

THE LOCAL COMMUNITY AND THE GREAT WAR: ASPECTS OF MILITARY PARTICIPATION

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Sixty years after the Armistice, our knowledge of the impact of the Great War upon those who experienced it is far from complete.¹ In social terms for example, existing research on Britain has concentrated upon the overall impact but this has not been studied in sufficient detail at local level. To consider one particular problem - that of military participation in the war - it is possible that a local perspective might challenge some generally held assumptions upon the nature of enlistment in the British Army during the First World War. What effect did the New Armies have upon the existing Territorial County Associations? What precisely was the response to the Derby Scheme and to conscription? Can the study of that now largely forgotten force, the Volunteer Training Corps, reveal much about the attitude of the public at large towards their defenders? It is the purpose of this article to consider such aspects of the problem of military participation in the context of one English county - Buckinghamshire - and, in so doing, to turn attention back to those long lists of names on every parish memorial.

Before 1914 Buckinghamshire had a strong amateur military tradition. The Yeomanry, formed in 1794, had survived government reduction in 1827 and fought a hard but ultimately unsuccessful battle to retain its two Napoleonic vintage six-pounder artillery pieces in 1876 against the recommendations of the Harris Committee. The latter battle involved appealing to one of the county's more distinguished M.P.'s - the prime minister, Disraeli - with dark threats of the political consequences to the Conservative cause if the Government persisted.² The Militia had been one of the first regiments to volunteer for service in Ireland in 1798 and had served in France in 1814 with the 1st Provisional Battalion. It had received the titles of 'Royal' and 'Kings Own' for the rather less demanding task of guarding George III at his bathing at Weymouth in 1794.³ In November 1914 it was suggested that the possibility be investigated of acquiring the prefix 'Royal' for the Buckinghamshire Battalions of the Territorial Force as the rightful successors of the disbanded Militia. Indeed the very first resolution of the newly constituted County Association in January 1908 had been to condemn the abolition of the Militia.⁴ The County as a whole had deeply regretted the loss of the 14th Foot as the Buckinghamshire Regiment under localisation and territorialisation and the Rifle Volunteers in the County had not only refused absolutely to regard themselves as the 3rd Volunteer Battalion of the Oxfordshire Light Infantry but had clung to the distinctive uniform of a rifle regiment. An attempt was made by the Home Defence Committee of the County Council to have 'Buckinghamshire' added to the title of the Oxfordshire Light Infantry in May 1900 and the matter was raised in the House of Lords by Lord Carrington and in the House of Commons by Walter Carlile, M.P. The resolution of the County Association at its second meeting in February 1908 was that 'Buckinghamshire' should be added to the title of the Regular regiment and, on this occasion, the suggestion was accepted by the War Office.⁵

The County Territorial Force itself fared rather better than many others between 1908 and 1914. The Rifle Volunteers had come to rely heavily upon the employees of the chair-making industry at High Wycombe and the carriage works of the London and North Western Railway at Wolverton. The Volunteer Battalion had been redistributed in 1897 to take advantage of these more favourable recruitment areas and it would appear that relations between auxiliaries and leading employers were generally good. Certainly in 1903 Lord Stalbridge, the Chairman of the L.N.W.R., had agreed to allow the Battalion to join Brodrick's proposed Field Army which implied increased commitments upon Volunteers.⁶ When meeting the Director General of the Territorial Force, Major General Bethune, in November 1913 at a conference in High Wycombe, representatives of the Association praised the co-operation of local employers. They also stressed, however, the need for more concessions towards employers such as preferential government contracts, taxation rebates and exemption of employers from jury service. On their own behalf the Territorial representatives called for separation allowances to be paid to all married men who undertook the summer camp, even if only for a few days.⁷ In 1908 a total of 1013 men transferred to the new Territorial units from the existing Volunteers, Yeomanry and supporting services. The establishment for the new units totalled 1642 men and the actual numbers serving were never less than 84% of establishment between 1908 and 1914 and in both 1909-10 and 1911-12 reached 93%. It is significant, however, that the Association rejected the proposal in 1910 that Territorials should engage for service overseas in common with many other County Associations. On the eve of war the Territorial Reserve stood at only 6 officers and 1 man although the National Reserve stood at 64 officers and 1660 men. These were immediately formed into supernumary companies for railway protection and guarding prisoners of war at Alexandra Park. There was also a small corps of Guides formed by Lt. Col. W. J. Levi in 1912. It was calculated that approximately 9000 Bucks men were already serving in the Armed Forces in July 1914.⁸

The first duty of the County Association in 1914 was, naturally, to mobilise its first line formations – the Royal Bucks Hussars and the Buckinghamshire Battalion – and to proceed to raise the second and third lines. This went reasonably smoothly with the Finance Committee actually admonishing Lt. Col. the Hon. H. Lawson of the Royal Bucks Hussars on 3 September 1914 for ordering uniforms for 128 new recruits for his second line unit without prior permission.⁹ The 2/1st Royal Bucks Hussars was formally constituted on 14 September 1914 and the 2nd Buckinghamshire Battalion on 26 September, the latter being entirely raised, clothed and equipped by the Association. Yet the process was considerably complicated by the competition for recruits as a result of Kitchener's appeal for the first '100,000' on 6 August and for the second '100,000' on 28 August. This is not the place to discuss the reasons for Kitchener's decision to ignore the Territorial Army but it can be said that the work of raising his New Armies, at least in Buckinghamshire, fell in any case upon the existing Territorial organisation simply through the fact that the Regular Army recruiting offices at Aylesbury and High Wycombe and the local depot at Oxford all but succumbed under the rush of recruits.

The special Emergency Committee of the Association considered a request from the War Office on 5 September 1914 to provide alternative accommodation for Kitchener recruits to relieve pressure on the Oxford depot and to hold the men until the War Office could make arrangements to take them in hand. The Committee telegraphed the

Central Committee for Recruiting on 8 September 1914 agreeing to re-open the old Militia barracks at High Wycombe for use by the New Armies.¹⁰ It would appear that the Association took some pride in the unequal comparison between the uniforms and equipment of the 2nd Bucks Battalion, including their DP rifles taken from the Eton College OTC, and the plain clothes and dummy rifles of the Kitchener recruits in the vicinity.¹¹ They were also quick to criticise what they regarded as incompetence at Oxford. Thus, on 14 November 1914, the depot commander, Sir Charles Cuyler was asked to explain a report in the *Bucks Herald* that Bucks recruits were being sent to the Wiltshire Regiment. Similarly, on 28 December 1914 one of the Committee's local recruiting agents complained to the Earl of Buckinghamshire that men from Holmer Green wishing to enlist in the Royal Artillery and Royal Engineers were actually being turned away at Oxford where enlistment was only possible in the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry, and:

it of course makes recruiting in this neighbourhood impossible as the men are only given passes to Oxford and do not care to pay their own fare and lose a days' work as well in going to London¹²

In response Cuyler promised to try and fit every Bucks man where he wished to go. The Association's Recruiting Sub-Committee had itself resolved in November 1914 that all recruits should be given the opportunity to join either the Regular Army or the Territorials as they wished without pressure being applied.¹³ It was clear, however, that the Association did resent the competition. In a report requested by the War Office in March 1925 the Association's secretary, Major General Swann, expressed the considered reflections of the Association upon the events of 1914. They believed that the appeal of Kitchener's Armies had been detrimental to the Territorials for a number of reasons. Firstly, it was widely rumoured that the New Armies would see action before the Territorials; secondly, the New Armies received higher pay than the Territorials; thirdly, the actual 'bringing' money stood at 5s for Regular recruits and only 1s (subsequently 2s) for Territorial recruits. There was also a complaint that the training of the Territorial units should have been undertaken within the county, a view formed by the Association as early as 12 September 1914 when reports were received of inadequate training facilities for the Royal Bucks Hussars at Churn and for the 1st Buckinghamshire Battalion at Chelmsford. The report also concluded that a depot such as Oxford which was merely a 'pillar box' collecting men for onward transmission to yet another depot was a poor advertisement for enlistment.¹⁴

Despite initial enthusiasm it became clear in Bucks as elsewhere that the supply of volunteers was running out for all categories of unit. There was naturally considerable activity through the early months of the war with all recruiting in the county falling under the jurisdiction of the County Recruiting Officer, Captain L. H. Green, appointed by the Association. There were the usual open air recruiting meetings such as that on the village green of Chalfont St. Giles in late August 1914 addressed by three worthies and entertained by the village band resulting in 'nearly forty of the right sort' being enlisted.¹⁵ Some 210 recruits for the Regular Army had been found by 28 August and 1200 by 12 September 1914. Yet as early as 28 August 1914 one recruiting agent, Philip Stevenson of Aston Sandford, was complaining that men from the villages around Haddenham were only just beginning to come in, for:

The Bucks yokels are terribly hard to move. We are waking them up all we can but there is hardly anyone to help in this missionary work¹⁶

Stevenson intended to hold a meeting at Cuddington and another at Haddenham on the 1st September 1914 to strike a blow 'at the apathy and indifference and ignorance' which might 'really open the floodgates to recruiting all round here'. But on 5th November 1914 the County Recruiting Committee received a report from Cuyler at Oxford that the flow of recruits had dropped from 200 per day to only 25 per day at a time when at least 500 were still required from Bucks to complete Kitchener battalions. A suggestion by the Marquis of Lincolnshire to raise a new and separate Buckinghamshire Regiment with a 'Carrington' company raised by himself, a 'Hampden' company raised by the Earl of Buckinghamshire and a 'Desborough' company raised at Slough by Lord Desborough was briefly considered but rejected. It was agreed, however, that three new area Sub-Committees must comb the county more thoroughly.¹⁷ By 18th January 1915 the County Recruiting Committee calculated that from a male population of approximately 107,000 there ought to be approximately 25,000 men available but those employed in the County's numerous railway works, the foundries around Chesham and the boot manufacturing districts around Olney would probably have to be excluded. It was, moreover, impossible to calculate how many men had travelled to London or Woolwich to enlist. A total of 2,105 men had enlisted in the Regular Army between August and October 1914 and 558 men since. A further 2,358 men had enlisted in the Territorials between August and October and approximately 700 since. In all, this accounted for approximately 5% of the total male population and only 20% of those considered eligible. The Committee concluded that the limit of voluntary enlistments in the County had already been reached, a view echoed by the Mid-Bucks Sub-Committee two days earlier which had recognised that the drain of manpower from the land was at its absolute limit.¹⁸ A number of new ventures was attempted including a march through the County in the wake of the sinking of the Lusitania in May 1915, a 'smart' detachment including the band of the Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry camping at selected villages and towns en route and showing films. By 20 June 1915 it was calculated that 2,640 men had enlisted in the Regular Army since August 1914, 3,291 in the Territorial Army and 270 in the National Reserve totalling 6,201 recruits, some 1,163 of whom had come in since 31st March 1915.¹⁹ A vigorous house to house visitation campaign had begun in November 1914 and in May 1915 this was supplemented by printing special window badges for householders to display indicating that members of the family had enlisted. By October 1915, for example, it was reported that the village of Long Crendon displayed 94 Army window badges and 40 Navy window badges.²⁰ Publishing the names of those enrolling had been introduced for the Special Constabulary in September 1914 and in October 1915 the Association's Chairman, Tonman Mosely (later Lord Anslow), suggested a roll of honour to record the names of all those who had joined the Armed Forces voluntarily. But this was really an acknowledgement of failure to produce more men. It had been decided in August 1915 that public meetings simply no longer attracted fit men and that they must be visited in their homes or at work. This realisation coincided with the introduction of the Derby Scheme, the basis of which was the kind of house to house visitation which the Association had already concluded the

most effective means of staving off conscription.

The object of Lord Derby's Registration Scheme introduced in July 1915 was to persuade men to attest their willingness to enlist in the event of conscription with a pledge that no married men would be called until all single men had been called up. As recommended the canvass would be carried out through the auspices of local political party organisations who were fully cognisant with this kind of operation. In Bucks the canvass began in late October in response to Derby's request of 16 October 1915. Fortunately, detailed records survive for the Mid-Bucks area where the canvass was organised by the Agent and Secretary of the Mid-Bucks Liberals, Edward Lacey.²¹ It was estimated at the start that some 5,000 men remained in the County who were not required by industry or agriculture. By 17th November 1915 Lacey could report to the Earl of Buckinghamshire, who chaired the Mid-Bucks Recruiting Sub-Committee, that he had received 5,789 cards of which he had so far analysed 2,639, a total that rose steadily from day to day in one way or another. Lacey's interim report dated 4 December 1915 indicated, not unexpectedly, that married men were holding back:

	Single Men	Married Men
Enlisted for immediate service	481	255
Attached to Army Reserve	92	122
Promised to enlist	79	46
Definite promise to join B Reserve	104	226
Declined to enlist for 'good' reasons	57	352
Refused permission to enlist by employers	70	132
No reason for refusal to enlist	372	631

Lacey's final report dated 16th December 1914 was as follows:—

Enlisted or promised to enlist	2,642
Rejected as medically unfit	379
Said they were unfit	487
War workers exemption	118
Government workers exemption	77
Foreigners	34
Dead	6
Left area	200
Refused permission to enlist by employers	188
Declined to enlist	1,521

Thus in the Mid-Bucks area, one of three sub-Districts in the County, approximately 46% of those canvassed enlisted or promised to do so while approximately 28% had one reason or another for exemption and approximately 26% declined absolutely to enlist. Over the country as a whole, while approximately 2½ million attested, over 300,000 single fit men declined or approximately 14% and in December 1915 the Government prepared its first conscription bill applying to single men between the ages of 18 and 41. With various criticisms of the measure, resulting largely from the non-fulfilment of Asquith's pledge that no married men would be called before all single men, conscription for all men between the ages of 18 and 41 was introduced in May 1916.

With conscription the nature of the duties of the County Association changed since the recruiting organisation was wholly taken over by the War Office. It became impossible to ensure that Bucks men were posted to Bucks units. One indication of this is the evidence of the casualty rolls of the 2nd Bucks Battalion. At its first major attack at Lavertie on 19th July 1916 the Battalion lost 108 men of whom 77 or approximately 71% were from Bucks parishes. By comparison in its second major attack during the war at Wiltje in the Ypres Salient on 22nd August 1917 it lost 115 men of whom only 51 or 44% were now from Bucks parishes.²² The Association was reduced to virtual impotence in its attempt to retain control of its original units. In April 1916, for example, the Association complained of rumours that first line Territorial battalions would be used for drafts if they were reduced by battle casualties. In October 1916 they attempted to ensure that the 3rd/1st Buckinghamshire Battalion, raised as a reserve battalion in late 1914 would wear the badges of the Buckinghamshire Battalion and not the badge of the Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry. In October 1917 the Association opposed the closure of the 152nd Territorial Depot 'on the grounds of the unique position of this County in respect to the Buckinghamshire Battalion, which alone of the Battalions of the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry, is a representative Buckinghamshire Corps'. In March 1918 there was much disquiet at the amalgamation of the 2nd Bucks Battalion and the Association managed to extract a promise from the Adjutant General that the War Office would not interfere with the 1st Battalion. Given this continuing resentment at slights to the County, it is not surprising that 1919 should find the Association both insisting that a separate Regular regiment be raised in the County to bear its name nor demanding a special letter from the War Office officially recognising the services of the 2nd Bucks Battalion, having been raised entirely under the auspices of the Association.²³

Nevertheless, the Association did have a continuing role to play after 1916 in administering the Volunteer Training Corps, ensuring the welfare of its service men and handling appeals against conscription through local advisory committees. It soon became apparent that men who had balked at voluntary enlistment would resist compulsion as well. In January 1916 Tonman Mosley had found the response to the Derby Registration Scheme 'most creditable':

but in South Bucks it was reported that in a few districts a considerable number of young men are still hanging back. They will surely come forward voluntarily sooner than be impressed under the new act?²⁴

He was in error. By 22nd January 1916 there had already been claims for exemption in the county and Captain Green, now employed as the War Office Recruiting Agent in the County, continued to make regular reports to the Association of the results. Between February and April 1916, for example, there were 2,058 claims for exemption from men of whom 1,271 were given temporary exemption, 137 conditional exemption, 110 absolute exemption and 540 dismissed.²⁵ In May 1916 alone there were 1,393 claims of which only 307 were dismissed but in fact the Association was genuinely worried by the drain of manpower from the land. In May 1916 Green attended a conference of Appeal Military Representatives of No. 7 District and raised the fears of the Mid Bucks Advisory Committee that the agricultural work force was at risk.

The Committee had tabled a resolution that it recognised:

the urgent need of men for the Army but at the same time views with alarm the serious depletion in the number of men who work on the land and in view of the grave loss of production caused thereby urges that in future no more unmarried men of over 35 years of age shall be taken from the land²⁶

In August 1916 Green called upon his representatives on the appeals tribunals to thoroughly investigate the cases of all single men called before the tribunals with the exception of agricultural labourers who should not be pressed because of the harvest that year. Between 4th August and 29th December 1916 tribunals in the county considered a total of 11,940 claims for exemption of which 2,695 were refused, 645 adjourned, 477 starred, 261 given absolute exemption, 6,546 temporary exemption, 94 temporary 'final' exemption, and 1,200 conditional exemption. Between January 1917 and April 1917 the percentage of cases dismissed varied from 3½% in High Wycombe to 45% in Marlow. The average for 22 separate tribunals based on rejecting the claims of 656 men out of 3,273 considered, was 19.4%.²⁷ This variation was, however, to concern the Volunteer Training Corps which although voluntary at first increasingly took men who had been conditionally exempted from the Army.

In fact a study of the Volunteer Training Corps and other auxiliary forces raised in the County between 1914 and 1918 such as the Special Constabulary is as valuable as Army and Territorial enlistment figures in analysing the extent of participation in the war effort. The Special Constabulary comprised some 4,120 men by 23rd September 1914 with 31 companies in the towns and larger villages under distinguished 'Captains' such as Lord Addington, the Earl of Orkney, Lord Denbigh, the Earl of Buckinghamshire, General Sir George Higginson and the Marquis of Lincolnshire. The men enrolled wore no uniform but carried a warrant card and a truncheon or night stick. Philip Stevenson, who was Captain of the Aston Sandford Company, regarded their proposed role of guarding tunnels, viaducts and bridges as highly dangerous against 'armed secret agents'. He had managed to raise about 40 men from the village of Haddenham which had about 1,400 inhabitants which he regarded as 'ridiculously inadequate' but he had hopes of raising more although he was careful to exclude 'anybody of an age or qualified to be a soldier'.²⁸ Those who joined the Special Constabulary, which was also given a role in the event of invasion of handling refugees and the evacuation of livestock, appear to have been mainly middle class. A roll of members of A Company of the 3rd Bucks Volunteer Regiment in November 1916, for example, lists 35 Volunteers who were also Special Constables and of these 15 were farmers and 6 professional men.²⁹ The exact status of Volunteers who were also Special Constables was by no means clear since the Chief Constable, Major Otway Mayne, was anxious to secure priority use of Special Constables in the event of an emergency. Mayne wrote to the Under Secretary of State in April 1916 seeking confirmation but Kitchener indicated in the Lords in May 1916 that military duties of Volunteers would take precedence over duties as Special Constables. In March 1917 Mayne announced that he was now prepared to accept the resignation of Special Constables who were also Volunteers and finally in June 1917 the War Office ruled that a man could be either a Volunteer or a Special Constable but not both.³⁰

The Volunteer Training Corps was in no small way sponsored by two prominent landowners in the County, Lord Desborough and the Marquis of Lincolnshire who became Lord Lieutenant on the death of Lord Rothschild in 1915. As Lord Lieutenant, Rothschild had appealed on 9th December 1914 for men to join the proposed Volunteer 'Commandos' as part of the County's preparations to meet the threat of invasion. Volunteers were to be raised in six classes – A, B, C, D, P, R. The A, B and C classes represented men over, of and under military age respectively who could march at least 5 miles, see to shoot with glasses if necessary, hear well and could prove themselves free from disease; the D class was for unfit men; the P class for those who were also Special Constables; and the R class for men employed on war work such as the railways who would probably not be available in the event of invasion. The object was to assist in recruiting the Army and Territorial Force, to teach elements of drill to those unable through age or disability to join the Army and to teach musketry on miniature rifle ranges. Three battalions were initially envisaged – a Northern Battalion centred on Bletchley, Newport Pagnell, Stony Stratford and Wolverton; a Mid-Bucks Battalion centred on Aylesbury, Chesham, Princes Risborough and Wendover; and a Southern Battalion centred on Slough, Gerrards Cross, and High Wycombe. Officers would be appointed by the Lord Lieutenant but the accepted military ranks and titles would not be used. On 10th April 1915 it was resolved to form a second Southern battalion, designated the 4th Battalion, taking in High Wycombe, Gerrards Cross, Marlow and the Chalfonts while the 3rd Battalion took in Eton, Slough, Burnham, Taplow and Wooburn Green. The four battalions were affiliated to the newly established Central Association of Volunteer Training Corps, formed by Lord Desborough and recognised by the War Office on 19 November 1914, on the condition that a military adviser was appointed (General Sir O'Moore Creagh). Every recruit received a brassard and signed an undertaking that he was not using membership of the Volunteers as an excuse for not enlisting in the Regular Army. The initial conditions of service were attendance at 40 one hour drills and attainment of 2nd class musketry. If a recruit failed to attend 12 drills in six months he had to resign.³¹ In October 1915 the Marquis of Lincolnshire tabled a Volunteer Bill to enable the Government officially to accept offers from Volunteers and in March 1916 the services of the Volunteers were formally accepted under the Volunteer Act of 1863 with the Central Association passing under the authority of the Director of the Territorial Force under the new guise of the Central Association of Volunteer Regiments.³²

In Bucks financial assistance was received from the Marquis of Lincolnshire, Lord Bolton, Lord Devonport and Lord Hambleden with Waldorf Astor and Lord Rothschild providing 2,000 Snider and Martini rifles. In November 1915 the 1st Battalion stood at 687 men; the 2nd Battalion at 882 men; the 3rd Battalion at 563 men; and the 4th Battalion at 619 men; in all a total of 2,751 Volunteers. An indication of the social composition and age range can be gauged from the nominal rolls of two companies in the 3rd Battalion for the period from July to December 1916. The average age of 211 men in A (Brill) Company was 30.5 years but the largest number of men were between 40 and 50 years of age – (35 in all) with 13 men over 50 years of age and one man over 60 years of age. Of these men, 47 were farmers, 9 professional men, 5 lower middle class of one kind or another, 51 tradesmen, 8 in service industries, 16 craftsmen and 66 labourers. The average age of 279 men in B (Olney) Company was 32.3 years with again the largest proportion (46) being between the ages of 40 and 50 years

though some 34 men were under the age of 20 years. In this boot and show manufacturing area the social composition was 21 farmers, 14 professional men, 60 tradesmen, 9 lower middle class occupations, 12 service industries, 28 craftsmen, 51 agricultural or other labourers and 84 in the shoe and boot trade.³³ The problem, however, was maintaining interest amongst the local population.

In May 1915, for example, the 70 year old Sir Launcelot Aubrey-Fletcher wrote to the Earl of Buckinghamshire who commanded the 2nd Battalion to offer his services, as the response in the neighbourhood of Wendover, Ellesborough, Kimble and Stoke Mandeville had been poor. In August 1915 Captain Hickman complained that the Chesham platoon of the same battalion had only a dozen loyal supporters:

The remainder if they do attend at all do so from inclination rather than duty: and the proportion of members to inhabitants is dismally small and disheartening to them³⁴

Hickman reported that at his last parade only 39 out of 67 members in Chesham had attended while 46 out of 47 members from Chesham Bois had been present. By the following year the Earl of Buckinghamshire was receiving numerous reports from his company and platoon commanders of the difficulties being encountered in rural areas. In July 1916, Captain J. Tarver of the Wing Company who was Lord Rothschild's estate agent at Ascot, warned of the

difficulties of bringing squads in scattered villages (some ten miles distant) up to that pitch which can best be attained by men in easy reach of company headquarters. The difficulty is accentuated by the number of recruits now coming in, some of whom will only be with us a short time. In a company like mine there must always be, I fear, about one third of the strength behind the others in general efficiency.³⁵

In October 1916 Major General Swann, the Association's secretary, asked the Earl for his views on the new proposals by Lord Derby and Field Marshal Lord French to compel Volunteers to undertake 20 drills per month in return for a capitation grant for uniform and equipment. The Earl replied that such an arrangement was impracticable for his area and suggested instead that there should be 16 drills for recruits and 8 drills for trained men in towns and 8 recruit drills and 4 drills for trained men in villages where the local recruit was likely to have had more than enough physical exercise in his working day. The Acting Adjutant, R. J. Thomas who in civilian life was the County Surveyor agreed:

A farm labourer working seven days a week from early morning until late in the evening at a distance of several miles from the nearest drill centre could not possibly attend four or five nights a week nor could efficient instructors *unpaid* be found to drill them³⁶

Similar problems continued to recur in 1917. In February Tarver reported that it was impossible for his company to carry out as many as 14 recruit drills and 10 drills for efficient each month due to the scattered nature of his unit. Some 50% of his men

were employed in agriculture, the remainder in trade or business but detachments were 10 – 12 miles apart and there were not enough Non-Commissioned Officers to instruct the men. His officers included a vicar, farmer, solicitor and an estate manager who for want of petrol simply could not get around all the detachments. In June Tarver complained that during hay time and harvest it would be impossible for 70% of his men to do their proper drills and indeed in the County as a whole in July 1917 those Volunteers in the A, B and C classes engaged in agriculture were relieved from attending half the number of prescribed monthly drills during July, August and September.³⁷

Apart from the problems of location it is also possible that the uninspiring nature of Volunteer duties may have played some part in the declining interest. The 2nd Battalion was assigned to guard the LNWR line from the Hertfordshire border to Peterborough in the event of invasion with the 1st and 4th Battalion allotted to the London District and the 3rd Battalion to Northern Command. There were occasional exercises such as guarding 19 miles of the Marylebone line by the 2nd Battalion in May 1916, the guarding of seven ammunition railway waggons overnight at Leighton Buzzard in August 1916 or the guarding of prisoners of war cutting wood at Windsor in April 1916. There was the additional task of manning observation posts at night for Zeppelins but the only real excitement was an inspection by Lord French in November 1916 and the call for Volunteers for special service companies to serve on the eastern coast as a result of drafts being sent to France from home defence battalions to stem the German advance in the 1918 offensives. A total of 5 officers and 63 men were attached to the 2/25 London Regiment at Wickham Market between 29 June and 28 September 1918 despite the hay harvest and the lack of casual labour which prevented many men from being released.³⁸

A worse problem was, however, the increasing use to which the Volunteers were put as a dumping ground for those conditionally discharged by tribunals. The Earl of Buckinghamshire had welcomed this in June 1916 suggesting that such men should be required to attend 4 compulsory drills a month but in fact it was found that the inclusion of conditionally exempted men lowered morale. In January 1917, for example, the 2nd Battalion numbered 990 men of whom 461 had been sent by tribunals. In February 1917 Tarver's company had about 30 – 40 out of a total of 200 men who had come by way of tribunals and in April 1919 the 3rd Battalion, by now renamed the 5th Volunteer Battalion of the Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry, had 309 out of its 544 men sent from tribunals.³⁹ A case in point was the Chesham company of the 2nd Battalion where it will be recalled interest had been lacking as early as August 1915. In December 1917 R. Yates of Amersham Grammar School wrote to the Earl of Buckinghamshire on the reasons why Chesham had not wholeheartedly embraced the Volunteers. He put this down to the 'peculiarity' of the inhabitants and their jealousy at anything which had originated outside the town – one NCO had seriously suggested absence at parades was due to the instructors being from Halton Camp near Aylesbury. There had been no assistance from the town as a whole with the Urban District Council refusing any grants to company funds and the local tribunal proving hostile by refusing to insist on conditionally exempted men joining the corps. Where the tribunal had made this provision they had then ignored the reports of Captain Hickman on men whom they had sent to the unit who now refused to attend drills. Yates considered that even a public meeting would not now rectify the situation as fit men would not attend and he concluded that 'when these two representative

bodies both slight the Force, the rest of the town naturally takes little interest'. The problem was evidently never solved since a letter to the *Bucks Examiner* from 'A Man in the Street' in August 1918 complained that only 15 out of 100 men had attended the last parade and the local tribunal would still not take its responsibilities seriously. Interestingly enough, this lack of interest in Chesham may well be due to the 'peculiarities' of the inhabitants. Chesham had been a centre of Lollard martyrdom in the Fourteenth Century and of Leveller activity in the Civil War. Its strong non-conformism and anti-militarism was marked in the Napoleonic Wars when in 1808 its Yeomanry troop was regarded as being deficient in numbers, efficiency and discipline. In 1860 it had failed altogether to raise a Volunteer Corps to the disgust of Lord Chesham who regretted the inhabitants had been 'so slack in coming forward'. To be fair to Chesham, however, it must be said that a new company had been added to the 1st Buckinghamshire Battalion in 1910 as a result of interest shown in the area and whereas only 50% of the Battalion as a whole had volunteered for service overseas when given the opportunity at Chelmsford in August 1914, the Chesham section 'came up well, twenty four out of thirty two volunteering'.⁴⁰

Generally, interest in the Volunteers declined throughout the 2nd Battalion area in 1917 and 1918 and the number of men listed as not completing even five drills per month was never less than 142 between October 1917 and May 1918. In May 1918 Tarver was complaining that he rarely got more than 50 men at parades especially with the introduction of a new Military Service Act that had given the backbone of his unit – men between 43 and 50 years of age – the opportunity to plead exemption. The decline in interest over the county as a whole between 1917 and 1918 was put down by the Association's Annual Report to the increased protection afforded men by exemption certificates issued for agricultural and munitions work, by the raising of physical standards and by the raising of the military service age. By August 1918 the 3rd, 4th and 5th Volunteer Battalions of the Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry, as the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Battalions were styled from July 1918 onwards, totalled 78 officers and 2,341 men.⁴¹

On 3rd January 1918, at a meeting of the General Purposes Committee of the County Territorial Association, the Marquis of Lincolnshire as Lord Lieutenant accepted from Lord Anslow as Chairman of the Association the Buckinghamshire Roll of Honour proposed by Anslow in October 1915. This recorded the names of 19,450 men who had joined HM Forces voluntarily before June 1916 including 34 officers and 372 petty officers, NCO's and men who had fallen, and 786 officers and 18,155 petty officers, NCO's and men who were still serving. In receiving the roll, Lincolnshire spoke of the 3,000 Volunteers, 4,000 Special Constables and those employed on the land and in local industries who had equally played their part.⁴² In a single village like Whitchurch with approximately 622 inhabitants in 156 households, 97 men had served or were serving in the Armed Forces by February 1918 of whom 9 were already dead and 3 invalided.⁴³ This response of almost 19,500 recruits for the Armed Forces and 7,000 auxiliaries was an impressive total for a County that in 1911 had had a population of 219,551 persons. But these figures concealed the tremendous problems faced by the Association in persuading many of these men to enlist after the winter of 1914 – 15 or, in the case of the auxiliaries, to continue to serve once the immediate threat of invasion had passed. It was also less than the casualties of a single day's fighting on the Somme. Above all, the Great War showed that the amateur military tradition, like

patriotism, was no longer enough in face of the challenge of modern industrial total war.

1. This article stems from the 'Call to Arms' exhibition at the Bucks County Museum from Nov. 1978 to Jan. 1979 commemorating the sixtieth anniversary of the armistice and from two stimulating papers read at the 'British Army in the Great War' conference at RMA, Sandhurst in November 1978 and the subsequent discussion of them – these were 'Kitchener's Armies' by Mr. Peter Simkins of the Imperial War Museum and 'The Leeds Rifles in the Great War' by Mrs. Pat Morris of the University of Leeds.
2. Correspondence on the artillery issue can be found in Bucks Record Office (hereafter BRO) *Fremantle Mss D/FR Box 134/4* and in the Disraeli Papers at Hughenden, Bucks (in the care of the National Trust) B/XX/Ha/113
3. PRO WO 68/242 Record of Service of the Royal Bucks Kings Own Militia
4. BRO *Territorial Army Collection* (hereafter TAC) Bundle 2, Minutes of Territorial Association 10.1.1908
5. Ibid, TAC Box 15 'Personal Recollections of the Bucks Volunteers' by Colonel Owen Wethered, p. 24; *Fremantle Mss D/FR Box 169* Mins. of Home Defence Committee, 10.5.1900; TAC Bundle 2 Mins. of TA, 6.2.1908
6. Ibid, TAC Box 15 'Memoirs' of Colonel Alfred Gilbey, chap XI, p. 2
7. Ibid, TAC Bundle 3(a) Mins. of a conference at Town Hall, High Wycombe, 14.11.1913
8. Major General J. C. Swann, *The Citizen Soldiers of Buckinghamshire, 1795–1926* (Aylesbury 1926), p. 43; BRO TAC Box 3 Draft Mss of Citizen Soldiers (subsequently much reduced for the final published version due to financial reasons), p. 90–4; TAC Bundle 5 Annual Reports of the Bucks TA *passim*
9. BRO TAC Bundle 1 Mins. of Finance Committee, 3.9.1914
10. Ibid, TAC Bundle 4 Mins. of Emergency Committee, 5.9.1914
11. Major General J. C. Swann, *The 2nd Bucks Battalion* (Aylesbury 1926), p. 4
12. BRO TAC Bundle 4 Mins. of Emergency Committee, 14.11.1914; Box 8 File 'Recruiting', Campbell to Buckinghamshire, 28.12.1914
13. Ibid, TAC Bundle 4 Mins. of Recruiting Committee, 5.11.1914
14. Ibid, TAC Bundle 2 Swann to War Office, 13.3.1925
15. Ibid, TAC Box 8 Gurney to Buckinghamshire, 31.8.1914
16. Ibid, TAC Box 9 'County Emergency Arrangements', Stevenson to Buckinghamshire, 28.8.1914
17. Ibid, TAC Bundle 4 Mins. of Recruiting Committee, 5.11.1914
18. Ibid, Mins. of Recruiting Committee, 18.1.1915
19. Ibid, Mins. of Recruiting Committee, 10.5.1915; Bundle 5 Annual Report 1914–15
20. Ibid, Mins. of Recruiting Committee, 21.10.1915
21. Ibid, TAC Box 8 File 'Recruiting'
22. Swann, *2nd Bucks Battalion*, op. cit., p. 30–8. The Battalion only arrived in France in late May 1916 with the 61st Division. The next highest casualty list for a single day after 19 July 1916 and 22 August 1917 was an attack near St. Quentin on 2 April 1917 in which 9 men were killed.
23. BRO TAC Bundle 3(a) Mins. of General Purpose Committee for 6.4.1916, 5.10.1916, 4.10.1916, 2.1.1919 and 6.2.1919; also Bundle 2 Mins. of TA for 7.3.1918
24. Ibid, TAC Box 11, Tonman Mosley to Buckinghamshire, 31.1.1916
25. Ibid, TAC Box 11
26. Ibid, Draft resolution by Captain Green, May 1916 and Green to Military Representatives, 2.6.1916
27. Ibid, TAC Box 10 File 'National Service' for tribunal statistics
28. Ibid, TAC Box 9 File 'Earl of Buckinghamshire's Arrangements', List of Special Constables, 23.9.1914 and Stevenson to Buckinghamshire, 28.8.1914
29. Ibid, TAC Box 9 Nominal Roll of 3rd Bucks Volunteer Regiment

30. Ibid, *TAC* Box 10 File 'B', Mayne to Under Secretary of State, 29.4.1916; Box 11 File 'Q', Marquis of Lincolnshire to Buckinghamshire, 31.5.1916; Bundle 2 Mins. of TA, 1.3.1917; Box 10 File 'Adjutant', Bland to Buckinghamshire, 16.6.1917
31. Ibid, *TAC* Box 9 Standing Orders of the Bucks Volunteer Training Corps, 26.3.1915; *Bucks Advertiser*, 15.5.1915; *Volunteer Training Corps Gazette*, 13.11.1915, p. 376 and 20.11.1915, p. 393
32. Ibid, *TAC* Box 11 File 'R'
33. Ibid, *TAC* Box 9
34. Ibid, *TAC* Box 11 Aubrey-Fletcher to Buckinghamshire, 17.5.1915 and Hicks to Buckinghamshire, 3.8.1915
35. Ibid, *TAC* Box 10 File 'B', Tarver to Buckinghamshire, 24.7.1916
36. Ibid, Buckinghamshire to Swann, 24.10.1916 and Thomas to Buckinghamshire, 25.10.1916
37. Ibid, *TAC* Box 10, Tarver to Buckinghamshire, 24.2.1917; Bland to Buckinghamshire, 18.6.1917; and Cholmondely to Buckinghamshire, 6.7.1917.
38. Ibid, *TAC* Box 10 File 'B' Battalion Orders, 28.5.1916 and 11.8.1916; File 'POWs' Buckinghamshire to Somerville, 27.4.1916; Box 3 Draft of Citizen Soldiers; pp. 119
39. Ibid, *TAC* Box 3 Draft 'Citizen Soldiers', p. 118; Box 10 *passim*; Box 9 Return of 5th Volunteer Battalion, 30.4.1919
40. Ibid, *TAC* Box 10 File 'Adjutant' Yates to Buckinghamshire, 3.12.1917; *Bucks Examiner*, 16.8.1916. For Napoleonic Wars see BRO *Clayton Mss* D/CE/Add J, 3 and 13; for 1860 see *TAC* Box 14 'Amersham Correspondence'; Lionel Crouch, *Duty and Service: Letters from the Front* (Privately printed, Aylesbury, 1917, p. 24)
41. BRO *TAC* Box 10 *passim*; Bundle 5 Annual Report, 1917-18
42. *Bucks Herald*, 5.1.1918
43. H. J. Anstruther, *Roll of Honour of Whitchurch, Bucks* (Privately printed, Aylesbury, February 1918).