reaching Ciudad Rodrigo in 1812:

The truth was, the troops, poor fellows, came through the town quite starving; during the retreat supplies and been mismanaged—regiments went three and four days without rations, and numbers died of absolute starvation, besides the sick. Lord Wellington is I hear very angry.

Wellington’s awareness that the men were going hungry did not, however, prevent him from railing against their scavenging practices. His anger, piqued by what he considered the misbehavior of the soldiers on the retreat from Burgos where they pillaged for food and drink with a desperate need, Wellington issued his infamous Memorandum of 28 November 1812 to all officers commanding divisions and brigades. In the memorandum, he accused his officers and NCOs of losing all control over the soldiers in their charge. Stating that “irregularities and outrages of all descriptions were committed with impunity,” Wellington assigned blame “for these existing evils to the habitual inattention of the Officers of the regiments to their duty.”

Frustrated beyond reason by the inability of the commissariat to feed the men properly and the soldiers’ refusal to curtail their plundering, Wellington stated what he knew to be falsehoods:

Yet this army has met with no disaster; it has suffered no privations which but trifling attention on the part of the officers could not have been prevented…nor has it suffered any hardship excepting those resulting from the necessity of being exposed to the inclemencies of the weather.
He then openly derided the efforts of his officers to bring their men to the battlefield in any state of efficiency. He accused the officers of neglecting their duty and failing to follow orders, especially in disciplining the men. Wellington brusquely informed the officers that better use of the chain of command and attention to orders of the army regarding plunder would greatly reduce the work of the provosts and regimental courts. In addition, more thorough inspections would prevent the men from selling their equipment, presumably for food and drink. Wellington even went so far as to outline camp arrangements and assignment of mess duties.

Although never meant for publication, this scathing document did, in fact, make its way into the papers. The memorandum infuriated Wellington’s officers who felt that Wellington had ignored the circumstances of the retreat and their efforts on behalf of their men. To be publicly shamed for what they felt were situations beyond their control did not sit well with the officers. An officer of the Coldstream Guards, John Mills, felt Wellington’s accusations unjust. He wrote:

And now, after a most severe campaign, successful as far as the courage of soldiers could make it, the army, naked, without hay, and reduced by sickness, is told that they have conducted themselves so ill, that they have brought all the evils upon themselves. Is this fair? What encouragement has a man to do his duty?

Aitchison was also offended by Wellington’s memorandum. Aitchison’s seething anger, and the duplicity of Wellington’s remarks, are evident in a letter written shortly after the memorandum was issued:

Lord W. says that ‘the army met with no disaster, it suffered no privation…that the marches were short, the halts long and frequent’!!! Is it then no disaster to be obliged to fight for existence and then to leave on the field to die or be eaten by birds of prey those who were wounded? Yet this happened on the retreat at Duenas!! …Is it then no privation to be without
food— absolutely for 24 to 36 hours? Yet this was the case….It often happened that the men had no bread, as it was issued 3, 4 or 5 days in advance which they could not keep so long…Is it no hardship to march fourteen hours without food, on the worst of roads in bad weather? ….I do not know what are long marches but I do know we marched eight Spanish leagues—that it was nearly 3 hours after dark before we arrived on our ground—it was then a wine country surrounded by cellars—the men broke into them and irregularities were the consequence of the drunkenness. Nor do I consider the crime so great when the system of destroying everything to prevent falling into the hands of the enemy had been enforced by these same soldiers by order when retreating in Portugal who now for the first time since were retreating into Spain.

Aitchison then offers his view of Wellington’s inspiration to issue the general order criticizing his officers. He argued:

The letter of Ld. Wellington to the army, in my opinion, ought not to have been published…the picture is overdrawn, and what I admit to be correct I think may in great part be ascribed to other causes than what his Lordship does. As you would alarm a man with a belief of great danger, to make him provide the better for his security, so Ld. W. seems to have overstated the want of discipline in his army to encourage it being increased.

Aitchison’s assessment seems closer to the mark regarding the motives behind the memorandum than does a sudden increase in the men’s tendency to plunder. He points out that there had been only one complaint against the men of his regiment and only one general court martial convened for the entire army.

The officers resented being made scapegoats for what was obviously a persistent problem; the soldiers would continue to loot until Wellington found a way to feed them regularly. With no improvement in funding, staff administration, or logistics, the driving force behind the men’s penchant for stealing food and drink remained.

Wellington, however, was not mollified by circumstances. He would be distressed, again, after the British victory at Vitoria in June of 1813, when British soldiers found and stripped clean most of King Joseph Bonaparte’s royal baggage train. The men
plundered and kept the lion’s share of the more than five million francs worth of treasure, money Wellington was counting on to feed and pay the army. Determined to secure some of the French funds, Wellington went to great lengths to locate the missing gold. Green recalled, with more than a little pride and resentment, that his battalion had acquitted itself well during the looting, but had been forced to surrender their plunder. In the search after his regiment was ordered to strip, money equaling more than £32 per man was confiscated.\(^{242}\) Most of the money, however, was never recovered by authorities. Livid, Wellington was forced to settle for what he could squeeze from the men; this included Marshal Jourdan’s baton, which was presented to Wellington sans its gold end-pieces. Eventually, the gold pieces were found and forwarded to Wellington, who asked that ten dollars be given to the corporal of the 18\(^{th}\) Hussars who “found” them.\(^{243}\)

The sudden availability of gold brought out previously hidden stores of Spanish food.\(^{244}\) Demand, however, soon sent prices skyrocketing, and the soldiers found themselves paying exorbitant amounts for food and drink. In a short time, most men found their pockets, and stomachs, empty again.

The dangers of life in the British military, from which the ranker sought escape in alcohol, were not restricted to the commissary or the enemy. Breaches in discipline, from minor offenses related to appearance to major violations such as insubordination, brought swift justice to the offender. Lawrence absented himself without leave from guard duty for twenty-four hours and upon his return was drum-head court-martialed, which was standard operating procedure on the battalion and company level. Even though this was his first offense and was barely in his teens, Lawrence received a sentence of 400 lashes. He had no problem remembering how he felt when the sentence was handed down: “I felt
ten time worse on hearing this sentence than I ever did on any battle-field.” After receiving 175 lashes meted out in increments of 25, Lawrence, enraged by pain, managed to push over the spontoons to which he was strapped. The colonel relented at this point, calling Lawrence a “sulky rascal,” and ordered him cut down and conveyed to the hospital.

Lawrence then provided an after-the-fact, shamefaced declaration as to the positive merits of such punishment. “Perhaps it was a good thing for me as could then have occurred,” Lawrence reflected, “as it prevented me from committing any greater crimes which might have gained me other severer punishments and at last brought me to ruin.”

This is one of the few such proclamations extant in first-hand accounts from enlisted men, and it is unfailingly quoted by historians seeking to corroborate Wellington’s assessment of the men as being of such a type that the necessity of savage corporal punishment went without question. What is usually overlooked, however, is Lawrence’s accompanying statement:

But for all that it was a great trial for me, and I think that a good deal of that kind of punishment might have been abandoned with great credit to those who ruled our army; for it amazing to think of four hundred lashes being ordered on a man as young as I was…just for an offense, and that the first, which might have been overlooked, or at any rate treated with less punishment and a severe reprimand.

Such harsh discipline was the norm in the British army. Patterned in large part on civilian law, the infamous Bloody Code which included over two hundred capital offenses, army discipline was brutal and punitive by nature; its aim was total obedience. Richard Holmes reminds us that “flogging [in the military] does not stand alone. It must
be judged by the standards of civilian penology of the age.” Yet far too many historians have failed to grasp this very fact, and have attempted to explain the use of corporal punishment as indicative of the savage nature of the British soldier. Flogging was but one of many punishments applied to soldier and civilian alike, and its use reflects more on the society that approved it than upon those who suffered its torments.

Flogging was actually a late addition to a series of corporal punishments dating back to Richard I’s Charter of Chinon, 1189, in which the first regulations for military punishment were stipulated. Death, branding (actually a kind of tattooing), disfiguring, riding the wooden horse, running the “gautelop” [gauntlet], isolation in confined quarters, reduction in rations, and forfeiture of pay or rank remained standard administrative tools right up through the 18th century when they slowly gave way to flogging. In an excellent article on the evolution of military punishment in the British army, Glenn Steppler illustrates that by the 18th century punishments had become far less brutal and arbitrary than they had been in previous centuries. A series of graduated punishments was called for, with flogging being a last resort. The lesser penalties included verbal reprimands, additional guard duty or drill, public humiliation, menial work, fines, pay stoppages, and reduction of rations to bread and water. The types of transgressions and appropriate penalties were listed in the Articles of War, which was supplemented by the unwritten British “Customs of War,” which dealt with conduct on a practical, day-to-day level, addressing appearance, kit repair, and general company expectations. Theoretically, this was intended to made the disciplinary code fairly constant across all regiments.

At below the regimental level, however, proceedings were recorded solely at the discretion of the company officers; thus, the majority of the crimes and outcomes were
never officially acknowledged, and most of the accounts for those that were have been lost. More serious crimes, such as desertion, murder, rape, gross insubordination, and striking an officer, were handled by regimental general courts martial. These events were required by law to be officially transcribed. At this level, there were few acquittals as the amount of evidence was usually substantial, or the event would never have progressed past company-level justice. Moreover, the accused often acknowledged his guilt in hopes of leniency, meaning the principle responsibility of the courts was to hand down punishments. The records of the 44th Foot, 1778-1784, are one the very few surviving examples (Tables 42 and 43). While they predate the period of the war against the French, they still provide insight into the functioning of regimental courts martial. Men who faced regimental courts martial had little hope of acquittal and not much more for either pardon or sentence reduction. Robbery and theft, usually of food, were the most common crimes.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disposition of case</th>
<th>Number of cases</th>
<th>Percent of cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brought to court martial</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquitted</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Found guilty</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentenced to corporal punishment</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>99% of guilty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pardoned</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part of sentence remitted</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 42: Regimental courts martial records, 44th Foot, 1778-1784

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of charge</th>
<th>Percent of cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Robbery and theft</td>
<td>36.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misbehavior on duty</td>
<td>26.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absent without leave</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misconduct toward military superiors</td>
<td>12.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General misconduct</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misconduct while in hospital</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 43: Regimental courts martial records – types of cases

Regimental courts martial dealt with the most serious cases and was officially sanctioned justice, which for the most part, the men accepted. The system of British military justice, however, was based primarily on minor punishments, administered below the level of the regimental courts. It is here that the “devil’s clause” circumvented the intended system and penalties as prescribed in the Articles of War. This clause stated that penalties on “all crimes not capital” fell under the purview of lower-echelon officers. Flogging and branding men, tattooing them with a “D” for deserter or “BC” for
bad character, was left to the discretion of the officers in charge; uses varied by battalion and officer, but flogging was the punishment of choice. Some officers abhorred it, and used it only for the most serious transgressions. Others used it weekly, to punish even the pettiest offenses. It was this unwritten and often arbitrary system of discipline to which most men objected. They viewed it as a source of abuse and suffering, having little to do with fairness or justice.

Flogging was certainly not an insignificant experience from the viewpoint of the punished soldier. It was a harrowing, tortuous ordeal, mixing overwhelming pain with the humiliation of having the lashes inflicted in front of the men with whom the soldier coexisted day-to-day. O’Neil of the 8th Foot recalled with a chilling detachment his memory of the implement that was used to administer punishment. “The cat,” O’Neil remembered, “is composed of nine small cords, twisted very hard, and having three knots on each cord; sometimes the ends are bound with wire. The whip is usually about eighteen inches long, and the handle fifteen.” O’Neil, a Catholic, was all too familiar with the cat, having received 300 lashes for refusing an order to attend a Sunday Church of England service.

Floggings were handled with ceremonial precision. The battalion was usually called to attention at sunrise and then told to form a hollow square with an open side. Richard Blanco, in his study of punishment in the British army, provides an excellent description of events:

The soldiers were required to be the passive audience of the ordeal. The charges were read aloud, the victim stripped to the waist and his hands tied to a post. As a husky sergeant applied the lash, a muffled drum-beat solemnly kept a count. Often a comrade in arms would faint at the sight of
the victim’s blood or at the sound of his terrifying shrieks. The “cat”...was in every respect a relic of a barbaric age.\textsuperscript{262}

The psychological and physiological shock to both the victim and the soldiers observing should not be underestimated. Each stroke was preceded by ten drum beats, heightening the anxiety for the soldier suffering the punishment and the men who were forced to watch. The damage could be substantial: sometimes flogging laid bare the bones of the spine and scapula. An officer who observed a number of lashings commented on their severity: “I have seen men suffer five hundred and even seven hundred lashes...the blood running down into their shoes and their backs flayed like raw, red, chopped sausage meat.”\textsuperscript{263} Green admitted that he almost fainted upon seeing his first flogging, and several of his comrades did, even though the soldier was pardoned after receiving only 50 lashes of the 150 to which he was sentenced.\textsuperscript{264}

Cooper recalled that the worst cases usually involved men who were flogged, but who succumbed after receiving only a portion of the sentence. They were allowed to heal and then had the remaining lashes administered. Cooper wrote “It may be imagined that the second lashing was worse then the first,”\textsuperscript{265} which is something of an understatement. Cooper also recorded the effects of flogging on a man whose back failed to heal:

A man of ours was flogged for breaking into a church and stealing some silver candlesticks. By some neglect his back festered. Being in the hospital one morning, I saw the poor fellow brought in to have his back dressed. He was laid upon the floor, and a large poultice taken off the wound. O! what a sickening sight! The wound was perhaps eight inches by six, full of matter, in which were a number of black-headed maggots striving to hide themselves. At this scene those who looked on were horrified.\textsuperscript{266}

The demoralizing effect of such punishment on the men can well be imagined. When it came their turn to face the cat, an almost inevitable event given its common use
in the army, some men found they could not face its horrors. A soldier in the 73rd, Thomas Morris, wrote of a comrade in his battalion who chose to commit suicide, using a musket and a string attached to his trigger and big toe, rather than receive 300 lashes for a minor offense. Morris described the man prior to his suicide as being “remarkably clean and well conducted.” In April of 1813, Larpent, the Judge Advocate General, made a notation in his journal of a similar incident regarding a commissariat clerk found guilty of fraud; the man shot himself to avoid the pain and disgrace of a flogging. The journal entry is almost administrative in nature indicating, perhaps, that such drastic measures were not all that unusual for men sentenced to the lash. Haythornthwaite also mentions a soldier who poisoned himself and another who chopped off his own hand to escape punishment.

While the men abhorred flogging, their real objection lay with the arbitrary and capricious manner in which officers resorted to it as a means of control. At the battalion level and below, punishments were at the whim of the officer in charge. Morris stated that his ardor to be a soldier cooled when he joined the 73rd and found its commanding officer to be a man who lashed anyone for the slightest error. Morris called it “disgraceful” and a “gross inhumanity.” Somehow articles about the officer’s propensity to abuse his men made their way to an English newspaper and he was removed shortly thereafter. His conduct, which was only a bit beyond the norm, was no doubt judged unsatisfactory less because of the lashings but because his zealous use of the cat caused army command at Horse Guards in London to deal with potentially embarrassing publicity.
With few exceptions, the personal accounts of British soldiers are filled with impassioned pleas decrying the use of flogging as a standard punishment. That innocent men or men with clean records could be made to suffer the same as the hardened types who were repeat offenders did not sit well with the rank and file. Donaldson relates the stories of one man with 12 years unblemished service receiving 500 hundred lashes for his first trifling offense of eating while on sentry duty, and another soldier suffering 400 strokes for being ten minutes late for roll call. Thomas Plunkett, a Rifleman, had recently distinguished himself by disrupting an enemy cavalry advance by racing towards the oncoming cavalry and shooting the French officer leading the advance. He was shortly thereafter sentenced to 700 lashes for threatening to shoot his captain while intoxicated. Costello, who witnessed the punishment, commented that “Flogging is at all times a disgusting subject of contemplation.”

William Surtees, also of the 95th, related the story of a soldier who was lashed for calling out to General Graham that “he had more need to give us some bread.”

O’Neil states that it took between six weeks and three months to heal from floggings, depending on the number of lashes administered. Not only did flogging temporarily remove a man from the line, it also impacted his self-esteem and made him question his place with his messmates and regimental comrades. His bonds with these primary and secondary groups, and his attachments to the regiment with its history, traditions, and colors, acted as sustaining motivations that allowed each man to identify himself proudly first with his primary social group, then with his parent unit. The lash helped sever these important connections.
Donaldson wrote on the effects of flogging with a simmering resentment. He despised a temporary captain who flogged daily and made the men wear yellow and black patches with holes cut in them signaling how many times they had been lashed. Donaldson made note that the badges and corporal punishment broke the spirit of the men in his unit; some of the men turned openly to crime while others became reckless during encounters with the French. “Honour and character were lost,” Donaldson commented, explaining the change in the behavior of the men.\(^\text{274}\) He was much relieved when the lieutenant-colonel returned, stopped the abuse, and had the men remove their badges of shame.

According to Donaldson, a “debasement of feeling and character” was the natural result of such harsh treatment. The beatings had the “effect of making a man so little in his own eyes that he feels he cannot sink lower….But let soldiers be taught that they have character to uphold…that they are made of the same materials as those who command them and there will soon be a change for the better in the army.”\(^\text{275}\)

Donaldson, however, saw little hope of salvation coming from the officer corps. “I have seen an officer,” he remembered, “quietly eating when one of his men was flogged for procuring, without making any effort to save him.”\(^\text{276}\) Donaldson also recorded that “I have known an officer shed tears when his favourite horse broke his leg, and the next day exult in seeing a poor wretch severely flogged for being late of delivering an order.”\(^\text{277}\) Donaldson had little doubt that the lash was the worst type of external coercion. “Terror,” he sadly reflected, “seems to be the only engine of rule in the army; but I am fully persuaded…that if a more rational method were taken, the character of the soldiers in
quarters would be as exemplary as in the field.”

He then went on to judge the effects of flogging:

I never knew a bad man amended by it; and I have known many a good man, who had committed some trifling crime, and was punished for it, lose all respect for himself, and in a sort of desperation, considering that he was already degraded as far as he could be, plunge recklessly into crime.

Morris used almost these same words to describe his perceptions of the negative outcomes related to such treatment of men:

It is an extraordinary fact, that, horrible as this form of punishment [flogging] is, it seems to have no effect whatever in reforming the character; it inevitably makes a tolerably good man bad, and a bad man infinitely worse. Once you flog a man, you degrade him forever.

Bell, an officer, also viewed the use of the lash with disgust, calling the process “inhuman.” When he came to command a regiment he abolished flogging. “It does not,” he wrote, “tend to reform a man by bullying and abusing him before his comrades.”

Nevertheless, flogging remained the norm. Robert Buckley, in his study of the British soldier in the West Indies, opines that the intent of military courts was to make examples of the condemned. Buckley describes floggings as “prolonged and emotionally rich rituals of barbaric retribution and salutary terror. Flogging…was not merely the beating of the convicted soldier, but a solemn, measured, and calculated ritual.”

That it was used excessively is evident by King George III’s royal warrant of 1807 which pronounced 1,000 lashes the maximum allowable, declaring that such a number was “a sufficient example for any branch of military discipline short of a capital offense.” The king felt compelled to intercede after hearing that a private of the 54th had suffered 1,500 strokes. In 1812, regimental courts were limited to sentences of 300 lashes, with an admonition by the Duke of York reminding officers that when they are
“earnest and zealous in the discharge of their duty, and competent to their respective stations, a frequent recurrence to punishment will not be necessary.” This edict, however, seems to have been largely ignored. Larpent noted in his journal three exceptions over just a two month period. On 27 March 1813 a man convicted of two separate courts martial offenses was sentenced to 2,000 lashes. Larpent observed: “This is absurd, he will bear six or seven hundred, and then it will end.” He also mentions that on 17 April of the same year he tried and convicted two soldiers for sheep stealing and gave them each 1,200 lashes.

Other punishments were available, as outlined above, but flogging remained the default choice as it was easily administered on the march and army leaders, taking their cues in part from Wellington, shortsightedly viewed it as essential for maintaining discipline. Wellington was an advocate of the lash and resented civilian attempts to limit its use. In a speech to the 93rd Highlanders at the presentation of the king’s colors in 1834, Wellington spoke of the need for discipline, using the term “enforcement of rules of discipline” as a euphemism for flogging:

It is…by the enforcement of rules of discipline, subordination, and good order, that such bodies [of soldiers] can render efficient service to their King and Country; and can be otherwise than a terror to their friends, contemptible to their enemies, and a burden to the State….They teach the soldiers to respect their officers.

Wellington was known for his impatience with courts martial that he believed were unnecessarily lenient. In his mind, the courts had but one responsibility: to inflict the proscribed punishment. Larpent recalled how Wellington “fell into a passion about the Courts martial for not doing their duty by acquitting and recommending mercy.”
Fifty years later, the sentiment of the army’s commanding officer regarding flogging had changed very little. Field-Marshal Viscount Wolseley commented blithely that it remained the best tool for maintaining discipline: “It was cheap [and] simple and withdrew the soldier from his duty for the shortest period of time.” Only after the issue of flogging was brought before the public in the 1860s by Lancet, the British medical journal, and The Times were army and navy polices, as outlined in the Mutiny Act, the Articles of War, and courts martial procedures significantly altered. The Examiner acknowledged that it was public opinion, not the good will of Horse Guards, that brought about the change, otherwise “Brown Bess, pigtails, leather stocks, and the Cat-o’-nine tails would have been honoured institutions to this day.” The subject would be debated for almost a quarter century, with the press coming down on the side of the common soldier and those in positions of authority almost uniformly demanding that flogging be retained as a disciplinary tool. For the latter it was a question of obedience, and they unfailingly believed that fear of punishment always superseded any question of justice. It would take until 1881 before flogging was outlawed altogether.

If such fundamental concerns as the men’s physical well-being were overlooked, it is not surprising that British officers collectively failed to reflect or act on more abstract considerations, such as the sustainability and enhancement of soldier morale by whatever means. Perhaps the social difference between the rank and file and British officers, reinforced by tradition and the expected social standards that guided officer-soldier interaction, made such endeavors to enhance individual morale difficult to recognize and consider in the tradition-bound environs of the British officer corps. Regardless of the
cause, the neglect of the men worked to loosen the ties between the rankers and the army; at the same time, it forced the men to rely more on each other.

The absence of supporting patriotic and ideological measures, such as those that worked to inspire American Civil War soldiers as described by James McPherson in his fascinating work on the motivations of Union and Confederate fighting men, make the battlefield successes of the British army that much more unusual. Unlike the soldiers on both sides of the Civil War, the British soldier could expect no appreciation from civilians back home. Perhaps because the army was generally disliked, service therein was if not scorned, then openly disparaged. When a husband, son, or brother joined the army he was likely never seen again. And while people knew the kind of degraded life soldiers lived, such realization often elicited more derision than pity. The people back home might celebrate victories, but they did not cheer the soldiers whose actions made the victories possible. The adulation of Great Britain would, instead, be showered on individual commanders, like Wellington; a select few were feted, turned into heroes, and christened peers of the realm. The individual soldier, meanwhile, was largely ignored, his deeds going unrecognized. As for contact with home, the British ranker did not even enjoy regular mail service or expectations that he might have any sort of regular contact with home and family. In short, he received little support from the people he safeguarded.

In addition, there were no ongoing efforts to bring nationalistic concerns and ideals, or even political indoctrination to the troops in any written form (army journals, Orders of the Day, bulletins), such as those regularly distributed to the French armies during the Revolution, and by Napoleon to his soldiers. Napoleon was especially adept at using such written material to improve morale. Issued at crucial times during campaigns,
his Orders of the Day were forceful exhortations to his soldiers to do their best to honor their emperor, France, their regiments, and themselves. Ringing with cries of glory, honor, and patrie, these orders were reminders of the abstract ideals that Napoleon knew appealed to the men. 301 His Bulletins were, as John Elting calls them, “after-action reports, directed as much at civilians as at the Grand Armee.” 302 These bulletins inevitably downplayed French losses, exaggerated enemy casualties, and dramatically described the exploits of the individual French regiments. Understandably, they were well received by the French soldiery who enjoyed seeing their exploits made larger than life. The effect of such masterfully contrived propaganda as a sustaining force should not be overlooked. Adding a touch of humor regarding the veracity of these bulletins, Elting reminds us that after a time, any soldier who played fast and loose with the truth was said to “lie like a Bulletin.” 303

These written appeals were but a small part of Napoleon’s on-going strategy to enhance soldier morale and encourage martial virtues. French military songs that characterized the soldier as a “lover of glory” and indomitable on campaign and on the battlefield served the same purpose. 304 Napoleon’s awareness that the morale of the men was the basis for his continued campaign and battlefield success is evident in one of his best-known maxims: “In war, the moral is to the physical as three is to one.” 305 Even as a captive at St. Helena, he reiterated this conviction: “Moral force, rather than numbers, decides victory.” 306 Napoleon’s intent was to instill le Feu Sacre (Sacred Fire) 307 in the hearts of his soldiers, in order to inspire his men to face the hardships of war willingly. David Chandler best describes Napoleon’s rationale and method:
In order to obtain the unquestioning obedience of his rank and file, Napoleon unhesitatingly set out to gain their affection as well as their respect. He wished to develop two main qualities in his officers and men: “If courage is the first characteristic, perseverance is the second.” Bravery was needed in the field and at the moment of crisis; perseverance and endurance at all other times. Napoleon was aware that “Bravery cannot be bought with money” and deliberately aimed to create the illusion of La Gloire by playing on the vanity and underlying credulity of his men. “A man does not have himself killed for a few half-pence a day for a petty distinction.” A carefully graded system of military awards—ranging from the coveted Cross of the Legion d’Honneur, swords of honor, monetary grants and nomination to a vacancy in the Imperial Guard for the rank and file, to the ward of duchies, princedoms and even thrones to the elect among the leaders—was one aspect of this policy; the rewarding of talent and proven ability by accelerated promotion another; the creation of an air of general bonhomie with the ordinary soldiers, yet a third.308

Napoleon’s machinations at the individual level were best exemplified by his sometimes contrived gesture of asking an officer to point out which of his men served in a particular battle. Then in a seeming moment of spontaneity, Napoleon would single out such men in formation or around a campfire for personal recognition. These deliberate efforts were intended to foster a personal connection between himself and his men; in a commensurate way, Napoleon hoped that such a bond would motivate the soldiers to better suffer his marches and carry out his attacks. Napoleon knew how to bind men to his service and was openly frank about his methods: “If I want a man I am prepared to kiss his a—.”309

To this end, Napoleon instituted a number of awards, ranging from “arms of honor,” standard issue weapons engraved to commemorate acts of bravery, to the highly valued Legion d’Honneur, whose recipients numbered over 25,000 living members by 1814, out of the 48,000 nominated.310 In between, Napoleon handed out to his soldiers the purely military Trois Toisons d’Or (Order of the Three Fleeces), the Order of the Iron
Crown, numerous smaller awards, pensions, and monetary gifts. In addition, his marshals merited duchies, the daughters of the rich and noble, and sometimes crowns; and, like Louis XIV, Napoleon kept them squabbling over such rewards, ensuring that his marshals were ever vigilant of their place and eager to rise in his favor. Thus he maintained their loyalty at the same time he spurred them to greater endeavors.

Moreover, Napoleon understood the value of ceremony and went to great lengths to award battle honors to regiments and eagles to new units. Each event was a celebration, as were the various military fêtes, such as New Year’s Day, where all military offenses were pardoned and toasts drunk to everyone’s health. Perhaps the biggest event was Napoleon’s birthday, which as Elting points out, meant “double rations, wine, contests of all sorts with prizes, music, dancing, and fireworks” for the men. Military masses, Te Deums, and even wage bonuses were also common on this day.

In addition to these celebratory events, Napoleon’s soldiers understood that promotion for steadfastness and valor on the battlefield were always possible. One man who rose from the ranks was Jean-Baptiste Bernadotte, a Pyrenees commoner who was eventually named first a marshal, then a prince. Likewise, Michel Ney, the son of a master barrel cooper and an apprentice cooper by profession until joining the cavalry in 1787, won the marshal’s baton, a dukedom and was named Prince de La Moskowa after his exceptional handling of the French retreat from Russia in 1812. Merit, not title or financial status, were the means by which men rose in the French army. While it may be an exaggeration that every French soldier “carried a marshal’s baton in his knapsack,” it can safely be said that the opportunity for promotion through the ranks was real enough to make the soldiers want to adhere to the written and unwritten rules of conduct.
pertaining to campaign and battlefield behavior. Winning a place in a regimental guard or light company was also a possibility; such promotion brought not only extra pay but the enormous pride of wearing the company’s colors and plumes and being recognized as an elite soldier. Eventual promotion to an Imperial Guard company stood as one of the greatest achievements of any enlisted man.

Napoleon also addressed one of his soldiers’ greatest fears and concerns: What would happen to them should they become seriously injured? To this end he maintained the Hotel des Invalides, created for the care of soldiers unfit for service by Louis XIV in 1674, as well as branch establishments in other locales. As an extension of this care, Napoleon established veteran’s colonies on public land in the Rhineland and the Piedmont on which wounded soldiers could farm and live out their lives. Napoleon even went so far as to adopt all the abandoned children of French soldiers killed at Austerlitz in 1805, having the boys brought up in one imperial palace and the girls in another. He allowed each of the children to add “Napoleon” to their names. How much of Napoleon’s motive was heartfelt and personal and how much a carefully considered ploy is not as important as the effect of his gesture. One can imagine the reactions of the veterans of Austerlitz when they learned that their emperor cared enough about their dead comrades as to adopt and care for their children.

In contrast, the British had but two old soldiers’ homes, at Chelsea and Killmainham. These refuges had limited beds and served only a few hundred soldiers, total. As for pensions, the common soldier usually needed to prove a service-related disability. Enlisted men applying for such a disability pension had to appear before a board at Horse Guards. The soldiers often found that their requests were delayed, as often
as three months or more, while the board combed over service records checking for monies owed or notations of lost equipment. Even Wellington acknowledged the cruelty of such treatment, writing, “While this is going on, many die who might be saved.”

The men who eventually did come before the board received a pittance, if anything, for their years of service to the king. A few examples will suffice to represent how the wounded soldiers were mostly abandoned to their fates by the board, their usefulness being at an end. Macfarlane of the 71st was invalided home after Corunna. Upon examination, the board declared that he was £5 in debt for necessities; the board then paid him this same amount for his wound and pension, clearing Macfarlane’s debt but leaving him nothing on which to live. For five years’ service and a wound at Waterloo, the wound almost necessitating amputation of this arm, O’Neil received one shilling a day for life, which he felt lucky to get. Lawrence went before the board and was granted seven pence a year for his ten years in the ranks. This was increased to nine pence when one of the examining board members brought attention to the knee wound Lawrence received at Badajoz. Later recalled to duty, from 1819 to 1821, Lawrence petitioned the authorities at Chelsea and was granted an additional three pence a day.

Plunkett, the Rifleman who won battlefield honors, received a severe head wound at Waterloo. Invalided out of the army, he was granted six pence a day; when he went before the board to complain, his pension was stopped altogether. Costello, Plunkett’s comrade, would likewise be shortchanged. After the better part of a decade in the army, Costello was retired due to wounds. His six pence a day pension left him, his wife, and daughter starving. Having little choice, his wife took the child home, which was back to France. Costello never saw either of them again.
was cast aside in a similar fashion. After Napoleon was sent to Elba, Harris was released from duty. For his eleven years of service he was granted a pension of six pence a day. But before he received even one day’s payment, he was called up to serve again when Napoleon escaped to France. Still sick with fever contracted on campaign, he was unable to answer roll call and was informed that his pension was forfeit.\textsuperscript{322}

Harris’ descriptions of hobbled and maimed discharged soldiers lining the streets and public houses are a poignant reminder of how Britain cared for its soldiers when they were no longer needed; such treatment of the British soldier at the hands of the government did little to improve morale or convince civilians to serve.\textsuperscript{323} French efforts orchestrated by Napoleon to care for injured and discharged soldiers, on the other hand, at least reassured enlisted men that their martial efforts were appreciated and that life after the army need not include penury.

British officers injured in the line of duty were not so ill-treated, as Michael Glover has pointed out. Officers without limbs and even some who were totally blind were allowed to continuing serving on full pay. If men of rank were unable to endure campaigning, they could count on substantial pensions: a lieutenant who lost an eye or limb was entitled to £70 a year, a far cry from the ranker’s top rate of one shilling a day.\textsuperscript{324}

Finally, in regards to French campaign motivations, there was always the enticement of plunder to sustain the French soldier in the field. Contrary to common belief, the French army had rules regarding such conduct. Rape and outright assault of civilians as a means of procuring valuables were considered crimes and punishable at the regimental level. Circumstances in Portugal and Spain, however, reduced the chances that
such crimes would be considered an offense, at least to the French officers in charge. Seduction of local women, in any case, was always acceptable to French tastes, if not to the women who were the objects of the men’s ardor. As for looting opportunities, plundering towns after assaults, stripping valuables from downed enemy soldiers on the battlefield, and taking anything of worth from local inhabitants all were standard behaviors for French soldiers.

Thus, it can be seen that Napoleon was well aware of the needs of his men and worked to address them on many levels to ensure the soldiers’ combat readiness. That he manipulated these motivations to achieve his own means does not lessen their effectiveness in sustaining his soldiers on campaign.

The British army, on the other hand, made little effort to see to the psychological needs of the men. Even regularly supplying daily rations or other necessities proved beyond the capability of the army commissariat. Little regard was paid to the men’s wellbeing, other than efforts to ensure they were at least marginally fit for marching and battle. No attempt was made to cater to the ideological concerns of the men or to ensure that the soldiers’ personal concerns and ideas about why they were fighting were aligned with their feelings regarding army leadership or national strategy. Moreover, there was none of the ideological indoctrination based on racial superiority and hatred for the enemy that Omer Bartov alleges helped keep Wehrmacht cohesion from disintegrating in the Second World War when Eastern Front casualty rates threatened unit integrity. The British viewed the French as professionals and, with the exception of French conduct regarding civilians in Spain and Portugal, held no contempt for them.
Unlike the attention given to their French counterparts regarding ideological and internal motivations, the British Soldier was virtually ignored in this regard. This is best illustrated by the absence of medals or awards of any kind for meritorious service in the British army. Other than the Army Gold Medal and Gold Cross, both rare and restricted to officers, there were no official British medals to reward bravery or exceptional service. A very small number of regiments had their own medal, such as the “Order of Merit” in the 5th Foot and the long-service medal for 71st Highland Light Infantry, established in 1767 and 1808 respectively,\(^{328}\) and a few units had unofficial rewards whose requirements were vague at best. Only the “VS” badge, indicating “Valiant Stormer” for survivors of Forlorn Hopes, was awarded at the army level. It was not until the Waterloo Medal, instituted in 1815, that a campaign medal of any type was issued. Available to all ranks, the Waterloo Medal credited its wearer with an additional two years extra service. The medal was also the first British medal to have the recipient’s name impressed around its edge and was the first campaign award to be posthumously awarded to a soldier’s next-of-kin. This medal was greatly resented by Peninsular campaign veterans who had never been officially recognized for their service in Spain and Portugal. They felt that the Peninsular effort was a much longer and more arduous campaign, and certainly merited some decoration. It wasn’t until 1848 when the Military General Service Award was issued that such service was acknowledged by the government. By that time, most of the Peninsular veterans were dead.\(^{329}\) No decorations for gallantry by enlisted men existed until 1854, when first the Distinguished Service Cross and then the Victoria Cross were created.\(^{330}\)
The best a British soldier could hope for was promotion for exceptional conduct under fire. Such promotions were, however, exceptionally rare. Costello, the sergeant in the 95th Rifles, vividly remembered such an event, in part because the soldier performed his deed in front of the battalion and because of the salubrious effect that both the deed and its recognition had on the men of the 95th. During a British retreat in the Peninsula, a bold French general was aggressively leading the cavalry pursuit. The British commanding officer, General Sir Edward Paget, challenged any of the Riflemen to earn his acclaim and his purse by shooting the officer in order to slow the pursuit. A Private Plunkett volunteered, the very same Plunkett whose government would later flog him, then cheat him of his pension. He ran 100 yards toward the approaching cavalry, and them assuming the standard Rifleman’s posture for long shots, lay down on his back in the road, took aim, and shot the French officer from his saddle.\textsuperscript{331}

For his efforts, Plunkett, already known for his bravery, skill, and daring, was awarded Paget’s purse, a medal,\textsuperscript{332} promotion, and high words of praise from Colonel Beckwith, the regimental commander. The ceremony was conducted in a hollow square, usually reserved for battalion punishment. Costello remembered, with pride, the effect the presentation had on the men: “I am convinced that it was attended with the happiest effects upon many of the men, and perhaps, indeed, induced much of that spirit of personal gallantry for which our corps afterwards became celebrated.”\textsuperscript{333}

This example, a rare find among all the first-hand accounts, illustrates the sustaining capability of recognition and reward for exemplary service. The difference between Napoleon and his British counterparts regarding morale considerations is considerable and noteworthy. The effects of this difference are, perhaps, best exemplified
by a conversation between a British private and a French enlisted man shortly after Waterloo. Gunn, of the Black Watch, proudly wrote in his memoirs that British soldiers didn’t need reward for any service, every man doing his duty as per Nelson’s signal flag at Trafalgar, “And they did then as ever since.” He then sadly related the story of his conversation with a French veteran in which Gunn bragged about his Waterloo Medal and the two additional years of service he would someday draw on his pension. The Frenchman scoffed and, pointing to his Cross of the Legion of Honor, replied that he had received an extra franc a day since receiving it and would continue to do so until the day he died.334

The inequities of the British ranker’s treatment by his government highlight the difficulties that worked to continually lower his morale. The lack of sustaining campaign motivations shaped the men’s behaviors and attitudes, making most soldiers fatalistic about their lives. They lived day-to-day, with little in the way of hope or expectation that the next day would be any better; basic survival became the accepted level of aspiration. Soldiers could dance like children at Christmas when the ration wagons arrived,335 and plunder whatever they could find with an extraordinary thoroughness when they did not, which was often the case. Exposing men to unremitting privation of the type experienced by the British ranker is not the ideal way to create cohesive fighting units. A certain amount of shared hardship is necessary to bond men together, for it is such experience that engenders trust and mutual dependence. But the extremes endured by British soldiers pushed the bounds of human tolerance. Men in the thousands succumbed to disease and exhaustion when these limits were exceeded.
The bonds formed by the men who survived, as they shared food, shelter, and the psychological difficulties related to a life of on-going privation, worked as the greatest sustaining motivation. The mess group of six to eight men, comrades with whom the soldier ate, slept, plundered, and stood next to in combat, became the primary social group. This family structure provided the physical and psychological support that allowed the British soldier to face the hardships of life in the British army. The connections between these men grew to where group ties evolved into the paramount driving force in their lives. As he shared what victuals were available, huddled under the night sky, stole and parceled out illicit food and drink, and suffered long marches and draconian discipline, the British soldier learned to rely on a small cadre of men who made the difference between life and death.

Discipline and pride in their military training and accomplishments also kept the men fighting; the redcoats’ capacities to withstand hardship and expertly perform required tasks on the battlefield worked in concert with faith in their leaders to give the men additional impetus to soldier on. Although it does not surface in primary source accounts, one might surmise that ethnic pride on the part of soldiers in regiments that were predominately Irish, Scottish, or English also played a role. Such pride, whether in an ethnic group, regiment, or army, only strengthened the bonds of the small groups that were forged under conditions of unremitting hardship. The small group remained the key to the men’s survival on campaign and in battle, and it was the primary determinant of their actions in both cases. Given a fuller understanding of their situation, the behaviors of British soldiers on campaign and in battle come into sharper focus. What is surprising, given the campaign miseries the men endured, is that the British common soldiers, almost
unsupported by the government that put them in the field, were able to sustain themselves physically and psychologically; it is unsurprising that they did so by bonding ever closer with their comrades. This tempering effect of shared privation, while constantly taking its toll on the men, unexpectedly created soldiers whose incredible reliance on their comrades enabled them to fight superbly and continually throughout the long years of the Peninsular campaign.

1 Joseph Donaldson, *Recollections of an Eventful Life* (Philadelphia, 1845) 44. This is a reprint of the 1824 edition.
2 Ibid. 44-45.
3 Ibid. 45.
5 Michael Glover, *Wellington’s Army* (London, 1987) 29. Charles O’Neil said his kit consisted of two shirts, two pairs of stockings, a plate, knife, fork, and few other small articles. Charles O’Neil, *The Military Adventures of Charles O’Neil* (Staplehurst, 1992) 18. This is a reprint of the 1851 edition. According to infantry recruiting instructions to Captain Sir Henry Seton, 17th Foot, while on recruiting duty in Edinburgh in 1767, “Every soldier was to be completed constantly with the following necessaries: 1 knapsack, 4 good white shirts, 2 good white stocks, 1 black hair stock, 3 pr. strong thread stockings, 2 pr. of strong shoes, 1 pair regimental gaiters, 1 pair half gaiters, a pair of white breeches, a set of regimental buckles, a turnkey and worm, a brush and wire, brushes and combs as ordered, polishing buff.” Colonel Sir Bruce Seton, “Infantry Recruiting Instructions in England in 1767,” *Journal of Army Historical Research* IV.16 (1925): 90.
8 Ibid.
11 Ibid. 178.
13 Kincaid claimed that in six years of campaigning, he “slept at least half the period under the open canopy of heaven.” John Kincaid, *Random Shots from a Rifleman* (London, 1835) 189.
15 Ibid. 67. Green also wrote of the men lacking “stockings, shoes, shirts, blankets, watchcoats, and trousers…there was a frost almost every night, so that we were nearly perished.” John Green, *The Vicissitudes of a Soldier’s Life* (Cambridge, 1996) 15. This is a reprint of the 1827 edition.
16 Douglass, *Douglass’ Tale of the Peninsula and Waterloo*, 78.
17 James Anton, *Retrospect of a Military Life* (Edinburgh, 1841) 121.
20 The 88th, which had acquired the nickname “the devil’s own,” had such a plundering reputation that Wellington once remarked to his surgeon general “that I hang and shoot more of your old friends for murder, robbery, etc. than I do all the rest of the army together….One more thing I will tell you, however; whenever anything very gallant or desperate is to be done, there is not a corps in the army, I would sooner rely than your old friends, the Connaught Rangers.” James McGrigor, *The Autobiography of Sir James McGrigor Bart., Late Director-General of the Army Medical Department* (London, 1861) 259.
21 William Grattan, *Adventures with the Connaught Rangers 1809-1814* (London, 1902) 81. William Surtees confirmed this description, writing that “Our clothing was literally all filth and dirt; our arms the colour of our coats with rust [from the rain] and our faces black as if we had come out of a coal pit.” William Surtees, *Twenty-Five Years in the Rifle Brigade* (London, 1833) 22. Even the elite Coldstream Guards did not receive their yearly shipment of uniforms on time. In April 1814, for example, only the first battalion’s uniforms were delivered, and those were too few and too small to outfit the men. When the shipment came for the second battalion in 1815, after the battle of Waterloo, the sizes were all too large. The remedy in both cases was formulated by Benjamin Selway, a regimental quartermaster. He organized groups of men to cut and sew pieces of the new uniforms together to make proper-sized tunics. Given the numbers of tailors, weavers, and other textile workers in the army, finding men with appropriate skills would not have been difficult. Glenn Steppler’s point is that the British soldier as depicted by military artists is a false image. The men’s uniforms were ragged, patched, and faded; whether in the Peninsula or in Belgium, the men’s appearance was exactly as Grattan and Surtees described. G. A. Steppler, “The Coldstream Guards at Waterloo: A Quartermaster’s Tale” *Journal of Army Historical Research* LXVII.270 (1989): 66-67.
23 Anton, *Retrospect of a Military Life*, 35.
25 Douglass complained his rations never matched these proscribed amounts. He claimed that whoever was weighing the food back in the shipyards was taking advantage of the men, as “our bread and rice ration [2 ounces] could be held with ease in one hand.” Douglass, *Douglass’ Tale of the Peninsula and Waterloo* 29.
28 *Green, The Vicissitudes of a Soldier’s Life*, 156.
30 The rum allocation was usually a part of the standard ration, with wine being used as a substitute only in emergencies. This was fine with the men who much preferred the rum with its higher alcoholic content.
32 Jonathan Roth makes a key point, here, one that is applicable to all the diets of the soldiers examined: vegetables are “seldom attested in the historical record.” Various legumes and beans, however, were probably an important source of protein for the soldiers of different eras, as they were for the poor. So while it is assumed that vegetables of some sort were at least an occasional part of each soldier’s diet, the lack of historical evidence precludes their inclusion in this analysis. Jonathan Roth, *The Logistics of the Roman Army at War (264 B.C. – A.D. 235)* (Leiden, 1999) 12. In regards to the British soldier, however, little can be assumed about his dietary intake. In the case of vegetables, for example, John Cooper specifically states that his Peninsular War rations never included any vegetables. John Cooper, *Rough Notes of Seven Campaigns* (London 1914) 157. This is a reprint of the 1869 edition.
33 Adrian Goldsworthy, *The Roman Army at War* (Oxford, 1996) 291. Goldsworthy states this was the smallest daily ration recorded.
A bottle of beer today is 12 ounces, which is the volume used in determining these values.


Frederic C. Lane, ‘Venetian Merchant Galleys, 1300-1334: Private and Commercial Operation,” *Speculum*, XXXVIII (1963) 179-205. Compiled nutritional data from this work and notations identifying the primary sources that follow were generously provided by Dr. John Guilmartin.


Approximately 23 percent of these calories came from the 34 fluid ounce daily wine ration. While this rather large amount of wine was the same as that received by the Roman soldier, the Roman legionary received more bread, making the calories received from wine only 13 percent of his diet.

Due to French foraging practices under Napoleon, it is nearly impossible to estimate the macro and micronutritional values of French rations.


Of the 7,250 men in the BSC, 2,860 were between the ages of 15 and 19. See Figure 7B, Appendix A


For the exact dietary breakdowns by soldier type, see Appendix C.


All the following data in this chart came from the same source, but different sub-sites.


This analysis used unenriched flour to approximate more closely the impact of the actual British soldier’s diet; for full details, see Appendix C.

Beers and Berkow, *The Merck Manual of Diagnosis and Therapy*,

A more complete version of this table addressing all micro-nutritional deficiencies is available in Appendix C, Table 117.

This list of medical ailments was suggested by Columbus physician Dr. Alex Kuskin, MD. Interview with author, March 1999.


Merino, “Immune and Hormonal Changes,” 1036.


S. W. Davis and J. G. Taylor, Stress in Combat (Chevy Chase, 1954) 2, 9-12. The pituitary gland, stimulated by stress, secretes the hormone ACTH, which stimulates the adrenal glands to release corticoids, which alter the rates of physiological processes.


Ancel Keys, et al, The Biology of Human Starvation (Minneapolis, 1950) II. Chapters 43-49 deal with the physiological effects.

The Chapman study was cited by A. Barocas, “Nutritional Support of the Medical Patient,” Hospital Material Management Quarterly 7.3 (1986) 7


All these figures come from army medical department sick returns. Yearly averages were as follows: 1810 (23.79 percent), 1811 (18.8 percent), 1812 (29.42 percent), and 1813 (23.96 percent). Ibid. I 504-505. Surgeon Charles Boutflower offers supporting information, noting that in October of 1811, sick rates in his regiment, the 40th Foot, were running almost exactly fifty percent. Charles Boutflower, The Journal of an Army Surgeon during the Peninsular War (Manchester, 1912) 113.
Cantlie, *A History of the Army Medical Department*, 373. The Waterloo campaign saw another 12,574 hospital admissions. Cantlie, 387. In addition, 4,000 men were lost to Walcheren fever in the disastrous expedition to Scheldt in 1809.

Ibid. 293. For insight into the efforts and travails of the army medical corps, see Richard Blanco, *Wellington’s Surgeon General: Sir James Blanco* (Durham, 1974).

Cantlie, *A History of the Army Medical Department* 298. Cantlie also brings to light an order of 1813 stating that a full hospital diet included one pound each of bread and meat, five ounces of rice, some sugar, salt, vegetables, and ½ pint of wine. Had the troops on the line been fed this well, sick rates would have been drastically reduced. Cantlie, 506.

Donaldson summed up his experience with medical treatment as “blister, bleed, purge…and purge again.” As for surgeons’ skills, he wrote “In the field they did more mischief, being totally ignorant of anatomy.” While his assessment may be unfair, it may not be too far of the mark. It does reveal how the men felt about hospital stays. Donaldson goes on to say that “The medical department of the French army was much superior to ours in every respect.” Donaldson, *Recollections* (1825 edition), 93-94.

For a vivid description of the efficacy of British medical treatment, see Green’s experiences after he was shot in the side 31 August 1813. That he survived the wound and his medical care is astounding. Green, *The Vicissitudes of a Soldier’s Life*, 191-204.


This endeavor translated to approximately 3,000 to 5,000 hours of hard labor per legion. John Peddie, *The Roman War Machine* (Gloucestershire, 1994) 77.

TEE in megajoules can be calculated using the following equation: 
$$ \text{TEE} = 7.377 - (0.073 \times \text{age}) + (0.0806 \times \text{wt}) + (0.0135 \times \text{ht}) - (1.363 \times \text{sex}) $$


See Table 120 in Appendix C. Total energy expenditures (TEE) were calculated according to the TEE formula in Vinken, et al., "Equations for predicting the energy requirements of healthy adults aged 18-81 y," 923. Jonathan Roth calculated this same number in his analysis of the nutritional needs for the Roman legionary. He notes that while the present U.S. Army recommendations state that a 16 to 19 year old soldier needs 3,600 calories and 70 grams of protein a day, the smaller stature of the Roman soldier would reduce these numbers to 3,000 calories and 60 grams of protein. Roth, *The Logistics of the Roman Army at War*, 12.


Komlos has surmised that adult males in America, circa 1839, needed approximately 3,300 calories for a work-day that included eight hours of heavy work. Komlos, “Shrinking in a Growing Economy?” 787.

The number of calories that will result in a man losing a pound of body fat is usually calculated as 3,600 calories or less, assuming that a pound of body fat contains about 90 percent fat (and ten percent water) and that fat generates nine calories of energy per gram, according to the usual Atwater factors for energy values of protein, carbohydrate, and fat. Atwater factors drawn from *Energy and Protein Requirements*, Report of a Joint FAO/WHO/UNU Expert Consultation 114.

Knowles, an officer in the 7th Royal Fusiliers, states that Camp Ello in Portugal had only 20 cottages to quarter 700 men and that fatigue parties were sent into the woods to search for acorns as a substitute for bread. He goes on to write, “You will agree with me when I say that few men in England would envy our situation.” Knowles, *The War in the Peninsular*, 42.
Calculated from roughly 3,000 calories per day; see Appendix C, Table 120.  
Values taken from acorns, raw, the USDA National Nutrient Database for Standard Reference, Release 17.  
For discussion of the risk of protein deficiency with any lack of regular rations, see discussion in Appendix C, Section V.  
Cooper, *Rough Notes of Seven Campaigns*, 8.  
The figures are calculated assuming that the men marched about four mph and ran about five mph. The calculations of energy expended rely on METS, metabolic equivalents for each activity, defined as one calorie per kilogram bodyweight per hour. METS are drawn from B.E. Ainsworth, *The Compendium of Physical Activities Tracking Guide*, Prevention Research Center, Norman J. Arnold School of Public Health, University of South Carolina, 2002. Retrieved 13 Jan. 05 from the World Wide Web. <http://prevention.sph.sc.edu/tools/docs/documents_compendium.pdf> The METS used are 6.5 for “marching, rapidly, military” and 8.0 for “running, 5mph”, and a 60-kg soldier (about 130 lbs.) is taken as the average. See calculations for Appendix C. The same assumptions are used for all calculations unless indicated otherwise. It should be noted that expenditures for marching are included on top of the normal daily expenditure; there may in fact have been some overlap here (eg, a limited amount of marching would have been included in the normal daily expenditure), but any resulting overestimate would be more than equaled by the extra expenditures of the soldiers in carrying heavy loads on their marches and marching over varied terrain, neither of which have been specifically added into the calculations. It is estimated that the British soldier’s pack weighed about 59 pounds. For a detailed breakdown of its contents, see Cooper, *Rough Notes*, 85-86. Green confirms the weight of the pack, stating that it was about “four stones weight” (56 pounds). Green, *The Vicissitudes of a Soldier’s Life*, 63. The weight of the ranker’s musket was an additional nine pounds. The weight of the British soldier’s pack far exceeds the limit arrived at by S. L. A. Marshall in his study of the relationship between fatigue and fear. He recommended that a soldier weighing 154 pounds should carry a combat load of no more than 40 pounds, excluding his weapon. S. L. A. Marshall, *The Soldier’s Load and the Mobility of a Nation* (Quantico, 1980) 71-73.  
This value was calculated as four cups of roasted European chestnuts, drawn from the USDA National Nutrient Database for Standard Reference, Release 17.  
Calculating about 20 miles per day, which was the rate of the Roman legionary. The Romans maintained this rate day in and day out. Graham Webster, *The Roman Imperial Army* (Whitstable, 1985) 121. John Peddie hazards a guess of about 15 miles a day (three miles per hour), but his numbers are less certain. Peddie, *The Roman War Machine* 75. British accounts often mention similar march distances of 16 to 20 miles and more.  
Ibid, 111. The British were chasing the French through the Pyrenees Mountains. Donaldson also mentions receiving half-rations of biscuit on other days.  
Includes marching approximately 40 miles.  
Green, *The Vicissitudes of a Soldier’s Life*, 63. Green mentions the rice ration on page 71.  
Value taken from white, unenriched, long-grain rice, cooked, from the USDA National Nutrient Database for Standard Reference, Release 17.  
Ibid. 154. Again, 20 miles per day for marching is assumed.  
Ibid. Green also states that they ate any green herb they could find.  
O’Neil, *The Military Adventures of Charles O’Neil*, 156. Walter Henry, a surgeon, recalled a humorous but telling account of the end of one such ration-less day. A rabbit scurried through the camp and the men sprang after it; the hare was in the camp-kettle in less than five minutes. Henry, who rarely mentions the men in his care, found the incident amusing. Henry had the means to purchase supplemental foodstuffs, meaning that he didn’t share the men’s privations. Walter Henry, *Events of a Military Life: Being Recollections after Service in the Peninsular War, Invasion of France, the East Indies, St. Helena, Canada, and Elsewhere* (London, 1843) I 143-144.  
Since the extreme fiber content of the bark would have rendered the digestibility of the substance so low, it is highly unlikely that the British soldier could absorb any substantial nutritive value out of ground
bark. For information on how digestibility affects the value of a diet, see Energy and Protein Requirements, Report of a Joint FAO/WHO/UNU Expert Consultation 118-120, 139.

115 Harris, The Recollections of Rifleman Harris, 71-72. This march distance may seem an exaggeration, but Christopher Hibbert points out that another such march has been confirmed: General John Hope’s division slogged their way over 47 miles in just over 36 hours in December of 1808. Harris, The Recollections of Rifleman Harris 48.

116 Lieutenant-Colonel J. Leach, Rough Sketches of the Life of an Old Soldier (Cambridge, 1986) 95. This is a reprint of the 1831 edition.

117 Leach wrote that this concoction was delivered in “very small quantities” and, after being moistened with water, fried into a pancake of sorts on camp-kettle lids. Ibid. 95.

118 As in the case with ground bark, the high fiber content of straw would have made this food lose most of its nutritive value and possibly impaired absorption of calories from the meat as well. See Energy and Protein Requirements, 118-120. In addition, such a high concentration of roughage would have increased the rate at which the men eliminated the food.

119 John Douglass, Douglass’ Tale of the Peninsula and Waterloo, ed. Stanley Monick (London, 1997) 55. Douglass lamented, “There was no use grumbling and to the road we went, hungry, wet, and weary.”

120 Value taken from white, unenriched, long-grain rice, cooked, from the USDA National Nutrient Database for Standard Reference, Release 17.

121 Douglass, Douglass’ Tale of the Peninsula and Waterloo, 63. Douglass complains that “not a toothful in the shape of eatables was served out” during the march from Ciudad Rodrigo to Campillo. George Hennell wrote of a similar incident during the Salamanca campaign. George Hennell, A Gentleman Volunteer: The Letters of George Hennell, ed. Michael Glover (London, 1979) 63. Captain Gordon of the 15th Hussars offers further confirmation, stating that on the retreat to Corunna “the army was seldom supplied with rations above once in three days, and the cavalry were sometimes four or five days without getting any.” Captain Alexander Wylie, The Journal of a Cavalry Officer in the Corunna Campaign, ed. Colonel H. Wylie (London, 1913) 146-147.

122 Hennell, A Gentleman Volunteer, 79. This occurred near Vitoria.

123 Since the extreme fiber content of the bark would have rendered the digestibility of the substance so low, it is highly unlikely that the British soldier could absorb any substantial nutritive value out of ground bark. For information on how digestibility affects the value of a diet, see Energy and Protein Requirements, Report of a Joint FAO/WHO/UNU Expert Consultation 118-120, 139.

124 Stephen Morley, of the 5th Foot, wrote that the men marched eight hours, then rested four, and then marched eight again. This allowed the officers to press the march for two-thirds of any given day. Morley, Memoirs of a Sergeant of the 5th Regiment of Foot, 59.

125 Surtees, Twenty-Five Years in the Rifle Brigade, 238.

126 As in the case with ground bark, the high fiber content of straw would have made this food lose most of its nutritive value and possibly impaired absorption of calories from the meat as well. See Energy and Protein Requirements, 118-120. In addition, such a high concentration of roughage would have increased the rate at which the men eliminated the food.

127 A Soldier of the Seventy-First, ed. Christopher Hibbert (London, 1975) 71. This was on route to Badajoz. The double ration of bread was served in lieu of meat. The author also mentions an alternative day’s rations as being comprised of half a pound of rice per man. He remembered that “hunger made little cooking necessary.” Hibbert, 68.

128 Ibid. 63. Stothert comments that such marches, up very hilly terrain, were not unusual. He also mentions the men accomplishing the 18-mile march in 13 hours. Stothert, 75.

129 Captain John Harley, The Veteran, or Forty Years in the British Service (London, 1838) II 62.

130 Values taken from acorns, raw, and small white beans, mature, cooked, from the USDA National Nutrient Database for Standard Reference, Release 17.

131 John Lynn, Giant of the Grand Siecle: The French Army, 1610-1715 (Cambridge, 1997) 185. Lynn also quotes the marquis de Torcy in 1709 worrying about soldier loyalty during times when the men were not fed. Torcy commented: “Although the courage of troops had been proven on all occasions, even the most unhappy, one doubted if they would resist in the absence of pay and food.” Ibid. 417.

Harris, *The Recollections of Rifleman Harris*, 148-161. 

Keys, 822, 828. See Keys’ table outlining these symptoms from semi-starvation (weeks 12 and 24) through rehabilitation (rehab weeks 12, 20, and 33) for specifics. Keys, 822. Keys also describes the attitudes of the men toward physical exertion as “ambivalent” at best, as any such activity was something to be avoided, if possible, due to their debilitated state.

Ibid. 793.

Ibid. 784.

Ibid. 823.

In the case of soldiers’ wives, those official on army lists (six per company) were given half-rations for acting as battalion launderers, cooks, nurses, and watching the army’s cattle and sheep. No food was allotted for their children. Some women resorted to stealing food and some were forced to sell themselves to avoid starvation, a fact greatly lamented by their husbands but looked down upon by officers who, unable to understand the circumstances, believed that the women “debauched the troops.” See Donaldson, *Recollections of an Eventful Life*, 216 and the fine study by Paul Kopperman, “The British High Command and Soldiers’ Wives in America, 1755-1783.”

Keys, 785, 789. In addition to theft and increased violence, Keys mentions other symptoms of “personal and social deterioration,” including child abandonment, prostitution, and even cannibalism. Keys’ charts outlining the intensity of symptoms and the percentage of deviate behavior related to starvation are worthy of a more detailed study that can be addressed here. Keys, 790, 912-913.

Ibid. 801. Also see Keys’ work regarding personality traits and the effects of rehabilitating nutrition on personality. Keys, 864-879.


Green, *The Vicissitudes of a Soldier’s Life*, 149.

Ibid. 155.

Cooper, *Rough Notes of Seven Campaigns*, 60.

Major-General George Bell, *Rough Notes by an Old Soldier* (London, 1867) 37.

Douglass, *Douglass’ Tale of the Peninsula and Waterloo*, 23.


Surtees, *Twenty-Five Years in the Rifle Brigade* 39, 90.


Ibid. 158.

Costello, *The Peninsular and Waterloo Campaigns*, 58.

F. Seymour Larpent, *The Private Journal of F. Seymour Larpent, during the Peninsular War, from 1812 to its Close*, ed. Sir George Larpent (London, 1853) I 110. Wellington was also referring to officers neglecting to look after their men.

Lawrence, *The Autobiography of Sergeant William Lawrence*, 85-86. But even this real threat was ignored when the men became famished. Costello writes of a time, after two days without rations, that he and his mates ended up in a firefight with Spanish troops who were guarding a wagon-load of bread. Desperate, Costello and his comrades won the load of bread and shared it among the men. He summed up their point of view by succinctly stating that “the sufferings of our men were such that many considered death a happy relief.” Costello, *The Peninsular and Waterloo Campaigns*, 115.

Lawrence, *The Autobiography of Sergeant William Lawrence*, 72, 84, 100. Like with any vocation, Lawrence learned the trade from an accomplished mentor. Lawrence watched his friend “Pig” Harding, a scrounger with few peers. Pig had acquired his name due to the thoroughness of his searches. In the bacon theft with Pig, Lawrence mentions sharing the find with comrades who were not in the initial searching party. One of his reasons, besides loyalty, was getting rid of excess plunder to avoid detection. Lawrence, 98-99. At another time, Lawrence disobeyed orders to gain access to a captured wagon of French boots.
Though the French were still at large, Lawrence managed to pilfer six pairs and, with great difficulty, returned to his mess group to give each comrade a pair. This is but one example of the culture of mutual support that was such a crucial part of British army life. Lawrence, 137-138.

156 Ibid. 71.
157 Knowles, The War in the Peninsular, 72.
158 Ibid. 45.
159 Douglass, Douglass’ Tale of the Peninsula and Waterloo, 21.
160 John Harley, The Veteran, or Forty Years in the British Service II 59. Harley acknowledged the danger to Dolan, but circumstances forced him to continue relying on Dolan’s ability to steal the food they needed. Another officer, Captain Thomas Browne, admitted that he was once a member of a party of officers that set off after a soldier who was in possession of half a pig, the animal being gained by plunder. The soldier dropped the carcass during the pursuit; Brown and the other officers recovered the remains and divided the pork amongst themselves, as all were famished. Captain Thomas Browne, The Napoleonic War Journal of Captain Thomas Henry Browne 1807-1816, ed. Roger Buckley (London, 1987) 194.
161 John Fortescue, History of the British Army (London, 1899-1930) IV 935. Holmes adds that it wasn’t until 1847 that an order was passed requiring all soldiers to receive no less than one pence per day (1/12th of a shilling) regardless of the amount of stoppages owed. Holmes, Redcoat, 309.
162 Costello, The Peninsular and Waterloo Campaigns, 30.
163 Douglass, Douglass’ Tale of the Peninsula and Waterloo, 12. This exchange took place in 1809.
165 Grattan, Adventures with the Connaught Rangers 1809-1814 296-297.
168 Cooper, Rough Notes, 119. The men did have a fondness for drink, which acted to temporarily dull their daily sufferings. Costello relates the humorous tale of Tom Crawley whose rum ration had been stopped because he woke his captain while narrating a ghost story. Crawley managed to accidentally drop his bread ration in the rum barrel. In slowly extricating it, after pushing it to the bottom of the barrel to ensure it soaked up as much rum as possible, Crawley then turned and complained to the commissary officer about his “misfortune” in having lost his only hot meal for the next four days. The kindly commissary gave him an extra half-loaf, “which he instantly squeezed against the wet one, lest a drop of precious liquor should fall to the ground.” He then went away and happily devoured both loaves. Costello, The Peninsular and Waterloo Campaigns, 46.
171 Harris, The Recollections of Rifleman Harris, 130.
172 Leach, Rough Sketches of the Life, 96.
173 Cooper, Rough Notes, 157.
174 Costello, The Peninsular and Waterloo Campaigns, 71.
175 A Soldier of the Seventy-First, 77.
176 Ernest Sanger, Englishmen at War: A Social History in Letters 1450-1900 (Dover, 1993) 252.
177 Moyle Sherer, Recollections of the Peninsula (Kent, 1996) 105. Aitchison provides a similar assessment of the government’s reluctance to look after its soldiers. “What must be thought of a government,” he asked, “so stinting in comfort—nay bare justice—to the defenders of their country, as to deny a General the means of easing the suffering of the Soldier when worn out, probably restoring him to service…I do not hesitate to say that such Governors ought to be dismissed.” Aitchison, An Ensign in the Peninsular War, 220. Italics in the original.
178 Douglass, Douglass’ Tale of the Peninsula and Waterloo, 131-132.
179 WO 90/1. Cited in Roger Buckley, The British Army in the West Indies (Tallahassee, 1998) 221. In the BSC sample, 19.7 percent of soldiers whose records listed a final disposition were categorized as deserters. See Appendix A.
Michael Hughes, “‘Vive la republique! Vive l’empereur!’: Military Culture and Motivation in the Armies of Napoleon, 1803-1808.” diss., University of Illinois, 2005, 380. Hughes notes that enlisted men did not often include mentions of glory, rewards, or their feelings about Napoleon in their writings. He argues that the French soldier resigned himself to service and developed the same fatalistic attitude as did the British ranker. His conclusion that perhaps French soldiers felt strongly about these topics but just did not consider letters to be the proper vehicle in which to voice their sentiments seems off the mark. It ignores the realities of life as experienced by the French enlisted men and by doing so misses the opportunity to investigate more fully the ties between motivation and campaign or combat behavior. Hughes, 384-393.

Ibid. 398. French deserters were usually fine or made to provide labor for public works. Only in the worst cases when theft of army property was involved did the French deserter face “the penalty of the bullet.”


T. H. McGuffie, “Recurring the Ranks of the Regular British Army during the French Wars,” 130.

Green, The Vicissitudes of a Soldier’s Life, 128.

Ibid.

Harris, The Recollections of Rifleman Harris, 124. Donaldson described a similar couple dying in each other’s arms on the retreat to Salamanca, remarking, “our reflections were bitter.” Donaldson, Recollections of an Eventful Life, 121, 123.

Blakeney, A Boy in the Peninsular War, 67.

Harris, The Recollections of Rifleman Harris, 41. Harris best summed up soldier expectations regarding officers’ backgrounds, revealing the attitude of optimistic subservience held by most men regarding the capabilities of well-born officers.

In psychological terms, the tendency to attribute the behaviors of other people to internal causes and character faults, while underestimating situational factors, is called the fundamental attribution error. Its companion error is the actor-observer bias, which is the personal tendency to attribute one’s own behaviors to outside causes rather than to personal traits.

Surtees, Twenty-Five Years in the Rifle Brigade, 39.

Robinson, “A Peninsular Brigadier,” 159.

Marquess of Anglesey, A History of the British Cavalry 1816-1850 (Hamden, 1973) 1 169. In regards to the notion that most officers came from an aristocratic or extremely wealthy background, Michael Glover has shown that less than 140 out of the 10,000 officers on full pay during Wellington’s time were peers or sons of peers. This amounts to less than two percent. The majority were sons of professional men, lawyers, doctors, bankers, clerics, etc. Using educational background as an indicator of wealth, Glover also contends that only 283 officers, or three percent, attended one the major public schools, those being Eton, Westminster, Harrow, Rugby, and Winchester. Michael Glover, Wellington’s Army 36-37.

Anton, Retrospect of a Military Life, 103. Coffee and tea were even beyond his means as a sergeant.

Larpent, The Private Journal of F. Seymour Larpent, 1 46, 52, 77. These purchases were all during 1812 and January of 1813.


Hennell, A Gentleman Volunteer, 41-42. Prices were from Madrid in August of 1812. Hennell’s description of his leisurely life as a moneyed officer provides great contrast to the day of the common soldier, struggling to survive. Hennell, 72.

Leach, Rough Sketches of the Life of an Old Soldier, 155, 188. Leach’s account is a good example. He portrayed the “sportsman’s” hunting attitude quite well, describing the joys of hunting hares, partridges, quails, and rabbits with hounds.

Sherer, Recollections of the Peninsula, 98.

Ibid. 101.

At the battle of Albuera in May of 1811, Marshal Beresford commanded the British force which was assaulted by the French under Soult. This brutal, close-up infantry battle, determined by the courage of the British ranker, cost the British almost 6,000 casualties out of the 32,000 men that participated; though they outnumbered the French 3 to 2, the French inflicted almost as many casualties as they received. Cooper recalled a conversation between himself and a comrade. “Whore’s ar [sic] Arthur?” the soldier asked. Cooper responded that he hadn’t seen him, but that he heard Wellington had arrived after the battle. His friend replied “Aw wish he wor [sic] here.” Cooper commented “So do I,” noting that “Had he come sooner we should have had more confidence of victory.” Cooper, *Rough Notes of Seven Campaigns*, 63.

Cooper, *Rough Notes of Seven Campaigns*, 63.


Oman, *Wellington’s Army*, 149.


The Duke of York, the army commander in chief in London, also had no direct control over the commissariat or the ordnance branch. Fortescue, *History of the British Army*, VI 190.


The complete issue of equipment for the army was also the Quartermaster-General’s responsibility, even to issuing blankets and shirts to artillerymen, who normally were supplied by the Ordnance Department. Road and bridge maintenance, as well as fortification repair, were also under the purview of the Quartermaster-General. Ibid. 137.


Commissariat officers were often so pressed to come up with supplies that they sometimes took advantage of the locals. The potential for graft was also a temptation. Larpent comments in January 1813 about four cases against commissariat clerks accused of defrauding local Spaniards under the pretense of acting for the army commissariat. The accused were buying and selling goods and keeping the profits. Larpent notes that he had 37 complaints pending against commissariat men for both shortchanging peasants or outright theft. Larpent, *The Private Journal of F. Seymour Larpent*, I 79.


Aitchison, *An Ensign in the Peninsular War*, 213.

Ned Clinton, *Ned Clinton; or the Commissary* (London, 1825) I 171-173.

Ibid. 173. Kincaid of the Rifles also recorded a similar fractious interaction between a line officer and a commissary officer. Kincaid wrote that General Craufurd threatened to arrest the commissariat officer if he proved unable to supply bread to Craufurd’s Light Division. Kincaid went on to comment that “Had he [Wellington] hanged every commissary…who failed to issue regular rations to the troops dependent on them, unless they proved that they themselves were starved, it would only have been a just sacrifice to the offended stomachs of many thousands of gallant fellows.” Kincaid, *Random Shots from a Rifleman*, 50, 144. Robert Blakeney recalled yet another such episode wherein General Paget berated a paymaster in charge of bullocks, threatening to have the man hanged. Blakeney, *A Boy in the Peninsular War*, 80.
Wellington wrote 8 January 1812 that pay was six months in arrears and that there was nothing in the war chest. Wellington Dispatches XI 425, 427. By June, he wrote again, this time to Lord Liverpool, stating that the troops were four months behind in pay, the staff six months, and the muleteers almost a year. Wellington complained “we are in debt for every article of supply, of every description.” Wellington Dispatches IX 263-264. Walter Henry mentions that the army was six months in arrears before the siege of Badajoz in 1812, and wrote as if this was an on-going problem, which it was. Henry, Events of a Military Life, 77. Larpent admitted that by 1813, the army was 16 months arrears in pay; by October of that same year, it was 20 months behind. Larpent, The Private Journal of F. Seymour Larpent, II 69, 110.


Ibid. 75.


Ibid. 198.

Ibid. 201, 202.

Ibid. 200.

That Weller was well off the mark, here, is evinced by the John Elting’s marginalia in the copy of the journal loaned to the author. Elting wrote, with an almost audible sigh, “Poor Jac, Wellington is his golden calf.”

Clinton, Ned Clinton, I 111.


Ibid.

Ibid.


Aitchison, An Ensign in the Peninsular War, 228. Italics in the original.

Ibid. 227.

Ibid.

Woodling wrote that while Wellington was “very much displeased with the insubordination of the regiment….Numbers of them he saw plundering…he was likewise very much displeased with several officers who were there likewise.” As an important side note, Woodling added that he was in such a state of starvation that he was forced to steal a sheep to survive. Hunt, Charging Against Napoleon, 110.

Green, The Vicissitudes of a Soldier’s Life, 170.

Hunt, Charging Against Napoleon, 164-165.


The sergeant’s halberd, officially called a pike, was actually a spontoon, which had replaced the real halberd in 1792. R. Scurfield, “The Weapons of Wellington’s Army,” Journal of Army Historical Research XXXVI.148 (1958): 146.

Lawrence, The Autobiography of Sergeant William Lawrence, 49.

Harris also wrote: “I detest the sight of the lash, but I am convinced the British army can never go without it.” Harris, The Recollections of Rifleman Harris, 138. Harris was referring to an incident in which General Craufurd flogged two men for straggling in order to ensure that no men fell out during the last struggles of the retreat to Corunna. Harris’ position, while seemingly odd, can probably be best explained by noting that he had no other frame of reference by which to judge flogging, as such corporal punishment was all he had ever known in civilian and army life. In this case, he saw that hard discipline may have saved lives under these special circumstances. It should be noted that Harris also lamented the tyranny of sergeants and officers who tormented the men with “trifles” and related punishments, a practice “very injurious to a whole corps.” Harris, 102. Officers who could inflict the lash but were immune to ever
suffering from it were often more open about advocating its use. Major Hudson, of the 51st, for example, spoke in 1809 about what he saw as the positive effects such treatment would have on one particular soldier: “It will do him good, make him grow and make him know better for the future.” Wheeler, The Letters of Private Wheeler 3.


250 Holmes, Redcoat, 320. Holmes goes on to point out that while civilian attitudes toward corporal punishment were changing, Dr. J. Keate, Eton Headmaster, still caned as many as 80 boys a day in 1832.

251 See Richard Glover’s comments regarding his description of British soldiers as “appalling thugs” who required flogging to control. Glover’s description is but the most vocal assessment of many similar opinions outlined in chapter two. Richard Glover, Peninsular Preparation (Cambridge, 1963) 174-176.


253 Flogging as a military punishment was first mentioned in an essay by a Lt. Colonel Dalrymple, published in 1761. Being suspended by one wrist with one foot balancing on the tip of a rounded off wooden cone was used by British dragoon regiments as late as 1803-04. Ibid. 11.


257 Ibid. 876.


259 Ibid. 48. O’Neil later petitioned the Duke of York at Horse Guards seeking permission to allow soldiers to attend services of their own denomination. O’Neil was gratified when this request was granted.

260 The British use of ceremony to enhance the effects of flogging stands in stark contrast to how Napoleon used ceremonies to enhance morale.

261 The men were more frequently tied to three crossed sergeant’s spontoons that had been driven into the ground.


263 Cleaver, Under the Lash, 74.

264 Green, The Vicissitudes of a Soldier’s Life 15. The soldier in question had, in a drunken state, struck an officer. His sentence was remarkably light given the offense, as such conduct usually resulted in either the gibbet or more than 1,000 lashes.

265 Cooper, Rough Notes of Seven Campaigns, 14.

266 Ibid.

267 Morris, Memoirs of a Soldier in the 73rd, 38.


269 Philip Haythornthwaite, The Armies of Wellington (London, 1998) 69-70. The man who mutilated himself was then punished for his efforts to avoid the lash. Haythornthwaite doesn’t mention if that was in addition to the flogging for the original crime.

270 Morris, Memoirs of a Soldier, 5.

271 Costello, The Peninsular and Waterloo Campaigns, 13. The lieutenant-colonel stopped the proceedings after Plunkett received 35 lashes, citing his previous good conduct.

272 Surtees, Twenty-Five Years in the Rifle Brigade 91. Surtees was surprised by this action, as Graham was usually held in high esteem due to his bravery and his skill at looking after the men.


274 Donaldson, Recollections of an Eventful Life, 146.

275 Ibid. 54.

276 Ibid. 104.

277 Ibid. 148.

278 Ibid. 104.

279 Donaldson, Recollections of an Eventful Life (1824), 194. In a later edition, Donaldson made similar a statement, describing the effects of the lash on a man’s character: “I have observed that it changed a man’s
character for the worse; he either became broken hearted and useless to the corps, or shameless and hardened.” Donaldson (1845) 147.

As proof that not every officer used flogging as a regular tool of coercive discipline, Costello wrote proudly that his commanding officer, Major Cameron, was “not only a brave and gallant officer, but a shrewd man.” Costello states than in six years not more than six men of his battalion were flogged. Costello, The Peninsular and Waterloo Campaigns, 118.

Holmes, Redcoat, 324. In his work on courts martial for the period 1809-1814, Charles Oman noted that when it came to plundering there were three general offenses with tiers of related punishment. He found fifty cases of straight plundering, which merited 300-700 lashes. Theft of valuables, of which there were 30 convictions, brought 700-1,000 lashes. Finally, armed robbery cases, which totaled 57, resulted in 24 soldiers being hung and the rest receiving 600-1,200 lashes. Oman adds that “some of the executed had taken comparatively little from the peasants whom they plundered, and had not severely injured them: no more than a blow with the butt-end of a musket had been given in many cases….But the moment that the element of violence was added to the theft, Wellington became inexorable, and only pardoned on the rarest of occasions.” Charles Oman, “Courts Martial of the Peninsular War, 1809-1814,” Journal of the Royal United Service Institution 56 (1912): 1710-1713. Assaults did occur, although they appear to be far fewer in number than has been suggested. Those caught, as Oman contends, were quickly and severely punished. Walter Henry, a surgeon, recalled finding a badly beaten peasant in a Spanish house as he and another officer were searching for food. The peasant was able to identify his assailant and the soldier was hung. Henry, Events of a Military Life, I 192.

Private Wheeler, for example, mentions that his unit received four extra hours a drill for a month for performing poorly on a field exercise. Wheeler, The Letters of Private Wheeler, 36. T. H. McGuffie also mentions a “Disgrace Squad” in London for men whose behavior was “irregular and unsoldierlike.” These men wore their tunics reversed and were constantly drilled. They also had all privileges suspended. T. H. McGuffie, “The 7th Hussars in 1813,” Journal of Army Historical Research XLVI.169 (1964): 9. Both these instances, however, occurred while the army was not in the field, which may have allowed officers to more carefully consider punishments. Wheeler’s case is also a collective rather than an individual punishment and the “Disgrace Squad” appears to have been for men who committed very minor offenses.

Philip Henry, Earl of Stanhope, Notes of Conversations with the Duke of Wellington, 1831-1851 (London 1998) 13. This is a reprint of the private (1886) and public (1888) editions.

Blanco, “Attempts to Abolish Branding and Flogging in the Army,” 145.

As an example, Henry J. Temple, an M.P. during the Napoleonic Wars, wrote that corporal punishment “was essential to the very existence of the Army.” Thomas Below, M.P., added in 1855 that “he could not believe that the retention of the punishment…was at all likely to be injurious to the service or society.” Sidney Herbert agreed, defending its use by explaining “Those we get are the young, the heedless, the
thoughtless, the wild.” *The Manchester Guardian* countered by describing flogging “as being the last refuge of barbarism in this country.” Blanco, “Attempts to Abolish Branding and Flogging in the Army,” 138-139. Even William Wilberforce, usually an advocate of the common soldier, succumbed to the notion that flogging was what had always been done and that it was still needed. He commented that “when he considered what a huge and multifarious body an army was, he should be afraid of adopting suddenly so material a change in what was deemed to be so essential to its discipline, on which depended entirely the management and government of it.” *Parliamentary Debates* XXI (1812) 1287.

297 Cleaver, *Under the Lash*, 1. One of Wellington’s most competent commanders, Rowland Hill was not among the advocates of the lash. Know as “Daddy” Hill to his men, he considered it unnecessary for maintaining discipline. Instead, he looked after the men’s needs, exposed himself the same dangers and hardships faced by the soldiers and led by inspiration rather than fear.


300 See Hughes very detailed analysis of Napoleon’s efforts to use normative and remunerative compliance to improve soldier morale. Hughes, “Vive la republique! Vive l’empereur!”


302 Ibid.

303 Ibid. 602.

304 Hughes, “Vive la republique! Vive l’empereur!” 215. Hughes points out that these songs were probably intended for the civilian population as well.


309 Ibid. 157.

310 Elting, *Swords Around a Throne*, 598. This number includes 1,200 crosses that went to civilians. The *Legion d’Honneur* had various grades, making it a continuously attractive award.

311 Ibid. 601.

312 Bernadotte was named Prince of Pontecorvo by Napoleon, then assumed the throne of Sweden, eventually becoming its king in 1818.

313 This was also possible in the British army.

314 Elting, *Swords Around a Throne*, 421.

315 Ibid. 596.


320 Costello, *The Peninsular and Waterloo Campaigns*, 16. Plunkett was forced to reenlist to survive. Invalided out again, he and his wife, who had lost part of her face when an ammunition wagon exploded at Quatre Bras, tried settling in Canada on a small parcel of land allotted to pensioners. When he located his land he was dismayed to find it mostly covered by swamp. Plunkett and his wife returned to England where he was reduced to selling matches and needles; he soon died a pauper.

321 Ibid. 162. Costello married his wife, who was French, against orders. Thus, when he sailed for England, she was left behind. Through much travail, they were reunited in England, only to discover that life on six pence a day was impossible.


323 In 1829 George IV issued a royal warrant regulating pensions based on 21 years of service for infantry and 24 for cavalry. Disability pensions were more complex, based on the severity of the wound and a minimum of 14 years service. Financial and land grant pensions for soldiers, while Roman in origin, were reintroduced by Congress for the Continental Army. Congress initially offered $10 and 100 acres of land for an enlistment in 1776. By 1779, the cash bonus had increased to $200, while the land grant remained at 100 acres for a private. Higher ranks were apportioned larger land shares. Emily Teipe, *America’s First*
Veterans and the Revolutionary War Pensions (New York, 2002) 219-220. The author is indebted to Josh Howard for pointing out this material and source.

324 Hennell, A Gentleman Volunteer, 148. See Glover’s footnote at the bottom of the page.
325 This is not to imply that the French army was always well provisioned. It was not, and the sufferings of the men at time equaled those of the British soldiery.
326 Omer Bartov, Hitler’s Army: Soldiers, Nazis, and War in the Third Reich (Oxford, 1992). Bartov argues, somewhat unconvincingly, that draconian discipline and the capacity to vent anger and frustration on enemy combatants and civilians kept small groups in the Wehrmacht intact. Bartov, 28. Bartov’s ideological considerations would have had little impact on primary group cohesion during combat. Rather, they fall under Lynn’s sustaining motivations and apply to keeping men going between battles. Paul Savage and Richard Gabriel have come to the same conclusion. In their work on unit cohesion and disintegration, they concluded that the willingness of German officers in World War Two to share risk and hardship with their men acted as a key ingredient that helped cement unit cohesion. Savage and Gabriel explicitly state that “leadership did not hinge upon a dedication to the ‘cause’—Nazi ideology or even nationalism.” Paul Savage and Richard Gabriel, “Cohesion and Disintegration in the American Army,” Armed Forces and Society 3 (1976): 343.
327 The accounts of British soldiers caring for their French counterparts after battles are numerous, and one example suffices to show the British rankers lack of enmity toward French soldiers. Edward Costello of the Rifles wrote about shooting a French soldier near a village and immediately feeling remorse. “An indescribable uneasiness came over me,” he recalled, “I felt almost like a criminal. I knelt to give him a little wine from a small calabash.” For the British common soldier, the French were the enemy, but they were regarded with professional respect. Costello, The Peninsular and Waterloo Campaigns, 56.
328 Haythornthwaite, The Armies of Wellington, 73.
329 Ibid.
330 Holmes, Redcoat 408.
331 Costello, The Peninsular and Waterloo Campaigns, 11.
332 The type of medal is never mentioned in Costello’s account.
333 Ibid. 8.
335 Donaldson, Recollections of an Eventful Life, 112.
CHAPTER 5

ORDEAL BY FIRE: THE BRITISH SOLDIER IN COMBAT

William McNeil has suggested that the most basic military drill, marching together in unison, works to enhance the psychological bonds between soldiers; he argues that walking in step as part of a group enhances the individual’s identification with the unit.\(^1\) As such, drill, while no longer a battlefield necessity, remains a small but important component of modern military training. If something as subtle and as nonthreatening as learning to march together can have a unifying effect on soldiers, then the extended campaign experiences of shared privation and hardship must have worked as a blast furnace in comparison, forging relationships of extraordinary strength among the British soldiers of the Peninsular War. Often neglected and pushed beyond the limits of human endurance, in both the physical and psychological sense, the British ranker learned that he must rely on his comrades if he was to survive in the field.

This mutual support on campaign may have proved of such intensity that a collateral effect ensued: an unintentionally enhanced cohesion during combat.\(^2\) Those veterans who somehow persevered provided the core foundation of each unit; the ties between them created a group ethos, one based on mutual dependence and trust developed over years of hard campaigning. By adhering to certain strictures, such as
maintaining one’s place in the line during combat and firing on command, the soldier enhanced the group’s chances of survival, as well as his own. Loyalty and behaviors that worked to preserve the group were reinforced, as men learned to protect each other in order to safeguard their surrogate families. At the same time, the soldier earned esteem from the men whose opinions he valued most. It is the real and collective exploits of such men that gave rise to the legend of British effectiveness on the battlefield.

Combat effectiveness, of course, is not based solely on group cohesion. The ability of any combat unit to function under fire is predicated on a great number of factors that act in concert to determine how well men stand up to the stress of battle. The physical and mental states of men going into combat, faith in leadership, weaponry, training, logistics, and experience all play a role in how soldiers behave when bullets fly. Any of these variables, alone or in combination, might provide an edge in battle or lower the general effectiveness of a unit on any given day. Yet all these factors work on the individual as a member of a group, making group dynamics the seminal point in understanding the behavior of men in battle.

Combat is about many things, but at its essence, it is about men, groups, and the sometimes slow but inevitable destruction of the individual soldier’s willingness to face danger and death. As John Keegan has commented:

What battles have in common is human: the behavior of men struggling to reconcile their instinct for self-preservation, their sense of honor, and the achievement of some aim over which other men are ready to kill them…. [Studying battle] is therefore always a study of fear and usually of courage; always of leadership, usually of obedience; always of compulsion, sometimes of insubordination; always of doubt, misinformation and misapprehension, usually also of faith and sometimes of vision; always of violence, sometimes of cruelty, self-sacrifice, compassion; above all, it is a
study of solidarity and usually of disintegration—for it is toward the
disintegration of human groups that battle is directed.⁵

Sociologist Charles Cooley coined the term primary social group in the first decade
of the 20th century. His description of the effects of the group on the individual, and how
the group molds the individual’s perceptions to create a collective rather than an
individual perspective, provides clarifying insight into the workings of primary group
processes:

The result of intimate association, psychologically, is a certain fusion of
individualities in a common whole, so that one’s self, for many purposes at
least, is the common life and purpose of the group. Perhaps the simplest way
of describing this wholeness is by saying that it is a “we.”⁶

In the seminal work on the subject, Samuel Stouffer et al. confirmed the premise
that group ties are the underlying force that allows men to function in combat:

The group in its informal character, with its close interpersonal ties, served
two principal functions in combat motivation: it set and enforced group
standards of behavior, and it supported and sustained the individual in
stresses he would otherwise not have been able to withstand.⁷

The exchange of trust and support was the “one way in which the resources of the
individual were maintained at a level at which he remained capable of coping with the
stresses of combat.”⁸ Exchanged words, actions, and the mere presence of comrades
allowed men to believe that they had some control over what occurred on the battlefield.
The helplessness and apparent randomness of combat was minimized. This assumption
was part illusion and part reality, but it did enable men to take actions that otherwise
would be beyond the capacities of isolated individual soldiers. In his appraisal of the
inner workings of combat motivation, Anthony Kellett notes that Stanley Schachter, a
psychologist, has demonstrated experimentally that as risk increases, so does the human
desire to be in the company of others sharing the same danger.⁹

Edward Shils, writing about the Stouffer et al. study, *The American Soldier: Combat and Its Aftermath*, observed that the study was based on attitudinal surveys and that the “actual operation of primary group life is not described and indeed is seldom referred to.”¹⁰ Shils proceeds to make clear, however, that the foundation for the entire study was the workings of primary groups, or *informal groups* as they are often called in *The American Soldier*. He argues that the value of the Stouffer et al. study lies in its analysis of how primary groups shape the behavior of soldiers.¹¹ Shils summarizes the method by which groups affect the actions of men during combat:

Primary group relations help the individual soldier to bear threatened injuries and even death by increasing his self-esteem and his conception of his own potency. They help particularly to raise his estimate of his capacity to encounter and survive deprivations.¹²

Ardant du Picq, a French colonel killed during the battle for Metz in 1870, was one of the first writer-soldiers to produce a general theory of battlefield behavior. He surveyed his fellow French officers and tallied their responses concerning battlefield morale. Du Picq concluded that the key to combat success lay in the psychology of the individual soldier, and not in the works of military thinkers like Antoine Henri Jomini. “It is the mind,” he wrote, “that wins battles, that will always win them, that has always won them throughout history.”¹³ Du Picq acknowledged the role fear plays in combat; he viewed bravery as a finite quantity, one that must be monitored, nurtured, and controlled. He suggested that the purpose of training and discipline was to preserve bravery and
dominate fear, replacing the latter “by a still greater horror, that of punishment or disgrace.”¹⁴

Colonel du Picq recognized that individual morale was based on group unity. He used the term *cohesion*, in regard to *esprit de corps*, describing how combat required men to share collectively a binding unity, a “moral cohesion.” Coming to the same conclusion that Stouffer et al. did over three-quarters of a century later, du Picq believed that the group was the source of the soldier’s strength. He simply, but eloquently, captured the dynamic of how this played out in combat:

Four brave men who do not know each other will not dare attack a lion. Four less brave, but knowing each other well, sure of their reliability and consequently of mutual aid, will attack resolutely. There is the science of the organization of armies in a nutshell.¹⁵

Such mutual reliance becomes possible when the individual soldier’s instinctive drive for self-preservation is overridden and replaced with social incentives that act to link the soldier’s esteem and security to the group.¹⁶ As Richard Holmes observed, “Fear is the common bond between fighting men,”¹⁷ an opinion echoed by Roger Little in his analysis of group relations and men under fire in the Korean War. Little concluded that “the primary basis for solidarity…was the recognition of mutual risk” and “that relationships were established to enhance effectiveness and survival.”¹⁸

The group provides the means by which men deal with fear. Behavioral standards and sanctions are set and recognized. If followed, they offer a degree of protection. The conduct of each group member is measured according to these established group norms.¹⁹ Once adopted into the group, the soldier attempts to behave according to these mores in order to gain the esteem of his peers. In this way, the soldier’s behavioral patterns are
shaped by social activity. According to Lionel Tiger, “Members of groups are facilitated in their aggressive or violent activity” by group dynamics. Gwynne Dyer offers a summation of the process by which social pressures work to ensure a minimally accepted level of participation in combat:

For all of military history down to less than a century ago, the answer was invariably the same….In a Roman legion, on the gun deck of a seventeenth-century warship, or in a Napoleonic infantry battalion, the men fought close together, and the presence of so many others going through the same ordeal gave each individual enormous moral support—and exerted enormous moral pressure on him to play his full part.

General Sir Henry Lawrence, killed at Lucknow in 1857, summed up the effects of group norms of the conduct of men under fire. He wrote: “Courage goes much by opinion, and many a man behaves as a hero or coward according to how he is expected to behave.”

At the same time that S. L. A. Marshall was conducting his post-action interviews that would eventually be the source of his ground-breaking work, Men against Fire, Edward A. Shils and Morris Janowitz were undertaking the field research that would result in their paper “Cohesion and Disintegration in the Wehrmacht in World War II.” The paper, published in 1948, investigated the relationship between criminality and asocial behavior as indicators of a proclivity to surrender. In their analysis, Shils and Janowitz made the first military use of the term primary social group. Very much in agreement with the conceptualization of group processes first put forth by Cooley, Shils and Janowitz believed that the group was “fundamental in forming the social nature and ideals of the individual. The result of intimate association…is a certain fusion of
individualities into a common whole, so that one’s very self, for many purposes at least, is the common life and purpose of the group.”

The work of Shils and Janowitz supports the hypothesis that a man’s capacity to withstand the stresses of combat has its roots in group dynamics. Shils and Janowitz argued:

> It appears that a soldier’s ability to resist [fear] is a function of the capacity of his primary group to avoid social disintegration. When the individual’s immediate group, and its supporting formations, met his basic needs, offered him affection and esteem from both officers and comrades, supplied him with a sense of power…. [Then] the element of self-concern in battle, which would lead to disruption of the effective functioning of his primary group was minimized.

In a threatening environment, each member of the group receives both physical and psychological support from the group. Hence, he is hesitant to behave in any way that violates group norms and potentially jeopardizes his place in the group. To give in to fear and forsake one’s comrades usually brings immediate sanctions: exclusion from the group and loss of all respect. In his work on group influence on combat behavior, Little learned that men who, using the phrase made popular during the Korean War, “bugged out,” were never able to live down the incident and were never again viewed as significant members of the group. Little did observe that such ostracized soldiers still served a group purpose: they were used as examples in teaching new men the consequences of not doing one’s share and endangering the group.

Shils posited that the soldier’s “sensitivity to the opinion of his comrades with its clear implication of the need for comradely approval [works] as an incentive to exertion in battle.” Elmar Dinter emphasized that while each member of the group is interested
in satisfying his own personal needs, “the strongest emotional force in this socially constituted group is the desire of each of its members for love, friendship, sympathy, recognition, respect, and power.”

Dinter identified group integrity as the determining factor that allows some units to fight better than others.

In his study of morale, John Baynes came to the same conclusion. He observed that coercive, external discipline, such as the lash, did little to motivate men in combat. Baynes recognized that self-discipline was the essential motivation for men facing “the physical fear of going forward and the moral fear of turning back.”

Using the experience of the 2nd Scottish Rifles in World War One as his case study, Baynes concluded that group norms dictated the actions of men under fire:

The primary source of discipline in the 2nd Scottish Rifles was public opinion within the battalion. One of the strongest reasons for men behaving well and trying to do their best is to earn the respect of their fellows. Put in a negative way, it is to avoid the contempt of others, particularly such people as they themselves admire. For most men an essential part of courageous behavior is their desire to gain the admiration of comrades.

Marshall, an infantryman in the First World War and the official army historian of the Second World War, identified group values and loyalties as the driving forces behind men’s actions in combat. In a series of interviews with soldiers coming directly off the line during World War Two, he learned that men risked danger not for ideological concerns, but on behalf of the men with whom they shared social identity. Marshall succinctly captured the rationale behind the behavior of men in battle. “The moral feeling of physical support in battle,” he wrote, “derives from the presence of another soldier rather than from the knowledge that he is taking appropriate action.” He then went on to add:
Man is a gregarious animal. He wants company. In his hour of greatest
danger his herd instinct drives him toward his fellows. It is a source of
comfort to be close to another man; it makes danger more endurable.\textsuperscript{35}

As Stouffer et al. discovered during their surveys of World War Two combat
veterans, it was this relationship of mutual dependence that allowed soldiers to persevere
and function in battle. When queried about what kept them going in combat “when the
going was tough,” American soldiers responded that prayer and fear of letting the other
men down were the dominating motivations.\textsuperscript{36}

Stouffer et. al. concluded that it was the reciprocal support among comrades that
made the difference in battle:

The combat situation was one of mutual dependence. A man’s life depended
literally and immediately upon the actions of others; he in turn was
responsible in his own actions for the safety of others. This vital
interdependence was closer and more crucial in combat that in the average
run of human affairs. Any individual’s action which had conceivable
bearing on the safety of others in the group became a matter of proper
concern for the group as a whole. Mutual dependence, however, was more
than a matter of mere survival. Isolated as he was from contact with the rest
of the world, the combat man was thrown back on his outfit to meet the
various affectional needs for recognition, approval, and in general for
appreciation as a significant person.\textsuperscript{37}

In the battlefield environment, a man’s world shrinks to encompass only the
immediacies of staying alive. In this setting, the fraternity between men sharing the same
experiences becomes paramount; it is because of this bond that men take the necessary
actions in combat that attempt to shift the odds of living in favor of them and their
immediate comrades.

Guy Sajer, drawing on his experiences in Russia as a soldier in the Wehrmacht
during World War Two, wrote about the desperation of combat. His words dismiss the
role played by ideology while confirming that battle, at its most gut-wrenching level, is
about survival of the group. It is interesting that Sajer always uses the first person plural we, but never the singular I.

We no longer fought for Hitler, or for National Socialism, or for the Third Reich—or even for our fiancées or mothers or families trapped in bomb-ravaged towns….We fought for ourselves, so that we wouldn’t die in holes filled with mud and snow; we fought like rats, which do not hesitate to spring with all their teeth bared when they are cornered by a human.38

It is due to group affiliation that men are loathe to give into their fears and act in ways that would portray them as less than worthy in the eyes of their comrades. Ego, personal honor, and social pressure become intertwined as the soldier aligns his interests with those of the group. The outcome is a type of emotional connection among soldiers that cannot be equaled in civilian life unless exposure to the threat of death is involved. The nature of war has always had this effect on men, as the words of the 14th-century knight, Jean du Beuil, confirm:

You love your comrade so much in war….A sweet feeling of loyalty and of pity fills your heart on seeing your friend so valiantly exposing his body. And then you are prepared to go and die or live with him, and for love not to abandon him. And out of that arises such a delight.39

The importance of the primary group to the individual British ranker becomes evident when his experiences as a whole are considered. The British soldier joined the army out of economic need; there was little in the way of ideological motivation behind his decision to take the drastic step of enlisting. The volunteer simply hoped for employment, regular food, and a living wage. As for the latter two enticements, the army would disappoint him time and time again. He was forced to plunder food, as even when delivered his rations were nutritionally deficient. When he was caught pilfering food and drink, he was punished harshly. His needs were rarely considered. While on campaign,
the redcoat received little in the way of sustaining motivations: he garnered no medals or awards recognizing his courage and competence; no efforts were made to address his patriotic ideals or personal concerns; he had limited opportunities for advancement and even fewer for profitable looting; his medical care was abysmally poor; he had no expectations of going home, as service was usually for life; and, finally, he held but marginal hope for a livable pension or any at all. Marginalized to an extraordinary extent, the British soldier withstood these conditions amid a daily life that was regulated and enforced by a capricious system of draconian discipline.

It was in the mess group of six to eight men that the British ranker found the support to endure the existence that was army life. Perhaps because he was enlisted for life, the ongoing hardship described above caused the British ranker to develop emotional ties of greater strength than was the norm for soldiers of this period. His need for support from his comrades was certainly as great as and at times greater than that of his French counterpart. Such continual privation created a cycle of want and requisite aid. As individuals broke down in different physical and psychological ways at different times, their messmates were there to provide succor. John Kincaid of the Rifles wrote about this mechanism and its effect on the men. He described with pride the sense of unity that the life of shared hardship and pride in their professional competence brought to the soldiers:

> When I add that our paunches were nearly as empty as our pockets, it will appear almost a libel upon common sense to say that we enjoyed it; yet so it was, —our very privations were a subject of pride and boast to us, and there still continued to be an *esprit de corps*,—a buoyancy of feeling animating all, which nothing could quell; we were alike ready for the field or frolic, and when not engaged in one, went headlong into the other.⁴⁰
As Charles Moskos has noted, it is this process of mutual support and shared experience that ties men together and enables them to face the demands of combat. He writes:

In ground warfare an individual’s survival is directly related to the support—moral, physical, technical—he can expect from his fellow soldiers. He gets such support largely to the degree that he reciprocates it—to the others in his group in general and to his buddies in particular.41

Firsthand accounts provide repeated examples of the extremes to which men would go to protect the group and protect their place in it. Two of the most striking representations of primary group identification and allegiance come from Rifleman Harris. He related two separate incidents wherein soldiers in the process of receiving 200 and 700 lashes, respectively, were offered the option of “banishment,” which entailed transfer to another regiment. If the men accepted, their remaining strokes would be remitted. Both declined without hesitation.42 That men in such a predicament valued their place among their friends in the battalion more than they wanted to escape the horrific punishment of the lash reveals much about the depth of feeling connecting British soldiers to their units.

As well, the behavior of British soldiers shows that they feared ostracism as much as they did death. Major George Bell recalled with pride the conduct of Kit Wallace, a private in the 34th. Wallace, a simple fellow with no friends, had become an outcast because he had gained a reputation as a malingerer who failed to stand his ground in battle. In a skirmish with the French, Wallace rushed to the front of the attack and shot off all 60 of his rounds. He then turned to the men of his company and cried out, “Now am I a coward?”43
Edward Costello, of the Rifles, remembered the fate of another man named “Long Tom,” who violated group mores by leaving a skirmish, supposedly to help the wounded. When the soldiers broke up into their mess groups that evening, Tom was refused entry into any of the groups; his efforts to avoid combat caused him to be “marked with indignation by the brave men.” Costello went on to comment that “no good soldier would venture, under so frivolous a pretense, so to expose himself to the indignation of his comrades.”

Tom, hungry and desperate, walked calmly through the picket lines and shot a French soldier, whom he attempted to carry back to the British camp in order to see what food the man possessed in his knapsack. His efforts, no doubt, were also intended to show the men of his regiment that he was not wanting in courage.

A sergeant in the 42nd, James Anton, corroborates Costello’s warning about engaging in behaviors, such as lagging behind or dropping out during combat, which could cause a group member to lose face among his comrades. Anton described the consequences of violating group norms:

A man may drop behind in the field, but this is a dreadful risk to his reputation, and even attended with immediate personal danger, while within the range of shot and shells: and woe to the man that does it, whether through fatigue, sudden sickness, or fear; let him seek death and welcome it from the hand of a foe, rather than give room for any surmise respecting his courage; for when others are boasting of what they have seen, suffered, or performed, he must remain in silent mortification. If he chances to speak, some boaster cuts him short; and even when he is not alluded to, he becomes so sensitively alive to those merited or unmerited insults that he considers every word, sign, or gesture, pointed at him, and he is miserable among his comrades.

William Lawrence offers a specific incident that illustrates how the bonds to the group can be irrevocably severed by a single violation of group standards during combat. His recollection also demonstrates the extreme difficulty of surviving in the field without
the help of comrades. During the initial stages of the battle of Waterloo, 18 June 1815, a new recruit asked to leave the ranks because he was ill, the illness brought on by a just-discovered fear of French artillery fire. Lawrence chided him, but the soldier fell to the ground and refused to move. Angered, Lawrence considered shooting him on the spot. He did not, but Lawrence let the man know he would “not forget him for this affair of cowardice.” The man disappeared that day only to return six months later. While Lawrence does not say what type of reception the man received from his fellow soldiers, it can be well imagined. His troubles were only beginning, however, as Lawrence reported him to the company commander. The deserter was found guilty of absenting himself from the battle without leave and received 300 lashes for his actions. Lawrence felt the sentence more than deserved. After recovering from the flogging, the man was shunned by all his comrades, who “would scarcely speak to him at all.” The man’s wages were stopped to pay for lost equipment, and without the help of his comrades, he found himself sorely in need of food. He slipped off to Paris and sold his kit for money. He was discovered and flogged again, receiving another 300 strokes. Lawrence wrote that “it may be…taken for granted that the drummers did not fail in their duty [laying on the strokes] towards such a man as this, for there is no one they feel more strongly against than a coward.” Within a short time he was lashed again and drummed out of the service. Summing up the attitudes of the men of the company, Lawrence wrote “and I never saw him again, which I was not sorry for.”

Lawrence provided a further example of what happens to men who fail to live up to group expectations. He wrote about the sudden appearance in camp of stragglers, including seven sergeants, who had rejoined the company upon hearing that Napoleon
had surrendered in 1814. Figuring that the danger of battle was at an end, the men hoped to be accepted back into their previous affiliations. They were rejected to a man. The soldiers turned their backs completely on the skulkers, refusing to acknowledge their existence. They had no one for company but each other. The sergeants were immediately transferred, the colonel telling them that the regiment “would not be disgraced by them any longer than he could help.” When the battalion was refitting in Ireland shortly thereafter, the remaining privates were all sent to the second battalion.

Major Bell also observed that men who had lost the respect of their comrades were likely to suffer from want of food. Bell recalled that when meat was served out to each company, the men subdivided it. Those who were out of favor received the stringier pieces, if they were given anything at all. In this way remunerative stressors coincided with normative pressure to mold the behavior of men in the field and in battle.

British soldiers, like most men who have seen combat and suffered as a result, took great pride in their wounds. Anton wrote about rankers who boasted of their battlefield injuries because they considered such marks confirmation that they had followed the behavioral standards set by the group and performed their duties during battle. Anton considered such talk proper as these men had done their share in battle as part of a team. It was not, however, considered necessary to attempt “feats of extraordinary daring...[as] individual daring is lost in orderly movements.” Such sentiments were also expressed by U. S. infantrymen in Korea. Men who aspired to be heroes were disdained as they were considered interested in personal glory rather than the survival of the group. Thus, they were considered dangerous.
Costello characterized the men of his unit as being composed of three types: those who were “zealous and brave to absolute devotion”; men who did their duty, like Long Tom, when under the watchful eye of a superior or a comrade; and soldiers who “were seldom seen until after a battle had been fought.” He labeled men in the last category as “skulkers and poltroons,” and was pleased that the number of such men in his regiment was very small.56

Although Wellington may not have understood the working mechanism of primary group cohesion, he recognized its effect: the combat capabilities of Peninsula veterans were unparalleled, at least against the French troops they encountered. Wellington disparaged their name, but he never doubted the courage of the men under his command. Even when veteran battalions suffered significant attrition over the course of the Peninsula campaign, he attempted to keep them intact. In a letter from Cadiz, 26 December 1812, Wellington requested permission from his royal highness, the Duke of York, commander in chief of the army, to do so. “I should prefer,” Wellington explained, “to keep as many of the old regiments as I can with the army.”57 Although depleted, these veteran regiments never suffered the types of casualties that diminished the effects of primary group cohesion.

In his work on the plight of the 22nd Infantry Regiment from D-Day through Hürtgen Forest in 1944, Robert Rush found that a unit suffering continually high casualty rates undergoes a gradual transition during which the effects of squad level cohesion on combat performance is greatly reduced.58 Rush contends that only a small cadre of non-commissioned officers and officers was needed to keep a unit fighting as long as replacements were continually available.59 The life and death circumstances of Hürtgen
Forest may have worked to decrease the time required to assimilate replacements into primary groups. As Rush notes, “It was only when units became battle hardened around a cadre of survivors that combat power increased.” In other words, combat effectiveness can only be improved through time and shared combat experience. Continually funneling raw recruits into units that have a small contingent of veteran NCOs to guide them will, in the short term, allow the units to function as the inexperience of the men causes them to be unwittingly aggressive. The cost of such a method is the lives of the enthusiastic replacements. Rush’s book reinforces the validity of primary group cohesion; it does not disprove its worth, as is sometimes misperceived through a quick reading of his introduction. Rush expertly shows, instead, that under very unusual circumstances a unit having a cadre of surviving leaders and steadily supplied with replacement troops can still take ground despite casualty rates that all but destroy group cohesiveness as usually understood. This was certainly not the case with Wellington’s veteran Peninsula regiments, although disease, much of it brought on by malnutrition, siege assaults, and years of campaigning interspersed with battles, took its toll on group integrity. While the Battle of Hürtgen Forest consumed men in great numbers over the course of about a month, the Peninsular War was a campaign of slow attrition covering approximately seven years. Thus, the pressures that chipped away at unit effectiveness were markedly different in duration. British units tended to lose men slowly over time; this timeframe also allowed replacements to be assimilated into units.

Group bonds, forged through campaign hardship and during the maelstrom of combat, unquestionably cemented links between Lawrence and his mates, men such as Pig Harding and George Bowden. These connections compelled Lawrence to join
Harding and Bowden voluntarily in the Forlorn Hope at Badajoz in 1812. Even the strongest ties between soldiers, however, do not guarantee their safety. As was expected for men leading the first wave of storming parties, Lawrence, Harding, and Bowden did not make it through the breach. Harding received seven wounds, and Bowden had his legs blown off. Both were killed instantly. Lawrence received four wounds during the assault, the most serious being to his knee; his injuries required a six-week hospital stay. Like many soldiers under similar circumstances, he missed the men of his company. Though his wounds were not fully healed, Lawrence returned to his company. Still weak, Lawrence fell ill due to fever and was sent back to the hospital where he would stay for an additional seven months before he was fit to rejoin his unit.  

Emotional ties to comrades and the related self-identity as part of a surrogate family can come to outweigh instincts for survival. This is the dynamic underlying primary group cohesion.

John Green, a veteran of the 68th Foot, experienced this same need to be with his company mates. Despite severe illness, Green tried to keep up with his battalion; when he could not, he fell out and collapsed. A fellow soldier and longtime friend dropped out and stayed with Green, eventually escorting him to the hospital at Castel Branco. Green credited the man with saving his life. Like Lawrence, Green left the hospital before he was well in order to make his way back to his unit.

Costello wrote about how rivalries between regiments arose during exhausting forced marches, each element of the brigade attempting to maintain the pace without losing men. Costello, who at one point fainted, recalled with admiration the remarks and conduct of a friend named Burke, who refused to allow illness to separate him from his company during the march. Advised by Colonel Beckwith to fall out, Burke declined
to do so. Casting a look of contempt back at the men who littered the sides of the road, Burke commented, “No sir. I certainly am not well, but I still have the heart of a man, and will keep up with my comrades as long as my legs will carry me.” Burke never shirked doing his share and more: he volunteered for the Forlorn Hopes at Ciudad Rodrigo, Badajoz, and San Sebastian. Miraculously, he survived all three assaults, earning the esteem of all who knew him.

Bell provides a similar story of a soldier of the 43rd who was shot through the thigh at Salamanca. The man refused to leave the field and struggled on with his mates, bleeding heavily from the wound and losing his shoes in the process. Costello well understood such devotion to the men with whom he served. When asked about his family, he replied, “I have no such ties, save my comrades.”

William Wheeler of the 51st behaved in the same fashion upon suffering the concussive effects of a cannon shot that nearly decapitated him during the siege of Badajoz. He succinctly sums up why absenting himself from the battlefield was not an option:

One of the round shot must have passed pretty near my cranium, I thought I was wounded, my head ached violently. I felt the pain a long time and it was with difficulty I could perform my duty. Had I been working in a place where there was no danger I certainly should have given up, but here I was ashamed to complain, lest any of my comrades laugh at me.

Another veteran, John Douglass of the Royal Scots, was wounded in the foot near Calirico. The regimental surgeon suggested that Douglass stay and assist with the other patients, telling Douglass that if he did not, he would draw no rations. Like Burke and the soldier of the 43rd described by Bell, Douglass was undeterred. He told the surgeon that “I would beg my way to the Regiment rather than be left behind.” A captain who
overheard the conversation gave Douglass some money to assist him on the road. “[Near] penniless, without a biscuit in my old haversack,” Douglass remembered, “in a country partly desecrated…in the depth of winter I plodded my way and joined the regiment at a village called Burtegrande.”

Joseph Donaldson, a veteran in the 94th, recalled a similar story of group loyalty. He told the woeful tale of a soldier forced to abandon his wife on a retreat from Madrid in November 1813. She was unable to go on and begged him to stay with her. Anguished over her possible fate, that of being left to the mercy of the French or dying of exposure, the soldier eventually chose loyalty to his comrades. Fearing being labeled a shirker or deserter by them, the ranker left her by the side of the road and trudged on with his company.

Men not in extremis were equally attached to their units. Wheeler wrote of the great reluctance with which he accepted a transfer to another company. Even though the move to a position as an officer’s batman ensured an easier life, Wheeler quickly longed to return to his comrades. “I had frequently applied to join my company,” he recalled, “but was always refused.” Wheeler then schemed and misbehaved his way back to his company, almost receiving 300 lashes in the process. He later offered his perspective on the possibility of being invalided home to Britain, reflecting that as much as he desired to see home, he would “much rather rejoin my regiment again and take my chance with it….Then, when this protracted war is over…I should have the proud satisfaction of landing on my native shores with many a brave and gallant comrade, with whom I braved the dangers of many a hard fought battle.”
Similarly, after recovering from the injuries received during the storming of Badajoz, Lawrence was notified that he had been promoted to corporal and transferred to another company. Although he relished the slight increase in pay, Lawrence soon became miserable. He wrote mournfully:

I was far from feeling at home in this company, as I lost all my old companions; and not only that, but I then stood six feet one inch high, whilst not one man in that company stood more than five feet seven inches. I made my complaint to the captain who promised that as soon as there was a vacancy, I should go back to my old company, and that cheered me up a little, but made me look with intense anxiety for the change back again.  

After three months, Lawrence’s company commander found an opportunity to place Lawrence back with his old company. This was much to Lawrence’s “great satisfaction.” Like Lawrence, Robert Blakeney of the 28th felt so strongly about his company that when he was promoted and transferred he made every effort to be exchanged back into his old unit. Blakeney even boldly wrote Wellington about the matter. When his new unit was shipped home, Blakeney found it sadly ironic that while hundreds of officers were attempting to make exchanges in order to return to London, he was unsuccessfully endeavoring to transfer back to his original unit in order to remain on the continent with his old company.

Historian William Manchester expressed the personal reasons behind such extraordinary efforts. Writing about his experiences as a Marine in the Pacific in World War Two, Manchester captured the essence of the relationship among men who live through combat together:

You’re dealing with excesses of love and hate, and among men who fight together there is an intense love. You are closer to those men than to anyone except your immediate family when you were young...I was not a brave young man [but after I was wounded] I went back because I learned that my
regiment was going to...land behind the Japanese lines, and I felt that if I were there I might save men who had saved my life many times, and the thought of not being there was just intolerable. I missed them, I yearned for them—it was, as I say, a variety of love, and I was joyful to be reunitied with them. It didn't last long—two days later I was hit much harder, and I was out of the war for good.  

William Grattan of the 88th articulated these same sentiments under almost the exact same conditions. During the siege of Badajoz, Grattan was severely wounded: a musket round hit him in the side and carried a part of his tunic through his torso, the remnants protruding from his back. He remembered that his thoughts first went to his closest friends in the company, half of whom had been killed during the attack. Even many years later, Grattan had difficulty expressing his emotions on seeing his remaining companions march away when the 88th moved on. His anguish at being separated from his comrades is palpable in his writings. It is significant that Grattan wrote more about being left behind than he did about his wound.

Despite or perhaps partially because of arduous campaigns and combat experiences, the British ranker felt a tremendous attachment to the men of his company, or more precisely his mess group. Grattan, who had amazingly recovered from his injury and rejoined the battalion, learned in 1814 that he was being shipped home to join the second battalion. Thinking back about how he felt when he realized that army life as he knew it was at an end, Grattan remembered with evident admiration how the men of the 88th had persevered; he had no trouble pinpointing the connection between comrades as the mechanism that made it all worthwhile:

The ‘boys of Connaught’ were not much put out of their way by the want of shoes, a good coat on their back, or a full allowance of rations: they took all these wants easy! [sic]....Years of hard fighting, fatigues and privations that we now wonder at, had, nevertheless, a charm that, in one way or another,
bound us together… I am of the opinion that our days in the Peninsula were the happiest of our lives.\textsuperscript{79}

The connection between soldiers was ever-present. Kincaid amusedly recalled soldiers almost fainting with fatigue on the march being revived by the camaraderie of fellow soldiers during the few minutes of allotted rest time per hour. The men “invariably grouped themselves in card-parties,”\textsuperscript{80} the communal activity restoring to a small degree the men’s will to go on.

For the British soldier, being a member of a primary social group was the foundation of his existence. His efforts to share food, clothing, the difficulties of campaign life, and the experiences of battle constituted life as he knew it. Anything that potentially threatened the group became the focal point of group action; even replacements were treated with suspicion. Understanding that new men were unproven and had no ties to the group, Private Wheeler realized they might be flight risks during combat. When replacements were distributed throughout his regiment, Wheeler ensured his safety by making it a point to trade places in the line, in order to be adjacent to “a man who had stood next to me in many fights.”\textsuperscript{81}

Surtees felt the same way about replacement troops, observing that lack of shared service time among comrades prevented them from having the confidence necessary to face combat without giving way.\textsuperscript{82} This lack of faith in new men is based partly on emotional resentment, as the replacements are taking the spots of killed or wounded soldiers who were trusted members of the group. This reaction to new soldiers also had a practical side. In battle, the actions of each soldier affected the fate of the group; thus men who had not established their bona fides represented a real risk to members of the
established squad. Audie Murphy, writing about his experiences in the Second World War, succinctly summed up how most veterans view replacements, and why veterans sometimes made the lives of new soldiers difficult:

The need for reinforcements is desperate. But we are suspicious and resentful of the new men that join us. As days pass, if they prove their worth, they gradually grow into our clique and share the privilege of riding other replacements.

Wellington may have unintentionally enhanced the ties between his soldiers in March 1813 when tents were first issued. The tents were large: three could house a company of 100 men. Their size required that they be transported on mules, which previously carried the soldiers’ cooking kettles. The kettles, which were substantial enough to serve ten soldiers, were too large for an individual soldier to port. This threatened to limit march-rates, so Wellington had lighter tin kettles made. The new version served six men, which, accidentally, is the approximate size of the smallest functional combat unit. From the contubernium of the Roman legion to the fire-teams of 20th- and 21st-century armies, the smallest functional battle group appears to be about six men strong. Not all the men appreciated the change to the smaller kettle, as it was but one more item the men had to carry, the load being shared every six days. But Wellington never asked their opinion, so tote it they did. The serendipitous benefits of having soldiers daily share their meals with the same group of men, undoubtedly the same men that stood in line together during battle, may have strengthened the ties among British rankers.

In his work on the battlefield success of Wellington’s army, historian David Gates has recognized that British tactical success was based on the élan of the British ranker.
British tactics, Gates writes, “demanded unfaltering obedience and steadiness on the part of the individual soldier, and their successful application is indicative of the superb training, discipline, and skill with which, by 1815, the British army had been imbued.” Gates, without making a specific reference to it, was describing the battlefield result of shared values regarding conduct in battle and superb primary group cohesion. Unit cohesion, manifesting itself through expressions of loyalty to the outfit, responsibility for doing one’s share or not letting the unit down, and pride and confidence in the unit, was the source of the British ranker’s combat effectiveness.

For a unit to perform well in combat, however, more than primary group cohesion is required. Cohesion, alone, can foster behavior that defies the wishes of military leadership when orders overtly threaten the group’s existence. The mutiny of five companies of the 43rd Highlanders in 1743 provides a prime example of the outcome of a clash between group norms and the army’s expectations regarding obedience. The highland regiment, a proud group very much centered on the Scottish concept of _clann_—which translates as _children_ and carries with it the implied leadership of a benevolent father figure—was raised to serve in Scotland. When they were marched to London to be paraded before George II, the men grew increasingly sullen, as rumors swirled that they were to be deployed abroad, either in Flanders or the West Indies. The men were terrified of being sent to the latter as it was justifiably considered something of a death sentence due to the effects of disease, as Roger Buckley’s work on British troops sent there in the late 18th and early 19th centuries confirmed. Men trailed away on the march south. No longer trusting their officers, the remaining men of the 43rd boldly stated that they would go no further upon reaching London. They felt they had been lied to, cheated
of their wages, denied proper uniforms, and sold to the West Indies.\textsuperscript{95} Because the group felt that its survival was at stake, the soldiers disregarded direct orders, directives which they felt guaranteed their demise. Here, normative compliance to group standards set the highlanders in opposition to authority as the latter’s demands were perceived as putting the group’s well-being at tremendous risk. Such oppositional behavior, however, was not tolerated by British authorities. The highlanders of the 43\textsuperscript{rd} were all condemned to death. Only three were shot, though, with one soldier being flogged and the rest sent to regiments in the Americas; the 43\textsuperscript{rd} thereby received the fate it mutinied to avoid.\textsuperscript{96}

This same sort of defiance regarding plundering remained a constant problem for British army authorities during the Peninsular War because the army’s inability to regularly feed the men endangered the group. The rampant desertions by British soldiers during the war represented military disintegration based on the inconsistency between group needs and army demands, as well as the British army’s reliance on external coercive discipline, which ran counter to the normative influence at work within the soldiers’ primary groups.\textsuperscript{97} It is only when the benefits to the group align with the military expectations imposed by the army that regulations for conduct on campaign and in battle are willingly followed.

The British soldier in the Peninsula had little in the way of the options available to the 43\textsuperscript{rd}, as he was far from home and refusing orders brought him neither closer to home nor protected him from harm. While his immediate concern was often obtaining food and drink, his survival and that of his primary group also depended upon the ability of the army to be as effective and efficient in battle against the French as was possible. Thus, it was in the soldier’s best interest to have group standards that encouraged men to stand
and fight. Group ideals related to perceptions of British societal norms regarding manly behavior, loyalty to comrades, and military obligations were shaded by this fundamental motivation. The “unfaltering obedience and steadiness,” as Gates phrases it, that became synonymous with descriptions of the British soldier in combat developed because the behaviors required by the army coincided with the group standards established by British redcoats. Both the army and his group encouraged aggressive behavior in battle; this stratagem was willingly adopted by the ranker because, more often than not, it increased his chances and those of his comrades of living through a battle and seeing another day. This is the essence of Westbrook’s theory of normative compliance. “Compliance in such organizations,” he argues, “rests largely on the legitimacy of the organization’s demands in terms of their conformity with the individual’s values and norms.”

The strong degree of cohesion among British soldiers and the alignment of group norms with army regulations enhanced unit *esprit de corps*, which engendered active combat participation and helped make the British ranker more amenable to army tactics that emphasized close-quarters fighting. Lynn cites the same process within the *ordinaire* of the French Revolutionary army, whereby relationships melded with standards to improve morale and combat effectiveness.

But unlike the French Revolutionary army which attempted to augment this dynamic with rhetoric, songs, oaths, and letters, the predominately coercive nature of the British army precluded such appeals. It would be left to the interaction of group members, isolated from civilian society and outside influences, to reinforce standards of behavior that promoted combat aggressiveness. Thus, the loyalty and mutual trust developed over time among British redcoats remained the driving force, compelling men
to strive to assimilate group standards as part of their personal codes, with normative compliance being the essential mechanism that shaped the soldier’s behavior. In this way, standards and cohesion proved as valuable under fire as they did when the men pillaged and shared food to stay alive. The end result was an unbroken string of British victories during the Peninsula campaign and at Waterloo (Table 44).

It is, of course, impossible to know how well Wellington’s army would have fared against a contingent of equal size from Napoleon’s Grand Armee of 1805, when the French army was at its peak. The French army of Austerlitz, for example, routinely employed *l’ordre mixte*, a tactical formation combining two columns with one line formation. Linked brigades would advance in this fashion, the formation providing firepower and sufficient depth for assault. *L’ordre mixte*, however, was a tactical combination that required extensive training in order to maintain proper intervals between the three formations. By the time of the Peninsular War, especially the later years, the loss of so many French veterans and officers forced commanders to rely on independent columns to move and fight, with some of the columns changing to line formation in an attempt to provide firepower in addition to the shock capacity of the column. Thus, while it is entertaining to conjecture about the outcome of a meeting between Wellington’s Peninsular army and Napoleon’s army of 1805, such a clash never occurred. We are left with the actual encounters of the Peninsula campaign, which present us with a series of British victories.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Battle</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Numbers</th>
<th>British deployment</th>
<th>Result</th>
<th>Casualties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vimerio</td>
<td>August 1808</td>
<td>Br. 18,000 Fr. 13,056</td>
<td>Defensive</td>
<td>British victory</td>
<td>Br. 720 Fr. 1,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corunna</td>
<td>January 1809</td>
<td>Br. 15,000 Fr. 20,000</td>
<td>Defensive</td>
<td>Marginal British victory</td>
<td>Br. 800 Fr. 1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corunna</td>
<td>May 1809</td>
<td>Br. 18,000 Fr. 20,000</td>
<td>British river crossing</td>
<td>British victory</td>
<td>Br. 120 Fr. 300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talavera</td>
<td>July 1809</td>
<td>Allies 54,000 Fr. 40,000</td>
<td>Defensive</td>
<td>British victory</td>
<td>Br. 5,400 Fr. 7,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Busaco</td>
<td>September 1810</td>
<td>Allies 61,500 Fr. 65,000</td>
<td>Defensive</td>
<td>British victory</td>
<td>Br. 1,250 Fr. 4,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barrossa</td>
<td>March 1811</td>
<td>Allies 15,000 Fr. 7,400</td>
<td>Attack siege lines</td>
<td>British victory</td>
<td>Br. 1,200 Fr. 2,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuentés de Onoro</td>
<td>May 1811</td>
<td>Allies 37,000 Fr. 47,500</td>
<td>Defensive</td>
<td>British victory</td>
<td>Br. 1,800 Fr. 3,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albuera</td>
<td>May 1811</td>
<td>Allies 35,000 Fr. 24,000</td>
<td>Defensive</td>
<td>British victory</td>
<td>Br. 5,860 Fr. 5,950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salamanca</td>
<td>July 1812</td>
<td>Allies 52,000 Fr. 49,000</td>
<td>Offensive</td>
<td>British victory</td>
<td>Br. 4,750 Fr. 14,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitoria</td>
<td>June 1813</td>
<td>Allies 79,000 Fr. 68,000</td>
<td>Offensive</td>
<td>British victory</td>
<td>Br. 5,150 Fr. 8,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waterloo</td>
<td>June 1815</td>
<td>Allies 68,000 Fr. 52,000 Fr. 72,000</td>
<td>Defensive</td>
<td>British victory</td>
<td>Br. 23,000 Pr. 6,900 Fr. 37,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 44: British battles in the Peninsular War and Belgium**

Wellington’s reverse slope tactics, no doubt, played an important role, but British tactics were not restricted to just one dynamic, as will be described below. They ran the gamut from various defensive combinations of short-range volley and charge methods to more offensive approaches utilizing combined tactics such as were exhibited at Salamanca in 1812. All the various tactical methodologies employed by Wellington, however, rested on the resolute nature of the British soldier and his willingness to engage
in close contact fighting. The cohesive bonds between redcoats and the alignment of group standards of behaviors with those imposed by the army enabled British units to display routinely a high degree of effectiveness in combat.

In order to better understand how various factors worked to influence the combat behavior of the British soldier, a certain awareness is required regarding the difficulties of translating the experiences of combat into words on the printed page. Words and phrases, such as cohesion and combat effectiveness, are frequently used to convey impressions of soldiers in battle, often unintentionally misleading the reader into considering these words as representations of absolute emotional or mental states. In reality, the terms combat effectiveness and cohesion are words that only roughly approximate the collective behavior of a group of soldiers. They are intellectual abstractions used to assign value to men’s willingness to face danger and death while in the company of comrades. The mix of psychological forces churning within each individual soldier, however, can be neither seen nor measured. Their effects can only be evaluated by comparing the behavior of units directly opposing each other on the battlefield.

In point of fact, combat effectiveness is in large part the manifestation of group unity. It is the bonds between men, based on mutual allegiance and agreed upon norms, that work to encourage men to withstand the rigors of battle. Weapons, leadership, logistical considerations, physical conditioning, tactical nuance, and shared experience also play important roles; each impacts individual capabilities and perceptions, thus affecting group function. A unit’s ability to fulfill effectively its combat responsibilities always comes down to how well the ties between group members keep men on the battlefield actively engaging the enemy.
When the men of a unit individually decide to either endure enemy fire, and stand their ground, or advance toward an enemy when so directed, they are considered to be a functional combat unit. Its effectiveness can only be gauged by its rate of outgoing fire and the aptitude of the soldiers to withstand incoming fire without a significant portion of men either cowering or abandoning their mates and retreating from the scene. When the majority of the men in a combat group actively engage the enemy, the unit is said to be effective. This is an observable phenomenon, even if a temporary one. On the continuum that constitutes combat behavior, individual soldiers participate to different degrees. Some actively fire their weapons, others do so half-heartedly, while still others are immobilized with fear. Some soldiers, overwhelmed by events, choose flight.

Marshall noted this phenomenon in interviews with combat veterans. He was surprised to discover that during a full day’s engagement with the enemy, a company might have only 15 to 25 percent of its men discharge their weapons at the enemy. In recent years Marshall has been justifiably criticized for his methods and conclusions, the latter being more impressionistic than quantifiable; the hard data on which he based his ideas appear untraceable. Marshall’s contribution, however, lies not in his data on fire rates, but in his recognition that the psychological stress of combat impacts soldiers in different ways, and that group cohesion is the source of a soldier’s battlefield morale. David Grossman, a psychologist and U. S. Army Ranger, has expanded Marshall’s ideas into a model of combat behavior that provides a soldier with four choices: fight, posture, flee, or submit. Grossman’s model provides a much more realistic portrait of the reactions of men under fire than that presented in most narratives describing the actions of soldiers in battle. His conclusions about killing and the behavior of men in battle lean,
perhaps, too heavily on Marshall’s questionable quantification of fire rates. More hard data from empirical studies are needed to investigate more thoroughly how social and psychological inhibitions to killing and the act itself affect the human psyche and the soldier in combat.

On the battlefield, a soldier can shift from one of Grossman’s four behaviors to another, as the intensity of combat changes and group members are wounded or killed. This means that group dynamics are in a constant state of flux. Thus, the designation combat effective and the term group cohesion have only transitory meanings; both concepts represent two different but intertwined spectrums of human responses to the threat of death. A unit’s fighting ability and the strength of the bonds between men are both dependent upon the debilitating effects of battlefield stressors on the psychological resiliency of the soldiers involved.  

Often, at some point a threshold is crossed, when self-preservation outweighs group allegiance. It is at this juncture, when men begin to edge rearwards shying away from the enemy, that combat effectiveness can again be observed. When men give way and flee the field, their actions establish a baseline defining the negative end of the effectiveness continuum. Between the observable extremes of all-out aggressive fighting—with nearly 100 percent participation—and flight, the combat capacity of a unit remains in a state of transition, shifting up and down the scale relative to the moment-by-moment exigencies of combat. Marshall reached this same conclusion almost forty years ago, writing that “morale is not a steady current…but an oscillating wave.”

As individuals react to battlefield stimulus, changes in cohesion occur. The confluence of fluctuating external forces and human interpretations make assessing a
unit’s combat status at a given time and its overall battlefield performance on a specific day difficult to decipher. Thus, the terms combat effectiveness and group cohesion represent but a snapshots of group behavior and of the connections between men at a particular time at a specific location.

The difficulty of capturing the ephemeral nature of such phrases and conveying the chaotic nature of the combat environment sometimes results in misconceptions about why men fight. As Richard Gabriel observed, the outcome is all too often an abridged representation of battle that makes it seem that soldiers of previous eras were somehow driven by different psychological forces than those acting on warriors today:

At the very least, military histories seem to simplify aspects of battle—perhaps a virtue of hindsight—so that the complications which are always attendant upon modern war are often absent or minimized in accounts of wars past. One result is to convey the impression that men who fought in earlier times were somehow different from those who will fight the battles of the future. This seems especially so in accounts of performance and endurance under fire. Nothing could be further from the truth.

This has certainly been the case with the British soldier of the Napoleonic period, as Richard Glover’s previously mentioned assumption illustrates. His attribution of the British soldiers’ battlefield successes to their drunken and rugged natures “unknown and scarcely conceivable in the decorous modern England of today” does little to explain either the motivations of the British ranker in particular or soldiers in general. Glover’s appraisal, which is representative of many such observations on the British soldier, works to obscure rather than identify and untangle the forces that work on men in battle.

A discriminating examination of the interplay of weaponry, tactics, leadership, training, and experience and their effects on group cohesion reveals what Glover’s superficial commentary cannot: why the British soldier was successful on the battlefield.
British combat efficacy stemmed, in part, from Wellington’s use of the two-rank line and his singular practice of using reverse slopes to conceal the position of British infantry on the field. This technique disrupted French tactical deployment, while at the same time protecting British infantry from French artillery and small arms fire. At various points in battle, depending on the situation, the initiative of British line officers, and Wellington’s orders, the British battalions would rise up and deliver a volley which was immediately followed by a charge.

There were a number of variations on this theme. At times the British were visible to the French and awaited their approach before firing and charging. In other cases, British units would advance toward the French and fire at under a hundred yards before charging. In other situations still, the British would close with the French without firing at all, relying instead on the ominous silence of their advance and the implied threat of cold steel to unbalance their Gallic counterparts. Regardless of the circumstance, the tactical outcome was predicated on British élan and willingness to close with the bayonet. This combination of tactics, group standards, and cohesion was unusual among the European armies opposing the French. The Austrians, Spanish, Prussians, and Russians found such a tactical sequence often beyond the everyday capabilities of their soldiers. Individual units were, of course, capable of replicating this approach, but cohesion limitations and differing group norms among each country’s soldiery prevented nations from universally adopting this series of tactics. The reverse-slope aspect aside, the British dependence on esprit and the bayonet most closely resembles the doctrine settled on by French Revolutionary armies. In fact, the combat methods of the British army under
Wellington bring to mind the 18th-century close-quarter tactics of highland regiments, such as those that fought and repeatedly relied on the bayonet at Culloden in 1745.

Much misinterpretation, stemming from Charles Oman’s misunderstanding of events at Maida in Italy during 1806, has sometimes resulted in the conclusion that British firepower, delivered at three rounds a minute, was the deciding factor when British infantry clashed with French. In his 1907 lecture to cadets at the Royal Artillery Institution at Woolwich, later published in the *Journal of the Royal Artillery Institution*, Oman—relying on the testimony of one British witness—argued that the French tactic of attacking in columns was purposeful and flawed.113 “5,000 infantry in line,” Oman summarized, “received the shock of 6,000 in column, and inflicted on them one of the most crushing defeats on a small scale that took place during the whole war.”114 John Fortescue incorporated Oman’s assessment into his *History of the British Army*, as Chandler has noted,115 further perpetuating the erroneous column-versus-line dynamic. Oman’s contention that the French somehow failed to understand the tactical nuances of column versus line interaction is refuted by a passage written by French military theorist Comte de Guilbert three decades before the French experience in the Peninsular War.

Guilbert accurately envisioned the outcome of an attack in column formation:

One approaches the enemy…the ranks are soon mingled…the column forms no more than a tumultuous mass…. If the head and flanks of the column are struck by a lively fire, the soldier dazed begins to fire in the air, the mass whirls, disperses, and can only rally at a very great distance.116

French infantry drill was set forth in the *Reglement* of 1791. This manual established the theoretical foundation of Revolutionary army tactics and heavily influenced those adopted by the armies of Napoleon. The regulations included
descriptions of nine column formations, but only one was intended for tactical assault: the attack column.\textsuperscript{117} John Lynn, however, convincingly argues that the regulations were altered in the field, where a “closed column with a front of two companies” superseded the attack column, with its wider intervals. This, Lynn contends, allowed shock assault in column to emerge “as the decisive element in offensive tactics.”\textsuperscript{118} He cites forty-two examples of divisional columns in battle, with 35 of the cases being engagements wherein the column was used in the attack.\textsuperscript{119} This emphasis on column assault helped transform Revolutionary zeal and group cohesion into a dominant battlefield tactic; French élan was put to use with \textit{arme blanche}, a phrase denoting the white gleam from edged weapons, to create the Cult of the Bayonet.\textsuperscript{120} As Lynn points out, however, the French tactical system consisted of much more than bayonet charges. Revolutionary tactics were theoretically founded on a series of coordinated attacks involving skirmishers, artillery, and infantry.\textsuperscript{121}

Tactical doctrine under Napoleon continued to rely, in part, on the threat of cold steel. The preferred French formation was \textit{l’ordre mixte}, consisting of two battalion columns in open order flanking one battalion in line.\textsuperscript{122} This evolution from Revolutionary assault columns provided the added element of firepower to French attacks. The deterioration of the quality of French infantry, which began in 1805-1806 and became a critical factor from 1809 on, precluded regular use of this formation in the later years of the war, as previously mentioned. The loss of experienced troops, NCOs, and officers at Austerlitz and Jena-Auerstadt, and later at Wagram, forced the French to abandon \textit{l’ordre mixte} and resort to columnar attacks, which demanded less training to employ and placed less emphasis on the coordination between units.
These is little consensus regarding what the French did next. It has been suggested that the French reverted to standard column assaults by the time of the important battles of the Peninsular War. In such a scenario, poorly prepared French attacks allowed the British to get the upper hand, forcing the stalled French columns to change formation into lines as a last resort in order to respond to incoming British fire. This explanation, however, runs counter to the timing and the dynamics of British attacks, as well as primary source accounts, as will be explained below.

The French may have compromised by resorting to column attacks supported by some columns deploying into line just before reaching the enemy. In this way, an ad hoc version of l’ordre mixte could have provided the French with the benefits of both shock and fire combat. The preponderance of current evidence, however, makes it appear likely that the French method of attack in the Peninsula campaign incorporated the change from column into line before reaching the enemy as the standard tactical procedure. Whether this was because of fire considerations or because they were trying to emulate the British method of volley and charge remains unknown.

James Arnold provides an excellent summation of Revolutionary tactics and how they were incorporated into Napoleon’s army. Describing the tactical flexibility of French formations, and their ability to make expeditiously the transition from column to line while under fire, Arnold cites Marshal Michel Ney’s codified instructions for his soldiers. Presented in 1805, each of Ney’s regulations mentioning bayonet charges specified that all close-action assaults should be delivered in line formation.

There are at least nine additional contemporary references to French units deploying into line, four from French sources and five from British. All involve
eyewitnesses to the events, leaving little doubt that French columns were intended to deploy into line formation as part of the French method of combined arms attack. As Chandler writes, “This evidence is reasonably conclusive on the issue.”

Napoleon’s combined arms approach dictated that a heavy artillery bombardment of the enemy’s position at the point of attack was to precede an advance. As this fire commenced, swarms of skirmishers, voltigeurs, moved to within musket range of the enemy in order to snipe at officers and NCOs. Under the cover of the skirmish screen, French infantry formed in columns would close the distance to the enemy position, preceded by cavalry charges whose purpose was to defeat enemy cavalry and force the enemy’s infantry into square. This protected the French columns from attack and reduced the amount of fire they would have to endure as they crossed the battlefield. It appears likely that the French columns, flexible and mobile, then deployed into line near the enemy before finishing the assault with a volley and charge.

From the British perspective, there was also the practical consideration of maintaining the fire rates required by Oman’s scenario. While a slightly more reliable musket than its French Charleville “1777” counterpart, the British Brown Bess still experienced fouling problems, due to black powder residue, and misfires caused by broken or worn out flints. Chandler estimates that the French musket misfired perhaps one time in six, the rates for the British flintlock would have been similar. With barrels requiring washing every 40 rounds or so and flints needing replacement every ten to twelve shots, the British ranker would have been hard pressed to keep his musket serviceable over the course of a battle. Rates of fire fairly rapidly declined to approximately one or two rounds a minute at most; this is substantially lower than the
three to five rounds that have sometimes been suggested. There is also the added consideration involving the number of rounds available per soldier. Most nations provided 60 rounds per man, which were intended to be enough for an entire battle. The three rounds a minute ideal, even setting aside all the problems of fouling and broken flints, would have consumed the soldier’s entire allotment in 20 minutes. While fire is not, of course continuous, such high rates of fire could only have been sustained for short periods.

Theoretically, even relatively low fire rates would have put enough lead into the air over the 100 yards or so that constituted the effective range of smoothbore muskets to inflict enough casualties to seriously impact the cohesion of an advancing French column or line. An eight hundred man battalion, firing but one round a minute could, in ideal conditions, expect about 60 percent of its rounds to strike the approaching formation at a range of about 80 yards. This translates to 480 casualties. But tests conducted with carefully loaded weapons and in the best possible circumstances do not come close to approximating the realities of combat.

Needless to say, casualty rates never approached the level just described, as battlefield conditions worked to lower significantly fire rates and accuracy. Inclement weather could turn powder into a congealed mass, making firing impossible. Clouds of gunpowder smoke also obscured vision and the cacophony of battle disconcerted soldiers; the din of thousands of firearms and scores of artillery pieces, all firing in succession, and the emotional strain of combat lead to accidental discharges, spilled powder and ball, fired ramrods, and double-loading. Moreover, continuous firing for just eight minutes could leave the barrel too hot to touch. Of equal importance was the
effect of “flintlock flinch” on accuracy. This phenomenon involved the natural human reaction to the delay between pulling the trigger and actual weapon discharge. During the fleeting moments after the flint struck the frizzen cover causing the gunpowder in the pan to fire, and when the gunpowder trail burned down the touchhole into the barrel igniting the rammed charge, soldiers tended to shy momentarily away from the expected explosion. This was in anticipation of the butt recoil, which was quite powerful. The flinch caused the men to elevate the end of their musket barrels a bit, causing their rounds to go high. None of these unintended outcomes would have worked to the advantage of a British unit relying on firepower alone to stop an attacking French formation. Brent Nosworthy, in fact, estimates that during combat a musket was at least 40 times less effective than during tests.

As General Hughes points out in his study of weapon effectiveness during this period, ballistic performance of muskets had only marginally improved since the 18th century, when it was estimated that only 0.2 to 0.5 percent of bullets fired hit their targets. Using the battle of Albuera, 1811, as an example, Hughes estimated that perhaps three to five percent of infantry rounds might find their targets if the firing distances were under 200 yards and the attacking and enemy formations stationary over an extended period, about a half an hour in this case. After analyzing all the studies on the subject, Muir concluded that it took between 200 and 500 fired rounds to inflict one casualty during Napoleonic battles. This explains Colonel Hanger’s remark, made in 1814, that “a soldier must be very unfortunate indeed who shall be wounded by a common musket at 150 yards provided his antagonist is aiming at him.” Thus, the contention that British success on the battlefield was directly related to infantry firepower
appears to be a questionable conclusion at best. Even when supported by artillery, British infantry could not sustain accurate fire of the type necessary to disrupt and repulse French attacks continuously.

The misrepresentation of the tactical interaction between French column and British line formations has worked to conceal the methods by which the British army was able to achieve tactical superiority over the French. The dearth of analyses attempting to unravel the dynamic by which the British accomplished this not unremarkable feat can be partially explained by the general lack of understanding regarding the strength of British group cohesion and how it impacted the behavior of the common soldier during combat.

British battlefield success over the French, from Egypt in 1801, through the Peninsular War, and finally at Waterloo in 1815, cannot be attributed, as Chandler has so eloquently acknowledged, to “[the] cool, typically modest, inborn, insular, even racially-blue-blooded British superiority in such matters.” While using such terms ironically, Chandler in fact pinpoints the traits to which writers often refer when trying to explain the combat efficacy of British troops during the Napoleonic Wars. Adjectives describing in generalized terms the supposed characteristics of a nation, however, do little to elucidate the behavior of men in battle.

British victory was, instead, founded in large part on a number of tactical components each of which required the British soldier to exhibit a type of steadfastness, based on unit cohesion and group values aligned with army demands, that was unusual for armies of the period. The British ranker’s ability to function in a two-rank line was one of the keys to British tactical superiority over the French. Like each of the aspects that worked in concert to give the British soldier an edge in combat, the two-rank line
demanded more of the soldier than was the norm. The principal advantage of deploying a line only two ranks deep was the increased frontage along which every musket could be brought to bear against the enemy. The formation, being wide but not deep, was also less susceptible to artillery and musket fire. This was the case with all line formations when compared to columns of similar manpower, but these advantages were more pronounced in the two-rank line.

The thinner line was not without its drawbacks, however. The principal difficulty involved diminished psychological support for the individual soldier. Such emotional sustenance, normally generated by the close proximity of comrades, was reduced by the removal of the third rank. This had a greater effect than the fractional amount ($\frac{1}{3}$) implies. The loss of the back rank made the two-rank line a lonely formation in which to fight. Spacing shifted each man in the second row to occupy the gap between the soldiers in the front rank, effectively reducing the formation to one rank. With but a turn of his head, each soldier became aware that there was no one directly behind him. This increased the stress on the soldier in combat, for as Marshall concluded “One of the simplest truths of war…the thing that enables an infantry soldier to keep going with his weapon is the presence or presumed presence of a comrade.”

The spacing of a line formation, with approximately 18 inches between men, put a greater demand on each soldier to stand his ground. The flight of but a few men in a two-rank line could have catastrophic consequences, as their absence opened complete gaps in the formation. The loss of men, from wounds or flight, also caused the line to constrict, as without the third rank there were no replacements available to step into the openings. For soldiers still in the ranks, the absence of a man in the files to their left or right made
them feel isolated and vulnerable. This greatly increased their inclination to flee, as heightened threat potential and the loss of psychological support began chipping away at group allegiance. This process helps explain the ardor of Rifleman Harris when he threatened to shot a soldier in the front rank who had turned and attempted to abandon the formation by pushing his way past Harris.\textsuperscript{145} As previously explained, the soldier’s attempt to leave his comrades in combat caused him to be ostracized and eventually transferred.

Mobility was also an issue when it came to linear formations. Moving a line, especially the two-rank variety, across open ground was a difficult and potentially dangerous maneuver. Ground undulations, natural obstacles, battlefield debris, and the bodies of the dead and wounded worked to distend the formation as the files and ranks separated; keeping the line contiguous with adjacent units was also taxing. These complications made the officers’ and NCOs’ tasks of maintaining formation integrity and directing the line along a preferred route a demanding undertaking. Moreover, the loss of men during campaign would shrink the frontage of the line, potentially reducing its linear advantage over a column. These problems, considered together, explain why no national army other than the British, or the national contingents they trained,\textsuperscript{146} fought in a two-rank line.\textsuperscript{147}

The three-rank line had its flaws, too, principally the reduction in firepower and the increased risk to the soldiers in the front rows from shots fired by the third rank; one of Napoleon’s marshals, Gouvion St. Cyr, estimated that approximately one-quarter of all infantry casualties were related to accidents involving men in the front ranks being shot by those in the rear.\textsuperscript{148} Men moving laterally and hurrying to reload were quite vulnerable
to rear-rank fire, as the length of the musket and the spacing needed for three ranks combined to form a potentially deadly combination. St. Cyr may have exaggerated the casualties inflicted by the third line, but the danger was real enough. The morale benefits of the third row, however, convinced all armies except the British that two-rank lines were too risky, especially for inexperienced troops.

Napoleon was well aware of the strengths and limitations of the three-rank line and attempted to intercede, making his one contribution to French infantry tactics. In 1813, after years of complaints by his officers regarding the hazards of the three-rank line, Napoleon decided that “The formation of infantry should be always in two ranks, because the length of the musket….The discharge of the third rank is not only uncertain but frequently dangerous to the ranks in the front.”

He then ordered French infantry to adopt the British method of fighting in two ranks. Lack of training time, coupled with the continued influx of raw recruits, prevented French line officers from incorporating the change. Napoleon’s decision order to adopt the two-rank line also may have been initiated by the declining numbers of available French soldiers. Unit frontage for a French line could be maintained with a third less men using the two-rank line approach. Regardless, it was ignored by his officers in the field.

It is worth noting that until 1788, the drill and training of British regiments were left to the preferences of regimental commanding officers. In that year, Sir David Dundas published what became officially sanctioned in 1792 as the first manual outlining tactical doctrine. His Rules and Regulations for the Movements of His Majesty’s Infantry, or the “Eighteen Manoeuvres” as they came to be called, were a bit on the convoluted side and sometimes more theoretical than practical. Nevertheless, they did, to a large extent,
standardize infantry maneuver and drill. In regards to line depth, Dundas agreed with the tacticians of other nations: he declared that the only viable line formation was three ranks deep. The impracticalities of this mandate soon had battalion commanders using the two-rank line, which won official approval by 1801. Philip Haythornthwaite suggests that three-rank line had been abandoned by units in the field well before this date.\(^{151}\)

While the two-rank line formation gave the British a slight advantage in firepower and frontage, it was but one aspect of the British tactical system. Wellington understood that in order to make proper use of what he would have described as the unusual tenacity of his men, now more properly identified as primary group cohesion based on an agreed-upon set of norms promoting aggressiveness in combat, he must reduce their exposure to prolonged fire. Wellington was also well aware of the fact that replacements were hard to come by. Sickness, naturally, took the lion’s share of soldiers, with approximately 600,000 hospital admissions and 55,000 disease-related deaths.\(^{152}\) Another 27,000 soldiers were killed in battle or died of wounds.\(^{153}\) As has been noted, demand always outpaced supply.

In order to safeguard his men, Wellington chose his battlegrounds carefully, picking those that afforded him defensible positions, which usually included gentle rises in terrain. This allowed Wellington to place his soldiers on reverse slopes and thus protect the men from incoming fire until the time he needed to deploy them. Often, the British soldier would lay prone, rise when so ordered, and deliver a close-range volley followed by a charge. Wellington did not invent reverse slope tactics, but he used them to a greater extent than any other commanders before or during the Napoleonic period. Getting men to rise from the prone position and advance while under fire is a difficult maneuver. Ney
even advised against having men kneel to fire, as they were often reluctant to rise and continue forward movement toward the enemy. Yet in contrast to Ney’s assertion, the British soldier routinely did so, coming up from the fully prone position in order to fire and, as was usually the case, to charge immediately. This is an important indicator demonstrating the tactical advantage provided by British cohesion.

Wellington’s method of hiding men also disrupted the calculations of French commanders, who needed to see the approximate locations of enemy units in order to have the time and required space to deploy from column into line. Wellington’s technique, properly done, frequently caused a tactical systems failure for the French. Generally speaking, the tactic allowed the British to rise from behind slight rises in terrain and deliver a volley at fairly close range into the French formation as it crested the slope. Caught in the process of changing from column to line or, as was often the case, lacking sufficient time to deploy from the densely packed column formation, the French unit would experience a succession of shocks. Surprise is never good in battle when one is on the receiving end, but the realization that the enemy was much closer than was anticipated disconcerted both individual soldiers and officers alike. This fleeting recognition of relative positions was quickly replaced by an understanding that the British were about to deliver a close-range fusillade, one which the French soldier knew could not be answered in kind. If the French were still in column, this fire would be coming from the front and both flanks as the British line wrapped around the French formation. If in line, the British two-rank formation would still extend beyond the ends of the French line which, because it was three ranks deep, occupied a third less frontage. Flintlock muskets could be quite deadly within a range of 50 yards or so: at Auerstadt in 1806,
Gudin’s division suffered 70 percent casualties at this distance, losing 3,500 of out of approximately 5,000 combatants.\textsuperscript{155}

Paddy Griffith’s study of 19 British firefights during the Peninsular War reveals that in only four instances did the British open fire at a distance of greater than 100 yards. In nine cases the distance was 20 yards or less. Griffith calculated that the average range of British firefights was about 64 yards, with an average opening range of 75.5 yards and a closing fire distance of 30.4 yards.\textsuperscript{156} As Muir points out, however, the precision of remembered distances calculated by officers during the heat of combat is questionable.\textsuperscript{157} Nevertheless, even as vague approximations, such numbers help explain how British combat methods combined group unity with fire ranges conducive to overcoming flintlock limitations to create a winning tactical dynamic.\textsuperscript{158}

The impact on surviving individuals can only be imagined. French cohesion would begin to disintegrate as comrades fell by the score; the bonds between men that held them in combat would be severely tested as each man took stock of the situation, the losses, and his options. The French soldiers would slow their advance or began edging rearward away from the source of fire. The remaining men, some wounded and others reeling from psychological stress, were given little time to react or regroup. Exacerbating the effects of this already distressing series of events, British troops would then charge, moving to close quarters with bayonets leveled. This is the real meaning of the term \textit{shock combat}, as the threat of grievous injury or death is delivered in a nearly face-to-face clash. To French soldiers, unfamiliar with such tactics and faced with the threat of steel delivered by highly motivated soldiers, retreat became a viable and preferred option.
Fear of the bayonet was real, despite the relatively few such wounds that were inflicted on either side. Dominique-Jean Larrey, Napoleon’s Surgeon General, discovered but five bayonet wounds compared to 119 bullet wounds in two hand-to-hand encounters between French and Austrian units.  

Christopher Duffy, using admissions from Invalides from 1762, concluded that only 2.4 percent of all wounds were caused by bayonet. Although Duffy’s numbers refer to a different era, before Revolutionary French armies shifted the emphasis to in-close fighting, the data confirm soldiers’ reluctance to actually come into contact with men wielding musket bayonets. Like Larrey’s results, however, Duffy’s totals only include men who survived their experience with cold steel. The number of men who perished after being run through remains unknown. The long triangular blades caused gaping wounds, which due to the shape of the bayonet were often impossible to suture. This made the puncture wound prone to suppuration, often leading to gangrene, amputation, and death. Thus, in melee, one side or the other tended to choose flight rather than face such injuries.

The British used a number of tactical variations in order to unbalance their French counterparts psychologically. All the versions required the British redcoat to hold his fire, even when the enemy did not, and then summon up the courage to rapidly close with French units and make use of the bayonet, if necessary. Knowledge that such methods usually led to victory would have instilled a high level of confidence, as the men realized that their abilities allowed them to take care of themselves given the contingencies of battle. These assault tactics worked to minimize fear for the British soldier by making use of his group ties and normative pressures in concert with the natural adrenal rushes.
that are experienced by every soldier in combat. Anton described the British soldier’s perspective, effectively capturing the physical and emotional effects of a charge:

No movement in the field is made with greater confidence of success than that of the charge; it affords little time for thinking, while it creates a fearless excitement, and tends to give a fresh impulse to the blood of the advancing soldier, rouses his courage, strengthens every nerve, and drowns every fear of danger or of death; thus emboldened amidst cheers that anticipate victory, he rushes on and mingles with the fleeing foe.  

John Macfarlane of the 71st provides one battlefield example of the many British techniques. Like all the versions, it was based on fondness for close assault work. Writing about the battle of Vimerio in 1808, he very nonchalantly described the British method and the results. “We got orders to prime and load, and lie down,” Macfarlane commented. As the French approached, the British stood up and the French fired immediately. The British then advanced. “At last we got nearer, we fired on them…,” he continued, “[and then] they turned and made off. We cheered and went on…they went over the hill, and left three guns and wagons behind.” This sequence exactly matches Wellington’s instructions to Rowland Hill at Busaco in 1810. “If they attempt this point again, Hill,” Wellington advised, “you will give them a volley and charge [with] bayonets; but don’t let your people follow them too far down the hill.”

In a letter, General William Gromm related the same chain of events regarding a skirmish near Duero in 1812. The French were in the process of changing formation when “the spirit of our people rose…and when [after advancing] they reached the enemy’s solid columns…a general shout of exaltation [came from our men]….The enemy wavered…till at length it was impossible to withstand the ardour of our soldiers…and complete rout ensued.”
Costello offered yet another variation, this time describing the advance of the 88th during a British attack. British élan, again, is the crucial ingredient. The ability of the Connaught Rangers to accept fire from the French while moving into closer range, in this case perhaps 250 yards, is typical, as is the denouement of the final bayonet attack. Costello recalled:

The 88th deployed into line, advancing all the time towards their opponents, who seemed to wait very coolly for them. When they [the 88th] had approached to within three or four hundred yards, the French poured in a volley or I should say a running fire….As soon as the British regiment had recovered the first shock, and closed their files on the gap it had made, they commenced advancing at the double until within fifty yards nearer to the enemy, when they halted and in turn gave a running fire from their whole line, and without a moment’s pause cheered and charged up the hill against them. The French meanwhile were attempting to reload. But being hard pressed by the British, who allowed them no time to give a second volley, came immediately to the right about, making the best of their way to the village.167

This sequence also illustrates the difficulty of maintaining fire rates during battle. It would have taken the 88th at least 30 to 40 seconds, at best, to cover the uphill distance from the point at which they fired to the French line. Yet, as Costello comments, the pressure of the British assault harried the French to where they were never able to get off a second volley.

John Aitchison of the Scots Guards, Grattan of the 88th, and an officer in the 53rd, John Carss, furnished three further examples, this time of the British on the defensive. In Aitchison’s account, the British rely on the bayonet alone to repulse a French attack at Talavera:

On their [the French] approaching within 200 yards, we were ordered to advance without firing a shot and afterwards to charge. This we did….The enemy did not wait for us, [and] we carried everything before us.168
Carss, in a letter home, described his regiment exhibiting this same steadiness at Talavera. The 53rd, in plain sight, stood in line awaiting the advance of a French column. Carss remembered the incident:

We never fired a shot until they cleared the wood and got over a small bank which was about 60 yards from our line, then we gave a volley, then rushed on with the bayonet. They ran instantly when we charged.\textsuperscript{169}

Grattan’s account echoed Aitchison’s and Carss’, as the 88th again resorted to the bayonet, this time at Busaco in 1810. Grattan heard Alexander Wallace, the Lieutenant-Colonel of the 88th, remind the men not to fire early. “Now Connaught Rangers….Pay attention to what I have said so often—don’t give the false touch,” Wallace exhorted, “but push home to the muzzle!”\textsuperscript{170} His advice worked, as the French broke before the oncoming Irishmen and were pursued down the hill.

An anonymous soldier in the 71st Highland Light Infantry provided an anecdote that gives a clear impression of British tenacity against a French column at the battle of Vimerio in 1808. In this instance, the grim silence of the British rankers and a late charge stopped the French advance:

[After forming into line] we gave them one volley and three cheers—three distinct cheers. Then all was as still as death. They came upon us crying and shouting, to the very point of our bayonets. Our awful silence and determined advance they could not stand. They put about and fled without much resistance. At this charge we took thirteen guns and one general. [General Antoine-Francoise Brenier was captured by Corporal Mackey of the 71st.]\textsuperscript{171}

An officer in the 85th wrote of this contrast between the French method of attack and the silent British defense. He recalled that the French “raise a loud but discordant yell,” while the British remained absolutely quiet. At close range, the redcoats “poured in but one volley, and then rushed on with the bayonet.”\textsuperscript{172} A private of the 71st captured the
psychological effects of group cohesion on his willingness to press forward with an attack. His commentary also highlights the British method of silently and grimly closing to close quarters:

   In our first charge I felt my mind waver; a breathless sensation came over me. The silence was appalling. I looked along the line. It was enough to assure me. The steady, determined scowl of my companions assured my heart and gave me determination. How unlike the noisy advance of the French.  

In a letter written two months after Talavera, Aitchison vividly described yet another such encounter. Aitchison’s recollection highlights two key aspects of British tactics: unit integrity under fire and the benefits of reverse slope tactics. Marveling that such behavior was standard for British soldiers, Aitchison credited the men for making such tactics work:

   From the numerous instances recorded, even in my own time, of the intrepidity of the British troops, I have formed an idea of the coolness with which they…oppose the impetuosity of a French attack and their bravery in advancing to the charge….I am persuaded but few persons who have not seen it, will credit….I have seen men killed in the ranks by cannon shots—those immediately round the spot would remove the mutilated corpses to the rear, they would then lie down as if nothing had occurred and remain in the ranks, steady as before. That common men could be brought to face the greatest danger, there is a spirit within which tells me it is possible, but I could not believe they could be brought to remain without emotion, when attacked, not knowing from whence. Such, however, was the conduct of our men on 28 July, and from this steadiness so few suffered as by remaining quiet the shots bounced over their heads.  

The same general tactics that worked in Spain and Portugal served the British well at the battle of Quatre Bras, the next-to-last British engagement of the war, two days before Waterloo. Frederick Patterson, a lieutenant in the 33rd, recorded the outcome of the advance by some of Marshal Ney’s infantry. “We gave them a beautiful volley,” wrote
Patterson, “and charged, but they ran faster than our troops (already fatigued) could do and we consequently did not touch them with the bayonet.”

Perhaps the most compelling depiction of a clash between a British line and a French column comes from General Bugeaud, who experienced the episode firsthand from within the attacking French column. The effect of British resoluteness on the morale of the French soldiers in the column is striking:

The English generally occupied well-chosen defensive positions having a certain command, and they showed only a portion of their forces. The usual artillery action first took place. Soon, in great haste, without studying the position, without taking time to examine whether there were means to make a flank attack, we marched straight on, taking the bull by the horns. About 1,000 yards from the English line the men became excited, called out to one another, and hastened their march; the column began to become a little confused. The English remained quite silent with ordered arms, and from their steadiness appeared to be a long red wall. This steadiness invariably produced an effect on our young soldiers. Very soon we got nearer, crying “Vive l’Empereur! En avant! A la Baionnette!” Shakos were raised on the muzzles of muskets; the column began to double, the ranks got into confusion, the agitation produced a tumult; shots were fired as we advanced. The English line remained silent, still and immovable, with ordered arms, even when we were only 300 yards distant, and it appeared to ignore the storm about to break. The contrast was striking; in our innermost thoughts we all felt the enemy was a long time in firing, and that this fire, reserved so long, would be very unpleasant when it came. Our ardor cooled. The moral power of steadiness, which nothing can shake (even if it be only appearance), over disorder which stupefies itself with noise, overcame our minds. At this moment of intense excitement, the English wall shouldered arms; an indescribable feeling would root many of our men to the spot; they began to fire. The enemy’s steady, concentrated volleys swept our ranks; decimated, we turned round seeking to recover our equilibrium; then three deafening cheers broke the silence of our opponents; at the third they were on us, pushing our disorganized flight.

The singular British ability to withhold fire until the French formation moved to close range is evident in this account, as is redcoat enthusiasm for pressing home the assault. It is worth noting that the British are in full view of the French column from the
beginning of the attack. This example again illustrates that it was group cohesion, and the emphasis of group norms centered on élan, rather than firepower or Wellington’s masterful use of ground that made the critical difference.

James Arnold has suggested that “British linear infantry tactics in 1809-1815 paralleled Ney’s instructions to the Grand Armée in 1805.” Yet, as Nosworthy has argued, the level of British aggressiveness was entirely new and “should not be viewed simply as some sort of mechanical and wholesale duplication of pre-existing continental system.” British officers knew little of the evolution of national tactical doctrines. What they learned of tactics they garnered mostly in the field. The cornerstone of the officers’ practical education, the one understood principal on which they could base their tactical judgments, was the reliability and boldness of the British ranker. It was his courage and allegiance to his mates that allowed the close action use of the bayonet to become the fundamental principal underlying British tactical doctrine.

Experience taught the British soldier that steadiness in line and willingness to close with the bayonet were grounded in collective action. The source of the ranker’s determination was his mess group, the men with whom he lived and next to whom he stood in combat. The redcoat’s confidence in his comrades was enhanced by group strictures defining behavioral expectations. These factors worked in concert with prior knowledge that British tactical methods usually led to combat success; this heightened the common soldier’s sense of worth and his self-assurance. Less prone to displays of enthusiasm than soldiers of other nations, such as the French whose troops did a great deal of shouting slogans and exhorting each other during an attack, the British soldier drew on the group, its standards, and his knowledge of British battlefield victories for
strength. The support he received minimized his need for rousing cheers. His fear of battle was real, but so was his faith in the group. Understanding that the highest combat casualty rates were usually incurred during flight after unit disintegration, the British soldier, ever-dependent on the group, came to recognize that unit integrity was the key. The ranker was willing to use the bayonet at close quarters because he realized that the maneuver increased the probability of tactical success; this, in turn, enhanced the survival potential for himself and his comrades. It is here, at the lethal point of the sharp end in combat that the slightest edge in cohesion and intent makes a difference. As opposing formations come together, and the chance of lethality increases, one side or another will give way as the instinct for self-preservation overrides group loyalty. Men with the strongest bonds, driven by group norms requiring all-out effort in combat, need to weather the stress of battle just fractionally longer than the men they are facing in order to win the field.

Analysis of battles is, of course, best done on a case by case basis. The experience and fatigue levels of opposing units can make the difference on any given day. Leadership, weaponry, terrain and tactical advantages, and any number of Clausewitzian “frictions” also play a role in determining the outcome of a battlefield encounter. As Alan Beyerchen has observed in his analysis of Clausewitz and the unpredictable nature of war, “a military action produces not a single reaction, but dynamic interactions that pose a fundamental problem for any theory.”179 Generally speaking, however, the strength of the connections among the British Peninsula veterans and the values they shared aligned with army directives to create British tactical nuances based on close-action, volley and charge methods. This enabled British soldiers to manage the chaos of the Napoleonic
battlefield and endure the ordeal of combat ever so slightly better than their French opponents. Such comparisons of killing field effectiveness, of course, can only be measured on the battlefield. The combat record of Wellington’s army in the Peninsular War, unblemished by defeat, stands testimony to the efficacy of this combination of emotional ties, group norms, and close-quarter tactics.

The silent, grim, battlefield determination of the British rank and file, born of the relentless physical and psychological pressures that were an inherent part of the British soldier’s life, has often been misinterpreted as an expression of national characteristics. The words *pluck*, *mettle*, and *British courage* have been used to describe the source of the British ranker’s capacity to face death. Collective portraits, however, misrepresent the underlying mechanism that allows soldiers to function in combat. Such characterizations are applied after the fact; they are imperfect attempts to synthesize the actions of men during the maelstrom of combat in order to identify root causes of behavior. Somehow, the words purporting to encapsulate the actions of the British soldier in combat have come to be considered the fount from which his conduct originated. In this flawed dialectic, adjectival descriptors have been transformed into causal factors that completely ignore the role of primary group cohesion and group norms on campaign and combat behavior. This transmutation process has been applied to negative characteristics as well: the redcoat’s reputation as a skilled plunderer, founded in his need to steal food and drink, is cited as the cause of his actions rather than attributed to nutritional need and commissariat failure.¹⁸⁰

David Chandler contends that the flexibility of French tactical doctrine brought the French army “ten years of almost unbroken victory on the field of battle...[as] the
fluidity, aggressiveness, élan, and mobility of the French infantry proved too much for a succession of Austrian, Prussian, Spanish, Russian, and Neapolitan armies.”

Chandler’s assertion provides a context against which the achievements of the British can be properly compared, as only the British were able to continuously disrupt and defeat the French tactical system. The British came to dominate the French on the battlefield primarily because Wellington tapped into the British soldier’s strongest attribute: his willingness to endure risks in order to preserve the group and maintain his place in it.

F. M. Richardson, writing about the spirit of men in battle, noted that groups allow men to “achieve a personal identity, earn a place, a nickname, a characteristic.”

Richardson goes on to identify loyalty to comrades as the “cardinal military virtue.” The British soldier, cast off by society and with little future outside the boundaries of the army, came to depend heavily upon such loyalty; campaign circumstances caused the ranker to cling to the group and its standards of behavior with both urgency and a sense of desperation. If, as Little asserts, the more soldiers share hardships and confide in each other, the more likely they are to depend on each other, then the bonds among the British rank and file primary social groups that comprised each company must have been remarkably strong. For the British soldier, the group acted as a surrogate family. His actions to protect its members formed the basis for his continued combat success. Unlike the French army, the British military establishment provided little in the way of sustaining measures. The British ranker expected no medals, promotions, or rewards for his combat behavior. Stated simply, the British soldier fought to live one more day among the adopted members of his primary social group. His sense of self was derived from his existence as an esteemed member of this small cadre, garnered by his adherence
to group mores. Emotional bonds, not tangible rewards, were the ranker’s motivating force.

As Richardson recognized, the British soldier’s identity and daily survival were directly linked to the physical and emotional support provided by comrades. This dependency allowed group norms to define and guide behavior. Such strictures, reinforced by the strength of the bonds between British soldiers governed the men’s conduct on the battlefield, for as Marshall has observed, “Fear is contagious but courage is not less so.” Wellington unintentionally harnessed this primary group cohesion. His tactics made optimal use of the rankers’ emotional ties to their mates, turning common men stressed and bonded together by extraordinary hardship into one of the most proficient combat soldiers of the Napoleonic era.

2 The role of shared campaign experiences becomes clearer when days in the field are compared with days of combat. According to Richard Holmes, in the 20 years of the Napoleonic wars, there were only about 200 days of pitched battles. Richard Holmes, Acts of War: The Behavior of Men in Battle (New York, 1985) 75.
3 Leadership and group cohesion appear to be two few factors that act as both sustaining and combat motivations.
4 The vast majority of references to combat in this chapter focus on infantry in battle. While cohesiveness between men remains the fundamental motivating factor, its effect on men in the different branches varies. Cavalry troopers were usually required to summon up their courage for a single charge, or perhaps two. They were usually not required to stand under direct fire and await an attack, as cavalry was a proactive shock weapon. Artillery crews had a different dynamic entirely; their responsibility was to work their guns until danger was imminent. Then they usually fled as a group to the nearest infantry formation for protection. These differences in combat responsibilities by branch do not, however, negate the underlying force that keeps the soldiers of each branch functioning. For each, the catalyst for action remains the cohesion of the primary group.
7 Samuel Stouffer et al., The American Soldier: Combat and Its Aftermath. Vol. 2 of Studies in Social Psychology in World War II. 3 vols. (Princeton, 1949-50) 130-131. Italics are in the original. This study was founded on post-action responses from over 12,000 combat soldiers who saw action in World War Two. These men came from both the European and Pacific theaters.
8 Ibid. 149.
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid. 27. Stouffer et al. refer to this process as enhancing the soldier’s “sense of power and security.”
14 Ibid. 94. Du Picq was referring, here, to military punishments and their consequences. He was just barely off the mark, as it is the loss of group support and status that motivates men in battle. John Dollard’s work with survivors of the Lincoln Brigade from the Spanish Civil War was one of the first to conclude that internal discipline, rather than the external, coercive form, was their key source of motivation for soldiers.
19 Michael Olmstead, *The Small Group* (New York, 1978) 19-20. Little listed sharing, humility (the lack of bragging), dependability, and group allegiance in the form of not showing favoritism or having only one buddy, as among the most important group norms. Little, “Buddy Relations and Combat Performance,” 200-201.
20 Lionel Tiger, *Men in Groups* (New York, 1970) 219. Little also noted that group norms often put the group at odds with the authority system, as group survival override external attempts to establish behavioral codes. This well describes the process whereby the British ranker became an unrivalled looter on campaign, despite Wellington’s orders against plundering. It also explains why nothing Wellington could do, short of providing adequate provisions, stopped the men from “reconnoitering” and sharing what they uncovered. Little, “Buddy Relations and Combat Performance,” 195.
21 Ibid. 222.
25 Edward A. Shils and Morris Janowitz, “Cohesion and Disintegration in the Wehrmacht in World War II,” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 12 (1948), 281. John Guilmartin has suggested that the Shils and Janowitz study was circulating through army channels during the war at the same time Marshall was conducting his interviews, conceivably shaping his attitudes to some degree. John Guilmartin, “Military Experience, the Military Historian, and the Reality of Battle,” paper presented at the Shelby Cullom Davis Center for Historical Studies, Princeton University, 8 October 1982, 12-13.
26 Shils and Morris Janowitz, “Cohesion and Disintegration in the Wehrmacht in World War II,” 281.
27 Little, “Buddy Relations and Combat Performance,” 203.
29 Elmar Dinter, *Hero or Coward* (North Wales, 1985) 41.
30 Ibid. 40.
32 Ibid. 183.
34 Ibid. 65.
35 Ibid. 141.
37 Ibid. 98.

John [Benjamin] Harris, *Recollections of Rifleman Harris*, ed. Henry Curling (New York, 1929) 81, 85. The second soldier was Thomas Mayberry whose crimes and efforts to redeem himself were outlined in chapter 1 of this work. He did restore himself to the esteem of his comrades due to his behavior in battle.

Major-General George Bell, *Rough Notes by an Old Soldier* (London, 1867) I, 57.


Ibid. 54.


Ibid. 223. Charles Oman provides insight into the attitudes of Wellington and the British high command to cowardice. They seemed to punish it much less harshly than desertion. When the Spanish shot 27 of their men for cowardice after Talavera, Wellington is said to have appealed for their lives. As Oman notes, “Evidently the British army then believed that while an occasional, or even habitual, lack of courage was disgraceful, it should not be a capital offence.” Charles Oman, *A History of the Peninsular War*, II, 515.


Ibid. 224.

Ibid. 193.

Bell, *Rough Notes by an Old Soldier*, 12.

Anton, *Retrospect of a Military Life*, 78.

Ibid. 140-141.

Little, “Buddy Relations and Combat Performance,” 203.

Costello, *The Peninsular and Waterloo Campaigns*, 121.


Ibid. 321-343.


John Green, *The Vicissitudes of a Soldier’s Life* (Cambridge, 1996) 77. This is a reprint of the 1827 edition.


Ibid. 64.

Ibid. Burke was killed at Quatre Bras in 1815.

Bell, *Rough Notes by an Old Soldier*, 57.


Ibid.


Ibid.

Ibid. 170.


Ibid. 127.

Robert Blakeney, *A Boy in the Peninsular War*, ed. Julian Sturgis (London, 1899) 256. Given Blakeney’s disparaging comments about British common soldiers, it is likely that his yearning for his original company was restricted to fellow officers.


Ibid. 308, 322.
Replacements, not yet assimilated into a group, resorted more to prayer than fear of letting down comrades as sources of aid during trying times on the battlefield. Interestingly, such men were prouder of their companies than were the veterans. This directly related to their aspirations to belong to the unit. Stouffer et al., *The American Soldier: Combat and Its Aftermath*, 183-184, 278-279.

84 Audie Murphy, *To Hell and Back* (New York, 1983) 10. This is a reprint of the 1971 edition. Also see Stouffer et al., *The American Soldier: Combat and Its Aftermath*, 242-289.


86 As a side note, General Robert Craufurd had advocated the switch to smaller kettles in 1810, most likely because the lighter kettles would have enabled his division to travel faster, always a prime consideration for the Light Division. John Aitchison, *An Ensign in the Peninsular War, the Letters of John Aitchison*, ed. W. F. K. Thompson (London, 1994) 236-237. This is a reprint of the 1981 edition.

87 An officer in the 34th, Moyle Sherer, pointed out that the French messed in groups of twos and threes. The effect this arrangement had on overall cohesion is unknown. Moyle Sherer, *Recollections of the Peninsula* (Kent, 1996) 132. This is a reprint of the 1824 edition.

88 The men of each contubernium always slept in the same tent, further separating them from other groups. The ordinaire of the French Revolutionary army was composed of 14 to 16 men, a size not dissimilar from current infantry squads. The numbers in a group, however, greatly affect how group members interact, as members pair off differently depending on group size. The larger the group grows, the more the individual subgroups groups disconnect from each other; this reduces the effectiveness of the parent organization. Lynn, *Giant of the Grand Siecle*, 441.

89 Aitchison, *An Ensign in the Peninsular War, the Letters of John Aitchison*, 236. Aitchison thought each man should be given his own small kettle, in lieu of the soup dish they carried.

90 An awareness of the value of keeping comrades together was already extant by this period. The British *Regulations for the Rifle Corps* (1800) stipulated that mates were to be quartered together in barracks or the field, stand together in battle, mess together, and share duties. Holmes, *Acts of War: The Behavior of Men in Battle*, 294. John Lazenby, citing Xenophon’s Cyrus, revealed that the Spartans also recognized the cohesive value of having men mess together. Cyrus writes that those who messed together were far less likely to desert, and that the strongest phalanx was one composed of friends. John Lazenby, “The Killing Zone,” Victor Davis Hanson, ed., *Hoplites: The Classical Greek Battle Experience* (London, 1991) 107.


95 Ibid. 80.

96 Ibid. 248.


98 Ibid. 248.


100 Unless otherwise noted, all data are drawn from Brigadier Michael Calvert, *A Dictionary of Battles 1715-1815* (New York, 1979).

101 These figures include all soldiers who were killed, wounded, or captured.

Marshall believed his only contributions to military thought were his interview techniques for piecing together battlefield experiences into a coherent record and his identification of the reciprocating relationship between fear and fatigue. S. L. A. Marshall, Bringing Up the Rear: A Memoir (San Rafael, 1979) 203. Cited in F. D. G. Williams, SLAM: The Influence of S. L. A. Marshall on the United States Army (Washington, 1994) 85.

The effect of dehydration on the attacking regiments of John Hood’s division on the second day of Gettysburg is but one example of how external factors, including fatigue, work to debilitate men, thus reducing group cohesion and with it combat effectiveness. In the heat of that July day in Pennsylvania, the attacking units were without water, as the men making a water-run with all the canteens had been captured. Undaunted, Hood’s soldiers made repeated assaults against Colonel Strong Vincent’s brigade, which held their ground with equal resoluteness. In the end, the 20th Maine, out of ammunition and nearly equally fatigued, made a desperate downhill charge that broke the cohesion of the lead Confederate regiments. The battle hardened soldiers from Alabama and Texas were as combat capable as any unit in the battle. Yet, the long-term effects of dehydration may have tipped the scales against them as the temperature and the stress of repeated attacks slowly sapped them of cohesion. The author has attempted to make repeated sorties up Little Round Top in July weather, walking at a fast rate, and can attest to the effects of weather and terrain on mental and physical states. Such a vicarious experiment, fortunately not done under live fire, lacked the inherent and additional psychological and physiological stresses of real combat.

Marshall, Men Against Fire, 179.

The exceptions to this are units, such as the 27th Foot at Waterloo, who stand their ground over an extended period under intense fire and units that flee upon first contact with the enemy. Both examples are relatively rare compared to combat groups that experience the emotional ebbs and flows of combat, sometimes fighting, often posturing, and occasionally retreating.


Rory Muir attests that “British troops were unusually good at holding their fire,” and notes that “other armies placed less emphasis on close-range musketry.” Rory Muir, Tactics and the Experience of Battle in the Age of Napoleon (New Haven, 1998) 81.


Charles Oman, Studies in the Napoleonic Wars (New York, 1930) 333. This is a reprint of Oman’s Woolwich lectures. Oman did admit his mistake in a footnote to his Wellington’s Army 1809-1814. (London, 1913), but allowed his lectures to be printed without correction. See Arnold, “A Reappraisal of Column Versus Line in the Peninsular War,” 543.


Ibid. 253. See Gunther Rothenberg’s figures representing column deployment, as well as that of l’ordre mixte, for accurate visuals. Gunther Rothenberg, The Art of Warfare in the Age of Napoleon (Bloomington, 1980) 116-117

Ibid. 185-193.

Ibid. 191.


John Lynn, conversation with author, 10 May 2005.


Chandler, *On the Napoleonic Wars*, 143. Chandler makes a similar statement in in this same work, writing, “It was axiomatic that the columns were intended to deploy into line before their final attack.” Chandler, “Column versus Line: the Case of Maida, 1806,” *On the Napoleonic Wars*, 139.

This is but a generalized overview of French Napoleonic tactics. The interplay between opposing infantry, artillery, and cavalry branches could be quite complex in practice.

The Brown Bess, British Short Land Pattern musket, was the preferred musket of manufacture for the British Army. The Board of Ordnance created the India Pattern version originally for the Honorable East India Company in the 1770s. The “New Land Pattern,” variation, was approved in 1803, but not manufactured before 1811; only 20,000 were made before Waterloo. The musket had a 39 inch barrel as opposed to its predecessor’s 42 inch length. This musket type was used as late as 1850 by some regular and militia units. R. Scurfield, “The Weapons of Wellington’s Army,” *Journal of Army Historical Research* XXXVI.148 (1958): 145.


Major-General B. P. Hughes, *Firepower: Weapons Effectiveness on the Battlefield*, 1630-1850 (New York, 1974) 27. Hughes is citing a French test made in 1800 wherein the French musket was fired at a target measuring 1.75 meters by 3.00 meters. At a range of 75 meters, 60 percent of the rounds struck the target; at 150 meters, the success rate fell to 40 percent. The estimated mean error of rounds fired at the 150 meter distance was 75 cm in height and 60 cm laterally. A Prussian test firing at a sheet of canvas, 6 feet tall by 100 feet wide, returned similar results: 40 percent hits at 150 yards and 60 percent at 75 yards. Holmes, *Redcoat: The British Soldier in the Age of Horse and Musket*, 198.

Thus, the most effective fire was usually the first, as the rounds were loaded before men’s nerves and the stressors of the battlefield worked to lower firing efficacy.

Nosworthy, *With Musket, Cannon and Sword: Battle Tactics of Napoleon and His Enemies*, 73.

Ibid. 198.

The Brown Bess had a muzzle velocity of 1500 feet per second, which was greater than American Civil War rifles. Brent Nosworthy, *The Bloody Crucible of Courage: Fighting Methods and Combat Experience of the Civil War* (New York, 2003) 33.

William Surtees of the 95th wrote that of this effect, noting that French shots were often high, coming down well behind his battalion. William Surtees, *Twenty-Five Years in the Rifle Brigade* (London, 1833) 121.
Hughes, *Firepower*, 27. Nosworthy provides an excellent analysis of casualties-per-shots-fired ratios using data supplied by various military writers, most of whom saw combat during the period in question. These rates range from .01 to 3.5 percent. Nosworthy, *With Musket, Cannon and Sword*, 204-05. The accuracy problems stemmed not from firepower, but the windage between ball and barrel and the irregular shape of rounds.

Hughes, *Firepower*, 133.

Muir, *Tactics and the Experience of Battle in the Age of Napoleon*, 82. Surtees quotes Muir’s lower estimate exactly; he then goes on to claim that one in 20 shots caused a casualty when fired from a rifle. Surtees, *Twenty-Five Years in the Rifle Brigade*, 290.

Ibid. 26.


See Muir for an excellent analysis of all the formation strengths, deficiencies, and tactical permutations of infantry combat during this period. Muir, *Tactics and the Experience of Battle in the Age of Napoleon*, 68-104.


Muir, *Tactics and the Experience of Battle in the Age of Napoleon*, 81.

Nosworthy concurs, concluding that a combination of tactics was the key. He states “that there is little evidence or no basis for the notion that British troops somehow defeated the French utilizing a continuum of well-orchestrated volleys.” Nosworthy contends that the British tactic of the “determined charge” was the essential factor. Nosworthy, *With Musket, Cannon and Sword*, 220-221.

Chandler, *On the Napoleonic Wars*, 136


Muir, *Tactics and the Experience of Battle in the Age of Napoleon*, 81.

Nosworthy concurs, concluding that a combination of tactics was the key. He states “that there is little evidence or no basis for the notion that British troops somehow defeated the French utilizing a continuum of well-orchestrated volleys.” Nosworthy contends that the British tactic of the “determined charge” was the essential factor. Nosworthy, *With Musket, Cannon and Sword*, 220-221.

Ibid.


The Brown Bess bayonet was 17 inches long, while that of the Charleville musket was 15 inches.


165 Moyle Sherer, *Recollections of the Peninsula* (Kent, 1996) 110. This is a reprint of the 1824 edition.


168 Aitchison, *An Ensign in the Peninsular War, the Letters of John Aitchison*, 56.


171 *A Soldier of the Seventy-First*, ed. Christopher Hibbert (London, 1975) 17-18. This Highland private later commented on the difference between the attitudes and demeanor of French and British troops during an attack. The French, he noted, came on shouting, the “men vociferating…in a fury.” The British were restrained, “as still as death.” Hibbert, 60.


173 *A Soldier of the Seventy-First*, 18.

174 Ibid. 57.


176 Marshal A. F. L. V. Marmont, *Mémoires du Maréchal Marmont, duc de Raguse, de 1792 a 1841* (Paris, 1857 et seq.) V, 105. Another French account, published in 1824, reproduces the same effects described by Bugeaud of British close-range musketry and a sudden charge on French troops. Although less dramatic, the 1824 anecdote from General Chambray ends with the same French surprise, disorder, and flight.

177 Griffith, *Forward into Battle*, 36.


180 Terms supposedly characterizing British national character, as exemplified in the soldiery, are selectively recalled. Often mentioned in regards to Britain’s rise to international dominance in the 19th and early 20th centuries, only the positive generalizations are alluded to. The negative, and equally specious, assessments are almost always overlooked.


183 Ibid. 13.


CHAPTER 6

INTO HELL BEFORE DAYLIGHT: PENINSULAR WAR SIEGES

The behavior of the British soldier after successful siege assaults during 1812 and 1813 merits special attention because much of the collective memory of the British redcoat as a drunken thug bent on rape and armed assaults originates from this period. The greatest difficulty lies in deciphering the degree to which the soldiers mistreated French defenders and Spanish civilians after winning their way into the fortresses of Ciudad Rodrigo, Badajoz, and San Sebastian. Separating the frequency of looting acts from occurrences of more egregious misdeeds is a confounding process, as many observers, usually officers, tend to generalize when writing about the conduct of their men: all behaviors not strictly adhering to regulations are perceived as crimes and described as such. This is especially true regarding inebriation and looting. Thus, the lines separating acts of plunder and drunkenness from physical assaults are blurred almost beyond recognition.

Adding to the Gordian complexity, few formal charges were ever brought against the soldiers, in large part because Wellington allowed the men free rein to satisfy themselves after the ordeal of the assault and because the sacking of cities that resisted after the opening of a practicable breach was a universally accepted military practice.
Without formal records, it is impossible to ascertain positively the number and types of crimes committed. The lack of court proceedings forces us to rely on first-person accounts, which have inherent limitations. Primary source information, such as letters, journals, and diaries, are unlikely to list specifics regarding behaviors the men knew would bring them shame and the disapprobation of their readers. There is no way of knowing the extent to which the soldiers were being decorous and self-protecting when they omitted details regarding their behavioral transgressions. It is, however, objectively impossible to ignore the numerous accounts that hint at acts of violence and rape. In order to come to any tentative conclusion, the existing primary source information must be carefully weighed and considered as one would evaluate the testimony of witnesses in criminal proceedings. The burden of proof falls on each witness; the veracity of each account can be measured through a comparative analysis of the details offered, consideration of possible witness bias, and the corroborating testimony of others.

Two opposing types of first-hand accounts surface: those that openly accuse the soldiers of untold numbers of rapes, violent assaults, and murders, and those that contend that such acts were quite limited. The chronicles are mostly divided along class lines, with the accounts by officers falling into the former category, although some enlisted men have also written about the excesses of the soldiers after they successfully stormed the three citadels. Like hearsay testimony, both types tend to be vague regarding details. Generally, though, historians have believed the officers, if for no other reason than that their descriptions of the British soldiers’ misdeeds align with Wellington’s “scum of the earth” portrayal.
One such officer, Robert Blakeney, offers a graphic account. Often disdainful of the men and inured to their misery, Blakeney provides one of the most scathing indictments of their behavior after siege assaults. Writing after Badajoz, he exclaimed:

There was no safety for women even in churches, and any who interfered or offered resistance were sure to get shot. Every house presented a scene of plunder, debauchery and bloodshed committed and wanton cruelty...and in many instances I saw the savages [the soldiers] tear the rings from the ears of beautiful women....Men, women, and children were shot...for no other...reason than pastime; every species of outrage was publicly committed...and in a manner so brutal that a faithful recital would be...shocking to humanity.

The surgeon, Walter Henry, also tended to see the men in the worst light; he often misunderstood their actions and motivations. Henry offered a similar appraisal of the rampage within the citadel:

I beheld a scene of the most dreadful drunkenness, violence and confusion. Parties of intoxicated men, loosed from all discipline and restraint and impelled by their own evil passages, were roaming and reeling about, firing into the windows, bursting open doors...plundering, shooting any person who opposed them, violating and committing every horrid excess and sometimes destroying each other.

Private William Browne, of the 45th, adds further evidence in his description of the aftermath of the assault at Badajoz. His passage ranks with Blakeney’s in scope and overall condemnation of the men:

When the garrison surrendered, leave for two hours was given to us to go to the town, camp, or wherever we pleased, but the town was universally preferred. All rushed to the gate which...the enemy had built up...as a means of defence leaving a narrow passage through which but one man could pass at a time. They all, however, got to the town soon enough for the inhabitants, who were by many of our men shamefully and barbarously treated. There was not, I believe, a house in the whole town that was not ransacked from top to bottom--murder, rape, and robbery were committed with the greatest impunity.
The primary source evidence, however, does not fully support the perceptions of Blakeney, Henry, and Browne. Writing about the siege of Ciudad Rodrigo, William Swabey offers contradictory testimony, stating that the men never intentionally resorted to bloodshed while looting the town.

Our troops, as soon as the breach was gained, more eager for plunder than their duty, broke and ran in defiance of their officers…and committed shameful excesses disgraceful to the whole army. [There was] not a soul that was not rifled….No intentional murders were committed, though some of the men were so drunk that they fired promiscuously in the streets and killed many of their comrades.6

Sergeant Lawrence, an astute and honest observer who endured almost a decade of service in South America, Portugal, Spain, and France, reminds us that many soldiers resisted the temptation to engage in wanton destruction and that murder, even during the pillaging of cities, was rare:

But while all this debauchery [at Badajoz] was going on amongst some of our soldiers, I will give a word of credit to a great many of the more respectable, who were trying as much as lay in their power to stop the ferociousness of the same….Things that could not be taken were often destroyed, and the men threatened if they did not produce their money, and the women sometimes the same. Comparatively few murders were, I believe, committed, but some no doubt occurred.7

A recollection by George Glieg, a subaltern, conveyed the chaos and horrors of the British entry into San Sebastian. His narrative is an example of most such accounts. It makes references to looting, property destruction, the men’s intoxication, and of mass rape, but avoids offering details about the actual fate of female inhabitants. Nevertheless, one is left with distinct impressions:

As soon as the fighting began to wax faint, the horrors of plunder and rapine succeeded. Fortunately, there were few females in the place, but of the fate of the few which were there, I cannot even now think without a shudder. The houses were everywhere ransacked, the furniture wantonly
broken, the church profaned, the images dashed to pieces; wine and spirit cellars were broken open, and the troops, heated already with angry passions, became absolutely mad by intoxication.8

The chronicle of William Grattan of the 88th provides insight into how semantics plays a role in the depiction of the men’s behavior. Such texts, perhaps, have been interpreted too severely by historians looking to assign blame to the redcoat’s conduct. Grattan refers to “scenes of the greatest outrage,” but then describes only the outcome of plunder and alcohol on the soldiers and the townspeople of Ciudad Rodrigo:

Scenes of the greatest outrage now took place, and it was pitiable to see groups of the inhabitants half-naked in the streets…while their houses were undergoing the strictest scrutiny. Some of the soldiers turned to the wine and spirit houses, where having drunk sufficiently, sallied out in quest of more plunder; others got so intoxicated that they lay in a helpless state.9

Grattan also details the sequence of events once the men entered the captured fortress. As in all the other accounts, alcohol plays an important role. He writes that for the soldiers it was simply about the enterprise of plunder, with the majority of the men seeking alcohol first. Grattan observed that the soldiers, once sufficiently drunk, turned to pillaging, some for valuables and others for more liquor. Many became helplessly intoxicated, while others broke into shops and stores of all types. He marveled at the “rapidity and accuracy” exhibited by the men as they traversed and looted Ciudad Rodrigo. Grattan later learned that the more enterprising soldiers had employed Spanish guides, with whom they shared the plunder.10 The result was inebriated soldiers dressed in priests’ robes, nuns’ habits, and women’s dresses. Other soldiers were nearly naked.11

Joseph Donaldson of the 94th wrote of the aftermath of Ciudad Rodrigo:

The camp…for some days afterward was like a masquerade, the men going about intoxicated and dressed in the various dresses they had found in the town; [the clothes of] French and Spanish officers, priests, friars, and nuns
were promiscuously mixed, [the men] cutting as many antics as a mountebank.12

Like Grattan, John Cooper of the 7th Foot offers a picture of men intoxicated and out of control but makes no mention of assaults on the inhabitants other than “horrible scenes commenced.” Given the fairly descriptive language of the passage, one might expect a hint of the alleged outrages against the inhabitants. But, instead, we are guided to the soldiers’ looting and inebriation after the storming of Ciudad Rodrigo:

Our maddened fellows rushed into the town by the thousands. Wine stores were broken open, and horrible scenes commenced. All order ceased. Plunder was the order of the night. Some got loaded with plate, etc; then beastly drunk; and lastly were robbed by others. This lasted two days.13

Lawrence furnishes corroboration, writing of the “horrors of soldiery” and then describing examples of miscreant behavior that do not include references to physical assaults. Lawrence’s summation of the men’s behaviors in the aftermath of the storming of Badajoz and Ciudad Rodrigo closely echoes those of Grattan and Cooper:

[After taking Badajoz, the men] began all the horrors that generally attended a capture by assault—plunder, waste, destruction of property, drunkenness and debauchery…. [I saw in Ciudad Rodrigo] all the horrors of the soldiery, excesses, riot, and drunkenness taking place on every side. Houses were plundered of their contents, cellars broken open and emptied, and many houses were even set on fire, amid the yells of the dissipated soldiers and screams of the wounded.14

Grattan goes on to admit that the men, intoxicated and heated by angry passions against citadel inhabitants, stripped women of their property and often of their clothes. This is one of the most specific accounts of crimes against persons rather than property. The “already deeply injured” phrase certainly intimates that some sort of personal assault occurred, although Grattan never provides details about the extent of the violations. Grattan expressed his shock and shame at the behavior of the soldiers:
[I saw them] turn upon the already deeply injured females, and tear from them the trinkets that adorned their necks, fingers, and ears! And finally, they would strip them of their apparel...many men were flogged, but although the contrary has been said, none were hanged—yet hundreds deserved it.\textsuperscript{15}

Edward Costello of the Rifles confirmed the lack of official action by Wellington or his provosts. Referring to Badajoz, he stated that “I am not aware that a single execution took place, notwithstanding the known severity of the Duke toward plunder and outrage.”\textsuperscript{16}

It would be naive, however, to think that drunken men would strip defenseless women and not attempt to press their advantage further. This, no doubt, occurred in more than a few instances. Captain John Harley provides the best eyewitness testimony with his description of the aftermath of the San Sebastian assault. Harley wrote that the raping of women after the siege was so prevalent that officers could not stop it. He details the experience of Lieutenant Powers, who defended a house with two female occupants. Powers disarmed one soldier who had tried to force his way in. Called away to duty in the trenches, Powers returned to the same house later that evening to find both women beaten and raped.\textsuperscript{17} Costello also hints at a similar outcome for the two daughters and the wife of an old patrone who tried to conceal them on the second floor of his ransacked house.\textsuperscript{18}

Such accounts help confirm the assertion that some women were grossly mistreated by British soldiers after siege attacks. Many chronicles, however, lack the corroborating details as supplied by Harley and Costello. Grattan, Cooper, and Lawrence could have described such scenes at no cost to themselves or their immediate comrades, but they failed to do so. This cannot be attributed to the sensitivities of the time, since Henry, Browne, and Gleig are not shy about using the words \textit{rape, rapine,} and \textit{violating}. The
first-person chronicles, though, tend to be more accusatorial than substantive in nature, perhaps in part because such recollections were based on rumor rather than empirical evidence. Thus, while it cannot be argued that no attacks against women occurred, the absence of unassailable, substantiating records leaves some doubt about the frequency of these acts.

Donaldson indirectly offers another possible explanation, as he attributes most “outrages” to regimental bullies whose actions were isolated and beyond accepted group mores. Donaldson’s description of these men hints at their sociopathic nature:

I have know some…bruising fellows in the army; indeed every regiment has its bully, but although they were always forward enough to abuse and tyrannize over their fellow soldiers…I never knew one of them that displayed even ordinary courage in the field; and it was invariably by fellows of this description that outrages, such as those perpetrated at Badajoz, were committed.\(^\text{19}\)

Donaldson, later writing about Badajoz, freely mentions alcohol, “mischief,” and wanton destruction. He also comments on the role alcohol played in the men’s misdeeds, again making reference to the small numbers of “villains” whom he accuses of committing the worst of the offenses. The profile of soldiers considered both skulkers and deviants adds credence to the idea that a good share of the most egregious siege assault crimes were committed by a relatively small number of soldiers who were the very worst of their units:

The effects of the liquor now began to show itself, and some of the scenes which ensued are too dreadful and disgusting to relate; where two or three thousand armed men, many of them mad drunk, others depraved and unprincipled, were freed from all restraint, running up and down the town, the atrocities which took place may be readily imagined—but in justice to the army, I must say they were not general, and in most cases perpetrated by cold-blooded villains who were backward enough in the attack.\(^\text{20}\)
It is likely that common soldiers did, in fact, commit a limited number of rapes and murders, especially under the influence of alcohol. It is possible that the men who recorded their impressions of post-siege rampages failed to mention many such acts because the transgressions were relatively few in number or the writers were either too ashamed or too considerate to inflict such indelicate images upon their readers. It is also probable that a good portion of the more serious crimes to which many of the eyewitnesses alluded were committed by soldiers who routinely operated outside the boundaries of group values. Such men acted without group sanction and were already held in contempt. As a result, the acts of cruelty and self-gratification perpetrated by primary group outcasts were considered to be aberrations unworthy of mention by men whose allegiance and pride centered on group values and an agreed-upon code of conduct. The evidence is too sparse to say definitely one way or another.

Charles Esdaille, however, argues that British soldier misconduct was willful and widespread. A scholar with a justifiable sympathy for the Spanish inhabitants who suffered at the hands of the largely drunken British soldiers, Esdaille refers to the sacking of San Sebastian; he posits that the British ranker wrought indiscriminate havoc with sword and flame. Murders were common, Esdaille asserts, so much so that “what took place was quite simply a disgrace—a war crime, indeed.” The vehemence of his language, however, is not justified by the evidence. Given the conflicting accounts and the lack of direct documentation, some doubt arises about the degree of guilt that should be assigned to the British soldiers for their conduct regarding civilians. They were, without question, guilty of plundering with a passion and of drinking themselves into various disoriented states. They destroyed and burned furnishings and houses and
robbed fortress inhabitants of every valuable conceivable, including those on their persons. For the most part, these offenses were crimes against property. But after that, it is impossible to say with any certainty that large numbers of British soldiers routinely committed offenses against the people themselves. Siege assault misdeeds have been generalized, if not exaggerated, because they align with the collective myth of the British soldier as “scum.” This is not meant to excuse the transgressions of the British ranker against citadel civilians. Rather, it is a cautionary note proposing that the evidence is not as injurious to the British soldier’s reputation as has been presumed. He plundered, drank, destroyed property, and terrorized inhabitants, but the degree to which he physically harmed them remains in doubt.

As for depredations against French soldiers, there is also creditable testimony that the British soldier did not seek unending retribution on fortress defenders. Major F. P. Robinson, for example, wrote in amazement at the control exhibited by the British soldier after the assault on San Sebastian in 1813. He also mentions the men’s thoroughness while looting:

Although our people were destroyed by the Enemy in such numbers before they entered the town—yet once in, all the Frenchmen they overtook were made Prisoners—hardly a man being killed—What other Troops in the whole World can act thus?...[as for valuables] what the fire spared, our men took, the plunder was immense.  

Costello tells a tale that reflects both the anger of the British soldiers toward the French garrison and the degree to which mercy was extended. In pain from a slight head wound received during the assault on Badajoz, Costello came a across a small group of French soldiers near a street corner. All but one ran away upon noticing Costello and his comrade, O’Brien. The remaining soldier ran at them with his musket held high.
Costello could fire, O’Brien wrested the rifle from the Frenchman’s hands. Unsatisfied, Costello moved to shoot the French soldier. “A feeling of revenge,” Costello recalled, “prompted by the suffering I endured from my wounds, actuated my feelings, and I exclaimed, ‘O’Brien, let me have the pleasure of shooting this rascal, for he may be the man who has brought me to the state I am now in!’” Costello then pressed his rifle close to the man’s chest, intending to kill him. “But as my finger was about to pull the trigger,” Costello wrote with much contrition, “he fell upon his knees and implored mercy. The next moment the rifle dropped from my hands and I felt a degree of shame that a feeling of irritation should have betrayed me into a commission of a crime for which I could never have forgiven myself.”

Lawrence recounts a further example of British restraint toward wounded French soldiers following the taking of one of the forts at Badajoz. Upon entering the fort, Lawrence and a few mates found a number of French defenders, mostly suffering from serious, though not mortal, wounds. Lawrence and his men attempted to relieve the suffering of their French counterparts by giving them rum and water, and then conveying them to the rear.

Not all French survivors of captured fortresses were so lucky, especially those that encountered British soldiers immediately after the breach was taken. To fully explain the physical and psychological factors at work on the British soldier as he stormed citadels and successfully fought his way through breaches, the dynamics of siege assaults must be deciphered and melded with soldiers’ perceptions regarding the perils of siege warfare and its possible rewards. As with enlistment and plundering on campaign, the reasons behind the behaviors of the British soldier are more complex than have been suggested by
historians seeking to link soldier conduct to Wellington’s negative assessments of the men.

To men regularly deprived of food and drink, a fortified town offered the potential to satisfy both needs, as well as the opportunity to scrounge whatever valuables might be uncovered. Women also may have been a conscious objective for some soldiers.

In order to reach the perceived wealth hidden behind bastion walls, the British soldier had to participate in the most deadly tactical maneuver of the time: a direct frontal assault on a breach. For the British soldier, or any soldier who experienced its horrors, siege assaults were, perhaps, the most harrowing of combat encounters. Reaching the opening was difficult enough, as the fortress barriers of glacis and ditch had to be negotiated. Braving the breach meant running a gauntlet of canister and musket fire, hidden explosives, and hurled objects, all the while trying to climb the broken stones of the destroyed wall area. Survivors in the initial attacks were few. More often than not, a succession of British assaults proved necessary to capture a breach or convince Wellington that further attacks were futile.

Before an assault could be made, however, a number of preparatory efforts were required. The soldier’s first task was to dig a series of zigzagging trenches, allowing the placement of siege artillery close enough to be effective in bringing down a portion of the bastion’s wall. This was open, dangerous work. And to half-starved men, the manual labor involved must have been extraordinarily difficult. One soldier was also assigned to each section of gun pit to pick off any defenders who exposed themselves along the walls or attempted to crew the fortress guns.26
Once the artillery was in place, a bombardment began. Wellington, lacking a proper siege train, was always short of large-caliber artillery; he was also without a corps of engineers. This meant that it took longer to create a breach than Wellington preferred. In addition, when it was made, the breach was often smaller than desired by Wellington and the men leading the assault. It was, perhaps, the quality of the breaches that caused the governors in charge of Christoval, Ciudad Rodrigo, Badajoz, Burgos, or San Sebastian to hesitate when making their decisions regarding surrender after initial breaches were made. More likely, though, Napoleon’s threat to execute any governor who surrendered a citadel before withstanding at least one assault played a greater role in the defender’s decision-making process.

Strategic considerations forced Wellington to spend his men’s lives in a way he always avoided in open battle. Thus, despite the quality of the breach, once an opening in the fortress wall was created, a select group of volunteers, the Forlorn Hope, began crossing the defensive emplacements. To get to the breach, the men first had to climb the slanting glacis and then jump into the ditch that surrounded the fortress. The men in front lugged ladders that would be lowered into the ditch. When sufficient ladders were unavailable, the men would throw down bundles of grass or straw to form a cushion of sorts that allowed them to hazard the drop, which could be ten feet or more. Heavily defended by artillery, infantry, and often hidden explosives, the opening in the wall was most likely well above ground level; the rubble from the wall formed a perilous staircase up which the British soldier was expected to climb while enduring a withering fire from the French defenders. The ladders were also utilized to negotiate the walls and the breach.
Attempts to take the breach often resulted in near-certain death for the units leading the attack. Nevertheless, the soldiers felt great pride when their battalions were designated to follow the Forlorn Hope into the breach. Surtees wrote about the way soldiers felt about the honor of being in the Forlorn Hope or the battalions that came in its wake:

Among the men also the same noble enthusiasm prevailed, for he who was selected for this dangerous service… was envied by his comrades…. In fact, it required a character for good conduct to entitle a man to this honorable employment.

One factor making such an honor acceptable to soldiers may have been the realization that the units first through the breach would have the best choice of plunder. Thus, pride mixed with the anticipation of loot enabled the British ranker to face the terrors of the breach.

The men were funneled to the opening in the fortress wall, which meant that they were crowded together into a mass, making them easy targets for the intense artillery and musket fire poured into them by the defenders. Repeated forays by fresh units were required to take each breach; at Badajoz it took nearly 40 attacks to break through into the town.

Three accounts suffice to describe the journey that historian Ian Fletcher has aptly named “in hell before daylight.” John Cooper, of the 7th Fusiliers, provides a frightening summary of an aborted attack on the breached portion of Badajoz:

When our men had approached within 300 yards of the ditch, up went a fireball. This showed the crowded state of the ramparts, and the bright arms of our approaching columns. Those men who carried grass bags to fill up the ditch, and ladders for escalading the walls, were now hurried forward. Instantly the whole rampart was in a blaze, mortars, cannon, and muskets, roared and rattled unceasingly. Mines ever and anon blew up with horrid
noise. To add to this horrible din, there were the sounds of bugles, the rattling of drums, and the shouting of combatants. Through a tremendous fire our men rushed to the top of the glacis, down the ladders, and up the breach. But entrance was impossible, for across the horrid gap the enemy had placed, in spite of our fire, a strong beam full of sword blades, etc, forming a chevaux-de-frise, behind which, entrenched, stood many ranks of soldiers, whose fire swept the breach from end to end. Besides, the top of the parapet was covered with shells, stones, sand bags, and logs of wood, etc, ready to be thrown into the ditch. As the breaches could not be forced, and as our men kept pouring down the ladders, the whole ditch was soon filled with a dense mass which could neither advance nor retreat. Upon these the enemy threw down missiles from the parapet, with a continuous fire of musketry and round shot. My comrade was killed descending a ladder. Some men went further to the right, and jumped that part of the ditch that was filled with water, and were drowned.\textsuperscript{33}

Harry Smith, a young officer who would survive the siege unscathed, offers a similar perspective of the Badajoz assault:

\begin{quote}
We flew down the ladders and rushed at the breach, but we were broken and carried no weight with us, although every soldier was a hero. The breach was covered by a breastwork from behind and ably defended on the top by chevaux-de-frise of sword blades, sharp as razors, chained to the ground; while the ascent to the top of the breach was covered with planks with sharp nails in them. However, devil a one did I feel at this moment. One of the officers of the Forlorn Hope, Lieutenant Taggert, of the 43\textsuperscript{rd}, was hanging on my arm – a mode we adopted to help each other up; for the ascent was most difficult and steep. A Rifleman stood among the sword blades at the top of one of the chevaux-de-frise. We made a glorious rush to follow, but, alas! in vain. He was knocked over….I had been some seconds at the revetment of the bastion near the breach, and my red coat pockets were literally filled with chips of stones splintered by musket balls. Those not knocked down were driven back by this hail of mortality to the ladders.\textsuperscript{34}

Finally, William Lawrence recounts his experience as a volunteer member of the Forlorn Hope at Badajoz. Lawrence, like many other British soldiers, was a skilled plunderer who also willingly shouldered his share of hazardous duty. His journey, across the glacis, down into the ditch, and into the breach, should have ended his life as it did for so many of the men around him:
I was one of the ladder party….On our arriving at the breach…a shower of shot, canister and grape, together with fireballs, was hurled…amongst us. Poor Pig [Harding] received his death wound immediately…while I myself received two small shots in my left knee, and a musket shot in my side, which would have been mortal had it not been for my canteen….Still, I stuck to my ladder and got into the entrenchment. Numbers had by this time fallen, but…we hastened to the breach; but there, to our great…discouragement, we found a chevaux de frise had been fixed….Vain attempts were made to remove this fearful obstacle, during which my left hand was dreadfully cut by one of the blades…but finding no success in that quarter, we were forced to retire for a time….My wounds were still bleeding, and I began to feel very weak. My comrades persuaded me to go to the rear, but this proved a task of great difficulty, for on arriving at the ladders, I found them filled with the dead and wounded, hanging…just as they had fallen…so I crawled on my hands and knees till I got out of the reach of the enemy’s musketry.35

An accounting of Wellington’s siege assault casualties illustrates the human cost of taking fortresses by storm. The British lost 400 officers and men during the two unsuccessful assaults at Christoval, the first of Wellington’s four sieges in 1812, with the siege evolving into just a blockade. Wellington and the British army next besieged Ciudad Rodrigo, with over 700 men falling during the assault; Ciudad Rodrigo offered up but a hint of what was to follow. Badajoz, the most formidable of the French bastions Wellington felt forced to take by direct assault, claimed the lives of an additional 3,500 men, with 700 men slain just in the ditches and the breach.36 In his next siege endeavor at Burgos, the fourth of his targeted forts, Wellington sent five assaults forward; each failed as badly as its predecessor, forcing Wellington to raise the siege after the loss of 2,000 men. The first storming of San Sebastian in July 1813 also failed, resulting in almost 600 casualties. The last of Wellington’s peninsular sieges succeeded after another series of assaults and, for the British, the fortuitous accidental explosion of a French magazine, but not before 2,500 fell during the final attack.37
Soldiers who succeeded in taking a breach after repeated assaults were, naturally, bent on taking revenge for their dead comrades. O’Neil wrote about his experience at Badajoz using the words “revenge for those who had fallen” as his opening statement. His summation of the aftermath from the participant’s perspective is representative of many such accounts. Calling the rampages repulsive, a horror, and a “feature of war more repulsive than [any] other,” O’Neil explained the cause:

Men’s passion, wound up almost to a frenzy by the exciting and maddening scenes through which they had passed, will have a vent….All the dreadful passions of human nature were excited.\(^{38}\)

Costello voiced similar sentiments. His description of the British dead piled in the breach at Ciudad Rodrigo carries with it both the feeling of loss and barely contained anger:

I now proceeded to the breach, which had been carried by the 3\(^{rd}\) Division, where the mine had been sprung. The sight exhibited was heart-rendering in the extreme. The dead lay in heaps, numbers of them half-stripped, and displaying the most ghastly wounds. Here and there, half-buried under the blackened fragments of the wall, or reeking on the surface of the ruin, lay those who had been blown up in the explosion, their remains dreadfully mangled and discoloured, and strewed about amongst dissevered arms and legs.\(^{39}\)

Under such circumstances, the release of strain that accompanies close brushes with death, the personal revenge for lost compatriots, and the availability of the spoils of war combined to supersede normal group mores. The group values that normally limited attacks on civilians and enemy combatants who surrendered were altered to address the exigencies of bastion assaults. And so for a brief time, much of the moral restraints that guided the soldier’s conduct were set aside, allowing the men to sate their anger and
physical needs for food, drink, and sometimes women. Alcohol, once found, added fuel to the men’s licentiousness, as lack of inhibition acted to further lower social constraints.

The men’s rage toward fortress inhabitants could be tempered, as it was at Ciudad Rodrigo, where the Spanish had defended themselves gallantly against the French. The unleashed anger could also be heightened by knowledge that the locals actively supported the French in their siege defense. This was the case at Badajoz and San Sebastian. Wellington shared this causal factor with his brother. In a letter referring to San Sebastian and its aftermath, he wrote that “in the course of the inquiry upon this subject, a fact has come out, which I acknowledge that I had not heard before, and as little suspected…viz. that the inhabitants…cooperated with the enemy in the defense of the town, and actually fired upon the allies.” The outcome was a nightmare of destruction and sometimes violence for fortress defenders and inhabitants.

John Aitchison of the Scots Guards puts the violence in perspective, explaining how the British viewed the rules of war regarding siege assaults:

The behavior of the British troops must be judged against contemporary customs of war. Because of the great casualties which an assailant must expect if forced the carry a place by assault, it had become practice to summons a place before making an assault. If the summons was accepted, terms of surrender were negotiated, which probably included the garrison marching out “with the honours of war.” If the summons was rejected and the place carried by assault, the garrison was considered to have lost the right to quarter and the place would be sacked unless the inhabitants were considered friendly.

Lest Aitchison’s perception be misconstrued as the singular viewpoint of a soldier seeking to justify the actions of his comrades, it must be remembered that Wellington also blamed Napoleon’s order to fortress governors forbidding surrender before the assault phase began as the cause of British casualties and the resulting vengeance-
inspired bloodshed. Wellington’s sanguinary words, written nearly a decade after the sieges, seem more appropriate for a medieval lord facing internal rebellion than a British army commander of the 19th century:

The consequences of this regulation of Bonaparte’s was the loss of the flower of my army, in the assault on Ciudad Rodrigo and Badajoz. I should have thought myself justified in putting both garrisons to the sword and if I had done so at the first, it is probable I should have saved 5,000 men at the second…the practice which refuses quarter to a garrison that stands an assault is not a useless effusion of blood.\(^{43}\)

Wellington may have complained vociferously about the conduct of his soldiers, but he well understood the unwritten rules related to siege assaults: if the defender did not surrender after a functional breach was made in the fortress walls, then the assaulting force earned the right to punish the defenders as they saw fit. Years after the war Wellington remarked that “I believe it has always been understood that the defenders of a fortress stormed have no claim to quarter.”\(^{44}\) Wellington used the lure of plunder to entice his men to brave the incredible dangers of breach assaults. Surtees acknowledged the arrangement, stating that after long exposure to fatigue, deprivation, and death, the men thought it only fair that they should reward themselves for their success.\(^{45}\)

According to Captain Thomas Browne, one drunken soldier, heavily laden with loot, actually had the temerity to say this to Wellington during the plundering of Badajoz. “We poor fellows,” the soldier exclaimed, “fights hard and gets nothing.” Wellington said nothing in reply.\(^{46}\) He may not have agreed, but he knew that fair was fair: the men had done his bidding, and they were allowed to claim their recompense in accordance with the customs of war.
It may be reasonably surmised that because Wellington used the post-assault behavior of the men to send a message to the defenders of all citadels still in French hands, he was loathe to bring men up on charges for what was considered acceptable siege behavior. His real anger emerged because he had difficulty bringing the men back under his control after they stormed the towns. The day after Badajoz, for example, Wellington sent in Power’s Portuguese Brigade to protect the inhabitants and relieve the units that made the final attack. Wellington later complained that Power’s men, succumbing to the allure of available food, drink, and valuables, plundered more extensively than did the men who took the citadel.\textsuperscript{47} Another day was needed, and much work by the provost marshals, to restore order. It is here that Wellington’s patience was sorely tried. His anger, which has sometimes been misinterpreted, was not directed at the men’s excesses, which he well understood would be great. It was, instead, focused on the soldiers’ recalcitrance to rejoin their units in a timely fashion.

The phrase \textit{rules of war} is almost oxymoronic when applied to evaluating soldier-civilian interaction during and directly after siege assaults, perhaps the most demanding crucible in which human beings are expected to function under fire. The redcoats were routinely deprived of food and continuously exposed to physical and emotional hardship. Forced to endure the harrowing experience of a breach attack and released from social constraints (both of their primary and secondary groups), these soldiers became engines of revenge and self-gratification once through the fortress breaches and inside the towns proper.
Harley was once confronted by a Spanish woman after San Sebastian. She asked him to explain the actions of his men; his reply conveys the difficulty of pinpointing the exact causes, but manages to identify the primary underlying motivation:

[A lady commented] ‘You have come from England to assist them [the Spanish]; you take a Spanish town from the French, a brave and meritorious act; but why have you plundered it?’ I must confess I could make her no reply, but that it was impossible to restrain an enraged army, who had lost so many men.48

Costello again offers his insight, commenting on how saddened and disturbed he still felt years after the rampages. His explanation for the men’s behavior echoes that of Harley. His words are, perhaps, the best summary of the forces that drove many British soldiers to act as they normally would not:

It is to be considered that the men who besiege a town in the face of such dangers generally become desperate from their own privations and sufferings; and when once they get a foothold within its walls—flushed by victory, hurried on by the desire for alcohol, and maddened by drink, they stop at nothing: they are literally mad, and hardly conscious of what they do in such a state of excitement. I do not state this in justification; I only remark what I have observed human nature to be on these occasions.49

Roger Buckley voices his agreement, concluding that the same upsurge of emotions that allowed the British soldiers to surmount the citadel walls also pushed the men to seek vengeance and release once inside the fortresses. While he never directly refers to primary group allegiance, Buckley’s observations are rooted in group dynamics. As he has in his work on the British soldier in the West Indies, Buckley touches on the human experience as his key to deciphering the motivations and limitations of the British ranker:

This underserved criticism [of the men’s behavior after Badajoz] suggests that human beings have an inexhaustible capacity for self-restraint in the face of horror. It also infers that the extraordinary human emotions and powers which miraculously drove British troops to mount no less than forty
assaults into the breach were suddenly to be turned off like an electric switch.\textsuperscript{50}

After venting their initial anger on French or Spanish defenders, the thoughts of the British rankers turned to plunder. John Kincaid, of the Rifles, recalled the immediate result: “Wherever there was anything to eat or drink (the only saleable commodities), the soldiers turned the shopkeepers out, and placed themselves behind the counter, selling off the contents of the shop.”\textsuperscript{51}

The attitudes of the British soldiers, and their women, toward plundering and the pernicious vandalism that followed in the wake of their efforts to obtain what they could are captured by Charles Von Hodenburg, an officer in the King’s German Legion. Although the motivations of Hodenburg to enter the town are suspect, as he was probably there to see what loot he could find for himself, his account of the incident provides insight regarding the nature of post-assault behavior:

In less than an hour after it fell into our possession it [Badajoz] looked as if centuries had gradually completed its destruction. The surviving soldier, after storming a town, considers it as his indisputable property, and thinks himself at liberty to commit any enormity by way of indemnifying himself for the risking of his life. The bloody strife has made him insensible to every better feeling; his lips are parched by the extraordinary exertions that he has made, and from the necessity, as well as the inclination, his first search is for liquor. This once obtained, every trace of human nature vanishes, and no brutal outrage can be named that he does not commit. The town was not only plundered of every article which the soldiers carry off, but whatever was useless to them or could not be removed was wantonly destroyed….A couple hundred of their women from the camp poured into the place, when it was barely taken, to have their share of plunder. They were worse, if possible than the men….But no more of these scenes of horror. I went deliberately into the town to harden myself to the sight of human misery—but I have had enough of it: my blood has been frozen with the images I have witnessed.\textsuperscript{52}
Finally, a British officer recalled these same images of destruction wrought by the soldiers and their women on the fortress town of Badajoz:

The town had now become a scene of plunder and devastation; our soldiers and our women, in a state of intoxication had lost all control of themselves. There, together with numbers of Spanish and Portuguese, who had come into the city…in search of plunder, filled every street. Many were dispossessed of their booty by others; and these exchanges of plunder in many cases were not effected without bloodshed, when the party about to be deprived of his spoils was sufficiently sober to offer resistance….Hundreds of both sexes were lying in a state of helpless intoxication in various costumes….Churches and convents, shops and stores…private houses and palaces, had all been plundered. The actors of these excesses were attired in the habits of priests with broad-brimmed hats of monks and nuns, and in the dresses of grandees and ladies of rank.

These drunken escapades went on for days. Wellington found that the most expedient method to regain control of his soldiers was to allow them time to completely satisfy their urges, eventually drinking themselves into unconscious oblivion. Then he would send in the provost marshals to herd the soldiers slowly back to their regiments. He erected gallows, and might threaten to hang a man as an example, but Wellington understood the rules. For most soldiers, conquered towns provided immediate, if temporary, escape from their lives of hardship. Once their alcohol-induced stupors wore off, the men having had their fill of food and especially drink and, all too often, the use of unwilling females, the soldiers’ licentious behavior ended. Carrying whatever potential goods they had acquired, the soldiers made their way back to their companies stationed outside the bastion walls. Not until they were once again asked to take a fortress by assault, with similar circumstances driving them to such emotional extremes while simultaneously providing them the means to satisfy their neglected needs, would British soldiers conduct themselves in a like manner.
That the men ran wild after siege assaults is a given; there are too many eyewitness accounts of pillaging, drinking, acts of folly, and even some of rape and murder to question this premise. It is nearly impossible, however, given the extant sources, to determine absolutely the number of heinous acts committed by British soldiers after siege assaults. We can, at best, conjecture about the extent of the men’s injudicious behavior and hazard a guess at the frequency of personal assaults, rapes, and use of lethal force.

Judgment, however, must be tempered by an awareness of the unwritten but well-understood rules regarding the behavioral expectations of soldiers forced to storm citadels. Once the defender failed to surrender after a practical breach was made, the die was cast. Soldiers enduring the untold horrors of the assault inevitably pursued an agenda of violent rage directed at the defenders, although the redcoats’ anger was usually of short duration. Exacerbating this already incendiary situation was the availability of drink, food, potential wealth, and females, with an emphasis on the first, leading to the gross mistreatment of the last. The British soldier’s life of privation made him especially susceptible to the temptations related to having immediate access to the things he desired most. The soldiers, freed from group values, perhaps even encouraged by situational dynamics, and beyond the control of military law, sated themselves, committing the kinds of acts that would permanently tarnish their reputations. As the surgeon Charles Boutflower commented after the siege and subsequent looting of Ciudad Rodrigo, “Gallant as our soldiers are when opposed to an Enemy, I fear they yield to no people on earth in their thirst for plunder.”54

These siege incidents of gross misconduct were, however, the exceptions to the British soldiers’ accepted rules of conduct; they were limited in duration and tied directly
to the dynamics of siege assaults and their aftermath. These extenuating circumstances do not excuse the actions of the soldiers, but they do present them in a different light.

---

1. The author could uncover no accounts by survivors among the vanquished defenders or townspeople, meaning their perspectives, unfortunately, are left unheard.

2. Blakeney was the officer, mentioned in the previous chapter, who saw the soldier and his family lying dead in the snow. He wrote that “exhaustion, depravity, or a mixture of both” led to their deaths. Robert Blakeney, *A Boy in the Peninsular War*, ed. Julian Sturges (London, 1899) 67.

3. Ibid. 273-274.


5. Ibid. 273-274.


7. William Lawrence, *The Autobiography of Sergeant William Lawrence*, ed. George Bankes (London, 1886) 117-118. In addition, Edward Costello relates one of many stories in which soldiers protected civilians. In this case he restrained a soldier intent on shooting an old man for not disclosing the whereabouts of the money hidden in his house. Costello, using his command of Spanish, convinced the man to surrender his money in order to keep his life. Costello’s account is remarkably honest, for he admits he then received a share of the cash. Costello’s motives for stopping the shooting appear sincere, but his willingness to accept money for his efforts makes them suspect. Edward Costello, *The Peninsular and Waterloo Campaigns*, ed. Anthony-Brett James (Chatham, 1994) 99. This is a reprint of the 1884 edition. Cited by Charles O’Neil, *The Military Adventures of Charles O’Neil* (Staplehurst, 1992) 190. Reprint of the 1851 edition. Again, the degree to which O’Neil may have exaggerated the offenses committed and the number of lives lost is impossible to verify.


10. Ibid. 159-160.


16. Costello, *The Peninsular and Waterloo Campaigns*, 99. Costello did remember that Johnny Castles, a quiet little man of his company with a fondness for drink, was arrested, presumably by the provost marshals for some drink-induced act, and dragged off to the newly erected gallows in the center of town. A rope was placed about his neck, but he wasn’t hanged. Costello goes on to comment that “the circumstance had such an effect on him that he took ill, and was a little deranged for some time after.”


22. While civilian criminal proceedings, of course, would have been impossible, some regimental charges would have surfaced had the men’s behavior been as widespread and injurious as has been asserted. The chaos and the duration of the drunken rampages do work against rapid apprehension and proceedings
against soldiers who committed heinous acts; but the situation does not preclude charges later being filed against miscreant soldiers by officers and NCOs observing serious offenses such as rape and murder. It is as injudicious to assume that the lack of evidence, in the cases of post-siege assaults, indicates collective guilt as it is to posit that the missing proof absolves the men of all crimes.

Major-General Sir F. P. Robinson, A. T. Atkinson, ed., “A Peninsular Brigadier, the Letters of Major-General Sir F. P. Robinson,” *Journal of Army Historical Research* XXXIV.140 (1956): 167-168. Robinson also argues that the fire that destroyed so many houses was set by the French just prior to the assault. While such a tactic may seem an odd behavior for defenders intent on safeguarding a fortress, it possibly reveals French certainty that the British assault, once initiated, would inevitably succeed. Thus, the French started burning houses to deny the British an intact citadel. Robinson, 168.


Lawrence, *The Autobiography of Sergeant William Lawrence*, 110. As a testament to the close-action dynamics of breach assaults, Lawrence noted that all the French soldiers had been felled by bayonet wounds.

At Badajoz, he had ten brass and four iron cannons. He also had four howitzers. His siege train was significantly better at Ciudad Rodrigo, where it contained thirty-five 24-pounders and three 18-pounders. Edward Cocks, *Intelligence Officer in the Peninsula: Letters and Diaries of Major the Hon Edward Charles Cocks 1786-1812*, ed. Julia Page (New York, 1986) 162.

John Aitchison, *An Ensign in the Peninsular War: The Letters of John Aitchison* (London, 1994) 147. This is a reprint of the 1981 edition. Richard Holmes comments that the purpose of this custom requiring surrender before the assault was to prevent the slaughter that always ensued once the attacking force gained entry to the city. Richard Holmes, *Redcoat: The British Soldier in the Age of Horse and Musket* (London, 2001) 381. Napoleon’s edict changed this dynamic and ensured that high casualties for attacker and defender would be the norm.

The Forlorn Hopes were followed in by designated regiments. At Badajoz, for example, the 43rd and 52nd were the primary assaulting units. They suffered casualties of 347 and 383 men and officers, respectively, or well over half the strength of each regiment. Holmes, *Redcoat*, 390.

O’Neil, while acknowledging the peril of such an assault, used the phrase “thrilled at the honor” to describe the distinction of having his unit designated for the assault on Badajoz. These are, of course, words written well after the assault, which O’Neil somehow survived unscathed. At the time of the storming, he was, no doubt, also deeply afraid, far more than his account relates. O’Neil, *The Military Adventures of Charles O’Neil*, 175. Costello provides a gripping firsthand account that well expresses the horrors faced by men in assault parties. He also comments bitterly about the way the French rewarded their stormers, while the British army all but ignored theirs. Costello notes that the only real distinction designating a Forlorn Hope survivor was his “empty sleeves or wooden stump.” Costello, *The Peninsular and Waterloo Campaigns*, 94-95, 134.

Surtees, *Twenty-Five Years in the Rifle Brigade*, 152. Grattan perceptively noted that the men expected their officers to behave the same regarding the honor of being chosen; he wrote that the rankers did not approve of officers who sat around writing letters before the assault. Grattan explained that the men expected something more martial and task oriented. Grattan went on to give the example of General Picton. Though the men did not love Picton, they respected him because of his fearlessness and his positive manner before siege attacks. Grattan, *Adventures with the Connaught Rangers 1809-1814*, 196, 207.

See Fletcher’s book of the same name for an overview of siege warfare in the Peninsula. Ian Fletcher, *In Hell Before Daylight* (Staplehurst, 1994). The title of this chapter is a slightly modified version of Fletcher’s title and interesting work.

Cooper, *Rough Notes*, 75-76.


Esdaille states that 4,670 British soldiers were lost at Badajoz, with 3,713 falling during the storming of the breach. Esdaille, *The Peninsular War*, 387.
All the siege casualty numbers come from Lieutenant-General Sir William Napier, *English Battles and Sieges in the Peninsular* (London, 1990), (Christoval) 107, (Ciudad Rodrigo) 132, (Badajoz) 155, (Burgos) 217, (San Sebastian) 343. This is a reprint of the 1855 edition, with the narrative extracted from his *History of the War in the Peninsula and the South of France, from the Year 1807 to the Year 1814*, 6 vols. (London, 1832).

O’Neil, *The Military Adventures of Charles O’Neil*, 177, 190. Surtees also writes of revenge, commenting, “All [the men] thought of what they owed their wounded comrades, and of the probability that ere long a similar fate might be their own.” He then went on to observe that this motive was soon “swallowed up in their abominable rage for drink and plunder.” Surtees, *Twenty-Five Years in the Rifle Brigade*, 144.

Costello, *The Peninsular and Waterloo Campaigns*, 82.

Ibid. 99. Also see George Hennell, *A Gentleman Volunteer: The Letters of George Hennell*, ed. Michael Glover (London, 1979) 17. Grattan also attests to the men’s animus toward Badajoz civilians who had been unfriendly toward British troops previous to the civilians’ active participation in the defense of the fortress. With barely contained glee, Grattan wrote that the men “contemplated with delight the prospect of having it in their power to retaliate upon the inhabitants their treatment of our men.” Grattan, *Adventures with the Connaught Rangers 1809-1814*, 175.


Aitchison, *An Ensign in the Peninsular War*, 146-147.


Surtees, *Twenty-Five Years in the Rifle Brigade*, 149. Major-General George Bell reiterates Surtees’ explanation regarding the men’s expectations, writing that the soldiers looked at the looting of a town as their reward for the dangerous exertions required of them during the storming of the fortress. Major-General George Bell, *Rough Notes by an Old Soldier* (London, 1867) 34.


Aitchison, *An Ensign in the Peninsular War*, 147.

Harley, *The Veteran*, II 97-98. Harley also comments that the French never plundered a town that fell into their hands. Instead, they laid a “contribution” on the inhabitants which was paid in lieu of being sacked.

Costello, *The Peninsular and Waterloo Campaigns*, 98. Lawrence describes a scenario that helps explain how the immediacy of such situations impacted the choices that soldiers had to face. He writes that during the Badajoz assault, he had been forced to bayonet a large French soldier who had stumbled and fallen at Lawrence’s feet while engaging Lawrence in an exchange of bayonet thrusts. Lawrence stuck his bayonet through the man, pinning him to the floor; the man soon expired. Lawrence wrote that it troubled him that he had not taken the Frenchman captive, but circumstances did not allow it. That the situation bothered Lawrence enough to cause him to reflect on the event and record it speaks against the portrayal of British soldiers as men who killed without compunction or reason during the storming of breaches. Lawrence, *The Autobiography of Sergeant William Lawrence*, 108.


Ibid., 102.

In his work on the influence of culture on the traits and combat capabilities of soldiers, John Lynn has advanced the argument that only through a cultural interpretation can the motivations and conduct of soldiers of any historical era be properly analyzed. Referring to his work on the subject, Lynn playfully wrote, “This volume has come to bury the universal soldier, not to praise him.” Perhaps All for the King’s Shilling can add a shovel or two’s worth of dirt onto the carcass of the generalized portrayal of fighting men.

British Peninsular War veterans have suffered more than most from the kinds of assumptions that Lynn argues against. For two hundred years they have borne Wellington’s “scum of the earth” assessment, one that casts aspersions on their character and their deportment on and off the battlefield. The British ranker’s remarkable capacity for survival on campaign and his unequaled combat success against the French have become lost amid misperceptions attributing the redcoat’s behavior to antisocial characteristics and the innate toughness that is somehow considered to be an inherent trait of all men from the lower economic classes.
The implication that common soldiers throughout history were scum, predisposed toward criminal activities and possessing unsavory characters, all too frequently arises in discourse concerning the composition of armies. The capacity of such men to function under extreme circumstances is chalked up to their hardy and savage natures. This suggests that economic status prepares men to endure war, making the everyday soldier more inured to the physical and emotional stresses of campaign and combat than a man born to affluence. It is an assumption as demeaning to soldiers of today as it was to the British soldier.

The campaign and combat behaviors of the British ranker under Wellington, or any soldier from any era, can only be understood when cultural and group norms, social and economic stresses, logistics, technology, governmental structures and goals, leadership, and human limitations are considered. The British soldier was not, as has often been assumed, a criminal forced to choose between the army and incarceration. The man who enlisted in the British army during the war against Napoleon most likely did so out of economic necessity. He was usually young; the vast majority of recruits were between 15 and 24 years of age. The recruit was an unemployed agricultural or manual laborer, textile worker, shoemaker, or tradesman from any of a hundred occupations. He chose the army because it offered the promise of regular food and pay. That the army failed miserably to fulfill its end of the bargain was not the soldier’s fault. Left without means to survive in Portugal, Spain, France, and Belgium, the British soldier did what any man would do: he learned to forage and plunder food, valuables, and, when he could find it, drink. Commissariat failure, not character flaws, caused the ranker to steal in order to clothe and feed himself.
While on campaign, the British soldier quickly bonded with the men with whom he shared the unremitting hardships of British army life. Unlike the soldier under Napoleon, the British ranker received little in the way of Lynn’s sustaining motivations consciously proffered by his officers. He was offered no tangible rewards, such as medals or personal honors. His rations and pay were grossly inadequate and irregularly supplied. Physical comforts were negligible; ideological concerns were never considered or addressed. Letters from home were rare, their frequency likely diminishing as the years passed. The redcoat could not even count on a pension should he be wounded. Physically and psychologically neglected, the British soldier lived a dreary, frequently dangerous, and debilitating daily life, one governed by harsh discipline.

Because the ranker was enlisted for life, his messmates became his primary social group. This entity became his family, and its norms dictated the redcoat’s behavior. Group mores regarding sharing, treatment of civilians and captured French soldiers, and conduct during combat molded the soldier’s actions to a remarkable degree. The strength of the shared bonds among British soldiers allowed Wellington to formulate battlefield tactics that made optimal use of his soldiers’ willingness to risk death to preserve the group. Wellington combined tactical variations, based on close-range fire and bayonet assaults, with the use of reverse slopes to create a combat methodology unique to the British army. Group allegiance, not sociopathic tendencies, allowed the British redcoat to become one of the most reliable combat soldiers of the period.

For far too long, Wellington’s derogatory appraisal of the British rank and file has prevented a fair analysis of their battlefield and campaign behavior. Perhaps, as C. T. Atkinson has suggested, “famous sayings, especially those of great and prominent
persons, are often quoted inaccurately...while the tendency of historians to copy each
other’s mistakes often causes those celebrated phrases...to be taken out of context.”

Distilling the accomplishments and the motivations of the British soldier amid the
difficulties of campaigning and the chaos of the battlefield requires a more detailed
process than has been applied to understanding the behavior of the British soldier under
Wellington. The army was anything but kind to these men, treating the recoats as
expendable commodities. British rankers were accorded neither honor nor respect by the
citizens and the government they served; they have fared even less well at the hands of
historians. Fate treated them no better, as this paragraph from the 18 November 1822
edition of the *London Observer* illustrates:

> It is estimated that more than a million bushels of human and inhuman
bones were imported last year from the continent of Europe in the port of
Hull. The neighborhoods of Leipzig, Austerlitz, Waterloo, and of all the
places where, during the late bloody war, the principal battles were fought,
have been swept alike of the bones of the hero and the horse which he rode.
Thus collected from every quarter, they have been shipped to the port of
Hull and thence forwarded to the Yorkshire bone grinders who have
erected steam-engines and powerful machinery for the purpose of reducing
them to a granularly state. In this condition they are sold to the farmers to
manure their lands.

While many of the British soldiers shared the same final destiny as did their French
opponents, their reputations have suffered much in comparison. It is, perhaps, time to
disregard the accepted but inaccurate portrait of British rankers as rogues and perpetrators
of misdeeds and consider these men for what they were: common men who bonded
together to endure frightful circumstances. The battlefield victories they attained should
rightly be credited to the redcoats’ collective will to preserve their primary social groups.
Comrades, rather than criminal tendencies, were the soldier’s driving motivation. The
British rank and file may have earned their daily shilling from the king, but they fought for each other.

**EPILOGUE**

William Lawrence survived the war and eventually made it back to his home. After Napoleon was sent to Elba in 1814, Lawrence’s regiment, the 40th Foot, was dispatched to Ireland and finally paid off. Lawrence wrote that the men had received advances, but never their full pay, during their years on the continent. He received £40, which constituted six years of accumulated pay; this included the higher rates for his service as a corporal and sergeant. From Ireland, he was sent first to Jamaica and then to New Orleans, the British being at war with the United States. His regiment soon sailed back to Britain. Before landing in Portsmouth, his regiment received word that Napoleon had escaped Elba. New orders directed the 40th Foot to Flanders, where they landed at Ghent. Lawrence and his regiment marched to meet up with the main army, arriving in time for the Battle of Waterloo. There he survived two incidents in which cannon shots killed the men beside him. The second near-miss occurred after Lawrence was ordered to join a detachment guarding the regimental colors. Of this honor, he recalled:

> This, although I was used to warfare as much as any, was a job I did not at all like; but still I went as boldly to work as I could. There had been before me that day fourteen sergeants already killed and wounded while in charge of those colours, with officers in proportion, and the staff and colours were almost cut to pieces. This job will never be blotted from my mind.

Miraculously, Lawrence survived the battle with only a facial scratch. The wound’s severity was slight, but the pain was exacerbated when the soldier standing next to
Lawrence overprimed his musket. The discharge blew the excess powder into Lawrence’s gash, making him “dance for a time without a fiddle.”

After the Allied victory, the 40th Foot accompanied the army to Paris. During his long stay there, Lawrence met and fell in love with a French woman who ran a small produce stand. He endeared himself to her by pursuing a soldier from a different regiment who had stolen some tobacco from her stand. Lawrence returned with the tobacco and so began his courtship. Lawrence soon beguiled her and she agreed to marry him.

Lawrence was equally persuasive with his colonel, who was against his men marrying French women. The colonel eventually consented to the marriage and Lawrence quickly wedded Marie Louise Claire. She marched with Lawrence and his regiment to Calais, where Lawrence found her official transport to Scotland. After two years further service, Lawrence was discharged. He and Marie Louise then proceeded to walk from Glasgow to London.

From London, the couple journeyed to Lawrence’s home parish in Studland, which is in the county of Dorset. After getting settled, Lawrence found employment as a farm laborer. He was called to service again in 1819, being deployed in Ireland to suppress smuggling, his wife ever-present by his side. Discharged for good in 1821, Lawrence and Marie Louise marched from Plymouth back to Studland, where he returned to work on the farm. With a house bequeathed to him by his master, Lawrence eventually saved enough money to open a small public house. With his meager pension, the money from the pub, and his farm wages, he lived “pretty prosperously” with his French wife. Lawrence’s tale is one of the few from the chronicles of enlisted men with anything close to a happy ending.
This was their second such trek. On the first journey, Lawrence received a furlough to see his ailing father. On that trip they found transport to London, but walked back to Glasgow.
APPENDIX A

THE BRITISH SOLDIER COMPENDIUM

Section I. Sources and distribution of the sample

The BSC is a compilation of demographic data from 14 British infantry regiments, four cavalry regiments, and three sources comprising a pool for “unspecified artillery battalions.” The War Office citations are listed by regiment in Table 45. The returns for each regiment were compiled by randomly selecting approximately the same number of pages from regimental description books. Two of the artillery enlistment books were done in exactly the same format and handwriting; these records are listed in the BSC as being from Artillery 1, while records from the other book, which were done in a different format, are given as Artillery 2 to differentiate the two groups.

The regiments included in the BSC are the only units for which information could be found. Data concerning casualty returns, officers, and even detailed descriptions of cavalry mounts was much more easily uncovered, but such records did not contain demographic information relevant to this study. The variation in regimental totals is, for the most part, related to the number of men listed on each page. Some regiments had 90 or more men per page, while others had as few as 10. In addition, some pages were incomplete. It should also be noted that the vast majority of regimental description books
were not paginated; thus it is impossible to include the page numbers used for each regiment. In addition, the varied nature of regimental record keeping ensured that information contained in the description books was anything but uniform.¹

All of the records in the BSC represent single individuals. Each entry includes the year of enlistment, country of origin, age and height at enlistment, and the previous occupation of the enlistee. It should be noted that all references to men of English nationality include Welshmen. The regiment and branch of service (artillery, cavalry, or infantry) into which the men enlisted was also recorded. Most of the records (82.3 percent) gave the month of enlistment as well as the year. The BSC was restricted to records showing an enlistment date between January of 1790 and June of 1815. The disposition of the enlistee (killed, deserted, held prisoner, etc.) is in the BSC if it was recorded in the description book, but only 11.5 percent of the records provided such information (Tables 51 and 52).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regiment/Country</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Irish</th>
<th>Scottish</th>
<th>Foreign</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Foot</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>507</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>1,075</td>
<td>WO 25-308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th Foot</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>WO 25-329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th Foot</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>WO 67-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25th Foot</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>WO 25-352</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28th Foot</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>WO 25-357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32nd Foot</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>WO 25-368</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34th Foot</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>WO 67-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42nd Foot</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>343</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>394</td>
<td>WO 25-382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53rd Foot</td>
<td>892</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1,292</td>
<td>WO 25-412/413</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58th Foot</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>WO 25-435/436</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79th Foot</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>WO 25-477</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88th Foot</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>348</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>387</td>
<td>WO 25-516</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grenadier Guards</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>WO 25-874</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scots Guards</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>WO 67-1/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artillery 1</td>
<td>566</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>814</td>
<td>WO 54-303/305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artillery 2</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>WO 54-307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Lt. Dragoons</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>WO 25-276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18th Lt. Dragoons</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>WO 25-292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19th Lt. Dragoons</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>WO 25-283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20th Lt. Dragoons</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>339</td>
<td>WO 25-285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>3,827</td>
<td>2,145</td>
<td>1,145</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>7,250</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 45: British Soldier Compendium sample and sources
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regiment/Country</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Irish</th>
<th>Scottish</th>
<th>Foreign</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Foot</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th Foot</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th Foot</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25th Foot</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28th Foot</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32nd Foot</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34th Foot</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42nd Foot</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53rd Foot</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58th Foot</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79th Foot</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88th Foot</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grenadier Guards</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scots Guards</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artillery 1</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artillery 2</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Lt. Dragoons</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18th Lt. Dragoons</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19th Lt. Dragoons</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20th Lt. Dragoons</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 46: Percent of regiment's enlistees from each country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Branch/Country</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Irish</th>
<th>Scottish</th>
<th>Foreign</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Artillery</td>
<td>684</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cavalry</td>
<td>553</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>862</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infantry</td>
<td>2,590</td>
<td>1,821</td>
<td>923</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>5,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3,827</td>
<td>2,145</td>
<td>1,145</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>7,250</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 47: Simplified distribution of sample
### Table 48: Simplified distribution as percent of whole sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Branch/Country</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Irish</th>
<th>Scottish</th>
<th>Foreign</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Artillery</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>negligible</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cavalry</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infantry</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>25.1</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>74.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>52.7</strong></td>
<td><strong>29.6</strong></td>
<td><strong>15.7</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 49: Percent of country's enlistees in each branch

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Branch/Country</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Irish</th>
<th>Scottish</th>
<th>Foreign</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Artillery</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cavalry</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>49.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infantry</td>
<td>67.7</td>
<td>84.9</td>
<td>80.6</td>
<td>49.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 50: Percent of branch's enlistees from each country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Branch/Country</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Irish</th>
<th>Scottish</th>
<th>Foreign</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Artillery</td>
<td>69.2</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cavalry</td>
<td>64.2</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infantry</td>
<td>48.0</td>
<td>33.7</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 48: Simplified distribution as percent of whole sample

Table 49: Percent of country's enlistees in each branch

Table 50: Percent of branch's enlistees from each country
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disposition</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent (of those listing disposition)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dead</td>
<td>542</td>
<td>65.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prisoner</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>14.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deserted</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>19.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executed</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Negligible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transferred</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Negligible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invalided</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Negligible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>834</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 51: Soldier dispositions when listed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disposition/Country</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Irish</th>
<th>Scottish</th>
<th>Foreign</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dead</td>
<td>60.6</td>
<td>69.6</td>
<td>76.6</td>
<td>66.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prisoner</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deserted</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executed</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transferred</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invalided</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 52: Percent of country's enlistees with each disposition
Section II. Age and Height

A small problem arises regarding including young boys in the totals. Most boys were identified as drummers and were, therefore, not included. In the BSC sample, there were 75 cases of boys under age 15 who were listed in the description books and were at least five feet tall. These records were included because the boys appear to have been accepted as full-status recruits. They were not identified as drummers and they were of sufficient height that recruiting officers may have been willing to accept them for full duty.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>22.44</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>6.12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 53: Age distribution of all enlistees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age by Country</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>21.71</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>5.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22.89</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>6.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scottish</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>23.68</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>6.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>25.35</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>6.96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 54: Age distribution by country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age by Branch</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Artillery</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18.89</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>2.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cavalry</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20.48</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>4.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infantry</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>23.40</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>6.51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 55: Age distribution by branch
Figure 7: A: Age distribution of 1806 enlistees; B: Age distribution of all enlistees
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>66.32</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>2.36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 56: Height distribution, in inches, of all enlistees**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Height by Country</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>66.30</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>2.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>66.18</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scottish</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>66.60</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>2.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>66.74</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>2.39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 57: Height distribution, in inches, by country**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Height by Branch</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Artillery</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>66.52</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>2.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cavalry</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>66.76</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>1.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infantry</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>66.22</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>2.43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 58: Height distribution, in inches, by branch**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>66.6</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>2.26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 59: Height distribution, in inches, of enlistees aged 18 and older**
Figure 8: Distribution of heights
Section III. Trades and Seasonal Enlistment Patterns

Possibly the most challenging part of the data collection was organizing the list of previous trades provided by enlistees. Trades were entered into the database exactly as recorded by the sergeant in charge of the regimental books. Before the data were analyzed, however, the list of trades was examined and many repetitions and spelling errors were corrected. Such variant spellings included “brasier” for “brazier” and “callier” for “collier.” There were also many professions that were listed in some records with a space between two parts of a compound word while other records gave the same compound word without a space, such as “needle maker” and “needlemaker.” The dataset was revised so that all such professions were written without a space. Other trades that were obviously the same, such as cooper and barrel maker, tinsmith and whitesmith, and shoemaker and cordwainer, were combined under one of the two variants.

When giving aggregate information about the trades prior to enlistment, types of trades are broken down into laborer, textile workers, and other professions. Men were classified as textile workers if the profession they listed was explicitly involved with any part of the textile industry, such as woolcombers, weavers, drapers, and tailors. While being somewhat imprecise, the term other professions has been applied to all men who listed a definable profession that was not laborer and was not related to the textile profession. In all, there are 230 occupations listed in the BSC. These run the gamut from true craftsmen, such as watch and cabinetmakers, to less skilled professions such as colliers and chimney sweeps.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trade/Country</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Irish</th>
<th>Scottish</th>
<th>Foreign</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No trade</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definable trade</td>
<td>3,773</td>
<td>2,047</td>
<td>1,111</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>7,055</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3,827</td>
<td>2,145</td>
<td>1,145</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>7,250</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 60: Men with no trade across countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trade/Country</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Irish</th>
<th>Scottish</th>
<th>Foreign</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No trade</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definable trade</td>
<td>98.6</td>
<td>95.4</td>
<td>97.0</td>
<td>93.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 61: Men with no trade across countries as percent of country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trade/Country</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Irish</th>
<th>Scottish</th>
<th>Foreign</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No trade</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definable trade</td>
<td>52.0</td>
<td>28.2</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>97.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>52.7</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 62: Men with no trade across countries as percent of whole sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Trade/Country</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Irish</th>
<th>Scottish</th>
<th>Foreign</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Laborers</td>
<td>1,480</td>
<td>983</td>
<td>412</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>2,943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textile workers</td>
<td>1,044</td>
<td>593</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2,051</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other professions</td>
<td>1,249</td>
<td>471</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>2,061</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3,773</td>
<td>2,145</td>
<td>1,145</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>7,055</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 63: Trades across countries
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Trade/Country</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Irish</th>
<th>Scottish</th>
<th>Foreign</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Laborers</td>
<td>38.7</td>
<td>45.8</td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>51.1</td>
<td>98.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textile workers</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>35.1</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>95.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other professions</td>
<td>32.6</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>33.1</td>
<td>97.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>98.6</td>
<td>95.4</td>
<td>97.0</td>
<td>93.2</td>
<td>97.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 64: Trades across countries as percent of each country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Trade/Country</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Irish</th>
<th>Scottish</th>
<th>Foreign</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Laborers</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>40.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textile workers</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>28.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other professions</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>28.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>52.0</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>97.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 65: Trades across countries as percent of whole sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trade/Branch</th>
<th>Artillery</th>
<th>Cavalry</th>
<th>Infantry</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No trade</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definable trade</td>
<td>937</td>
<td>858</td>
<td>5,224</td>
<td>7,055</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>988</td>
<td>862</td>
<td>5,400</td>
<td>7,250</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 66: Men with no trade across branches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trade/Branch</th>
<th>Artillery</th>
<th>Cavalry</th>
<th>Infantry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No trade</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definable trade</td>
<td>98.5</td>
<td>99.5</td>
<td>96.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 67: Men with no trade across branches as percent of branch
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trade/Branch</th>
<th>Artillery</th>
<th>Cavalry</th>
<th>Infantry</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No trade</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definable trade</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>72.1</td>
<td>97.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>74.5</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 68: Men with no trade across branches as percent of whole sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Trade/Branch</th>
<th>Artillery</th>
<th>Cavalry</th>
<th>Infantry</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Laborers</td>
<td>371</td>
<td>401</td>
<td>2,171</td>
<td>2,943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textile workers</td>
<td>327</td>
<td>314</td>
<td>1,420</td>
<td>2,061</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other professions</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>1,633</td>
<td>2,051</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>937</td>
<td>858</td>
<td>5,224</td>
<td>7,055</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 69: Trades across branches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Trade/Branch</th>
<th>Artillery</th>
<th>Cavalry</th>
<th>Infantry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Laborers</td>
<td>37.6</td>
<td>46.5</td>
<td>40.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textile workers</td>
<td>33.1</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>26.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other professions</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>30.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>98.5</td>
<td>99.5</td>
<td>96.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 70: Trades across branches as percent of branch

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Trade/Branch</th>
<th>Artillery</th>
<th>Cavalry</th>
<th>Infantry</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Laborers</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>29.9</td>
<td>40.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textile workers</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>28.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other professions</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>28.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>74.0</td>
<td>97.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 71: Trades across branches as percent of whole sample
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trade</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>laborer</td>
<td>2943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>weaver</td>
<td>1307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shoemaker</td>
<td>377</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tailor</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>none</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>smith</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>carpenter</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>servant</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spinner</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>baker</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mason</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bricklayer</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>miner</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clothier</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>butcher</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nailer</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cutler</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hatter</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sawyer</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>framework/wool</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knitter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gardener</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tinsmith</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grinder</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>painter</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clerk</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cooper</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dyer</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>printer</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clothdresser</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cutter</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wheelwright</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hosier</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hairdresser</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>joiner</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>farmer</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>woolcomber</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>founder</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plasterer</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stocking maker</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cabinetmaker</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cotton spinner</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>farrier</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>flaxdresser</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>slater</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>groom</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>miller</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>collier</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>glazier</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knitter</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>locksmith</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>saddler</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tanner</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bleacher</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>buttonmaker</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gunsmith</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>musician</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>potter</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skinner</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bookbinder</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brazier</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ropemaker</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>watchmaker</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>basketmaker</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>collarmaker</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cordwinder</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>silversmith</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tobacconist</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brushmaker</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bucklemaker</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>combmaker</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glover</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jeweler</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>presser</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shearmen</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>turner</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>breecher maker</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chandler</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leather dresser</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>papermaker</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plaiter</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>schoolmaster</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tinker</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tinman</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wagoneer</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wheeler</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wire worker</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bellows maker</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brickmaker</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>broguemaker</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>confectioner</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cork cutter</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cotton carder</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>currier</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>file smith</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>harnessmaker</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ironfounder</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ladler</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>needlemaker</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pipemaker</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plumber</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>porter</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stone mason</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>woolcarder</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cardmaker</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>coachmaker</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dressmaker</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>engineer</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>engraver</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>glassblower</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grocer</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gunmaker</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lapper</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>moulder</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reedmaker</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>saddlemaker</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stonecutter</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>surgeon</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>toymaker</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 72: Trades by type reported in the BSC

Continued
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trade</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>victualer</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>whipmaker</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wire drawer</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>apothecary</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>armorer</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>blockmaker</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>boatman</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bookkeeper</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bootmaker</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brewer</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>carver</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chimney sweep</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cloth draper</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clothmaker</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>forgeman</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>glassmaker</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lawyer</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>machinemaker</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>manufacturer</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>millwright</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nailmaker</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>patternmaker</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pinnaker</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plateworker</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pumpmaker</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sailmaker</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sawmaker</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>scrivener</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shipwright</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>silverplater</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sinkermaker</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stamper</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>storer of cloth</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thatcher</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wireworker</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wright</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yeoman</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>actor</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>barber</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bitmaker</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>block cutter</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>book closer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>buckle caster</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>button burnisher</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>carpetmaker</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>carter</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cartwright</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chainmaker</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chairmaker</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chaise driver</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cigar shaper</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clockmaker</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>coachman</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>coachsmith</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cobmaker</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>copper miner</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>copperman</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>coppersmith</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cotton strainer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cotton worker</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>courier</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cratemaker</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cymbal maker</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>die tinker</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drover</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fender maker</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>filer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>forger</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>frame setter</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>frame smith</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gun mold</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gunstocker</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hair dyer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hammersmith</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hempmaker</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hostler</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>husbandman</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ironmonger</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>keymaker</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lt. Cleaver</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mariner</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>musical instrument maker</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ostler</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>packer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>postcutter</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>potmaker</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>razor grinder</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>razor smith</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sailor</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>scribbler</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>setter upper</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>silk dresser</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>soldier</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spindlemaker</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>springmaker</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stationer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>steelmaker</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stone polisher</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tapper</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tile cutter</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>timber dresser</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tin plate worker</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tobacco spiker</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>toolmaker</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>twinemaker</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>twiner</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>upholsterer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>warehouse man</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wine merchant</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>woodcarver</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>woolstapler</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 9: Number of enlistees per month
Section IV. Comparisons to general returns

In order to confirm the randomness and reliability of the sample in the British Soldier Compendium, information drawn from the BSC was compared to general returns from four separate regiments. General returns gave a summary of the state of the regiment on a given date, including information on the nationalities, heights, and ages of all men in the regiment at that time. Out of all the regimental description books examined, general returns were found for only four regiments. For the two regiments that had more than one general return available, the general return with the latest date was the one examined.

The regimental general returns were compared to the same regiments in the BSC sample up to the time the returns were compiled. For the height data, the general returns listed how many men were each height, but only for men 65 inches and taller. Therefore, only the corresponding data from the BSC were used to calculate comparable means and standard deviations. For ages, the general returns listed how many men were in each age bracket; this was compared to the BSC data directly.

The overall comparison reveals that the BSC sample is consistent with the general returns. Thus, it is fairly safe to say that the BSC data can be used to represent the British army of the period as a whole.
Comparison of BSC sample to general return for the 88th Foot, 1815

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Percent in the general return</th>
<th>Percent in the BSC sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish</td>
<td>90.2</td>
<td>89.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scottish</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign</td>
<td>negligible</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 73: Percent of regiment from each country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Height</th>
<th>Value in the general return</th>
<th>Value in the BSC sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>66.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard deviation</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>1.69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 74: Height in inches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age bracket</th>
<th>Percent in the general return</th>
<th>Percent in the BSC sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 20</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>34.0</td>
<td>27.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>33.4</td>
<td>34.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>27.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-44</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-49</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-54</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 and over</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 75: Age
Figure 10: Comparison to 88th Foot general return: Age
Comparison of BSC sample to general return for the 6th Foot, April 1811

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Percent in the general return</th>
<th>Percent in the BSC sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>75.7</td>
<td>74.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scottish</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 76: Percent of regiment from each country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Height</th>
<th>Value in the general return</th>
<th>Value in the BSC sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>67.1</td>
<td>67.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard deviation</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>1.87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 77: Height in inches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age bracket</th>
<th>Percent in the general return</th>
<th>Percent in the BSC sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 20</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>30.1</td>
<td>35.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>26.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-44</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-49</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-54</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 and over</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 78: Age
Figure 11: Comparison to 6th Foot general return: Age
Comparison of BSC sample to general return for the 58th Foot, April 1803

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Percent in the general return</th>
<th>Percent in the BSC sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>38.5</td>
<td>30.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish</td>
<td>55.0</td>
<td>64.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scottish</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 79: Percent of regiment from each country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Height</th>
<th>Value in the general return</th>
<th>Value in the BSC sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>67.8</td>
<td>67.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard deviation</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>1.73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 80: Height in inches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age bracket</th>
<th>Percent in the general return</th>
<th>Percent in the BSC sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 20</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>32.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>33.7</td>
<td>37.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-44</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-49</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-54</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 and over</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 81: Age
Figure 12: Comparison to 58th Foot general return: Age
Comparison of BSC sample to general return listing trades for the 58th Foot, April 1803

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Trade</th>
<th>Percent in the general return</th>
<th>Percent in the BSC sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No trade</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laborers</td>
<td>47.6</td>
<td>44.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textile workers</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>30.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other professions</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 82: Distribution of trade types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trade</th>
<th>Percent in the general return</th>
<th>Percent in the BSC sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Laborer</td>
<td>47.6</td>
<td>44.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weaver</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tailor</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoemaker</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 83: Distribution of the most frequently listed trades
Comparison of BSC sample to general return for the 20th Lt. Dragoons, May 1810

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Percent in the general return</th>
<th>Percent in the BSC sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>77.5</td>
<td>65.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scottish</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>18.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 84: Percent of regiment from each country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Height</th>
<th>Value in the general return</th>
<th>Value in the BSC sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>67.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard deviation</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>1.46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 85: Height in inches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age bracket</th>
<th>Percent in the general return</th>
<th>Percent in the BSC sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 20</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td>41.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>33.4</td>
<td>34.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>19.9</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-44</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-49</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-54</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 and over</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 86: Age
Figure 13: Comparison to 20th Lt. Dragoons general return: Age
Section V. Characteristics of enlistees in 1806

As discussed in Chapter 3 of the text, 1806 was a banner year for recruiting. The spike in enlistment for that year has led to closer examination of that year’s enlistees; these characteristics are described in the tables and figures below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Branch/Country</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Irish</th>
<th>Scottish</th>
<th>Foreign</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Artillery</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cavalry</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infantry</td>
<td>760</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>849</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1,097</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 87: Simplified distribution of sample for 1806

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Branch/Country</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Irish</th>
<th>Scottish</th>
<th>Foreign</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Artillery</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cavalry</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infantry</td>
<td>69.3</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>87.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>77.4</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 88: Simplified distribution of sample as percent of 1806 sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Branch/Country</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Irish</th>
<th>Scottish</th>
<th>Foreign</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Artillery</td>
<td>45.8</td>
<td>39.0</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cavalry</td>
<td>83.8</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infantry</td>
<td>78.8</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 89: Percent of branch's enlistees from each country in 1806
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Branch/Country</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Irish</th>
<th>Scottish</th>
<th>Foreign</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Artillery</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cavalry</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>49.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infantry</td>
<td>67.7</td>
<td>84.9</td>
<td>80.6</td>
<td>49.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 90: Percent of country's enlistees in each branch in 1806

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of trade</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laborers</td>
<td>418</td>
<td>38.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textile workers</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>33.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other professions</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>27.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,097</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 91: Trades in 1806 sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>6.71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 92: Age distribution of 1806 enlistees
Figure 14: A: Age distribution of 1806 enlistees; B: Age distribution by group of 1806 enlistees
One major question the British Soldier Compendium was designed to investigate is how economic factors in the United Kingdom at the time of the Napoleonic Wars affected army enlistment. This information allows the first-ever examination of the backgrounds and possible motivations of the men who comprised Wellington’s army. The records of fluctuating enlistment rates show clear correlation with the economic factors of the time: when the economy worsened, enlistment rose, and when the economy recovered enlistment plummeted. These records also reveal that when the economy was in contraction, older men were forced to enlist, raising the maximum age of enlistees.

To assess these correlations systematically, a series of analyses using ordinary least squares linear regression were undertaken. The dependent (explained) variable in all of these regressions is the number of enlistees per year in the BSC sample. The independent (explanatory) variables are meant to represent the economic dislocations that would have caused men to consider the army a viable alternative to mendicancy or starvation. The fluctuations of enlistment over time may be seen in Figure 15 and Table 93.
Bread prices were initially used in this analysis as a measure of changes in the economy at the level of the individual consumer. Since the major fluctuations in prices
during this period can be traced to recurring harvest failures that raised the price of grain to extraordinary levels,\textsuperscript{1} this approach is a good first approximation of the economic pressures on working-class men. Data on average annual bread prices, in pence, for the city of London were drawn from Mitchell and Deane’s *Abstract of British Historical Statistics*.\textsuperscript{2} While these prices are specifically for the London market, they may be assumed to represent the general trend throughout Great Britain, since prices in major Scottish markets tended to move in concert with London prices.\textsuperscript{3}

\begin{center}

\begin{tabular}{|l|l|}
\hline
R\textsuperscript{2} & 0.29 \\
Coefficient of bread prices & 38.7 \\
Confidence level & greater than 99\% \\
Standard error of estimate & 210 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}

\textbf{Table 94: Regression comparing enlistment and bread prices}

\end{center}

The results of this regression, as summarized in Table B.2, show that 29 percent of the change in enlistment from year to year can be explained based on changes in bread prices. The coefficient of bread prices was 38.7, meaning that when prices rose by one penny (pence), this model predicts that 39 more men would enlist in the BSC sample in that year. This result may not seem significant when compared to the whole of Wellington’s army, but it must be considered in the context of the BSC sample. Since that sample of 7,250 men is taken to represent an army that may have numbered more than 230,000, the predictions of this model must be scaled up proportionally to get a sense of their meaning with respect to the whole army. In other words, 39 more men enlisting in the BSC sample would be equivalent to 1,237 more men joining the army as a
whole in that year. This gives a much better appreciation for the correlation between bread prices and enlistment. We can predict, with greater than 99 percent confidence, that if bread prices had not risen by one penny in any given year, over a thousand men would not have chosen to enlist. The true scale of the economic impact on recruiting becomes clear when one considers that bread prices in 1812 at their peak during this period were 11.1 pence greater than their low point in 1792, and that that difference may have caused an additional 13,731 men to enlist by 1812 compared to 1792. The correlation between bread prices and enlistment is also shown in Figure 16. It is apparent in this graph that 1806 is an outlier year; this anomaly will be addressed shortly.

![Figure 16: Enlistment vs. bread prices](image)

Figure 16: Enlistment vs. bread prices

366
Since bread prices only reflect information about a very small portion of the economy, it is logical to compare enlistment rates to a wider range of economic data. A separate regression was performed that incorporated information on wages, prices, trade, and other social factors in multiple independent variables.

Clearly, the strongest possible proxy for the direct impact of total economic conditions on the working classes in the United Kingdom would be a measurement of purchasing power fluctuations during this time. For this information, Tucker's data on real wages\(^4\) were used. Tucker's data form the only complete series found for this time period that attempts to measure fluctuations in real wages on a year-to-year scale. Other complete series list data in five or ten year increments, which make them too broad to be of use in this analysis. In addition, many series that reflect yearly changes are extremely limited in scope and have multiple gaps where no original source data are available. Tucker's series is constructed from data on a limited area and portion of the population, because of the difficulty of finding complete and consistent source data, but it is still the best series found for this period. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, it has been assumed that Tucker's index is at least representative of general fluctuations in real wages for some of the population. It is hypothesized that as purchasing power decreases, as represented by real wages, enlistments will rise, all else being equal.

One note of caution applies here. In Tucker's original estimate of real wages, he attempted to include rents in his cost of living estimate by assuming that rents “tended to equal one-sixth of [London artisans'] weekly wage,”\(^5\) and he proceeds to calculate real wages on this assumption. In the words of Elizabeth Gilboy, another economic historian studying this period, “deflation of a given wage series by means of a cost of living index
in which the same wage series is a significant element appears to be a questionable statistical procedure." Tucker published his estimates of money wages and his cost of living index without including wages separately from his estimate of real wages, perhaps because he anticipated such critiques. This study used the series for money wages and cost of living to generate an estimate of real wages excluding rents. Given the argument that rents tended to change only slowly, it is unlikely that rents had a significant impact on the fluctuations of purchasing power over the comparatively short time, in economic terms, involved in this study.

This estimate of real wages is not adjusted to take into account the changes in unemployment, both seasonal and long-term, that occurred during this period. Data on unemployment are unavailable because little to no social relief was provided in an organized way at that time. Given this, the fluctuations in army enlistment may actually represent more information about changing employment rates in the private sector than has been known to date.

A significant shock to the economy of the United Kingdom during this period was the fluctuating enforcement of Napoleon's blockade. From 1806 through the end of the war, the Continental System was enforced with fluctuating effectiveness. Problems with America surrounding the War of 1812, but beginning years earlier, also limited foreign markets up until the end of 1814. In order to represent the impact of the Continental System and the War of 1812 on British trade, data on the yearly volume of imports were drawn from Gayer et al. Presumably, when the blockade was enforced more carefully and the War of 1812 had an effect on trade, imports fell, and the effects of limited trade spread through the economy in many forms, including fewer jobs.
Therefore it is hypothesized that, all else being equal, as imports fall, enlistments will rise.

Even though the Continental blockade and the War of 1812 affected both imports and exports, imports alone were used to measure the disruption of the United Kingdom’s international commerce. Much historical analysis has gone into demonstrating how the blockade caused exports from the United Kingdom to be shifted from their previous continental destinations to markets in other areas of the world, including especially areas such as Spain and South America that previously had not received much British trade, if any at all. While the United Kingdom’s merchants may have been somewhat successful in finding new outlets for their goods, it was not as easy to replace the volume of imports usually drawn from the continent by looking to less developed areas such as South America. Therefore, imports alone represent a better approximation of how deeply the blockade may have affected economic conditions in the United Kingdom.

The final piece of data used in analyzing enlistment changes from year to year is a binary variable that is zero before 1806 and one during and after 1806. This variable represents a collection of qualitative factors that influenced recruiting and that all came into existence circa 1806. Most prominent is the initiation of Napoleon’s continental blockade in that year; while the explicit effects of the blockade on trade may be measured in the volume of imports, it is also possible that fear of the blockade and anticipation of its economic effects may have led to increased enlistment regardless of whether such economic consequences actually occurred. Concurrently, the mechanization of the spinning, carding, and weaving took hold in Great Britain, throwing thousands out of work. One final variable occurring in the period of 1805-1807 is the beginning of the
end of the Volunteer system, no longer required after Nelson’s victory at Trafalgar. This resulted in 100,000 men, many of them poor, being released from service and the supplemental pay that it provided; if even a portion of such men turned to the army for employment, then at least some of the 1806 enlistment increase can be explained. All of these factors may have increased recruiting in 1806 and following years, so it is hypothesized that this variable will have a positive coefficient.

The results of a regression assessing the impact of all these variables on enlistment are summarized in Table 95.

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$F$ (3, 22)</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence level for F-test</td>
<td>greater than 99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard error of estimate</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 95: Regression comparing enlistment and multiple economic factors**

The model as a whole is statistically significant based on the F-test. The $R^2$ value indicates that 63 percent of the change in enlistment can be explained fully by these combined economic factors. On a human level, this means that the enlistment of almost two-thirds of the men in Wellington’s army can be explained solely in terms of economic factors. Given different economic circumstances, these men would not have chosen to enlist. This belies the collective myth of the British ranker as a vagabond or psychopath with no home, no occupation, and no redeeming value. Providing more detail to this new image of the British soldier, the effects of the various economic factors can be analyzed separately as shown below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Absolute value of t-statistic</th>
<th>Confidence level for one-tailed t-test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Real wages</td>
<td>-59.9</td>
<td>5.05</td>
<td>greater than 99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imports</td>
<td>-26.2</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>greater than 99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative factors</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>greater than 99%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 96: Effects of independent economic factors on enlistment

An analysis of the coefficients from the regression shows the following:

- When real wages fell by one hundredth of what they were in 1900, all else being equal, this model estimates that 60 more men would have enlisted that year. This translates to approximately 1,920 more enlistees in the army as a whole. (Data from Tucker.\textsuperscript{16})

- When imports fell by one million pounds per year, all else being equal, this model estimates that 26 more men would have enlisted that year, or approximately 832 more across the entire army. (Data from Gayer et. al.\textsuperscript{17})

- When the Continental Blockade was initiated, the mechanization of the textile industry took hold, and the Volunteer System began disbanding (all in 1806), this model estimates that 231 more men would have enlisted that year, or approximately 7,392 more recruits in the whole army. (Binary variable)
A one-tailed t-test was used for the confidence levels shown in the table because there were directional hypotheses about all three variables based on qualitative information. All three independent variables are statistically significant and show coefficients that confirm the hypotheses.

The variable that has the largest single effect is the qualitative factors that take hold in 1806. This is unsurprising because that variable represents a combination of events and influences, including the growing effects of Napoleon’s blockade, the Industrial Revolution, and the dissolution of the Volunteer system. The year 1806 still appears as an outlier, based on internally studentized residuals and leverages, but the size of the residual has been significantly reduced from the previous model. There is always the possibility of sampling error causing that outlier, but it is much more likely that the confluence of unusual events in that year cannot be fully captured quantitatively. Aside from showing 1806 as an outlier, all other statistical tests showed that this model is valid and reliable.\textsuperscript{18}

This quantitative analysis gives strong weight to the argument that the majority of men who joined the army immediately before and during the Napoleonic wars were not “the scum of the earth,” gathered in jails and forced to serve the king. They were, instead, ordinary British working-class men, usually under 24 years of age, trying to eke out a living in a time of enormous economic upheaval. Further analysis directed towards investigating the ages and occupations of these men gives a richer characterization of their backgrounds upon enlistment.

If a portion of the men in the army were driven to enlist because they were forced out of work by economic circumstances, it is expected that some of these men would be
older, possibly aged 25, 30, or more. Comparing some features of the groups of enlistees from good economic years and bad economic years substantiates this argument. In bad economic years, it appears that there are more enlistees with a previous profession other than laborer, and that the enlistees are, on the whole, older.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of enlistees</th>
<th>Percent of enlistees with a profession other than laborer</th>
<th>Maximum age of enlistees</th>
<th>Percent of enlistees age 30 and older</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1800</td>
<td>419</td>
<td>67.8</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1806</td>
<td>1,097</td>
<td>60.8</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>13.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1812</td>
<td>492</td>
<td>59.1</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>12.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 97: Characteristics of enlistees in poor economic years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of enlistees</th>
<th>Percent of enlistees with a profession other than laborer</th>
<th>Maximum age of enlistees</th>
<th>Percent of enlistees age 30 and older</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1803</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>39.8</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1810</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>41.6</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1813</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>56.8</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 98: Characteristics of enlistees in good economic years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recruits less than 15 years old</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruits more than 25 years old</td>
<td>1,690</td>
<td>23.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruits less than 65 inches tall</td>
<td>1,507</td>
<td>20.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 99: Enlistees not meeting recruiting standards
Although the recruiting regulations specified that no one over 25 years of age was to enlist, it is clear from the BSC that such regulations were often disregarded, both in terms of age and height (Table 99). Since there is evidence that men of a wide range of ages enlisted in the army, it is reasonable to investigate whether economic factors correlate with changing age patterns over time. It is hypothesized that the maximum age of enlistees will rise in years of economic hardship compared to years of economic plenty, because in those years there will be more older men who are forced out of other employment and must resort to enlistment. This hypothesis was tested using OLS linear regression with the maximum age of enlistees as the dependent variable and the same set of independent variables defined in the previous regression.

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>0.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$F (3, 22)$</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence level for F-test</td>
<td>greater than 99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard error of estimate</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 100: Regression comparing age of enlistees and multiple economic factors**

The model as a whole is statistically significant based on the F-test. The $R^2$ value indicates that 45 percent of the change in the age of the oldest enlistee can be explained fully by these combined economic factors. In other words, based on the standard error of the estimate, given information on the economic situation in a given year, this model can predict the age of the oldest enlistee in that year in the BSC sample with an average error of 5 ½ years.
Table 101: Effects of independent economic factors on age of enlistees

An analysis of the coefficients from the regression shows the following:

- When real wages fell by one hundredth of what they were in 1900, all else being equal, this model estimates that the oldest enlistee would have been about a year and a half older.

- When imports fell by one million pounds per year, all else being equal, this model predicts a rise of about six months in the age of the oldest enlistee.

Since there were directional hypotheses about all variables based on qualitative information, a one-tailed t-test was used for the confidence levels shown in the table. The coefficients and confidence levels for real wages and imports show that both of these variables influenced the age of the oldest enlistee in a given year. In contrast, the qualitative factors summed up in the binary variable did not have a significant effect on the age of the oldest enlistee; this probably indicates that influences such as the end of the Volunteer system, the Continental System, and the mechanization of textile industries did not have large effects on older workers.

This analysis confirms that the men who swelled the ranks of Wellington’s army during the Peninsular campaign were not just young boys with a taste for adventure and
nothing else to do; they were men as old as 50 and 55 who were driven to enlist merely to feed and clothe themselves. From 1790 to 1815, only one year, 1791, in the BSC shows a group of enlistees with a maximum age under 30. In other years, the percent of men over 30 ranges from less than 5 percent to more than 40 percent, with the years of highest proportion also being difficult economic years. These older men, who were more probably aware of the hardships army life entailed, are unlikely to have enlisted in the army given any other choice.

1 See, for example, Arthur Gayer, W. W. Rostow, and Anna Jacobson Schwartz, The Growth and Fluctuation of the British Economy, 1790-1850: An Historical, Statistical, and Theoretical Study of Britain's Economic Development (Surrey, 1975), I 9, 29. This is a reprint of the 1953 edition.


4 Rufus S. Tucker, “Real Wages of Artisans in London, 1729-1935,” The Standard of Living in Britain in the Industrial Revolution, ed. Arthur J. Taylor (London, 1975) 21-35. It should be noted that while data on wages are extremely difficult to find, many economic historians have attempted to construct an index of prices during this period. One of the most representative and reasonable of these is Gayer et al.’s index of wholesale prices. (See Gayer et al., The Growth and Fluctuation of the British Economy.) Tucker’s price data are almost perfectly collinear with Gayer et al.’s index; other price indices are also highly similar. This enhances confidence in the use of Tucker’s series.

5 Ibid. 25.


7 Ibid.

8 For a summary of the relevant Poor Laws and their impacts, see Chapter 3.

9 Francois Crouzet dates the periods of serious enforcement of the Continental System as “late 1807-early 1808, end of 1810-mid 1812”, but the system was in place from late 1806 on. In the midst of Britain’s agricultural crises, however, licenses were granted for the export of French grain to Britain. See Francois Crouzet, “The Impact of the French Wars on the British Economy,” Britain and the French Revolution 1789-1815, ed. H. T. Dickinson (New York, 1989) 192-193, 195.


11 Ibid. 11, 32, 66, 87, and 119.

12 Ibid. 32, 67, 89-90.

13 Along these lines, Gayer et al. attribute a sharp rise in prices in the first half of 1806 to fear of the blockade and anticipation of a harvest failure; this pressure was somewhat relieved when the harvest was not as poor as initially feared, but such psychological factors may still have played a role in men’s decision making throughout this period. Ibid. 63.

14 Ibid. 72., and see information on machine breaking in Chapter 3.

15 For a discussion of the end of the Volunteer system, see Chapter 3.


18 Since each independent variable is separately statistically significant, there are no initial signs of collinearity problems. This was confirmed by looking at the correlations of the independent variables. The
independent variables are not highly correlated with each other either pairwise or as one variable compared against the other two. This indicates that the variances of the model are not inflated due to collinearity.

There is no reason to suspect a pattern in the residuals correlated with one or more of the independent variables (heteroskedasticity), and the Breusch-Pagan test for such patterns was negative. The situation for autoregressive error processes is more complex. Since the model uses time series data, and particularly economic indicators, there is a strong possibility that the data have some inertia, that is, observations on separate years are not completely independent. This could cause an autoregressive (AR) error process where the residuals show a pattern within themselves. The most probable type of error process is an AR-1 positive process where each residual is similar to the residual of the year before.

Standard tests for AR processes were not conclusive. In the Durbin-Watson test for AR-1 processes, the D statistic for the OLS regression was 1.4051, while the critical values of the D statistic for 26 observations and four independent variables (including the intercept) are DL=1.1432 and DU=1.6523 for 95% confidence. Since the value of the D statistic is slightly less than DU, there is a possibility of an AR-1 positive process, but the test is not definitive. Correlograms also indicated the possible presence of a weak AR-1 positive process, but no other type of AR process.

It is important to keep in mind that the presence of an AR-1 positive process would only affect the significance of the individual independent variables. Since there was circumstantial evidence for a possible weak AR-1 process, the model was re-analyzed using first differences of the dependent variable and the two independent variables besides the qualitative factors. In that analysis, the coefficients and significance of the independent variables were not substantively different. Altogether, this indicates that the OLS results should be accepted.

19 Colonel Sir Bruce Seton, “Infantry Recruiting Instructions in England in 1767,” Journal of Army Historical Research IV.16 (1925): 86, 88. Instructions to Captain Sir Henry Seton, 17th Foot while on recruiting duty in Edinburgh. For more information on recruiting standards, methods, and results, see Chapter 3.
APPENDIX C

NUTRITIONAL ANALYSIS

Section I: Methods

To better understand and put in perspective the impact of diet on the ordinary British soldier of the Napoleonic Wars, I have examined dietary data from a wide range of sources. In order to evaluate the diets of various armies across time, historical examples of military rations from the late Roman army, 14th and 16th century Mediterranean galley slaves, 16th century Spanish soldiers and sailors, and the English Civil War were gathered and compared to the standard rations of the British soldier in the Napoleonic period. These diets were analyzed in terms of macronutrients (energy, carbohydrates, fat, and protein) and micronutrients (necessary vitamins and minerals). This appendix explains in detail the sources and methods used to analyze the components of each diet.

All the food items described in historical sources were matched with the closest equivalent in the USDA National Nutrient Database for Standard Reference, Release 17. Bread was the single most difficult food to analyze because of the inaccuracy of comparison to modern equivalents. The National Nutrient Database entries for modern bread assumed the use of modern flour, which is enriched with substances such as
folate\(^2\), and modern milk, which is supplemented with Vitamin A and other essential nutrients. This supplementation would misrepresent the historical diets as being much more valuable in terms of some essential nutrients than they actually were. Descriptions of bakers’ methods indicated that a baked loaf of one pound would have been made from some 20 ounces of unbaked dough which contained only flour, water, and small amounts of yeast and salt.\(^3\) The dough would have required varying amounts of water based on the precise quality of the flour as well as a myriad of environmental factors, but the flour would have absorbed at least half its weight in water or more.\(^4\) This would result in a dough composed of two-thirds flour and one-third water, by weight. By this reasoning, 20 ounces of dough would contain 13 and one-third ounces of flour, or just under 400 g. Thus, one pound (454 g) of baked bread or biscuit was counted in the nutritional analysis as 400 g unenriched flour, with the assumption that the remaining weight consisted of water and negligible amounts of yeast and salt. Figures for unenriched flour were drawn from the database entry for “wheat flour, white, all-purpose, unenriched.”

Meat formed a staple of many armies’ rations, particularly as a protein source. One pound of meat ration was evaluated as the edible portion of one pound of meat, excluding refuse, as defined in the Nutrient Database for “beef, composite of trimmed retail cuts, separable lean and fat, trimmed to 1/8" fat, all grades, cooked.” Since this analysis assumes trimming of fat and restricts itself to modern retail cuts, it probably over-estimates the nutritional value of the rations in terms of protein and slightly under-estimates the value in terms of fat. For the British soldier, who received one pound of meat including the bone, these values were scaled down to two-thirds to allow for the weight of the bones.
Other major sources of protein included cheese and beans, depending on the culture involved. Cheese was analyzed as “cheese, cheddar.” Any cheese purchased and transported for long periods by an army must have been a hard cheese, and various choices in this category led to highly similar results, so cheddar was deemed a reasonable choice. Individuals on board Spanish and Venetian galleys are reported to have consumed garbanzo beans as part of their daily rations; these are evaluated as “Chickpeas, mature seeds, cooked, boiled, with salt.” The officers, sailors, and soldiers aboard Spanish galleys also consumed bacon as part of their diets, and this was taken to be “pork, cured, bacon, cooked, broiled, pan-fried or roasted,” while salt pork supplied to Venetian galley slaves was analyzed as “pork, cured, salt pork, raw.” The other component of the diets of non-slaves aboard Spanish galleys was fish; this was taken to be trout or a similar fish.

Armies’ daily rations frequently included alcohol of some type. Wherever wine was mentioned, it was analyzed as “alcoholic beverage, wine, table, all,” and rum was evaluated as “alcoholic beverage, distilled, rum, 80 proof.” Beer was assumed to be equivalent to “alcoholic beverage, beer, regular.” Other additions to military diets included oil, analyzed as “oil, olive, salad or cooking,” and vinegar, taken to be “vinegar, cider.”

For some soldiers, such as the officers, soldiers, and sailors aboard Spanish galleys, the diet included a regular rotation of various components. In this case, the typical diet for a week was averaged in order to approximate the daily intake. For the common soldier in the English Civil War, the rations were expressed with alternatives: one pound of meat or one pound of cheese, one bottle of wine, or two bottles of beer. These analyses averaged the results over all possibilities, since no information on the
frequency of each alternative was available. For the British soldier in the Napoleonic period, wine was supplied in place of rum occasionally, and the values for wine are given separately, but the summary information assumes the use of rum, as it was far more common.

After the primary description of the rations in terms of energy, carbohydrates, fat, and protein, the total values for all the armies were compared, not only in terms of raw units but also in terms of the percent of calories coming from each type of nutrient. These caloric amounts were calculated using the standard Atwater factors for amount of digestible calories available per gram of nutrient. This calculation allowed the distribution of calories in the diet to be compared to modern recommendations. In addition, a more detailed analysis used the same USDA Nutrient Database entries, except for bread, as mentioned above, to assess the amount of vitamins and minerals available in each type of food. These values were summarized in terms of percent of Dietary Reference Intakes for individuals, as determined by the Institute of Medicine. Out of the 14 vitamins and 15 minerals found in the Dietary Reference Intakes for individuals, values were gathered for 12 vitamins and 10 minerals, these being the only ones listed in the Nutrient Database. The percentages of Dietary Reference Intakes translate the raw content of the historical diets into terms that can be compared to modern recommendations to determine the possible ill-effects of their diet on the men. At the end of the appendix, descriptions of the possible impact of the deficiencies of each essential micronutrient listed are summarized.
Section II: Diet composition in terms of energy, carbohydrates, fat, and protein

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Daily allowance</th>
<th>3lb bread</th>
<th>1lb meat</th>
<th>33.8fl oz wine</th>
<th>1.6fl oz oil</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calories</td>
<td>4368</td>
<td>829</td>
<td>770</td>
<td>381</td>
<td>6348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carbohydrates, grams</td>
<td>915</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>915</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fat, grams</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protein, grams</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 102: Nutritional breakdown of standard rations for the Roman soldier

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Daily allowance</th>
<th>2lb bread</th>
<th>1lb meat</th>
<th>1lb cheese in place of meat</th>
<th>1 bottle of wine</th>
<th>2 bottles of beer in place of wine</th>
<th>Totals, averaged over different possibilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calories</td>
<td>2912</td>
<td>829</td>
<td>1830</td>
<td>578</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>4669.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carbohydrates, grams</td>
<td>610</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>623.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fat, grams</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protein, grams</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>177.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 103: Nutritional breakdown of standard rations for a common soldier serving in the English Civil War

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Daily allowance</th>
<th>25.2oz biscuit</th>
<th>1.1pt wine</th>
<th>1.41oz cheese</th>
<th>1.83oz salt pork</th>
<th>0.6cup garbanzo beans</th>
<th>Totals with wine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calories</td>
<td>2293</td>
<td>413</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>389</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>3417</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carbohydrates, grams</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>506.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fat, grams</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protein, grams</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 104: Nutritional breakdown of standard rations for 14th-century Venetian galley slaves

382
### Table 105: Composite nutritional breakdown of minimal standard rations for 16th-century Spanish galley slaves

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Daily allowance</th>
<th>26oz biscuit</th>
<th>0.6cup garbanzo beans</th>
<th>0.21fl oz oil</th>
<th>0.6fl oz vinegar</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calories</td>
<td>2366</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>2618</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carbohydrates, grams</td>
<td>496</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>539</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fat, grams</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protein, grams</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 106: Nutritional breakdown of rations for 16th-century Spanish officers, soldiers, and sailors aboard galleys

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weekly allowance</th>
<th>26oz biscuit, seven days</th>
<th>34fl oz wine, seven days</th>
<th>8oz beef, three days</th>
<th>6oz bacon, one day</th>
<th>6oz cheese, one day</th>
<th>6oz fish, one day</th>
<th>Daily average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calories</td>
<td>2366</td>
<td>770</td>
<td>414.5</td>
<td>920</td>
<td>686.25</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>3589</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carbohydrates, grams</td>
<td>496</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.6875</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>497</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fat, grams</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>56.25</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protein, grams</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>42.75</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 107: Nutritional breakdown of standard rations for the British soldier in the Napoleonic Wars
Table 108: Nutritional comparison of standard rations for various armies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Daily allowance</th>
<th>Roman soldier</th>
<th>Soldier, English Civil War</th>
<th>Spanish officer, soldier, or sailor</th>
<th>Venetian galley slave</th>
<th>Spanish galley slave</th>
<th>British soldier, Napoleonic wars</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calories</td>
<td>6348</td>
<td>4669.5</td>
<td>3589</td>
<td>3417</td>
<td>2618</td>
<td>2350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carbohydrates, grams</td>
<td>915</td>
<td>623.25</td>
<td>497</td>
<td>506.4</td>
<td>539</td>
<td>305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fat, grams</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protein, grams</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>177.5</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 109: Percent of calories from each source

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Daily allowance</th>
<th>Roman soldier</th>
<th>Soldier, English Civil War</th>
<th>Spanish officer, soldier, or sailor</th>
<th>Venetian galley slave</th>
<th>Spanish galley slave</th>
<th>British soldier, Napoleonic wars</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calories from carbohydrates (percent)</td>
<td>3660 (57)</td>
<td>2493 (53)</td>
<td>1988 (55)</td>
<td>2026 (59)</td>
<td>2156 (82)</td>
<td>908 (41)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calories from fat (percent)</td>
<td>1017 (16)</td>
<td>999 (21)</td>
<td>156 (4)</td>
<td>576 (16)</td>
<td>144 (5)</td>
<td>576 (26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calories from protein (percent)</td>
<td>792 (12)</td>
<td>710 (15)</td>
<td>420 (11)</td>
<td>348 (10)</td>
<td>304 (11)</td>
<td>344 (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calories from alcohol (percent)</td>
<td>770 (13)</td>
<td>428 (9)</td>
<td>770 (21)</td>
<td>413 (12)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>341 (15)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section III: Diet analysis in terms of essential micronutrients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nutrient, units</th>
<th>1lb meat</th>
<th>33.8oz wine</th>
<th>3 lb bread (1200g unenriched flour)</th>
<th>3.2 tbsp olive oil</th>
<th>Totals</th>
<th>DRI</th>
<th>Percent DRI consumed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calcium, mg</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td>80.28</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>288.78</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copper, mg</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron, mg</td>
<td>7.47</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>14.04</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>25.28</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magnesium, mg</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>88.73</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>415.73</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manganese, mg</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>8.18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9.49</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>412</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phosphorus, mg</td>
<td>579</td>
<td>128.86</td>
<td>1296</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2003.86</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potassium, mg</td>
<td>892.5</td>
<td>836.55</td>
<td>1284</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3013.05</td>
<td>4700</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selenium, mcg</td>
<td>53.25</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>406.8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>463.01</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>841</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sodium, mg</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>59.15</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>260.15</td>
<td>1500</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zinc, mg</td>
<td>16.67</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>25.66</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folate, mcg</td>
<td>10.37</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>26.11</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niacin, mg</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>5.26</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6.53</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pantothenic acid, mg</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riboflavin, mg</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thiamin, mg</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.</td>
<td>3000</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin A, IU</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin B-6, mg</td>
<td>6.96</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7.07</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin B-12, mcg</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin C</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>10.56</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>342.06</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin E, mg</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>6.21</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin K, mcg</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>25.92</td>
<td>34.62</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 110: Vitamin and mineral analysis of Roman soldier diet
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nutrient, units</th>
<th>2lb bread (800g unenriched flour)</th>
<th>1lb beef</th>
<th>1 lb cheese</th>
<th>2 bottles of beer</th>
<th>1 bottle of wine</th>
<th>Totals, average</th>
<th>DRI</th>
<th>Percent DRI consumed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calcium, mg</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td>3270</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>60.21</td>
<td>1813.35</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copper, mg</td>
<td>9.36</td>
<td>7.47</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>16.01</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron, mg</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>66.54</td>
<td>325.27</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magnesium, mg</td>
<td>864</td>
<td>579</td>
<td>2322</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>96.65</td>
<td>2412.82</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manganese, mg</td>
<td>856</td>
<td>892.5</td>
<td>445</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>627.41</td>
<td>1934.46</td>
<td>4700</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phosphorus, mg</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>2817</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>44.36</td>
<td>1549.18</td>
<td>1500</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potassium, mg</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>16.67</td>
<td>14.11</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>21.25</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selenium, mcg</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sodium, mg</td>
<td>5.46</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zinc, mg</td>
<td>271.2</td>
<td>53.25</td>
<td>63.1</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>2.22</td>
<td>332.58</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>604</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folate, mcg</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10.37</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>17.47</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niacin, mg</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>5.19</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pantothenic acid, mg</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riboflavin, mg</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thiamin, mg</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4545</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2272.5</td>
<td>3000</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin A, IU</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin B-6, mg</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6.96</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>5.47</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin B-12, mcg</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin C</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>7.92</td>
<td>283.71</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin E, mg</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin K, mcg</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 111: Vitamin and mineral analysis of the diet of a common soldier in the English Civil War
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nutrient, units</th>
<th>26 oz biscuit (650g unenriched flour)</th>
<th>34 fl oz wine, seven days</th>
<th>8 oz beef, three days</th>
<th>6 oz bacon, one day</th>
<th>6 oz fish, one day</th>
<th>6 oz cheese, one day</th>
<th>Totals, average</th>
<th>DRI</th>
<th>Percent DRI consumed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calcium, mg</td>
<td>97.5</td>
<td>80.28</td>
<td>14.25</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>1226.25</td>
<td>375.2</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copper, mg</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron, mg</td>
<td>7.61</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>13.67</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magnesium, mg</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>88.73</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>47.63</td>
<td>266.89</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manganese, mg</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>1.86</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>5.98</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phosphorus, mg</td>
<td>702</td>
<td>128.86</td>
<td>289.5</td>
<td>906</td>
<td>534</td>
<td>870.75</td>
<td>1285.04</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potassium, mg</td>
<td>695.5</td>
<td>836.55</td>
<td>446.25</td>
<td>960</td>
<td>787</td>
<td>166.88</td>
<td>1996.71</td>
<td>4700</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selenium, mcg</td>
<td>220.35</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>26.63</td>
<td>105.4</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>23.66</td>
<td>257.08</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>467</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sodium, mg</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>59.15</td>
<td>88.5</td>
<td>3927</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>1056.38</td>
<td>838.28</td>
<td>1500</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zinc, mg</td>
<td>4.55</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>8.33</td>
<td>5.95</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>5.29</td>
<td>10.53</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folate, mcg</td>
<td>8.13</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>5.19</td>
<td>18.87</td>
<td>9.81</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niacin, mg</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>1.99</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pantothenic acid, mg</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riboflavin, mg</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thiamin, mg</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>1704.38</td>
<td>267.77</td>
<td>3000</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin A, IU</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin B-6, mg</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>12.73</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin B-12, mcg</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin C</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>10.56</td>
<td>9.75</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>30.75</td>
<td>192.28</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin E, mg</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin K, mcg</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.76</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 112: Vitamin and mineral analysis of 16th-century Spanish soldier, sailor, or officer’s diet aboard a galley
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nutrient, units</th>
<th>25.2 oz biscuit (630g unenriched flour)</th>
<th>0.6cup garbanzo beans</th>
<th>wine, 1.1pt</th>
<th>1.41oz cheddar cheese</th>
<th>1.83oz salt pork</th>
<th>Totals</th>
<th>DRI</th>
<th>Percent DRI consumed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calcium, mg</td>
<td>94.58</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>41.8</td>
<td>288.17</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>475.54</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copper, mg</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron, mg</td>
<td>7.38</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>12.53</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magnesium, mg</td>
<td>138.71</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>46.2</td>
<td>11.19</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>247.1</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manganese, mg</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5.98</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phosphorus, mg</td>
<td>680.94</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>67.1</td>
<td>204.63</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1144.67</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potassium, mg</td>
<td>674.64</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>435.6</td>
<td>39.22</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>1469.45</td>
<td>4700</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selenium, mcg</td>
<td>213.74</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>5.56</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>227.44</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>413</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sodium, mg</td>
<td>12.61</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>248.25</td>
<td>739.1</td>
<td>1269.66</td>
<td>1500</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zinc, mg</td>
<td>4.41</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>7.94</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folate, mcg</td>
<td>7.88</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>9.66</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niacin, mg</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pantothenic acid, mg</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riboflavin, mg</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thiamin, mg</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>400.53</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>427.53</td>
<td>3000</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin A, IU</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin B-6, mg</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin B-12, mcg</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin C</td>
<td>163.93</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>7.23</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>346.66</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin E, mg</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin K, mcg</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6.91</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 113: Vitamin and mineral analysis of 14th-century Venetian galley slave diet
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nutrient, units</th>
<th>26 oz biscuit (650g unenriched flour)</th>
<th>0.6 cup garbanzo beans</th>
<th>0.21 fl oz oil</th>
<th>0.6 fl oz vinegar</th>
<th>Totals</th>
<th>DRI</th>
<th>Percent DRI consumed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calcium, mg</td>
<td>97.5</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>146.7</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copper, mg</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron, mg</td>
<td>7.61</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>10.59</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magnesium, mg</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>193.6</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manganese, mg</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>5.49</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phosphorus, mg</td>
<td>702</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>868.2</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potassium, mg</td>
<td>695.5</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>999.5</td>
<td>4700</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selenium, mcg</td>
<td>220.35</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>223.95</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sodium, mg</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>252.</td>
<td>1500</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zinc, mg</td>
<td>4.55</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6.06</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folate, mcg</td>
<td>8.13</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8.64</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niacin, mg</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pantothenic acid, mg</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riboflavin, mg</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thiamin, mg</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>3000</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin A, IU</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin B-6, mg</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin B-12, mcg</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin C</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>338</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin E, mg</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin K, mcg</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9.25</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 114: Vitamin and mineral analysis of 16th-century Spanish galley slave diet
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nutrient, units</th>
<th>1lb biscuit (400g unenriched flour)</th>
<th>1lb meat, including the bone</th>
<th>5.3fl oz rum</th>
<th>15.9fl oz wine</th>
<th>Totals with rum</th>
<th>Totals with wine</th>
<th>DRI</th>
<th>Percent DRI consumed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calcium, mg</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>1000.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copper, mg</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron, mg</td>
<td>4.68</td>
<td>4.98</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>9.84</td>
<td>11.31</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magnesium, mg</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manganese, mg</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phosphorus, mg</td>
<td>432</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>825</td>
<td>879</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potassium, mg</td>
<td>428</td>
<td>595</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>1026</td>
<td>1419</td>
<td>4700</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selenium, mcg</td>
<td>135.6</td>
<td>35.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>171.1</td>
<td>172.5</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sodium, mg</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>1500</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zinc, mg</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>11.11</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>14.01</td>
<td>14.19</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folate, mcg</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niacin, mg</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6.92</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>11.92</td>
<td>12.26</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pantothenic acid, mg</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riboflavin, mg</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thiamin, mg</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin A, IU</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3000</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin B-6, mg</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin B-12, mcg</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.64</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>4.64</td>
<td>4.69</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin C</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin E, mg</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin K, mcg</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 115: Vitamin and mineral analysis of British soldier diet
100 percent being the recommended level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nutrient</th>
<th>Roman soldier</th>
<th>Common soldier, English Civil War</th>
<th>Spanish sailor, soldier, or officer</th>
<th>Venetian galley slave</th>
<th>Spanish galley slave</th>
<th>British soldier, Napoleonic wars</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calcium</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copper</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magnesium</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manganese</td>
<td>412</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phosphorus</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>344</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potassium</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selenium</td>
<td>841</td>
<td>604</td>
<td>467</td>
<td>413</td>
<td>407</td>
<td>311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sodium</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zinc</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folate</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niacin</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pantothenic acid</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riboflavin</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thiamin</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin A</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin B-6</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin B-12</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin C</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin E</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin K</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 116: Dietary Reference Intakes (DRIs) in percents\textsuperscript{15}
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nutrient</th>
<th>Etiology and symptoms of deficiency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calcium</td>
<td>Calcium would be drawn out of bones to make up for dietary deficiency; eventually, this would result in weakness of the bones. If the body were unable to replace the needed calcium in blood plasma, the result would have been muscle cramps, weakness, and eventually symptoms such as depression, dementia, and psychosis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copper</td>
<td>Clinically significant copper deficiency usually occurs only in individuals with genetic abnormality, so symptoms are almost never observed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron</td>
<td>Deficiency would cause anemia, leading to fatigue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magnesium</td>
<td>In cases of dietary deficiency, magnesium is conserved by the kidneys fairly efficiently, delaying the onset of symptoms, which include anorexia, vomiting, lethargy, weakness, and muscle tremors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manganese</td>
<td>Symptoms of naturally-occurring deficiency have not been documented.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phosphorus</td>
<td>Deficiency often shows no symptoms, but can produce anorexia and muscle weakness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potassium</td>
<td>The kidneys conserve potassium if there is not enough provided in the diet, but the conservation is less efficient than for sodium or magnesium. Hypokalemia is worsened by chronic diarrhea and leads to muscle weakness, muscle cramps, and the potential for cardiac arrhythmias.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selenium</td>
<td>Cases of selenium deficiency are rare but are sometimes associated with a viral cardiomyopathy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sodium</td>
<td>When sodium intake is insufficient, the kidneys restrict sodium output to maintain acceptable levels. Severe hyponatremia would result in decreased extracellular fluid and associated circulatory changes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zinc</td>
<td>Depleted levels of zinc can cause growth retardation, anorexia, hair loss, immune disorders, night blindness, and impaired wound healing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin C</td>
<td>Consumption of less than 10mg of Vitamin C per day puts individuals at risk of scurvy if those levels are maintained for 3 to 6 months. In the absence of full scurvy, Vitamin C deficiency can make individuals bleed and bruise more easily, and make wounds fail to heal or old wounds break out again.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folate</td>
<td>Deficiency of folate contributes to anemia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niacin</td>
<td>Severe deficiency leads to pellagra; initial symptoms include rashes and lesions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pantothenic acid</td>
<td>Experimentally induced deficiency caused malaise and stomachaches.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riboflavin</td>
<td>Insufficient intake can cause pallor along with discolorations and lesions of the mouth and skin.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**Table 117: Symptoms caused by dietary deficiencies of essential nutrients**

392
Table 117 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nutrient</th>
<th>Etiology and symptoms of deficiency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thiamin</td>
<td>Deficiency causes mental symptoms including fatigue, irritation, poor memory, and sleep disturbances, along with physical symptoms such as chest pain, anorexia, stomachache, and constipation. Advanced deficiency causes various forms of beri-beri. 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin A</td>
<td>Lack of Vitamin A leads to changes in the eyes, resulting in night blindness and eventually poor vision or blindness. 31 Immune system deficiency resulting from breakdown of mucosal barriers in individuals with Vitamin A deficits, increasing the incidence of respiratory infection. 32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin B-6</td>
<td>Lowered levels can cause anemia in adults. 33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin B-12</td>
<td>Deficiency contributes to anemia. 34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin E</td>
<td>In children, lack of Vitamin E results in loss of position sense, lack of reflexes, and muscle weakness. 35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 117
Section IV: An Assessment of the Protein Content of the British Soldier’s Rations during the Napoleonic Wars

When calculating the amount of required protein in any given diet, two main considerations come into play: the digestibility of the protein sources and their amino acid composition. The rations of the British ranker in 1803-1815 just met modern standards of adequacy, assuming that the food was provided regularly and was of nearly modern quality. This latter assumption is especially questionable. Since neither of those assumptions was likely to be consistently true over time, the British ranker may have suffered from protein deficiency, particularly when receiving only bread or limited rations.

Under normal rations, the ranker received 50 g of protein per day from beef and 41 g of protein per day from wheat. The digestibility of meat protein is 100 percent, since it is used as a reference protein, and the digestibility of wheat protein after refinement is approximately 95 percent. The digestibility of a diet as a whole may be calculated as the weighted average of the digestibility of each part of the diet, given that we know what proportion of the protein came from each source. Since meat protein formed 54 percent of the diet and wheat protein 46 percent, the digestibility factor is calculated as $0.54 \times 1 + 0.46 \times 0.95$, which works out to 0.98, or 98 percent. Thus the British ranker can be assumed to have absorbed about 98 percent of the protein present in his diet, or 89 g per day.

The World Health Organization calculates that 0.75 g per kg of body weight per day of “good-quality protein” is a minimum level sufficient to sustain health in all but 2.5 percent of the population, once adjusted for digestibility. At this rate, a 60 kg (132 lb)
man would need at least 45 g of protein per day, a little more than half of that provided by the British soldier’s rations. In fact, the rations should have been sufficient, merely in terms of protein, to sustain a man of 118 kg (261 lb). Thus, the protein ration was minimally sufficient, when the men received it. However, since this amount of protein constituted less than two days’ requirement for the average man, the unavailability of the meat ration for even one day would have put the British ranker’s intake well below the minimum recommended levels.

It is worth noting that for boys under the age of 18, the protein requirements per day are higher, up to 0.96 g per kg body weight per day for boys aged 14 to 15. The protein supplied in the rations would have been sufficient to sustain a boy of this age who weighed 93 kg (204 lbs) or less. Even if the young men were assumed to be smaller than average, perhaps between 100 and 130 lbs, the protein present in standard rations was just above the minimums required. The key factor, however, in considering the diet of the British soldier is understanding that the commissariat routinely failed to deliver rations on a day-to-day basis. So while his daily fare provided a minimum level of protein, it must be remembered that a day’s rations would not have sustained the British ranker over more than a 24-hour period. Without a nutritional reserve, the men would have begun to feel the adverse affects of their diets almost immediately. The younger members of the army, in particular, would have borne the lack of rations, especially protein, less well than the older men.

The second consideration in assessing the protein content of a diet is the amino acid composition of the protein sources present in the diet. There are several essential amino acids that the body must absorb in sufficient quantities for the creation of new
proteins; the amino acids which are typically in least supply are lysine, methionine & cystine, threonine, and tryptophan. Almost all animal sources provide sufficient amounts of amino acids per gram of protein to ensure that if a minimum amount of protein is consumed, by the above standard of 0.75 g per kg body weight per day, then sufficient amounts of amino acids have been consumed. For this reason, animal proteins are generally called ‘complete proteins’, whereas plant sources of protein are often deficient in one or more amino acids, making them incomplete. A comparison of the requirements to the distribution of amino acids present in beef and wheat protein is shown in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amino Acid</th>
<th>Minimum requirements, mg/g protein</th>
<th>Amount present in wheat protein, mg/g protein</th>
<th>Amount present in beef protein, mg/g protein</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lysine</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methionine &amp; Cystine</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threonine</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tryptophan</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 118: Amino acid contents of beef and wheat, compared to minimum requirements

Based on this information, it is clear that the amino acid the soldiers were most likely to be lacking was tryptophan. For the other amino acids, even if the ranker did not receive enough protein to meet his overall daily needs, he probably still received enough of those amino acids to meet or nearly meet the requirements; for example, a day’s rations provided more than three times the minimum daily amounts of threonine, so
missing a day’s rations would not immediately put a soldier into a state of deficit for that amino acid.

For tryptophan, a day’s rations provided 410 mg from wheat and 400 mg from beef, or 810 mg total. The daily requirement of tryptophan is 5 mg per g protein, assuming that at least 0.75 g of protein per kg body weight is consumed per day, so a person needs at least 5 x 0.75, or 3.75 mg of tryptophan per kg body weight per day. For a 60 kg (132 lb) ranker, at least 225 mg of tryptophan are required. The tryptophan present in a day’s rations was sufficient for about three and a half days’ needs; after that period, the men would have suffered not only from overall protein deficiency, but from a lack of this specific amino acid as well, possibly slowing or even preventing the synthesis of new protein in their bodies.

A final comment about the protein composition of the British soldier’s diet is in order. While this ration proved to exceed minimum requirements for health, it still was not present in sufficient quantity to form a large enough portion of the diet. If the British ranker’s rations had provided sufficient bread to supply the roughly 3,000 calories per day that he probably needed, the protein allowance still would have formed just over ten percent of the calories in that diet, barely within the recommendations for distribution of calories from various sources.43
Section V: Estimation of Caloric Needs of the British Ranker

The calculation of caloric needs for an individual depends on gender, height, weight, and age. For men in the British army in this period, we can estimate the typical heights and ages from the BSC sample, as described in Appendix A. No information on weight is given in the description books, but weight can be estimated from height based on the Body Mass Index (BMI) typical of men at that time. Estimates based on population studies show that the average BMI for men in 1800-1819 was about 20.7; since BMI fluctuates within fairly narrow ranges for the healthy population, it is relatively safe to assume that the BMI of these men was between about 20 and 22.

Two different approaches were used to approximate the average caloric needs of the British common soldier. Both methods depended on calculating the total energy expended (TEE) in a day, using a current formula that represents the TEE of modern adults with no particularly active lifestyle. This calculation should be a reasonable estimate of the British ranker’s needs, if somewhat of an underestimate. In one approach, the TEE for several different combinations of typical heights, ages, and BMIs was found and then averaged across the entire set; in the other approach, the TEE for a British soldier possessing the average height and average age based on the BSC and the estimated BMI. Both methods agreed closely on the average caloric needs of men in this part of the population.
Table 119: Total Energy Expenditure for average British ranker

All possible combinations of typical ages, heights, and BMIs included ages in five-year increments from 15 to 40, the average height plus and minus one and two standard deviations, and a BMI of 20, 20.5, 21, 21.5, or 22. This resulted in 150 different possibilities for analysis. These calculations are summarized in Table 120. The first six lines of the table are an example of how the full calculations were done; the rest of the calculations are collapsed, with all age groups for given physical characteristics represented on one line and the corresponding range of caloric needs given on the right. Note that caloric needs decrease with age, so the maximum amount listed on each line is for 15 year olds, while the minimum is for 40 year olds, and other age groups would be in between.

All of these combinations gave estimated energy expenditures between 2,509 and 3,447 calories per day, with an average of just under 3,000 calories per day. Thus, throughout this paper, it has been assumed that the average British soldier needed approximately 3,000 calories per day, not including nutritional needs brought on by exertions such as long marches.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Height (inches)</th>
<th>BMI</th>
<th>Weight (lbs)</th>
<th>TEE (calories)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>61.5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>2945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>61.5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>2858</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>61.5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>2771</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>61.5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>2683</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>61.5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>2596</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>61.5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>2509</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ages 15-40</td>
<td>63.9</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>2603-3039</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ages 15-40</td>
<td>66.3</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>2701-3137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ages 15-40</td>
<td>68.7</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>2801-3237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ages 15-40</td>
<td>70.7</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>2887-3323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ages 15-40</td>
<td>61.5</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>2532-2969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ages 15-40</td>
<td>63.9</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>2629-3065</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ages 15-40</td>
<td>66.3</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>2728-3164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ages 15-40</td>
<td>68.7</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>2830-3266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ages 15-40</td>
<td>70.7</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>2918-3354</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ages 15-40</td>
<td>61.5</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>2556-2992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ages 15-40</td>
<td>63.9</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>2654-3090</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ages 15-40</td>
<td>66.3</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>2755-3191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ages 15-40</td>
<td>68.7</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>2860-3296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ages 15-40</td>
<td>70.7</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>2949-3385</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ages 15-40</td>
<td>61.5</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>2579-3016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ages 15-40</td>
<td>63.9</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>2679-3116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ages 15-40</td>
<td>66.3</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>2783-3219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ages 15-40</td>
<td>68.7</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>2889-3325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ages 15-40</td>
<td>70.7</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>2980-3416</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ages 15-40</td>
<td>61.5</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>2603-3039</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ages 15-40</td>
<td>63.9</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>2705-3141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ages 15-40</td>
<td>66.3</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>2810-3246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ages 15-40</td>
<td>68.7</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>2918-3354</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ages 15-40</td>
<td>70.7</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>3011-3447</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 120: Calculation of Total Energy Expenditure for all plausible body types and ages

1 U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service, USDA National Nutrient Database for Standard Reference, Release 17, 2004, Nutrient Data Laboratory Home Page, <http://www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/foodcomp> All data on the composition of various foods can be accessed using the search engine provided on this page and the specific name given in the text. Individual URLs for compositions of various foods are not available, so individual footnotes are not supplied.

Steven Laurence Kaplan, The Bakers of Paris and the Bread Question 1770-1775 (Durham, 1996) 72-73, 63.


6 Food and Nutrition Board, Institute of Medicine, National Academies, Dietary Reference Intakes (DRIs), Institute of Medicine, 12 Jan. 2005. <http://www.iom.edu/Object.File/Master/21/372/0.pdf>

7 Adrian Goldsworthy, The Roman Army at War (Oxford, 1996) 291. Goldsworthy states this was the smallest daily ration recorded.

8 A bottle of beer, today, is 12 ounces, which is the volume used in determining these values.


10 Frederick C. Lane, “Venetian Merchant Galleys, 1300-1334, Private and Commercial Operation,” Speculum, XXXVIII (1963): 179-205. Compiled nutritional data from this work and notations identifying the primary sources that follow were generously provided by Dr. John Guilmartin.

11 Collecion Navarrete, vol. XII, fol. 371, dto. 100. Corroborating examples may be found in Collecion Navarrete, vol. XII, fol. 313, dto. 84, vol. VIII, fol. 114, dto. 14, and in Coleccion Sanz de Barutell (Simancas), Articulo 5, dto. 2, fol. 5-14, dto. 12, fol. 45-47, dto. 17, fol. 59-62, and Articulo 4, dto. 322, fol. 420-422. Cited in Guilmartin, Gunpowder and Galleys, 223.


13 The rum allocation was usually a part of the standard ration, with wine being used as a substitute only in emergencies. This was fine with the men who much preferred the rum with its higher alcohol content.

14 Approximately 23 percent of these calories came from the 34-fluid ounce daily wine ration. While this rather large amount of wine was the same as that received by the Roman soldier, the Roman legionary received more bread, making the calories received from wine only 13 percent of his diet.

15 Food and Nutrition Board, Institute of Medicine, National Academies, Dietary Reference Intakes (DRIs), Institute of Medicine, 12 Jan. 2005. <http://www.iom.edu/Object.File/Master/21/372/0.pdf>


All the following data in this chart came from the same source, but different sub-sites.

17 Ibid. <http://www.merck.com/mrkshared/mmanual/chapter12/12d.jsp>

18 Ibid. <http://www.merck.com/mrkshared/mmanual/chapter12/12f.jsp>

19 Ibid. <http://www.merck.com/mrkshared/mmanual/chapter12/12b.jsp>

20 Ibid. <http://www.merck.com/mrkshared/mmanual/chapter12/12c.jsp>

21 Ibid. <http://www.merck.com/mrkshared/mmanual/chapter12/12a.jsp>

22 Ibid. <http://www.merck.com/mrkshared/mmanual/chapter12/12e.jsp>

23 Ibid. <http://www.merck.com/mrkshared/mmanual/chapter12/12g.jsp>

24 Ibid. <http://www.merck.com/mrkshared/mmanual/chapter12/12h.jsp>

25 Ibid. <http://www.merck.com/mrkshared/mmanual/chapter12/12i.jsp>

26 Ibid. <http://www.merck.com/mrkshared/mmanual/chapter12/12j.jsp>

27 Ibid. <http://www.merck.com/mrkshared/mmanual/chapter13/3q.jsp>


29 Ibid. <http://www.merck.com/mrkshared/mmanual/chapter13/3k.jsp>


31 Ibid. <http://www.merck.com/mrkshared/mmanual/chapter13/3b.jsp>

Beers and Berkow, _Merck Manual_ <http://www.merck.com/mrkshared/mmanual/section1/chapter3/3m.jsp>


Ibid. 120.

Ibid. 82.

Ibid. 106.

Ibid. 123.

Ibid.


TEE in megajoules can be calculated using the following equation: 

\[ \text{TEE} = 7.377 - (0.073 \times \text{age}) + (0.0806 \times \text{wt}) + (0.0135 \times \text{ht}) - (1.363 \times \text{sex}) \]

where age is in years, weight is in kilograms, height is in centimeters, and sex is zero for men and one for women. One megajoule equals approximately 239 nutritional calories. Vinken, AG, Bathalon, GP, et al. “Equations for predicting the energy requirements of healthy adults aged 18-81 y,” _American Journal of Clinical Nutrition_ 69 (1999) 923.

For references to the age distribution of men in the BSC, see Table 51 in Appendix A.

For references to the height distribution of men in the BSC, see Table 54 in Appendix A.
Primary Sources


Coleccion Navarrete, Museo Naval, Madrid (compiled under the direction of Teniente de Navio Fernandez de Navarrete ca. 1789-95; originally in 44 volumes of which 29 survive along with three additional volumes of reconstituted fragments; Index).

Coleccion Sanz de Barutell (Simancas), Museo Naval, Madrid (compiled under the direction of Teniente de Navio Don Juan Sanz y de Barutell ca. 1789-95; 6 Articulos of from one to four volumes each; Index; also Coleccion Sanz de Barutell (Barcelona), Biblioteca de la Academia Nacional, Madrid, dealing with the maritime affairs of the Kingdom of Aragon prior to the union with Castile).


Secondary Sources


---. “The Statistics of Wages in the United Kingdom During the Last Hundred Years. (Part XI.) Engineering and Shipbuilding. B. Statements of Wages from Non-


Dinter, Elmar Hero or Coward. North Wales, 1985.


---. *Student Study Guide and Workbook History 580.01: European Warfare from the Renaissance through 1870*. Columbus, 2005.


420


---.*The Soldier’s Load and the Mobility of a Nation*. Quantico, 1980.


