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**White mutiny:  
the Bengal Europeans, 1825-75,  
a study in military social history**

**Peter Alan Stanley**

**A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
of The Australian National University  
March 1993**

This thesis is an original work

Bob Stanley  
10 March 1993

**In memory of**

**Peter Milne**

**(1957-1981)**

**Scholar and blagard**

## Acknowledgments

This thesis would not have been attempted, let alone completed, without Michael McKernan's encouragement and support, offering patronage in its noblest form. Iain McCalman proved to be a model supervisor, trusting enough to allow independence while offering invaluable guidance. Both provided standards of historical judgement and scholarship worthy of emulation.

I acknowledge with gratitude the sponsorship of the Australian War Memorial, and particularly successive directors, Mr Keith Pearson, AO, and Mr Brendon Kelson, who approved awards under its Post-graduate Research Assistance Scheme.

Within the Memorial I owe special debts to many colleagues. Within the Historical Research Section, to Peter Londey, who in my absence capably performed my job and gracefully relinquished it on my return, and who patiently played Ariadne in the labyrinth of Word for windows; to Richard Reid for last-minute research, to Margaret Thompson for her rigour and to Jenny Bell for sound advice. Within the Memorial; I appreciate the help of Neil Godfrey, who gave generously of his graphic skills; and of staff librarians Rosemary Semple and Keryn Cobden, and acknowledge all those who both took a friendly interest in my work or forbore when it intruded upon my time and concentration.

I am grateful for the assistance of the following institutions: Ames Library, University of Minnesota, particularly Mr Donald Clay Johnson; Australian Defence Force Academy; British Library; Brynmor Jones Library, University of Hull; Cambridgeshire County Records Office; Cambridge South Asian Archive, particularly Dr Lionel Carter; Dorset County Library, Dover Library, Essex Record Office; 15th/19th The King's Royal Hussars Museum; Government of Pakistan Archives; Hampshire Records Office; India Office Library and Records, particularly Dr Richard Bingle, Mr Ian Baxter, Mr A.J. Farrington, Ms Lydia Seager, Mr Salim Quraishi and Mr Tim Thomas; Kent County Archives Office; Library of Congress; Macquarie University; Melbourne University; Ministry of Defence Library, London; Mitchell Library, Glasgow; Mitchell Library, Sydney; National Archives of India; National Archives of Ireland; National Army Museum, particularly Dr Peter Boyden and the long-suffering Mrs Marion Harding and Miss C.M. Wright; National Library of Australia; National Library of India; National Library of Scotland; particularly Ms J.F. Russell; National Portrait Gallery; Public Record Office; Public Record Office of Northern Ireland; Punjab Archives; Royal Artillery Institution, particularly its Director, Brigadier K.A. Timbers; Royal Archives, Windsor; Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts; Royal Northumberland Fusiliers Museum; School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London; Scottish Record Office; Scottish United Service Museum, particularly Mrs Ruth Wilson; 17th/21st Lancers Museum; State Library of

New South Wales; State Library of South Australia; State Library of Victoria; Staffordshire Regiment Museum, Lichfield; University of Durham, particularly Dr Joe Fewster of the Prior's Kitchen; University of Edinburgh; University of Sydney; University of Southampton; University of Western Australia; Victoria Barracks Museum, Sydney; West Sussex Records Office; West Yorkshire Archives.

I am grateful to the following for permission to reproduce illustrations; to the Director of the National Army Museum, Mr Ian Robertson, for illustrations 1, 6a-d, 10, 13, 14 and 17 a & b; to the Director of the India Office Library and Records, Dr Richard Bingle, for illustrations 9a, 16a and 19; and to the National Portrait Gallery for illustration 18.

Some preliminary research was undertaken with the assistance of a Menzies Scholarship awarded by the Australia-Britain Society in 1987, which I acknowledge with gratitude.

Having spent an enjoyable and productive year in the Department of History of the Faculty of Arts at the Australian National University, it is my pleasure to thank Mr Bill Craven and the department's staff, Shirley Bradley, Marian Robson and Maree Beer. I am particularly grateful for the accommodation and writing facilities provided by Mr Craven's predecessor, Mr Ian Hancock. Dr John Tillotson proved to be a helpful post-graduate convenor. Kevin Cowan and Claudia Erle of the Geography Cartographic Unit, ANU provided valuable cartographic advice and facilities.

In the course of writing the thesis I have called variously for advice, guidance, assistance and support from many individuals, including: Dr Richard Barz, Dr Joan Beaumont, Ms Ross Beeby, Dr Brian Bond, Dr J.M. Bourne, Dr Ian Britain, Prof. Wayne J. Broehl, jnr, Ms Jane Buckingham, Mr Peter Burness, Dr Peter Burroughs, Dr R.A. Cage, Mr David Collyer, Dr Bryan Egan, Dr Eric Fry, Mrs Enid Fuhr, Mr Chris Hawes, Dr Tony Heathcote, Mr Alec Hill, Prof. Ken Inglis, Ms Veronica James, Dr John Mackenzie, Dr Robin McLachlan, Mr Michael Maclagan, Mr Samir Majumdar, Dr Peter Marshall, Mr Victor Neuburg, Dr Doug Peers, Mr David Perrott, Ms Sue Rickard, Dr S.A. Rizvi, Dr Barry Smith, Dr Edward Spiers, Mr Brian Stevens, Dr Hew Strachan, Ms Josephine Swannie, Mrs E.F. Thomson, Ms Genevieve Thompson, Dr Jim Walvin, Mr S.P.G. Ward, and Mr Craig Wilcox: thanks to all.

Last, but most importantly, having in the course of researching this thesis spent long months away from Mary-Ann and Claire, I have become aware in more than the academic sense of what Sergeant Samuel Roaks's sweetheart called the 'pains of sepparetion'.

## **Abstract**

In this thesis I seek to connect the military and social history of mid-Victorian Britain through a study of the East India Company's Bengal European regiments and their demise following the 'white mutiny' of 1859-60. I work from the contention that military and social history have been imperfectly integrated, and seek throughout to demonstrate the connections between the culture of the European force in itself, and their culture as the expression of aspects of the societies from which its members derived.

The thesis is structured in four parts, based on concepts adapted from criticism of the work of E.P. Thompson. 'Culture' shows how the officers and men of the Bengal Europeans in the thirty years preceding the 1857 rebellion constituted a distinct community (the composition, values and expectations of which differed from those of the Queen's army) which was at the same time rooted in aspects of contemporary British society. 'Conflict' discusses how this community reacted to the Indian rebellion of 1857-58, and how its culture both determined its performance in battle and ensured its survival and expansion when an antagonistic Queen's army sought its suppression. 'Power' examines in detail the soldiers' protest of 1859, demonstrating how the men acted in accordance with the force's culture, and how critical features of contemporary society - including 'populist' understandings of rights, occupational experience and ethnicity - shaped the outcome of the protest. 'Transformation' traces the effects of the protest, particularly the Bengal Europeans' incorporation into the Queen's army, and how officers and men accepted or resisted the suppression of their distinctive culture.

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## Notes

### Length

The text of this thesis, counted in accordance with the Australian National University's Rules, (which specify that a doctoral thesis shall not exceed 100 000 words) consists of 98 600 words.

### Quotations

All direct quotations have been rendered verbatim, with minor amendments for clarity.

### Citations

The standard Oxford system of citation is used, subject to several qualifications. Only initial words and proper nouns are rendered in capitals in the titles of books. Names include first and surname where possible, irrespective of the use of initials, titles or decorations.

### Biographical notes

In emulation of Charles Bean's official history, Australia in the war of 1914-18, I have attempted to provide biographical notes on all individuals mentioned in the text, in marginal notes usually located at the most relevant point. The notes usually relate to the period 1857-60; Frederick Roberts, for example, being described as a lieutenant of the Bengal Horse Artillery rather than 'Field Marshal'. Other individuals are identified in brackets in footnotes. Due to the technicalities of a word processing program almost as complex as the Bengal Army's pension regulations, the inclusion of these marginal biographical notes often leaves blank spaces on preceding pages. Some of these spaces have been filled by illustrations or tables, but others leave otherwise unaccountable gaps, for which I apologise.

### Regimental titles

The subtleties of regimental nomenclature often bemuse the uninitiated or uninterested. Since those of some European units altered four times over the period 1825-75, regimental titles will conform to those obtaining for most of the two periods involved; before and after the European force's amalgamation with the Queen's army in 1861. See Appendix F for details.

### Spelling

Spelling evokes the mental world of the past. Today, for example, the people of Kanpur look across the Ganga toward Avadh. In 1859, however, from the perspective of those to which this thesis deals, natives in Cawnpore saw Oudh across the Ganges. The inconsistency of spelling of Indian place names, however, makes any attempt at systematisation pointless.<sup>1</sup>

Contemporary usage has therefore been adopted, with two major exceptions. First, conflicts

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1. Richard Burton, for example, the officer of Bombay native infantry-cum-explorer, published three books on Scinde, the title pages of which rendered the province's name differently.

are generally described geographically rather than by protagonists, so that the Anglo-centric 'Sikh wars' (the traditional name seemingly ascribing responsibility only to the Sikhs) are referred to as the Punjab wars. Second, the 1857-59 'Mutiny' has been described throughout as 'the rebellion'. Using the contemporary term would both lead to confusion with the 'white mutiny' and perpetuate the apprehension that it was exclusively a military phenomenon.

### Measures

Imperial measures of distance have been retained. The other significant measure, that of money, cannot be converted. A rupee comprised 16 annas or 64 pice, expressed as, for example, Rs18/11/3, and was equivalent to about two shillings in contemporary sterling. Its value may be gauged by comparing the monthly pay of a sergeant and of a captain for whom detailed monthly accounts exist.

In September 1858, while recuperating at the convalescent depot at Murree, Staff Sergeant Samuel Roaks of the Bengal Artillery received Rs37/4/5.<sup>2</sup> Rs6/1/- was stopped for rations. Roaks would have spent some of the balance, Rs31/3/5, on servants, subscriptions to the hospital, the library and the station priest, and on the services of a writer, amounting to about Rs20. This would have left him with about ten rupees, or about a pound.<sup>3</sup> Determining officers'

**Staff Sergeant Samuel Roaks, Bengal Artillery. Groom, of Battle, Surrey, enl. London, May 1844 aged 22; Tudor, 1845; d. 1859.**

**Captain Archibald Oliver Wood (1819-?), 14th Bengal Native Infantry. son of a Bengal officer; comm. 1840; served Gwalior war, first Punjab war; Captain, 1854; Lieutenant Colonel, 1866; ret. 1871**

pay is complicated by their allowances, but a detailed account for January 1858 exists for Captain Archie Wood, who commanded the Murree depot at the time Samuel Roaks was convalescent. A captain of native infantry received Rs415/6/- per month, plus Rs100 command allowance.<sup>4</sup> From this he paid numerous subscriptions, to the military, marriage and orphan funds, to the mess, book club, band and station church. After deducting rent, servants food, clothes household items and the costs of his wife's latest confinement, Captain Wood found himself Rs106 in debt. Captain Wood therefore overspent his pay by the equivalent of some £10 per month.

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2. All places mentioned in the text appear in maps.

3. Note book of the effects of S/Sgt Samuel Roaks, Bengal Artillery, India Office Library and Records (ILOR), Mss.Eur.F133/47

4. Capt Wood to Mrs Blane, Jhelum, 6 January 1858, in Jane Vansittart, (ed.), From Minnie with love. London, 1974, p. 135. Wood's letter attempted to make clear to his mother-in-law why he could not provide for her daughter without sinking deeper into debt.

**Abbreviations**

<b>ADFA</b>	<b>Australian Defence Force Academy</b>
<b>AWM</b>	<b>Australian War Memorial</b>
<b>BL</b>	<b>British Library</b>
<b>CSAA</b>	<b>Cambridge South Asian Archive</b>
<b>ERO</b>	<b>Essex Record Office</b>
<b>IOLR</b>	<b>India Office Library and Records</b>
<b>MU</b>	<b>Melbourne University</b>
<b>ML,G</b>	<b>Mitchell Library, Glasgow</b>
<b>ML,S</b>	<b>Mitchell Library, Sydney</b>
<b>NAI</b>	<b>National Archives of India</b>
<b>NAM</b>	<b>National Army Museum</b>
<b>NLI</b>	<b>National Library of India</b>
<b>PRO</b>	<b>Public Record Office</b>
<b>PRONI</b>	<b>Public Record Office of Northern Ireland</b>
<b>SLNSW</b>	<b>State Library of New South Wales</b>
<b>SLSA</b>	<b>State Library of South Australia</b>
<b>SLV</b>	<b>State Library of Victoria</b>
<b>SOAS</b>	<b>School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London</b>
<b>SRM</b>	<b>Staffordshire Regiment Museum</b>
<b>SRO</b>	<b>Scottish Record Office</b>
<b>SU</b>	<b>Sydney University</b>
<b>SUSM</b>	<b>Scottish United Service Museum</b>
<b>UofD</b>	<b>University of Durham</b>
<b>VBM</b>	<b>Victoria Barracks Museum</b>
<b>WSRO</b>	<b>West Sussex Record Office</b>
<b>WYA</b>	<b>West Yorkshire Archives</b>

### Abbreviations used in biographical notes

Every attempt has been made to reduce abbreviations, the bane of readers of military history. It has not been possible to eliminate entirely the prolific abbreviations beloved of armies, even nineteenth century ones. Arcane terms as DAAG or SGIMD appear sparingly, only in notes, and are explained in Appendix C, a glossary of military terms. The following abbreviations are used for brevity in biographical notes.

appt	appointed <sup>5</sup>
b.	born
BCS; ByCS	Bengal Civil Service; Bombay Civil Service
Bt	brevet
CofS	Chief of Staff
comm.	commissioned
d.	died
disch.	discharged; 'disch. 883' connotes discharged under General Order No. 883
Div.	division
EIC	East India Company
GCM	general court martial
hon.	honorary
inv.	invalided
KCB	Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath
KCSI	Knight Commander of the Order of the Star of India
No.	regimental number
ret.	retired
trsf.	transferred to

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5. The terms indicate subtleties of status of considerable importance to contemporaries; officers were commissioned and retired; soldiers were enlisted and discharged; surgeons and civil officers were appointed.

## Prologue

### Morar cantonment, 18 May 1859

Shortly after dawn on 18 May men of the grenadier company of the 3rd Bengal European Regiment assembled outside the infantry mess house of Morar cantonment. They waited to be summoned not to breakfast, but before a court of inquiry convened by the general commanding the Gwalior Division, Sir Robert Napier. Even at five the temperature was around eighty degrees. By the time the twentieth soldier had been summoned, just after nine, the sun would have become uncomfortably hot. The twentieth man called was No. 447, Private John Brown. Like those preceding him, Brown marched in and stood before a table at which sat four officers. He was asked if he had any complaint or grievance to make. The transcript records:

I enlisted in the Honourable Company's service, which has now ceased to exist, and object to being transferred without bounty or re-enlistment.<sup>1</sup>

Major General Robert Cornelis Napier (1810-90), Bengal army. Comm. Bengal Engineers, 1826; employed as civil engineer, 1831-35; laid out Simla, 1838; served first and second Punjab wars; civil engineer to Punjab government, 1849-53; Military Secretary to Sir James Outram, 1857-58; commander, Gwalior Div., 1858-60; second China war, 1860-61; Commander-in-Chief, Bombay, 1865; Abyssinia campaign; created Baron Napier of Magdala 1868; Commander-in-Chief, India, 1870-76

Private John Charles Brown, No. 447, 3rd Bengal European Regiment. Clerk, of Aberlady, East Lothian *ps* ~~Linlithgow~~; enl. Edinburgh, June 1853, aged 20; disch. as time expired, July 1861

Private Brown then withdrew. After hearing another three soldiers, the court adjourned. Men and officers retreated indoors, the officers to their bungalows, the men to their barrack-rooms, waiting for the heat to abate before again venturing out.

Private Brown's testimony - one sentence in the massive transcripts published the following year by order of Parliament - seems unremarkable. Indistinguishable from that of hundreds of soldiers called before this and similar courts all over Bengal in the summer of 1859, Brown's statement may be regarded as representative. Brown (an archetypical English name, though actually Scots) may be taken to stand for the thousands of men enlisted by the East India Company who were transferred to the British army when in November 1858 the Crown resumed the Company's power. Yet Private Brown's testimony was remarkable, for he was the only one of the thousands of soldiers testifying who recorded his own account of what occurred in the court.

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1. 'Proceedings of a Court of Inquiry held at Morar, Gwalior ...', PP 1860, Vol. LI, Papers relating to the late discontent among European troops in India, p. 444. This, the thesis's single most important source, will henceforth be cited as 'PP 1860'.

John Brown's 'Private Journal' is one of the most rewarding of the surprisingly rich lode of surviving personal sources created by soldiers of the Company's European force. It includes recollections of his enlistment and travels, reflections on India, verses composed by soldiers, extracts from newspapers and general orders which interested him, 'moral and practical observations', specifics against 'clap' and dysentery and recipes for varnish and insecticides. It describes how his comrades rose at four thirty that morning, and were called individually to testify. Brown had prepared for his appearance by bringing with him his attestation papers. After giving what he called a 'Regimental Salute' - that is a model salute - '[I] squared my heels, and tried the best way to clear the cobwebs from my throat'. 'Well my man', asked 'Sir Napier', 'what grievances have you to state?' Brown replied:

Nothing very particular Sir, only I do not find myself justified by serving her Majesty without either reenlistment or bounty, and consider it unlawful and unjust in the manner they have handed me over to the crown.<sup>2</sup>

Brown then produced his attestation. 'The colonel' - presumably Colonel William Riddell of the 3rd infantry - waved it away, telling him that the court had seen another man's a few minutes before. Brown then saluted again, came to the right about and marched out.

Unlike the formal transcript forwarded to the Adjutant General, Brown's account adds that after the men were dismissed, they were assembled to hear what Brown calls 'a few hasty words' from 'Sir Napier'. Brown recorded Napier's suggestion that they would probably be successful in obtaining their discharge but that as 'mutineers' they would not be allowed to land in England. Then, he went on, confusingly, 'I cannot exactly call you Mutineers although you are next to it'. In 32 years in the Company's army, he went on, he 'never knew of a British soldier disobeying the lawful commands of his Officer'. This, Brown noted parenthetically, was 'one great blunder for an experienced soldier'. Napier continued, expressing his hope that he could report that the men were quiet and peaceable.

Do for God's sake and the sake of your Country, obey all orders of your Superiors, and do not tarnish that noble name which you always bore as well as all other British Soldiers.

'After this lingo', Brown ended prosaically, 'we marched back into our lines'.

There are, of course, discrepancies between the two accounts. Brown recalled that he was the eighth, not the twentieth, witness. His own version of his statement differs from that taken down (presumably in longhand) by the Deputy Judge Advocate General, but is perhaps closer to his actual words than the stereotyped summaries in the seemingly verbatim record. Napier

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2. John Brown, 'A private journal', National Library of Scotland (NLS), Ms 15393

nowhere recorded his impromptu speech, but other soldiers' accounts of what occurred in the 3rd infantry that month corroborate Brown's version.<sup>3</sup>

The brief exchange between Private Brown and the court constituted a minute part of the episode which has become known as the 'white mutiny'. That summer he and over 10,000 of his comrades secured their discharge after protests variously described as a 'mutiny', or 'strikes' in cantonments all over Bengal. Contemporaries regarded the protest, which occurred within months of the suppression of the great Indian rebellion, as a military and imperial crisis of some importance. It seemed for a time to imperil the security of Britain's tenure of India, and certainly affected the military relationship between Britain and India until 1947. Historians have considered it primarily as a political crisis, and have comprehensively charted the British and Indian governments' responses to the protest.

Yet, as both the official transcript and Private Brown's memoir suggest, the soldiers' protest derived from understandings operating at more fundamental levels than the questions of policy and legality which have concerned the imperial authorities and their historians. As a crisis occurring within and deriving from a distinctive Anglo-Indian military culture the protest has been almost entirely neglected by social historians. The soldiers' language - attestation, re-enlistment, bounty - suggests a military culture which their transfer to the Queen's army disturbed profoundly. Brown's derision at Napier's claim that disobedience was rare among soldiers raises questions as to the place of protest within the culture of the barrack-room. Napier's confusion over whether Brown's comrades were 'mutineers' exposes an ambivalence over the soldiers' response subsequently muted by the propagation of the term 'white mutiny'. His appeal to law and justice, and references by officers and men to 'strikes', raise further questions as to the extent to which the mutiny was influenced by ostensibly civilian notions. On the other hand, Napier's language - grievance, superiors, duty - bespeaks the concern for subordination characteristic not just of the army, but of Victorian society.

While at one level the encounter between Private Brown and General Napier may represent simply a formal military transaction, an exchange between a soldier and his officer, at another it can be seen as a part of the great struggle animating Britain in the nineteenth century. General Napier's 'Well my man, what grievances have you to state?' could have been spoken in any year of the nineteenth century anywhere in the British isles; in a workshop, an estate or factory office, at a rally or a meeting. Though spoken far from home, in the mess house at a military cantonment in central India, both question and answer promise to illuminate the nuances and ambiguous boundaries of class in contemporary British and Irish society. Indeed,

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3. See chapter 9 for a more detailed discussion of events at Morar.

a study of the causes, course and consequences of this little studied military protest relates to central preoccupations of British social history: culture, class and the relationships of power which shaped Victorian Britain.

## Introduction

### Two armies; two nations

This enquiry straddles several fields usually regarded as distinct: British imperial, military and social history. In substance a study of the European officers and men of the Bengal army, it aspires to integrate the study of military and social history. I explore the military culture of the European officers and men of the East India Company's Bengal army and its transformation and suppression following the 'white mutiny' of 1859-61, making several historical and historiographical connections in the process. I seek to show how events at a dozen Indian cantonments in India in the years 1859-61 can be used to illuminate aspects of contemporary British and Irish society; to show how members of obscure military units influenced the military and political leaders of Britain and India; and to propose ways in which military and social history can be pursued as an integrated 'military social history'.

Every study is in part a product of its author's historiographical inheritance. The theoretical and methodological concerns animating this thesis are discussed in greater detail in Appendix A. For the present, because it bears upon the thesis's structure, it is only necessary to mention that it originates in and develops the concern to explore class as an historical relationship most influentially propagated by E.P. Thompson in The making of the English working class.<sup>1</sup> I pursue an approach articulated by Suzanne Desans in her contribution to Lynn Hunt's The new cultural history. In considering the pioneering contributions of E.P. Thompson and Natalie Davis towards integrating social and cultural history in early industrial England and reformation France, Desans called for those following to refine their precursors' approach. 'We need', she wrote,

to ask how the cultural approach to history in general and to collective activism in particular can incorporate both the anthropological emphasis on meaning and mentalité and a greater awareness of the dynamics of power and change.

Desans called for social historians to integrate the analysis of the critical aspects of 'community' and 'legitimacy' with the analysis of 'power, transformation and conflict'. This study has been organized around those concerns.<sup>2</sup>

The ostensible subject of this thesis, the British army in India, though an icon of the British imperial presence, has been poorly served by historians. The neglect probably derives from the

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1. E.P. Thompson, The making of the English working class, Penguin, 1974

2. Suzanne Desan, 'Crowds, community, and ritual in the work of E.P. Thompson and Natalie Davis', in, Lynn Hunt, (ed.), The new cultural history, Berkeley, 1989, p. 71

liberal academic distaste for imperialism and militarism (especially in combination) but it has left the subject without rigorous scholarly studies. The Indian army's most recent chronicle, A matter of honour, provides an impressionist history permeated by a deep affection for India and its people, but also tinged with a romanticism making it a useful foil but an unreliable guide.<sup>3</sup> Besides a handful of pre-Great War regimental histories, offering raw material rather than analysis, the British army in India has only Tony Heathcote's The Indian army, a survey based on secondary research, though a useful introduction.<sup>4</sup> Little scholarly attention has been accorded to the Company's forces. Notable exceptions include J.A.B. Palmer's thorough study of the mutiny at Meerut and John Pemble's The invasion of Nepal.<sup>5</sup> Articles arising from Douglas Peers' doctoral thesis on Anglo-Indian militarism and the first Burmah war have recently re-directed scholarly attention to what would otherwise have become a limpid backwater of imperial military history.<sup>6</sup>

The white mutiny itself has been neglected: the most recent survey of mutiny in British and Commonwealth armies ignores it entirely.<sup>7</sup> It has been considered incidentally in a number of published works, in chapters, essays and articles, notably in a chapter and an essay by Michael Maclagan, Lord Canning's biographer, and in a doctoral thesis and a subsequent article by A.H. Shibly.<sup>8</sup> Several other popular works refer to the events of 1859, often partially and inaccurately. Maclagan and Shibly's studies, drawing primarily on the Canning papers and Parliamentary Papers, establish the essential framework of events and their significance for

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3. Philip Mason, A matter of honour: an account of the Indian army, its officers and men, London, 1974

4. T.A. Heathcote, The Indian army: the garrison of British imperial India 1822-1922, Newton Abbott, 1974

5. J.A.B. Palmer, The mutiny outbreak at Meerut in 1857, Cambridge, 1966; John Pemble, The invasion of Nepal: John Company at war, Oxford, 1971

6. Including 'Between Mars and Mammon; the East India Company and efforts to reform its army, 1796-1832', The historical journal, Vol. 33, No. 2, 1990, pp. 385-401; 'The Duke of Wellington and British India during the Liverpool administration, 1819-27', Journal of imperial and commonwealth history, Vol. XVII, October 1988, No. 1, pp. 5-25

7. Lawrence James, Mutiny in the British and Commonwealth forces, 1797-1956, London, 1988

8. The episode was first discussed by an historian in Lionel Trotter's History of India under Queen Victoria from 1836 to 1880, Vol. II, London, 1886, pp. 125-9. Modern studies include Michael Maclagan, 'Clemency' Canning, London, 1962; 'The white mutiny', in H.R. Trevor Roper, (ed.), Essays in British history presented to Sir Keith Feiling, London, 1965, pp. 271-301; A.H. Shibly, The reorganisation of the Indian armies, 1858-1879, PhD, University of London, 1969; (as A.H. Shibli), 'The white mutiny', Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, Vol. XVII, No. 2, August 1972, pp. 9-24.

British India. In this, and in connecting the white mutiny to Canning as governor general and to the wider question of army re-organisation, respectively, they provide a valuable starting point. No existing study, however, discusses the soldiers' protest with reference to the military culture which influenced the formulation or expression of the soldiers' grievances, nor develops the connections between the soldiers' grievances and actions and those of their officers. Nor do they draw on the range of published and unpublished material available. Above all, existing studies referring to the European troops' protest do not attempt to connect events in the barrack-rooms and messes of the Bengal army with mid-Victorian society. This thesis, then, seeks to both contribute to the social history of the mid-Victorian army and to explore British social history in an exotic setting.

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### **The armies of British India, 1825-57**

For a century, from the British victory at Plassey in 1757 to the rebellion of 1857, an uneasy combination of military forces exerted Britain's military power in India. Its three main elements were, in descending order of size, the 'native' forces of the Company, troops of the British or 'Queen's' army, and the European forces of the Company. The British armies in India were, in the words of the Anglo-Indian military journalist Joachim Stocqueler, 'the most remarkable phenomenon in the history of the world'.<sup>9</sup> They served a private company rather than a nation or sovereign. They encompassed an incongruous mixture of ethnic groups: Hindoos, Muslims, Goorkhas, Sikhs, Englishmen and Irishmen led by English or Anglo-Irish officers. The creation of just a century, in spite of vast differences in religion, culture and language, they had conquered immense domains, virtually undefeated. Before 1750 stunted by apathy, penury and improvisation, the force became under the guidance of Robert Clive the arbiter of the sub-continent. As the Mughal empire dissolved, the East India Company succeeded it as the dominant power. By 1825 the Company's armies, supported by small numbers of royal troops, had extended British rule or influence across India to the borders of the Sikh state of the Punjab (see Map 1). As the conquerors became more conscious of their actual and potential achievements they progressively re-modelled the principal instrument of conquest, notably in 1796 and 1824, though never thoroughly or rationally. The force created by the latter re-organization prevailed until 1857. This study therefore encompasses the period of the old Bengal army's final form before the rebellion and its aftermath swept it away.

**Joachim Hayward Stocqueler (1800-85)** Anglo-Indian journalist and man of letters. Edited several periodicals in Calcutta, 1821-55? and published widely on Anglo-Indian affairs, including a Hand-book of India; war correspondent during American civil war; also known as J.H. Siddons.

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9. J.H. Stocqueler, The hand-book of British India, London, 1854, p. 52



Map 1: British India, 1825-57

The armies of British India were based on the three presidencies from which the Company's possessions had grown: Madras (the oldest), Bombay (the smallest) and Bengal (regarded with varying degrees of warmth as the senior). They acquired distinct characters. The 'Mulls' of the Madras army were seen as slothful, the 'Ducks' of Bombay as poorer and less stylish than the others, and the 'Qui hais' of Bengal (which referred to the other two as the 'minor presidencies') as arrogant.<sup>10</sup> Effectively independent of each other, the three presidency

**General Sir Charles James Napier (1782-1853), Commander-in-Chief, India, 1849-50. Comm. 33rd Foot, 1794; served Peninsular war and Anglo-American war of 1812-15; Resident at Cephalonia, 1822-30; KCB 1838; commanded Northern District of England during Chartist disturbances, 1839-41; conquered and administered Scinde, 1842-47; ret., 1847; Commander-in-Chief, India, 1849-50; resigned 1850**

armies differed in composition, equipment, conditions and customs of service.

Contemporaries countenanced this unwieldy and apparently illogical separation of powers as a bulwark against either mutiny by native troops or combination by their European officers.<sup>11</sup>

Each of the three commanders-in-chief presided over separate staffs for Crown and Company forces and adjudicated over the resultant tiffs as each rubbed along with the other and the ancillary departments serving both. The system which had evolved by the second quarter of the nineteenth century was therefore extraordinarily cumbersome, dense with regulations and anomalies within and between forces. Subject to both the minute scrutiny of the Court of Directors and the more immediate oversight of the governor general (liable to arrogate other than purely military matters) the Commander-in-Chief exercised limited power. Only the heroic administrator, such as Charles Napier, could have hoped to prevail within a system so imbued with inertia. Napier's unavailing challenge to the military culture of British India makes him a central figure in this thesis, influential beyond the strict tenure of the command. His attack on the Bengal army's shortcomings aroused extremes of admiration and detestation: to some extent an individual's attitude to Napier became the litmus test of their orientation to the changes through which the army would pass in the following decade.

If the Bengal army was a 'bamboo spear tipped with steel', then the point was an alloy, compounded of European Crown and Company troops.<sup>12</sup> The royal troops stationed in each presidency enjoyed generally inferior conditions of service to the Company's Europeans. Equally reserved for 'scenes of danger, difficulty and enterprize', however, it seemed absurd

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10. 'Qui hai' came from the Hindoostanee 'who's there?' - or rather, in its idiomatic use, 'come here!', said to be the customary call as a Bengal officer entered the mess.

11. 'One to bridle the other', as the Bengal hurkaru put it, 17 September 1842

12. T.R.E. Holmes, A history of the Indian mutiny, London, 1891, p. 47, quoting W.H. Russell in the Times, 3 September 1858, 7e. Evidently Colin Campbell, Lord Clyde, coined the metaphor.

that two European forces should be maintained.<sup>13</sup> Rationalists proposed amalgamation periodically before 1857.<sup>14</sup> The issue was not simply one of administrative efficiency, but involved control of the vast prize of control of 'Indian patronage', the distribution of military commissions and civil appointments. The politics of the army in India reflected the great fact of the 'two nations' of Victorian Britain. The two contending 'nations' were not those of Disraeli's *Sybil*, but the 'two nations struggling' within the 'expanding society' identified by George Kitson Clark:

an old nation based upon the old nobility, upon the squires and upon the Established Church, and a new nation based upon commerce and industry.<sup>15</sup>

Stripped of qualification and exception, the Queen's army belonged to the old nation, the Company's to the new. The royal army (through the Horse Guards, the office of the Commander-in-Chief in Britain) had repeatedly attempted to abolish the Company's Europeans, while the Court of Directors repeatedly persuaded the Board of Control of the need for their retention.<sup>16</sup> Over the fifty years following the first act regulating the Company's affairs the Court of Directors had progressively conceded power to the British government. Responsibility rested with the President of the Board of Control (a member of the cabinet) and the Governor General, nominally appointed by the Company but in fact sanctioned if not selected by the government. With the last renewal of the Company's charter in 1853, its directors lost the right to appoint candidates to India's civil service, retaining only the power to nominate cadets to military appointments in India, prizes valued by both patron and protégé. The absorption of the Company's Europeans and their replacement by royal troops would therefore have been a step toward the capture of Indian patronage which royal officers so coveted and 'East Indians' so fiercely opposed. Conservatism in the face of radical change, the

13. J. Dark [Assistant Secretary, East India House] to Thomas Courtenay [Secretary to the Board of Control], 15 September 1814, 'Correspondence relating to the Company's establishment of European Infantry', India Office Library and Records (IOLR), L/MIL/5/411, Collection 298

14. Proposals to unite the two forces had been made repeatedly. At the opening of the period, for example, Walter Badenach, *Inquiry into the state of the Indian army*, London, 1826, p. 69; at the end, 'The amalgamation of the Indian armies and their transfer to the crown', *Colburn's united services magazine*, Sep. 1850, pp. 125-34; 258-65; 'Amalgamation of the Indian armies', *Colburn's united services magazine*, Oct. 1852, pp. 267-80; PP 1852-53, Vol. XXVIII, Select committee on Indian territories, qq 3974-5.

15. G.S.R. Kitson Clark, *An expanding society: Britain 1830-1900*, Melbourne, 1967, p. 11. It need hardly be emphasised that the 'new' nation based upon commerce had contended with the old for at least two centuries, and that the contest remained both relevant and unresolved.

16. See, for example, Raymond Callahan, *The East India Company and army reform 1783-1798*, Harvard, 1972, pp. 45-9; Duke of York to Lord Hobart, 6 February 1802, Public Record Office (PRO), WO 1/624; 'Correspondence relating to the Company's establishment of European Infantry', IOLR

lingering influence of the 'India interest' and, perhaps, an awareness of the magnitude of the responsibility, had always defeated attempts to transfer the military force from the Company to the Crown. In this the contest over apparently trivial issues of precedence, or eligibility for appointments and honours, represented a broader struggle over who should distribute and share in the mixed boon which empire conferred on middle-class Britons, and beyond that whether old or new nation should prevail.

Though they served together in war, at least more efficiently than their enemies, at the heart of the relationship between Queen's and Company's officers lay a corrosive feeling of superiority on the one hand and resentment on the other. Abiding tensions created profound 'jealousies' - the word recurs in almost every contemporary account. In messes, in the columns of mofussil (up-country) newspapers, before official enquiries and in their memoirs, officers expressed jealousy over the advantages of Indian service, principally in securing promotion and commands.<sup>17</sup> *which principally went to Queen's officers* The enduring tension between the two forces is explained by fundamental differences in their purpose, composition and culture. Queen's troops fulfilled a clear purpose; in peacetime the guarantors of order against mutiny or rebellion, in war the mainstay in major campaigns. The Company's Europeans enjoyed no such unanimity of purpose. Certainly the European artillery repeatedly proved to be the decisive arm in Indian warfare, and the Company's European infantry won regard as a fighting force.<sup>18</sup> *Company's* But the/European force had other, perhaps more important purposes, which confounded its interests as a disciplined fighting force. It provided non-commissioned officers to serve with the native army and in the huge administrative organization of British India. Had it not been for this function it is possible that the apparently rational calls for its abolition or amalgamation with the royal army might have succeeded. PS

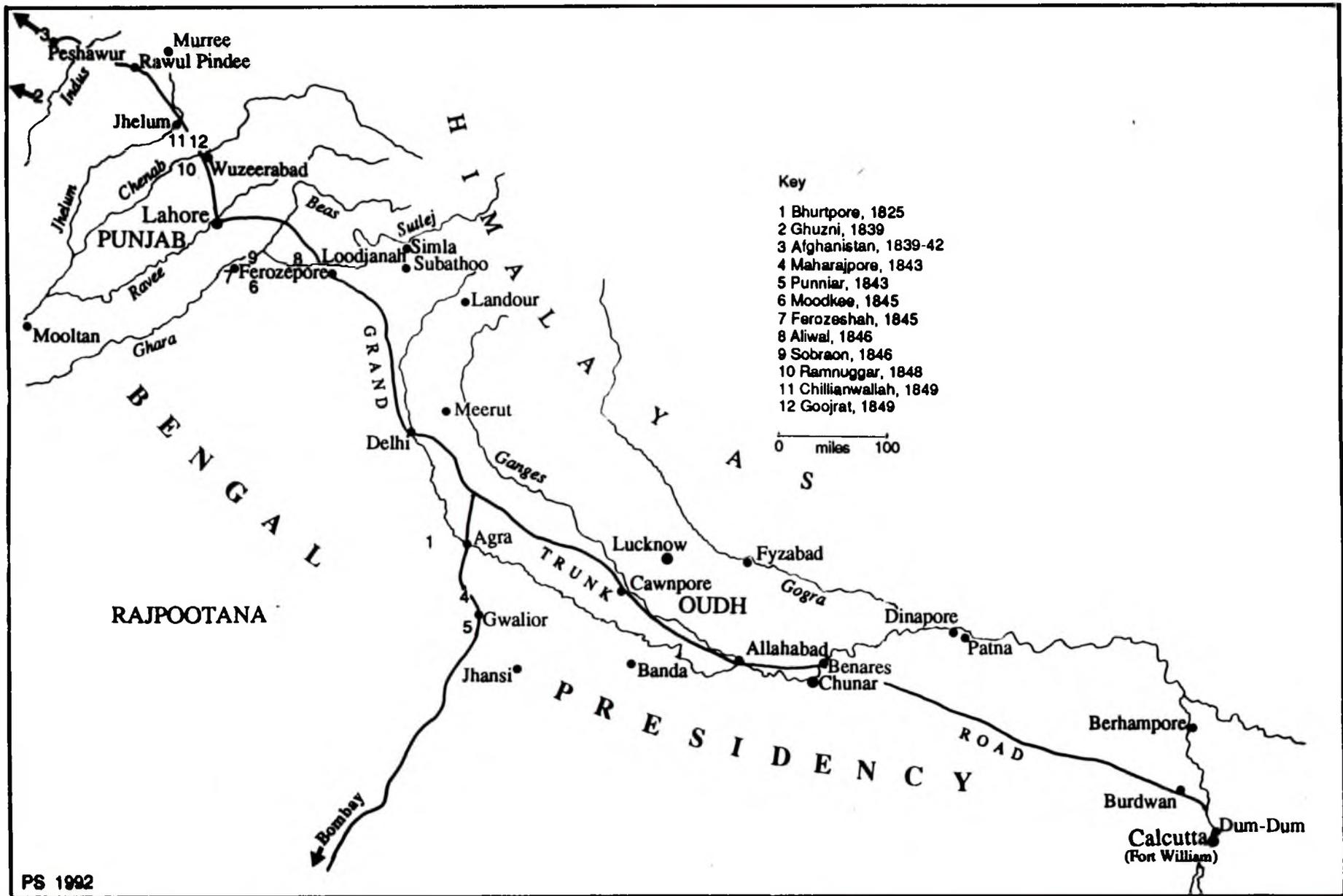
In 1856, on the eve of the rebellion, the British force in India numbered 280,000 men, of which the Bengal army, of 160,000, was the largest. Organized, trained and often dressed in imitation of European troops, it was built around the 74 regiments of Bengal native infantry, the largest disciplined force in Asia. The Queen's army provided two-thirds of the Bengal army's 24,000 European troops. Weakened by the diversion of regiments to the Crimea, they comprised 15 regiments of infantry and one of cavalry. The remainder, some 8,000 men, comprised the Company's 'European' force.<sup>19</sup> Though the smallest constituent part of the army, the European

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17. Section XVII of the General regulations of the Bengal army, Calcutta, 1855, specified elaborate rules for the distribution of command and staff positions between the two armies.

18. No Royal Artillery served in India until 1857.

19. 'European' was a legacy of the period when race rather than national allegiance defined their members. Though the accuracy of the term had been questioned (by, among others, Thomas de



To follow page 10

Map 2: The Bengal presidency, 1825-57

corps included its oldest. European soldiers had defended the Company's 'factories' since the late seventeenth century. Only in 1757 were their scattered companies organized as regiments, though the senior European regiments in each presidency traced institutional lineages longer than those of most Queen's regiments.

The European force's composition, purpose, identity and aspirations created what amounted to a distinct culture, one differing in important respects from that of the royal army. Its distinctive character stemmed not only from its functions as a military institution, but also from the economic realities and social expectations of the society from which its members came. The first three chapters explore the nature of that culture and how it derived from key aspects of contemporary British society; class, culture and community. None of these terms can be used without explanation, and they relate to key works informing this thesis's theoretical orientation. The term 'culture' is generally used so promiscuously as to bring it dangerously close to redundancy. E.P. Thompson, in his Customs in common, discusses usefully meanings ascribed to the term in historical writing.<sup>20</sup> Emphasising its value as a means of understanding the 'confrontations and negotiations between patricians and plebs' he contrasts it with the 'over-consensual' view of culture propounded by an earlier generation. I have adopted a robust working definition, regarding the European force's culture as a constellation of related attitudes and reactions expressing a coherent world-view. Class, arguably the single most important interpretative concept in modern British history, is simultaneously understood almost intuitively, and yet stands in need of clarification and explanation. I adopt the celebrated rubric of 'class as a relationship' of Thompson's The making of the English working class. My recognition of the importance of 'community', a less familiar interpretative category, also derives from The making of the English working class, and from Craig Calhoun's critique of it, The question of class struggle, in which he argues that communities critically mediated radical reaction to the social and political imposts of the 1790s.<sup>21</sup> Investigation of communal (and not simply 'popular') understandings and actions has for three decades been an important element in

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Quincey, whose son-in-law served in the Bengal Engineers) the term survived in default of any clear alternative: see James Hogg, (ed.), The uncollected writings of Thomas De Quincey. Vol. I, London, 1892, pp. 321-2

20. E.P. Thompson, Customs in common, London, 1991, pp 6-7, citing, for example, A.L. Krieger & C. Kluckhohn, Culture: a critical review of concepts and definitions, New York, 1952

21. Craig Calhoun, The question of class struggle: social foundations of popular radicalism during the industrial revolution, Chicago, 1982

recent British social history.<sup>22</sup> By contributing to knowledge of the experience of European soldiers in mid-Victorian India, this thesis seeks to advance understanding of that broader field.

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22. For example, in Patrick Joyce's Visions of the people: Industrial England and the question of class 1848-1914, Cambridge, 1991, which in its discussion of 'populism' as a key analytical construct has made a significant contribution to my exploration of the culture of the Company's soldiers.

## **PART I: CULTURE**

### **Class, culture and community: the Bengal Europeans, 1825-57**

**Chapter 1 'Self-exiled in youth': class and the composition of the Bengal Europeans, 1825-57**

**Chapter 2 'East India Convicts': the military culture of the Bengal Europeans, 1825-57**

**Chapter 3 'Ours': community, identity and power in the Bengal Europeans, 1825-57**

... there is a separation in England between rich and poor ... no soldier can now go up to his officer and speak to him without a non-commissioned officer gives him leave and accompanies him! His captain ... receives him with upstart condescension, ... and ... the private goes away with disgust or contempt, instead of good, respectful, comrade[ly] feelings

Sir Charles Napier, Journal, 20 January 1851

## Chapter 1

### 'Self-exiled in youth': class and the composition of the Bengal Europeans, 1825-57

Desperation and enterprise as fundamental responses to an economy regulated largely by individual conscience were central to Victorian society. British social historians have traditionally concentrated on the working-class predicament of desperation, but have had 'hardly anything to say about utopia', or even the most realistic earthly option, membership of the middle-class. If the aspiration of marriage, a bungalow, servants, four hour's work a day and a pension constituted utopia for officers and soldiers of the Company, then this thesis at least addresses the latter deficiency.<sup>1</sup> The experience of European soldiers of the East India Company suggests that thousands of individuals or families avoided the hard edge of the contemporary economy, or even approached utopia, by the decision to enlist.

\* \* \*

Some 18,000 European soldiers joined the East India Company's Bengal army between 1825 and the outbreak of the rebellion in 1857. They appear to have come from the broad strata of Anglo-Irish society which provided the rank and file of the Queen's army. Most observers agreed, however, that the Company's service attracted a 'superior' grade of recruit, with higher proportions of artisans and clerks and a smaller proportion of simple labourers. The force's particular composition is fundamental to an understanding of its character. Staff Sergeant Thomas Quinney alleged that 'none is willing to admit that he was a labourer'.<sup>2</sup> Itself an indication of the recruits and the sergeants' expectations, his contention is sustained by scrutiny of the stated occupations of recruits enlisted throughout the period. Table 1 compares the occupations of Queen's and Company's recruits.

**Staff Sergeant Thomas Quinney (1807-?). enl. Edinburgh 1826; served 1st Bombay European Regiment, 1826-30; Bombay Artillery, 1830-41; ret. 1841**

The motivations of men enlisting in the Queen's army have been assumed. A reliable - or at least much quoted - contemporary observer considered that unemployment drove over half of all recruits to enlist. No more than 2% of recruits sought advancement through enlistment.<sup>3</sup> Historians have largely accepted the traditional view of enlistment as an act of desperation.

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1. Patrick Joyce, Visions of the people, p. 341
  2. Thomas Quinney, Sketches of a soldier's life in India, Glasgow, 1853, p. 50
  3. 'A late staff sergeant of the 13th Light Infantry' [James MacMullen], Camp and barrack room: or the British army as it is, London, 1846, p. 311

Table 1

## Comparison of Queen's and Company's recruits, 1825-58

While the occupational backgrounds of all recruits for the Company's service are accessible through the Military Department's records, comparable material for the much larger Queen's service is scarce. In particular, 'description books' survive for but a handful of units for the period. The nominal roll of the 80th Foot, a line regiment which served in India from 1844-59, provides a partial basis for a comparison with the 'registers of European soldiers'.<sup>1</sup> While the relative proportions of clerks suggests the Company's appeal to literate men, the percentages of labourers reveal how unskilled workers formed the largest single identifiable group in both services.

	80th Foot	Company's recruits
1825 (155 recruits)		<i>Prince Regent</i> 1824 (29) <sup>2</sup>
clerks	1.29% (2)	17.24% (5)
labourers	30.96% (48)	34.48% (10)
1839 (114 recruits)		<i>Edinburgh</i> 1839 (380) <sup>3</sup>
clerks	1.75% (2)	3.94% (15)
labourers	55.26% (63)	46.57% (177)
1849 (108 recruits)		<i>Collingwood</i> 1848 (210) <sup>4</sup>
clerks	0.92% (1)	6.66% (14)
labourers	69.4% (75)	55.98% (117)
1858 (93 recruits)		<i>Jalawar</i> 1858 (49, names L-Z) <sup>5</sup>
clerks	2.15% (2)	5.68% (5)
labourers	47.3 % (44)	30.68% (27)

The comparison is imperfect: the 80th may not be representative, other transports carrying Company's recruits reveal different proportions (though broadly in accord with those selected), while the bare category of 'previous occupation' may simply not provide a statistical sieve fine enough to sift nuances of occupational standing. It substantiates, however, contemporary observations of the essential differences in the composition of the two services.

1. 'Nominal and descriptive roll of the Eightieth Regiment [1804-1881]', Staffordshire Regiment Museum, Lichfield, held on Australian Joint Copying Project Reel M815, National Library of Australia.

2. Register of European soldiers, IOLR, L/MIL/10/122, 123

3. Depot embarkation list, IOLR, L/MIL/9/78

4. Register of European soldiers, IOLR, L/MIL/10/125

5. Register of European soldiers, IOLR, L/MIL/10/129

Even revisionist research devotes scant attention to the question, accepting the traditional answer.<sup>4</sup> Whether the conclusion remains valid for the Queen's army cannot be tested here. For the Company's service, however, it is certainly inadequate. The Company's recruiting parties (ironically, mostly retired Queen's sergeants) could afford to be relatively selective. During the mid-1850s (when the force expanded) recruiting parties still needed to find only twenty men each month in each of its seven recruiting districts to meet the 'beating orders' specifying their quotas.<sup>5</sup> It is therefore arguable - especially, as will become apparent, from their careers in India - that the Company accepted and was sought by many men who saw in it not simply a refuge from poverty but a route to prosperity and even respectability. Contemporaries considered it so. 'So popular was service in the Indian local army', recalled an essay considering the revival of the force,

owing to pay and pensions, the prospects of rising and obtaining civil employ, and the probability of being able to send money home, that the greater number of recruits raised in the United Kingdom, and certainly the pick of them, tried to get into it.<sup>6</sup>

The appeal of India itself should not be underestimated, both as an adventurous destination for young men and as an exotic country where humble men acquired fabulous riches. Recruiting sergeants naturally retailed stories of the 'splendours of India', an impression evidently widely current.<sup>7</sup> John Downie, writing to his parents before embarkation, anticipated his departure for a 'land of mistification and dark bloody superstition ... where slavery groans in the most abject form ...

Gunner John Downie, 4/1st Bombay Artillery. Labourer, of Edinburgh, enl. Edinburgh, April 1846, aged 24

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4. C.C. Bayley, in surveying the domestic recruiting policies which led the Queen's army to seek continental mercenaries during the Crimean war, concluded that appeals to 'a "better class of recruit"' were 'marginal in their effect': Mercenaries for the Crimea: the German, Swiss, and Italian Legions in British service, 1854-56. Montreal, 1977, p. 20. Hew Strachan, in his otherwise revisionist Wellington's legacy: the reform of the British army 1830-54. Manchester, 1984, the most thorough study yet of the army between Waterloo and the Crimea, conforms to the traditional view (expressed by the military reformer, Henry Marshall) that 'most recruits were "thoughtless youths, petty delinquents, ... unable to perform work or ... very indigent ... "'': p. 54.

5. Computation from 'Return of the numbers and ages of ... European recruits ... 1850 to 1858', Northbrook India papers, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), 118332/14

6. M.J. King-Harman, 'Should the European army in India continue as at present constituted ...?', Journal of the Royal United Services Institution. Vol. XXIX, No. CXXIX, 1885, p. 348

7. Recollections of Sgt Maj Mark Crummie, Essex Record Office (ERO), D/DU 100/1-4. It is likely too that they emphasised (and exaggerated) the erotic possibilities of imperial service, explored by Ronald Hyam in Empire and sexuality: the British experience. Manchester, 1990, chapter 4.

beyond the knowledge of man'.<sup>8</sup> Popular melodrama set in the east may have inspired such romantic fancies.<sup>9</sup>

While recruiting parties were inclined to restrict their choice to recruits of higher quality, they were often given the opportunity to refuse after a personal or occupational crisis prompted a man to take such a serious step.<sup>10</sup> The romance of the ranks, a compilation of anecdotes thinly rendered as fiction by an officer formerly a ranker of the Royal Sappers and Miners, provides one of the handful of first-hand accounts of a recruiting sergeant at work. Confronted with a man who had been dishonourably discharged as a deserter from the Queen's service, a recruiting sergeant skilfully refused to allow a capable man to disqualify himself by an incautious reply:

"Ye want to 'list, aye?"

"Yes"

"That's weel . Ye canna do better. For a man of a gallant an' enterpreesin' speerit, there's no place like Indee to draw oot his manly characteristics ... I preshume yer age is twenty? ... Of course you've never bin in the service?"<sup>11</sup>

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8. Pte John Downie to his parents, Warley, June 1845, Scottish United Services Museum (SUSM), IA846.1

9. Little attention has been paid to the effects of 'imperial' themes on their audiences before mid-century. See, however, Heidi J. Holder, 'Melodrama, realism and empire on the British stage', in J.S. Bratton (and others), Acts of supremacy: the British empire and the stage, 1790-1930, Manchester, 1991, pp. 129-49, which suggests how such works may have fostered such impressions. I am grateful to Dr John Mackenzie for his advice on this point.

10. After 1847, infantrymen enlisted for ten years, gunners for twelve; before 1847, men enlisted for 'unlimited' service, in effect for twenty-one years.

11. T.W. Connolly, The romance of the ranks ..., London, 1859, Vol. I, p. 136. The Naval and military gazette in reviewing the book concluded that the incidents described 'all occurred': 28 May 1858. Accounts of their enlistment appear in Mark Crummie's memoir and in Arthur Owen's Recollections of a veteran of the days of the great Indian mutiny ..., Lahore, 1915, pp. 5-6. I am grateful to Chris Hawes for bringing this book to my notice and for lending a copy.

This is not to suggest that all or even many recruits entered the service after mature consideration. Most recruits were aged twenty-two or under, though the Company seems to have accepted more older men than the Queen's service, including married men, even those with children.<sup>12</sup> Many evidently took the Company's shilling lightly, while tramping in search of work. When Richard Perkes enlisted in 1841 he told his brother that he 'had good places and i could not keep them for my mind was vexed for rambling so much'.<sup>13</sup> For some the decision to enlist may have been made after considering other options, such as shifting to a city or emigrating. (William Hollohan's father, writing from Tipperary in 1855 told him that 'the biggest part of your friends is in a merica', while Matthew Brown's entire family emigrated after his enlistment in 1848, a choice he may have considered.<sup>14</sup>)

**Private Richard Perkes, 1st European Bengal Fusiliers. Labourer of Kidderminster, enl. London May 1841; Glen Huntley. 1841. d. Mooltan July 1860 (also Pirkes).**

**Gunner William Hollohan, 2/1st Bombay Artillery. Pump borer and well sinker, of Kair, Tipperary; enl. July 1834; served Afghanistan, Mooltan, Goojrat; d. returning to Britain, 1858**

**Sergeant Matthew Brown, 2nd European Bengal Fusiliers. Labourer, of Mghra Coolmony, Fermanagh; enl. Glasgow, March 1847, aged 22. Trsf. to 3rd BER, 1854; d. Chinsurah, September, 1854**



**Map 3: Recruiting districts, 1850s**  
● headquarters of recruiting districts

12. The Depot embarkation lists, giving recruits' ages and occupations, also reveal that wives and often children accompanied about one man in twenty. Recruits for the Queen's army were invariably single. IOLR, L/MIL/9/77-81.

13. Pte Richard Perkes to his brother, Brompton, 17 July 1841, National Army Museum (NAM), 7505-57. Note that the Company's military records refer to him as Pirkes.

14. Robert Hollohan to Gnr William Hollohan, 2/1st Bombay Artillery, 13 May 1855, IOLR, Mss.Eur.F.133/27; Pte Matthew Brown, 2nd EBF, to 'Dear Sir', Lahore, 24 August 1849, Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI), D.813/24

In surveying the reasons for which those whose letters, diaries or reminiscences have survived, however, it is striking how many were prompted to enlist by an emotional rather than economic crisis, particularly with their families. Mark Crummie fell out with his step mother and was persuaded to join the 'Flying Horse Artillery'.<sup>15</sup> Though John Ramsbottom claimed to have enlisted simply because he 'did not like to begin work again', his subsequent letters betray an obsession with Emma Broomhead: four years later he would still 'marry her to morrow ... if she was hear'.<sup>16</sup> William Pattison told his mother seven years after his enlistment that his 'heart still remains the same' towards 'Jane'.<sup>17</sup> Several letters bear poignant appeals for forgiveness for acts of youthful defiance. Thomas Woodley sorrowfully wrote to his father that:

Certainly I must own that it was my own fault .. when I humble myself ... I thought that I might be forgiven by him who calls himself my father but no...<sup>18</sup>

**Staff Sergeant Mark Crummie, No. 4221, 3/1st Bengal Horse Artillery. Galvanized ironworker, of Poplar, Middlesex; enl. London, August 1844. Queen, December 1844; served Burmah, Punjab, Oudh and trans-Raptee campaigns, 1857-58; disch. Canterbury, September 1864**

**Lance Sergeant John Ramsbottom, 1st Bombay European Fusillers. File cutter of Manchester, enl. London, October 1853, aged 23, Salamanca, disch. July 1859**

**Schoolmaster Sergeant William Pattison, Bengal Artillery. Harness maker of Belfast, enl. Dublin June 1830; admitted to pension 1859**

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15. Crummie papers, ERO

16. Pte John Ramsbottom to 'William', [1854],; to 'Jack', Mooltan, 19 March 1858, British Library (BL) Add.Ms.59876

17. Corporal William Pattison to his mother, Dum-Dum, 13 October 1837, NAM, 6702-66-2

18. Gnr Thomas Woodley [alias Lawson] to his father, Ferozepore, 4 February 1852, Soldiers' references, IOLR, L/MIL/5/362, Part 2. John Downie, in a letter to his parents from Sholopore, 10 November 1848, also hinted at a family quarrel which a decade after his enlistment 'brings me days and weeks of grieve', SUSM.

Many men, like Woodley, enlisted under assumed names, a sign that they wished not to be traced. They included Joshua Grierson, one of the stormers of the Kashmir gate in 1857, and Frederick Whirlpool, awarded the Victoria Cross in 1858.<sup>19</sup> That the Company's army served as a refuge of the kind which the French Foreign Legion was later romantically portrayed is suggested by the number of black-coated men who enlisted as privates, in much greater numbers than the Queen's force. They included law students, opticians and accountants, and notably medical students or surgeons - at least 26 enlisting in the Bengal regiments during the 1840s, perhaps fleeing the horrors of the operating room, or, more prosaically, financial insecurity.<sup>20</sup>

The decision to enter the Company's service appears to have been, more often than for Queen's recruits, a considered choice. That virtually every draft sent to India included men who had purchased their discharge from the Queen's service testifies to the contrast.<sup>21</sup> Thomas Quinney enlisted after casting about for a calling that provided a good wage and a 'competency' in old age. The Company's service offered both.<sup>22</sup> John Brown remarked how he joined 'of my own volition'.<sup>23</sup> George Carter, hardly destitute, kept a room at a nearby inn on arriving at the Company's depot.<sup>24</sup> Since the Company's trooping season extended over the British summer many recruits joined in good weather, not during winter, the best friend of the Queen's recruiting sergeant. That enlistment for many recruits was evidently not an act of desperation proved significant in defining the culture of the Company's Europeans, in that the force was distinguished by its members' eagerness to better themselves. The force may therefore permit a closer examination

**Gunner Thomas Woodley (real name Thomas Lawson), 4/3rd Bengal Artillery. Labourer, of Castle Dargan, Sligo; enl. 1847; d., of consumption, Jullunder, July 1859**

**Second Corporal Joshua Grierson (alias Frank Burgess) (1835-57), Bengal Sappers and Miners. Clerk, of Edinburgh; enl. in Edinburgh, September 1854; Minden, November 1856; killed in the storming of the Kashmir gate, September 1857**

**Private Frederick Whirlpool (c. 1831-99), 3rd Bombay European Regiment. Teacher, of Ulster, real name unknown; VC, 1858; inv. to Australia, 1859**

**Sergeant Major George Carter, 2nd Assam Light Infantry. Apprentice bookbinder, of Edinburgh, enl. June 1839, Liverpool, Edinburgh, 1839; served 2nd European Bengal Fusillers, 1839-56; TML 1856; disch. 1861**

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19. Roger Perkins, *The Kashmir gate: Lieutenant Home and the Delhi VCs*, Chippenham, 1983, pp. 122-25; Peter Stanley, 'Frederick Whirlpool, VC', *Journal of the Australian War Memorial*, April 1984, no. 4, p. 40

20. Registers of European soldiers, 1840-50, IOLR, L/MIL/10/124-25

21. Depot Embarkation lists, 1824-55, IOLR

22. Quinney, *Sketches of a soldier's life*, pp. 2-3

23. Brown private journal, NLS

24. 'Jot book' of Sgt Maj George Carter, IOLR, Mss.Eur.E.262

of those whom Janet McCalman calls 'the most elusive people in Victorian England', the respectable working-class.<sup>25</sup>

Recruiting sergeants knew that the Company needed intelligent artisans as well as brawny young fighters. In 1853 they accepted as a sapper a printer whose arms were different lengths, a handicap he attributed to his playing the violin.<sup>26</sup> Because from 1824 until the rebellion the European force consisted predominantly of artillery, it required more intelligent and mechanically adept men. John McCosh, one of the force's surgeons, described gunners as 'generally ... more careful, steady, [and] studious'.<sup>27</sup> The Company policed the quality of its recruits. Once attested before a magistrate and passed by a doctor, recruits entered the Company's depot, at Chatham until 1843, thereafter at Warley, in Essex. There Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Leslie imposed a system which did much to maintain the quality of the recruits shipped to India each summer. The depot letter books show how Leslie and his staff enquired into many recruits' circumstances, weeding out deserters from the Queen's service, truant apprentices and other undesirables, often undoing the recruiting sergeants' best efforts.<sup>28</sup>

Surgeon John McCosh, Bengal army; 2nd European Bengal Fusiliers, late 1840s; appt. 1831

Lieutenant Colonel John Thomas Leslie (1803-68) Bombay Artillery. 'No parentage'; comm. 1820; Captain, 1833; ret. as hon Colonel, 1854; Recruiting officer, Newry, 1847-49; Commandant of Warley depot, 1850-61

Only for Irishmen was enlistment often impelled by a broader economic imperative. Following the great famine, a time coinciding with one of the force's periodic expansions, Irish recruits became more prominent than before. Though its ethnic composition has never been investigated comprehensively, influential memoirs have created the impression that it was predominantly Irish.<sup>29</sup> The Irishness of the Company's Europeans was, however, misrepresented even at the time, an impression which has never since been examined or redressed. Many officers in rendering their men's direct speech, in both letters and memoirs,

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25. Janet McCalman, *Respectability and working-class radicalism in Victorian London: 1850-1890*, PhD, Australian National University, 1975, p. 3

26. Depot embarkation list, Minden, 1856, IOLR, L/MIL/9/81. As a sapper, the man had trained at Woolwich in the meantime, and embarked with his wife and child.

27. Dr John McCosh, PP 1863, Vol. XIX, Report of the commissioners appointed to inquire into the sanitary state of the army in India, *Précis of evidence*, p. 247

28. Depot letter book I, 1846-51, IOLR, L/MIL/9/55

29. Particularly in Frederick Roberts's Forty-one years in India from subaltern to commander-in-chief, London, 1898 and N.W. Bancroft's From recruit to staff sergeant, both of which recalled the Bengal Horse Artillery in the mid-1840s to mid-1850s, the period of greatest Irish enlistment.

gave them stage Irish accents.<sup>30</sup> A survey of the composition of drafts throughout the period reveals, inevitably, a more complex picture. Rather than a predominantly Irish force throughout the period, Irish recruits comprised between a third and three-quarters of particular drafts, but they predominated only in the late 1830s and the late 1840s. The proportions of the force relative to the populations of the components of the kingdom are immaterial; what matters is the flavour of the force as men experienced it.

Recruits for the Company's service characteristically hoped for advancement. Within the Queen's service soldiers could realistically hope only for promotion through non-commissioned ranks to sergeant major. The Company's service, however, offered not only similar opportunities for promotion within the regiment, but even better prospects beyond it. Thomas Quinney, enumerating the possibilities open exclusively to soldiers of the Company's service (in his Sketches of a soldier's life in India, which the Company included in the libraries of troop transports), declared that '[h]e must be a silly fellow who cannot make himself something better than a private in this service'.<sup>31</sup> The differences between the Queen's and Company's services were in this respect profound. The Queen's force could almost be defined by its limitations, the Company's by its possibilities. One rewarded fidelity to the regiment, the other allowed and encouraged the pursuit of individual aspiration beyond its confines.

Promotion beyond the European regiments was regulated by the 'Town Major's list' maintained at each presidency.<sup>32</sup> In 1856 the largest single group of appointments (230, about a third) comprised the two European sergeants posted to each sepoy corps (going 'for the blackies', as the men said).<sup>33</sup> More envied still were the 150 warrant officers seconded to the Ordnance and Commissariat departments as sub-conductors at £9 a month, with possibilities of becoming conductors at monthly salaries of £14 and even assistant deputy commissaries at a salary higher than a subaltern's. The roads and canals constructed by the Public Works Department

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30. When they could understand them at all. Lt Daniel Sandford of the 2nd Fusiliers recalled how the Sikhs captured a 'perfect Yahoo ... from the wilds of Ireland'. They released him: 'they could get nothing out of him. No more can we': Leaves from the journal of a subaltern during the campaign in the Punjab, Edinburgh, 1849, p. 67.

31. Quinney, Sketches of a soldier's life, p. 91

32. Confusingly, by the 1830s oversight of the list appears to have passed from the Town Major (the officer in charge of administrative arrangements in Fort William) to the Adjutant General's office.

33. Col John Welchman, giving evidence before the Commissioners appointed to inquire into the organization of the Indian army, PP 1859 (I), Vol. V, minutes of evidence, p. 17, q. 490 (hereafter referred to as the Peel Commission, after its chairman, Maj Gen Sir Jonathan Peel, Secretary of State for War).

needed surveyors and overseers - 83 in 1856 - employed at monthly salaries of up to £6.<sup>34</sup> Assistant overseers trained for a year at Thomason College at Roorkee, and could thereafter superintend hundreds of miles of road and as many labourers. The diverse agencies of military and civil administration created hundreds of miscellaneous positions for bazaar, barrack, bullock, stud, or magazine sergeants, and positions in offices, prisons, laboratories and telegraph stations. In the decades before the rebellion the list grew faster than the force as a whole, from 281 in 1821 to 737 in 1856, over ten per cent of the entire force.<sup>35</sup>

Skilled men permitted to remain in India after discharge  
could find work in one of a dozen trades serving the Anglo-

Sidney Lamar Blanchard (c.1825-83), editor, Bengal hurkaru c. 1857.

Indian population. Each magazine, for example, employed several European clerks, while the Adjutant General's office operated a printery with nine Europeans, including four compositors. Others clerked for European merchants, in the uncovenanted civil service or, in the 1850s, on the railways beginning construction. Newspapers attracted men whom Sidney Blanchard described as 'private soldiers of a better class' as journalists, which partially explains their interest in the troops' welfare and in military controversy.<sup>36</sup> Two companions of 'Charles Masson' became clerks, one with a private firm in Calcutta, the other in the Adjutant-General's office.<sup>37</sup>

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34. Bengal army muster rolls and casualty returns, 1856, IOLR; Quinney, Sketches of a soldier's life, p. 90

35. Alphabetical annual long roll, Bengal Town Major's list, 1 September 1856, Bengal muster rolls and casualty returns, 1856, IOLR, L/MIL/10/177. The number of Europeans serving in Bengal in 1856 is computed from PP 1859 (I), Vol. V, Appendix 15, p. 21.

36. Sidney Blanchard, Yesterday and today in India, London, 1867, p. 281. The prolific Anglo-Indian journalist J.H. Stocqueler (also known as J.H. Siddons) is said to have been a member of the European force, (for example in S. Austin Allibone's Dictionary of English literature, Philadelphia, 1870, Vol. II, p. 2265) but the evidence is inconclusive. I am grateful to Mr Brian Stevens for his assistance in searching for signs of his military career among the records of the Military Department.

37. 'Masson' enlisted as John Lewis and served as a horse gunner until deserting just after the siege of Bhurtapore. A celebrated explorer of central Asia, he remains the only soldier of the Company's service to have been accorded a biography, Gordon Whitteridge, Charles Masson of Afghanistan, Warminster, 1986. Whitteridge consulted letters from Lewis's former comrades held in the IOLR at Mss.Eur.E.161; p. 5.

For those remaining within the force promotion conferred several benefits, not the least pecuniary. When George Carter met Godfrey Leonard, quartermaster sergeant of a Goorkha battalion who had left the 2nd Fusiliers in 1852, he noted enviously how 'very comfortably situated' Leonard was, on Rs75 a month, 'a good bungalow to himself' and four hours work a day.<sup>38</sup> Even more, men on the Town Major's list were able to save, as the estates of those who died show. In the early 1850s privates in the 1st Fusiliers left estates of about thirty rupees, the equivalent of about two months' pay, while sergeant majors and overseers were leaving estates worth about 950 rupees, the equivalent of £95 or about eighteen months' pay.<sup>39</sup> Their wills reveal instances of steady accumulation: in 1854 Corporal Oswald Child, a gunner seconded to the Public Works Department as assistant overseer of the Burdwan embankments, bequeathed Rs3,226, the equivalent of £300.<sup>40</sup> Senior non-commissioned officers and warrant officers received ample pensions: up to £75 a year for medical warrant officers, for example.<sup>41</sup> Other advantages were less tangible but equally appreciated. Warrant officers were allowed the privilege of furlough in 1856, and their respected standing in the Anglo-Indian hierarchy could allow a handful to rise socially.<sup>42</sup> A former private of the 3rd Bengal Europeans, John Lyons, rose over thirty years to honorary captain before suffering the classic Anglo-Indian fate, dying after being mauled by a tiger.<sup>43</sup> Aspiration therefore marked many members of the European force. Thomas Quinney believed that 'the greater number' of men in the Company's service were 'anxious to return home, in a better condition than when they left'.<sup>44</sup>

Quartermaster Sergeant Godfrey Leonard, Nusseree Bn. Servant, of Dublin, enl. Dublin, August 1839, **Repulse**, 1840; served 2nd European Bengal Fusiliers.

Corporal Oswald Child, Bengal Artillery and Bengal Sappers and Miners. Clerk, of Waltham, Essex, enl. March 1851, at Southampton, aged 20; d. in hospital, March 1854

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38. Carter jot book, entry for 7 September 1856, IOLR. Carter himself, as a pay sergeant, made just under Rs30 per month.

39. 'Annual account of the estates of deceased ... 1st European Bengal Fusiliers', 1 November 1851, Bengal muster rolls and casualty returns, 1851, IOLR, L/MIL/10/172

40. Soldiers' wills, 1853-54, Estates Branch, Military Department, National Archives of India (NAI)

41. General Order 279, 22 July 1848, Regulations applicable to the European officer in India, London, 1865, Part III, p. 1101

42. General regulations of the Bengal army, 1855, Section XXXVI, p. 44

43. Papers of Conductor John Lyons, NAM, 8311-76

44. Quinney, Sketches of a soldier's life, p. 144. In this the Company's soldiers reflect the artisan's impulses toward thrift and respectability discussed by Robert Gray, 'Thrift and working-class mobility in Victorian Edinburgh', in A. Allan MacLaren, Social class in Scotland: past and present, Edinburgh, nd, pp. 128-42.

Little direct evidence exists to disclose men's motivations in accepting the Company's rather than the Queen's shilling.

Corporal Henry Smith, Madras Sappers and Miners. Draughtsman, enl. 1846, d. c. 1853

Sets of brothers enlisting suggests that men joined after considering their options, but there is little indication that, say, printers sought out the Company's service in the expectation of obtaining positions in the Government Lithographic Press.<sup>45</sup> It is, however, plausible that artisans in Britain talked of the favourable prospects obtainable through enlistment in the Company's service. Thomas Leslie, accounting for the Company's success in attracting reliable recruits, explained simply how awareness of the Company's conditions of service spread: 'one man informs another'.<sup>46</sup> 'Broken-down gentlemen' more often sought enlistment in the Company's service; Mark Crummie explained that they knew of the opportunities offered by the Company.<sup>47</sup> Certainly draughtsmen and chemists enlisted hoping to obtain situations as surveyors and apothecaries in the Company's military and civil establishments. The papers of Henry Smith, a 'first rate Civil Engineer' reveal these men's aspirations, and the risks they took in attaining them. Smith, a surveyor, enlisted in 1846 after a family quarrel, looking to purchase his discharge and become a civil engineer. By 1849 his hopes of obtaining a position looked grim ('all have forgotten me ... I have regretted my foolish step') but in 1850 he became an assistant surveyor at a salary of Rs140 a month, eight times his military pay. He apparently died in 1853, the breach with his family so complete that his effects were never able to be returned.<sup>48</sup>

Clerks provide the clearest sign that recruits regarded enlistment in the Company's service as a route to prosperity. Not only do these men exemplify the aspirations of a substantial proportion of recruits for the Company, they were also to exercise a critical, and problematic, part in the events of 1859. They therefore justify detailed attention. Since most situations of responsibility required literacy and numeracy, and often command of a native language, literate and intelligent men were welcomed by the Company's recruiting parties. The Company seems to have accepted proportionately twice as many clerks as did the Queen's army, some 1,200 joining the Bengal Europeans between 1840 and 1857, about a tenth of all recruits.<sup>49</sup>

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45. Three sets of brothers embarked on the Edinburgh in 1839, for example, presumably having chosen the force deliberately: Depot embarkation lists, IOLR, L/MIL/9/78.

46. Evidence of Lt Col Thomas Leslie, PP 1861, Vol. XV, Report of the commissioners appointed to inquire into the present system of recruiting the army, minutes of evidence, p. 29, q. 494

47. Bengal hurkaru, 12 May 1842; Crummie papers, ERO It is possible that awareness of the possibilities of service in India existed in the way that young men in Australia regard the north-west of Western Australia, a source of enrichment at the cost of hardship and separation.

48. Effects of Cpl Henry Smith, Madras Sappers and Miners, IOLR, Mss.Eur.F.133/51

49. Registers of European soldiers, 1840-57, IOLR, L/MIL/10/124-27

Little is known of these men, either individually or in the aggregate, and their motives in enlisting must largely be inferred.<sup>50</sup> The impression that clerks believed that prospects in India were favourable seems to have been common. In the 1840s the military authorities realised that men were enlisting with the intention of purchasing their discharge. In 1847 Lord Hardinge refused permission to two recently-landed recruits, though they could afford the £40 required. He insisted that they serve two years before again applying: by then both had died.<sup>51</sup> Both had possessed marketable skills, one a cabinet maker, the other a clerk.<sup>52</sup> Former clerks were easily the largest single occupational group to purchase discharge (about nine per cent, compared to two per cent of all recruits).

The Queen's army regarded such men as a risk rather than an asset, and accepted them reluctantly. Henry Marshall included them in a class of recruits which he considered

**Henry Marshall (1775-1851)**  
**Military surgeon, statistician and reformer, author of several works on the contemporary army**

'objectionable', including footmen, shopmen, profligate young gentlemen and 'out of place clerks'.<sup>53</sup> Allegedly distinguished from most recruits by their wan complexions, doughy skin, clean teeth and fullness of belly, they were suspected of having been corrupted by proximity to the soldier's usual social superiors. Literacy itself seems to have caused unease, particularly to Wellington, whom an admiring biographer conceded was 'no great promoter of high education for the working classes'.<sup>54</sup> Such men allegedly became, in contemporary terms, 'lawyers', liable to contest commands and lead combinations against authority.

The motivations of those entering the two services seem therefore to have been distinct. Certainly, the Company's sergeants accepted desperate men, and ambitious men took the Queen's shilling. While soldiering for the Queen was 'not ... a career into which a reasonable and prudent man may be expected to enter', the Company's force included many men who were

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50. It is, for example, impossible to determine the religious denominations to which recruits belonged, precluding comparison with the Queen's army on one of the measures most likely to establish the 'respectability' of its men. For a discussion of the denominational composition of the Queen's army, see H.J. Hanham, 'Religion and nationality in the mid-Victorian army', in M.R.D. Foot, *War and society: historical essays in honour and memory of J.R. Western*. London, 1973, pp. 159-82.

51. Memo 're soldiers purchasing their discharge', 12 June 1847, Hardinge papers, IOLR, Reel neg. 11691 Vol. 1-2

52. In the Queen's army in the years 1845 and 1846, no men of under ten years' service purchased their discharge: 'Return showing the number of ... men ... discharged', PP 1847, Vol. XXXVI, p. 74.

53. Henry Marshall, *Hints to young medical officers of the army on the examination of recruits*. London, 1828, p. 69

54. G.R. Gleig, *The life of Arthur Duke of Wellington*, London, 1873, p. 401

looking beyond enlistment to the wider prospects it could offer.<sup>55</sup> Enlistment in the Company's service in many ways paralleled the struggle of the lives of the respectable labouring poor, aspiration impelling men to rise, chance and circumstance conspiring to blight their ambition. It was perhaps fortunate that at the moment the recruit reached for the recruiting sergeant's proffered bounty he was most likely unaware of what its acceptance could entail.

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On the eve of the rebellion of its native force the Bengal army included some 3100 European officers, 500 in Queen's regiments, 400 in the Company's European and the remainder in native corps.<sup>56</sup> Observed from afar the two groups seem superficially similar: both regarded themselves as gentlemen. Among others, an anonymous Company's officer asserted in 1853 that Company's officers were 'nothing inferior to those in the royal services', that they were '[b]orn of the same stock'.<sup>57</sup> That the assurance was considered necessary suggests reservations over the two services' similarity. To other contemporary observers the two services were distinct, with the Company's men distinctly inferior. In 1843, for example, in deprecating an attempt by Queen's officers to veto Company's officers joining the Junior United Service Club, even the Bengal hurkaru (a newspaper sustained by officers' subscriptions) conceded that many of the Company's officers were unequal 'in point of family', referring obscurely to 'objections of a social, not of a military character'. Its leader added that the 'contempt' of Queen's officers was encouraged by the Indian officers' 'peculiarities ... which are opposed to a wellbred Englishman's ideas of conventional proprieties'.<sup>58</sup> As William Arnold put it in his novel Oakfield, the Company's officers were 'heartily laughed at by the service which they aped'.<sup>59</sup> The comparison recurred, and the degree and nature of these perceived and actual differences dominated the European officers' conception of their force's military and social value. The 'entire history' of the Company's force, said one of its generals,

**Lieutenant William Delafield Arnold (1828-59), 58th Bengal Native Infantry. son of Thomas and brother of Matthew; educ. Rugby, Oxford (one year); comm. 1848; detached to civil service 1851; published Oakfield, 1853; Director of Public Instruction in the Punjab, 1855-58**

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55. John Godley, 'Memorandum on the means of Recruiting the Army ...', March 1859, Cambridge papers, IOLR, Reel pos. 7161

56. Appendix 15 to PP 1859 (I), Vol. V, Appendices, p. 21

57. Anon, Grievances and present condition of our Indian officers, considered with a view to improvement and redress, np, 1853, p. 7

58. Bengal hurkaru, 28 July 1843

59. W.D. Arnold, Oakfield or fellowship in the east, [1854], Leicester, 1773, p. 231

'is one continual struggle to obtain equal rights and honours with the Line Army.'<sup>60</sup> Wellington long remained one of the Company's officers' most influential adversaries. Having made his reputation as a 'sepoy general' in the first Deccan war, he had become intimately acquainted with them. He made numerous references to Indian officers, most disparaging.<sup>61</sup> Coming from the victor of Waterloo this did the Company's officers much damage. Wellington held the view throughout his life; and considering that no serving officers of the Company officially participated in his funeral procession in 1852, perhaps he even slighted them from beyond the grave.<sup>62</sup>

Resentment was mutual; neither force monopolized power.

Lucrative divisional and brigade commands were distributed according to a formula which gave commands disproportionately to Queen's officers. For regimental officers the material rewards of Indian service

**John Pollard Willoughby (1799-1866), ByCS, a director of the East India Company, 1854-58**

**Major General Henry Hancock, Bombay Army. Comm. 1818; on furlough, 1858**

overwhelmingly went to those of the Company. Not until days before the outbreak at Meerut were appointments in the Company's service opened to royal officers, a monopoly resented by many royal officers.<sup>63</sup> In matters of prestige so dear to them, Company's officers resented that their standing as officers went unrecognised west of the Cape of Good Hope until 1855 and that they were slowly and, it seemed, grudgingly accepted as eligible to receive honours they coveted. John Pollard Willoughby offered examples of honours tardily conferred: the 'highly-esteemed honour' of aide-de-camp to the Queen granted only in 1842; a royal monopoly on the position of commander-in-chief of a presidency army persisting until 1856. Henry Hancock, a partisan of the Company, concluded that such slights aroused 'jealousies and heartburnings'.<sup>64</sup> Most galling of all for the Company's officers was their customary subordination to royal

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60. PP 1859 (I), Vol. V, p. 616, Report of Major General Hancock

61. See, for example, his remarks in Sidney J. Owen, (ed.), A selection from the despatches, memoranda, and other papers relating to India of Field Marshal the Duke of Wellington, Oxford, 1880. Writing to Lord Ellenborough in 1829 he declared that its officers' 'absolute impossibility of ... living in their own country at their ease' to be an 'excitement to mutiny' (p. 643). Lord John Russell disclosed that he had 'heard the ... Duke ... at least ten or twelve times' describe the local force as 'deficient in discipline': Hansard's parliamentary debates, 27 July 1860, Vol. CLX, column 329.

62. The detailed report of the Duke's funeral, in the Times of 19 November 1852, reveals that the Company was represented by six other ranks, a delegation of directors in a coach and Lt Gen Sir George Pollock, among those representing the knights of the Bath. No other Company's officers appear to have participated, though two officers from every Queen's regiment marched, as well as six infantry and two cavalry regiments entire.

63. General Order 7 May 1857, Compilation of standing general orders ... issued to Her Majesty's forces in India, Calcutta 1860

64. PP 1859 (I), Vol. V, minutes of evidence, p. 270, q. 611

officers of equal rank, and that the differing systems of promotion within the two armies permitted relatively young royal officers to supersede experienced Company's officers.<sup>65</sup> Partly the consequence of the circumstances of their service in India, the differences dividing the two forces also stemmed from conceptions of 'respectability' and 'quality' among the British middle-class.

The few existing studies of the Company's officers suggest the degree to which the two forces differed in composition. The officers of the Company's army were drawn from the more unassuming strata of the middle-class. John Bourne's analysis of the backgrounds of officers of the Bengal army in the period 1796-1854, based on applications for cadetships, (summarized in Table 2) illuminates the distinct composition of the Company's cadets. Their parents would have been accustomed to living on modest and often fixed incomes, obliged to earn rather than spend an income and anxious to provide for large families.<sup>66</sup>

The Company's officers may be contrasted briefly with those of the Queen's army. In 1840 only eight per cent of entrants to the Royal Military College, Sandhurst, were the sons of other than 'gentlemen' or military officers.<sup>67</sup> Of colonels in 1854 an eighth were sons of peers or baronets, a quarter came of the 'gentry' with just five per cent sons of professional men.<sup>68</sup> Commissions in the Queen's army required an adequate private income: if by 1847 forty per cent of commissions were obtained through seniority or merit, ninety per cent of first commissions were bought.<sup>69</sup> Recent research qualifying the conventional impression that Queen's officers came from 'aristocratic' backgrounds nevertheless confirms that wealth as well as birth determined that overwhelmingly 'gentlemen by education, manners and habits' were accepted as

65. For a statement of this understanding, see 'Copy of letter written by Lord Hill [Commander-in-Chief in Britain] to President of the Board of Control [Charles Grant], 25 March 1834, PP 1868-69, Vol. XXXVI, Officers (Queen's army and Indian army), p. 529

66. J.M. Bourne, *The civil and military patronage of the East India Company, 1784-1858*, PhD, University of Leicester, 1977, pp. 187. T.A. Heathcote's survey of 1,945 officers of the Bengal army, 1821-34 (based on V.C.P. Hodson's *List of the officers of the Bengal army, 1758-1834*, 4 vols, London, 1927), broadly agrees: *The Indian army: the garrison of British India, 1822-1922*, pp. 122-7.

67. C.B. Otley, 'The social origins of British army officers', *Sociological review*, (NS) Vol. 18, 1970, p. 224. Edward Spiers points out (in *The army and society, 1815-1914*, London, 1980, p. 6) that because orphans entered Sandhurst at public expense the composition of its cadets may not mirror that of Queen's officers as a whole. Even so, it is clear that the Queen's army drew officers from more substantial backgrounds than did the Company.

68. Spiers, *The army and society*, p. 8

69. Michael Glover, 'The purchase of commissions: a reappraisal', *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, Vol. LVIII, Winter 1980, No. 236, p. 234; Spiers, *The army and society, 1815-1914*, p. 12

**Table 2**  
**Backgrounds of Company's cadets, 1825-56**

The applications for cadetships preserved in the India Office Library and Records' 'Cadet papers' enabled John Bourne to construct detailed tables showing the occupations of young men entering the Company's service from 1796 to 1854.<sup>1</sup>

Decade:	1821-30	1831-40	1841-50
<b>Father's occupation:</b>			
Company's service	15.3	35.6	29.9
Gentlemen	4.0	7.7	8.3
Commercial, manufacturing	6.5	7.7	6.4
Clergy	4.4	6.7	11.8
HM services	15.2	18.3	15.2
Medical	2.2	7.7	3.4
Legal	9.5	4.8	7.4
Civil service	3.3	2.9	2.9
MPs	1.1	-	-
Tradesmen	4.0	1.9	0.5
Other	5.8	4.8	3.9
No information	28.7	1.9	10.3

These figures suggest several conclusions. That about a third of cadets came from 'Anglo-Indian' families hints that the Company's service tended to propagate itself. That the father of one cadet in seven had been a Queen's officer serves as a reminder of the complexity of relationships between the two forces. The relative scarcity of sons of 'gentlemen', however, explains the Company's service's comparatively low esteem. The substantial proportion of 'no information' suggests at worst evasion or outright deception on the part of many aspiring cadets, and at best an insecurity of standing. It is apparent that statements in intending cadets' applications glossed over nuances of status. Charles Napier, for example, generally a sympathetic observer of the Company's officers, regarded more than half of those of a European corps as 'no better than attorneys' clerks'.<sup>2</sup>

1. Abridged from Table 8a, '... showing fathers' occupations of recruits to the East India Company's military service, 1796-1854', Bourne, *The civil and military patronage of the East India Company, 1784-1858*, p. 187

2. Napier to William Napier, August 1844, Napier, *Life and opinions*, Vol. III, p. 135

officers.<sup>70</sup> Despite their protestations, Company's officers generally could match neither the birth nor the wealth of their brothers in the royal service.

The differences between the officers of the two forces, when measured by criteria such as origins, education or ethnicity and expressed as statistical aggregates and means, appear to be relatively minor. Each group's pretensions to gentility, admittedly more substantial in the case of the Queen's officers, appears sound. Considered as groups of individuals in the regimental messes in which they lived, a contrast becomes apparent. Unambiguous evidence of the social standing of individuals is difficult to obtain and, given the subtlety of nuance, harder to interpret. W.C. Erskine's memoir presents a collective portrait of the men with whom he shared the mess of the 73rd Bengal Native Infantry in the late 1830s. Written in 1848, it may have been recorded out of spite or as a caricature whose exaggerations would only be apparent to those familiar with its subjects. Accepting that it may not be representative, it raises several issues in introducing the character of the Bengal army's European officers.<sup>71</sup>

**Walter Coningsby Erskine (1810-72). Comm. 1828; served 73rd Bengal Native Infantry, 1829-49; civil positions 1849-61; 12th Earl of Kelle, 1866**

The 73rd was commanded by Major Walter Yates, 'a little stout [J]ewish looking man'. Yates was at first amusing and hospitable, but became suspicious and quarrelsome, particularly when he felt that his officers slighted his dark Eurasian daughter. The adjutant, Francis Thomas, though 'the best humoured fellow in existence' was 'an illiterate, ignorant fellow' who 'every night ... went to bed the worse for liquor'. James Oliver was an excellent officer, though evasive over his birth and background. Henry Patch, 'a man of inferior mind [and] of vulgar manners' was 'not an ornament'. Nor was Robert McNair, a 'vulgar' man who 'would have made a much better merchant than soldier'. Robert Crofton, who had exchanged from a European corps, was 'a drunken half witted fellow, clever and well informed but fond of low company'. William Andrews, 'gentlemanly in his manners', played the flute and violin but was '[v]ery foppish in his dress and yet exceptionally dirty in person', and was called by a young lady 'the dirty dandy'. Edward Hopper, nick-named 'Paddy', was 'fond of his lass and his glass'. Andrew MacDougall was 'a Scotchman by name but a low cockney by birth'. Though 'excessively ignorant' he joined Andrews on flute and violin, but with more persistence than accomplishment. Erskine regarded his 'chum', James Sleeman, later renowned as the suppressor of thugee, as 'decidedly a gentleman', but even he was 'excessively conceited'. James Marshall was in mixed company 'gentlemanly... but amongst his familiars he is most gross in his language'. William Richardson ignored debts but 'spends most of his pay on

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70. Strachan, Wellington's legacy, pp. 110-11, quoting the Times, 24 October 1840

71. Extract from memoir by W.C. Erskine, NAM, 7106-24

women'. This odd group is far from the conventional ideal of the regimental mess or of the gentleman's club. Some of the failings Erskine recorded - such as Sleeman's vanity - were personal, but most are significant in that they point to a particular tone in the regiment's mess, and, more broadly, raise questions about the character of the European officers as a whole.

And yet, measured against the details of paternal occupation on which existing surveys have been based, the 73rd's officers appear to have been solidly middle-class: Andrews and Patch were sons of surgeons, MacDougall and Crofton of solicitors, Hunter, Marshall and Thomas of military officers, McNair a customs official, Sleeman a merchant, Oliver a minister. Only Richardson, the son of a 'slop seller', and Yates, son of a tobacco manufacturer, were clearly marginal.<sup>72</sup> The comparison suggests that nuances of respectability apparent to contemporaries may not be recaptured even by fine statistical sieves. If the 73rd's mess was at all representative it also raises the questions of why and how the European officers of the Bengal army were so different to the Queen's army. If, as an officer of the Madras Europeans wrote, 'every man in the Company's service has brothers, father, or relations in the Queen's'. why were the Company's officers so poorly thought of and, as a Madras officer put it, 'not so agreeable or polished'?<sup>73</sup>

Just as Queen's officers may not have been as genteel as they have been thought (and the poorer ones unable to evade service in India even less so) so their disparagement of the Company's officers may have helped to bolster their own esteem. Garnet Wolseley, for example, found 'the great bulk' of the Queen's officers he encountered in India in the

**Captain Garnet Joseph Wolseley (1833-1913), 90th Light Infantry. Comm. 1852; served Burmah, Crimea, rebellion (Lucknow, Oudh), China, Canada, Africa; succeeded Cambridge as Commander-in-Chief of the British army, 1895-99**

early 1850s 'socially not of a high order ... wanting in good breeding and ... badly educated'.<sup>74</sup> Antagonism between the two forces cannot, however, be attributed solely to the insecurity of Queen's officers, particularly as the Company's officers apparently were drawn from even less securely respectable strata. Answers lie in the conjunction of marginal middle-class Englishmen serving for many years in India, and the unique culture which it created.

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72. Erskine himself later inherited a Scottish earldom. Details of paternal occupation recorded in Hodson's List of officers of the Bengal army, and on the unpublished cards of officers entering the force after 1834 in the Hodson index in the National Army Museum, were evidently culled from the cadet papers.

73. S.H. Jones-Parry, An old soldier's memories, London, 1897, p. 255

74. Garnet Wolseley, The story of a soldier's life, 2 vols, London, 1903, Vol. I, p. 10

Several observers of the Company's officers noted, like Erskine, the presence of 'cockneys' as well as gentlemen in their messes. 'Cockney', a middle-class term of disparagement for those lacking in refinement, appears in several contemporary accounts, hinting at contrasts if not tensions within the service.<sup>75</sup> In May 1845, shortly after boarding the Seringapatam for Calcutta, William Hodson observed his fellow cadets. A little older than his fellows (having, unusually for a Company's cadet, taken a degree) he sat 'in silent amazement', wondering at their '[o]utrageous Cockneyism', and offending all by his aloofness.<sup>76</sup> The term and the type appear in other memoirs and contemporary letters. Thomas Fraser, for example, posted to the Bombay Europeans in the 1820s, recalled his disgust at a 'coarse-minded Scotch colonel', known as 'Lying Jack'.<sup>77</sup> Such officers were visible to men in the ranks. George Carter, for example, noted disapprovingly a captain in the 2nd infantry when he arrived in 1840, 'a most slovenly ill-dressed person'.<sup>78</sup> A court martial on a Private William Roberts of the 1st Fusiliers at Rangoon in 1853 indicates their significance. Roberts had impersonated a lieutenant of his regiment, obtaining from a European merchant a quantity of sardines, cheese, beer and hair oil, escaping punishment for reasons concealed by the brevity of the published proceedings. That a former butcher should attempt such a ruse suggests more substantial differences between officers and men in the Queen's than in the Company's.<sup>79</sup> Lying Jack and his ilk were the product of a complex historical and social process. Long service in India confronted all with choices and imperatives which often worked changes in individuals and which contributed to the development of a distinctive culture, one with its own values and standards of behaviour and judgement. The culture was not stationary, and through

**Major William Stephen Raikes Hodson (1821-58)** son of clergyman; educ. Rugby and Cambridge; comm. 1845; served first Punjab war; Lieutenant, 1849; commanded Guides Corps, 1852; raised Hodson's Horse, 1857; killed at Lucknow. Hodson's financial probity was then and later the subject of speculation.

**Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Gamble Fraser (1806-78)**, Bombay army. Comm. 1823; Captain, 1838; Major, 1851; ret. 1856

**Private William Roberts, No. 2059**, 1st European Bengal Fusiliers. Butcher, of Plymouth; enl. London, December 1849; Sea Park, November 1850

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75. K.C. Phillipps, Language and class in Victorian England, Oxford, 1984, p. 22, claims that the term disparaged urban dwellers, connecting social quality with rural residence. The predominantly urban backgrounds of Company's officers doubtless imparted an additional edge to the term.

76. Barry Joynson Cork, Rider on a grey horse: a life of Hodson of Hodson's Horse, London, 1958, p. 17

77. Thomas Fraser, Records of sport and military life in western India, London, 1881, p. 58

78. Carter jot book, IOLR

79. Proceedings of a GCM against Pte William Roberts, 7 February 1853, Bengal general orders, 1853, IOLR, L/MIL/17/2/302

the period changes can be traced, but it remained distinct from that of the Queen's officers, and was always regarded by them as inferior.

W.L. Burn noted that for contemporaries gentlemanly attributes included 'gentle birth, the ownership of land [and] money, some degree of education, courage and a high sense of honour, generosity and unselfishness'.<sup>80</sup> Matched against such criteria many Company's officers fell short of Queen's officers in all but courage. Men of dubious gentility were able to enter the service throughout the period. When Jim Harris arrived as an ensign in the 2nd Fusiliers in 1852, for example, he was unable to ride a horse.<sup>81</sup> Thomas Cadell's tattoos (see Illustration 1) may be explained as much by

blindness to genteel nuance as by youthful bravado. At the same time, in considering the economic advantages of accepting a commission in the Company's service, a correspondent to the Bengal hurkaru nominated as subalterns' contemporaries, 'articled clerks, young Templars, and Medical students', all peripherally rather than securely identifiable as gentlemen.<sup>82</sup> Few Queen's officers doubted their brother officers' inferiority.

It is difficult to understand these men, and harder still to like them. Obtaining more than a superficial acquaintance with them necessitates ranging across sources from the entire force over the whole period. Surprisingly little of their private correspondence survives in public collections, their memoirs are hardly more representative than those of their men, while their public writing often seems, in a word expressive of the tone of Anglo-Indian society, liverish. The writings of their critics, many of whom were fellow officers, are abundant and credible. And yet, however arrogant, carping, self-seeking and ill-humoured these men were, one suspects that at the heart of their individual and corporate existence lay feelings of anxiety, frustration and desperation. This, once realised, lends a rich irony to their pretensions, and tends to inspire sympathy rather than derision.

Lieutenant Thomas Cadell (1835-1919), 2nd European Bengal Fusiliers. Comm. 1854, VC, 1857; Captain, 1866; entered Political Department; Chief Commissioner of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, 1879-92

Lieutenant James Thomas Harris (1832-1914), 2nd European Bengal Fusiliers. Comm. 1849; served rebellion (Delhi) and second China war; Capt SC, 1861; ret. as hon. major general, 1881

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80. W.L. Burn, The age of equipoise, London, 1964, p. 257. Burn's discussion of 'the concept of gentility' in mid-Victorian Britain reveals how Queen's officers embodied the gentleman, and the extent to which changes in what was held to be acceptable behaviour (such as the decline of duelling) delineated the boundaries of gentility.

81. J.T. Harris, 'China Jim' being incidents and adventures in the life of an Indian mutiny veteran, London, 1912, p. 4

82. Bengal hurkaru, 24 December 1840. The very candour of the debate points to the Company's officers' concerns.



**Illustration 1**

Thomas Cadell, displaying his tattoos. They may be read as a sign of how cadets, as Henry Keene put it, 'carried the moods of schoolboys into the work of men' (NAM neg. no. 75592).



**Illustration 2**

Sir Charles Napier, sketched while addressing tribal leaders in Scinde. George Carter's jot book describes Napier as he appeared before the 2nd fusiliers in Beloochistan in January 1845. 'An extraordinary man', he recorded, dressed in 'a helmet something of the shape of a jockey's cap', a blue frock coat, brown leather 'inexpressibles', 'enormous boots' reaching to mid-thigh, his face adorned with beard and whiskers (from 'a contemporary sketch' reproduced in Rosamund Napier's Charles Napier).

The Company's officers have largely been neglected by the social historians of both the army and the empire. Concentration on a few outstanding individuals - Henry Lawrence, John Nicholson or Fred Roberts - has obscured these officers as the products of an historical process. The pattern of values, attitudes, expectations and customs they shared expressed a coherent and, in its own terms, comprehensible world view which influenced and explains their actions and reactions before and during the events which destroyed their world. Though an Anglo-Indian phenomenon, the culture of the officers of the Company's service was shaped fundamentally by the realities of middle-class life in Britain during the first half of the nineteenth century - by their desire to avoid or escape genteel poverty and its consequences - a consideration which must be recalled throughout if their world is to be understood.

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Whether a young man would enter the Queen's or the Company's service was sometimes determined by family sentiment or tradition, but for most it was a matter of simple economics. For middle-class families lacking the security of land or property, preserving gentility could be a precarious undertaking, especially in disposing of their children's futures in accordance with their aspirations. Daughters faced either a suitable marriage or spinsterhood. For sons, the traditional professions, including the army - the Queen's army - were possibilities given adequate means.<sup>83</sup> But not only would aspiring ensigns need to be acceptable to both the Horse Guards and to prospective colonels, they would also require a minimum of £500 to purchase a commission, or the good fortune to be able to secure a commission without purchase. Either would incur further costs in uniform and an allowance to supplement an officer's nominal pay. But 'gentlemen deficient in their rents', noted Sir Charles D'Oyley in his 'burlesque' of 1828, Tom Raw, the griffin, '[a]lways on India turn a longing eye'.<sup>84</sup> Entry to the Company's service cost half as much, in fees at its military seminary and outfitting expenses. It was further supposed that the Company's officers could live on their pay, and that they received generous pensions. Bourne's detailed scrutiny of the Cadet papers establishes the penury of many successful applicants.<sup>85</sup> Their relative poverty is indicated by their education. Between fifty and sixty per cent came from 'proprietary schools' - uncontrolled and variable in the education they imparted. One in eight had attended grammar school, the same proportion public

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83. J.M. Bourne, Patronage and society in nineteenth-century England, London, 1986, pp. 89-91

84. [Charles D'Oyley], Tom Raw, the griffin: a burlesque poem, in twelve cantos, London, 1828, p. 2

85. Bourne, The civil and military patronage of the East India Company, p. 194

school.<sup>86</sup> Earlier in the period memories of the 'nabobs' of the previous century suggested the possibility of amassing riches through trade or booty - the prospect of which declined as the Company imposed more rigorous standards of conduct on its servants. In introducing Tom Raw, D'Oyley satirized the attraction of the Company's service:

Of money making in the glorious East,  
Such and a thousand odd conceits,  
(By rich returning Nabobs sore increased)  
Fill the parental mind with feverish heats<sup>87</sup>

Parents or guardians seeking smaller outlays and greater security were drawn toward the Company's service.<sup>88</sup> The dual desire for economic security and for genteel standing dominated the reactions of the Company's officers throughout their service and would become critical in the crisis they faced following the rebellion.

Suplicants often secured cadetships by demonstrating what Bourne calls 'influential poverty', the conjunction of genteel pretension and economic privation.<sup>89</sup> Those soliciting appointments for sons, nephews or wards needed to be inured to rebuff. One described it as 'humiliating to be obliged to go from door to door of the several directors ... urging their claims upon them'.<sup>90</sup> Another, who in 1841 had organized a memorial seeking preference in patronage for officers' dependents, described the process as 'very little different from ... begging'.<sup>91</sup> Many directors, however, had risen from 'relative poverty and complete obscurity' or from the Indian services, and remained conscious of the predicament of those confronting the need to secure their children's future. While prudently serving their relations (as the numbers of directors' relatives in the East India register shows) they were acknowledged to be open to approaches from the needy genteel.<sup>92</sup> Company's officers acknowledged theirs to be a 'poor service'.<sup>93</sup> Harriet Tyler recalled years

**Lieutenant Montague Hall, 1st  
European Bengal Fusillers. Comm.  
1852**

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86. Ibid., p. 237

87. D'Oyley, Tom Raw, p.3

88. For the period 1821-54 at the time of their appointment a quarter of all cadets had lost their fathers: Bourne thesis, p.198.

89. Bourne, The civil and military patronage of the East India Company, p. 166

90. Testimony of Col T.M. Taylor, PP 1852, Vol. X, Select committee on Indian territories, p. 199, q. 1990

91. Testimony of Capt R.G. Macgregor, Ibid., p. 189, q. 1887

92. Bourne, The civil and military patronage of the East India Company, p. 166

93. 'Qui Hi', What is to be done with the Bengal army?, p. 46

later how her father could not afford even as a major to buy her a twelve-rupee toy, while a sympathetic civil official recalled that even in a cavalry regiment the officers kept no band, no mess, and only one charger between them.<sup>94</sup> Few sought cadetships who could avoid it, and many families made considerable sacrifices to do so. Montague Hall recorded in his diary how a year before to the day 'that deed was ... signed ... in which so much was sacrificed for my sake'.<sup>95</sup>

From 1810 until the Company's dissolution about a quarter of the Company's cadets attended its military seminary at Addiscombe, near Croydon. After passing an unexacting entrance examination young men of between fourteen and sixteen spent two years pursuing a curriculum heavy with arcane mathematics and light on idiomatic Hindoostanee (taught by men who had never been to India) and indulging in genuinely ingenious practical jokes.<sup>96</sup> Addiscombe was neither a serious public school concerned with classics and the formation of character nor a good technical academy.<sup>97</sup> Its most notable contributions were to introduce cadets to the robust male society which they would find in India and to preserve them from arriving in India at an even more vulnerable age. Cadets were appointed to the engineers, the artillery and to the infantry in order of what passed for academic merit.<sup>98</sup> Most infantry and all cavalry cadets, however, were appointed 'directly', arriving in India without any preparation and little guidance.

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94. Anthony Sattin, (ed.), An Englishwoman in India: the memoirs of Harriet Tytler 1828-1858, Oxford, 1986, p. 13; H.G. Keene, A servant of 'John Company', London, 1897, p. 99. The contrast with Queen's cavalry regiments is striking.

95. Diary of Ensign Montague Hall, 1st European Bengal Fusiliers, 27 January 1853, NAM, 5705/11/1

96. See H.M. Vibart, Addiscombe its heroes and men of note, London, 1894

97. J.M. Bourne, 'The East India Company's military seminary, Addiscombe, 1809-1858', Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research, Vol.LVII, Winter 1979, No. 323, pp. 206-22

98. Addiscombe's scholastic records offer monotonous runs of cadets making 'great' or 'very great' progress, indicating either curiously uniform achievement or remarkably feeble teaching: Monthly reports on Mathematics and Classics, 1851-61, IOLR, L/MIL/9/342.



**Illustration 3**

'Tom Raw in the midst of difficulties', from Sir Charles D'Oyley's Tom Raw the griffin, published in 1828. Financial woe, the fundamental reality for the officers of the Bengal army, would deepen when in the 1840s and 50s the children of the officers commissioned during the 1820s entered adulthood seeking secure futures (SLNSW).

Once committed to a military career there was little prospect of obtaining a second chance. Even Kendal Coghill, the son of a baronet who dined with friends in the Guards, felt 'like an exile ... for the infernal crime of poverty'.<sup>99</sup> Likewise Daniel Sandford, who expressed bitterness at his 'perpetual exile' because not in under twenty years did he think it possible to 'realise sufficient to ... live comfortably at home'.<sup>100</sup> There is in this a supreme irony. The British officer in India was indeed, a 'sahib', one of the 'lords of human kind', able to do practically anything with impunity - except go home.<sup>101</sup> Homesickness became one of the perennial themes of Anglo-Indian verse, in which pathos generally triumphed over banality. Herbert Edwardes, a 23-year-old subaltern, wrote after hearing the song of the Bulbul, or Indian nightingale,

Sing not to me thou merry bird;  
Thy song is but an Eastern tale,  
I'd give it for the simplest word  
Of England's gentle nightingale.<sup>102</sup>

Pension and furlough regulations determined the duration of their exile. The first encouraged them to serve as long as possible to obtain a half-pay pension. The second prescribed that most could expect to see home only at the first furlough, after ten years.<sup>103</sup> In the meantime cadets arriving as 'griffs' accustomed themselves to the exotic tedium of cantonment life.

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Officers and men's motivations in joining the Company's service were complex. Many cadets simply obeyed their families' dictates; many recruits simply acted on impulse. In a real sense,

**Lieutenant Kendal Coghill (1832-1919), 2nd European Bengal Fusiliers. Second son of Vice-Admiral Sir Josiah Coghill, Bart.; comm. 1851; Lieutenant 1853; Captain 1863; exchanged into 19th Hussars, 1870; commanded 19th Hussars 1882; ret. 1883**

**Lieutenant Daniel Augustus Sandford (1829-49), 2nd European Bengal Fusiliers. son of the Archdeacon of Canterbury; educ. Rugby; comm. 1846; served second Punjab war; d. of fever, Lahore**

**Herbert Benjamin Edwardes(1819-68) Soldier turned political officer. Comm. 1841; served briefly in 1st Bengal European Regiment before occupying political appointments in the Punjab, in which he played a critical role in 1857; ret. 1865; KCSI 1866**

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99. Lt Kendal Coghill, 2nd EBF, to his brother 'Jos', Subathoo, 19 April 1856, NAM, 7112-38-39

100. Sandford, Leaves from the journal of a subaltern, p.32

101. European officers evidently pronounced 'Sahib' 'sarb': John Lang, Wanderings in India: and other sketches of life in Hindostan, London, 1859, p. 155.

102. Emma Edwardes, (ed.), Memorials of the life and letters of Major-General Sir Herbert B. Edwardes, 2 vols, London, 1886, Vol. I, p. 21

103. Stocqueler, The hand-book of British India, pp. 451-53; 456-7

though, all were, as a soldier of the Company put it in an elegiac poem, 'self-exiled in youth'.<sup>104</sup> Young men of both stations doubtless looked for adventure. Their emotions in embarking for Bengal were mixed, ranging from elation to dread, but many clearly entertained, as a Company's official put it, 'hope of fortune and preferment'.<sup>105</sup> For both, the Company's service offered security and prospects unlikely to be realised in Britain. In this the European force reflects movements apparent within British society, imparting to it a particular complexion.

It is tempting to see both officers and men as members of the 'middling class'.<sup>106</sup> R.S. Neale proposes that adopting a hierarchy of five (rather than three) classes would better reflect the nuances of mobility and uncertainty prevailing in early nineteenth century society. His 'middling class' - 'petit bourgeois, aspiring professional men, other literates, and artisans' - corresponds to a large, if indeterminate, proportion of the Company's soldiers, and a smaller but still substantial segment of its officers. It included 'compositors as well as doctors, artisans as well as small producers, self-employed shopkeepers as well as bigger and more successful retailers. Though couched (or rather cloaked) in sociological jargon, Neale's analysis of the middling class applies with remarkable congruity to the Company's officers and men. Most officers and many soldiers aspired to appointments conferring immediate or eventual financial benefit and security. At the same time they enjoyed little esteem, particularly from officers of the Queen's army, who perpetuated a traditional superiority. The resultant tension produced identifiable groups of officers and men, unwilling to acknowledge the deference expected of them but equally defending their interests.<sup>107</sup>

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104. Benjamin Franklin Langford, 'Songs for India No. 1', in Alvin of Erie, or the mourner's choice, Lahore, 1854, p. 244

105. J. Dark to T.P. Courtenay, 15 September 1814, 'Correspondence relating to the Company's Establishment of European Infantry', IOLR

106. R.S. Neale, 'Class and class consciousness in early nineteenth century England: three classes or five', in, History and class: essential readings in theory and interpretation, Oxford, 1983, pp. 143-64

107. Ibid., p. 150

Examples of men characteristic of the middling class within the European force are not hard to find. Allowing that many officers perceived themselves and were seen as undeniably middle-class, others' credentials were less secure. Their endemic financial anxiety and their efforts to establish security and respectability would prove to be characteristic of the Company's European officers, imposing a perennial tension between their pretensions to gentility and others' acceptance of it. The commercial backgrounds of many of the Company's officers made for uneasy acceptance by the predominantly genteel Queen's army. Several of the officers figuring prominently in this thesis came from such insecure backgrounds: James Brind's father was a ribbon manufacturer, Jim Harris's a 'manufacturer', Henry Norman's an 'enterprising but not too fortunate merchant'.<sup>108</sup> Many were younger sons with claims to patrimony vulnerable to the vicissitudes of patronage and opportunity, others sons of surgeons and clerics whose respectability rested on qualifications rather than family repute. Their schooling often corresponded to that of the 'half-educated, half-gentlemen' of Neale's middling class.<sup>109</sup> Simply being Company's officers rendered their social standing suspect.

Their men equally deviated from the pattern expected of other ranks in the Queen's service. Allowing that many soldiers were simply labourers looking for a secure billet, the aspiration characteristic of many others introduced incongruities fundamental to the force's composition and orientation. Clerks, among the occupational groups most likely to prosper from enlisting in the Company's service, occupied an equivocal position: necessary functionaries, from but not always of the working-class, aspiring to join but rarely accepted by their social superiors. Aspiration often necessitated dubious claims, perhaps born of desperation. Henry Smith, for example, though claiming to have worked as a surveyor in the Swan River Colony, does not appear in the exhaustive biographical dictionaries of the colony's inhabitants. This enigma emphasizes the marginality of many of the Company's recruits. Those securing promotion to warrant rank also

**Lieutenant Colonel James Brind (1808-88), Bengal Horse Artillery. Comm. Bengal Artillery, 1827; detached to revenue survey, first saw action in Mohmand expedition, 1854; served rebellion (Delhi, Rohilkund, Bareilly); Inspector General of Artillery 1865; KCB 1869; commanded Sirhind Div., 1873-78; married five times**

**Lieutenant Henry Wylie Norman (1826-1904) Comm. 31st Bengal Native Infantry, 1844; served second Punjab war, AAG and DAG to Delhi Field Force and Oudh Field Force, 1857-58; Officiating AG, Bengal army, 1859; Assistant Military Secretary for Indian affairs, Horse Guards, 1860; SGIMD 1862-68; KCB, 1873; Lieutenant General 1877; Governor of Jamaica, 1882-87; Governor of Queensland, 1889-95**

**Henry Marlon Durand (1812-71), Member of the Council of India, 1859-61. Comm. Bengal Engineers, 1828 and mostly employed in civil positions; served first Afghan war, Gwallor war; second Punjab war. Military member of the Governor General's Council, 1865-70; KCSI, 1867; Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab, 1870**

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108. V.C.P. Hodson, *List of the officers of the Bengal army, 1758-1834*. Vol. II, p. 205; William Lee-Warner, *Memoir of Field Marshal Sir Henry Wylie Norman*, London, 1903, p. 2

109. R.S. Neale, 'Three classes or five', p. 152

often came from ambiguous class backgrounds - one of Henry Durand's sapper sergeants at the siege of Ghuzni, for example, had been 'a gentleman by birth who had got into trouble at home'.<sup>110</sup> The Company's army therefore reflected not so much British society in microcosm as its lines of fissure, divisions which were to exert a disproportionate influence in the crisis preceding its demise.

**Table 3**  
**Commanders-in-Chief, India, 1825-75**

Oct 1825	Gen Sir Stapleton Cotton (1st Viscount Combermere, 1827)
Jan 1830	Lt Gen George Ramsay, 9th Earl of Dalhousie
Jan 1832	Lt Gen Sir Edward Barnes
May 1833	Gen Lord William Cavendish Bentinck (also Governor General)
Sep 1835	Lt Gen Sir Henry Fane
Dec 1839	Gen Sir Jasper Nicolls
Aug 1843	Gen Sir Hugh Gough (1st Viscount Gough, 1849)
May 1849	Gen Sir Charles James Napier
Dec 1850	Gen Sir William Maynard Gomm
Jan 1856	Gen the Hon George Anson
Aug 1857	Lt Gen Sir Colin Campbell (Baron Clyde, 1858)
Jun 1860	Gen Sir Hugh Rose (Baron Strathnairn, 1866)
Mar 1865	Gen Sir William Rose Mansfield (Baron Sandhurst, 1871)
Apr 1870	Gen Robert Cornelis Napier (1st Baron Napier)

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110. The man eventually prospered in the Public Works Department: H.M. Durand, The life of Major-General Sir Henry Marion Durand, 2 vols, London, 1883, Vol. I, p. 53

## Chapter 2

### 'East India Convicts': the military culture of the Bengal Europeans, 1825-57

Embarkation brought home to many a recruit the gravity of his decision to enlist. William Bingham, a former clerk who became a sergeant in the 1st Fusiliers, expressed his feelings in verse. He connected the pain of parting with the anticipation of arrival in his 'The soldier's farewell to England':

Sergeant William Bingham, 1st European Bengal Fusiliers. Clerk, of Hull; enl. March 1841; appt. QMS 5th Depot Bn, January 1846, QMS 20th Bengal Native Infantry, 1848, disch. October 1855

My native land! My native land!  
 Thou'rt fading from my view;  
 To thy white cliffs, and sea-girt strand  
 I must now bid adieu  
 I sail away for foreign shores  
 To seek for wealth and fame;  
 I go, to where the Ganges pours  
 His tribute to the main<sup>1</sup>

The reality which John Brown recalled was less mannered. As a sixteen year-old who had enlisted 'with a free will', he parted from his father at Leith in July 1853. With his father sobbing inconsolably Brown was unable to offer comfort, standing 'motionless gazing on the blank and vacant spot untill my eyes became dim'.<sup>2</sup>

The long voyage to India is a set-piece in most contemporary military memoirs. They record the cheers and tears of the departure, the novelty of the ocean, the excitement of catching flying fish and sharks, and the boredom which only arrival could allay. Accounts of voyages carrying Company's recruits to India, however, introduce a distinctive element, in that drafts sailed not as did Queen's troops, detachments under officers and sergeants, but in groups of between 150 and 200 with non-commissioned officers appointed from among them, overseen by officers returning from furlough. This system, which prevailed throughout the period, placed men unaccustomed to discipline under 'pipeclay sergeants' and sepoy officers often unable to impose it. Several accounts record transports arriving with men in irons or officers barricaded in their

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1. William Bingham, The field of Ferozeshah in two cantos, with other poems by a young soldier, London, 1848, p. 68

2. Brown private journal, NLS

cabins.<sup>3</sup> Though in the 1850s the Company provided a 'capital library' and a schoolmaster sergeant, and though many voyages were undeniably dull, the licence of the voyage anticipated the imperfect subordination prevailing in the Company's force, a further sign of the differences between the two armies.<sup>4</sup>

On arriving in the Hooghly they confronted, like all newcomers to India, an alien and chaotic culture. Many recorded their impressions, often disapprovingly: a former Belfast miner found Indians 'a very ignorant set of people ... their is a Buffaloe in Barrackpore they worship'.<sup>5</sup> Shortly after arrival drafts of recruits travelled, usually by river, up-country to join their units. Though instructions were issued for those commanding drafts of Europeans and though individual officers were able to maintain order, parties often travelled without adequate supervision, and young men often spent up to six months as soldiers without discipline before reaching their units.<sup>6</sup> In the absence of strong formal discipline the major force shaping the soldiers' lives became the culture of the barrack-room.

The Company's European soldiers shared a distinct culture discernible over the several decades preceding the rebellion of 1857. While sharing with Queen's soldiers the conditions and hazards of Indian service, the Company's European troops' culture emphasised different attributes to those of the Queen's service, values which would ultimately bring the two into direct confrontation. Both recognised that the Company's troops generally enjoyed better pay, rations, conditions of service and prospects. 'We are treated a great deale better than the Line soldiers', Richard Perkes told his brother, 'only we have to stop in the indias for 21 years ...'.<sup>7</sup> The Queen's troops' jibe that the EIC on their caps stood for 'East India Convicts' held enough

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3. For example, Joseph Fayrer, Recollections of my life, Edinburgh, 1890, pp. 48-9; Albert Herve, (ed. Charles Allen), A soldier of the Company: life of an Indian ensign 1833-43, London, 1988, p. 9. George Carter's jot book describes an attempted rising by the recruits aboard the Edinburgh in 1839 after provisions ran short and a man died at the hands of its surgeon.

4. By contrast, however, the letters Catherine Stock, who travelled to Calcutta in 1854 with her husband, Capt Alfred Stock of the Bengal Artillery, describe recruits on the Collingwood singing, boxing, reading and cheering the birth of a baby on board: letters to her mother, 8 & 25 August and 30 November, Stock papers, Cambridge South Asian Archive (CSAA).

5. Pte James Armstrong, 2nd EBF, to his parents, Barrackpore, 5 July 1859, Soldiers' references, Part 3, IOLR, L/MIL/5/362

6. No copy of the 'Notes relating to the command and management of European recruits' specified in the 1855 General regulations appears to have survived. Samuel White conceded that he 'had some trouble' taking a draft of the 3rd Bengal Europeans from Calcutta to Agra in 1856: A complete history of the Indian mutiny, Weston-super-mare, 1885, p. 2.

7. Richard Perkes to his brother, Brompton, 17 July 1841, NAM

truth to smart.<sup>8</sup> Both officers and men joked sardonically about their 'sentence'. In calculating men's length of service both spoke of 'servitude'.<sup>9</sup>

By taking their cots in the barrack-room recruits became part of an insular male community, whose rhythms and values paralleled those of the regiment but were largely opaque to their officers. Much that occurred in the barrack-room went unnoticed, and can be retrieved only tangentially from soldiers' letters, officers' memoirs, official records and newspapers. The barrack-room belonged to its inhabitants rather than to the service. In a reversal of the Queen's army's practice, men seem to have discouraged officers from even entering barracks. William Hough recalled how in the 1820s infantry officers could not enter barracks after dark without an escort.<sup>10</sup> Distinctions of dress signified the soldier's two worlds. On parade men dressed in the impractical and uncomfortable uniform of the early Victorian army. Off parade, as Gunner John Luck put it, 'we keep what close we like', a custom which had always distinguished the Company's service from the royal.<sup>11</sup> The barrack-room maintained its own sanctions, shadowing the service's formal code of discipline.<sup>12</sup> It applied its own specifics against illness - when Jeremiah Brasyer contracted cholera in the early 1830s, his comrades dosed him with rum in which a fowl had been boiled.<sup>13</sup> As they were introduced to the military skills of drill their older comrades inducted them into this culture. Within every unit there

**Gunner John Luck, Bengal Artillery. Blacksmith, of Deeping, Lincolnshire, enl. London, August 1839. Purchased disch. 1843**

**Jerimiah Brasyer (1812-97), Bengal Army. Gardener, of Southfleet, Kent, enl. July 1834; Barrosa: served Bengal Artillery; to TML September 1839; served first Afghan war, first and second Punjab wars; Ensign 1846; commanded Brasyer's Sikhs 1857-58 at Lucknow; Lieutenant Colonel 1858; ret. 1861**

**Lieutenant Colonel William Hough (1789-1865), 48th Bengal Native Infantry. Comm. 1805; served with Bengal native infantry and in staff appointments; served Nepal war, third Deccan war, first Afghan war; ret. 1850; authority on military law**

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8. Carter jot book, IOLR; Crummie papers, ECRO F/33

9. Carter jot book, IOLR. Col George Brooke referred to a soldier's 'Servitude 2 yrs 1/4' in a testimonial for Gnr P. Brothers [1830], Papers of the 9th Earl of Dalhousie as Commander-in-Chief in India, SRO, GD 45/5/16

10. William Hough, Precedents in military law..., London, 1855, p. 81

11. Gnr John Luck to his mother, 18 November 1840, IOLR, Mss.Eur.E.339. See also George Carter's impression of his comrades' appearance ('anything but regular') on joining the 2nd Fusiliers in March 1840, IOLR; Gerald Bryant, The East India Company and its army, 1600-1778, PhD, University of London, 1975, p. 41.

12. Quinney, Sketches of a soldier's life, records how men beat a sergeant who toadied to the sergeant major by informing on them; p. 74.

13. Not altogether successfully, since they then took him to the surgeon: Jeremiah Brasyer, The memoirs of Jeremiah Brasyer, London, 1892, p.5. See also the recipes compiled in the 1850s in Pte John Brown's commonplace book, NLS.

existed two hierarchies, in the regiment of rank, in the barrack-room of length of service. Recruits deferred to 'old soldiers' as experienced hands able to introduce them to the intricacies of soldiering in India, even as they baited them as 'dirty recruits'.<sup>14</sup> Old soldiers in India were old in experience rather than age. After seeing five or seven years service, or active service, a man might be so regarded, while still in his late twenties.<sup>15</sup> Significantly, the time it took to qualify as an old soldier corresponded roughly to the seven years an apprentice served in mastering a trade.<sup>16</sup> Much of the soldiers' culture was expressed through their slang, itself impenetrable to outsiders.<sup>17</sup>

Life in the barrack-room mirrored the aspects of the communities from which its members came, replicating and accentuating the contrast between desperation and aspiration which so dominated their experience of work at home. Outsiders viewing barrack-rooms during formal visits emphasised the effects on their occupants of heat and enforced idleness, frequently referring to the 'ennui' soldiers endured, becoming, as one of their surgeons wrote, 'listless, gloomy and melancholy'.<sup>18</sup> Attempts to escape the tedium were obvious enough, in alcoholism, self-mutilation, crime and suicide. Seen from within, however, barrack-rooms could also be places of enterprise and enjoyment. During the summer they could be unbearably hot, especially before the 1850s, when punkahs were first installed, but in other respects life in a barrack could be accompanied by luxuries inconceivable in barracks elsewhere in the empire. Men were attended by many native servants, each costing a few annas a week, the Company's men even more so than the Queen's. Indolence was not, however, obligatory, nor was enterprise confined to those who got on and got out. Within many units a black economy operated, run by men best regarded as 'anna capitalists'.<sup>19</sup> Literate men hired their skills, 'bagdadders' sold their spirit ration to comrades or lent money at a discount against batta yet to

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14. Bancroft, From recruit to staff sergeant, p. 91

15. After James Downie received 'a medle' for the first Punjab war he told his parents it was 'a great honer and makes me an old soldier', letter 31 May 1851, SUSM

16. Men occasionally compared military to civil life in occupational terms. Matthew Brown, for example, in telling a friend at home of the lightness of his duties, commented that a Company's soldier 'knows the duty he has to do and not like tradespeople at home it does not come daily': Letter to 'Dear Sir', 24 August 1849, PRONI.

17. See Appendix B for a glossary and discussion of soldiers' slang.

18. John McCosh, Advice to officers in India, London, 1856, p. 110

19. On the analogy of John Benson, The pennv capitalists: a study of nineteenth-century working-class entrepreneurs, New Brunswick, 1983.

be awarded.<sup>20</sup> Men made straw hats and khaki clothes. Thomas Quinney described the barrack-rooms of the Bombay Artillery as 'presenting the appearance of a workshop', with men netting socks and gloves, thread buttons (which stood the dhobies' robust attentions better than horn), along with tailors, shoemakers and tinkers.<sup>21</sup> Since most of these crafts could have been practised more cheaply by natives it is likely that they provided occupational therapy as well as pocket money. Senior non-commissioned officers were especially enterprising, milking the canteen profits or selling expended bullets for scrap, and the possibilities for graft suggest one motive for the Europeans' general desire for promotion.

The aspiration characteristic of the Company's barrack-rooms is all the more remarkable given that soldiers lived in constant awareness of death. Repeated visitations of fever, cholera or dysentery left men few illusions of their chances of survival. The rates of mortality among soldiers in early Victorian India have remained both notorious and open to dispute.<sup>22</sup> In general the rates of mortality declined, but even during the five years preceding the first Punjab war, annual mortality among Queen's troops in India averaged almost 7.5%.<sup>23</sup> During the 1850s, however, mortality began to fall, to just under 3% in 1852.<sup>24</sup> Arguments over the percentage of men who died from cholera, dysentery, malaria and other diseases endemic to India recurred throughout the period, partly as a by-product of the dispute over whether the Company's Europeans were 'acclimated' (therefore justifying their retention) and partly as a contribution to the growing debate over the necessity of medical and administrative reform. The oppressive awareness of the omnipresence of death conveyed by all contemporary sources is, perhaps, sufficient. Moreover, for its soldiers, mortality was not measured in the statistics of deaths per thousand compiled by the actuaries of India House, but in the passing of their friends. Scrutiny of the Registers of European soldiers over the period 1824-48 reveals how

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20. Bancroft, From recruit to staff sergeant, pp. 88-9. 'Batta' was a gratuity awarded after a campaign.

21. Quinney, Sketches of a soldier's life, p. 9

22. Peter Burroughs, 'The human cost of imperial defence in the early Victorian age', Victorian studies, Vol. 24, No.1, Autumn 1980, pp. 7-32. For a detailed discussion of the relevant statistics, see Philip Curtin, Death by migration: Europe's encounter with the tropical world in the nineteenth century, Cambridge, 1989.

23. 'A return of the mortality ... among the European troops ... in the East ... Indies', PP 1850, Vol. XXXV, p. 113

24. Despatch to Bengal, No. 128, 26 October 1852, in 'Mr Cochrane's ms extracts from despatches on military subjects', Vol. I, IOLR, L/MIL/5/445 The statistical picture is complex and requires specialist attention. Actuaries advising the Commissioners enquiring into the Indian army's sanitary state in the early 1860s discussed the conflicting statistical evidence: PP 1863, Vol. XIX, pp. 21-24.

slight were any individual's chances of returning to Britain. Six drafts recorded in detail lost between sixty and ninety per cent before completing twenty one years service.<sup>25</sup> The impact of this attrition on shipmates and comrades is suggested by the detailed audit which George Carter kept of casualties in the 2nd Fusiliers in the 1840s. Over ten years 616 men died in a regiment with an average strength of 732. Though it served in Scinde and the second Punjab war in the period, men died overwhelmingly from disease.<sup>26</sup>

Despite the diseases endemic to India, crowded barracks and unsuitable diet, the authorities attributed much of the mortality of the European soldiers to their drinking habits. Drinking was both a cause and a response to the statistical likelihood and human fact of death. The ethos of the barrack-room was most obvious to outsiders in the drinking which brought men to the orderly room on charges of 'habitual drunkenness' or offences attributable to it. Alcohol - principally rum (called grog) or 'country liquor' such as arrack - was as central to the lives of soldiers as to large sections of the labouring poor of Britain. Issued daily and available from the canteen or the bazaar, it was an unavoidable recreational recourse for the young men and an addiction for many of their older comrades. Queen's officers alleged that the Company's men were if anything more drunken than their own, assertions supported with anecdotal and less easily refuted statistical evidence.<sup>27</sup>

Soldiers therefore had to come to terms with a lengthy and most likely permanent absence from home: unlike officers, they were ineligible for furlough. Though more soldiers of the Company's service were literate than those of the

**Staff Sergeant William Braithwaite,  
2/2nd Bengal Horse Artillery,  
Carter, of Dublin, enl. Liverpool,  
June 1829, William Fairlie, 1830.  
Killed in action at Moodkee, 18  
December 1845**

Queen's, and though postage was relatively cheap, many lost contact with their families. The Soldiers' references at India House contained many appeals from families, one writing 'to know if he is dead or alive', another having lost touch for eight years.<sup>28</sup> 'Homesickness' inadequately describes men's feelings: William Braithwaite wrote as a young gunner how 'them that never

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25. The ships comprised: Prince Regent, 1824: 65%; Marquis of Wellington, 1824, 58%; Broxbournebury, 1836, 89%; Sir Robert Small, 1836, 67%; Nankin, 1841, 68%; Collingwood, 1848, 60%: Registers of European soldiers, IOLR.

26. Carter jot book, IOLR

27. Maj Gen Sir Edward Lugard, for example, a Queen's officer who had served in India for 26 years, offered both to the Peel Commission, testifying that European corps were lax, 'in a hundred respects', and 'twice as drunk' as Queen's corps: PP 1859 (I), V, minutes of evidence, p. 148, qq. 4012, 4014

28. 'Form of inquiry after a soldier' completed in 1860 by the mother of John Young, a Limerick labourer enlisted in 1849; letter from Henry Kelshaw, of Alderney, 17 April 1860, enquiring after his brother: Soldiers' references, Part 2, IOLR, L/MIL/5/362

was [far] from home could never believe how it would haunt their thoughts night and Day', a feeling echoed by other men who were ambitious and pragmatic enough to become senior non-commissioned officers.<sup>29</sup> Even the brash John Ramsbottom, in showing off his command of Hindoostanee to stay-at-home friends translated his script, in minute letters, as 'i wish i was at home'.<sup>30</sup> Their awareness of separation, in addition to the emotional unease which for many accompanied or prompted enlistment, created a profound disquiet - at bottom a fear that they would die in India. Though rarely openly expressed, it was central to their response to their predicament and lurks beneath the tough exterior which these men presented to their fellows and to the world, discernible across the range of evidence available. Staff Sergeant Samuel Roaks, who had enlisted in Battle, Surrey, in 1844, died while returning to Britain in 1859. Among his effects, never returned to his family, is a greasy, torn and folded letter, clearly long cherished, postmarked Battle and dated 1845. It reads:

o sweet o sweet is that sensation  
 wen to harts in honour meet  
 But the pains of sepparetion  
 mingle bitter with the sweet...<sup>31</sup>

The 'pains of sepparetion' were not easily assuaged. Pension regulations confronted men with a powerful dilemma. Obligated to serve for at least ten years, they could not retire with a pension in under twenty one unless incapacitated, rules prominent in every soldier's account book.<sup>32</sup> Before long men realized that if they survived ten years in such a climate they would be unlikely to be fit to resume their trade. 'Coming home after soldiering 9 or 10 year hear without a pension would be madness', John Luck concluded, 'after 7 years ... your constitution is broke'.<sup>33</sup> Their choice was therefore to seek promotion and the security of a pension or to abandon any aspiration and give in to what Luck called 'blagarding and Drunkenness': Luck himself, appalled at his prospects of surviving, purchased his discharge.<sup>34</sup> Though his earlier

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29. William Braithwaite to his mother, Mhow, 29 May 1831, NAM, 7605-75. Mark Crummie recalled that at times he would 'have given a leg or an arm to have got out', ERO.

30. John Ramsbottom to 'Jack', 12 May 1857, BL

31. Effects of S/Sgt Samuel Roaks, Bengal Artillery, IOLR

32. See, for example, the account books of Pte John Lambert, 2nd Madras European Light Infantry (enlisted 1840), IOLR, Mss.Eur.F. 133/33 and Gnr Thomas Perrott (enlisted 1858), in the possession of Mr David Perrott, Camberley, Surrey.

33. John Luck to his mother, 9 March 1842, IOLR

34. John Luck to his mother, 29 November 1840, IOLR. Luck obtained his discharge, paid for by the ubiquitous Victorian 'friends', and returned in 1843, crippled by rheumatism. Another escape, emigrating to America in 1849, ended with his wife's death.

letters betray a desperate homesickness, John Downie, in reviewing his options, decided that he would rather 'come home with a pension of a Shilling a day and say Sixty Pounds ready cash'.<sup>35</sup> The choice which men faced was therefore no idle option. It confronted them daily, especially in considering the temptation of the canteen. This dilemma, and soldiers' responses to it, reflects one of the classic choices facing the labouring poor of Victorian Britain, the struggle to get on and go up, or to give up and go down.

The ambitious soldier's path to a desirable situation was not, however, without risk. 'Reduction' (to a lower rank) was a constant danger to men within regiments and 'remand' (to their original units) a hazard for those on the Town Major's list. Both occurred frequently, and often repeatedly for

**Gunner Charles Cole, Bengal and Royal Artillery. Clerk, of Holyhead, Anglesea; enl. London, May 1855, aged 22, married at Morar, October 1861; variously promoted to sergeant and sergeant major and remanded**

individuals. The account book of Charles Cole shows that in the eleven years after his enlistment in 1855 he was promoted ten times and remanded or reduced six times.<sup>36</sup> Letters by soldiers often refer to men being 'broke' within corps, while the volumes of General orders testify to the traffic in and out of the Town Major's list. The lives of those who gave up survive in little but discharge and court martial papers, but a few men recorded the moments at which they decided to abandon the carelessness characteristic of recruits. In 1831, two years after his arrival, William Braithwaite told his mother - his 'confessor' - of how he had 'got among a set of fellows that thought of nothing but drinking'.

we us'd to go out on the beach at night [and] take pipes and tobacco and lots of grog[.] ... [W]e were ... two months before I thought of the life I was leading getting drunk lying on the damp ground ...<sup>37</sup>

Gunner Braithwaite, a reflective young man, displayed in confronting the likely consequences of drinking the self discipline which in time gained him promotion. After a long spell in hospital with fever, he resolved to change, learning the flute and reading morning and afternoon. Despite also joining the Mhow chapel choir, Braithwaite's transformation from unthinking youth to 'steady' man was not spiritual but 'social' in that he, like many of his comrades, realised the possibilities which the service offered for those willing to accept the discipline of sobriety, thrift and self-restraint.

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35. John Downie to his parents, Sholapore, 5 June 1856, SUSM

36. Account book of Gnr Charles Cole, Bengal and Royal Artillery, 1855-63, NAM, 6102-283

37. William Braithwaite to his mother, Mhow, 29 May 1831, NAM

In the aspirations which it fostered among its members the force mirrored a critical facet of contemporary British life. Soldiers apparently believed at enlistment, as Arthur Owen recalled, that in India soldiers 'lived the lives of gentlemen'.<sup>38</sup>

The idea recurs in contemporary sources - the depot

sergeants told Gunner Luck that soldiers 'live better than many Gentlemen in England'.<sup>39</sup> The impression was reinforced on arrival. Mark Crummie, for example, saw the laboratory clerks at the Dum-Dum arsenal looking 'like men who have 300 a year'.<sup>40</sup> Nor were their expectations necessarily ludicrous. John Ramsbottom was told that he would have a horse. This improbable promise (particularly when made by a recruiting sergeant to an infantryman) turned out to be correct: in his first letter home Ramsbottom recorded that his comrades had indeed formed a pack and hunted jackals on horseback.<sup>41</sup>

**Arthur Owen, occupation unknown, of London; enl. Madras Fusiliers, 1856; trsf Bengal Artillery, 1857; served first relief and siege of Lucknow. Trsf to 65th Foot, 1870; ret., 1875; joined Lucknow police; returned to Britain 1903 and 1911**

Aspiration depended crucially on literacy. Soldiers' letters and journals reveal another face to the Company's service, men whom their comrades called 'scholars'; men able to read and write. Though perhaps exaggerated by the nature of the surviving evidence, the impression seems to be reliable.<sup>42</sup> Literacy appears to be characteristic of the force, and more representative of it than of the Queen's service. Relative levels of literacy in the two services are difficult to determine definitively. Up to sixty per cent of Queen's soldiers appear to have been functionally literate.<sup>43</sup> In the European force, at least sixty per cent of wills (often made by men mortally ill) were signed, an indication of the minimum level of functional literacy in the force.<sup>44</sup> The Company enjoyed no clear superiority: the distinction was probably one of quality rather than quantity.

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38. Owen, Recollections of a veteran, p. 5. He reiterated the point at p. 101. Thomas Quinney, in his Sketches of a soldier's life, used a similar expression; p. 35.

39. John Luck to his mother, 2 February 1840, IOLR

40. Crummie papers, ECRO

41. John Ramsbottom to 'John', Warley, 27 November 1854; Kurrachee, 8 April 1856, BL

42. See Appendix A for an analysis of the 79 men who appear in the marginal biographical notes to this thesis, which suggests that the range of evidence available is in fact representative of the European force as a whole.

43. The proportion appears to have remained roughly consistent over the period: Henry Marshall, Military miscellany: comprehending a history of the recruiting of the army, military punishments, etc., London, 1846, p. 94; Alan Ramsay Skelley, The Victorian army at home: the recruitment and terms and conditions of the British regular, 1859-1899, London, 1977, p. 87.

44. Soldiers' wills, 1851-52, NAI

The differing purposes and composition of the two forces revealed contrasts in their attitudes to literacy. The Queen's army's suspicion of the political dangers of encouraging soldiers to read long hampered attempts to foster schooling. (Henry Marshall, a progressive, felt that books tended 'to make soldiers question the wisdom of their officers, and fit them for being ringleaders in any discontent'.<sup>45</sup>) The Company's need for literate men able to accept responsibility, however, inclined its recruiting parties to seek them out. Recruits remarked on (and used) the libraries at both the Chatham and Warley depots.<sup>46</sup> The Company established libraries at Indian stations in the early 1820s, their books contrasting with the pallid selection of 28 improving works allowed to royal soldiers (including Kind caution to profane swearers and Companion to the aged), and then only to those in hospital.<sup>47</sup> The Europeans' libraries included not only sermons and homilies but also the Arabian nights, Scott's novels, Shakespeare's plays, Burns's poems, periodicals such as the Tatler and the Rambler and, pragmatically, Hindoostanee dictionaries and lexicons.<sup>48</sup> Troops supplemented official issues by subscription - the 350 invalids at Chunar (notoriously the most 'dissipated' of the Company's old soldiers) purchased 801 works between 1839 and 1843, most 'novels, tales [and] romances'.<sup>49</sup>

Soldiers valued the ability to write, partly because of the opportunities it offered. It is notable how many men's handwriting improved over the course of their service - such as gunners Luck, Braithwaite and Pattison. Gunner Pattison set about learning to write better 'that I may be enabled to improve myself' and eventually became an artillery schoolmaster.<sup>50</sup> Men schooled each other, but the Company also provided educational opportunities within its European corps

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45. Marshall, Military miscellany, p. 320

46. John Downie told his parents in June 1845 that he spent most of his time with the 500 volumes held at Warley, SUSM. Richard Perkes told his brother that he 'never was so happy ... as what i ham now', mainly because the Chatham depot had a school, and 'plenty of Bookes to read of all sorts', 17 July 1841, NAM.

47. Extract from Military letter from Bombay, 29 January 1823, concurring with proposals emanating from the Bengal army in 1819. 'On the subject of a supply of Books for the use of the European Soldiers', IOLR, L/MIL/5/384, Collection 85a: T.H. Hawkins & L.J.F. Brimble, Adult education: the record of the British army, London, 1947, pp. 12-13; S.J. Curtis, History of education in Great Britain, London, 1967, p. 589.

48. 'On the ... supply of Books for the ... European Soldiers', IOLR

49. 'Abstract of books ... purchased for the Library of the European Invalids ...', Letters received by the Officer in Charge of European invalids 1845-1857, Chunar Fortress Records, Military Department, NAI. Surgeon Major F.J. Mouatt described Chunar as the 'headquarters of chronic intoxication', in his 'The British soldier in India', Journal of the Royal United Services Institution, Vol. 10, 1866, p. 380.

50. Gnr William Pattison to his mother, Saugor, 20 July 1834, NAM; Register of European soldiers, IOLR, L/MIL/10/123

without parallel in the Queen's army. Not only were recruits encouraged to attend school at the depot and on board troopships, but also the establishments of European regiments included, in the 1820s, a school master, a reading master and writing master, later joined by two assistant school masters, a librarian and (for soldiers' children) a school mistress.<sup>51</sup> The Queen's army made good the deficiency only in the 1850s.

For men of an intellectual bent a barrack-room could still be a lonely place. 'Among a thousand of my kind', lamented William Bingham, 'I run a solitary race ... Books are to me a source of joy'.<sup>52</sup> Bingham, apparently one of only two Company's soldiers to publish a book of verse, may have exaggerated his difference for a sympathetic respectable readership. While it seems likely that fewer cultivated men served in the infantry, the barrack-room could also correspond to the impression conveyed by Sergeant James Fraser, perhaps to refute his brother's notion that enlistment had been an act of folly. 'Those of an Intellectual taste', he wrote, 'spend a Good Deel of their time in the improvement of their minds' in the regiment's 'most excellent Library'. 'Some even cultivate Literature' and 'one or two ... dabbles a little at Poetry, other[s] ... in Philosophy', while 'one Poor man ... his favourite hobby, was ... trying to Discover the Perpetual Motion'.<sup>53</sup> The impression is that of the modest intellectual endeavour characteristic of, say, artisans' mutual improvement societies.

Sergeant James Fraser (or Frazer),  
2nd Bombay European Light  
Infantry, of Moray, Scotland,  
Recovery, 1842

These 'scholars' and the 'blagards' whom Gunner Luck scorned, though representing divergent responses to their circumstances, did not inhabit separate worlds. They were found in the same barrack-room, and even in the same individual. John Ramsbottom's letters reveal how scholar and blagard co-existed, exemplifying the character of the force. Ramsbottom had enlisted after falling out with Emma Broomhead, and particularly her mother. At the depot his sergeants had led him to believe that 'being a desent scholar', he could expect rapid promotion. As a private in the 1st Bombay Fusiliers Ramsbottom told his friend Jack how he had 'gon[e] to bed ... very often with no less than one bottle and a half of raw brandy in my inside', though he had been 'always lucky and esckaped being puckered that is being caught drunk'. After three years he resolved to give up drinking 'because if I do I am sure I shall go a hed' and began 'banking all I get hold of'. He recorded how he remained 'very fond of reading'. '[W]e have got a fine

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51. Bengal Annual Military Statements, 1824-25; 1845-46; 1854-55, NAI

52. 'Past and present; or, random thoughts in Hindostan', in Bingham, The field of Ferozeshah, pp. 58-9

53. Sgt James Fraser to his brother George, 9 September 1850, SUSM, I.A850.1

liberary and their is some splendid works in it sometimes I sit reading the whole of the night'.<sup>54</sup> That John Ramsbottom could have been simultaneously a scholar and a blagard suggests that the Company's Europeans shared barrack-rooms as a unified culture rather than living as several separate but disconnected or antagonistic groups. If some, and perhaps many, Company's soldiers sought by enlistment a respectability often denied to Queen's soldiers they may have fallen victim to the power of contemporary judgements unthinkingly adopted by historians. Private Ramsbottom, the subscribers to the Chunar library and the reformed William Braithwaite serve as reminders that the boundaries of respectability were more permeable and transitory than we may have imagined. In revising and imparting nuance to the conventional interpretation of the soldier they reinforce recent suggestions that respectable behaviour may have been more ambiguous and mutable than contemporaries conceded.<sup>55</sup>

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Young officers arriving in India as cadets faced many hazards. Works of advice cautioned against swearing, gambling, debt, duelling, native mistresses, and (pointlessly in view of the proficiency exhibited at Addiscombe) practical jokes.<sup>56</sup> Most cadets were little more than boys. Kendal Coghill disgustedly told his brother how the captain of a ship carrying Addiscombe cadets 'overheard them ... talking as if they were in a playground about how much they sp..d overnight'.<sup>57</sup> Cadets entered messes as impressionable youths. Their futures depended on the tone of the regiment to which they were posted. Cadets received one opportunity of exchanging from an uncongenial corps, and thereafter were obliged to remain.<sup>58</sup> Only the most strong willed resisted conforming to the character of the mess he joined. George Malleeson,

**George Bruce Malleeson (1825-98)**  
**Captain, 2nd Assistant Military Auditor General. Comm. Bengal native infantry, 1844; served second Burmah war; served in Commissariat; occupied several military and political positions before retiring in 1877; published extensively on Indian history, notably three volumes of a History of the Indian mutiny (1878-80)**

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54. John Ramsbottom to Jack, various dates 1854-57, BL

55. Peter Bailey first put the argument in, "'Will the real Bill Banks please stand up?': towards a role analysis of mid-Victorian respectability', Journal of social history, Vol. 12, No. 3, Spring 1979, pp. 336-52

56. Henry Kerr, A few words of advice to cadets, and other young persons proceeding to India, London, 1842, p. 33. Since the former head of the cadet institution proffered the advice, it can be assumed to be based on experience rather than on apprehension, and therefore reflects the actual pastimes of young officers.

57. Coghill to 'Joey', Essex, 2 March 1851, NAM. Whether Coghill referred to 'spewed' or 'spend' (ie masturbate) is unclear - either suggests adolescent excess. He was 18 at the time.

58. General regulations of the Bengal army, 1855, Section VIII, p. 5

later an historian of the rebellion, recalled that '[a] hard drinking regiment would ... make him a sot; a pious regiment, a Puritan'.<sup>59</sup>

Though European corps were regarded as 'fast', it is difficult to distinguish European from 'sepoy' officers.<sup>60</sup> Cadets went to either corps seemingly at random, and artillery officers moved freely between European and native companies and troops. The East India register offers slight evidence that the Indian army's few titled officers (all distinctly of the lesser aristocracy) gravitated to the European infantry, but too few to make an appreciable difference to its tone. During the 1820s and '30s, when the European corps were run down at the expense of the native, their officers were frustrated at their neglect; they certainly enjoyed no edge in securing appointments.<sup>61</sup> The backgrounds, expectations and experience of officers of both European and native corps were, however, congruent, and they regarded their interests as similar if not identical.

Cantonment society resembled that of provincial England, with climate, isolation, and the triumph of pretension over substance magnifying its petty jealousies. Up-country in the 'mofussil', military duties were generally undemanding, though in European corps officers were obliged to exercise a greater degree of supervision over their men. The parochialism of mess life fostered intense feuds and factions: ('a grand flare up between Bunce, Spankie, and Litchford', recorded one officer, 'Old Sage made a fool of himself'.)<sup>62</sup> Larger stations revelled in a more varied society. At Agra in 1852 Kendal Coghill found an 'upper' and a 'lower current' dominated the station, the former the 'lively parties ... who give the crack parties', the latter the 'Grannies'.<sup>63</sup>

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59. Introduction to Thomas Gamble Fraser, Records of sport and military life in western India, p. viii

60. Diary of Lt Montague Hall, 1st European Bengal Fusiliers, 25 November 1852, NAM; Jones-Parry, An old soldier's memories, pp. 23, 29

61. A 'Memo. of names to which I am particularly desirous to pay attention' in the papers of the Earl of Dalhousie, Commander-in-Chief in India 1829-32, demonstrates the European corps' under-representation among those favoured by the Bengal army's major military patron, SRO, GD45/5/90.

62. Diary of Capt Henry Van Holmrich, 48th Bengal Native Infantry, Loodianah, 1 March, 22 April 1845, NAM, 6305/55/1-2

63. Kendal Coghill to his brother, Joey, 6 February 1852, NAM, 7112-38-39. Illustrations 4 and 5 reveal aspects of cantonment and mess society as satirized in the 1860s.

Membership of messes, the focus of officers' life in the Queen's army, was voluntary.<sup>64</sup> Many officers refused to join, and when messes existed they were often the cause of dissension, especially over their cost.<sup>65</sup> The 'undisguised coarseness and hearty blackguardism' of one mess dismayed a less robust officer, the archetypal Christian gentleman, William Arnold.<sup>66</sup> Revealing his father's influence, Arnold's repugnance reflects values which came to dominate several generations of English middle-class men. He can be seen as more than simply a square peg, but as passing the future's judgement on attitudes rapidly becoming obsolete among gentlemen in Britain.<sup>67</sup>

All officers' primary interest revolved around promotion and its attendant advantages. Advancement to the rank of major proceeded strictly by regimental seniority. Provided an officer survived he could be certain of advancement in time.

Officers scrutinized the army list obsessively. George Rybot described a fellow artillery officer as 'a walking army list'.<sup>68</sup> Since promotion came only on the retirement or death of their seniors, their concern could be ghoulish: death notices

Lieutenant George Oliver Rybot (1827-1912), Bengal Artillery; comm. 1845; 2nd Captain, 1858; ret. as hon. Lieutenant Colonel, 1872; served in central India campaign

in mofussil newspapers often also noted who would benefit by an officer's death. One lieutenant carried an army list in his pocket through the second Punjab war 'to scratch off the men as they are knocked over'.<sup>69</sup> Even so, promotion generally came slowly, excruciatingly so in some regiments - in 1860 fourteen men commissioned before 1830 were still captains. That

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64. 'A Bombay officer' [John Jacob], A few remarks on the Bengal army and furlough regulations, with a view to their improvement, London, 1857, p. 11. For a succinct survey of the character of Queen's army messes, see Spiers, The army and society, pp. 22-23.

65. Correspondence on the cost of regimental messes periodically appeared in Indian newspapers; see, for example, the Bengal hurkaru, 9 January & 25 February 1832 for a typical exchange.

66. Arnold, Oakfield, p. 92, presumably recalling the native infantry regiment with which he served, the 58th.

67. Though including many evangelical Christians and subject to periodical revivals, Anglo-Indian society generally appears to have been remarkably indifferent to serious religion beyond what H.G. Keene called the 'sort of Low-Church orthodoxy ... everyone professed': A servant of 'John Company', pp. 133-4.

68. Diary of Capt George Rybot, 19 June 1849, NAM, 7907-99. Promotion in the artillery was notoriously slow.

69. [Samuel Browne], Journal of the late General Sir Sam Browne, Edinburgh, 1937, p. 21

another thirteen arriving after 1850 had achieved the same rank emphasised the unfairness of the system.<sup>70</sup>

Officers looked to improve these depressing prospects through several devices: securing a staff appointment, the 'retiring' or 'bonus' fund, the brevet and augmentation. Each reveals their overwhelming concern for financial security. 'Brevet' and 'augmentation' both provoked dissatisfaction, and may be disposed of shortly. Officers coveted brevet promotions because they conferred unpaid extra-regimental promotion which enhanced prospects of command on active service.<sup>71</sup> Increasing the numbers of officers by 'augmentation' cost the Company both in salaries and pensions. Directors sought to create lieutenancies to fill situations with applicants, while officers wanted captaincies to free promotion for the Company's numerous lieutenants. Agitation for augmentation continued unceasingly.

The device of the bonus fund would ultimately produce even more heartache. The Company's service, unlike the Queen's, did not require those entering its service to purchase commissions. Instead, unofficially, senior officers 'blocking' promotion within their regiments could be induced to retire by the payment of a 'bonus', an amount subscribed by their juniors in proportion to the benefit derived from the officer's departure. Though forbidden officially, the authorities connived at the practice as a way of accommodating the officers' great preoccupation.<sup>72</sup> Formally illegal, few candid references to it exist, but in the papers of Captain Willoughby Brassey its workings are apparent. In 1855 Brassey wanted Rs11,000 (about a thousand pounds) from his fellow officers, asking them to pay from Rs1,800 from the senior lieutenant (who would thereby acquire a company and its allowances) to Rs 25 from the junior ensign.<sup>73</sup> The officers subscribing hoped to recoup their investment on their retirement. The system imposed hardships on particular individuals and provoked acrimony within messes when men refused to pay or complied under duress.

**Captain Willoughby Brassey (1818-?), 2nd Bombay European Light Infantry. Comm. 1839; Lieutenant, 1841; ret., 1855**

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70. 'Table shewing the number of Captains in ... each Presidency ... and their length of Service', in 'Proposal for a Scheme for retirement of 1000 Officers of the Indian Army', IOLR, L/MIL/5/435

71. For example, between the gunners William Olpherts and his junior, Henry Tombs, when the authorities denied Olpherts brevet rank for his conduct in the battle of Punnier in 1839. Though both received the Victoria Cross in the rebellion, Olpherts continued to submit memorials pursuing the grievance thirty years later: Peter Collister, *'Hellfire Jack!'* VC, London, 1989, p. 34.

72. Evidence of Philip Melvill [Secretary of the Military Department at East India House], PP 1857(II), Vol. XVIII, Report of the commissioners appointed to inquire into the system of purchase and sale of commissions in the army, p. 32, qq 657-59

73. Papers of Capt Willoughby Brassey, NAM, 6807-459. A major in the Bengal army might command a 'purse' of up to Rs30,000 or £3,000: V.C.P. Hodson, *List of the officers of the Bengal army 1758-1834*, Vol. I, p. xxxv



**Illustration 4**

'The mess of the Third Goodicotta Light Whistlers', from Captain W.S. Hunt's Brown's sporting tour in India, 1865. Though good-humoured, the scene plays upon the contemporary impression of the intemperance of the officers' messes of the Indian army (in this case the Madras army).

The certainty of promotion by seniority within the regiment encouraged officers to regard regimental duty as a casual obligation, and many were content to remain with their regiments while leaving most work to their subordinates. Obtaining a detached situation became, wrote Dalhousie, 'the chief and creditable(!) ambition of every officer of the Indian army from the day he lands a cadet'.<sup>74</sup> Bengal's civil service was relatively small: in 1853 some 600 strong.<sup>75</sup> Officers seconded from their corps filled hundreds of civil, political and military positions, situations for which Queen's officers were ineligible. The entire military administration of the Company's armies, from the Town Major (on a salary of Rs13,000 a year) to the superintendent of the Army Commissariat Department's mule train, offered possibilities for attachments.<sup>76</sup> Most paid handsome salaries and allowances for undemanding or nominal duties without affecting regimental pay or seniority. All were the subject of intense competition. Appointments, like entry to the service, were secured by patronage, primarily in the gift of the Governor General, assisted by his military secretary, who in consequence became an influential patron in his own right, worried by 'constant applications' for preferment. When Peregrine Pulteney, the artillery lieutenant hero of the novel by Sir John Kaye (himself formerly a gunner officer) met the military secretary he was shown a clothes basket full of letters.<sup>77</sup> The approach of an actual suppliant indicates their tone. In January 1856 Mr T.V. Fosbery asked Lord Harris to have Lord Canning intercede on his behalf. 'George our soldier son', an ensign with the 48th Bengal Native Infantry, 'vegetating in Cantonments at Allahabad'. Ensign Fosbery, wrote his father,

John William Kaye (1814-76) Historian. Comm. Bengal Artillery 1832; wrote for Bengal hurkaru and founded Calcutta review. 1844; returned to Britain, 1845; succeeded J.S. Mill as Secretary in the EIC's Political and Secret Department; published extensively, including editing Memoirs of the services of the Bengal Artillery (1852) and wrote Administration of the East India Company (1853), Lives of Indian officers (1867) and the History of the sepoy war in India (1864-76); KCSI, 1871

Lieutenant George Fosbery (1833-1907) 48th Bengal Native Infantry. educ. Eton; comm. 1852; VC, 1863; Captain, 1864; Lieutenant Colonel, 1876; ret. 1877

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74. Lord Dalhousie to Sir George Couper, Simla, 7 May 1849, in J.G.A. Baird, (ed.), Private letters of the Marquess of Dalhousie, Edinburgh, 1911, p. 68

75. East India register, 1853

76. 'List of Officers on the Bengal Establishment holding those purely Military permanent Staff appointments which are under patronage of the Governor General ... 1 April 1853', Dalhousie papers, SRO, GD/45/6/342

77. J.W. Kaye, Peregrine Pulteney: or. life in India, 3 vols, London, 1844, Vol. I, p. 109

longs ... for a more active career ... with Eleven children we cannot do anything for him and he finds his pay somewhat scanty - but what he wants is a path to professional advancement...<sup>78</sup>

In this the Company's army existed, from the point of view of its officers, only incidentally as a fighting force. For most it offered a means of gaining economic security. Over the period 1825-57 the prospects of obtaining that security remained uncertain. As a sympathetic Queen's officer put it, the surplus of applications over available situations and the changing currents of influence increasingly rendered the service, a 'lottery'.<sup>79</sup> The system's failure to distribute the rewards expected of it embittered the disappointed without ensuring the security of the successful. Even the genuinely talented were denied the opportunity to benefit without a patron: Henry Norman, for example, secured his first appointment because he rescued a wounded sepoy, as it happened under the eye of Charles Napier.<sup>80</sup> Appointments usually came in less gallant, though no less arduous, circumstances, in an army which turned casual encounters and slight social acquaintances into opportunities for lobbying.<sup>81</sup> Officers routinely secured testimonials from those under whom they had served.<sup>82</sup> The resultant scramble appeared unedifying, particularly to Queen's officers:

The mail just in having brought the intelligence of the death of Lieut Hoare the officer for whom he is officiating solicits to be confirmed in the appointment.<sup>83</sup>

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78. T.V. Fosbery to Lord Harris, 9 January 1856, Canning papers, West Yorkshire Archives (WYA), Vol. 114, No. 107. Though selected at random from numerous such appeals in Canning's papers, George Fosbery, as will be apparent, turned out to impinge upon the Europeans' experience at several points.

79. Col Armine Mountain [Adjutant General, HM Forces] to Sir H. Verney, 6 March 1852, in Charlotte Mountain, (ed.), Memoirs and letters of the late Colonel Armine S.H. Mountain, London, 1857, p. 299

80. Napier, Life and opinions, Vol. IV, pp. 245-6; Lee-Warner, Memoirs of ... Norman, pp. 40-41. A study of patronage within the Indian army might disclose seemingly unlikely alliances: Henry Lawrence, for example, attempted in 1847 to secure for William Hodson the adjutancy of the 1st Fusiliers (Cork, Rider on a grey horse, p. 34) and in 1848 obtained George Bouchier a situation at Warley: Eight months' campaign against the Bengal sepoy army, during the mutiny of 1857, London, 1858, p 125.

81. 'I think I have had the pleasure of meeting you at Simla in /56 ...', wrote Lt J.P. Turton to Capt Sir Edward Campbell, Canning's military secretary, with ill-disguised nonchalance: 16 October 1859, Canning papers, WYA, Vol. 136, Military secretary's office papers, correspondence, No. 313

82. See, for example, testimonials for Lt C.K. Mackinnon, 63rd Bengal Native Infantry, 4 March 1860, Canning papers, WYA, Vol. 136, No. 2658

83. Lt H. Lilly, Hyderabad Contingent, to Military Secretary, 22 July 1859, Canning papers, WYA, Vol. 132, Military Secretary's office, register of letters received, 1859-60

Influence lubricated the creaky machinery of the Bengal army. Napier complained of being 'pestered with letters, even from lieutenants' asking to be moved to more desirable stations. He took this as a sign that 'these things have been done from favouritism, or these gentlemen would not dare to write such impertinence to a commander-in-chief'.<sup>84</sup>

The intense competition prevailing for appointments of all kinds explains the Company's reluctance to award commissions to men from the ranks. The Company commissioned only sixty-three soldiers, the first seemingly in 1842, most during the rebellion and then only for 'very great merit'.<sup>85</sup> A greater proportion of men were commissioned from the ranks in the Queen's army, virtually the only advantage in advancement it enjoyed over the Company's service, though too few to make any difference.

Though unabashedly desiring advancement, officers' primary motivations - to attain economic security and social respectability - remained largely unstated. Since obtaining security so often entailed imperilling respectability, officers were hard put to maintain their claims to gentility. Their attitude toward indebtedness, for example, compelled the adoption of a code of honour inexplicable to Queen's officers. Initial poverty, the costs of bonus payments, the expense of maintaining as many domestic servants as custom dictated, and youthful excesses paid for on credit resulted in young officers getting into the debt which few evaded and fewer ever escaped.<sup>86</sup> Debt was no stranger to civil or military gentlemen in Britain, but the scale of Indian officers' indebtedness, and especially their nonchalance in the face of it, offered their critics signs of their peculiar conception of 'honour'. 'Qui Hi', evidently an officer of the Bengal army, estimated that three-quarters of regimental officers were 'pretty deeply' in debt to money-lenders or banks, many standing surety reciprocally for others at rates of 12-14%, compounded six-monthly.<sup>87</sup> Under the Bengal army's general regulations 'Courts of request' assembled monthly at which embarrassed officers were called upon to meet their debts.<sup>88</sup> 'Hundreds of officers', Qui Hi alleged, allowed themselves to be called repeatedly before such courts,

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84. Napier to William Napier, Napier, *Life and opinions*, Vol. IV, p. 203

85. 'Bengal Non-Commissioned Officers promoted to commissions', IOLR, L/MIL/10/120; *Regulations applicable to the European officer in India*, Part III, p. 1091

86. Their predicament is depicted in Illustrations 3 and 5.

87. 'Qui hi', *What is to be done with the Bengal army?*, pp. 51-4

88. *General regulations of the Bengal army*, 1855, Section XXIII



Blobbs views with complacency the Indian Uniform, and thinks the Helmet particularly becoming.



The Mail arrives from England, and he is pleased to find himself well remembered by his Tailor!



Fatigued & heated by his morning's amusement he arrives at home only to be refreshed by the sight of a few Bill Collectors, who swarm about the 2<sup>d</sup> or 3<sup>d</sup> of each month.



The news of the death of a distant & rich relative, (who has left him a fortune) causes the unfeeling conduct displayed by our friend Blobbs



Our friend Ensign Blobbs, as free man, bids adieu to India in general, and Madras in particular, and



sails for old England!!

**Illustration 5**

Scenes from A subaltern's life ... being the adventures of Ensign Blobbs 'of ours'. 'W.T.D.' satirized the travails of the European officer in Madras in the 1860s, but similar scenes of debt, desperation and exultation at returning to Britain could have been recorded in any presidency over the preceding fifty years.

'without feeling the slightest shame'.<sup>89</sup> Indian officers' standards of financial probity affronted Charles Napier, himself not a rich man. In 1851, a week before he retired and in no mood to evade the issue, he issued a general order 'relating to officers being in embarrassed circumstances'. Though addressed to all officers, there is no doubt that it was directed particularly to those of the Company. 'Some young men', he observed, evidently referring to one of the many cases reported to him,

get Commissions without having had much education, or perhaps a vulgar one... A vulgar man who "enjoys a champagne Tiffin "AND SWINDLES HIS SERVANTS ... is not a Gentleman!<sup>90</sup>

Though issued at the height of the dispute resulting in Napier's resignation, Dalhousie considered this order 'better than any ... in his career'.<sup>91</sup>

Not so the officers impugned. Captain Frederick Thompson of the 2nd Fusiliers was shortly after convicted of 'conduct unbecoming' in that after being summoned to appear before a Court of request no less than nineteen times in twelve months he sent a 'highly insubordinate' letter to his adjutant commenting on Napier's observations. Though he had bilked Dorabjee, Covergee and Company of Sukkur of some

Captain Frederick Thompson (1816-83) 2nd European Bengal Fusiliers. son of a Royal Naval captain; comm., 1836; Captain, 1848; served in Scinde, 1844-45 and second Punjab war; GCM, 1850

Captain John Fagan (1815-51), 1st European Bengal Fusiliers. Lieutenant, 1838; cashiered, 1850

Rs2,350 Thompson objected to being referred to as a cheat. 'I did not appoint Sir Charles Napier as my Agent', he wrote, 'it is not the custom for Gentlemen to interfere in one another's private pecuniary transactions'.<sup>92</sup> Anglo-Indian notions of commercial morality were regarded as notoriously elastic.<sup>93</sup> That the Company's officers' idiosyncratic standards were out of harmony with those of Britain is apparent from the case of Captain John (or James) Fagan of the 1st Fusiliers, who in 1850 was cashiered for deceiving shareholders of the Benares Bank, including 'a brother officer who ... confided in him'. The court, however, recommended mercy

89. A view confirmed in a subsequent Parliamentary enquiry, when a Maj Gen R. Alexander, a Madras officer, claimed that only Bengal officers exhibited this casual attitude to debt: PP 1859 (I), Vol. V, minutes of evidence, p. 80, q. 2368

90. 'General order and circular letter by General Sir C. Napier relating to Officers being in embarrassed circumstances', IOLR, L/MIL/5/419, Collection 363

91. Dalhousie to Sir George Couper, Wuzeerabad, 23 December 1850, in Baird, Private letters of the Marquess of Dalhousie, p. 148

92. Bengal general orders, p. 373, 30 July 1851, IOLR, L/MIL/17/2/300

93. John Capper, The three presidencies of India, London, 1853, p. 471

'on the grounds of high character'. Napier indignantly denied the request.<sup>94</sup> Officers such as Thompson and Fagan were among the 'individuals of this class' who were 'cut by Queen's officers'.<sup>95</sup>

Company's officers vigilantly scrutinised and acted in defence of their collective interests, one of the main differences between them and the Queen's officers. While Queen's officers were officers but not an 'officer corps' on the Continental model - a group whose members have more in common with each other than with the group from which they are drawn - the Company's officers displayed both a collective awareness of interest and a willingness to act to secure and maintain rights, privileges and advantages. Their determination to do so explains to a large degree the Queen's officers' disdain. As mercenaries - a term rarely used then and since - the officers' relationship with the Company was essentially commercial. Though holding the royal as well as the Company's commissions since 1781, the Company's officers' orientation had always been that of employees rather than that of shareholders-cum-retainers, the customary stance of the royal officer.<sup>96</sup> The Court of Directors evidently considered their obligations to extend little beyond remuneration: a widow pressing her son's claims to a cadetship on the grounds of her late husband's military service was said to have been told, 'Well, Madam, we paid him for all that'.<sup>97</sup> The Company's officers' allegiance had always been conditional on the fulfilment by their employers of a hard bargain, and they had a long tradition of expressing their grievances. 'An Indian officer' explained how the Company's officers were:

impatient of authority, resentful at reproof, and have the practice of appealing to Government, or to the public through the press, against the decisions of their military superiors. They pride themselves on this sort of independent feeling.

This was, he conceded, 'a tone utterly at variance with that unhesitating and respectful obedience required by the discipline of the British Army'.<sup>98</sup> Dalhousie recorded his view more

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94. 'Memorandum on the dismissal ... of Captain James Fagan ... 1850 ...', IOLR, L/MIL/5/421, Collection 376. Unfortunately, the biographical details of officers cashiered or otherwise disgraced are often either sketchy or absent from the Hodson biographical index.

95. Naval and military gazette, 30 September 1837, quoted in Donald Thomas, Charge! hurrah! hurrah!: a life of Cardigan of Balaclava, London, 1974, p. 67

96. Gerald Bryant, The East India Company and its army, 1600-1778, p. 266

97. 'An East Indian proprietor', Claims of the Indian army on Indian patronage, London, 1852, p. 2

98. Bengal hurkaru, 12 January 1841

pungently, noting, 'with deep disgust the spirit of croaking, which is characteristic of this army and this whole society ... How we ever came to win India', he wondered, 'I cannot tell'.<sup>99</sup>

Officers had repeatedly displayed this spirit of 'independence' over the century in which the army had existed, twice combining against Clive, for instance.<sup>100</sup> In 1796 the Governor General and his Commander-in-Chief faced and narrowly bested another 'combination' of officers against 'their Employers' in defence of 'their Allowances and Advantages'.<sup>101</sup> In 1809 the first 'White mutiny' occurred, among the European officers of the Madras army, over the loss of allowances and culminating in sustained mutiny over three months.<sup>102</sup> Nor did the officers' predisposition to contest disagreeable decisions remain hidden in the archives. Publication of Arthur Broome's history of the Bengal army in 1850 revealed to a new generation their predecessors' 'impatience of control'.<sup>103</sup>

It would be an exaggeration to suggest that the Company's officers habitually menaced their employers. Open protest

**Lord William Cavendish Bentinck**  
(1774-1839), Governor General,  
1828-35

signified that the customary processes of collective bargaining had gone awry, and the relationship was characterised more by memorials than mutiny. The most celebrated instance of petitioning occurred in 1829 when Lord William Bentinck reduced station allowances in the 'half-batta order'. Senior and junior officers 'cut' Bentinck and deluged the directors, unsuccessfully, with some 76 memorials.<sup>104</sup> The attitude persisted in the 1840s and '50s, with the submission of several large petitions.<sup>105</sup> Rarely animated over principle, officers acted to protect their economic interests, particularly in pay and promotion.

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99. Dalhousie to Sir George Couper, Calcutta, 11 September 1853, Baird, Private letters of the Marquess of Dalhousie, p. 263

100. J.W. Kaye, A history of the sepoy war in India, 3 vols, London, 1896, Vol. I., pp. 206-210

101. Letter book concerning officers' protest, Midnapore 1796, NAM, 6404-74-2. See Amiya Barat, The Bengal native infantry: its organisation and discipline 1796-1852, Calcutta, 1962, p. 60

102. Alexander Cardew, The white mutiny: a forgotten episode in the history of the Indian army, London, 1929

103. Arthur Broome, History of the rise and progress of the Bengal army, Calcutta, 1850, p. 559

104. Barat, The Bengal native infantry, p. 92. See memorials submitted in 1829 in the papers of Captain Hugh Wilson, 25th and 40th Bengal Native Infantry, asserting 'that they entered the Service ... under the impression that these advantages were secured ... beyond the possibility of revocation', SUSM, IA825.1.

105. Memorials were hardly the preserve of impatient youngsters: the 'Service Memorial' of 1852, seeking preference for officers' sons, was signed by 100 colonels: 'An East Indian proprietor', Claims of the Indian army on Indian patronage, p. 4.

The Court of Directors and the military authorities attempted progressively to curtail the unrestrained appeals characteristic of the service in the eighteenth century. The process can be traced through the compilation of Regulations applicable to the European officer in India, published in 1865 and itself a force for moderation. Officers were enjoined in 1787 (and reminded in 1821) to address the court only through official channels, prohibited in 1821 from travelling to Britain to press their claims, and warned in 1843 that disrespectful memorials would be ignored. In 1848 the court prohibited printed memorials circulated within regimental messes. Officers customarily expressed freely their views in newspapers over anything concerning their profession, including, for example, the fitness of officers nominated for senior staff positions, questions which in Britain would have been the subject of private comment rather than public controversy.<sup>106</sup>

The 'independence' expressed in the submission of memorials and the practice of publicly commenting on military decisions was deeply entrenched. Successive commanders-in-chief sought to restrain officers through exemplary courts martial.<sup>107</sup> Captain Christopher Hassell, for example, was at least twice charged with such offences. In 1850 he had been convicted of 'gross disobedience' in complaining 'pertinaciously and litigiously'.<sup>108</sup> When confirming his sentence Napier remarked that '[t]hose who fancy that this army is a debating society will find themselves egregiously mistaken'. Courts martial composed of Company's officers were, however, reluctant to curtail their brother officers' privilege of expressing dissent publicly: in 1852, for example, Captain George Thomas was acquitted of a charge of 'highly unbecoming' and 'disgraceful' conduct in writing to two newspapers sarcastically reflecting in 'most disrespectful and unjustifiable terms' on Napier's remarks concerning the Thompson case.<sup>109</sup> Only in 1855 were addresses and meetings, memorials,

**Major Christopher Hassell (? - 1863) 48th Bengal Native Infantry. Comm. 1833; Commanding Munipore Regiment, 1858; name also rendered Hasell and Hassall in official records**

**Major George Powell Thomas (1808-57), 64th Bengal Native Infantry and 3rd Bengal European Regiment. b. Lucknow; comm. 1825; served 64th BNI and staff appointments; served first Afghan war; Crimean war; trsf to 3rd BER, 1853; died of wounds received at Sussia, 5 July 1857**

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106. Regulations applicable to the European officer in India. Vol. I, pp. 952-6

107. Though perhaps not as often as they might have wished: Napier described Indian army courts martial as 'farces'. 'If a private is to be tried they are sharp enough; but an officer is quite another thing'; 11 February 1847, Napier, Life and opinions. Vol. IV, p. 37.

108. Bengal general orders, 1850, p. 136, 13 March 1850, NAI

109. Bengal general orders, 1852, p. 376, 7 July 1852, IOLR

anonymous letters to the press and public comment on professional grievances expressly forbidden under the revised general regulations issued in that year.<sup>110</sup>

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In 1849, following the bloodily mismanaged battle of Chillianwallah in the second Punjab war, Sir Charles James Napier superseded Lord Gough as Commander-in-Chief in India. During his brief tenure Napier launched a 'slashing onslaught' on the Bengal army's customs.<sup>111</sup> While continuing the reformation of the soldiers' conditions of service commenced under Hardinge, Napier made his particular mission the reform of the distinctive culture of the officers of the Bengal army. On his appointment Dalhousie noted that Napier would 'astonish the Bengal army before long, and much they need it'.<sup>112</sup> Napier astonished most observers. Aged 67 on assuming command, Napier had served in the Peninsular war, where he had suffered six wounds, which tormented him for the rest of his life. A product of a stylish but shabbily genteel Anglo-Irish landed family, a Whig and a vocal opponent of flogging, in command of the Northern District of England in the late 1830s, he had gained the respect of Chartists, with whose cause he sympathised. In 1842 he conquered Scinde, governing the province with robust good sense before retiring in 1848. Debilitated by the climate, his punishing personal regime and by the political quarrels engendered by his contempt for 'politicals', he returned to India only at the urging of the Duke of Wellington, he and the Company's Directors suppressing their mutual loathing. Napier's eccentricities were legendary. In dress (see Illustration 2), in issuing general orders couched as moral homilies, in his self-conscious lack of pretension, Napier was an untypical British general. He did not share the Horse Guards' prejudice against Indian officers as such. Rather, he found offensive their contravention of the standards of liberal gentlemanly honour by which he lived: 'I have smashed about a dozen blackguards', he told his brother

**Hugh, 1st Viscount Gough (1779-1869)** Commander-in-Chief, India, 1843-49. Comm. 1793; served Cape, West Indies, Peninsula; Major General, 1830; served first China war; commanded in Punjab wars; KCSI, 1861; in battle prodigal of his men, among whom he remained inexplicably popular

**Henry, 1st Viscount Hardinge (1785-1856)**, Governor General, 1844-48. Comm. 1799; served Peninsular war, Waterloo; MP 1820-44; Secretary at War, 1818-30; Commander-in-chief of the British army, 1852-56; Field Marshal, 1855

**James, 1st Marquis Dalhousie (1812-60)** Governor General 1848-56. son of General George Dalhousie, the ninth earl, Commander-in-Chief in India, 1830-32; educ. Harrow and Oxford; Peelite MP, 1837-38

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110. General regulations of the Bengal army, 1855, Section XX, p. 24

111. Dalhousie to Sir George Couper, Muhassoo, 19 October 1849, Baird, Private letters of the Marquess of Dalhousie, p. 97

112. Dalhousie to Sir George Couper, Simla, 25 June 1849, Ibid., p. 81

William after six months in command.<sup>113</sup> His temper - part affectation, part pathological inability to deal with opposition - was notorious: he once ordered a delinquent officer to copy out the Articles of war.<sup>114</sup> Lord Hardinge, a supporter, admitted that Napier was 'a little crazy'.<sup>115</sup>

Napier's attempt at reform ended prematurely, truncated by resignation following his quarrel with Dalhousie. However, Napier did not merely identify aspects of the Company's culture about which Queen's officers were uneasy. His confrontation accentuated contrasts between the Queen's and Company's forces which proved to be fundamental to the transformation of the military forces of British India in the thirty years preceding the rebellion.

When seeking explanations for the catastrophe which overwhelmed the native army in 1857 contemporary and later commentators divined changes among the European officers to which they attributed the sepoys' growing alienation. Such changes affected not only the officers' relationships with their men, but also officers' relationships with each other. Indeed, it is apparent that by the 1850s significant differences existed between older and younger officers. Many older officers were dispirited and uncertain. Some, in a mood traced by Philip Mason, were disconcerted by disappointed expectations, harking back to a mythical 'golden age', when they enjoyed the confidence of their sepoys, untroubled by the tensions which the European presence in India had produced.<sup>116</sup> Others felt more prosaic concerns: slowness of promotion, increased competition for appointments. Senior officers particularly complained of the difficulties of securing patronage for the growing numbers of sons arriving a generation after the army's massive expansion in the 1820s.<sup>117</sup>

Subalterns commissioned from the mid-1840s, though dismayed by the likelihood of long exile and dearth of prospects, did not necessarily share older officers' disillusionment, and differed in ways which would become more marked in the rebellion and its aftermath. Shifts in the 'tone'

113. Charles to William Napier, 22 December 1849, Napier, Life and opinions, Vol. IV, p. 218

114. Dalhousie to Sir George Couper, 30 June 1850, Chini in Kunwar, Baird, Private letters of the Marquess of Dalhousie, p. 131

115. Hardinge to Sir Walter James, on the Ganges, 3 December 1847, Bawa Satinder Singh, (ed.), The letters of the First Viscount Hardinge of Lahore ..., London, 1986, p. 239

116. Philip Mason, A matter of honour, pp. 171-78

117. Though the number of available detached appointments had doubled, from just over 500 in 1834 to just over a thousand in 1852, the number of contenders outstripped the number of positions by five to one: Philip Melvill before the Select committee on Indian territories, PP 1852-53, Vol. XXVII, minutes of evidence, p. 5, q. 69; Appendix 7, 'An account of the military force employed under each presidency'.

of a society are notoriously difficult to trace. In the absence of adequate evidence subtle changes in attitudes and practices must often be recaptured from impressions. A change appears to have occurred in the culture of the Bengal army in the late 1840s as younger European officers rejected 'Anglo-Indian' in favour of 'metropolitan' values. The change coincided with Napier's tenure as Commander-in-Chief in India. If it did not originate in his attempt to 'give the army what it wants:- a proper military tone', then his homilies arguably symbolized and accelerated a process already gaining headway.<sup>118</sup>

The transition in the morés of European officers beginning in the late 1840s is exemplified by the decline of duelling. Cavalier over their debts, the Company's officers were sensitive about their honour in a way which cost them little but, occasionally, their lives. Though 'affairs of honour' were forbidden by the 1825 Articles of war, until the 1840s Indian officers regarded them as legitimate and laudable.<sup>119</sup> In 1838 even the saintly Henry Lawrence felt obliged to comply: his 'only wilful and deliberate sin' had been to seek 'the usual satisfaction' when accused of lying.<sup>120</sup> Duels

subsided only as changing ideas of gentlemanly honour in Britain (where it had declined a decade before) percolated to Anglo-Indian society.<sup>121</sup> Even so, in the mid-1850s young officers were still warned against issuing or accepting challenges. A notorious duel at Banda (again among officers of the 48th Bengal Native Infantry) in 1850 greatly discredited the practice, though it survived covertly until perhaps 1855.<sup>122</sup> One of the principals of the Banda duel,

**Brigadier Henry Lawrence (1806-57), Bengal army. Comm. Bengal Artillery, 1821; served first Burmah war, first Afghan war, first and second Punjab wars; KCB 1848; administrator in the Punjab, 1849-57; died of wounds at the Residency, Lucknow, 4 July 1857**

**Lieutenant Edward Bunbury Litchford (1822-?), 48th Bengal Native Infantry. Son of Anglican clergyman; comm. 1840; cashiered September 1850**

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118. Charles to William Napier, 4 November 1849, Napier, Life and opinions, Vol. IV, p. 202

119. Rules and articles for the better government of the officers and soldiers [of the East India Company], London, 1825, p. 15; Thomas Fraser recalled that in the 1820s duels were 'constant': Records of sport and military life, p. 6.

120. Herbert Edwardes & Herman Merivale, (eds), Life of Sir Henry Lawrence, 2 vols, London, 1872, pp. 194-5. In reflecting on the decline of the practice the editors noted on the same page the formation in 1842 in London of an 'Association for the Discouragement of Duelling'. Chapter 12 of V.G. Kiernan's The duel in European history: honour and the reign of aristocracy, Oxford, 1988, discusses the decline of duelling in Britain.

121. The lag between metropolitan and Anglo-Indian fashions is suggested in the opening pages of G.O. Trevelyan's satirical novel, The competition wallah, London, 1866, when the hero arrives in Calcutta in 1863 and notices the absence of Dundreary whiskers, by then an established fashion among gentlemen.

122. Three Company's officers (though no Queen's) were convicted of offences relating to duelling during Napier's term as Commander-in-Chief in India: John Mawson (ed.), Records of the Indian command of General Sir Charles James Napier, Calcutta, 1853, p. 1.

(also involved in the 'flare up' in the 48th's mess at Loodianah) was Lieutenant Edward Litchford, the archetypal Anglo-Indian cad. William Arnold described Litchford to his father as 'a Man known through India for blackguardism and bullying and moreover as a good shot'.<sup>123</sup> Napier cashiered principals and seconds, later reinstating a young ensign, the victim of Litchford's bullying.<sup>124</sup> The duel at Banda symbolizes both a change in the old Anglo-Indian military culture, and a disjunction between generations of officers. Evangelical reformers explicitly recognized that in the Queen's army a new ethos increasingly supplanted the old. An anonymous contributor to Colburn's united service magazine in 1850 asserted that '[e]very year a New Generation of officers are swelling our ranks, educated on principles radically opposed to the present army system'.<sup>125</sup> Young officers in India had traditionally exhibited scant deference to their seniors, illustrations of which are legion. John Lang, for instance, recalled an ensign address a man of sixty, 'Now then, old moonsiff, pass that claret', while John Backhouse, an otherwise temperate observer of the first Afghan war, described a brigadier as speaking 'as if he was standing on his head with somebody hammering tent pegs into his bottom'.<sup>126</sup> Changing conceptions of gentlemanly conduct and unashamed evangelism sharpened existing tensions between old and young.<sup>127</sup>

Changes in the moral and racial sensibility of British India in the 1830s and '40s have long provided a staple explanation of the alienation contributing to the outbreak of the rebellion of 1857. It has been attributed to the arrival in India of the evangelical movement and increased numbers of European women, who were supposed to be the carriers of the movement and all it entailed. Clearly the presence of more European women in cantonment society implied changes for the Bengal army's bachelors. The practice of keeping native mistresses, for example,

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123. Quoted by Kenneth Allott in his introduction to Oakfield, p. 29

124. 'Memorandum on ... a duel at Banda', IOLR, L/MIL/5/422, Collection 383; Keene, A servant of 'John Company', pp. 84-6

125. 'H.S.', 'The army new generation', Colburn's united service magazine, September 1850, p. 418

126. Lang, Wanderings in India, p. 9. Henry Yule and A.C. Burnell's Hobson-Jobson A glossary of colloquial Anglo-Indian words and phrases, (London, 1903) defines 'moonsiff' as 'a native civil judge of the lowest grade'. Typescript journal of Capt J.B. Backhouse, Bengal Artillery, 1838-42, entry for 7 February 1839, NAM, 6305/115.

127. It is striking how (except perhaps in their devotion to 'sport') Company's officers barely exhibit the self-conscious 'manliness' increasingly characterising middle-class men: see John MacKenzie, 'The imperial pioneer and hunter and the British masculine stereotype in late Victorian and Edwardian times', in J.A. Mangan & James Walvin, (eds), Manliness and morality: middle-class masculinity in Britain and America 1800-1940, Manchester, 1987, pp. 176-98.

apparently common in the 1820s, seems to have either declined or become more covert.<sup>128</sup> It is, however, improbable that the detectable change in tone which occurred among officers about mid-century can be exclusively attributed to the 'arrival' of European women, if only because the most active evangelical Christians were male, and that most 'memsahibs' must have been born and raised in India as officers' daughters.<sup>129</sup>

Though the strength of evangelical Christianity in Anglo-Indian society generally is difficult to measure, a more

Surgeon Warrick Walter Wells,  
48th Bengal Native Infantry. Appt  
A/Surg. 1840; Surg. 1854

assertive Christian presence helped to moderate the tone of the officers' vigorous masculinity.

The presence of women probably intensified the ethical concerns of the evangelical revival.

Frances Wells, for example, wife of Surgeon Walter Wells, also of the 48th Bengal Native Infantry, developed a sense of matronly propriety soon after her arrival in 1854. She may have served to remind her husband's brother officers of standards which they all too often forgot, and her letters to her father provide a moral commentary on the regiment's affairs. After joining the regiment early in 1855 Mrs Wells expressed her detestation of Captain Christopher Hassell of the 48th, 'the black sheep of the Regiment', whom Napier had admonished. Writing on 9 March she described him as 'the most horrible man I ever heard of ... [who] has not been sober since the 28th of January'.<sup>130</sup> George Malleson recalled in the 1880s the 'perpetual soaking' he observed as a subaltern in the 1840s.<sup>131</sup> Whether drinking declined much before the rebellion is unclear. The abstemious Napier in 1844 claimed that 'to drink beer from morning to night is the gentlemanlike practice in the Indian army', though it is not apparent which he found more deplorable, the choice of beverage or the duration of its consumption.<sup>132</sup>

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128. The evidence is predictably scanty, though a few references to officers acknowledging children by native women suggest that it continued. See Duncan Campbell, (ed.), Records of Clan Campbell in the military service of the Honourable East India Company 1600-1858, London, 1925, which (on pp. 39-41) reveals that Lt Archibald Campbell of the 3rd infantry fathered four '[i]llegitimate children by Golabi, an Indian' before marrying a colonel's daughter. Jones-Parry was advised to take a mistress when he joined the 1st Madras Fusiliers in 1850 (An old soldier's memories, p. 23), while Richard Burton, an officer of Bombay native infantry, recorded that in the 1840s 'every officer ... more or less' kept a mistress: Hyam, Empire and sexuality, p. 117, quoting F.M. Brodie, The devil drives: a life of Sir Richard Burton, London, 1971.

129. The explanation appears to be durable. Ronald Hyam, while rejecting its 'cruder variants' and identifying a serious flaw in the theory, nevertheless explains changes in Anglo-Indian society supposedly following the rebellion in terms of the memsahibs' 'arrival': Empire and sexuality, pp. 118-20.

130. Janet Wells to her father, Dr Francis Fox, 9 March 1857, Berners papers, Cambridge South Asian Archive (CSAA)

131. In his introduction to Fraser, Records of sport and military life, p. ix

132. Charles to William Napier, June 1844, in Napier, Life and opinions, Vol. III, p. 109

It is possible that for most officers drinking became more strictly regulated by informal sanctions. With more married officers resorting to their own quarters the masculine society of the mess may have become even less a force for cohesion within regiments, perhaps leaving them more the province of the arrogant subalterns whom Arnold reviled in Oakfield.

The greater presence of European women seems likely to have derived not only from the arrival of brides found by officers on furlough, but also from the growth to maturity of officers' daughters in India following the army's expansion in the 1820s. Their presence in cantonments allowed

**Brigadier John Jacob (1812-58), Bombay army. Comm. 1828; served first Afghan war, Scinde campaign, and the Persian war; a protégé of Outram, a vigorous administrator of Scinde and a vocal advocate of military reform**

younger officers to consider marriage more readily than had previous generations. The establishment of the Military Fund (a further sign of the officers' concern for security) acted, as John Jacob put it, as a 'joint stock company for the promotion of imprudent marriages'.<sup>133</sup> Surgeon McCosh, in dissuading ensigns from early marriages, noted in 1856 that '[y]oung fathers, and young mothers, and large families, on slender means, now teem in every regiment'.<sup>134</sup> The officers' greater responsibilities intensified their desire for lucrative detached situations and brought an increasing desperation to its members' search for security. Given the conception of Anglo-Indian 'nabobs' and the jokes about shaking the pagoda tree, it is ironic that officers' lives would be so dominated by the desire to secure not the vast riches obtainable within living memory, but the modest competency of staff allowances, a bonus and a pension. Their pretensions emphasise the insecure foundation on which their social standing rested.

On the eve of the rebellion the torpor of cantonment life weighed as oppressively as ever: ('India', complained, a 'griff' in March 1857, 'is the slowest place in the world, not even excepting Bognor').<sup>135</sup> It concealed, however, a state of incipient crisis. The rebellion exposed the turmoil among its native troops, increasingly uneasy over the direction and pace of the changes wrought within Indian society by British rule.

For European soldiers the life of the barrack-room continued largely undisturbed.<sup>136</sup> Their officers, however, were perturbed by what can best be seen as a social crisis compounded by

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133. Lewis Pelly, (ed.), The views and opinions of Brigadier-General John Jacob, London, 1858, pp. 203-4

134. John McCosh, Advice to officers in India, p. 39

135. Letter from Ensign Charles Macgregor, Ferozepore, 12 March 1857; Lady [Charlotte] Macgregor, (ed.), The life and opinions of Major-General Sir Charles Metcalfe Macgregor, 2 vols, Edinburgh, 1888, Vol. I, p.15

136. 'Largely' because reforms, discussed in the following chapter, ameliorated their conditions of service.

demographic inevitability. Regarding the service as a means of obtaining the economic and social ends of security and respectability, they were frustrated in their fundamental desires. Disdained socially by the Queen's officers, they competed with increasing intensity for an inadequate pool of staff positions. Denied their customary means of expressing grievances, the Company's officers laboured under an inchoate frustration. The rebellion and its aftermath deepened and exposed that crisis.

## Chapter 3

### 'Ours': community, identity and power in the Bengal European regiments, 1825-57

In the face of separation from their homes, the daily uncertainties of Indian service and the probability of death rather than discharge, soldiers formed several formal and informal bonds, which shaped men's lives and gave them meaning. They ranged from the identification as 'East India Convicts' in opposition to the royal service to the friendships of man and man forged in barracks or battle. Within the barrack-room, the most important corporate relationships were defined by several overlapping bonds, between 'shipmates', 'townies' and 'chums'. An awareness of these relationships is a fundamental starting point in understanding the communities of the Bengal European regiments.

At the end of the long voyage recruits went to their units, perhaps never to meet again. Friendships formed aboard ship, however, endured long after landing. Men wrote often of and to their 'shipmates', keeping track of their fortunes and, poignantly, of their deaths: William Braithwaite noted how 13 out of 75 had died within a year, John Luck how 13 were left out of 40.<sup>1</sup> Calculation of the chances of death or survival must have made for gloomy reflection. Awareness of their vulnerability heightened the importance of

friendships. 'A soldier was nobody', recalled Nathaniel Bancroft, 'unless he had a comrade'.<sup>2</sup> Most men had both a particular 'chum' and a group with whom they kept company and messed. Friendships formed over years of service, especially following active service or epidemics or as surviving shipmates dwindled, could be intense. The fact of contact often prevailed over the stereotyped content of any one letter. The surviving evidence of these friendships is often couched in the trite formality of the semi-literate, but is no less a testament of friendship for that. Bartholemew Ballance's letters to his 'Dear Comrade', for example, follow a formula common in soldiers' letters:

**Private Bartholemew Ballance (c.1839-?), No. 838, 5th Bengal European Light Cavalry. Servant, of Dublin, enl. Dublin February 1858, aged 21; disch. 883 1859**

**Staff Sergeant Nathaniel Bancroft, 5/1st Bengal Horse Artillery. Clerk, born Nagpore, enl. 1833; served Jodpore campaign, 1838, first and second Punjab wars, North-west frontier, 1850-54, rebellion; disch. 1866**

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1. William Braithwaite to his mother, Mhow, 29 May 1831, NAM; John Luck to his mother, 28 June 1841, IOLR

2. Bancroft, *From recruit to staff sergeant*, p. 59

I take the opportunity of righting to you hoping to find you are in Good helt As these few lines Leave Me at presant thank god for it Dear Comrade ...PS Give my Best Respects to all old comrades Dear Comrade ...<sup>3</sup>

Men also sought out 'townies', passing on local news within their own and others' units. British provincial towns were small enough for most men to find some common ground.

**Gunner Christopher McLoughlin, 2nd Bengal Horse Artillery. Cook, of Dublin, enl. Dublin, July 1843; Bangalore, 1843**

Even a Dublin cook, Christopher McLoughlin, while convalescing at Landour in the 'Haymala Mountains' in 1845, met a man named Ryan 'a son to Ryan the corn merchant in Stephens Green and ... a Brother of ... the House agents that you are acquainted with'.<sup>4</sup> Village and neighbourhood gossip in this way circulated throughout the force. Other friendships can be traced, particularly through the wills which men composed, usually only after realising that an illness might be mortal, often frank and dramatic, touched by the realisation of impending death. More than half named comrades as beneficiaries, often as 'my friend and comrade'.<sup>5</sup> Groups of men agreed to leave their estates to each other, perhaps helping them to buy their way out of the service.<sup>6</sup>

These bonds, assuaging the isolation which all felt, turned military organizations into familiar and comfortable homes. George Carter, who served in the 2nd Fusiliers for seventeen years, recorded his feelings on being promoted to the Town Major's list in 1856. He felt 'worse than when I was leaving England in /39'. Though in his 'jot book' he had catalogued years of bickering and jockeying for positions within the regiment, and though he had secured his release only after unpleasant confrontations with the colonel, Carter was soon reminiscing about his erstwhile comrades, how 'Sam Law and Sam Justice never could agree ... Then there was Currie in No.2 [Company] and Rice in No.7 ... Silver & Gould, ...', naming some fifty men with whom he had served over the years.<sup>7</sup> The bonds over which he became so nostalgic were forged primarily within men's corps. It is against their units' composition and rhythms that the culture of the barrack-room must be seen. The individual ambition characteristic of the Europeans weakened the force of institutional attachment, in that it rarely attained the fervour

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3. Pte Bartholmew Ballance, 5th BELC, to 'Dear Comrade', Peshawur, 17 February 1859, (part of the effects of Corporal Henry Smith, though dated at least five years after his death), IOLR

4. Gnr Christopher McLaughlin to his parents, Landour, 12 May 1845, (bound with the Braithwaite letters), NAM

5. Soldiers' wills, 1851-52, NAI

6. 'Annual account of the estates of deceased ... 1st European Bengal Fusiliers', 1 November 1851, Bengal muster rolls and casualty returns, 1851, IOLR

7. Carter jot book, IOLR

increasingly found in the Queen's army. For the Company's force, however, regimental identification was not, as it has traditionally been portrayed for the senior army, a matter of allegiance to an institution. Rather, soldiers spoke of 'ours', identifying the relationships existing within a particular institution: in effect, to a community.<sup>8</sup>

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European corps therefore lived as closed worlds, impenetrable to outsiders then as now. With the exception of those seeking advancement through promotion to the Town Major's list, men served from arrival to discharge or death with one unit. Gunners lived within the small worlds of the horse artillery troop or foot artillery company. Infantrymen, though part of the larger community of the regiment, lived as members of companies. Each sub-unit numbered less than a hundred. Relatively small groups therefore circumscribed men's lives. Their existence was structured; organisationally, spatially, and temporally. All soldiers belonged to aggregations claiming and imposing obligations - rear rank and front rank pairs who drilled and fought together; messes sharing a barrack-room; a troop or company. This network of obligations, privileges and duties bound the entire structure. The formal hierarchy of rank running from the commanding officer to the newest ringtail was merely the most visible connection. As a social and military institution the regiment depended upon several key individuals: the commanding officer, the adjutant, the sergeant major and the surgeon.

In the Queen's army, though a regiment could effectively be purchased, colonels had often served with it and remained in command for an average of some five years.<sup>9</sup> The Company's service allocated colonelcies in order of seniority (allowing those familiar only with sepoys to command Europeans and vice versa).<sup>10</sup> As steps to the coveted colonel's allowances, regimental commands were often held for the minimum period, and imposed little obligation to exercise responsibility. The system placed much authority in the hands of the adjutant, the

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8. Clearly, Queen's soldiers' lives' also revolved around their units - also, for example, referring to their units as 'ours' (see the journal kept by Lt Alfred Heathcote, 60th Rifles, during the siege of Delhi, Victoria Barracks Museum (VBM), Sydney). My point is to expose the particular style of the Company's force.

9. A survey of the commanders of every tenth line regiment over the period 1838-81 disclosed a range between 2.9 and 7 years, with the lower figures heavily influenced by casualties in the Crimea and in the 1857 rebellion: Henry Manners Chichester & George Burges-Short, The records and badges of every regiment and corps in the British army [1900], London, 1970.

10. General regulations of the Bengal army, 1855, Section LIV, pp. 392-3. Hodson's List of the officers of the Bengal army discloses numerous instances of its instability in the 1850s among officers connected with the European force. John Gerrard, who briefly led the 1st Fusiliers in the rebellion, commanded three corps in three years, William Lennox six in six years and George Sherer five in four years.

lieutenant charged with overseeing a unit's discipline and administration. A conscientious adjutant could effectively command a corps, an inefficient one ruin it.<sup>11</sup> Surgeons, honorary officers only (a distinction they regarded as a slight) occupied a particularly important place in a unit's life. Responsible for men's lives and able (though not obliged) to work for their welfare, the surgeon became 'a light on a hill', 'his charities and his friendships ... prized beyond all price'.<sup>12</sup>

Among the non-commissioned officers, the most important single individual in a corps was the sergeant major. A figure generating awe among old soldiers but little interest among scholars, he stood between officers and the rank and file. Standing orders enjoined him to particular vigilance: his eyes were to be 'everywhere, his ear should always be open. Nothing should occur ... unknown to him'.<sup>13</sup> Staff sergeants also exercised considerable influence in their respective spheres, particularly the orderly room clerk (privy to sensitive information) but also the quartermaster, hospital, schoolmaster, drill and provost sergeants. A company's colour sergeant (responsible for its discipline) and pay sergeant exercised authority within a more limited compass.

More than in even the most rigorous factory, the soldier's time was ordered. Days officially began and ended with bugle calls and roll calls. The soldier's year proceeded through an established cycle: the daily pay parade and rum ration, the monthly accounting day, the annual brigade and divisional inspections, clothing issue or regimental anniversary. Larger climatic patterns dictated human activity. From April to June summer heat imprisoned soldiers in barracks in sweaty, irritated indolence while all officers who could escaped to the cooler hills. The monsoon, arriving in July and at first welcomed, brought cholera and fevers. In October the invaliding committees convened and in November drafts of invalids departed as recruits arrived. In the cooler weather from October to March the artillery embarked on practice camps and all smartened up for the annual inspections. Upon this annual cycle the authorities superimposed the tri-annual exchange of station, with orders arriving in August for a move the following November. The wanderings of Sergeants Bancroft and Carter - the former from Calcutta to Peshawur, the latter from Beloochistan to Burmah - suggest a force in constant motion, home at once everywhere and nowhere.

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11. Since the inspection reports of the Bengal army for the entire period of this study are lost, the point must be made from fragmentary evidence. See the sequence of reports for the 73rd Bengal Native Infantry for the years 1835-40 tracing a transformation from drill 'very ill executed' to a corps in 'excellent order' in the papers of Lt W.C. Erskine, the adjutant, IOLR, Mss.Eur.D.597/12.

12. H. M. Lawrence, *Essays, military and political, written in India*, London, 1859, p. 469; John Bell, *The principles of surgery*, Edinburgh, 1801, Vol. I, p. 3

13. *Regimental standing orders, 90th Light Infantry*, Chatham, 1848, p. 25

Though overwhelmingly a masculine community, regimental society included women occupying diverse positions.

**Major Henry Marcell Conran (1813-?) Bengal Artillery; son of Queen's army captain; comm. 1831, served first Punjab war; ret. 1855**

Soldiers coveted marriage as a route to both solace and respectability. Henry Conran, though vindictive in punishing drunkards, saw in his men a 'pining after domestic life'.<sup>14</sup> Officers regarded soldiers' wives in the British army as disreputable. In India, and particularly in the Company's service, they were highly prized, Kendal Coghill finding them 'different out here ... very respectable'.<sup>15</sup> Girls of fourteen were married, often to much older men, and widows received proposals at the graveside. Widows of Company's men were more fortunate than those of the Queen's army, who, as Sergeant John Pearman put it, were compelled within six months to 'get married or go off pay'.<sup>16</sup> The Company's service equated domesticity with success. After six years William Braithwaite, by then a sergeant, hoped to obtain a situation on the Town Major's list, not 'for ambition ... no, it is the wish to be comfortable and settled ... the only happiness I can have in the Country is by being married'.<sup>17</sup> Marriage became largely the preserve of older soldiers and particularly sergeants: most Europeans attached to native infantry, for example, were married.<sup>18</sup>

The lives of soldiers' wives were in some ways easy (Elisabeth Downie proudly told her family that 'I ... never needs to dirty my hands') but they were often isolated, confronted with the perils of child birth and child-rearing in a climate in which both were unusually hazardous.<sup>19</sup> Until the 1840s families often occupied corners of barrack-rooms or verandahs - single men talked sardonically of the 'breeding cages' - with the consequent inconvenience, lack of privacy and danger.<sup>20</sup> Small wonder that Elisabeth Downie also lamented her 'pityfull condition ... in a desolate place' full of 'nothing but insects of every description'.<sup>21</sup> The consequences of the

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14. H.M. Conran, Autobiography of an Indian officer, London, nd, p. 54

15. Kendal Coghill to his brother Jos, Subathoo, 19 April 1856, NAM

16. Carolyn Steedman, (ed.), The radical soldier's tale: John Pearman, 1819-1908, London, 1988, p. 181. Mary Ann Copeland, for example, the fourteen-year-old widow of a gunner killed at Chillianwallah received a pension. Her petition appears at Nos 293-5 in the Military proceedings, 18 January 1850, NAI. Rapid engagement after sudden bereavement may seem to exemplify the depravity of barrack room life deplored by middle class contemporaries, but it also suggests the degree to which a regimental community looked after its own.

17. William Braithwaite to his mother, Cawnpore, 7 March 1837, NAM

18. Bengal Annual Military Statements, 1833-34; 1846-7; 1854-55, NAI

19. Elisabeth Downie to her parents, Kurrachee, 3 December 1848, SUSM

20. Bengal hurkaru, 19 November 1841

21. Elisabeth Downie to her brother and sister, Kurrachee, 21 December 1848, SUSM

dynamics of gender and age within the Company's force were to be profound. The barrack-rooms of the Company's regiments remained, even more than those of the Queen's army, the preserve of young, single men; indeed, over the period 1825-57 the proportion of men of over fourteen years' service declined markedly.<sup>22</sup>

The 'European' force was in fact a multi-racial community. Each artillery unit, for example, included dozens of gun lascars, drivers, grass-cutters and grooms. A European corps employed hundreds of native servants, camp followers and prostitutes in the 'regimental bazaar', a highly ordered world within itself, living in a symbiotic relationship with its host.<sup>23</sup> Each mess or room supported several servants though little direct evidence survives of their relationship.<sup>24</sup>

Soldiers' relations with at least native bazaar prostitutes are obscure. Only John Ramsbottom provides direct insights into their use of women. He told Jack how he had 'a bit of a lark with some of the native wimmin', and that 'I just get amongst as many ... as I can'.<sup>25</sup> The statistics of soldiers' rates of venereal infection reveal what their own writings largely do not. Official reluctance to confront the issue, however, precluded the collation of reliable statistics on the incidence of venereal disease before the 1880s.<sup>26</sup> Policy toward prostitution depended on commanding officers, and many appear to have sanctioned supervised brothels. Medical officers considered venereal disease to be a serious problem.<sup>27</sup> Fear of evangelical censure, however, repeatedly deterred the military authorities from confronting its effects. When Napier in 1850 proposed introducing the registration and supervision of women in sanctioned brothels, he was shown correspondence dating from 1816 recording how twenty-four previous attempts

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22. Bengal Annual Military Statements, 1829-30; 1845-46; 1854-55, NAI

23. General regulations of the Bengal army, 1855, Section VI

24. William Braithwaite, in a letter to his mother dated 29 May 1831 told her that he laid out each month a rupee each for the sicklegaur (who cleaned his accoutrements) and the cook boy, 12 annas for the dhobie and four annas for the shoe black, NAM. Some became part of the regimental community: when one of the 2nd Fusiliers' elephant mahouts died George Carter's mates subscribed Rs400 to assist his widow.

25. John Ramsbottom to Jack, Kurrachee, 8 April 1856; 10 July 1856, BL

26. Kenneth Ballhatchet, Race, sex and class under the raj: imperial attitudes and policies and their critics, 1973-1905, London, 1980, chapter 1; Hyam, Empire and sexuality, pp. 121-27. Neither study fully exploits the surviving, if elusive, evidence from either soldiers or military authorities, particularly before the 1880s.

27. Surgeon Edward Hare of the 2nd Fusiliers regarded syphilis as 'the bane of the European troops in India': PP 1863, Vol. XIX Part II, Appendix, answers to questionnaire, p.183

to regulate them had foundered on 'difficulties'.<sup>28</sup> Officers were advised neither to interfere with nor encourage bazaar prostitutes, and reminded them not to include them among the quarterly returns of 'people attached to the Bazars' - though they clearly were so.<sup>29</sup> Their toleration suggests that officers (many of whom also kept native mistresses) regarded their men's recourse to prostitutes, in accordance with contemporary opinion, as unavoidable. Even the evangelical vegetarian Conran accepted the maintenance of brothels 'to preserve the health of the men'.<sup>30</sup>

Much of the reconstruction of the Europeans' military culture is founded on speculation resting on often insubstantial foundations. Changes within the force's culture, over time and between units, further compound the difficulty of determining reliably relationships between officers and men and within barrack-rooms from evidence thinly scattered over the many units and over thirty-odd years. In the 1820s the force suffered rudimentary accommodation, limited rations and appalling health. Between the mid-1820s and the mid-1850s, however, it appears that the European force lost some of the roughness which had so impressed its royal critics. Beginning in the late 1840s, coinciding with and deriving from the changes affecting officers, a range of reforms altered the force's conditions of service. The major changes appear in Table 4.

While paucity of sources often obscures the details of this process of change, its operation seems unquestionable. In 1836, for example 'A Bengal Artilleryman' claimed that in his company over six months 31 men had received an average of 380 lashes.<sup>31</sup> The gradual diminution of flogging in the Queen's army reflected both the effects of legislative sanction and the influence of younger officers seeking less brutal ways of securing subordination. Fred Roberts, who joined the Bengal Artillery in 1852, witnessed only one flogging parade, and it became during the 1850s a much rarer punishment in most units.<sup>32</sup> The most important

Lieutenant Frederick Sleigh Roberts (1832-1914), Bengal Horse Artillery. Comm. Bengal Artillery 1852; posted to Horse Artillery, 1854; staff officer in Delhi Field Force, 1857; VC, 1858; QMG's Dept, 1859-78; commanded Punjab Frontier Force, 1878; second Afghan war, 1879; Commander-in-Chief, Madras, 1881-5; Commander-in-Chief, India, 1885-93; Baron Roberts, 1892; Commander-in-Chief, South Africa, 1900; Earl Roberts, 1900; last Commander-in-Chief of the British army, 1900-05

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28. Col A.S.H. Mountain to Col J. Stuart [Secretary to the Government of India, Military Department], 24 November 1849, No. 10, Military proceedings. February 1850, NAI

29. Circular, 5 April 1852, Compilation of standing general orders ... issued to Her Majesty's forces in India

30. Conran, Autobiography of an Indian officer, p. 223

31. Bengal hurkaru, 7 July 1836

32. Roberts, Forty-one years in India, p. 13

Table 4

**Major reforms in soldiers' conditions of service, 1847-57**

Few Indian officers championed reform, and complacent officers denounced those who did. The Europeans' improved conditions of service essentially followed the more extensive movement activating the Queen's service, impelled in India by Hardinge, Dalhousie, Napier and staff officers such as John Adye and Armine Mountain. The need to maintain comparable facilities (such as barracks) ensured that changes in the larger service would eventually be introduced in the smaller. Regimental savings banks, for example, a key element in persuading men to save rather than spend their pay, were introduced in the Company's service nine years after the Queen's army.

1847	Canteens, married quarters, reading rooms and skittle alleys introduced <sup>1</sup> ; corporal punishment limited to 50 lashes <sup>2</sup>
1848	Canteen profits used to subsidize purchase of beer and wine <sup>3</sup> ; limited enlistment introduced <sup>4</sup> ; punkahs installed in barracks <sup>5</sup> ; hill stations established for troops
1849	Daily pay introduced <sup>6</sup> ; morning dram prohibited <sup>7</sup>
1850	Space per man in barracks set at 1000 cubic feet <sup>8</sup> ; families prohibited from sharing barrack rooms <sup>9</sup> ; vegetables issued as rations <sup>10</sup>
1851	Additional and better bedding issued <sup>11</sup>
1852	Bathing and washing facilities approved <sup>12</sup> ; military prisons established <sup>13</sup>
1856	Regimental savings banks extended to Company's Europeans <sup>14</sup> ; soldiers' baggage transported at official expense

1. Minute No. 630 Hardinge to SGIMD, 21 July 1847, Hardinge papers, IOLR
2. 'Mr Cochrane's extracts ...', Vol. I, Despatches to Bengal, No. 131, 21 December 1847, IOLR, L/MIL/5/445
3. Ibid., No. 42, 7 June 1848
4. Ibid., No. 24, 21 March 1848
5. 'Principal measures in the Military Department from 1848 to 1856', No. 6, 4 February 1848, Dalhousie papers, SRO, GD/6/328
6. Ibid., No. 8, July 1849
7. 'Mr Cochrane's extracts ...', Vol. I, No. 95, 31 October 1849, IOLR
8. Ibid., No. 92, 21 August 1850
9. '194 papers compiled in the Military Department, 1848-56', No. 55, General order, 6 May 1850, Dalhousie papers, SRO, GD/6/327
10. 'Mr Cochrane's extracts ...', No. 31, 19 March 1850, IOLR
11. Ibid., No. 123, 5 November 1851
12. Ibid., No. 32, 17 March 1852
13. Circular, 5 September 1853, Compilation of standing general orders ... issued to Her Majesty's forces in India
14. 'Mr Cochrane's extracts ...', No. 45[?], 7 June 1856, IOLR

changes moderated the drinking to which most crime was attributed. Beer replaced spirits and 'habitual drunkenness' became an offence rather than an excuse. By the 1850s the young men inhabiting the Europeans' barrack-rooms (by the early 1850s usually without married men and their families) still drank and whored, but were physically more comfortable, were more likely to save than to spend their pay, and had access to pastimes less likely to put them in hospital or on a charge. The changes appear to have enhanced the force's ethos of aspiration and strengthened its identity and sense of difference to the Queen's army.

The contemporary comparison with the Queen's army is also inescapable in retrospect. The Queen's army was portrayed as a service in which protest was rare or swiftly suppressed. Contemporaries considered the Company's force as at least 'greatly inferior' to that of the Queen's army, and at worst 'disgraceful'.<sup>33</sup> Yet the discipline of the Queen's army was not as pristine as it has been portrayed or was expected at the time. The Company's Europeans, exaggerating tendencies apparent in the other, represented for Queen's officers a perpetual reminder of the undesirable disorder to which their own force might fall prey. Though little attention has been directed to the detail of relationships within Queen's regiments, evidence suggests that obedience was rarely automatic or unquestioning, and that a continual contest of complaint and compliance occurred within Queen's regiments. As a Queen's officer put it to a Parliamentary enquiry, 'it is customary for soldiers ... to express themselves'.<sup>34</sup> Contemporary sources provide numerous instances of Queen's troops in India contravening the standards of subordination expected of them.<sup>35</sup> Though generally concealed by regimental solidarity, passing references to the 53rd Foot suggest how precarious subordination may often have been. The 53rd had allegedly 'run riot' in Gibraltar during the 1840s.<sup>36</sup> In 1857, at the height of the rebellion, a European railway engineer recorded reports of it 'kicking up shines very like mutiny'.<sup>37</sup> In Dublin during the Fenian crisis of the mid-1860s the regiment became notorious

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33. Charles Grey to his brother, Henry, Lord Howick, 29 & 30 October 1858, Priors Kitchen, University of Durham (UofD). I am grateful to Prof. Peter Burroughs for the suggestion that the Grey correspondence might prove useful.

34. Evidence of Capt Henry Smith, 39th Foot, PP 1835, Vol. VI, Report from the select committee into colonial military expenditure, p. 12, q. 138

35. For example, Steedman, The radical soldier's tale, pp. 118, 185; Arthur Swinson & Donald Scott, (eds), The memoirs of Private Waterfield, London, 1968, p.143-5, describing how soldiers objected to poor rations; Sam Browne described how Queen's troops 'hurrooshed' him, attempting to take half a sheep he was carrying: Journal of the late Sam Browne, p. 23.

36. Lang, Wanderings in India, p. 257

37. John Blackett to his mother, Agra fort, 18 October 1857, IOLR, Photo. Eur.7

for harbouring nationalists.<sup>38</sup> If, therefore, contemporaries measured the Company's Europeans against the actual rather than the ideal state of discipline in Queen's regiments, then their dereliction must indeed have been grievous, and the Europeans' example correspondingly less welcome.

'Discipline', however, one of the contemporary army's most powerful shibboleths, possessed several meanings depending on usage. In determining whether, how and to what extent the Europeans challenged conventional conceptions of discipline, care is needed both to establish the meanings applied in particular circumstances and to avoid simply accepting contemporary judgements. It sometimes related to troops' bearing on parade - royal officers alleged that the Company's troops were not as smart. It also related to the tendency to commit military crime, and again arguing from statistics of offences committed and punishments awarded, the Company's Europeans were said to be poorly disciplined. Most importantly, discipline was also a measure of 'subordination' - not whether men expressed the grievances which bothered even Queen's regiments, but whether they did so in a 'soldierlike' manner. The Company's Europeans, like the Queen's army, informed men through their account books that 'obedience is the first duty of the soldier', though they plainly did not observe the precept unreservedly.

The relationship between officers and men, and especially the degree to which subordination was expected or enforced, is central to a study focussing on a military protest. Differences in systems of reporting and the imperfect evidence available impede comparison between the two forces, but there seems no reason to doubt that Queen's troops were less prone to commit serious offences, and every reason to believe that the Company's discipline was as 'lax' as a Queen's officer claimed to be a 'matter of remark' among royal officers.<sup>39</sup> He saw the Europeans' 'inferiority' in their habits of

neglecting to salute officers, showing a want of respect in their demeanour, making loud remarks in the hearing of officers, answering coarsely, and in a disrespectful manner'.<sup>40</sup>

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38. Sir Hugh Rose to the Duke of Cambridge, Dublin, 1 February 1866, Rose papers, BL, Correspondence with Duke of Cambridge, Add. Ms 42796

39. That the Europeans' officers and sergeants might have more rigorously policed crime is, in the light of the surrounding discussion, unlikely. The Delhi gazette believed the royal army to be 'much more vigorous' in prosecuting minor disciplinary cases; 18 January 1859.

40. H. Biddulph, (ed.), 'The European army in India after the Indian mutiny: Captain R. Biddulph's memorandum', Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research, Vol. XVIII, No. 69, Spring 1939, p. 14

Queen's officers worried that the Europeans' indiscipline might be contagious, a particularly acute concern in the late 1840s and early 1850s, when charges of insubordination intensified in Bengal. Men dissatisfied at the life of a soldier heard (presumably from regiments arriving from New South Wales) of the easier time which convicts enjoyed, and men struck or threatened officers or sergeants in order to be sentenced to transportation. The Company's Europeans were particularly affected, the limited but accessible statistics of courts martial substantiating their reputation. Under Napier the two Bengal European regiments averaged 7.5 cases tried before courts martial compared to an average of 2.25 for Queen's regiments in Bengal.<sup>41</sup>

Compelling statistics notwithstanding, it would be unwise simply to accept the Queen's officers' criticism, nor need the question be approached from the perspective of officers seeking subordination. Rather, explaining relationships between ranks within the force necessitates an awareness of the informal and formal relationships between officers and men, and the morés of the barrack-room. Company's officers appear to have tolerated conduct which in the Queen's army would have been regarded as insubordinate or even mutinous, and viewing the relationship from the perspective of the Queen's army obscures rather than clarifies, as a discussion of contemporary explanations for its state of discipline suggests.

Queen's officers attributed the discipline of the Company's service to the corrosive effects of long service in India, the heavy drinking among its members and the instability of its non-commissioned officers. They argued that even Queen's regiments suffered after fifteen years in India, though the mechanism by which this occurred remained obscure, and concluded that indiscipline was endemic to a force serving permanently overseas.<sup>42</sup> Their explanation, simplistic and largely unsubstantiated, is difficult to reconcile with the complexities of the barrack-room and officers' mess. Contemporary critics were on firmer ground in attributing much military crime to the men's habitual 'soaking'. Though some critics contended that the

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41. Mawson, Records of the Indian command of General Sir Charles James Napier, index, pp. viii-xi. Such statistics provide a rough index of subordination, but one not readily supplemented. Few statistics of offences tried have survived. Those for general courts martial, recorded in the General orders, are complete, if lacking in detail. Some figures, but no details, of district courts martial, exist, for some years. Numbers and details of regimental courts martial, the most numerous and most reliable measure of regimental discipline, are almost entirely lost, recoverable only in impressions gleaned from conduct sheets attached to discharge papers.

42. For example, see the testimony of Maj Gen Sir Edward Lugard before the Peel Commission, PP 1859 (I), Vol V, minutes of evidence, pp. 147-8, qq. 3966-72

locals drank harder than the line, heavy drinking was prevalent in Queen's corps, and cannot alone account for the difference between the two.<sup>43</sup>

Contemporaries identified the disruption consequent on their promotion as a major cause of their indiscipline. The explanation at least distinguishes between Queen's and Company's armies, and offers effects which may be traced. Whether discrepancies between the backgrounds of officers and men often both of the 'middling class' produced tension

**Major General Archdale Wilson (1803-74), Commander, Delhi Field Force, 1857. Comm. Bengal Artillery, 1819; served Bhurtpore, second Punjab war, commanded Meerut Div., May 1857; KCB, 1857; furlough, 1858 to death; Lieutenant General, 1868**

generally is impossible to determine. An incident described by 'An old soldier', however, evokes a force in which officers did not enjoy the unquestioned superiority prevailing in the Queen's army. Abused by an adjutant 'with his usual coarse bad language', a soldier (significantly a gunner) retorted that he was 'a soldier ... [and] no scoundrel but a gentleman'.<sup>44</sup> It is, however, incontestable that European units, especially artillery, were in permanent flux as men moved out and up on promotion or back and down on remand or reduction. The need to find dependable subordinates for secondment to native corps or to the departments meant, as Archdale Wilson plaintively put it, that 'they take all our best men'.<sup>45</sup> The repeated promotion of ambitious and capable sergeants (especially the staff sergeants, regarded in the Queen's army as the mainstay of regimental cohesion) and their replacement by inexperienced or unsuitable men must have contributed to instability. Contemporary explanations are limited because, though based on experience, they were invariably offered by senior Queen's officers unacquainted with the interior life of the force. Considered as a culture rather than as a problem in imperial military policy, the Company's Europeans exhibited relationships between ranks unique to it, a culture against which the force's disciplinary complexion must be seen.

There is, it must be admitted, a perplexing lack of consistency in the evidence concerning the relationships between officers and men, particularly given how few officers served in European corps - less than 250 at any one time.<sup>46</sup> As in the Queen's army, some recognised and strove to

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43. Lord Elphinstone [Governor of Bombay] to Sir Charles Wood, 26 September 1859, PP 1860, Vol. L, Future organization of the Indian army, p. 63

44. Bengal hurkaru, 11 October 1836. The incident exemplifies several tendencies within the European force; Cockney officers, the gunners' sense of superiority, and their pretensions to gentility.

45. PP 1859 (I), Vol. V, minutes of evidence, p.245, q. 5573

46. Determining reliably the force's styles of command is difficult. No copies of the standing orders which some regiments published can be located in major libraries. No inspection return and only one regimental digest appear to have survived, and the sensitivity of the subject of discipline (and especially indiscipline) understandably precludes mention in regimental histories. It is often

meet paternal obligations, while others failed to meet expectations which in the Queen's army would have been accepted as routine. Both soldiers' and officers' memoirs and letters refer to officers encouraging men to learn to read, starting theatres and participating in games. In 1839 on the march into Afghanistan, infantry officers worked with their men for four days, dragging guns up the Kojuck heights.<sup>47</sup> On the other hand, there exist instances of, for example, an officer refusing (in contravention of the Articles of war) to appear for one of his men at a court martial<sup>48</sup>, officers allowing their units to march without them<sup>49</sup>, or even admitting that they possessed 'little influence'.<sup>50</sup> The lack of consistency reflects the absence of an institutional philosophy of leadership.

While Queen's officers increasingly cultivated a paternal leadership based on a growing regimental identity, the Europeans' officers subscribed to no general ethos of command. Lacking a particular style of leadership, Company's officers were left to develop their own or follow that of their fellow officers or their colonel. Forceful or charismatic officers established informal bonds with their men, while those unschooled in command, unaware of or uneasy with its demands, remained preoccupied with their own interests. Soldiers' nicknames for their officers exemplify the conundrum. 'Old Jeremy' and 'Dad' bespeak affection and respect.<sup>51</sup> 'Old Bill-a-Nick' (the origin obscure, but perhaps signifying a propensity to charge men), 'Bully' and 'Big stick' suggest less benevolent regimes.<sup>52</sup>

A medical reformer urged the Company's corps to develop, as he put it in deploring the Europeans' poor health, 'a community of feeling'.<sup>53</sup> With officers often anxious for appointments outside the unit, colonels posted to corps from a roster and soldiers seeking positions elsewhere, few units could expect the continuity and attachment becoming usual in the Queen's army. Even so, whatever their disciplinary shortcomings, European units exhibited

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necessary to generalise from particular incidents, the cumulative import of apparently unrelated occurrences buttressing the resultant unavoidable speculation.

47. P.R. Innes, The history of the Bengal European Regiment ... and how it helped to win India, London, 1885, p. 343

48. Bengal general orders, 1853, p. 351, 20 June 1853, IOLR

49. Carter jot book, IOLR

50. Conran, Autobiography of an Indian soldier, p. 135

51. Carter jot book, IOLR; Quinney, Sketches of a soldier's life, p. 101

52. Brown private journal, NLS; Bancroft, From recruit to staff sergeant: 'An old soldier', Bengal hurkaru, 11 October 1836

53. Kenneth Mackinnon, A treatise on the public health, climate, hygiene, and prevailing diseases, of Bengal ..., Cawnpore, 1848, p. 189

a robust corporate identity, founded on the personalities of their officers and on their performance in battle. The Bengal Horse Artillery particularly cultivated its impression as an élite, an institutional identity continually refreshed by the reputations of its troop commanders and the vigorous culture of its men.<sup>54</sup>

The relationship between soldiers and their officers was based on the implicit understanding that they were employed to do a job of work on duty or, even more, on active service, but that otherwise they were not to be troubled by the impositions of military service.<sup>55</sup> The formalities obtaining between officers and men resembled those between masters and employees at work. Men felt able to approach officers directly. As an old soldier counselled Bancroft:

if yer want anything done for ye, don't you be goin' about to understrappers, and this fellow and that chap, but go straight to the hid of the house!<sup>56</sup>

Officers and men rarely met informally, and then in defined arenas: mounting theatricals or in occasional sports days, when the reserve normally observed relaxed into an informality comparable to harvest festivals or fairs at home. A few met as brother masons in the small lodges maintained by some units, though details are more obscure than most aspects of the interior life of the European corps.<sup>57</sup> Dealings between ranks appear to have been characterized by a finely balanced combination of deference and familiarity quite foreign to the style becoming fixed in the Queen's army.<sup>58</sup>

The approach influenced even the administration of the force's disciplinary code. In contesting a charge, for example, a man was permitted to sing 'John Barleycorn' in the orderly room.<sup>59</sup> A sentry could challenge the orderly captain with 'Arrah, ... Major ... go home again, the boys are

54. Horse artillery officers sought to retain command of their troops as long as possible. For example, Mark Crummie's colonel, Michael Dawes, commanded the 3/1st troop for eight years.

55. 'Provided the men were sober enough for roll-call', recalled Thomas Fraser of the Bombay Europeans in the 1820s, 'those off duty were allowed to go to the devil in their own way': Records of sport and military life, p. 29

56. Bancroft, From recruit to staff sergeant, p. 7

57. George Carter, an active Mason, recorded his ascent through the 2nd Fusiliers' lodge in his jot book, IOLR.

58. Charles Napier, accustomed to the more casual style of the Peninsular army, denounced the encroachments of 'martinets' who would have soldiers address officers only through sergeants and 'blow their noses by beat of drum': 'Relation of officer and private', undated newspaper clipping reviewing his Life and opinions, probably from the Scotsman c. 1857, from the collection of Dr John Grieve, Mitchell Library, Glasgow.

59. Bancroft, From recruit to staff sergeant, pp. 68-9

very tired & fast asleep!', and not be charged.<sup>60</sup> In the Bombay Europeans a defaulter could explain his dereliction 'in an irresistibly comic Irish brogue', thereby 'mitigating his punishment'.<sup>61</sup> Similar incidents can certainly be found in the memoirs of Queen's officers.<sup>62</sup> The early Victorian army was a less rigid institution than it is often portrayed; a Royal Artillery officer recalled in the 1890s how in the army of his youth there was 'much less Orderly-room Clerk and much more personality in the military system of that epoch'.<sup>63</sup> That Queen's officers found the Company's force unacceptably 'lax' suggests how casual its discipline must have been.

Armies have many purposes, but the soldier's job is in one sense simply to fight. All observers agreed that the Company's men endured the rigours of war at least as well as the Queen's troops. European corps served in every campaign mounted in and from British India in the century after Plassey. It is possible that the Company's less rigid discipline permitted qualities of initiative and independence which made its men better fighting soldiers. In the disastrous retreat from Kabool, for example, gunners of the 1/1st horse artillery, among the least disciplined of the Europeans in cantonments, maintained order longer than any other troops.<sup>64</sup> Survivors taken by the Afghans displayed an initiative contrasting with the apathy afflicting captured royal troops.<sup>65</sup>

Battle, George Carter wrote, formed 'the theme of many a barrack & tent conversation'.<sup>66</sup> Few, however, described in detail the experience of battle, and the reality lies concealed in accounts

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60. Carter jot book, IOLR

61. A. McKenzie Annand, (ed.), Cavalry surgeon. the recollections of Deputy Surgeon-General John Henry Sylvester, London, 1971, p. 41

62. For example, a colonel merely admonishing men attempting to deceive Garnet Wolseley as a raw subaltern: Wolseley, The story of a soldier's life, Vol. I, pp. 32-34

63. Thomas Bland Strange, Gunner Jingo's jubilee, London, 1893, p. 154

64. E. Buckle, (ed. J.W. Kaye), Memoir of the services of the Bengal Artillery ..., London, 1852, p. 433. Members of the corps commissioned a memorial column at Cossipore, an embodiment in stone of the horse artillery's identity.

65. George Lawrence (ed. W. Edwards), Reminiscences of forty-three years in India, London, 1874, pp. 201-2; 221-2. Moreover, contrary to persistent imperial myth, Dr Brydon was not the only European to survive the retreat. At least one European soldier, Sgt Maj John Lissant, also reached safety after a nightmare in the Khyber Pass, an indication of the toughness of the force's men: Bengal hurkaru, 27 May 1842.

66. Carter jot book, IOLR

couched in the evasive conventions of the 'battle piece'.<sup>67</sup> A force founded on an aggressive male culture regarded battle as the ultimate test of masculinity: Gunner Luck's comrades shunned a man who attempted to evade combat, while the literary William Bingham, recording his 'random thoughts in Hindostan' resolved to do his duty to 'shew at least, that I'm a man'.<sup>68</sup> Many welcomed active service, as a release from the tedium of cantonments, as an opportunity for batta or loot, or to demonstrate prowess likely to assist advancement.<sup>69</sup> Despite the paucity of evidence of its effects, in that battle forged and broke deep friendships its place in the creation of the Europeans' culture must not be discounted. For individuals and regimental communities these effects could be profound. Richard Perkes, for example, lamented how at Ferozeshah in the first Punjab war, 'my best friend was killed ... she was together more than three years and agreed like two brothers'.<sup>70</sup> At Ferozeshah the 1st Fusiliers lost 51 killed and 164 wounded. By the end of the sixty-day campaign 20 out of 26 officers and 410 of the 640 men had been killed or wounded.<sup>71</sup> The ordeal confirmed the Europeans' institutional identity. Perkes, who survived the campaign 'without receiving one scar', told his family that 'Froreshaw was one of 'the two greatest Battles that ever were fought in India'. William Bingham recounted the ordeal in his epic poem written from the perspective of a soldier in the ranks.<sup>72</sup>

In accordance with the force's ethos, European soldiers measured reward in more material terms: Perkes went on to relate how he received 'a battey off sevent[y] six rupees which is about eight pounds', suggesting the Europeans' ability to combine institutional pride with individual pragmatism. Promotion, however, brought more certain reward than battle, and a study of its workings points to the centrality of the aspiration central to the force's ethos. Some positions, notably in the Public Works Department, were filled by men possessing stipulated qualifications. Assistant overseers had usually demonstrated their capacity to measure, estimate and write during their year's instruction at Thomason College. Overwhelmingly, though, advancement for the European force's other ranks operated much as it did for its

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67. John Keegan's term for descriptions of battle cast in the language, assumptions and images traditionally available to describe combat: The face of battle, London, 1976, pp. 36-46

68. John Luck to his mother, Kurnaul, 26 May 1842, IOLR; 'Past and present; or, random thoughts in Hindostan', in Bingham, The field of Ferozeshah, p. 60

69. Christopher McLaughlin, for example, looked forward to the imminent conflict with the Sikhs because it would 'be the means of putting some money in my pocket'; letter to his parents, Landour, 12 May 1845, NAM

70. Richard Perkes to his brother and uncle, Subathoo, 10 August 1846, NAM

71. Innes, History of the Bengal European Regiment, pp. 379-90; 407. As an ensign, Percy Innes carried one of the 1st's colours at Ferozeshah.

72. The field of Ferozeshah; an excerpt appears in Appendix D.

officers, by patronage. Men sought and dispensed patronage at every level. Sergeant Fraser recorded that a non-commissioned officer, besides being 'Temperate, Active and Industrious', should be 'a patron to all those to whom he has Got Authority over'.<sup>73</sup> Senior non-commissioned officers exercised considerable power.<sup>74</sup> George Carter recorded his bitterness at being evicted by his sergeant major from the profitable situation of mess steward because 'I never sammee'd him nor brandied him'.<sup>75</sup> Because the demand for responsible men exceeded the supply, cronyism resulted. Even Thomas Quinney admitted that 'there are more promoted than really deserve it'.<sup>76</sup> The perplexing co-existence of formal qualification and informal influence paralleled contemporary practice in civil life, where illiteracy, for example, need not have barred men from becoming foremen and patronage prevailed over more formal recruitment procedures.<sup>77</sup>

Officers naturally deployed even more influence, particularly in obtaining promotion to the Town Major's list, and were generally able to advance or retard men's prospects. Henry Smith, William Braithwaite and William Pattison had their families in Britain intercede with the relations of Indian officers to obtain promotion (all, it seems, successfully).<sup>78</sup> Like their officers, soldiers appear to have sought testimonials to enhance their prospects.<sup>79</sup> Such recommendations doubtless often reflected favouritism: a satirical 'New Military Dictionary' defined General orders as

Lieutenant Colonel Henry Tombs (1824-74), 2/1st Bengal Horse Artillery. Educated Sandhurst and Addiscombe; comm. Bengal Artillery, 1841; BHA, 1844; served Gwallor war, first and second Punjab wars, rebellion, 1857-58; VC, 1857; Lieutenant Colonel, RHA, 1861; Brig. commanding Gwallor District, 1863; commanding column in Bhootan Field Force, 1865; commanding Allahabad Div., 1871, Oudh Div., 1872

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73. James Fraser to his brother, 12 July 1852, SUSM

74. Even to the extent of driving unpopular men out of the force: Jones-Parry referred to a pay sergeant forcing out a man unwilling to accede to corruption; An old soldier's memories, p. 244

75. Carter jot book, IOLR. 'Sammee'd' connotes worship; troops called the Hindoo temple on Delhi ridge the 'Sammy House'.

76. Quinney, Sketches of a soldier's life, p. 144

77. See David Vincent's discussion of literacy and occupational recruitment in Literacy and popular culture. England 1750-1914, Cambridge, 1989, pp. 127-28. The importance of patronage in obtaining jobs is suggested by Michael Huberman, 'Invisible handshakes in Lancashire: cotton spinning in the first half of the nineteenth century', Journal of economic history, Vol. XLVI, No. 4, December 1986, pp. 967-98.

78. G. Tierney Fergusson to George Aynsley, 26 October 1846, Effects of Henry Smith, IOLR; William Braithwaite to his mother, Cawnpore, 7 March 1837, NAM; William Pattison to his brother and mother, Saugor, 20 July 1834, NAM

79. See, for example, the testimonial for Pte Richard Miller, Agra, 31 March 1830, Papers of the 9th Earl of Dalhousie, Commander-in-Chief in India, 1829-32, SRO, GD45/5/16

'Records of jobbery and annals of Toadyism'.<sup>80</sup> Conversely, to offend an officer could be ruinous: William Braithwaite feared being 'broke just as the caprice or fancy of the Com[manding] officer pleased'.<sup>81</sup> Nathaniel Bancroft, on being transferred to Henry Tombs's 2/1st horse artillery in 1856, immediately (and inexplicably) incurred Tombs's dislike. Within six months Tombs, who had told Bancroft at first sight that they would 'never be good friends', had court martialled and reduced him. A sympathetic colonel, who told Bancroft that Tombs intended 'to disgrace you by scratching your back', had him transferred to another troop.<sup>82</sup> The orderly progress of promotions and postings concealed much less worthy lobbying, the very foundation of successful careers, in the Bengal army as much as in civil life.

The Queen's army plainly also exhibited its share of victimization and favouritism.<sup>83</sup> The relatively weak centripetal bonds within the Company's regiments, however, posed a dilemma for those responsible for their corporate existence. This is exemplified by George Carter's attempts to secure promotion to the Town Major's list. Carter, a competent pay sergeant, had attempted unsuccessfully to gain permission to apply for promotion in 1852 and 1854.

In 1856, after 'a very trying scene' before Colonel St George Showers, he was at last permitted to sit the promotion exam.

After passing, however, he was pressed to consider the 'comparatively easy, and ... very lucrative' position of Schoolmaster sergeant at the regiment's depot. Showers summoned Carter to appear before a full regimental orderly room. In describing the pressure to which he was subjected, Carter conjures up virtually a tableau vivant of the structure of regimental authority:

"No, Sir: - I wouldn't take it" There was a dead silence of three minutes or so, I standing ... with my full dress on ... the adjutant [Kendal Coghill] on the Col's right ... & very busy turning the leaves of a book; the Orderly Room Clerk ... standing to attention behind the Colonel; ... the officers ... all eyes and ears; the Sergeant Major on my half-right ... and in my rear about three paces all the Pay [and] Orderly-Sergeants

...

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80. Bengal hurkaru, 18 August 1840. The General orders recorded promotions of both officers and men.

81. William Braithwaite to his mother, Cawnpore, 23 February 1836, NAM

82. Bancroft, From recruit to staff sergeant, pp. 91-3

83. For examples of both patronage and persecution in the Queen's army, see the journal of Cpl John Mitchell, 58th Foot, NAM 7402-128

**Colonel St George Daniel Showers (1808-65), 2nd European Bengal Fusillers, 1855-63. Comm. Bengal native infantry, 1825; served staff and regimental positions, 1825-54; commanded 2nd EBF 1855; commanded various formations and stations 1857-58; commanded Muttra, 1859; commanded Presidency Div., 1861-65. Despite his severity as a disciplinarian, during the rebellion he displayed an aversion to inflicting retribution on rebels**

Showers broke the tense silence with an irritable 'Very well', and Carter marched out, to join the 1st Assam Light Infantry as Quartermaster sergeant.<sup>84</sup> Carter displayed more resolve than most, however. In the military accounting year ending the month before Carter's confrontation with Showers only four other men of the regiment achieved promotion to the list, though nineteen from the other two infantry regiments had been allowed to go.<sup>85</sup> The incident emphasises that the European force was not so much a system as a patchwork of interest, patronage and individual attachments cutting across and co-existing with institutional affiliations.<sup>86</sup>

Command in the Bengal Europeans was therefore as much a matter of diplomacy as of direction. Like their officers, soldiers cherished the right to air grievances in newspapers, to submit petitions and to appeal against court martial sentences. In the Company's force, though, it was common for officers and men to negotiate rather than simply obey: John Luck told his mother that 'our officers are not so strict ... as the quean troops'.<sup>87</sup> Depending on an officer's personality this could resemble either a disdain for formal codes of order or weakness. Bancroft provided examples of

both. He recalled Colonel 'Bully' Brooke as 'severe and eccentric in weighing off prisoners', but who, confronted with men asking to have their sentences forgiven, gave each man what amounted to a good conduct bond.<sup>88</sup> Bancroft also recalled how a group of old soldiers, marching with remounts and recruits from Cawnpore to Meerut, struck a bargain with their officer to allow them to make their own way. The arrangement absolved the officer from care and the old soldiers from work, for they compelled the recruits to look after the horses.<sup>89</sup> Both officers and men set the boundaries of acceptable negotiation widely. In 1843, for example, men of the 2nd Fusiliers refused to carry their knapsacks while marching from Meerut into the Punjab. George Carter's detailed 'jot book' provides a first-hand account of the incident.

Colonel George Brooke (1791-1882), Bengal Horse Artillery. Comm. 1808; served Bundelcund, Nepal war, third Deccan war, Bhurtpore, first and second Punjab wars; furlough 1856; KCB 1873; ret. as Major General

Bt Colonel James Frushard (1789-1847), commanded 2nd Bengal European Regiment, 1840-47. Comm. 1806; served Bengal native infantry and staff appointments, 1807-40

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84. Carter jot book, IOLR

85. Bengal army muster rolls and casualty returns, 1856, IOLR, L/MIL/10/177

86. Nor were officers immune from such pressure. The 1st Fusiliers' adjutant, Frederick Salusbury, sought to restrict officers' mobility. Montague Hall saw him in 'no end of a wax' over an officer's application for a transfer: Diary, 5 June 1853, NAM.

87. John Luck to his mother, undated [1840], IOLR

88. Bancroft, From recruit to staff sergeant, pp. 32-33

89. Ibid., pp. 13-14

Hearing that no other European corps carried knapsacks on the march, the men agreed to drop them in unison, and succeeded in having them transported in the baggage train. Their colonel, 'Old Jeremy' Frushard, later persuaded the men at least to carry their greatcoats as a 'proof of our obedience'. The men accepted the compromise 'rather than that Old Jeremy should get into a scrape'.<sup>90</sup>

The Europeans' style of command owed more to the grand gesture than to regulation. Colonel Abraham Roberts, commanding the 1st Bengal Europeans in the late 1820s, publicly remitted a flogging on the grounds that the man had displayed great courage at the storming of Bhurtpore. Men 'hailed with joy' their colonel's generosity, doubtless reinforcing the impression that the occupant rather than the office was the critical element in meeting crime.<sup>91</sup> Officers commonly bent rules which in the more rigid Queen's army would have been inflexible. At musketry practice Jones-Parry allowed any man scoring a bull's eye to fall out: three hits and he dismissed the entire company.<sup>92</sup> Their readiness to make such gestures marks those regarded as popular officers. Two examples from the Bengal Horse Artillery during the rebellion confirm the point. William Olpherts rewarded his crews' gunnery by directing a servant to 'Give that gun a drink', a practice conducive to continued popularity if not accuracy.<sup>93</sup> Henry Tombs omitted to record on his conduct sheet a punishment awarded to a gunner who had later

Colonel Abraham Roberts (1784-1873), Bengal European Regiment, 1832-34. Comm. 48th Foot, 1803; Bengal native infantry, 1805; served second Deccan war, Nepal war, first Afghan war; commanded Peshawur Div., 1852-54; ret. 1854

Captain William Olpherts (1822-1902), Bengal Horse Artillery. Comm., 1839; served Gwallor war, Scinde, 1844-45, North-west frontier, Crimea, rebellion; VC, 1857; commanded artillery in Peshawur Div., 1861-68 and in other formations, 1870-75; Lieutenant General, 1877; KCB, 1886

Captain Sidney (or Sydney) Jones-Parry (1830-?), 1st Madras European Fusiliers, son of a Royal Naval captain; served second Burmah war and rebellion

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90. Carter jot book, IOLR. The incident illustrates the difficulty of comparing British forces in India. By a remarkable coincidence the 48th Bengal Native Infantry also protested against carrying knapsacks on the march, also on the road to Ferozepore; but in 1838, not 1843. Moreover, an officer who witnessed it claimed that the sepoys were only following the example of a European regiment - but of the Queen's army: Henry Palmer, *Indian life sketches*, Mussoorie, [1888], pp. 10-11. Bancroft provides a further example of collective protest, of men believing they had been cheated of pay who 'fell upon the pay sergeant *en masse*'; p. 12.

91. S. McCance, *History of the Royal Munster Fusiliers*, 2 vols, Aldershot, 1927, Vol I, p. 100

92. Jones-Parry, *An old soldier's memories*, p. 30

93. Owen, *Recollections of a veteran*, p. 58. Substantiating the foregoing impression of the force's casual attitude to discipline, Owen recorded that Olpherts punished men for being *caught* drunk; p. 71.

absconded from hospital to take his place at a gun.<sup>94</sup> Though qualifications inevitably apply, the consequence was to impose upon the Europeans' officers greater expectations of consideration and flexibility than prevailed in the Queen's army.

The Company's non-commissioned officers exercised greater authority than their royal counterparts. Artillery troops and companies were perennially and chronically short of officers: in 1842 there were more companies than officers in Bengal's foot artillery.<sup>95</sup> Archdale Wilson recalled that '[m]any ... for years never saw an officer'.<sup>96</sup> The Company's force therefore necessarily accorded sergeants considerable

discretion. In contrast to the Queen's army, it did not insist on a formal separation between privates and non-commissioned officers.<sup>97</sup> Jones-Parry overheard a private address a corporal as 'a d\_\_\_\_d coward'.<sup>98</sup> Mark Crummie, though conscious of his dignity as a troop sergeant major, recorded without qualm or condemnation an incident revealing the tenor of relations between ranks in the force. Late in the rebellion while returning from the operations across the river Raptée his troop met 'our old Delhie and Namoul friends, the 1st European Bengal Fusiliers'. Crummie learned from the Fusiliers' canteen sergeant how his quartermaster sergeant, Burgiss, had

got drunk in their camp & had insulted some of their men[,] one of which had given him a thrashing and the two black eyes.

Sergeant Burgiss's assailants must have been men inferior to him in rank. Crummie, while meticulously recording the Fusiliers' correct title, displayed no surprise at what would have been in the Queen's army a serious infraction of both discipline and dignity.<sup>99</sup>

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94. Royal Artillery Institution, Memoir of Major-General Sir Henry Tombs. Woolwich, 1913, pp. 23-4

95. Bengal hurkaru, 2 August 1842

96. PP 1859 (I), Vol. V, minutes of evidence, p. 245, q. 5567

97. A French observer noted that 'the distance which separates the soldier from the simple corporal is immense'; Charles Dupin, View of the history and actual state of the military forces of Great Britain, 2 vols, London, 1822, Vol. II, p. 33

98. Jones-Parry, An old soldier's memories, p. 226

99. Crummie papers, ERO. Bancroft also refers to non-commissioned officers and men settling disputes by 'slogging' it out.

Gunner Edward Burgiss, No. 4104, 3/1st Bengal Horse Artillery. Saddler, of Uxbridge; enl. London, June 1844; Simon Taylor, November 1844. (Burgiss had evidently been reduced from Quartermaster sergeant between the incident Crummie recorded and compilation of the following muster list.)

The barrack-room superimposed upon formal structures an informal system of decision making. Men's ways of regulating their conduct resembled primitive direct

**Robert Peel Glanville Blatchford (1851- 1943), socialist writer; served 103rd and 96th regiments, 1870-77; established Clarion newspaper**

democracies. Bancroft and Crummie (both horse artillerymen) referred to the custom which Bancroft called the 'committee of the whole troop' in which a collective decision would be taken by the men themselves.<sup>100</sup> Though the evidence is insubstantial, similar practices appear to have existed within the infantry. Robert Blatchford described the custom of 'spinning cuffers' - telling stories after lights out in barracks. The story teller would periodically call out 'Boots', and would proceed if his comrades responded 'Spurs'.<sup>101</sup> The Europeans' democratic tendency may have underlay Queen's officers' criticism that European corps were 'commanded by their men'.<sup>102</sup>

The validity of its critics' strictures would apparently be confirmed by the events of the soldiers' protest of 1859. In the meantime, the European force's distinctive culture became evident during the last great test of battle which it faced in the rebellion in Bengal from May 1857.

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100. Bancroft, From recruit to staff sergeant, p. 40; Crummie papers, ERO

101. Robert Blatchford, Tommy Atkins of the Ramchunders, London, 1901, pp. 237-8. The chapter reproduces one 'cuff' concerning the Company's Bombay Europeans which had evidently circulated for at least thirty years. John Brown's journal includes a story of jackal hunting which he may have heard as a cuff.

102. Naval and military gazette, 13 August 1859

## **PART II: CONFLICT**

**'India saved':**

**the Bengal Europeans and the Indian rebellion of 1857-8**

**Chapter 4 'Pandies': the Bengal Europeans in 1857**

**Chapter 5 'Dumpies': the Bengal Europeans' survival and expansion, 1857-58**

The moment these brave and able natives learn how to combine they will rush on us  
simultaneously and the game will be up.

Sir Charles Napier, Journal, 29 August 1849

## Chapter 4

### 'Pandies': the Bengal Europeans in the rebellion of 1857

Two nights after the sepoys' outbreak at Meerut an aide-de-camp to the Commander-in-Chief galloped into the depot of the 2nd Fusiliers shouting 'India is on fire - get ready'. Colonel Showers immediately had Kendal Coghill put the regiment on the road south from Subathoo. Ammunition was issued and men took their leave of their families, who were to remain in the hills with the unfit and the recruits. Coghill watched wives become engaged 'two and three deep "on the off chance"'. The schoolmistress was in this way serially engaged to five men. Within hours the regiment had marched, the women following apprehensively for five miles as the column made for the plains.<sup>1</sup> The rebellion would reveal the European force's fighting skill, and its character as a complex military and social institution.

The mutinies which consumed the native army of Bengal over the summer of 1857, and the rebellion which accompanied them, confronted the British empire with its most serious challenge during the nineteenth century. From May for most of 1857 the British lost control over a vast area of northern India, from the Punjab down the Ganges to

**Major General Henry Havelock (1795-1857) commanding Oudh Field Force, 1857. Comm. 13th Foot, 1823; served first Burmah war, first Afghan war, Gwalior war, first Punjab war, Persia war; Captain, 1838; QMG 1854; AG, Queen's troops, 1855; relieved Lucknow, 1857**

Patna (see Map 4). A military narrative of the suppression of the Indian rebellion is necessarily complicated by the simultaneous prosecution of the major operations of 1857, the advance upon Delhi from the Punjab and the advance from Calcutta toward the besieged garrisons of Cawnpore and Lucknow. These - the operations which symbolically and effectively denied the rebels victory - were fought overwhelmingly by troops in India at the outbreak of the rebellion, and therefore involved the Europeans substantially. Units of the Bengal Europeans participated primarily in the siege of Delhi and the operations which followed in the upper Ganges valley. Companies of artillery and invalids called out from Chunar joined Henry Havelock's campaign to relieve Cawnpore and Lucknow, while horse and foot artillery units were involved in virtually all operations. The suppression of the rebellion, which effectively was confined to the Bengal presidency, fell to the Queen's regiments in India and the Bengal Europeans.

The two fusilier regiments, spending the hot weather at their depots, were at Dugshaie and Subathoo respectively, in the hills below Simla. The 3rd infantry regiment was at Agra; after the Queen's 32nd became besieged at Lucknow it became the only British regiment between

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1. Coghill memoir, 'On the war path', NAM. Illustration 6a depicts the Fusiliers' departure from the hills.

Patna and Umballah. The foot artillery companies were scattered from Peshawur to Burmah, though all of the horse artillery troops were located in the North-West Provinces and the Punjab. The Europeans' experience of the mutinies and the rebellion which they became was therefore diverse.

Men on the Town Major's list, living with their families in stations all over the North-West Provinces, confronted outbreaks without the support of comrades. Their ordeals were to be an ironic reward for their promotion. At least sixteen men seconded from the force were killed by rebels from May to September when their sepoy regiments mutinied, and many others narrowly evaded massacre.<sup>2</sup> Others, though escaping with their lives, lost heavily in other ways. One bazaar sergeant was said to have lost thirteen members of his family in the rebellion, while a retired sergeant major lost Rs1,000 in property destroyed in the mutiny at Lucknow.<sup>3</sup> Fugitives from outbreaks such as this gravitated to the remaining islands controlled by the British, often joining regiments in order to exact revenge.

The rebellion annihilated one European unit, the sixty men of the 1/6th foot artillery stationed at Cawnpore. All were killed defending Wheeler's exposed entrenchments (firing, among others, a gun rifled by Lieutenant Fosbery, presumably to pass the time while 'vegetating').<sup>4</sup> The European invalids at Chunar, who may have reasonably considered their military careers over, reinforced Havelock's tiny column as it struggled through the monsoon to relieve Cawnpore and Lucknow. Harangued by Havelock in his customarily Napoleonic manner ('My men ... I have come to thank you for volunteering to assist your country'), one old soldier responded, 'Beg pardon Sir ... we only come 'cos we was forced'.<sup>5</sup> Travelling in carts as a concession to their infirmities, they suffered severely from cholera and dysentery and in the costly fights for the beleaguered garrisons. At the other extreme, a few foot artillery companies saw no action at all. Many, however, executed mutineers by blowing them from guns, duties which did not unduly distress them.<sup>6</sup> Believing reports of the murder and violation of European

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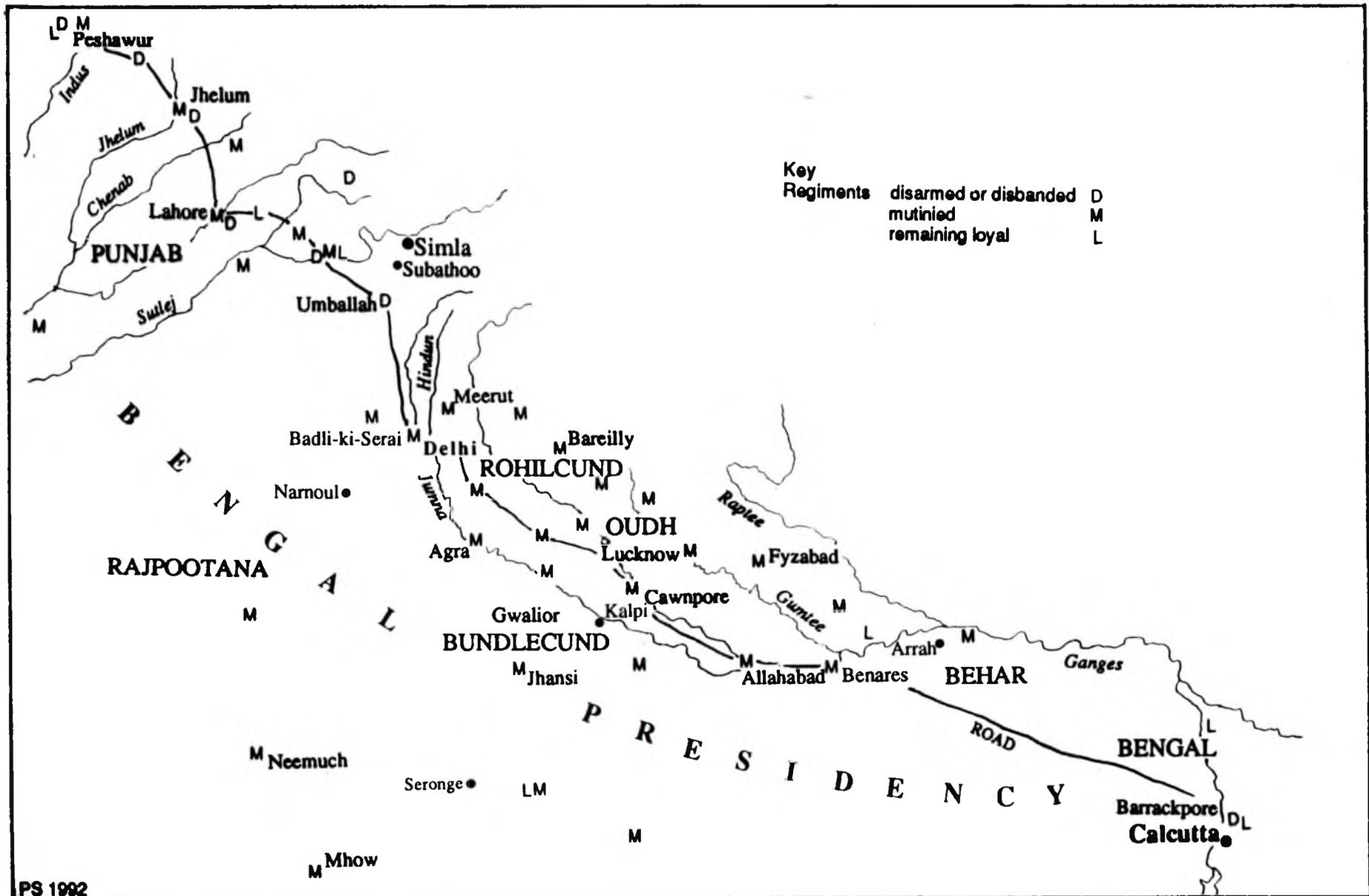
2. Annual alphabetical long roll, Town Major's list, 1857, Bengal army muster rolls and casualty returns, 1857, IOLR, L/MIL/10/178

3. Capt Iltudus Prichard [editor, *Delhi gazette*] to Sir Edward Campbell [Military Secretary to Clyde], nd [1860], Canning papers, WYA, Vol. 136, No. 1447

4. Mowbray Thomson, *The story of Cawnpore*, London, 1859, p. 30

5. J.C. Pollock, *Way to glory: the life of Havelock of Lucknow*, London, 1957, p. 189

6. Mark Crummie, blowing captured sepoy from guns at Lahore, though finding the sight 'appalling', nevertheless remained detached enough to rig leather straps able to secure the prisoners to the gun yet allow their remains to be blown away from rather than over the crew: Crummie papers, ERO.



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Map 4: Bengal during the rebellion, 1857-59

women and children many felt a grim satisfaction in acting as the agents of retribution. The change evident in John Ramsbottom indicates the effects of the rebellion on Europeans generally. Despite his former predatory attitude, he told Jack in 1857 how 'the Black shes ... make me sick to look at them'.<sup>7</sup>

The first outbreak of mutiny, at Meerut on 10 May, plunged the headquarters of the Bengal Artillery into panic. Troops of horse artillery stationed there became the first European units to fire on mutineers fleeing toward Delhi. For three weeks, while mutiny broke out at cantonments down the Ganges, and was narrowly deterred or swiftly suppressed in

**Major General Sir Henry William Barnard (1799-1857), Commander-in-Chief, May-July 1857. Comm. 1st Foot Guards, 1814; commanded a brigade and a division in Crimea; commanded Sirhind Div., 1857; succeeded Anson, May 1857; d. of cholera, 5 July 1857**

the Punjab, the British failed to act. European units began to collect around Umballah late in May, but remained immobilized for want of transport. The Bengal army's commissariat and ordnance departments, in the pungent view of Sir John Kaye, 'prepared for almost anything in the world but fighting', had been deprived of bullocks by Dalhousie's misguided economy.<sup>8</sup> Not until the first week of June, having disarmed the disaffected 5th Bengal Native Infantry, did the new Commander-in-Chief, Sir Henry Barnard, send a column from Umballah down the Grand Trunk Road towards Delhi.<sup>9</sup> The former capital of the Mughals had by then had been in rebel hands for three weeks. Under the reluctant but evocative figurehead of Bahadur Shah, the mutineers represented a powerful challenge to British rule, and Delhi's capture became the issue on which the rebellion's outcome would depend.

A force from Meerut finally moved to join Barnard, defeating en route a larger rebel force at the River Hindun. This, the rebellion's first serious action, brought to prominence Henry Tombs, commander of the 2/1st horse artillery and Sergeant Bancroft's adversary. Tombs excited universal admiration for his conduct at the Hindun, becoming for the British one of the great heroes of the rebellion. He also played a key role in articulating European officers' grievances after the rebellion, and must be considered as both hero and rebel. 'The model of a Feringhee warrior', Tombs exercised the direct personal leadership characteristic of the ideal horse artillery officer.<sup>10</sup> He relished the release from convention and opportunity which active service offered, ordering his men to cut off with clasp knives their tight collars as he led them

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7. John Ramsbottom to Jack, Mooltan, 20 December 1857, BL

8. Kaye, *A history of the sepoy war*, Vol. II, p. 147

9. His predecessor, Gen Sir George Anson, a Queen's officer who had demonstrated his attitude to Company's officers by failing to appoint any to his staff, died of cholera on 27 May.

10. Kaye, *A history of the sepoy war*, Vol. II, p. 578

out of Meerut.<sup>11</sup> The incident reveals the extent to which the Europeans valued competence and personal leadership over the niceties of regulation: William Olpherts, another celebrated horse artillery officer, allowed his troop sergeant major to dress in a coat fashioned from the baize of a billiard table.<sup>12</sup>

The 1st Fusiliers first saw action at Badli-ki-Serai, when the rebels attempted to halt the British march on Delhi. The fight, a wild rush on a roadside rest house, was marred by confusion, delay and recrimination as the Europeans and the Queen's 75th Foot charged a rebel battery. The incident dramatised the tension between the two forces, which, despite their common cause as Europeans facing revolt, would be as evident in war as it had been in peace. The two corps occupied adjacent positions through the ensuing siege of Delhi, the tension of battle revealing to the other their shortcomings as well as their successes. Thomas Cadell later scorned the 75th as 'amateurs', while Kendal Coghill referred to a Queen's regiment at Delhi, the identity of which he tactfully concealed, which 'wd'nt fight'.<sup>13</sup> Their disdain, perhaps that of professionals who knew their business, may also have recompensed men aware of their assumed inferiority. For example, in one copy of John Rotton's The chaplain's narrative of the siege of Delhi, a European officer annotated references to his regiment, inserting its correct title while noting that Rotton had correctly rendered the titles of Queen's regiments.<sup>14</sup>

Barnard's Delhi Field Force, steadily reduced by wounds and disease, occupied 'the ridge', a rocky outcrop a mile north-west of the city's walls, and opened what long remained a token siege of Delhi. Until the arrival of a siege train from the Punjab early in September it was in fact the British who were besieged, as the rebels launched a series of ill co-ordinated attacks to

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11. George MacMunn, The Indian mutiny in perspective, London, 1931, p. 213n. MacMunn's informant was Alfred Light, a horse artillery major who had distinguished himself by preventing mutinous sepoys from occupying the magazine at Meerut.

12. O'Moore Creagh & E.M. Humphries, (eds), The Victoria Cross 1856-1920, Polstead, 1985, p. 40

13. Lt Thomas Cadell to his father, Delhi ridge, 29 June 1857, NAM 6702-90; Kendal Coghill to his brother 'Jos', Delhi, 28 May 1859, NAM. Few contemporary accounts commented frankly on the British force's shortcomings, partly because relatives often published soldiers' letters in provincial newspapers (an unexploited source, liable to produce evidence as valuable as that revealed by Frank Emery in The red soldier: letters from the Zulu war, 1879, London, 1977). Alexander Lindsay recorded how an engineer officer narrowly escaped a 'scrape' after describing to his family how a Queen's cavalry picket 'bolted'. 'Though it was the truth these things are not generally blurted out': A.H. Lindsay, (ed.), 'The Indian mutiny letters of Lieutenant Alexander Haddon Lindsay ...', Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research, Vol. L, No. 204, Winter 1972, pp. 215-16.

14. John Edward Wharton Rotton, The chaplain's narrative of the siege of Delhi, London, 1858, annotations to the copy in the library of the Australian National University, p. 190

dislodge them. The defence of the ridge became a desperate affair. British posts were attacked by much larger rebel forces, fights in which weak companies of defenders plugged gaps in a rough line. Wounded men struggled to crawl back to the ridge, and those cut off were often mutilated and killed. The soldiers' seemingly genial name for the rebels - 'Pandies' - belies their feelings for their enemy. An already bitter struggle intensified late in July when the besiegers learned of the massacre at Cawnpore. The few rebels captured were executed routinely, as were a few of the camp followers sustaining the besiegers' camp, suffering from the troops' suspicion or ignorance. Even Sir John Kaye admitted that the 'alleged inhumanity of our people towards the Natives in camp' was said to have been 'only the old, normal state of things - unaltered, unrepressed'.<sup>15</sup>

The ordeal of the ridge - rendered invariably as the Ridge - was depicted in the histories which appeared during the lives of its protagonists as a chivalrous and heroic crusade. In conventional accounts officers habitually displayed careless valour, their men their customary stoicism. Even the unavoidable acknowledgment that the senior commanders lacked resolution served to throw into relief the firmness and decision of the junior officers who animated both the defence of the ridge and the assault eventually launched on Delhi. Later accounts of the siege, overwhelmingly anecdotal rather than analytical, while confirming even more the dissensions and inadequacies of British commanders and the besiegers' harsh treatment of even their camp followers, have largely perpetuated the traditional portrayal of the siege as an heroic epic.<sup>16</sup> The realities of the siege certainly tested the men's endurance. The 'most revolting and unwelcome' of the Fusiliers' piquets was a ruined mosque which the men called 'The Valley of Death', where they were exposed not only to rebel fire, but to cobras and dead camels rotting in the muggy heat of Delhi in the monsoon.<sup>17</sup> While the besiegers' endurance of the vicious fighting and their fly-infested and disease-ridden positions should not be discounted, consideration of the siege as a manifestation of the social history of the British armies in India produces a different interpretation.

Sir John Kaye and Colonel George Malleon, the rebellion's great chroniclers, portrayed British officers on the ridge as a 'fellowship' in which 'all were alike chivalrous, patient, and self-denying'.<sup>18</sup> The Fusiliers' histories follow contemporary accounts in representing men and

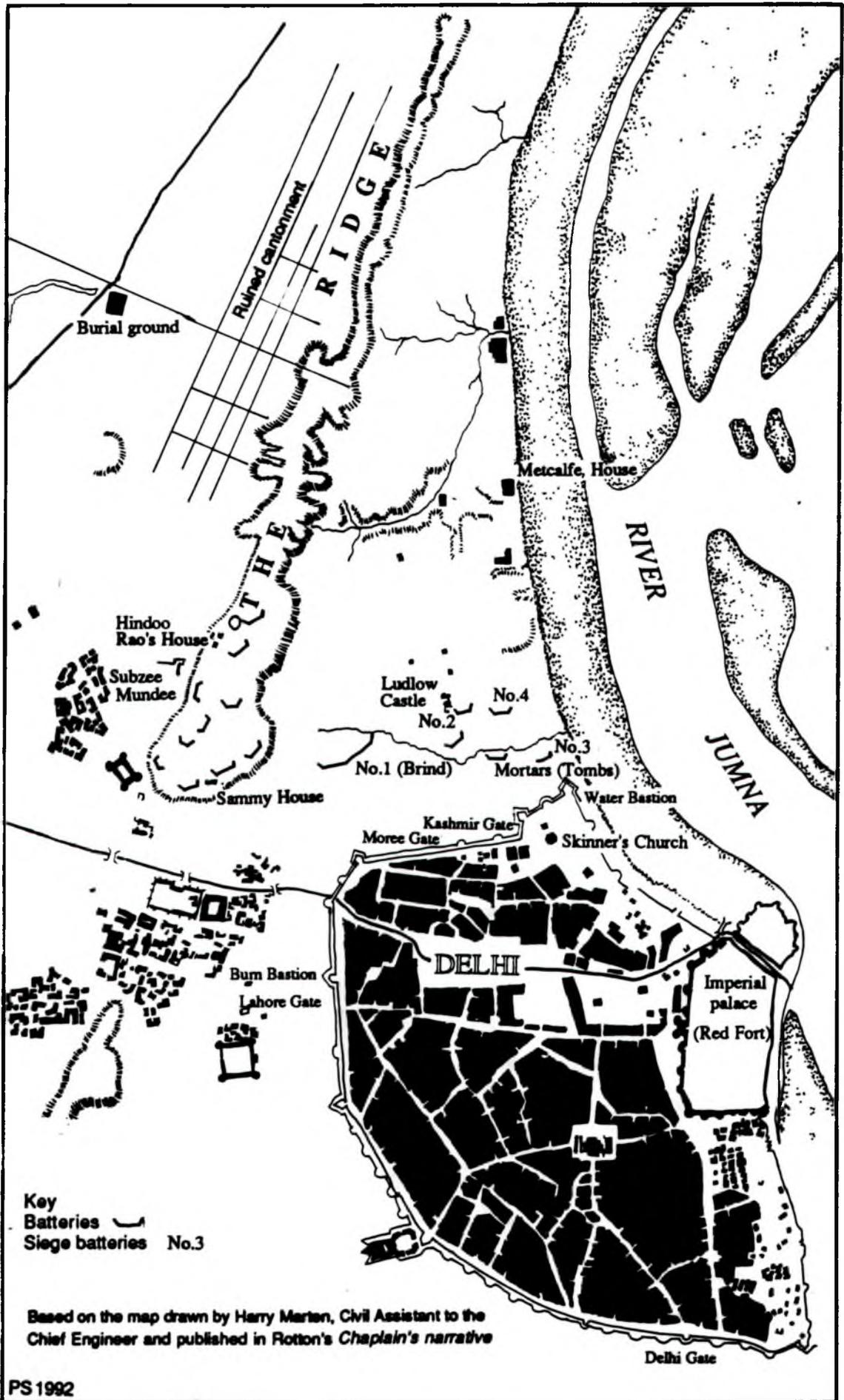
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15. Kaye, A history of the sepoy war, Vol. II, p. 605

16. Christopher Hibbert's The great mutiny: India 1857, Penguin, 1986, for example, though thoroughly researched and evocatively written, essentially perpetuates earlier such impressions.

17. Innes, History of the Bengal European Regiment, pp. 467-8

18. Kaye, A history of the sepoy war, Vol. II, p. 557



Map 5: The siege of Delhi, 1857

officers as manifesting the characteristic regimental virtues. Contemporary diaries and letters, however, as well as supporting these eulogistic judgements, suggest that in spite of the racial and imperial crusade which all felt they were engaged, the tensions inherent in the force nevertheless persisted. Jealousies formed in cantonment followed the force on campaign. Even among the few artillery officers, for example, cliques formed, the spartan Meerut men regarding those from Umballah as 'a luxurious set of fellows', whose retention of table-cloths they derided as effete.<sup>19</sup> Among their men, the strains of war itself introduced more significant tensions. Repeated rebel attacks, increasing in intensity as the rebels were reinforced by sepoys arriving in Delhi following further outbreaks, became wearing. Kaye hinted at the effects, loyally remarking that as the defenders' constant forays wore down the men of the Delhi Field Force, 'if they had lost some of their discipline, they ... lost none of their heart'.<sup>20</sup> Jim Harris, free of the official historian's reserve, recorded frankly that his men would not follow him during an attack on the Flagstaff Tower. 'Enraged', he went around the tents of his company 'calling each man a coward'. Though some were understandably 'indignant', Harris claimed that this restored discipline and 'mutual trust'. A fellow officer disputed Harris's account, annotating a copy as 'not true', but it accords with the direct style of command favoured by the Company's Europeans.<sup>21</sup> It is also corroborated by a surgeon, who recorded how men dispirited by rebel attacks 'grumbled roughly, in the hearing of the officers, at the way their lives were wasted'. The loss of authority, Ireland recorded, was as apparent also in the Queen's regiments.<sup>22</sup>

Though in many ways an extraordinary setting, the Europeans' tenure of the ridge exhibited as much the continuities of cantonment life as the dislocations of war. Some incidents on the ridge can be explained only in terms of the Europeans' military culture, with its readiness to voice grievance and idiosyncratic styles of leadership. Thomas Walker, a sepoy officer who adapted to the style of

Lieutenant Thomas Nicholls Walker (1837-1903), 60th Bengal Native Infantry. Son of an architect, comm. 1854; ret. 1883

John Peter Brougham, Surgeon, 1st European Bengal Fusillers. Appointed 1840; regarded by his contemporary, Anthony Beale, as 'a very good surgeon'

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19. Hervey Greathed [Chief Civil Officer at Delhi, 1857] to his wife, Delhi ridge, 16 June 1857, in, 'His wife', (ed.), Letters written during the siege of Delhi, London, 1858, p. 49

20. Kaye, A history of the sepoy war, Vol. II, p. 588

21. Harris, 'China Jim', pp. 37-8. The copy is in the National Army Museum. Since Harris was severely wounded on 27 June, the incident he records must have occurred within weeks of the siege opening.

22. 'One who served there' [W.W. Ireland], History of the siege of Delhi, Edinburgh, 1861, pp. 174-5. It was not, however, the only such incident recorded among the Company's force: Samuel White of the 3rd infantry 'indiscreetly blurted out' about his company 'going to the right about when I wanted to engage the enemy': A complete history of the Indian mutiny, p. 157.

command expected of the Fusiliers, recorded how one night one of his privates on sentry at an advanced post was heard shouting. Walker, fearing an attack, scrambled to him, only to find the cause of the alarm was that his relief was a quarter of an hour late, and, as he said, 'it is time I was relieved!'<sup>23</sup> The 1st Fusiliers' surgeon, J.P. Brougham, published a series of articles in Blackwood's Magazine, evidently based on his diary, which also suggest how the practices of peace time persisted on the ridge. Grievances were, for example, freely, if anonymously, expressed. Men scrawled graffiti on the walls of a ruin condemning a sergeant:

Sergeant \_\_\_\_\_ is suspected of having put water in the grog; 'tis to be hoped he'll not be guilty of such unsoldierlike conduct in future.<sup>24</sup>

The negotiation characteristic of the force was apparent even in the trenches. An artillery officer (probably James Brind) persuaded his men to take quinine by offering grog as an incentive.<sup>25</sup> A 'typical incident' recorded by one of Tombs' subalterns likewise expresses the Europeans' assertion. Tombs had a gunner who had abused a comrade as a coward for 'bobbing his head' under fire apologise and shake hands with him. The man did so, saying, 'I obey your orders', but adding, 'He bobbed his head, he did'.<sup>26</sup>

The consequences of the absence of a uniform understanding of an officer's responsibilities became apparent. While some officers' won and enhanced their men's regard, others seemed unaware of practices widespread in the Queen's army: those of the 1st Fusiliers, for example, are recorded as breakfasting before their men.<sup>27</sup> Officers of mutinied or disbanded sepoy corps posted to replace casualties made their own mistakes. Surgeon Ireland recalled how a sepoy officer, 'brave and manly' but '[a]ccustomed to softer men ... used a style of command which the soldiers did not relish'. He was abused anonymously from the ranks ('Sind him back to his ould mutinous Saypoy rigiment') and, losing his temper, he declared that he would rather hold the piquet himself than command 'such a mutinous set of fellows'. Within minutes the men had chalked on a wall a 'drawing of him holding the piquet against a whole army of sepoys'.<sup>28</sup> It is

23. Thomas Nicholls Walker, Through the mutiny: reminiscences of thirty years' active service and sport in India, 1854-83, London, 1907, p. 71

24. [J.P. Brougham], 'The First Bengal European Fusiliers in the Delhi campaign', Blackwood's magazine, January 1858, p. 129

25. Kaye, A history of the sepoy war, Vol. II, p. 600. The other possibility, Henry Tombs, is unlikely, since his 2/1st was predominantly temperate.

26. Memoir of Major-General Sir Henry Tombs, pp. 30-31

27. G.B. Malleson, History of the Indian mutiny, 3 vols, London, 1896, Vol. III, p. 287

28. Ireland, History of the siege of Delhi, pp. 174-5

possible, though, that, given the soldiers' dislike of native infantry, they may have either resented being commanded by a sepoy officer, or, since they were more acute judges of the nuances of class than we will ever be, that they regarded him as a cockney. Whatever the reason, the feeling was evidently not confined to one corps at Delhi, as 1859 would reveal.

The antagonisms and petty jealousies within the force on the ridge diminished in importance when at the end of August preparations at last began for an assault on the city. In this the artillery, hitherto an auxiliary, became critical. Casualties were heavy in the batteries which the engineers and Sikh sappers mounted within 500 yards of the walls. The bombardment preceding the assault threw up another of the Bengal Artillery's heroes, James Brind. Unexceptional before 1857, during the bombardment Brind became 'indefatigable ... his name was on every man's tongue in the camp'.<sup>29</sup> Brind provides yet another example of the paradox of the Bengal army's European officers, in that he appears to have emerged from the torpor of cantonments to respond vigorously to the demands of battle, only to exhibit after the crisis, as will be seen, the familiar self-interest.<sup>30</sup>

In the early hours of 14 September the infantry quietly took up their positions before the foremost trenches. They were joined by men absconding from hospital and by conductors and other detached men seeking a part in the retribution which all hoped to inflict on those whom they believed had perpetrated the massacres of the summer, or perhaps seeking loot. The 1st, with its uneasy companion the 75th and a

**John Nicholson (1821 -57) Deputy Commissioner of Peshawur, 1857. son of a doctor; comm. Bengal native infantry, 1839; served first Afghan war, first and second Punjab wars; Bt Lieutenant Colonel, 1854; commanded Punjab moveable column, 1857; mortally wounded at Delhi, 14 September; d. 23 September**

Punjabee regiment, was to storm the Kashmir gate as part of the first column under the mercurial John Nicholson. The 2nd, with the Queen's 8th and a Sikh regiment, was to take the Water bastion on the Jumna's bank (see Illustration 6c). Two other columns supported these attacks. The assault, launched late after a confused attempt to blow the Kashmir gate, turned into bedlam. A private, 'Old George', recorded fifty years later his impressions of the attack. Though couched in the banal conventions of doggerel verse, it conveys a nightmare impression of the experience: 'Head long they went and down that trench up rises the ladders ... my Comrades where left to their Fate, the Ladders served out was far too short to reach that Hole

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29. Evelyn Wood, *The revolt in Hindustan 1857-59*. London, 1908, pp. 113-4

30. It is possible that his energy at Delhi derived from grief or rage at the death of his elder brother, also an artillery officer, killed by mutineers at Sealkote two months before.

in the Wall called the Breach'.<sup>31</sup> On the ramparts an officer of the Fusiliers saw a man who had lost wife and children to mutiny fight savagely, crying 'Where are my poor children?'<sup>32</sup>

The Europeans entered the battle sustained by the bonds characteristic of the force. Coghill, for example, asked his brother to tell a neighbouring tenant how her son had died in the attack. Dan Driscoll was 'shot through the head by an 8 ounce grape ... whilst charging a heavy battery at the Cabul gate'. Driscoll, 'a plucky young lad', had joked with Coghill that they were "'Townies" from Skibbereen'.<sup>33</sup> Even more striking is the case of Sergeant James McGuire and Drummer Miles Ryan, awarded Victoria Crosses for hurling blazing ammunition boxes into a canal near the Kabool gate on 14 September. McGuire and Ryan, both from Ulster, had enlisted within months of each other, sailed to India aboard the same transport, entered the 1st Fusiliers on the same day, and were both discharged on 16 May 1859.<sup>34</sup> The relationships apparently existing between Coghill and Driscoll and Miles and Ryan breached the rigid distinctions between ranks prevailing in the Queen's force.

**Private Dan Driscoll, 2nd European Bengal Fusiliers. Labourer, of Bearsland, Cork; enl. Bridgewater, Somerset, June 1849, aged 20. Killed in the attack on Delhi, 14 September 1857**

**Sergeant James McGuire (182?-62), 1st European Bengal Fusiliers. Of Enniskellen, enl. Enniskellen, 1849; Ellenborough, 1849; served Burmah war, awarded VC for conduct at Delhi; disch. 1859**

**Drummer Miles Ryan, 1st European Bengal Fusiliers. Blacksmith, of Londonderry; enl. Banbridge, September 1848; Ellenborough, October 1849; served Burmah, rebellion (Delhi, Lucknow); VC, 1857; disch. May 1859**

The advance into the back streets of Delhi turned out to be Europeans' most terrible fight. Amid the noise and smoke of a battle against adversaries often above and behind, the Europeans several times wavered. John Nicholson was shot leading a party of Fusiliers in a lane behind the Burn bastion. As they helped him into a hospital dhoolie he abused them as cowards.<sup>35</sup> On the second day the tensions of the long ordeal on the ridge boiled over: drunken troops went mad, looting, killing and, most probably, raping in the warren of streets behind the walls. Not until the following day did officers regain control. Most accounts elide by

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31. Verse, 'The storming of Delhie', included in Coghill memoir, NAM. It appears in full in Appendix D.

32. Innes, History of the Bengal European Regiment, p. 476

33. Coghill to his brother, 'Jos', Delhi, 14 March 1858, NAM

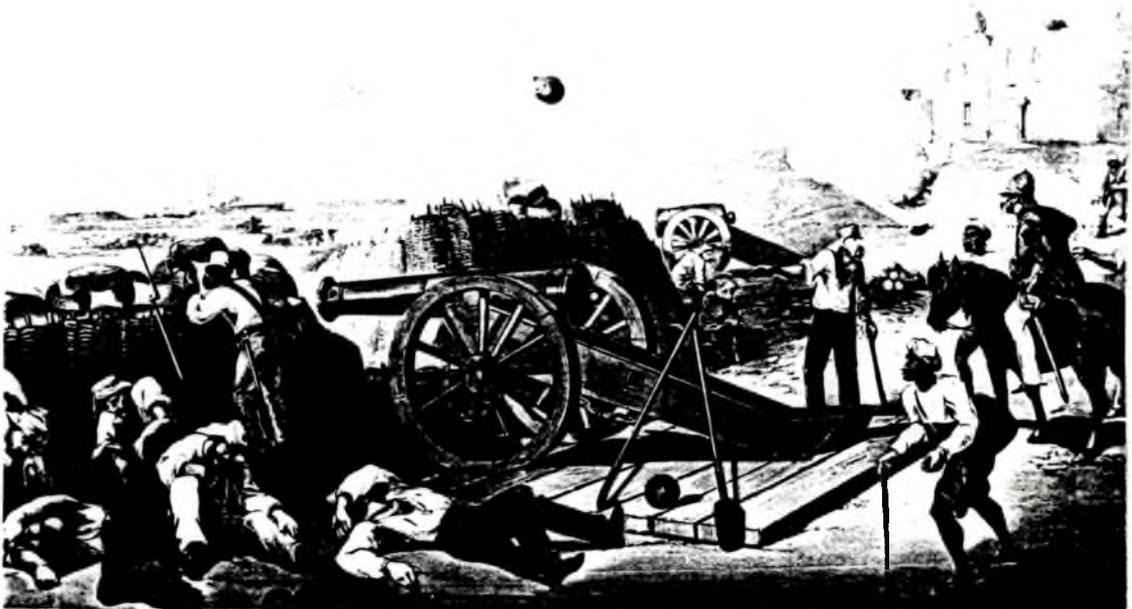
34. Creagh & Humphries, The Victoria Cross, p. 56

35. Richard Collier, The sound of fury: an account of the Indian mutiny, London, 1963, p. 262, though he gives no source.



**Illustration 6a**

Bengal fusiliers marching from the hills to the plains, May 1857. The origins of the Europeans' 'Delhi style' decried by Queen's officers is apparent. They march at ease in loose blouses, unencumbered by kit and refreshed by bheesties carrying water (from The campaign in India by George Francklin Atkinson, a captain of the Bengal Engineers; NAM neg. no. 19526).



**Illustration 6b**

Foot artillery in the batteries on Delhi ridge. The artist shows both the rigours of the climate and the importance of native servants in sustaining the British force. Though often reproduced since, Atkinson's engravings were criticised at the time. Thomas Cadell condemned those published in the Illustrated London news as 'wretched untruthful productions', complaining that Atkinson 'never left the hills' in 1857 (NAM neg. no. 19539).



**Illustration 6c**

Bengal fusiliers fighting alongside Sikh irregulars during the assault on Delhi in September 1857. Though the horror and confusion of the scene are barely apparent, the depiction suggests the importance of officers' leadership in battle (from Atkinson's The campaign in India; NAM neg. no. 19545).



**Illustration 6d**

Bengal Horse Artillery coming into action during the rebellion. The scene illustrates the horse gunners' accustomed élan and suggests the vigour of the gunners' subalterns (from Atkinson's The campaign in India; NAM neg. no. 19535).

euphemism: 'The troops were very much out of hand'.<sup>36</sup> The force pushed on, after six days of bitter street-fighting taking the Red Fort. Archdale Wilson, never a resolute commander and unnerved by the risk he had taken, was narrowly persuaded that a withdrawal would be even more costly. After the capture of Delhi the 2nd's schoolmistress married the fifth of those to whom she had become informally and serially betrothed that night at Subathoo five months before.

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The siege of Delhi, the most important campaign of the rebellion, cost the Delhi Field Force 1,012 killed and 2,795 wounded, exceeding the cost of operations in Oudh and the central India campaigns combined.<sup>37</sup> The capture of the rebels' symbolic capital transferred the initiative to the British, the more so because soon after its fall the first reinforcements from Britain began to arrive.

In redressing inadequate impressions of the siege it would be misleading to depict the European regiments generally as other than exceptionally skilful and determined fighters which essentially remained disciplined throughout. While the 1st disregarded dress regulations, becoming known, with perverse pride as 'the dirty shirts', the 2nd maintained Showers' standards of regularity even in the chaos of the ridge, with officers required to dress as correctly as possible.<sup>38</sup> When an officer appeared on duty wearing a forage cap instead of a sun helmet (because he had had a premonition that he would be killed wearing a helmet) Coghill sent him to change, reminding him that officers

**Major Alexander Boyd (1817-80), commanding 2nd European Bengal Fusillers, 1857. b. Meerut, father, Bengal officer; comm. 1835; served 57th, 18th, 5th, Bengal Native Infantry; trsf. 2nd Bengal European Regiment, 1839; captain, 1847; served Scinde, second Punjab war, second Burmah war, rebellion, Delhi; Lieutenant General, 1880**

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36. E.W.C. Sandes, The military engineer in India, 2 vols, Chatham, 1933, 1935, Vol. I, p. 345

37. Julian Jocelyn, The history of the Royal and Indian Artillery in the mutiny of 1857, London, 1915, Appendix III, pp. 444-49. These figures omit casualties from disease and sunstroke, which killed men irrespective of whether they were fighting, accounting for 80% of all European deaths during the rebellion.

38. Edward Vibart, a sepoy officer serving with the 1st at Delhi, claimed that the nickname derived from a compliment bestowed by Lord Lake at the siege of Bhurtpore in 1805. The evidence suggests that the regiment lived up to its nickname: The sepoy mutiny as seen by a subaltern from Delhi to Lucknow, London 1898, pp. 127-8. Charles Macgregor's perplexing view that the 1st in 1858 was oppressed by 'pipe-clay notions of discipline' (in his Life and opinions, p. 98) can be interpreted variously. It is possible that after Delhi its new colonel, Douglas Seaton, imposed a more rigorous standard of discipline on a regiment which had lost three colonels within a year, or that Vibart's conception of disciplinary stringency explains the soldiers' contempt for the sepoy officers' softness.

should set an example.<sup>39</sup> The fusilier regiments' experience of the siege appears to have been similar in the hardships and tensions which its men encountered and in their skill in battle. The 1st, nevertheless, attracted greater renown then and since: If, as Coghill alleged, the 2nd was one of the few regiments never to have conceded ground at Delhi (though as its adjutant he was hardly disinterested), it is perplexing why the 1st acquired such a reputation. Officers of the 2nd attributed their eclipse to both the 1st's inclination to 'blow their own trumpet' and their own colonel's reluctance to boost his own corps' name. The 1st's casualty lists, Cadell thought, had been inflated by the inclusion of the slightly wounded, while Alexander Boyd, Showers' successor, 'does not care a rap for anything as long as he gets his beer and brandy and water'.<sup>40</sup>

For the men occupying the cowed city praise would have been welcome, but, as was traditional, both men and officers attached great importance to more material reward - in loot

Private Ingham Britcliffe, No. 2513,  
1st European Bengal Fusiliers.  
Spinner, of Colne, Lancs; enl. June  
1854, aged 20; disch. 883

immediately after the assault and, eventually, to generous issues of batta and prize money. Despite orders looting began even as the walls were breached and continued for weeks after amid the chaos following the city's capture. Ingham Britcliffe told his parents how he had acquired 'several little things'. His loot included about two hundred rupees, precious stones, a gold ring, a gun and a Kashmir shawl.<sup>41</sup> Officers did little to restrain the frenzy. Despite Showers' insistence on regularity, he connived at Coghill pillaging systematically with the aid of shovels and an Irish cart. Free-booting reduced the booty collected by the prize agents appointed from the force, but even so it was valued at Rs3.5m.<sup>42</sup> Batta had been distributed after virtually every campaign in British India within living memory, and the troops confidently expected an award. Their anticipation of prize money was, however, sharper, because it was expected to be much greater than batta, and because Archdale Wilson had promised prize money in exchange for the troops forbearing to loot.<sup>43</sup> The batta, Rs36 for privates, Rs450 for

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39. Coghill memoir, 'Ludlow Castle', NAM

40. Cadell to his father, Delhi, 29 November 1857; and to his sister Annie, Delhi, 28 March 1858, NAM

41. Ingham Britcliffe to his parents, Delhi, 27 October 1857, in P.J. Haythornethwaite, (ed.), 'The assault of Delhi', *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, Vol. LVIII, No. 235, Autumn 1980, p. 186. Despite a name suggestive of a down-at-heel gentleman, he described himself as a spinner.

42. *Times*, 30 March 1860, 11f

43. Extract from Field Force order 1266, 7 September 1857, 'Prize money, Delhi, Lucknow and other places in India', Public Record Office (PRO), WO 32/6336, Part I

lieutenants, was approved in November 1857 and distributed by May 1858, but the expected prize money did not appear.<sup>44</sup>

As the months passed without word the troops in Delhi became restive. 'We have been badly treated', Henry Norman complained, having heard 'not one word of thanks' from Calcutta.<sup>45</sup> Dispute over the legality of regarding the property of civilians of British territory as prize led Canning to proclaim in November 1857 that the prize money would not be issued.<sup>46</sup> By January 1858 '[a]ll the Delhi troops' were 'in such a rage' that Coghill feared that his men might attack the civil officials whom they believed had denied them their right.<sup>47</sup> Surgeon Ireland recorded that the men showed their 'utmost discontent' in 'the most open manner'.<sup>48</sup> Again the troops' feelings were expressed anonymously but forcefully in graffiti. Variations on 'Delhi taken and India saved for 36 rupees and 10 annas' appeared on walls all over the city.<sup>49</sup> Officers displayed an ambiguous attitude to this protest. Some, having looked forward to reducing their debts with prize money of up to several hundred pounds, were dismayed, complaining to influential friends and relatives, as well as to British newspapers.<sup>50</sup> At least one such letter quoted the troops' graffiti, making common cause, as it were.<sup>51</sup> Jim Harris attributed the restoration of the prize money to publication of the soldiers' slogans in the newspapers.<sup>52</sup> Since the Delhi garrison comprised three Company's artillery units, the 2nd Fusiliers and the Queen's 61st Foot, most of the protests came from Company's troops.

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44. Lt Charles Robinson received Rs547/12; letter to his sister Emily, 8 May 1858, IOLR, Mss.Eur.B.220

45. In a letter late in September to his wife, Selina: Lee-Warner, *Memoirs of ... Norman*, p. 172

46. General Order 1499, 27 November 1857, 'Prize money, Delhi, Lucknow and other places in India', PRO

47. Coghill to his sister 'Silly', Delhi, 18 January 1858, NAM

48. Ireland, *History of the siege of Delhi*, pp. 276-77

49. The inscriptions must have been widespread; they appear in several contemporary accounts, including: Charles John Griffiths, *A narrative of the siege of Delhi ...*, London, 1910, p. 230; Ireland, *History of the siege of Delhi*, p. 277; Harris, 'China Jim', p. 62. Reports of the graffiti spread: Fanney Duberly (the wife of a Queen's officer who campaigned with him through the rebellion, as in the Crimea) heard of it in Rajputana; E.E.P. Tisdall, *Mrs Duberly's campaigns: an Englishwoman's experiences in the Crimean war and Indian mutiny*, London, 1963, p. 174.

50. Lt Alexander Lindsay, writing to an unknown correspondent while convalescing at Simla in November, anticipated a 'glorious' three or four thousand rupees: Lindsay, Indian mutiny letters, *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, p. 215

51. *Times*, 11 March 1858 8f

52. Harris, 'China Jim', p. 62

The campaign eventually succeeded. In 1861, the troops learned that shares would be distributed, one share per private (amounting to about seventeen pounds), with captains receiving 12 shares, colonels 17 and major generals 76 each.<sup>53</sup> As Cadell foresaw, though, it was to be years before the money would be distributed (partly because the government of India had appropriated the actual treasure as a means of reducing the crippling debt the rebellion had fostered), and the issue of the prize money's distribution would engender further dissatisfaction over the critical years to follow. The denial of the Delhi prize was said to have incited the troops looting Lucknow in March 1858 to destroy all they could not carry off, to foil the government's profiting.<sup>54</sup> For both the Queen's and Company's troops involved the episode must surely have both fostered suspicion of the authorities and suggested the power which they could exert by collective protest.

The rebellion confirmed Queen's officers' impressions of the Europeans' inferiority. Few disputed their fighting skill, but many looked askance on their standards of subordination. During the skirmishing for the ridge at Delhi Richard Barter, adjutant of the 75th, encountered what to the Queen's army was the characteristic and unacceptable face of the Company's Europeans. Barter shared a bullock cart with a wounded fusilier, whom he offered a pull at his brandy flask. The man emptied it 'without a single word of thanks', and then

began grumbling at the idea of him, a Glasgow man too, being shot ... and on the first day and all, the audacity of the thing was beyond conception[.]

Barter resolved to leave this 'selfish savage ... to grumble alone', and joined a man of his own regiment, who, though mortally wounded, expressed contrition for being 'a bad soldier', thereby proving to be a more sympathetic companion.<sup>55</sup> Though all its protagonists were wounded and in pain, the incident exemplifies the differing demeanour expected of officers and other ranks in each force. Service together accentuated rather than diminished differences between the two forces.<sup>56</sup> Jim Harris, convalescing at Simla early in 1858, resented the 'sneers' of Queen's

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53. Times, 9 February 1861, 12c

54. John Pemble, The raj, the Indian mutiny, and the kingdom of Oudh, 1801-1859, Hassocks, 1977, p. 231

55. Richard Barter, The siege of Delhi: mutiny memoirs of an old officer, London, 1984, pp. 20-21

56. See, for example, Stanley to Canning, 14 December 1858, Canning papers, WYA, Vol. 6, Letters from the Secretary of State. Garnet Wolseley, for instance, a captain in the Queen's 90th Light Infantry, recorded his dissatisfaction with the Indian army officers he encountered on joining the Oudh force in October; Joseph Lehmann, All Sir Garnet: a life of Field-Marshal Lord Wolseley, London, 1965, p. 55.

officers who connected the Europeans with the mutinous sepoys.<sup>57</sup> Coghill, though confident that he could 'work my Regt around any Queen's Regt' resented being seen as 'a Colonial Coon'.<sup>58</sup> The Europeans' customary condescension toward griffish Queen's officers offered poor retaliatory compensation.

European officers looked for more than material rewards for their exertions. Their experience of the rebellion confirmed the generational divergence apparent before its outbreak.

Lieutenant George Cracklow (1832-73), 2/3rd Bengal Horse Artillery. b. Jaunpore, son of a Bengal officer; comm. 1851; Lieutenant, 1857; ret. as 2nd Captain, 1864

Thomas Cadell's outspoken condemnation of the Delhi Field

Force's commanders as a 'choice collection of muffs' reflected the conventional Anglo-Indian impatience on the part of the younger officers for their seniors.<sup>59</sup> George Cracklow, a horse artillery lieutenant, was appalled at his new commanding officer: 'a great pudgy fat man of about 5 and 40 - 27 years in this country has made him a perfect nigger in thought and habits'. He was 'slack in duty matters and slovenly in dress' who thought of 'nothing but scraping together money, eating and smoking'.<sup>60</sup> While the force's senior officers had displayed mediocre powers of decision, its junior officers had embraced the opportunities which the rebellion offered. Their opportunism is exemplified by the competition which emerged among junior officers to secure the Victoria Cross (VC), the decoration 'for valour' introduced in 1856, during the war in the Crimea.

Partly because battle allowed them the opportunity, the difference between young and old officers was most marked in their conduct in action, in which junior officers repeatedly, and even routinely, exhibited acts of courage. Mowbray Thomson, one of the two officers to survive the Cawnpore massacre, often heard officers serving in Oudh 'covet the honour of a wound', some 'openly express[ing] the desire for a pretty extensive gash to the face' as a mark of their courage.<sup>61</sup> Of 182 VCs awarded during the rebellion, 66 went to members of the

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57. Harris, 'China Jim', p. 57

58. Coghill to his brother, Jos, Delhi, 14 June 1859, NAM

59. Thomas Cadell to his father, Delhi, 29 June 1857, NAM

60. Wayne Broehl, Crisis of the raj: the revolt of 1857 through British lieutenants' eyes, Hanover, 1986, p. 252. The object of Cracklow's scorn was Captain Ernle Money.

61. Thomson, The story of Cawnpore, p. 253. Not that older officers ignored the possibilities of reward. At the height of the action at Narnoul Lt Col John Gerrard, commanding the 1st Fusiliers, shouted 'This will be a C.B. for me ...', only to be killed shortly after. Since Gerrard was not only the one European wearing a scarlet tunic, but was mounted on a white horse, his desire to be noticed may be thought to have contributed to his death: Vibart, The sepoy mutiny, p. 159.

Company's service, mostly of the Bengal army.<sup>62</sup> No less than 42 of these men were officers, most lieutenants. The qualities which many young officers exhibited in action during the rebellion deserve attention, in that they reveal how the European officers adapted to, and capitalized on, changing circumstances. Young officers of the Bengal army, besides sharing the reckless enthusiasm which sustains succeeding generations in war, had always known that a route to advancement lay in being noticed performing well, and preferably heroically, in battle. Before the VC's institution it had been necessary to perform deeds under the eyes of a likely patron. The VC, however, provided a ready made standard of valour with a utility far beyond that of an individual patron. Ambitious officers of the Indian army quickly realized the potential which this innovation offered. Though for a time alarmed at the suggestion that the original warrant's wording excluded the Company's armies from eligibility (which they took as a characteristic slight by the Queen's army) many recognized that the new award offered exceptional possibilities for those seeking advancement, expectations which were for the most part fulfilled.<sup>63</sup>

It would be idle to suggest that the 'deeds' for which the VC was awarded were not acts of courage, and naive to deny that many to whom it was awarded were activated by both the madness general to battle and the retributive passions particular to the British in the rebellion. It is impossible, however, to view these men as other than the products of their army. Charles Macgregor, a sepoy officer posted to the 1st Fusiliers, confessed after the fall of Delhi that he 'wanted nothing more than to get a chance of getting the Cross'.<sup>64</sup> In October 1858 Thomas Cadell expressed his frustration at the difficulties of being noticed in the infantry, having 'tried hard to do so ... and still have never been mentioned'. In fact Cadell had been 'noticed', and later received the decoration he coveted.<sup>65</sup>

**Lieutenant Charles Metcalf Macgregor (1840-87), 57th Bengal Native Infantry. Comm. 1856; served rebellion (Lucknow, Oudh); second China war; Bhootan, Abyssinia, second Afghan war; compiled Gazetteer of central Asia; KCB, 1881**

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62. John Smyth, The story of the Victoria Cross 1856-1963, London, 1963, pp. 75-90

63. A warrant of 29 October 1857 extended eligibility for the award to European members of the Company's forces: M.J. Crook, The evolution of the Victoria Cross: a study in administrative history, Tunbridge Wells, 1975, pp. 282-3

64. Macgregor, Life and opinions, Vol. I, p. 50

65. Cadell to his father, Delhi, 31 October 1858, NAM; Innes, History of the Bengal European Regiment, p. 461; Smyth, The story of the Victoria Cross, p. 76; Crook, The evolution of the Victoria Cross, pp. 226-27 His award, however, would not be gazetted until 1862, almost nullified by War Office officials eager to tie up the loose ends of the rebellion.

That the actions for which VCs were performed were hardly impromptu is suggested by the case of Fred Roberts, who had confided that 'what I want more than any other [reward] is the Victoria Cross ... Oh! ... how jolly I should be!'.<sup>66</sup> In 1858 he calculatedly performed a militarily pointless act - taking the colour of a rebel regiment - in the hope of obtaining the award. Roberts's memoir, Forty-one years in India, though reticent in describing the deed for which he

gained the VC, reveals his ardent desire from the rebellion's outbreak to gain distinction in furtherance of his ambition to obtain a position in the quartermaster-general's department, the staff responsible for the conduct of operations.<sup>67</sup> Those recommended for the VC realised how it could enhance their prospects. Roberts wrote home of how he was 'indeed a lucky fellow - a major at 25, with the "Victoria Cross", and sure of a good appointment'. He planned to capitalise on his fame by seeking 'while the iron's hot' a medical certificate to return home.<sup>68</sup> Lieutenant James Hills, who with Henry Tombs performed one of the most highly regarded deeds to gain a VC also revealed how young officers could regard acts of valour not just as chivalric exploits but, more pragmatically, as fortuitous openings to advancement. Though wounded, Hills felt the honour 'worth a cut on the head'.<sup>69</sup> Like eighteen other officers awarded the VC, Hills achieved the rank of general. It is possible that soldiers also performed acts of courage in expectation of advancement. If they did act as calculatedly as their officers their efforts went unrewarded: of the eighteen soldiers awarded the VC only two secured promotion, from bombardier to quartermaster sergeant and from private to sergeant.<sup>70</sup>

**Lieutenant James Hills (1833-1919)**  
**2/1st Bengal Horse Artillery.**  
**Comm. 1853; served with Tombs' troop through rebellion; awarded VC for conduct at Delhi, 1857; trsf. to RHA 1861; held staff and regimental appointments; Major General 1879; served second Afghan war; KCB, 1881; adopted surname Hills-Johnes, 1882; ret. 1888**

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66. Roberts to his mother, Delhi ridge, 24 July 1857, Letters written during the Indian mutiny, London, 1924, p. 29

67. Roberts, Forty-three years in India, pp. 78, 82

68. Broehl, Crisis of the raj, p. 235. Ironically, considering their later rivalry as the dominant generals of the late-Victorian army, Garnet Wolseley filled Roberts' place in the quartermaster-general's department. That it was secured through Colonel William Pakenham, Adjutant-General of the Queen's forces in Bengal, suggests how the winds of influence in the British army in India were shifting: Lehmann, All Sir Garnet, p. 75.

69. Lt James Hills to his brother, Delhi ridge, 19 July 1857, NAM, 6301-70

70. National Army Museum, The Victoria Crosses and George Crosses of the Honourable East India Company and Indian Army 1856-1945. [London], 1962

The rebellion gave other young officers opportunities to display their talents, though as staff officers rather than through vainglorious exploits. Neville Chamberlain, Edwin Johnson, Keith Young and, pre-eminently, Henry Norman, gained experience and recognition. Norman would as a result soon exercise influence exceeding that of even the VC heroes, and which would affect all the officers of the Indian army. Norman became the Delhi Field Force's adjutant general, its chief staff officer. Admired and universally praised, Norman appears to have combined intelligence and application in his duties with a capacity to excel without offending those whom he surpassed. He also displayed a gift for attracting patrons without succumbing to toadyism. Sir Colin Campbell, who had marked him while a divisional commander on the frontier in the early 1850s, made him in 1858 adjutant general of the much larger army in Oudh. Norman therefore exercised considerable power at the Commander-in-Chief's headquarters during the rebellion's most important operations. William Howard Russell, the Times correspondent, described him as 'a sort of steam-engine, made of bones, flesh (very little of that), blood, and brains'.<sup>71</sup> Despite his gifts, Norman remained a lieutenant after thirteen years' service. In the headquarters tents of Delhi and Oudh he influenced by force of energy and intellect while men his intellectual inferior passed him by accident of posting. Norman's motives in his role in prompting the reform of the Indian army are not immediately apparent. The inefficiency as much as the unfairness of this system seems to have motivated Norman to seek to change it: his biography, based on a selection of his papers, offers little clue. Norman illustrates, however, how the Bengal army could produce men of ability almost in spite of itself, and his effects on it during the crises following the rebellion would be immense. Meanwhile, far from the stench and horror of the ridge, in the Directors' Court, in the Horse Guards and the Cabinet room in Britain, a contest for the expansion and survival of the European force provided a muted counterpoint to its war with the rebels.

**Lieutenant Colonel Edwin Johnson (1825-93), Bengal Artillery. Comm. 1842; served second Punjab war, rebellion; became Assistant Military Secretary for Indian Affairs at the Horse Guards, 1865; KCB 1875; Military Member of the Supreme Council in India, 1877-80**

**Captain Keith Young (1806-62), Judge Advocate General, Bengal Army, 1852-62. son of an architect, comm. 1823; served BNI, 1824-43; d. at Simla as a Bt Colonel**

**William Howard Russell (1820-1907), Correspondent for the Times. Reported several wars, notably the Crimea and the American civil war; knighted, 1895**

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71. W.H. Russell, My diary in India... 2 vols, London, 1860, Vol. I, p. 212

## Chapter 5

### 'Dumpies': the expansion and survival of the Bengal Europeans, 1857-58

News of the 10 May mutiny at Meerut reached Britain on 26 June.<sup>1</sup> It was soon clear that the mutiny was no local affair, but would require an imperial solution, and in the first week of July the earliest reinforcements sailed for Bengal. The

Charles John, 1st Earl Canning (1812-62), Governor General, 1856-62. son of George Canning; educ. Eton and Oxford; Peelite MP, 1836-37; Postmaster-General, 1853-55

crisis would bring imperial opportunities and problems in another sense in that it rapidly became apparent that, assuming that it did not end British power in India, the rebellion would alter its expression. The rebellion became not only a struggle between insurgents in India and its British rulers. Both the Company's directors and the Horse Guards also recognized from the outset that the rebellion would intensify and perhaps resolve the long-standing contest between the two British military forces in India. The contending parties in this war of minutes, pamphlets, newspaper leaders and select committees were the Company's directors (anxious as the rebellion spread for their own survival) and the Commander-in-Chief at home and his advisers (seizing the opportunity to extend the Queen's army's authority to India). Successive presidents of the Board of Control and the Governor General, Lord Canning, simultaneously agents of the Crown and yet advocates of Indian interests, played more ambiguous roles. The outcome of this contest - surprisingly, the survival and expansion of the European force - was to be decisively influenced by the force's culture, and particularly that of its officers.

Existing political biographies and administrative studies chart the political manoeuvring which produced the Government of India Act of 1858 and the transfer of the European force to the Crown, the event which precipitated the white mutiny.<sup>2</sup> It is therefore unnecessary to rehearse in detail the views and exchanges of the principal protagonists and antagonists: Cambridge, Stanley, Wood, Campbell, Mansfield and the Company's directors. The decisions taken in Britain during the rebellion affecting the European force require re-examination, however, in

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1. Times, 27 June 1857 12a; Halford Lancaster Hoskins, British routes to India, New York, 1966, p. 400

2. Michael Maclagan, 'Clemency' Canning, chapters 8-10; R.J Moore, Sir Charles Wood's Indian policy, Manchester, 1966, chapter 10; Donald Southgate, The most English minister ...: the policies and politics of Palmerston, London, 1966; James Gregory McAree, The passage of the Government of India Bill of 1858, PhD, University of Minnesota, 1961; Shibly, The reorganisation of the Indian armies, 1858-1879; Courtenay Ilbert, The government of India, Oxford, 1907, pp. 94-7. Of the major protagonists only Stanley's role remains unexplored. Despite completion of a thesis (Lawrence Johnson, Lord Derby: man, statesman, and Victorian, PhD, Temple University, 1974) no biography has yet appeared, and his journals (published as John Vincent, (ed.) Disraeli, Derby and the Conservative Party: journals and memoirs of Edward Henry, Lord Stanley 1849-1869, Hassocks, 1978) omit the years 1858-59.

that existing studies leave a substantial question unanswered. If powerful interests in the Court, Horse Guards, Cabinet, and Parliament wished to limit, absorb or abolish the European force, how did it not only survive, but expand in size to be transferred virtually intact to the Crown?

The reconstruction of the Bengal army (and, indeed, dealings between British and Indian authorities as a whole during the rebellion) was dominated by happenstance and outright blunder, permeated by ambiguities and paradox. One arm of the British government, for example, campaigned to abolish or subordinate the European force, while another twice sanctioned its expansion. The politics of the expansion of the European force and its transfer to the Crown refute persuasively any impression that British imperial policy was orderly, or even coherent, and suggests that decisions were the uncontrollable consequence of the competing interests of sections of the military and political authorities. Even more, when the significance of the European force's reactions in India to the decisions is considered, the white mutiny appears as a colossal accident, the result of an unintended and unforeseen collision between the Company's volatile military culture and British political and military authorities. The very transfer of government from the Company to the Crown, the immediate cause of the soldiers' protest, was more the product of domestic political imperatives than the outcome of a concern to reform an unsatisfactory system of government.

Previous studies of the 1859 protest by European soldiers have failed adequately to explore critical aspects of the event. They have not considered the Europeans' officers' contribution to the protest. They have considered it neither as the expression of a durable and self-contained culture, nor as a process of adjustment to the changes brought by the rebellion, which extended far beyond the more dramatic unrest of 1859 and 1860. Considering the process afresh from the perspective of the culture of the officers and men of the Company's Europeans suggests an explanation which enriches and amplifies existing interpretations. Reviewing the political decisions taken in Britain during the rebellion by which the European force was increased and continued, it is apparent that the culture of self interest and protest of the Company's army, and particularly its officers, decisively influenced decisions made by bodies ostensibly opposed to either outcome. A small group of politicians, generals and officials meeting in Westminster ostensibly determined the Indian army's future. The apparent political resolution, however, must be considered in relation to developments in India, in that the rebellion's effects on the European force and the Company's European officers ensured that the military future of British India could not be so easily settled by British authorities.

Surprisingly, perhaps, mutiny and rebellion did not inevitably sap the Company's claim to continue its government of India. News of successive mutinies refreshed the desultory debate over the future of the Company's custody of India and the necessity and nature of 'India reform'

which had developed over the preceding quarter century. In addition, the conservative opposition attempted to use the rebellion to damage Palmerston's government. While Disraeli and Lord Ellenborough's ill-judged attempts to implicate the government failed, however, Lord Granville, Canning's unofficial agent at home, prevailed upon the Times, and the informed opinion it represented, to defer judgement on his term of office until the outcome of distant events became clearer.<sup>3</sup> Palmerston was in any case for much of 1857 indifferent to the issue: his Cabinet did not discuss India between July and November, and his ministers only learned that the prime minister contemplated ending the Company's rule while attending the Queen and Prince Consort at Balmoral that autumn.<sup>4</sup>

British rather than Indian political imperatives dominated the entire episode. Palmerston's motive in introducing a bill to transfer the government of India was aimed, as Lord Granville wrote to Canning from Balmoral, 'as a counter-irritant to Reform'.<sup>5</sup> Vernon Smith, President of the Board of Control, introduced the first bill in February 1858.

Critical of the system of dual government rather than the directors' policies, it passed its first reading by a comfortable 100 votes. The next day, however, Palmerston's government fell in the xenophobic controversy prompted by the Orsini case. Under Derby's conservatives, the future of the Government of India Bill depended on its erstwhile opponents, men reliant on the support of whigs and radicals who wholeheartedly supported it. A second bill,

proposed by Lord Ellenborough, formerly Governor General and Derby's new President of the Board of Control, attempted to reconcile the interests of its proposers and accordingly 'died of ridicule'.<sup>6</sup> Ellenborough himself then resigned over a further misjudged attack on Canning. His replacement, Derby's son, Lord Stanley, a liberal Tory with useful radical connections, introduced a third bill in June. Stanley was unable to prevent the conservatives' radical allies from shaping the bill resolution by resolution in a committee of the whole house, and what

**Robert Vernon Smith (1800-73),  
President of the Board of Control,  
1855-58. Liberal MP, 1829-59**

**Edward Law, 1st Earl of  
Ellenborough (1790-1871) Governor  
General 1842-44. educ. Eton and  
Cambridge; President of the Board  
of Control, 1834-35, 1841 and 1858;  
recalled, 1844; notoriously  
preferred military to civil officials**

**Edward Henry Stanley (1826-93),  
Secretary of State for India, 1858-  
59. son of the Prime Minister;  
educ. Rugby and Cambridge; 15th  
Earl of Derby, 1869**

**George Leveson Gower, 2nd Earl  
Granville (1815-91) leader of the  
Whigs in the House of Lords**

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3. McAree, The passage of the Government of India Bill, p. 158

4. Ibid. p. 286

5. [Lord] Edmond Fitzmaurice, The life of Granville George Leveson Gower, Second Earl Granville, 2 vols, London, 1905, Vol. I pp. 259-60

6. Ilbert, The government of India, p. 94

eventually passed its third reading on 30 July was essentially the bill which Palmerston had introduced the previous winter.<sup>7</sup>

Proclaimed simultaneously in London and Calcutta on 1 November 1858 the Government of India Act transferred India from the Company to the Crown.<sup>8</sup> The Act in many ways changed the form rather than the substance of imperial rule. British India was to continue to be ruled by a governor general supported by a Council of officials and under the direction of a secretary of state in London assisted by another Council. The Act preserved the European force, in law changing only its name and in practice roughly halving the patronage available to former directors retained on the Council. For the European soldiers and their officers the critical clause of the Act was that which turned the Company's Europeans into Her Majesty's Indian Forces. In that the Act was the single most important cause of the ensuing protest, Palmerston's condescending quip about Ellenborough's abortive second bill ('[W]henever a man was to be seen laughing in the streets he was sure to have been discussing the Government of India Bill') acquires a vast, if unintentional, irony.<sup>9</sup>

Just as British politicians embarked on the India bills of 1858 for reasons largely unconnected with Indian administrative reform, the Bengal European force survived and expanded as part of the contest between Company and Crown for reasons unconnected with military efficiency.

The rebellion renewed debate over the necessity and utility of the Company's trusteeship of India. Ostensibly a mutiny, the rebellion brought the Company's military administration under particular scrutiny, and allowed its opponents opportunities to capitalise from its discomfiture. The Europeans' most determined adversary was George, Duke of Cambridge, Commander-in-Chief of the army at home since

1856 and the Queen's cousin. Cambridge implacably opposed the existence, expansion and continuance of a British military force independent of the Queen's army. Formerly denied

**George, Duke of Cambridge (1819-1904) Lieutenant General, Commander-in-Chief of the British army, 1856-95. Grandson of George III. Comm. (as Bt Colonel), 1837; commanded division in Crimea; Field Marshal, 1862**

**Colonel Sir William Mansfield (1819-76) Chief of Staff to Lord Clyde 1857-60; General and Commander-in-Chief in India, 1865-70. Comm. 53rd Foot 1835; served first and second Punjab wars; KCB, 1860; Commander-in-Chief, Bombay, 1860-65; created Lord Sandhurst 1871**

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7. McAree, *The passage of the Government of India Bill*, pp. 200-202; 229. The lack of a major biography of Stanley confounds attempts to evaluate his effectiveness as an advocate of Indian interests. Johnson's psycho-biographical thesis represents him as a brilliant administrator, if unduly fastidious and in awe of his father. Stanley's 'mistakes' - such as recruiting Europeans beyond the limit sanctioned by Parliament - suggest either a clever but lazy young man coping with complexities beyond him or a politician unscrupulous in serving the interests of his portfolio.

8. An Act for the better government of India, 21 & 22 Vic. Cap: 106

9. Ilbert, *The government of India*, p. 95n

direct influence, the crisis offered him an opportunity to participate directly in re-shaping the British army in India. Cambridge's supporters included virtually all Queen's officers and many officials, dismissive of the Company's force and aware of the advantages likely to follow its demise.<sup>10</sup> Early in the rebellion Cambridge began gathering evidence to subvert the Company's force. Colonel William Mansfield, Campbell's chief of staff (and formerly colonel of the periodically disaffected 53rd Foot), resolutely opposed the Company's force. Cambridge had presumably asked him before or soon after his departure (in July) to report on the Company's Europeans. In October 1857 he expressed the Queen's officer's archetypal objections to them. They were debilitated from long service in a tropical climate. The 'traditions and customs' of their regiments were 'fatal to discipline' and 'encouragements to sloth and debauchery', 'evils' beyond individual commanders' powers to rectify. They 'serve a master for pay but do not honour him' as 'a mercantile body with mercantile interests'.<sup>11</sup> Against such a measure the valour and intellectual ability of a few young officers provided an insubstantial counterweight.

The poor performance of many of the Company's senior officers greatly strengthened the case against it: Wilson's irresolution before Delhi, for example, though retrieved by his officers, became common knowledge.<sup>12</sup> Though the European force as a whole had fought skilfully, Queen's officers attributed the disasters of 1857 largely to the deficiencies of the Company's generals who were, as Dalhousie succinctly put it, 'in the mud'.<sup>13</sup> Critics derided them as too old for active service, and alleged that they failed at critical points in the crisis.<sup>14</sup> Company's officers did not suffer the odium in silence: Alexander Lindsay, writing from the camp before Delhi in August, damned a list of ineffective Queen's generals.<sup>15</sup> Queen's officers resurrected

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10. Parallel networks of correspondents can be constructed for protagonists of the Company's and Queen's armies. Consultation between the Queen's army's advocates can be seen through Mansfield's surviving private letter book, which reveals how he maintained contact with those testifying before the Peel Commission, such as Sir George Clerk and Sir Edward Lugard.

11. 'Memorandum by Major General Mansfield on the British Portion of the Service of the H.E.I. Company', 20 October 1857, Cambridge papers, Royal Archives (RA), Vic.Add Ms E/1/775

12. See, for example, Ross Mangles [Chairman of the Court of Directors, 1857-58] to Canning, 24-26 August 1857, conceding that 'many of our officers have shown great weakness and want of decision', Canning papers, WYA, Vol. 3, Letters from the Court of Directors, No. 36

13. Dalhousie to Sir George Couper, Malta, 17 November 1857, in Baird, Private letters of the Marquess of Dalhousie, p. 389

14. With some justice. The ages of the Company's generals has ever since been regarded as a sign of its decay, though Cambridge at 34 had criticised the ages of Queen's generals (Willoughby Verner, The military life of HRH George, Duke of Cambridge, Vol. I, London, 1905, pp. 55-9) and Campbell became Commander-in-Chief at 65.

15. Lindsay, 'The Indian mutiny letters of Lieutenant Alexander Haddon Lindsay ...', Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research, p. 207

familiar arguments about the deterioration inseparable from long service in India. Most damaging of all was Campbell's awareness of the incapacity of the Company's officers available to him. Though he followed precedent in appointing brigadiers according to the formula devised before the rebellion, doubtful men were 'sent away to quiet stations' and active commands given to the competent. Of the seventeen brigades he had scouring Oudh in 1858 only three were commanded by Company's officers.<sup>16</sup> The dereliction of its commanders confirmed Queen's officers' prejudices and intensified long standing pressure for the force's absorption or suppression.

Amalgamation or absorption of the Company's Europeans into the imperial army had, of course, been a possibility for some time. It had been advocated by Queen's officers formally as a means of obtaining uniformity and control over an army meeting imperial commitments, and informally as a way of vastly extending the Horse Guards' patronage. It had been opposed by the Company for exactly the same reasons, 'wholesome emulation' between armies to some being 'jealousy' to others, and military patronage being the only substantial interest left to its directors.

Military pamphleteers advocated changes to the Bengal army without discussing either the European force or European officers. Most politically astute observers accepted, however, that the possession and deployment of patronage lay at the root of the contest.<sup>17</sup> Two aspects mattered: whether patronage should continue at all, and who should control it if it did. Radicals wished military commissions and civil service appointments to be obtained openly, preferably by competitive examination, and Disraeli narrowly saved the third Government of India Bill by negotiating a compromise securing the royal prerogative.<sup>18</sup> As with other issues, the distribution of patronage under the new act modified rather than superseded existing practice. The Council of India (which for the time being substantially comprised the Company's directors, providing informed but, as it turned out, often partisan and outdated advice) retained more than half of the power its members had possessed. Artillery and engineers conformed to the Queen's army in appointing on technical merit, again, more or less as before, securing the best cadets. The transfer to the Crown therefore gave exclusive power over Indian appointments to no single body. The directors, concerned at losing substantial

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16. Clyde to Cambridge, 2 May 1859, copy in Clyde to Wood, 30 June 1859, Wood papers, IOLR, Vol. 85

17. McAree, *The passage of the Government of India Bill*, pp. 235-6.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 250. Victoria was interested in only a few aspects of the issue, particularly the number of commissions awarded. See Wood papers, IOLR, Mss.Eur.F.78/60/1, 'Correspondence with Queen, 1859-63' and /60/2, 'Correspondence with Prince Consort, 1859-61'

individual power, feared the concentration of power over appointments which might deny their dependents and protégés desirable situations. Given the Horse Guards' view of the social standing of the Company's officers, they feared that if it gained control of Indian army patronage it would doubtless serve a very different group to the importunate widows and retired officers who waited on the directors.

The Horse Guards and Court of Directors clashed early in the rebellion over the proposed expansion of the European force. In 1854 Dalhousie had recommended that the

**Ross Donnelly Mangles (1801-77)**  
**Director of the East India Company**  
**and Chairman of the Court, 1857-**  
**58**

Company's European infantry be increased, and that European cavalry be formed. He hoped both to ensure that European troops were available independently of withdrawals, and to save money.<sup>19</sup> Canning's habitual pedantry had left the matter unresolved at the outbreak of the rebellion. In April 1857 the Chairman of the Court, Ross Mangles, had foreseen a 'controversy' over Dalhousie's proposal, realizing the Horse Guards' reluctance to allow the European force to increase.<sup>20</sup> By mid-1857, with hundreds of officers without units, the matter had become urgent. The Court's desire to raise new corps strengthened, formally in order 'to find employment for officers of our mutinied or disbanded Native Regular Cavalry', but informally because officers without regiments would make the army's disbandment or absorption easier. The character, interests and fate of the Company's 5000 European officers (rather than its 15,000 men) therefore became central to the contest over the survival of the European force.

The directors' tactics are also evident from the 'flood of cadets' which throughout the rebellion arrived in Bengal - in 1858 about four times the usual number - despite the disappearance of almost the entire regular native army.<sup>21</sup> Though the Court pressed that new units be raised, Cambridge advised the British government to refuse permission. Disagreeing that the need to

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19. William Lee-Warner, *The life of the Marquis of Dalhousie*, 2 vols, London, 1904, Vol. II, pp. 276-80. Dalhousie complained of the 'mysterious' fate of his minutes in a letter to his confidant, Sir George Couper, Malta, 30 April 1858, in Baird, *Private letters of the Marquess of Dalhousie*, p. 424. Dalhousie was a marquess according to most biographical sources.

20. Mangles to Canning, 27 April 1857, Canning papers, WYA, Vol. 3, No. 28

21. Mansfield to the Earl of Ripon [Earl de Grey and Ripon, Under-Secretary of State for War], Simla, 9 August 1859, Wood papers, IOLR, Vol. 85. A table, 'Allotment of cadetships in 1858', confirms the point; Wood papers, IOLR, Vol. 81, 'Correspondence and papers relating to army affairs, particularly to line and local troops, 1857-60'

'dispose' of displaced sepoy officers required the creation of new European corps, the Duke offered to 'absorb' them in the royal service.<sup>22</sup>

It is difficult to see any military arguments for the creation of new regiments once the rebellion had begun.

**Fox Maule, 2nd Baron Panmure (1801-74) Secretary of State for War 1855-58. Liberal MP 1835-52; Dalhousie's brother**

Notwithstanding that no one could have known how long it would last, the time needed to raise, equip and train new corps would have been at least eighteen months, while on active service they must have been less efficient than established units. Though the directors' efforts were at first 'very feeble', they eventually prevailed, in October 1857, when Cabinet approved the creation of four light cavalry regiments.<sup>23</sup> The reasons for their success are ambiguous. Lord Granville, Canning's closest friend and his informal emissary to the government, told Canning that he had been 'a little instrumental' in persuading Cabinet to approve the corps.<sup>24</sup> The decision may also have been abetted by either inefficiency or treachery within the secretariat, in that Cambridge, known to be the proposal's main opponent, was not sent the papers. Palmerston may have been advancing a private scheme to deny Cambridge power: he glibly explained that 'through some inadvertence' the papers had not been sent to the Horse Guards, but admitted to Panmure that he could find no reason to refuse that would be acceptable to a Parliament angered by reports of massacre and alarmed by the spread of rebellion.<sup>25</sup> The directors negated the Horse Guards' objection that their enlistment would obstruct recruitment for the Queen's army by setting the recruits' maximum height at 5' 4" - men who were soon christened 'dumpsies'. Though Cambridge was, as Mangles gleefully told Canning, 'in what is vulgarly called "a state of mind"' over the measure, it soaked up the officers of eight of the ten regiments of native regular cavalry, and, later, two more when a fifth was approved.<sup>26</sup>

The creation of new cavalry corps, even if, as will be seen, distinguished by inefficiency and disorder, at least provided for officers formerly of the native cavalry. It did not, however, alleviate the plight of the several thousand officers of native infantry under- if not unemployed

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22. Cambridge to Panmure, 22 July 1857, in George Douglas & George Ramsay, The Panmure papers, 2 vols, London, 1908, Vol. II, p. 406

23. Granville to Canning, 10 August 1857, in Fitzmaurice, Life of Granville, p. 256

24. Granville to Canning, 24 October 1857, in Fitzmaurice, Life of Granville, p. 262. In putting his case Granville evidently drew upon a pamphlet, Light horse, by 'Jacob Omnium', the pen-name of the liberal journalist Matthew Higgins.

25. Palmerston to Cambridge, Broadlands, 25 October 1857, in Verner, Military life of HRH the Duke of Cambridge, p. 205

26. Mangles to Canning, 26 October 1857, Canning papers, WYA, Vol. 3, No. 40

in cantonments all over Bengal. Some had been posted to do duty with European corps (as the Delhi graffitists showed, with variable results), others seconded to the departments supplying Campbell's columns. Many were simply idle. In response to the Court's continued pleading, Cabinet agreed in April 1858 that three further European infantry regiments were to be formed in Bengal, each officered from two native corps.<sup>27</sup> Curiously, Cambridge consented to the measure, presumably because the force would, he believed, before long pass to the control of the Queen's army, and because the number of regiments despatched to India had denuded the army elsewhere, especially at home. Since rebellion was being successfully suppressed, he may have seen three experienced Queen's regiments at home as better value than the same number in India.<sup>28</sup> As a result of the directors' lobbying, therefore, the European force became substantially larger as it was about to be transferred to the Crown.

It was understandable that at the height of the rebellion Cabinet would allow the Company to increase its European force, and that the consequent crisis in the numbers of Queen's troops available elsewhere would lead it to again allow the force to increase. In the light of the European officers' notorious predilection to defend their interests it was equally understandable for Parliament to accept that in framing the Government of India Bill the force could not simply be absorbed or extinguished. The critical decisions, then, were Cabinet's agreement in October 1857 and April 1858 to increase the force, and Parliament's decision, unreflective as it was, to 'guarantee' its members' rights under the Government of India Act. Each derived from or was substantially influenced by an awareness of the Indian officers' 'independence'.

Debate over the size, function, composition and control of a re-organized Indian army, and especially that of Bengal, gathered pace as the scale of the mutiny became apparent. Partisans skirmished in newspapers and pamphlets, in parliamentary debates and enquiries, and in exchanges

between officials of the Horse Guards, War Office and the Board of Control. The contending forces met head-on before the royal commission appointed in July 1858 to consider the future of the Indian armies. Chaired by Major General Jonathan Peel, the commission accumulated between July 1858 and March 1859 a mass of evidence of incalculable value to the study of the

**Major General Jonathan Peel (1799-1879) Secretary of State for War, March 1858- June 1859. Comm. 1815; Major General, 1854; Conservative MP, 1826, 1831-68; brother of the former prime minister**

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27. Sir Frederick Currie [Chairman of the Court of Directors, 1858] to Canning, 26 April 1858, Canning papers, WYA, Vol. 3. The directors' instructions to the government of India authorizing the new corps appear in the Military letter to India, 21 April 1858, IOLR, E/4/854.

28. Verner, Military life of HRH the Duke of Cambridge, refers to but does not reproduce Cambridge's 'most earnest protest' of April 1858 against the 'total inadequacy' of Britain's available forces in the light of threats of a European war; Vol. I, p. 213.

European force immediately preceding its final crisis.<sup>29</sup> Appointed following the destruction of the native army of Bengal, one of its main tasks was to recommend on the balance between the British and native forces. While the size of the British garrison, 80,000 men, appeared to have been chosen arbitrarily, the ratios which it stood to the native force in the several presidencies formed the basis of the garrison of India for the rest of the century. Suspicion of Indian troops generated several bizarre and barren proposals, that Maoris, Malays, 'Tartars', Italians, Arabs or Albanians should be recruited as mercenaries.<sup>30</sup> All, however, recognised that for the sake of security a European component was essential, though opinions differed over whether it should be found from imperial (or 'line') troops or from what came to be called a 'local' European force, and in what proportions.

The Peel Commission's first task was to advise on the terms on which the Company's European force should be transferred to the Crown. It became the only major issue on which they could not agree. Forty-seven witnesses testified, from both armies and with wide experience of Indian service. It became apparent, however, that the opinions of Queen's and Company officers were diametrically opposed, that the former advocated the amalgamation of the local force with the Queen's army, while Company's officers urged that it be retained or even expanded.<sup>31</sup> Cambridge

wanted the local force to be small and subordinate to his own, as did Lord Clyde (as Sir Colin Campbell became - reluctantly - from September 1858).<sup>32</sup> Lord Stanley, President of the Board of Control and then Secretary of State for India, favoured its retention. Canning, represented by Colonel Henry Durand, had been persuaded by Indian officers to advocate a huge expansion of the local force from nine to thirty regiments of infantry and ten of cavalry, though without considering how the Queen's army would regard such an assault on its relative power. The Europeans' advocates justified the proposed increase in local Europeans not by the need to overawe potential mutiny (since a force of Queen's troops would do so just as well) but

**Colin Campbell, Lord Clyde (1792-1863), General, Commander-in-Chief in India, 1857-60. Born Colin McIver, changed name to that of patron; son of a Glasgow carpenter, comm. 9th Foot, 1808; served in the Peninsular war; Lieutenant Colonel 1835; served first Anglo-Chinese war, first Punjab war, Kohat pass campaign; KCB, 1849; brigade commander in the Crimea; Major General, 1854; Lieutenant General, 1856; General, 1858; Field Marshal, 1862**

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29. PP 1859 (I), Vol. V. Vol. VIII of session II effectively is identical.

30. Robin McLachlan, 'Some suggestions for rebuilding the Indian army, 1857-58', *RMC historical journal*, Vol. 4, 1975, pp. 1-8. Optimists even proposed that cavalry be recruited in the Australian colonies: *Glasgow herald*, 30 September 1857.

31. Charles Grey to Henry, Lord Howick, 21 November 1858, Grey papers, UofD

32. 'Extract of a letter from Lord Clyde to HRH the Duke of Cambridge', Lucknow, 19 January 1859, PRO, WO 33/7 paper 27

to employ the officers of the now non-existent native regiments. The Indian officers' position was founded on the self interest for which they had become renowned.

So obdurate were the two sides that there might have been created a local 'army of the East' and an imperial 'army of the West'.<sup>33</sup> In fact the commissioners' freedom of manoeuvre had been restricted by the Government of India Act passed after the royal warrant had been issued. Though Company's officers' attempts to increase the force and substantially displace the royal army foundered, Queen's officers' hopes of abolishing the rival service were in turn nullified by the Act's 56th clause, which guaranteed the Company's force its pay, pensions, allowances and (unspecified) 'advantages' under the Crown. By one of the many unintentional ironies of the episode, Parliament accepted the clause without debate or amendment, an oversight instrumental in the events which followed. The majority report therefore recommended reluctantly that the local force remain, neither increased nor merged with the imperial army. A minority report, submitted by Major General Henry Hancock expressed the Indian officers' views lucidly and (at least in contesting several weaknesses or exaggerations in the majority report) convincingly, arguing for the expansion of the local force to two-thirds of the British force in India, an increase from about 15,000 to 50,000.<sup>34</sup> Though the commission declared in favour of the Queen's officers, the Indian officers' determined rearguard action and the clause of the Government of India Act later known as 'the guarantee' confounded any claim to conclusive victory. The formal report, as Stanley wrote, became 'comparatively unimportant', with Cabinet determining the garrison's constitution.<sup>35</sup> Despite the urging of senior Queen's officers, it accepted that for the meantime the two forces would remain.

The directors' success in expanding their European force and then securing its officers' conditions of service was remarkable, given the strength of the opposition they faced and the performance of their army as a whole in the rebellion. Not only did they confront Cambridge, but also the Queen and Prince Consort and successive secretaries of state for war, Panmure and Peel. The Indian case's supporters numbered only Stanley, Canning (through his London envoys Colonel Durand and Lord Granville) and a large but indeterminate number of opposition MPs. That the directors secured the force's expansion even as they faced extinction not only suggests the residual power of the India interest in and out of Parliament, but also the British establishment's critical division over the disposition of such a rich prize. The directors' successful Parthian defence of their patronage (even if ultimately a Pyrrhic victory) is

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33. Col J. Holland [Bombay army, 1823-57], PP 1859 (I), Vol. V, minutes of evidence, p. 158, q. 4183

34. *Ibid.* Report of Major General Hancock, pp. 611-45

35. Stanley to Canning, 26 October 1858, Canning papers, WYA, Vol. 6, No. 74

explicable also in terms of the balanced stance which the Company's Parliamentary allies had adopted in party politics.<sup>36</sup> Just as parties lukewarm about India reform produced the 1858 Act, so perhaps all hesitated to allow any single power (and particularly the Horse Guards) to capture Indian military patronage. The resultant compromise effectively perpetuated a system whose deficiencies were ostensibly the cause of both the mutinies and the need for reform. This reflects and explains the directors' effectiveness as personal rather than overtly political brokers of patronage.

The directors' success also, however, reflected the antipathy which the Company's officers aroused, both socially and politically, within the British military and political establishment. Statements in Parliament were understandably guarded - Monckton Milnes, for example, (an advocate for the Company in 1858) referring to 'a different class of men ... from ordinary English military

**Richard Monckton Milnes, (1809-), MP, 1837-62; became Lord Houghton**

**Hon. Charles Grey (1804-70), Private Secretary to Prince Albert**

**Henry George Grey, Viscount Howick (1802-94), Whig office holder and military reformer**

officers'.<sup>37</sup> Privately, however, reservations about the quality of the Company's officers were expressed less circumspectly. In an exchange of letters debating the question, Charles Grey told ~~the~~ Henry, Lord Howick, that he feared that amalgamation would produce the 'enormous evil of lowering the class of our officers'.<sup>38</sup> Charles reminded Henry of how the Company's officers were 'a troublesome lot'. Their 'normal state', he wrote was 'indiscipline ... insubordination, quarrels & endless Courts Martial'.<sup>39</sup> Paradoxically, then, the Company's officers' social inferiority may have acted to preserve them from absorption. Such views testify to the impact of the Indian officers' lobbying, in that successive individual approaches and collective campaigns (particularly the great memorials) had created a strong impression that they would be ill disposed to accept any attempt to curtail whatever 'advantages' they possessed.

The protagonists' tenacity in prosecuting their case in Britain during the rebellion, however, not only failed to resolve the future of the European force, but also intensified problems which were to shape its members' reactions to the Act of 1858. The contest between opponents and champions of the European force produced a series of paradoxes engendering further problems. While its junior officers had performed well and hoped for further advancement, older officers

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36. Bourne, *The civil and military patronage of the East India Company*, pp. 15-18

37. Hansard's parliamentary debates, 27 July 1860, Vol. CLX, column 334

38. Charles Grey to Lord Howick, 29 October 1858, Grey papers, (UofD)

39. Charles Grey to Lord Howick, 30 October 1858, Grey papers, (UofD)

had buttressed the case for the force's demise. While the Horse Guards continued to oppose the existence of the force, the directors had secured its expansion. While under the Government of India Act it was to be transferred to the Crown, no soldier of the Company's army had been consulted in the four months over which it was shaped. While its opponents apparently recognised the volatility of the Company's military culture, their actions might almost have been calculated to provoke it.

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Late in October 1857 Sir Colin Campbell left Calcutta with his chief of staff, William Mansfield, to take command of the British army preparing again to attempt to relieve the besieged garrison of Lucknow. The new Commander-in-Chief had been selected after news of Anson's death from cholera arrived in London the previous July. Campbell had

**Lieutenant General Sir Patrick Grant (1804-95), Commander-in-Chief, Madras, 1856-61. Comm. 1820; raised North-West Frontier Force, 1841; served Gwalior war, first and second Punjab wars; KCB, 1856; temporarily Commander-in-Chief, India, 1857; ret. 1861**

accepted, leaving England with uncharacteristic swiftness the day after his appointment. A veteran of the Peninsular war with Indian experience, Campbell seems an unlikely candidate for such a command. The son of a Glasgow carpenter, he retained a strong accent. His military career had not been particularly distinguished. A friend and protégé of Charles Napier, he had performed poorly in command of a punitive expedition on the frontier in 1851. Rebuked, he resigned (Dalhousie felt) 'in a huff'.<sup>40</sup> An heroic episode in the Crimea, where he had commanded the 'thin red-line streak' at Balaclava, had magnified his reputation, though the reasons for his selection by Panmure remain obscure. Sir Patrick Grant, a distinguished and experienced Company officer who had acted capably in the interim, appears to have been disqualified only because he was a Company's officer.<sup>41</sup> Though notoriously prone to favour Scots regiments, Campbell was popular with the troops for his concern for their welfare, his readiness to share the discomforts of campaigning, and his facility in recalling soldiers' names.

Like many successful commanders, Campbell was but half of a partnership, and the degree to which he was the dominant member was, and remains, a subject of speculation (see Illustration 8). '[T]he ordinary official reserve between superior & subordinate', Mansfield told a

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40. Durand, Life of Major General Sir Henry Marion Durand, p. 127. Dalhousie's dissatisfaction is evident from his letter to Sir George Couper of 13 & 27 June 1852; Baird, Private letters of the Marquess of Dalhousie, pp. 207, 209

41. Cambridge to Panmure, 15 January 1858, Panmure papers, Vol. II, p. 466. Cambridge actually referred to Grant in considering Campbell's replacement 'in the event of anything unforeseen happening', but Grant had been as well qualified six months before. Cambridge considered the appointment of a Company's officer 'a very serious evil'.



**Illustration 7**  
Lord Canning, Governor General and Viceroy,  
1856-62 (an engraving from Roberts's Forty-one  
years in India, based on a photograph).



**Illustration 8**  
Lord Clyde (right) and his chief of staff,  
Sir William Mansfield, in poses hinting at  
Mansfield's domination of the partnership.  
Though notoriously short-sighted,  
Mansfield vainly removed his spectacles  
for the photograph on which this  
illustration is based (from Roberts's Forty-  
one years in India).

confidant, '[n]ever existed between us'.<sup>42</sup> None denied Mansfield's considerable intellectual gifts. William Howard Russell, who became familiar with him at Campbell's headquarters, admired his powers of observation, sagacity and firmness, though he conceded that his habit of throwing back his head and peering through spectacles gave a supercilious impression.<sup>43</sup> Other observers were less charitable. The ambitious Charles Macgregor, meeting him after he had become Commander-in-Chief in India, described him as 'dark, Machiavellian, "very knowing"'.<sup>44</sup> Garnet Wolseley, reflecting the impressions of his fellow subalterns, recalled that 'no one liked him ... not even Lord Clyde'.<sup>45</sup> Sydney Herbert attributed his 'many enemies' to a contemptuous manner, which was to impede, though not wholly stunt, his aspirations.<sup>46</sup> It is possible that Panmure and Cambridge agreed to appoint Campbell as a figurehead while Mansfield exercised influence greater than his position would formally permit. Cambridge arranged for Mansfield to assume the Indian army's adjutant general's privilege of corresponding directly with the home authorities, becoming 'in fact the War Minister for India'.<sup>47</sup> In the meantime Mansfield assisted Campbell in planning the re-conquest of the vast area still in rebellion.

Within weeks Campbell had relieved and evacuated Lucknow, a tactical success which nevertheless left the capital of Oudh in rebel hands. The relief brought Campbell and Canning, into conflict with lasting consequences for their army. Canning, conscious of the political importance of subduing a kingdom only recently incorporated into British India, wanted the army to take Lucknow and to quarter and reduce Oudh and its rebellious 'talookdars', or landlords. Campbell favoured moving westwards into Rohilcund. Canning prevailed, establishing over the Commander-in-Chief an ascendancy even in strictly military affairs which Campbell never attempted to contest.<sup>48</sup> The episode explains the self-effacing tone of

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42. Mansfield to Maj Gen W.F. Foster, 10 September 1859, Private letter book [of] Chief of the Staff, May-September 1859, NAM, 8103-78

43. Russell, My diary in India, Vol. I, pp. 173, 264

44. Macgregor, Life and opinions, Vol. I, p. 317

45. Wolseley, The story of a soldier's life, Vol. I, p. 336

46. Herbert to Canning, 10 December 1859, Canning papers, WYA, Vol. 2, 'Letters from HM Ministers', No. 32

47. Cambridge to Panmure, 22 July 1857, Panmure papers, Vol. II, p. 407

48. Maclagan, 'Clemency' Canning, pp. 151-52. The Lucknow campaign has recently been treated in Bruce Watson's The great Indian mutiny: Colin Campbell and the campaign at Lucknow, New York, 1991, but the book could not be obtained in time to contribute to this thesis.

Campbell's correspondence with Canning, and suggests that Mansfield's influence, powerful though it may have been, was limited to Campbell and his army.

The evacuation of Lucknow ended the crisis of the rebellion, and from December 1857 the British task became the eradication of the large but virtually leaderless rebel forces. Campbell commanded a massive force. As the British position worsened, more troops had been summoned; from the other presidencies, Ceylon, Mauritius, the Cape and Australia, while a force steaming to China had been diverted to Bengal. Reinforcements from Britain continued to arrive, until by the end of 1858 fifty-one Queen's regiments served in Bengal, compared to the thirteen stationed in the presidency in May 1857.<sup>49</sup> As Kendal Coghill predicted in March 1858, writing to his brother from the Red Fort, Campbell was 'sending the new English Regiments to do the rest of the work'.<sup>50</sup>

The Bengal Europeans became a progressively smaller proportion of this growing Queen's army. In the campaign to re-take Lucknow the only European infantry units were the 1st Madras and the 1st Bengal Fusiliers, veteran regiments but depleted and exhausted by the hard fights of 1857. Campbell's artillery included five royal companies to one Bengal. European units were not, it seems, excluded deliberately from the major campaigns of 1858 - at least the surviving papers do not suggest so - but the rebellion's last year left the European force in limbo. Its most experienced units were recovering from an arduous year of war, its officers particularly apprehensive of changes the rebellion would bring.

While Campbell's 'moveable columns' quartered Oudh, Rohilcund and Bundelcund, gradually engaging, pursuing and eliminating rebel forces, in central India the last major campaign of the rebellion began. An army from Bombay conducted the most remarkable campaign of the rebellion, introducing to the British army in India Sir Hugh Rose, who was to influence more than any other individual the fate of the European force. Like Campbell, Rose seemed an unlikely choice to accept and excel in an Indian command. An aristocratic figure, 'pale, thin and delicate', he had spent

Lieutenant General Sir Hugh Henry Rose (1801-85), Commander-in-Chief, India, 1860-65. Comm. 19th Foot, 1820; 92nd (Gordon) Highlanders, 1829; diplomatic posts 1840-4; Crimea 1854-56; KCB, 1856; commanded Central India Field Force, 1857-58; Commander-in-Chief, Bombay 1860; Commander-in-Chief, India, 1860-65; created Baron Strathnairn, 1866; Commander-in-Chief, Ireland, 1865-70; Field Marshal, 1877

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49. 'Return (No. X) of Queen's troops serving in India', PRO, WO 33/7. A further 22 regiments of Queen's infantry joined the Bombay and Madras armies.

50. Coghill to Jos, Delhi, 14 March 1858, NAM

as much time as a diplomat as a soldier.<sup>51</sup> Though a solicitous and effective regimental officer, he had never commanded a regiment. During the 1840s and '50s a diplomat in the middle east and liaison officer with the French in the Crimea, he had frequently sought action, exhibiting stamina and courage: Marshal Canrobert nominated him for the Victoria Cross.<sup>52</sup> Rose volunteered to go to India in 1857, following the military opportunist's instinct that advancement lay in war. His task in re-asserting British control in central India demanded as much logistic as military skill, in that he had to march a small army over a thousand miles at the onset of the summer and locate and engage much larger rebel forces. Though his force suffered severely from 'sunstroke', he fought a series of brilliant battles against huge odds, facing the rebels' best commanders. Rose's willingness to risk defeat brought startling victory. While besieging Jhansi he was threatened in the rear by a rebel force ten times larger than his own. Dividing his small force, he defeated the relieving force and immediately stormed the walls. Rose's personal toughness was remarkable: remaining in the saddle through the heat of the day, he had a bheesty souse him continually. A staff officer claimed he was 'made of brass, with wire works'.<sup>53</sup> The absence of a journalist such as Russell (who though having missed most of the action in the main Gangetic theatre remained with Campbell) diminished the Central India Field Force's fame. Rose discerned what he saw as Campbell's jealousy: a bar recognising his campaign on the medal struck to commemorate the rebellion was apparently approved against Campbell's wishes, possibly only after Rose complained to Cambridge.<sup>54</sup>

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51. Annand, Cavalry surgeon, p. 91. A new biography is needed: the standard sources are the Dictionary of national biography, George Malleson's 1865 essay in the Calcutta review (re-printed in his Essays and lectures on Indian historical subjects, London, 1876) and an uncritical account by his former military secretary, Owen Tudor Burne, Clyde and Strathnairn, Oxford, 1895.

52. As a general, however, he was ineligible for the award.

53. 'Mrs John Speid', Our last years in India, London, 1862, p. 62

54. Rose to Lt Col Robertson, Mahabaleshwar, 20 April 1859, Rose papers, Public letter book, BL, Add. Ms 42812. Rose had been appointed Cambridge's equerry in 1830.

In contrast to the polished Rose, Campbell appeared an irascible old man. His idiosyncrasies, aggravated by the hardships of active service, intensified the uncomfortable partnership between Queen's and Company's forces. Men serving together developed feelings of comradesly warmth - Mark Crummie, for example, recorded how on quitting the trans-Raptee force Queen's hussar and rifle sergeants hosted 'a farewell doo', giving his men 'three cheers as only Englishmen can'.<sup>55</sup> Service together, intensified rather than diminished differences between the two services as a whole.

Relations were most cool in the artillery. Troops and companies of the Bengal Artillery had been engaged throughout 1857, displaying in its final campaign the qualities which had won its reputation. Accounts of its services, usually as detached batteries, concentrate on the leadership of the lieutenants and captains commanding them. The rebellion contributed to the artillery's mythology as had no previous war. At the mismanaged action at Sussia, when the 3rd infantry emerged from the fort at Agra to meet a larger rebel force, in which rebel batteries destroyed his out-gunned foot company, Captain Edward D'Oyly's dying delirium - 'I am done for. Put a stone on my grave and write that I died fighting my guns' - were accepted as emblematic of the force's demeanour in action.<sup>56</sup> It is difficult to distinguish the mythology from reality: at least two troop commanders, Charles Blunt and Colin Cookworthy, were said to have led full gun teams over mud walls or banks, attracting the admiration of the army.<sup>57</sup> The horse artillery especially saw hard service, and suffered correspondingly high casualties. Blunt's 2/3rd Troop, engaged at Delhi, Agra, the second relief and siege of Lucknow, and the defence of Cawnpore, lost 99 out of its original 113 men during a year of almost continual action.<sup>58</sup>

**Captain Edward Armstrong Currie D'Oyly (1823-57), 2/5th Bengal Artillery. b. Dinapore, son of a Bengal officer; comm. 1841; Captain, 1854; d. of wounds, Sussia, 7 July 1857**

**Lieutenant Charles Blunt (1824-1900), 2/3rd Bengal Horse Artillery and 3/1st Bengal Artillery. Comm. 1842; served second Punjab war, rebellion (Delhi, Agra, relief of Lucknow, Kalpi); ret. as major general, 1867**

**Lieutenant Colin Cookworthy (1826-?), 3/1st Bengal Horse Artillery. son of a physician; com. 1842; served Punjab wars; ret. as major general, 1872**

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55. Crummie papers, ERO

56. Kaye, A history of the sepoy war, Vol. III, p. 385

57. Malleon, History of the Indian mutiny, Vol. II, p. 116. A Madras team emulating the feat broke an axle: Strange, Gunner Jingo's jubilee, p. 158

58. Wood, The revolt in Hindustan, p. 212. Illustration 6d depicts horse gunners in action during the rebellion.

Having performed so well Bengal gunners regarded the arrival late in 1857 of units of the Royal Artillery with unease: on the eve of the storming of Delhi Charles Robinson wrote gloomily to his mother that 'there will be no getting them out'.<sup>59</sup> Though serving together through the second relief of Lucknow and the campaigns of 1858, the gunners' collaboration was marked by misunderstanding and resentment. Royal Artillerymen were 'astonished' - or affronted, perhaps - by what one subaltern called its "'Delhi" style', the casual practicality of veterans.<sup>60</sup> Bengal gunners, already anxious over promotion and appointments, saw competitors in both. Campbell unthinkingly aggravated the antagonism when, shortly after his arrival in August 1857, he detained the Royal Artillery staff idly in Calcutta, making them 'very angry'.<sup>61</sup> Though some Bengal officers evidently found Campbell's slight distasteful, that the Commander-in-Chief was a 'great friend' to one service antagonised royal officers without actually easing the Bengal officers' predicament.<sup>62</sup> Company's officers superseded by senior but less experienced Queen's officers found exasperating their insistence that operations be run 'exactly as it was done in the Crimea'.<sup>63</sup> The friction augured ill for the union into which the two forces were to be brought.

Lieutenant Charles Gilbert Robinson (1835-1916), Bengal Horse Artillery. Son of a grazier; comm. 1854; Lieutenant, 1857; Lieutenant Colonel, 1878; ret. as hon. major general, 1885

Lieutenant Alexander Haddon Lindsay, 1/1st Bengal; Horse Artillery. Comm. 1849; ret. as Lieutenant Colonel, 1880

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While during 1858 the Company's Europeans became progressively less important to the suppression of rebellion, the force as a whole expanded. By late 1858, with the formation of eight new infantry and cavalry corps, the force had virtually doubled in size. The increase significantly altered its composition and equilibrium. The new regiments' formation is therefore the most important development of 1858, and must be carefully traced if its significance in the events of 1859 and beyond are to be understood.

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59. Lt Charles Robinson to his mother, Delhi, 11 September 1857, IOLR

60. Broehl, Crisis of the raj, pp. 177-8, 205

61. Capt Henry Lindsay, 3rd Bn Rifle Brigade, to his father, Allahabad, 2 January 1858, Gore Lindsay papers, CSAA

62. Balcarres D. Wardlaw Ramsay, Rough recollections of military service and society, 2 vols, London, 1882, Vol. I, p. 280; Broehl, Crisis of the raj, pp. 205, 246

63. Broehl, Crisis of the raj, p. 234

The directors' anxiety to enlarge the force resulted in 'almost indiscriminate recruiting'.<sup>64</sup> Their enlistment was chaotic. Private Patrick Carroll described the scene of his attestation, in Dundee in November 1857:

Private Patrick Carroll, No. 28, 2nd Bengal European Light Cavalry. Millmaker, of County Cavan or possibly Dundee, attested at Dundee, November 1857, aged 23; d. June 1859

there was about 15 of us in together, and some were smoking and some were cursing and swearing dreadful, and I couldn't hear what was said, and the magistrate was writing away at the table, minding his own business, and I wasn't very sober myself<sup>65</sup>

It was an inauspicious but typical beginning for many individuals and for the new regiments. Recruits for the cavalry began to reach Warley in the first week of November, over 900 arriving within a fortnight.<sup>66</sup> Between November 1857 and August 1858, when the cavalry regiments were completed, 5,857 men arrived at the depot, overwhelming Colonel Leslie's careful system. Parties arrived 'in fifties, Sixties & hundreds ... late at night - always ... in a filthy state of rags and dirt'.<sup>67</sup> To Leslie the recruits of 1857-58 presented a startling contrast to the drafts sent to India before the rebellion. He found many 'totally uneducated', some 'knock kneed' and 'crook backed', and when the height standard was again reduced some seemed 'mere Children'.<sup>68</sup> The numbers arriving made Leslie's careful vetting of undesirables impossible, and some drafts, despatched for Bengal as rapidly as possible, sailed without even nominal rolls.

Leslie's understandable horror at the influx of recruits suggests that the crisis brought a different type of man to join the Company's service. The issue is critical in that the protest of 1859 involved both old soldiers and recruits, and understanding the participation of each depends largely upon determining the differences between the two. The Company had never found difficulty in recruiting its quotas before the rebellion. Finding men to fill the new regiments was eased by coincidence of the 'commercial crisis' of 1857-58, 'one of the worst depressions of the nineteenth century', which put thousands of men out of work during a winter in which the Company's recruiting parties sought more men than ever before.<sup>69</sup> 'The great

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64. Leslie to Philip Melvill, 27 December 1857, Depot letter book M, IOLR, L/MIL/9/58
65. Testimony of Pte P. Carroll, Meerut inquiry, PP 1860, p. 357
66. Memorandum, 'Light Cavalry Recruiting', 25 November 1857, Depot letter book M, IOLR
67. Leslie to Melvill, 27 December 1857, Depot letter book M, IOLR
68. Memoranda, 25 November 1857; 23 August 1858, Depot letter book M, IOLR
69. J.R.T. Hughes, Fluctuations in trade, industry and finance: a study of British economic development 1850-1860, Oxford, 1960, p. 30

India war', a street ballad apparently published in 1858, connected the war with the trade depression:

Distress throughout the country I believe it does increase;  
I wish the war was at an end that we could live in peace,  
And men for labour better paid as they have been before  
And soldiers too that fought so true in the great India war<sup>70</sup>

Certainly some men were also drawn to enlist by the reports of massacres: John Pindar was persuaded to take the Queen's shilling in June 1858 by a recruiting sergeant inveighing against the 'black-hearted spalpeens' who 'kilt all our poor women and children at Cawnpore'.<sup>71</sup> For some, awareness of the Company as a route to advancement may have impelled them to prefer its sergeants, and men seeking more than simply a refuge continued to enlist throughout the crisis. Necessity, however, seems to have been by far the most important inducement. G.F. Browne, who presumably spoke to officers serving at the time, noted that during the rebellion the standard of recruits 'fell to the ordinary line standard'.<sup>72</sup>

Leslie's impression of many recruits' desperation is confirmed by an analysis of the backgrounds of a sample of men enlisted during the rebellion. The counties producing most recruits were those regions and industries most affected by the depression: Lancashire and the cotton industry, Staffordshire and Warwickshire in iron and coal, London and the building industry.<sup>73</sup> Granville reported to Canning late in 1857 that Lancashire, Yorkshire and Staffordshire were 'all out of employment', news that would affect his government in ways neither could have anticipated.<sup>74</sup> That the crisis began in and affected commerce generally also explains the numbers of recruits enlisting from all parts of the kingdom.

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70. Roy Palmer, (ed.), The rambling soldier: life in the lower ranks, 1750-1900 through soldiers' songs and writings, Penguin, 1977, pp. 215-6

71. John Pindar, Autobiography of a private soldier, Cupar, 1877, pp. 5-6

72. G.F. Browne, 'Should the European army in India continue as at present constituted ...?', Journal of the Royal United Services Institution, Vol. XXIX, No. CXXIX, 1885, p. 301

73. Hughes, Fluctuations in trade, industry and finance, pp. 95, 171-78, 224-5. Increasing numbers of 'adult able-bodied male paupers' in London and Lancashire (accounting for over half of those recorded in England) corroborate the impression from imperfect sources: Marie Dessauer, 'Unemployment records, 1848-59', Economic history review, Vol. X, 1940, pp. 38-43

74. Grenville to Canning, Buckenham, 24 November 1857, Fitzmaurice, Life of Granville, p. 267. The relatively few men enlisted in Yorkshire evident in the samples undertaken is inexplicable except as a statistical oddity.

The Company's recruits during the rebellion present mixtures of men which seemingly defy analysis. Recruits obtained during the rebellion came from all over the British isles: the 530 men of the 2nd cavalry who testified to the Meerut court of inquiry, for example, named 'native places' in 72 counties.<sup>75</sup> Some patterns are apparent, however. The places of enlistment of some 650 artillery recruits and 265 infantrymen discharged after the protest reveal the recruits' urban and particularly metropolitan backgrounds. London accounted for almost a quarter of all artillery recruits and about forty per cent of infantrymen. Most of the remainder came from large provincial cities: Lancashire, Birmingham, Dublin, Glasgow and Cork accounted for a third of all artillery and infantry recruits and three-fifths of the cavalry's.<sup>76</sup> Very few were countrymen; most gave the name of a town rather than a village as their native place, either at enlistment or before the court. Henry Durand's report of recruiting in Ireland during the winter of 1858-59 corroborates the statistical suggestion. By the time news of a recruiting party arrival in a town had reached the surrounding country its quota had been filled by townsmen.<sup>77</sup>

Using the occupational measures of the proportions of labourers and clerks, the recruits of 1857-58 were less skilled and less literate than those enlisting before 1857. While before 1857 about a third of recruits described themselves as labourers, during the rebellion over 40 per cent of later recruits did so. While clerks constituted almost ten per cent of pre-1857 recruits in 1857-58 they made up less than two per cent of the drafts arriving at Warley. Such differentials indicate that those enlisted during the rebellion differed qualitatively from those already in India. A more significant difference lies in their experience of and attitude to working away from home. While before 1857 almost two-thirds of recruits enlisted in other than their native county, during the rebellion roughly the same proportion enlisted in or near their 'native place'.<sup>78</sup> The implications of these figures are critical. Recruits arriving in European corps in 1858 were at best unwilling soldiers rather than adventurers seeking prospects through enlistment. The restless but ambitious town workers characteristic of the

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75. 'Proceedings of a special court of inquiry ... at Meerut', PP 1860, pp. 233-35; 238-41; 251; 253-62; 213-13; 317-21; 402-7; 505-6

76. Not including the large numbers (130 - about a fifth) attested at the Company's depot at Warley (usually having enlisted for other arms elsewhere), possibly misrepresenting the scale of enlistment in the provinces. The sources on which the analysis is based are not ideal: the infantry and cavalry under-represent those reluctant to testify before courts of inquiry, though the similarity with the pattern of enlistments in the artillery suggests that the sample is reliable.

77. Durand to Canning, 24 January 1859, Canning papers, WYA, Vol. 73 (Letters from Durand), No. 18

78. Inevitably the reality belied the neatness implied by the figures. There is no assurance that men enlisting in their native county had not 'tramped' for months before returning home, nor that a man born in, say, Sligo had not lived in Manchester since childhood. The congruence between units and ships in the two periods lends credibility to the assumption, however.

**Table 5**  
**Comparison of recruits pre-1857 and 1857-58**

	Ethnicity			Occupation		Mobility
	English	Irish	Scottish	Lab.	Clerks	Tramping
<i>Broxbournebury and Sir Robert Small, 1836</i> <sup>1</sup>	38	58	3	42	15	69
<i>Nankin, 1841</i> <sup>2</sup>	49	40	10	38	2	61
<i>Cambodia, 1856</i> <sup>3</sup>	42	27	29	29	8	65
2 BELC <sup>4</sup>	38	46	15	38	2	32
5 BER <sup>5</sup>	63	25	9	44	2	41

While these sources omit (for the cavalry) those who declined to testify and (for the infantry) the few who elected to remain in India in 1859, such qualifications would not seem to impair markedly the sample's validity. 'Tramping' is defined (arbitrarily but consistently) as those men whose native place differs from the county in which they enlisted. The low proportion of clerks aboard the *Nankin* and *Cambodia* does not accord with the proportion within the force as a whole derived from scrutiny of the registers of European soldiers. The disparate ethnic composition of the corps formed during the rebellion may reflect varying movements of recruiting parties in 1857 and 1858, but certainly underlines the individuality of regimental communities.

1. Because relatively small drafts embarked during the 1830s (a decade of neglect for the force, because it comprised only one infantry regiment and the artillery), drafts from two ships, *Broxbournebury* and *Sir Robert Small*, have been combined, both from the Register of European soldiers, IOLR, L/MIL/ 10/ 122-23
2. Register of European soldiers, IOLR, L/MIL/10/124-25
3. Register of European soldiers, IOLR, L/MIL/10/126-27
4. Proceedings of a special court of inquiry held ... at Meerut, PP 1860, pp. 263-66, 321-81, 408-31, 507-23
5. Discharge papers, 5th Bengal European Regiment, IOLR, L/MIL/10/313

force, on the tramp from choice as much as necessity, perhaps, were joined by men regarding enlistment as a resort of need. The depression, however, retrenched tradesmen as well as the labourers who customarily suffered first and most by such crises. The recruits crowding Warley's barracks that winter were therefore not merely desperate unskilled workers, but were in many cases perhaps more representative of British and Irish working men than the footloose young men traditionally attracted by the Company's service. If they introduced into the Company's army an unfamiliar element, one which diffracts the otherwise easy analysis of the soldiers' protest, they also connect the force more securely to the attitudes and experience of contemporary society.

Contemporary observers differed markedly in describing these men. Orfeur Cavenagh, Town Major at Fort William and responsible for the drafts in Calcutta, recalled them as, 'for young soldiers ... extremely well-behaved'. He claimed that reports of disorderly conduct (those in the *Times* hostile

Orfeur Cavenagh (1821-91), Town Major, Fort William. Comm. 1837; served Gwallor war, first Punjab war; political appointments; Governor of Straits Settlements, 1859-67; Lieutenant General, 1874; KCSI, 1881

to Canning and written by Delane's brother, Charles) misinterpreted the strictness of his arrangements. The numbers arrested derived, he claimed, from his order that police apprehend those wandering about the bazaars, rather than from the men's misconduct.<sup>79</sup> Iltudus Prichard, on the other hand, quoted an officer writing from the recruit depot. He recorded that along with men with 'small white hands and large horny ones ... specimens of every shade of society' the dumpies included 'a good many men' formerly of the Queen's army's Land Transport Corps, men 'a terror to ... peaceable inhabitants'.<sup>80</sup> The registers of European soldiers do not bear out his claim, but the difference reveals how partisanship early entered the debate in explaining the protest which followed.

Most recruits were shipped off to Calcutta in drafts within weeks, without even the four or five months' introduction to military service usual before 1857. On reaching Bengal arrangements for their reception were as haphazard as at Warley. The earliest drafts arrived at the onset of the hot season of 1858, and, inadequately supervised, housed or dressed, were allowed to wander about in the bazaars in the sun, drinking arrack and suffering unusually heavily from sunstroke and disease.<sup>81</sup> The new regiments' administration was woeful. Their pay fell into

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79. Orfeur Cavenagh, *Reminiscences of an Indian official*, London, 1884, pp. 230-31. Delane's role is described in McAree, *The passage of the Government of India Act*, p. 90.

80. Iltudus Prichard, *The administration of India from 1859 to 1868*, 2 vols, London, 1869, Vol. I, pp. 36-87

81. *Times*, 1 June 1858, 9d. The *Times's* correspondent may have been unsympathetic, but a letter from Currie to Canning (25 June 1858, Canning papers, WYA, Vol. 3, No. 63) corroborates the impression.

arrears, officers went absent or in the meantime managed to find other duties, and three of their colonels were removed as unfit.<sup>82</sup> Few experienced non-commissioned officers could be found. Sergeants were taken from the denuded horse artillery troops and even from the Town Major's list, men who may have thought themselves inviolable. One, a bullock sergeant for nine years, was roused out to teach a regiment to ride.<sup>83</sup> Only the 5th cavalry, which secured the services of a cornet formerly a sergeant major of a Queen's dragoon guards regiment, was able to approach the standard of organization, equitation and training expected of a cavalry regiment, though not one member of the five regiments was ready for active service by the end of the rebellion.<sup>84</sup> 'No Cavalry Corps ... ever raised', wrote a staff officer, 'have had such difficulties ... to contend with'.<sup>85</sup>

The three infantry regiments' formation, though less disorderly than the cavalry's, was equally protracted. In July parties of old soldiers posted from the three older corps gathered at the depot at Barrackpore to receive the first parties of recruits. Their officers were recalled from staff appointments, other regiments and leave, and late in 1858 began to arrive at the depot.<sup>86</sup> Laggards reluctant to relinquish congenial staff appointments were reminded in January 1859, by which time the new regiments were receiving every few weeks fresh drafts of recruits from transports arriving in the Hooghly.<sup>87</sup> Like the cavalry, the new infantry regiments contended with several obstacles in becoming not just efficient military organizations, but in reconciling their disparate social elements. Since their officers, non-commissioned officers and men held differing and fundamentally contradictory conceptions of their purpose in coming together they were ill-adapted as both military and social entities.

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82. Extract from Clyde to Cambridge, 11 May 1859, Wood papers, IOLR, Vol. 85

83. Henry Knollys, Incidents in the sepoy war 1857-58 compiled from the private journals of General Sir Hope Grant, Edinburgh, 1874, p. 305

84. Lt Henry Norman [Ag AG] to Maj Gen Richard Birch [SGIMD], 5 July 1859, India military consultations, No. 442, 22 July 1859, IOLR, P/191/27

85. Memorandum, 17 March 1859, Canning papers, WYA, Vol. 139, Arrears correspondence, No. 572

86. Bengal general orders, 1858, p. 1401, 27 October 1858, IOLR, L/MIL/17/2/307

87. Record of service 107th Regiment [3rd Bengal European Regiment], West Sussex Record Office (WSRO), RSR Ms.2/2; Bengal general orders, 1859, p. 28, 17 January 1859, IOLR, L/MIL/17/2/308

Efforts to provide for displaced sepoy officers rested on the understanding fundamental to the Company's officers, that they were entitled to remuneration rather than obliged to be employed. Officers for the new corps were all drawn from sepoy regiments which had mutinied or been disarmed, men who had reacted to the imminent or possible mutiny in ways characteristic of the old army. When ordered to parade their corps for disarming some in the Punjab had responded in a 'highly insubordinate' manner, while others, typically, had complained to newspapers.<sup>88</sup> George Sherer, one of Yates' successors in commanding the 73rd Bengal Native Infantry, refused to contemplate disarming his regiment, telling his officers that 'even an order ... won't budge me'.<sup>89</sup>

The mutinies dealt these men a severe blow. The rapid and almost total collapse of the native army had destroyed their units, suddenly and often violently. Simultaneously deprived of occupation, identity and pride, they lost their most valued possession, security, leaving all but the most enterprising idle and uncertain. Cantonments were full of officers drawing pay but not doing (and often refusing) duty.<sup>90</sup> The effects on individuals could be severe. Archie Wood, whose regiment had mutinied at Jhelum in July, was transformed by the trauma from a poor but hale man into an invalid, a decline charted painfully by his wife Minnie's letters to her mother. By October 1858 Archie was 'far from well', 'downhearted' and debilitated by diarrhoea. Having applied to Campbell, Sir John Lawrence, Mansfield, 'etc., etc.', he could secure only an appointment (surely appropriate in the circumstances) at a convalescent depot.<sup>91</sup> The Military Secretary's papers indicate that in the wake of the rebellion place-seeking became even more frenzied than before, with 'vast numbers of applicants' attempting to find employment (and allowances) to replace those lost.<sup>92</sup> Officers of both

Lieutenant Colonel George Moyle Sherer (1800-70), 73rd Bengal Native Infantry. b. Blandford, Dorset, son of a clergyman; comm. 1821; Bengal native infantry; Lieutenant Colonel, 1853 (served with five regiments in next four years); ret. 1861; KCSI 1866

Maria 'Minnie' Wood (nee Blane). Married Captain Wood 1856; later divorced and re-married

John Laird Mair Lawrence (1811-79) Governor General 1864-69. Younger brother of Henry Lawrence; BCS, 1830; served NW Provinces; Member of Board of Administration, Punjab, 1849; Chief Commissioner in the Punjab, 1853; KCB, 1856, Baron Lawrence, 1869

88. Kaye, A history of the sepoy war, Vol. II, p. 480n; p 480; Sydney Cotton, Nine years on the north-west frontier of India from 1854 to 1863, London, 1868, p. 183

89. Collier, The sound of fury, p. 155. The 73rd, stationed in remote Assam, remained loyal, one of a handful of such corps.

90. Bengal general orders, 1859, 18 February 1859, NAI

91. Minnie Wood to her mother, October 1858, Vansittart, From Minnie. with love, p. 152

92. Military Secretary's office, Register of letters received, Canning papers, WYA, Vol. 132; Sir Edward Campbell [Military Secretary] to Lt Richard Chadwick, 5th Madras Native Infantry, 14 July 1859, Effects of Major R.A. Chadwick, IOLR, Mss.Eur.F.133/8

European and native troops felt apprehensive over the changes which were expected to follow the rebellion. '[T]hings will be much changed', Charles Robinson despondently told his sister, 'with all the patronage will be in the English Government's hands, I am afraid to our disadvantage'.<sup>93</sup> His fellow gunner subaltern, Alexander Lindsay, while seeing the union of the two forces as 'very jolly for some', pragmatically foresaw that it would 'not advantage us, as our [retiring] funds would be ruined'.<sup>94</sup>

In the light of the Horse Guards' ambitions, their apprehension was well founded. In July 1858 Campbell had signed a minute foreshadowing changes in the Bengal army's system of promotion. Referring to 'changes which cannot be far distant', Campbell advocated 'radical reform' in opening the 'dead lock' of the 'Seniority System', proposing an unattached list which would promote officers flexibly between regiments instead of by strict regimental seniority. This, he expected, would allow him to 'dispense with' unsuitable officers.<sup>95</sup>

In Mansfield's eyes sepoy officers were almost by definition unfitted to command European troops. Though the rebellion had massively undermined the case, sepoys had been regarded as 'biddable', an impression which nevertheless continued to shape their officers' understanding of the requirements of command. Largely supervised by native subordinates, sepoys were temperate, lightly disciplined, cooked for themselves and needed no roll calls.<sup>96</sup> Sepoy officers charged with maintaining order over Europeans were, wrote Mansfield, 'from the Colonels to the Lieut[enant]s ... like infants'.<sup>97</sup> Observers considered that those accustomed to commanding natives would be unable to adopt the same methods with Europeans. Fanny Duberly, learning of the new regiments' formation, wondered 'how will these men ever control Englishmen?' She feared that association with

**Frances Isabella Duberly (nee Locke) (1829-1903). Wife of Henry Duberly of the 8th Hussars, whom she accompanied to the Crimea and India, publishing accounts of both campaigns**

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93. Lt Charles Robinson to his sister, Emily, Meerut, 23 February 1858, IOLR

94. Lt Alexander Lindsay to an unknown correspondent, Dilkhoosha [Lucknow], 5 March 1858, A.H. Lindsay, (ed.), 'The Indian mutiny letters of Lieutenant Alexander Haddon Lindsay ...', Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research, Vol. L, No. 204, Winter 1972, p. 220

95. Sir Colin Campbell, 'Minute on the subject of Transfers and Postings of the Officers of the Bengal Army ...', 7 July 1858, Wood papers, Vol. 85, IOLR

96. Col Oliphant, 'Memo. on the Local Army', [1859?], Wood papers, IOLR, Vol. 85

97. Mansfield to Sir George Clerke [sic 'Clerk'], 11 May 1859, Mansfield private letter book, NAM. Such forebodings were not entirely justified. Sepoy officers had successfully formed the original cadres of the second European corps raised in 1839, though the instance emphasises the importance of individual influence in the Company's force.

natives had 'brutalized' them: 'the very tone of their voices when speaking to a native is that of a man rating a ... dog'.<sup>98</sup>

The new corps' non-commissioned officers had volunteered or been drafted from the older regiments. Colonels are unlikely to have felt obliged to send their best men, and many of those encouraged to transfer seem to have been their worst. The old soldiers transferring from the 2nd Fusiliers brawled with Queen's troops soon after arriving at their new station.<sup>99</sup> Those volunteering for promotion, though doubtless ambitious for the benefits it brought, were unlikely to have been experienced, though virtually all those arriving became sergeants. They brought with them, however, understandings of how their old units functioned, knowledge which they used and evidently imparted selectively to both officers and recruits.

The recruits, unleavened by experienced men, arrived in large drafts after long sea journeys, having received no training before embarkation or during the voyage. Nor were their new units able to impart more than rudimentary drill. Most members of the three new infantry corps had been in India for less than six months when the unease became apparent in May 1859. The men were therefore essentially civilians, lacking identification as soldiers or to units. Little survives recording their reactions to military life beyond a few newspaper reports and a few individuals' letters.

Given the new regiments' constituents - reluctant and disoriented officers, inexperienced or unsuitable sergeants, unwilling soldiers - it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that they were ever likely to have been anything but troubled. Instructed against his better judgement to form the new corps, Mansfield predicted to Henry Durand on the day after they were formally raised that if commanded by sepoy officers according to the practices usual in the Company's force they would be 'a disgrace in quarters and ... will misbehave in the field'.<sup>100</sup>

Of all the ironies evident in the saga of the European force during the rebellion, these must surely be the most piquant. By the end of 1858 hapless sepoy officers found themselves in charge of regiments which had been created not to fulfil any urgent or even foreseeable military function, but to occupy them and thereby protect the continued patronage of the directors of a Company which had by then ceased to exist. Their men, who had enlisted because of a trade depression now over, found themselves by legislation part of a force which they had not joined,

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98. Fanny Duberly to Mrs Francie Marx, near Indore, 12 August 1858, BL, Add.Ms. 47218C

99. Diary of Col Edward Holdich, 7 January 1859, Staffordshire Regiment Museum (SRM)

100. 'Memorandum from Major General W.R. Mansfield to Lieutenant Colonel H.M. Durand', 4 September 1858, PRO, WO 33/6B. Durand, of course, had championed the larger European force before the Peel Commission.

commanded by authorities who had done their best to abolish it. In all this the critical but hitherto unidentified element was the volatile military culture of the Company's Europeans. It had influenced decisively the political decisions taken in Britain and would in turn precipitate a protest of both officers and men in India, a protest which would, in a final irony, ultimately destroy that culture.

## **PART III: POWER**

**'White mutiny':**

**the soldiers' protest of 1859**

**Chapter 6 'European Pandies': the 'white mutiny'**

**Chapter 7 'Free-born British subjects': class, populism and the new regiments'  
protest**

**Chapter 8 'Mutinous combination'?: barrack-room culture and the artillery's  
protest**

**Chapter 9 'Mutiny'?: regimental communities and the 'old' infantry regiments'  
protest**

My indignation rises at customs now springing up in the army ... there is much danger when soldiers cannot be familiar with their officers; for times are coming when soldiers will take part in politics: they must do so.

Sir Charles James Napier, Journal, April, 1851

## Chapter 6

### 'European Pandies': the 'white mutiny'

On 1 November 1858 Lieutenant Vivian Majendie of the Royal Artillery happened to be in Calcutta, where he witnessed the proclamation of the Government of India Act transferring India to the Crown. Though Lord Canning presided at the main ceremony, at Allahabad, no expense was spared to make proceedings on the maidan at Calcutta suitably impressive. In honour of the occasion a display of squibs, Roman candles and rockets, said to have cost over thirty thousand rupees, was ignited on a huge bamboo scaffolding. What fireworks lent in spectacle they cost in dignity. Catherine wheels went awry, and an illumination of Queen Victoria caught fire, unintentionally burning her in effigy. '[D]isloyal natives', Majendie noted, 'shouted "Wah! wah!"', at 'an omen not wholly disagreeable'.<sup>1</sup> By the act in force from that day the European regiments of the East India Company became part of Her Majesty's Indian Forces.

Within days it became evident that the proclamation had caused unease among Europeans as well as natives. Men of the 4th Bengal European Light Cavalry, one of the new European corps, had expressed 'demur' at becoming part of the Queen's army.<sup>2</sup> Graffiti appeared on the walls of the fort at Lahore proclaiming 'No white slavery' and 'Give us our freedom'.<sup>3</sup> At least one soldier must have ventilated his view, because an officer of the re-named force declined to sit on a court martial called to 'assert the obligation of the Company's English soldiers to serve the Queen'.<sup>4</sup>

A few days later a Mr W. de Rhet Philipe wrote to Major General Richard Birch, Secretary to the Government of India's Military Department, contesting the European force's transfer. As Canning told Clyde in forwarding his letter,

**Major General Richard Birch (1803-75), Secretary to the Government of India, Military Department, discussed in detail in chapter 11**

Philipe had been 'an enlisted soldier in the Bengal Artillery, but of good education ... now in the Judge Advocate's office': the very model of an ambitious Bengal ranker. Philipe did not contest the legality of the 56th clause of the Government of India Act, but he questioned what he

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1. Vivien Dering Majendie, *Up among the pandies: or a year's service in India*, London, 1859, pp. 357-8
  2. Canning to Clyde, Allahabad, 5 November 1858, Canning papers, WYA, Vol. 70, 'Letters to the Commander-in-Chief', No. 56
  3. *Delhi gazette*, 11 November 1858 and *Punjabee* (Lahore), quoted in Shibly, *The reorganisation of the Indian armies*, p. 83
  4. Canning to Clyde, Allahabad, 9 November 1858, Canning papers, WYA, Vol. 70

called the 'equitable right' of transferring men who had chosen to enlist in the Company's service to another. 'Where does it stop', he asked rhetorically, could a Queen's regiment be transferred to the service of the Maharajah of Cashmere? Canning saw with relief that Philippe recognised the soldiers' obligation to serve even though disagreeing with the act, and hoped that 'the writer's former comrades will take the same view of their duty'.<sup>5</sup> Lord Clyde was not so sanguine. Already he had learned that the 1st Madras Fusiliers, still in Bengal, had also questioned whether the transfer contravened the terms of their enlistment and the oath of allegiance the men had sworn on attestation. He agreed that men enlisting for the Company had sworn allegiance to the Queen only as subjects, not as soldiers. Within a fortnight of the proclamation of India's new rulers, then, in a land in which after eighteen months of savage warfare rebellion had not been completely suppressed, European officers and soldiers had challenged the validity of their transfer to the Queen's army. Their Commander-in-Chief apparently sympathised with them. Significantly, the objections first brought to Canning's attention came from all elements of the European force - from men of old and new corps, from officers, and from a former soldier who knew the force - and had been expressed in ways characteristic of it.

By the end of 1858, however, Canning seemed to have grounds to hope that the issue had evaporated. While a few mofussil newspapers pursued the question (for whose editors' views Canning did not care 'two straws'), the grumbling reported from the European regiments in November ceased.<sup>6</sup> He nevertheless sought opinions from law officers in Calcutta and London which he hoped would resolve the ambiguity. Canning could also take comfort from the progress of military operations. Late in January 1859 Clyde could report to Canning that 'the War seems to be fairly at an end'.<sup>7</sup> Though the 'Nana Sahib', the supposed perpetrator of the Cawnpore massacre, continued to elude capture (as he was to do forever), 'Tantia Topie', the rebel leader in central India, was taken and executed in April. As the

'Nana Sahib' (1820?-1859?) leader of rebel forces. Born Govind Dhondu Pant, adopted son of former Peshwa of the Mahrathas, Baji Rao II; commanded rebel forces at Cawnpore, 1857; evaded capture and supposed to have died, 1859

'Tantia Topie' (c. 1814-59) actually Ramachandra Pandurang, retainer of Peshwa Baji Rao II. Participated in the massacre at Cawnpore; defeated Windham at Cawnpore; defeated at Kalpi; betrayed, captured and executed, April 1859

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5. W. de Rhet Philippe to Birch, 12 November 1858, Mansfield memoranda, IOLR; Canning to Clyde, 15 December 1858, Canning papers, WYA, Vol. 70, No. 60. Since a 'G.W. De Rhé Phillippe' published in Lahore in 1912 a work on European monuments in the Punjab, it may be surmised that the former gunner's descendants established a respectable position in Anglo-Indian society.

6. Clyde to Cambridge, Camp Fyzabad, 10 December 1858, RA, Vic. Add. Ms E/1/2087; Canning to Granville, 11 December 1857, Fitzmaurice, *Life of Granville*, Vol. I, p. 275

7. Clyde to Canning, Lucknow [?], 25 January 1859, Canning papers, WYA, Vol. 70

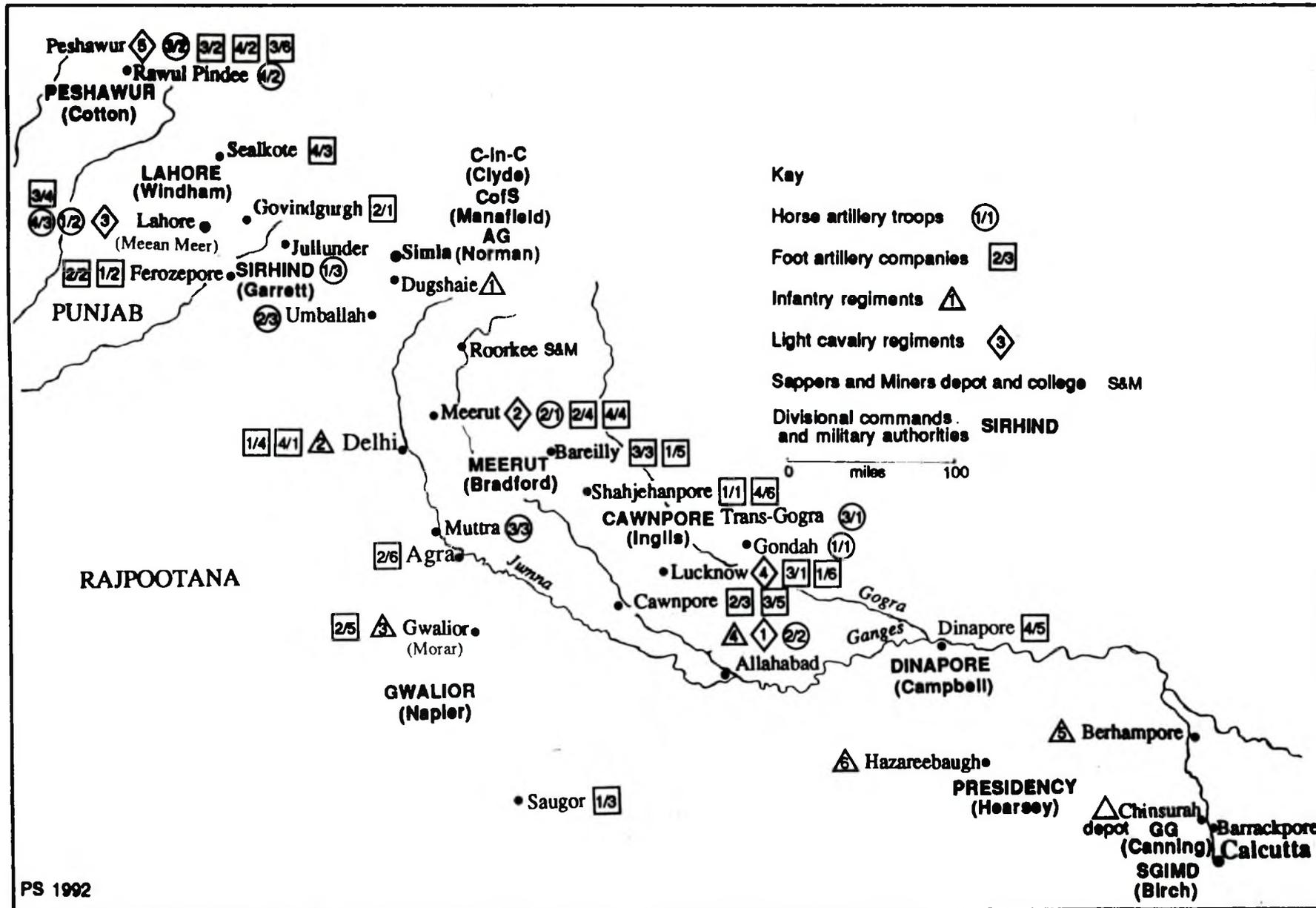
reactions to the accidental conflagration on the maidan suggested, the passions which had unleashed the rebellion were not so easily suppressed, but open opposition to British rule had been almost everywhere quashed. Within months, however, British India faced a protest from its European soldiers potentially as dangerous as the rebellion.

Canning's request for clarification of the legality of transferring the former Company's European force to the Crown took four months to be considered by the Crown lawyers in Britain and return to Calcutta. In the meantime, recruits continued to arrive, units began to assemble and drill, and officers manoeuvred for attachments. As operations against the last rebels in the field diminished during the cool season of 1858-59, the regiments of Her Majesty's Indian Forces moved to the stations they would occupy during the approaching summer, shown in Map 6.

The European force in February 1859 numbered some ten thousand men, almost evenly divided between artillery, cavalry and infantry.<sup>8</sup> They were concentrated in the Meerut and Cawnpore divisions, the heart of the recent rebellion. Every unit included some recruits, though almost the whole of the three new infantry and five light cavalry regiments had enlisted during the rebellion. While recruits adjusted to the sights and sensations of service in India, their older comrades returned to the familiar rhythms of cantonment life. As the rebellion ended, Thomason College at the sappers and miners' depot at Roorkee continued to train soldiers hoping to become assistant engineers. A Public Works Department rebuilding devastated cantonments and constructing new barracks for a larger British garrison provided ample opportunities for employment.

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8. On 1 February the Bengal European force comprised: artillery, 3,133; cavalry, 2,892; infantry, 3,332: PP 1859(II), Vol. XXIII, 'Return of the actual strength ... in the three presidencies', pp. 486-7



To follow page 138

Map 6: Stations of the Bengal Europeans, May 1859

As Canning had hoped, the anxiety diminished over the transfer which in November had seemed so important. Few letters appeared in the mofussil papers, but it later became apparent that indications of the soldiers' feelings had reached Clyde's headquarters. In January Henry Olpherts reported 'much discontent' among younger soldiers of his 1/1st horse artillery at Gondah, forwarding copies of petitions from his men. A Gunner Edward Cooke, aware of the differences between the two services in pensions, pondered the transfer's effect on his future. He requested a free discharge because 'the East India Company has ceased to exist' and that since he had not enlisted in the Queen's service 'if I was disabled I would receive something but what guarantee have I ...?'<sup>9</sup> Expressing disquiet at their 'anomalous position' following the transfer, two other men, Thomas Woods and Thomas Baxendale, sought 'a proper guarantee for my pension &c.'<sup>10</sup> Another man had been confined for declaring that he 'would not serve the bloody Queen'.<sup>11</sup> Mansfield, who happened to be nearby, personally spoke to Olpherts' men, allaying their fears but not his own forebodings of the consequences of Canning's policy.<sup>12</sup>

At Lord Stanley's request the Crown lawyers in London advised on the legality of the transfer. They concisely affirmed that the clause was legal and unambiguous.<sup>13</sup> Canning, inclined to pedantry and perhaps encouraged by the fussy Richard Birch, felt justified in enforcing the legality which more than any single act precipitated the soldiers' protest.<sup>14</sup> Accordingly, on 22 April Henry Norman, the officiating Adjutant General, distributed from Clyde's headquarters,

Lieutenant Colonel Henry Alan Olpherts (1820-60), 1/1st Bengal Horse Artillery. Brother of William Olpherts; comm. 1839; d. at Landour

Gunner Edward Cooke (c.1828-?), No. 6848, 1/1st Bengal Horse Artillery, 1859. Farmer, of Hacketstown, Carlow; enl. Dublin May 1850, aged 22; Sea Park, November 1850; served Delhi, Lucknow, Oudh, disch. 883

Gunner Thomas Woods, No. 9255, 1/1st Bengal Horse Artillery. Groom, of Canterbury; enl. London, June 1857; Hotspur, November 1857; disch. 883. Also Wood

Gunner Thomas Baxendale, No. 8900, 1/1st Bengal Horse Artillery. Draper, of Ormskirk, Lancs; enl. London, September 1855, aged 20; served Delhi, Lucknow, Oudh, disch. 883

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9. Gnr Edward Cooke to Olpherts, Gondah, 20 January 1859; PP 1860, p. 781

10. Petitions of Gnr Thomas Woods and Gnr Thomas Baxendale, PP 1860, pp. 777-78

11. Olpherts to 'the Staff Officer', Camp Gondah, 22 January 1859, PP 1860, p. 777

12. Norman to Birch, Lucknow, 11 February 1859, PP 1860, p. 782. Mansfield evidently impressed troops more than their officers: in 1852 Private Waterfield described his manner as 'mild and winning': Swinson, The memoirs of Private Waterfield, p. 138.

13. Several copies exist of the lawyers' opinions: '... Counsel's opinion on the questions raised by the transfer of certain soldiers ...', IOLR, L/MIL/5/422, Collection 384; J.R. Mowbray to Colonel Sir H.K. Storks, 15 January 1859, PRO, WO 81/104, p. 453

14. Henry Norman's letter to his wife, Selina, nd, suggests that Birch advised Canning not to concede the case. Lee-Warner, Memoir of ... Norman, p. 221

in camp en route to Simla, General Order number 480. The brief order, drafted by Canning earlier that month, for the most part simply summarised the issue; that as a consequence of the transfer, men of the Bengal Europeans sought discharge or re-enlistment on payment of a bounty.<sup>15</sup> Its final sentence carried the burden of the order, for which men of the Europeans had waited since the previous November. The order answered the men's claim for discharge or re-enlistment with bounty with, as a gunner at Meerut later described it, 'the shortest word ... in Johnson's dictionary': 'inadmissible'.<sup>16</sup>

Canning's tactless order dashed the hopes the soldiers had formed in the intervening months. 'Till then', explained the unusually talkative Gunner Flemming, 'every man expected he would be allowed to take his discharge'.<sup>17</sup> Within days of its promulgation the Company's European regiments were in turmoil. Protests erupted at station after station. Unrest first and most seriously became evident at Meerut, the depot and headquarters of the Bengal Artillery. On the evening of

1 May, shortly after hearing that hopes of discharge or re-enlistment with bounty were 'inadmissible' 400 men of the Bengal Artillery and the 2nd cavalry met surreptitiously to discuss the issue. Major General John Bradford, commanding the division, sent a telegraphic despatch to Clyde reporting the troops' 'very bad spirit'.<sup>18</sup> On receiving it Clyde moved with Mansfield from Simla down to Kussowlie, where the telegraph ended.<sup>19</sup> Bradford's reports became more alarming: on 5 May he reported finding 'inflammatory writings' on the wash houses of the 2/4th foot artillery, a traditional form of protest among soldiers. The graffiti included 'Unity is strength!' and 'John Company is dead; we will not soldier for the Queen'.<sup>20</sup>

**Gunner John Flemming, No. 5862, 2/1st Bengal Horse Artillery. No occupation, born in India; enlisted Lahore January 1851 (also Fleming)**

**Brigadier General John Fowler Bradford (1805-89), commanding Meerut Div., 1858-59. Comm. Bengal Light Cavalry, 1821; served first Afghan war, Gwallor war, first and second Punjab wars; KCB 1871; ret. 1877**

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15. General Order 480, 8 April 1859, PP 1860, p. 11

16. 'Proceedings of a Special Court of Inquiry ... at Meerut' (henceforth Meerut inquiry), testimony of Gnr J. Morrison, PP 1860, p. 161

17. Meerut inquiry, testimony of Gnr J. Flemming, PP 1860, p. 152

18. Telegraph message, Maj Gen John Bradford to Birch, Meerut, 2 May 1860, PP 1860, pp. 11-12. Bradford had already alerted Clyde at Simla and other station commanders by telegraph; p. 67.

19. Telegraph message, Clyde to Bradford, 4 May 1859, PP 1860, p. 67

20. Telegraph message, Bradford to Mansfield and Birch, Meerut, 5 May, PP 1860, p. 21. Detailed reports of events at Meerut appeared in the *Times*, 14 June 1859, 12b-c and the *Delhi gazette*, 5 & 12 May 1859.

Though reflecting a custom established in the European force, the graffiti also echo the style of banners commonly displayed in industrial and political protest.<sup>21</sup>

Troops at Allahabad first heard general order 480 on 4 May. By the evening of 6 May the 4th infantry was 'in a state of mutiny': one officer later reported that his men 'told him that if he came near them they would bayonet him'.<sup>22</sup> Next morning men of the 1st cavalry refused to parade. Order deteriorated: on 7 May men broke open the canteen, attempted to release prisoners and fired off their carbines. Sir John Inglis, the divisional commander, hastened from Cawnpore, planning to disarm the two regiments when Mansfield's order arrived authorising courts of inquiry. The decision briefly mollified the protesters, but on the 9th men hooted off parade a troop of cavalry which had been induced to appear, while the infantry stoned their guardroom. By 10 May cavalry wandered over the cantonment 'out of control', pelting officers and defiantly firing carbines. Only the arrival of Queen's regiments summoned from Benares and Cawnpore apparently deterred further unrest.<sup>23</sup> The men declared that they 'will not work till the question is decided'.<sup>24</sup> Signs of discontent were also reported from Agra, Berhampore, Cawnpore, Lahore, Lucknow, and Morar. Queen's troops were ordered to march towards the disturbed stations and those embarking for home were halted on the quays in anticipation of collision.<sup>25</sup>

**Major General Sir John Eardley Wilmot Inglis (1814-62)**  
commanding Cawnpore Div., 1859.  
Son of clergyman; comm. 32nd Foot, 1833; served second Punjab war; commanded besieged garrison of Lucknow, 1857 after Lawrence's death; KCB, 1857

That European troops at major cantonments in a region only recently pacified should so dramatically assert themselves naturally alarmed military and civil authorities. The depth of their concern and their deliberations in meeting the emergency are apparent both from Canning and Mansfield's private correspondence, and from the despatches and

**Major General Sir Robert Garrett, Commanding Sirhind Div. Comm. 1811; served Peninsular war and Crimea**

**Lady Charlotte Canning (1817-61), daughter of Lord Stuart de Rothsay; m. 1835; lady-in-waiting to Queen Victoria**

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21. For example, those carried in Lancashire during the short hours campaign of 1853; 'The People are the Grand Moving Power', 'From Six to Six with One Hour and a Half Out': Joyce, *Visions of the people*, p. 103.

22. Rose to Cambridge, Fyzabad, 14 December 1860, BL, Add.Mss 42813

23. Events at Allahabad can be reconstructed from the reports in PP 1860, pp. 23-28, 30-31, 33-34, 39-44, 46, 51-55, and the *Delhi gazette*, 14 May 1859

24. Telegraph message, Col James Rice to Birch, Allahabad, 9 May 1859, PP 1860, p. 25

25. Canning's despatches to Stanley provide the most coherent account of the crisis of May from the authorities' perspective: PP 1860, pp. 14-19; 35-6; 45-6; 61. Just as the first of these arrived, Stanley (one of the prime authors of the crisis) had been replaced as Secretary of State by Sir Charles Wood, whose first days in office were dominated by the soldiers' protest.

telegraphic messages preserved in the official record. Much of the correspondence between Clyde (in the hills) and Canning (in Calcutta) has survived. All recognised that the protest threatened the security of British India. Clyde's major and related concerns were that his European force should remain reliable, that his native force should remain uncontaminated, and that rebellion should not break out afresh. He warned Cambridge that it was 'impossible to exaggerate the gravity of the present circumstances'.<sup>26</sup> As Mansfield reminded Sir Richard Garrett, commander of the Sirhind Division at Umballah, 'we have still an active campaign in Northern Oudh, & the whole of Central India is trembling with excitement'.<sup>27</sup> The insecurity of the British position must be recalled; many expected the rebellion to be merely the first round of a larger conflict. Large numbers of auxiliaries had been enlisted during the rebellion, particularly Sikhs. Lady Canning told her sister that 'it might become serious if the Seiks and natives ... see disunion in our troops'.<sup>28</sup> The consequences of extending to the huge native army the concessions of bounty or discharge granted to the Europeans had been canvassed the previous November. Canning had decided that, even had he the power of allowing the native troops the concession demanded by the Europeans, allowing native troops to realize that they could leave the army or re-enlist with a bounty would have left them 'impressed with very dangerous notions'.<sup>29</sup> Acceding to the expectation or demand would have released thousands of native troops and denuded the army, not to mention imperilling further British India's precarious finances. Refusal it might have sparked a second mutiny of the native army. Not only might conflict within the European force tempt disaffected native troops, but the issue itself could also have inflamed the native army and renewed rebellion among 'the still excited ... native population throughout India'.<sup>30</sup>

The Bengal Europeans evidently realized the power of the threat they posed. They too understood the native army's

Private John Young, 2nd Bombay European Light Infantry. Labourer, of Limerick, enl. 1849

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26. Clyde to Cambridge, 10 July 1859, Wood papers, IOLR, Vol. 85

27. Mansfield to Maj Gen Sir Richard Garrett, [5?] May 1859, Mansfield private letter book, NAM

28. Lady Charlotte Canning to Lady Stuart de Rothsay, 14 May 1859, in Augustus Hare, (ed.), The story of two noble lives, being memorials of Charlotte, Countess Canning, and Louisa, Marchioness of Waterford, 3 vols, London, 1893, Vol. III, p. 49

29. Canning to Stanley, 18 November 1858, PP 1860, p. 2

30. Mansfield to Mr Robert Montgomery, 8 May 1859, Mansfield private letter book, NAM

volatility: John Young of the Bombay Europeans recorded rumours that 'the Sykis is going to war with us'.<sup>31</sup> At Meerut, 'Delhi' was 'the watchword of the disaffected'.<sup>32</sup> One of ten letters sent to various stations on 2 May informed a gunner at Meean Meer that the Meerut men planned 'to march from Meerut to Delhi', just as the mutinous sepoys had in 1857.<sup>33</sup> Another scrawl on the 2/4th's wash houses read 'Stick up for discharge or bounty; if refused, immediately for Delhi'.<sup>34</sup> At Morar the 3rd Bengal Europeans first expressed their feelings on 10 May, the second anniversary of the mutiny which had instigated the rebellion. In his 'commonplace book', Private John Brown recorded that 'the anniversary of the outbreak at Meerutt was kept up in splendid style' by the men refusing to parade, while their officers' pleas for them to don cartridge pouches had 'as much affect [sic] on them as the fat did on the Sepoys'.<sup>35</sup> Indian and British newspapers made the comparison explicit, the Times recording the common attitude that the soldiers' protest was a 'second mutiny', while the Mofussilite described the soldiers as 'European Pandies'.<sup>36</sup>

Newspapers had traditionally abetted or dampened controversy in British India. In 1859 the mofussil newspapers exerted a vital influence. Fearful that reports might inflame the protest in hitherto unaffected stations, Richard Birch reminded Charles Stuart that 'nothing should be given out'.<sup>37</sup> Allen's Indian mail complained that at the beginning of the crisis the authorities forbade public use of the telegraph and asked newspapers to be silent.<sup>38</sup> In fact, though a perpetual irritant to government over military grievances and Anglo-Indian quarrels, their editors appear to

**Colonel Charles Stuart (1810-92),  
Military Secretary to Lord  
Canning, December 1857 to July  
1859. Lady Canning's cousin**

**Captain Mark Walker (1827-1902),  
3rd Foot, 1859. Comm. 30th Foot,  
1846; VC Crimea; Major General,  
1878; KCB 1893**

**George Robert Elsmie (1838- )  
BCS; later Member of Governor  
General's Legislative Council, 1888-  
93**

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31. Pte John Young, 2nd Bombay European Light Infantry, to his family, Belgaum, 31 May 1859, Soldiers' references, Part II, IOLR, L/MIL/5/362. Soldiers evidently pronounced Sikhs as 'Seeksees'; Francis Cornwallis Maude, Memories of the mutiny, 2 vols, London, 1894, Vol. I, p. 20.

32. Bradford to Mansfield, [6 May 1859], PP 1860, p. 81

33. Gnr J. McDougall to Gnr Thomas Gosland, Meerut, 1 May 1859, PP 1860, p. 29

34. Bradford to mansfield and Birch, Meerut, 5 May 1859, PP 1860, p. 21

35. Brown private journal, NLS. Sir John Fortescue recorded, without supporting evidence, that one new corps 'actually made overtures to the Sikhs': A history of the British army, Vol. XIII, p. 528.

36. Times, 31 March 1861; Mofussilite, 5 July 59

37. Birch to Charles Stuart [Canning's Military Secretary, 1857-59], 10 May 1859, Canning papers, WYA, Vol. 139, No. 681

38. Allen's Indian mail, 6 June 1859

have appreciated the gravity of the protest, and acted with discretion to abet the authorities. The Delhi gazette's editor, in particular, at first declined to report the protest, and from 5 May sought to dissuade men from pressing their case.<sup>39</sup> He corresponded with officers at Simla, even forwarding to the authorities letters addressed to him.<sup>40</sup> The Mofussilite, the other paper popular among the soldiers, reported the unrest, but with the message, 'Dumpies beware'.<sup>41</sup> In the absence of detailed or prompt reports, rumours spread through private letters. At Fort William in Calcutta, 750 miles away, Captain Mark Walker, a Queen's officer, recorded 'furious rumours about the row at Meerut', including that the 75th Foot 'wouldn't fire ... if ordered'.<sup>42</sup> At Jhelum, 300 miles to the north-west, an official, George Elsmie, recorded in his diary that gunners at Meerut had begun a mutiny by calling for 'three groans for the Queen', that the 75th had refused to fire on them, and that after the ringleaders had been arrested they had been blown from guns like mutinous sepoys.<sup>43</sup> Actual and, even more, potential parallels to 1857 appalled Anglo-Indian readers.

Whether Queen's troops were sympathetic to or would have acted against the protesters was a point on which no unanimity existed, but it underlay both the authorities' desire to restrict news of the outbreak and their alarm at its possible consequences. Clyde believed that royal troops felt 'considerable sympathy' for the protest, while Mansfield had 'no doubt' that they hoped that the Bengal Europeans would 'stick up for their rights'.<sup>44</sup> Clyde and his commanders' generally sensible handling of the protest ensured that, while they were required to picket the Europeans' lines, Queen's troops were not required to move against them openly. The authorities' forebodings were therefore never tested. Given the lack of warmth prevailing between the two forces (and especially the tension evident during the siege of Delhi between the 75th and the fusiliers), it is doubtful that Queen's troops felt sympathetic enough to risk acting on the

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39. Delhi gazette, 5 May 1859. Lt Webster, at Seepree, read to his men 'a good and sensible article' from the Delhi gazette to dissuade them from 'mischief': extract from a demi-official letter from Maj. Richard Meade, Seepree, 8 May 1859, PP 1860, p. 86.

40. Clyde to Canning, Simla, 3 June 1859, Canning papers, WYA, Vol. 70, No. 136. The editor appears to have been Iltudus Prichard, formerly an officer of the 15th Bengal Native Infantry.

41. Mofussilite, 17 June 1859

42. Journal of Capt Mark Walker, 3rd Foot, Fort William, 6 May 1859, NAM 6807-85

43. G.R. Elsmie, Thirty-five years in the Punjab 1858-93, Edinburgh, 1908, p. 57

44. Clyde to Canning, 7 May 1859, Canning papers, WYA, Vol. 70; No. 131; Mansfield to Maj Gen W.F. Foster [Military Secretary to Cambridge, 1860-71], 5 June 1859, Mansfield private letter book, NAM. Evidence for the Queen's soldiers' attitude is elusive. The Naval and military gazette's Calcutta correspondent reported that a French merchant at Allahabad had told him that the 53rd (Mansfield's former corps) would have refused to fire on the Europeans had they been ordered; 3 September 1860.

Europeans' behalf. The Delhi gazette's Meerut correspondent, who found that the soldiers had 'a great many sympathizers' among civilians, officers and soldiers of the former Company, thought that the Queen's soldiers' support stopped short of action. Certainly when men of the 75th learned that all over India their fidelity had been doubted they became 'highly indignant'. Their commanders' lack of confidence suggests that the Queen's officers' derision at the Europeans' unreliability was less justified than it may have seemed.<sup>45</sup>

The Europeans' officers' sensitivity toward the issue magnified the authorities' awareness of the danger they confronted. By the time the Government of India Act had been proclaimed they were already uneasy about their future. The terms of the transfer, assuring them that their rights and privileges were to remain unaffected, evidently did little to allay their fears. The soldiers' outbreaks, however, not only surprised, but placed them in an ambivalent position. Some took a mercenary approach: as one wrote in the Delhi gazette, '[m]y hired service is due to the party who pays me'.<sup>46</sup> Others saw the re-negotiation of their employer without their consent in similar ways to their men. They too felt aggrieved at the transfer and were apprehensive of its consequences, but faced a protest just as many contemplated seeking redress of essentially the same grievance. A few openly ventilated their views - such as an officer formerly on Canning's personal staff, who gratuitously informed Edward Campbell that General Order 480 was 'a mistake'.<sup>47</sup> Most, however, maintained a discreet, if uncomfortable, silence.<sup>48</sup> Yet their reluctance to imperil the prevailing fragile calm was deceptive. At the outset Canning had anticipated from them 'a cry ... that the Act of Parliament is powerless', a prospect which he described, with characteristic understatement, as 'awkward'.<sup>49</sup> Mansfield reported to Lord Ripon the 'immense undercurrent of dissatisfaction' which he felt prevailed among officers, who 'would strike if they did not fear starvation'.<sup>50</sup>

Captain Sir Edward Campbell (1822-82), Military Secretary to Lord Canning, July 1859-1861. Comm. 60th Rifles, 1841; served second Punjab war; ADC to Napier; served siege of Delhi

George Frederick Samuel, Earl of Ripon (1827-1909) Under-Secretary of State for War, 1859-61. Liberal MP 1852-59; Marquess, 1871; Governor General, 1880-84

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45. Delhi gazette, 31 May 1859.

46. Ibid. 1 January 1859

47. Maj Philip Bouverie [Political Agent at Bhurtpore] to Military Secretary, 25 July 1859, Canning papers, WYA, Vol. 108, No. 5108

48. In that Company's officers also held the Queen's commission, no doubt existed as to their allegiance. See the commissions of Henry Carleton as lieutenant (1840), captain (1848) and major (1855) in the Bengal Artillery: IOLR, MSS.Eur.D.1025/1

49. Canning to Clyde, 9 November 1858, Canning papers, WYA, Vol. 78, No. 57

50. Mansfield to Ripon, 22 July 1859, Mansfield private letter book, NAM

Though the officers themselves gave no sign, the mofussil newspapers articulated the officers' unease, even as they urged discretion on the troops. The Hurkaru, no friend of Canning but hardly a radical paper, quoted the New Times:

the officers of the Indian Army had not mutinied and had got nothing, nor are they likely to get anything unless they bestir themselves and that pretty sharply.

The Hurkaru merely commented mildly that '[m]utinies seem to be in fashion under Lord Canning'.<sup>51</sup> 'There is hardly a newspaper in the country', Mansfield complained in a later letter to Ripon, 'which is not calling on them to Agitate'. The local press, he explained, 'is little else than an organ of the various Services ... we are listening to their voices'. The danger of the officers' disquiet lay, he went on, in that '[T]he arguments held out by both classes are pretty much the same, that their monopoly of all offices ... has vanished at the very time Parliament has declared that all their rights & Privileges shall be maintained'.<sup>52</sup> Since the 'white mutiny' has hitherto been regarded exclusively as a soldiers' protest in which the Europeans' officers were allied with the forces of authority, existing accounts have underestimated the potential threat which the officers offered. The officers' concerns, while not immediately apparent in 1859, were to assume a greater prominence in the aftermath of the protest.

The outbreaks placed Clyde and Mansfield in an invidious position. As Mansfield told the reformist journalist Matthew Higgins, both had warned, 'almost on our knees' that the transfer of the Company's force to the Crown could provoke such a response.<sup>53</sup> Their counsel was based not only on a pragmatic anticipation of its consequences but also because, as Mansfield told Robert Montgomery, 'we consider the Soldiers to have all the Arguments on their side'.<sup>54</sup> The two therefore had to defend and implement an official policy with which they disagreed, extricating Canning from a crisis which he had at least aggravated by his narrow legalism. Clyde believed that irrespective of the

**Robert Montgomery (1809-87), Lieutenant Governor, Punjab, 1859-65. Addiscombe 1824-25, a contemporary of Vincent Eyre and Robert Napier - comm. Bengal Engineers, but never served; trnsf to BCS, 1828; joined Punjab administration, 1848; KCB, 1859; ret. 1865**

**Major General Sydney Cotton (1792-1874) commanding Peshawur Div., 1858-9. Comm. 1810 in the royal army but served in India 1810-66; known to the army as 'the noisy brigadier' from his penetrating parade ground bawl**

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51. Bengal hurkaru, 17 September 1859

52. Mansfield to Ripon, Simla, 9 August 1859, Wood papers, IOLR, Vol. 85

53. Mansfield to 'Mr Higgins', 31 July 1859, Private letter book, NAM. The identity of Mansfield's correspondent is established by his address. It is ironic that Mansfield should have corresponded with the man who, as 'Jacob Omnium' had advocated the formation of light cavalry which at the time so threatened the military authorities.

54. Mansfield to Montgomery, 8 May 1859, Private letter book, NAM

transfer's legality, it infringed the soldiers' conceptions of justice. Both believed that soldiers could not be transferred between corps without consent.<sup>55</sup> Clyde himself took his stance as 'soldiers' friend' to extremes which some considered unwise. Sydney Cotton, who helped to prevent outbreaks among the Europeans in the Punjab in 1859 just as he had forestalled mutiny in 1857, heard that Clyde had in a barrack-room in the hearing of soldiers expressed his belief that the men were entitled to discharge or bounty.<sup>56</sup> Though Cotton did not credit the story, many soldiers believed the Commander-in-Chief to be sympathetic, and the impression percolated to Britain.<sup>57</sup> Sir Hugh Rose, Commander-in-Chief of the Bombay army following the central India campaign, confided to British authorities, including Cambridge, his dissatisfaction with Clyde's lenient handling of the protest. He later informed Mansfield that he thought that under Clyde (and by extension, Mansfield) the protest had 'not been met with anything like adequate punishment', attributing to Clyde's half-hearted moderation difficulties which Rose in turn encountered with the Europeans.<sup>58</sup> If Rose dismissed too lightly the possible consequences of misjudged firmness, Clyde's unwillingness to countenance severity seems to have been influenced by his agreement with the soldier's case.

Like most contemporary commanders, however, Clyde understood that protest was unavoidable in an army demanding subordination to the extent prevailing in the contemporary Queen's army. Its customary approach to expressions of dissatisfaction was to manage rather than suppress dissent. The legal definitions of mutiny would have ostensibly branded every man who complained to a comrade a mutineer - the authoritative text in military law defined as mutinous soldiers who 'murmur at authority or mutter words on being commanded', and specified that 'all who join in the crime become principals'.<sup>59</sup> Individual acts of 'mutinous conduct' were therefore punished severely, usually by transportation or imprisonment with hard labour, and sometimes with death. Though hardly frequent, large protests were not uncommon

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55. Though the Queen's regulations are silent on the point, they stipulated that soldiers were 'not to be transferred ... without the previous authority of the Commander in Chief'; Queen's regulations and orders for the army, London, 1857, p. 164. The Mutiny Act specified that 'an attested Certificate of Transfer shall be delivered to the Soldier', which certainly did not occur in 1858: An Act for punishing mutiny and desertion, 9 April 1832, 2nd Geo IV, cap XXVIII, clause XXXVII. Popular belief in the barrack room probably strongly reinforced these legal provisions.

56. Cotton, Nine years on the north-west frontier, p. 258

57. Sir Charles Wood to Mr Charles Phippes, 4 August 1859, Wood papers, IOLR, Letter book 1

58. Rose to Cambridge, Mahabaleshwar, 21 May 1859, Rose public letter book, BL, Add.Ms. 42812

59. William Hough, Precedents in military law ..., p. 58 (emphasis in original)

- several, for example, occurred in the garrison of New South Wales in the 1830s and '40s.<sup>60</sup> Because it was impossible to apply rigidly the legal penalties to 'mutinous' protests involving groups of men, officers expected to negotiate, singling out only 'ringleaders' for punishment. Clyde therefore followed the conventional response and not one man was actually charged with mutiny. Instead, he adopted a course which ultimately granted the soldiers' point but without revealing the weakness of his position.

Though no soldiers and few officers below the rank of brigadier realized it, the Meerut protest succeeded, within days securing one of its ostensible objectives. On 5 May, three days after learning of the outbreak, Canning authorised Clyde to grant discharges to 'some of the least guilty', and, after learning of the number of men involved and the spread of protest to Allahabad, the next day conceded discharge to all men enlisted by the Company except those charged with insubordination.<sup>61</sup> Clyde, however, felt unable to accede immediately to the troops' demands, for fear of the protest spreading beyond the Europeans. He therefore convened a court of inquiry at Meerut, tempering open protest by giving the troops a forum to express their grievances and allowing the authorities a pretext for granting, apparently in good time and after hearing the men's case, the concession already decided. Mansfield admitted to Sir George Clerk that the inquiries were necessary 'to preserve ... the appearance of dignity & of surrendering to argument & not to intimidation'.<sup>62</sup> The expedient succeeded. During the first two weeks of May Mansfield had feared that 'open mutiny and dreadful collision seemed to be imminent'.<sup>63</sup> By mid-May, however, Clyde informed Canning that Meerut was again quiet, though with 'the tranquillity of expectation'.<sup>64</sup> Commanders at other stations were authorized (though not compelled) to convene similar courts of inquiry in order to deflect or deal with further unrest. Since the men were unaware of the success of their case, protests continued, and ultimately disorder occurred at eleven cantonments. Europeans at stations all over Bengal (except, it seems, at those on the north-west frontier) expressed

Sir George Clerk (1800-89) Under-Secretary of State for India, 1858-60. ByCS, appt, 1817; Governor of Bombay, 1847-48, 1860-62

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60. Peter Stanley, 'Soldiers and fellow-countrymen in colonial Australia', in Margaret Browne & Michael McKernan, (eds), Australia two centuries of war and peace, Canberra, 1988, pp. 69-73

61. Canning to Clyde, 5 & 6 May 1859; PP 1860, p. 20, 22

62. Mansfield to Clerk, 11 May 1859, Mansfield private letter book, NAM

63. Mansfield to Maj Gen Sir Hope Grant, 14 May 1859, Mansfield private letter book, NAM

64. Clyde to Canning, 15 May 1859, PP 1860, p. 39. Mansfield also used the phrase in a letter to Foster to whom he reported on developments in India.

grievances. As with the sepoy mutinies protest was largely confined to the Bengal presidency, with only minor outbreaks in Madras and isolated incidents in Bombay.<sup>65</sup>

By mid-June courts of inquiry convened at nine stations, and reports from many others, revealed that the Europeans overwhelmingly felt that they had been treated unjustly by the transfer, and that most men would accept discharge if they could not obtain a bounty. Civil and military officials accepted that irrespective of the legality of the men's case the issue could not be won. On 20 June Canning issued General Order 883, allowing all those enlisted for the Company to take their discharge.<sup>66</sup> Unlike the general order which the men had found so offensive, this order went to some lengths to mollify the troops' sensitivity, belatedly meeting Sir Charles Wood's wish that the previous general order should have been 'wrapped ... up with complimentary language'.<sup>67</sup> Boards convened in all European units allowed men to elect to remain or take their discharge. The 'absolute Exodus', evident in Table 6, 'startled' Clyde and his commanders.<sup>68</sup> By the end of the year Her Majesty's Indian Forces in Bengal numbered only 6641, an eighth of the Queen's force in the presidency.<sup>69</sup> Viewed as a challenge to authority activated by the demand for discharge or bounty, the soldiers' protest was in effect a complete success. Ordinary soldiers succeeded in securing their discharge and free passages home without bloodshed or, for all but a handful, prosecution.

Sir Charles Wood (1800-85),  
Secretary of State for India, 1859-  
66. Eton and Oriel College,  
Oxford; Liberal MP, 1832-65;  
President of the Board of Control,  
1852-55; Viscount Halifax 1866

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65. The Madras Artillery also used graffiti to express their point (including the economical example found by Col George Briggs, 'D \_\_\_ the Queen, Company for ever, give us bounty, shoot Briggs'; Officer Commanding Centre Division, Madras Army to AG, Madras Army, 16 June 1859, PP 1860, p. 397). The quiescence of the Europeans of the 'minor presidencies' requires explanation. That neither force expanded during the rebellion and received many fewer recruits seem obvious explanations, but Bengal's soldiers had always displayed an assertive demeanour. Arthur Owen's memoir, however, suggests that only extraordinary precautions prevented open unrest in the 1st Madras Fusiliers. He recalled that the officers camped on the parade ground and the sergeant major patrolled with drawn sword; *Recollections of a veteran*, p. 83.

66. General Order 883, PP 1860, pp. 236-37

67. Wood to Canning, 25 June 1859, Wood papers, IOLR, Letter book 1. This, Wood's first official letter to Canning as Secretary of State for India, betrays his anxiety over the crisis he had inherited from his predecessor. Wood told Canning that '[f]or the four nights that I have been at the India Office my thoughts have been almost exclusively given to the very uncomfortable position of the Indian troops'. With news a month old, he could not have known that the crisis had by then passed.

68. Clyde to Canning, Simla, 11 July 1859, Canning papers, WYA, Vol. 70, No. 137A

69. 'Return of the number of European Troops in the Three Presidencies...' [21 November 1859], Gladstone papers, BL, Vol. DIV, Add.Ms 44589

Table 6

## Discharges, 1859

Unit	Strength Feb '59 <sup>1</sup>	Discharged Jul-Aug '59 <sup>2</sup>	% discharged
1st BELC	645	476	73.79
2nd BELC	613	592	96.57
3rd BELC	621	509	81.96
4th BELC	619	485	78.35
5th BELC	394	506	-
1st EBF	720	340	47.22
2nd EBF	657	309	47.03
3rd BER	779	507	65.08
4th BER	734	474	64.57
5th BER	502 <sup>3</sup>	308	61.20
6th BER	174	262	-
Artillery	3124	1541	49.32
Others	-	29	-
<b>Totals</b>		<b>6338</b>	

All figures but the numbers discharged should be regarded with caution. Clearly, some movement in and out of the force occurred between 1 February and the exodus of July, in deaths, routine discharges of time-expired men, transfers and remands and in the arrival of both recruits from Britain and men transferring from Queen's corps to the cavalry. The 5th BELC and 5th and 6th BER particularly received large drafts just before the protest, and their figures have either been corrected from other sources or ignored. Though calculation to two decimal places lends a spurious accuracy to these figures, the general trends corroborate impressions discussed in subsequent chapters: the cavalry's wholesale disaffection, the substantial dissatisfaction of the new infantry and the 3rd BER and the ambivalence of the artillery and the fusiliers.

1. 'A return of the actual Strength ... of ... forces in the Three Presidencies', 1 February 1859, PP 1859 (II), Vol. XXIII, pp. 2-3

2. 'Account of the number ... discharge[d] ... ', PP 1860, Vol. L, 'Papers relating to the future organization of the European force in India', p. 192

3. 'Morning report ... [5th BER]', 20 June 1859, PP 1860, p. 251. Many recent recruits (many still at the Barrackpore depot at the time of the protest) were unable to accept discharge because they had enlisted after the transfer.

The protest mortally wounded the European force's prospects of surviving the transfer intact. Even before news of open protest reached Britain the Naval and military gazette, the influential organ of military opinion, had embarked on a campaign to denigrate the force, publishing an average of one leading article each month criticising its composition, performance and particularly its discipline. The newspaper condemned the Europeans' inferior stature, stamina and health, blaming their deficiencies on the loss of 'the best men' for the Town Major's list.<sup>70</sup> Protesting that it meant 'nothing offensive', the Naval and military gazette described the European officers as 'squirrel-minded' and 'craving for patronage'. News of the outbreaks of May prompted it to deplore the force's 'disloyal and mercenary spirit'.<sup>71</sup> The protest's success confirmed the Queen's army's prejudices against the European force, justifying those who had sought its elimination. Mansfield declared that the experience of the protest 'forbids us to entertain the idea of a local European army ... if we value the existence of the empire'.<sup>72</sup>

After the courts of inquiry convened, the crisis passed without further incident, until, on the very day General Order 883 was issued, the 5th infantry, at Berhampore, broke into open mutiny. The outbreak's immediate outcome, under General Order 884, was to deny to the 5th's men until September the privilege of taking their discharge. Though occurring five weeks after the initial outbreaks (though before the protest's outcome was clear) the Berhampore mutiny decisively affected Anglo-Indian and British views of the soldiers' protest. The demonstration, the most protracted and serious outbreak of the entire episode, contributed nothing to its resolution. Its consequences were, however, profound, indicating the European force's temper and the potential hazards of its continuance.<sup>73</sup>

For the rest of the European force, after a month's grace in which men were expected to change their minds, drafts left every European unit, steaming down the Ganges or the Indus to board transports for Britain. Very few men generally (though groups in some units) changed their minds. Just over 10,000 men left from the European force as a whole, 6,000 from Bengal.<sup>74</sup> 'The Government of India', Mansfield wrote to Ripon, 'has been beaten by its own army; it has yielded to intimidation ... the mutineers have achieved a victory'.<sup>75</sup>

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70. Naval and military gazette, 15 January 1859

71. Ibid., 16 April, 18 June 1859

72. Mansfield to Ripon, 26 September 1859, PP 1860, Vol. L, p. 76

73. The following chapter deals in detail with the 5th infantry's 'mutiny' at Berhampore.

74. 'Account of the number ... discharge[d] ... ', PP 1860, Vol. L, 'Papers relating to the future organization of the European force in India', p. 192

75. Mansfield to Ripon, 26 September 1859, PP 1860, Vol. L, p. 76

The entire episode had been, as Cambridge recognised, 'sadly mismanaged'.<sup>76</sup> Wood, who in no way contributed to the debacle, wrote that 'everybody who has meddled with the Bengal Army seems to have blundered'.<sup>77</sup> Blame, like responsibility, was widely distributed: 'everybody seems disposed to blame everybody else', Wood remarked. Neither political nor military authorities in India or Britain answered for the episode. After the event there was no want of retrospective advice, particularly from the presidencies spared open discontent. From Bombay, Bartle Frere commented that 'a good dinner and a complimentary order would have kept them all perfectly contented'.<sup>78</sup> A sergeant attached to the Town Major's office told his superior that had the troops received 'a well-worded explanatory and ... laudatory order' with three days' batta, they would have toasted the Queen and the matter would have ended.<sup>79</sup> Instead, the protest remains the largest and most successful challenge to authority the British army has ever experienced. It may be attributed ultimately to three men: to Stanley's negligence in drafting the bill transferring the force for which he as President of the Board of Control was responsible; to Canning, who allowed himself to be guided by an unimaginative legalism rather than the pragmatism befitting his position, and Clyde, who might have counselled Canning more firmly.

**Sir Henry Bartle Frere (1815-84)**  
**Chief Commissioner in Scinde,**  
**1850-59. Appt to Bombay Civil**  
**Service, 1834; KCB, 1859; Member**  
**of Supreme Council, 1859-62;**  
**Governor of Bombay, 1862-67; later**  
**Governor of South Africa**

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Since the troops gained their objectives almost immediately the inquiries might seem, as they were intended to be, a waste of time. It might therefore seem to be futile to consider the testimony and related correspondence, particularly when so much of it is superficially similar. Long before the last transcripts arrived Clyde and Canning wearied of reading variations on the same essential grievance, just as historians considering the protest have been content to reproduce representative statements to illustrate the gist of the men's complaints.<sup>80</sup> The purpose of re-considering in detail the protest does not, therefore, lie in re-assessing its outcome. Rather, a detailed discussion of the soldiers' grievances, of the language and manner in which they were expressed, of the beliefs and decisions informing them, provides insights into relationships within the force and within the wider society from which its members came.

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76. Cambridge to Wood, 9 August 1859, Wood papers, IOLR, Vol. 62

77. Wood to Elphinstone, 3 December 1859, Wood papers, IOLR, Letter book 2

78. Extract of letter Frere to Sir George Clerk, 9 August 1859; extract of letter from the Adjutant General, Madras, Wood papers, IOLR, Vol. 85

79. Cavenagh, Reminiscences of an Indian official, p. 231

80. See, for example, Maclagan, 'The white mutiny', p. 286

Considering the events of 1859 in the framework of class, culture and community, while unavoidably accentuating or diminishing some aspects of the force's experience, provides several analytical advantages. It reveals nuances in the texture of the culture of the Europeans' barrack-rooms, showing how the course and expression of protest varied from station to station, depending upon each unit's composition and ethos. Second, it reveals ways of understanding how men from Britain and Ireland conceived and expressed grievances, and thereby suggests ways of understanding political relations between and within classes in contemporary society.

Understanding in detail what occurred in the barrack-rooms of the European force is possible partly because of the Indian army's preoccupation with administrative documentation. The authorities' concern over the fact and implications of the protest produced detailed correspondence, transcripts and reports incorporated into the force's Military Proceedings (an administrative practice unaffected by the transfer). An edited but still daunting selection of these records appeared as a Parliamentary paper in 1860. Mofussil newspapers, private papers and memoirs provide tantalisingly incomplete complementary sources. As the comparison of Private Brown's and the Deputy Judge Advocate General's accounts of his testimony at Morar suggests, the surviving documentation is hardly ideal, but the available evidence is almost overwhelming.

Paramount among the available evidence are the transcripts of the courts of inquiry, all but one of which survive.<sup>81</sup> Though authorized by the same circular memorandum, they varied in thoroughness (another indication, perhaps of the Bengal army's lack of uniformity). The Meerut inquiry, the first and largest, was overseen by the Judge Advocate General, Keith Young. He not only recorded statements verbatim (including, for example, expressions such as 'listed' for 'enlisted' and 'dinna ken' from Scots), but also identified each man by name, former occupation, and both place of birth and enlistment.<sup>82</sup> Advised by less diligent deputies, courts at other stations allowed men less latitude in expressing themselves. At some single sentences or approximate rather than exact transcripts were recorded. Nevertheless, subject to such qualifications, the resultant 420-odd pages of close-printed transcript provide unparalleled insights into what hundreds of ordinary men thought and said on the issue.

Dissection of what occurred at cantonments all over Bengal that summer is, however, complicated greatly by the changes which the European force had recently experienced. Old

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81. All save the transcript of the court held at Berhampore (for which a summary exists) were published in PP 1860.

82. Henry Norman, his friend, believed that the effort of supervising the month-long hearings at the height of summer killed him: Keith Young, *Delhi - 1857*, London, 1902, p. xvii

artillery and infantry units had been joined by new regiments of infantry and cavalry, all of which contained both old soldiers and recruits. How did the two 'combine'? Half of its men had been soldiers for less than two years: to what extent were they acting not as soldiers but as civilians? The Europeans' officers, both of old units and those transferred from sepoy units, were equally affected by the transfer, and equally prone to voice their grievances: how did they simultaneously express their feelings while facing protest among their men? In effect, three protests - by recruits, old soldiers and officers - occurred within the European force in 1859, each masking the other. The old soldiers and officers' actions can be largely explained by the force's culture. The massive presence of recruits in the force, however, introduced a novel dimension, without which the protest would have been more limited and less significant. Their involvement cannot be explained by the European force's culture, in that theirs was essentially a civil protest in a military setting - a 'Manchester strike', as Lady Canning put it - albeit one modified by the peculiar conditions of their employment. The protest's contemporary power, and its value as a means of understanding Victorian Britain, lies in that it straddled lines of class, occupation and nationality.

Understandably shocked by the outbreaks, Clyde soon divined in them what he described as 'a secret mutinous and unlawful combination'.<sup>83</sup> The phrase is significant, expressing not only the belief that the protest was a conspiracy, but also that it resembled industrial action. That the soldiers' action was simultaneously a military and a civilian protest is fundamental to understanding both the events of 1859 and their significance. Clyde and Mansfield realised at the outset that the soldiers' anxiety over their transfer derived from both military and civilian roots. In November 1858, in unsuccessfully counselling Canning to adopt a more pragmatic approach, they based their advice on their

intimate acquaintance with British Soldiers, and the manner in which they feel the rights they possess, in common with other Englishmen.<sup>84</sup>

That the army's commanders explicitly connected an ostensibly military protest with the men's conception of their rights as 'Englishmen' provides the key to understanding the events of 1859. Notwithstanding the evidence of 'combination', each unit's experience of the protest was different. Identifying and evaluating patterns of protest in the Europeans' barrack-rooms is therefore a task of some complexity. Isolating and explaining the force's actions necessitates analysis on several levels. Since its members' experience in 1859, as ever, depended most critically on their unit, an examination of the course of the protest within a selection of units is

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83. Clyde to Canning, Simla, 18 May 1859, Canning papers, WYA, Vol. 70, No. 134

84. Mansfield to Birch, 10 November 1858, Mansfield memoranda, IOLR

fundamental to any interpretation. Each unit's reaction occurred, however, within a dynamic barrack-room culture, the importance and nuances of which must constantly be recalled. All the force's members, but particularly its recruits, also carried with them into the Company's service civilian conceptions of 'justice' or 'rights' which influenced their ideas of and actions in the protest.

As far as the responses of ten thousand individuals can be categorized, the Bengal Europeans' reactions to the transfer are explicable in terms of relationships of class, community and culture. Just as these relationships explain the life of the Company's force, they can be used to explain its final crisis. Men in all units, but particularly recruits in the new cavalry and infantry regiments, reacted to the issue according to conceptions of rights current within the British and Irish working-class. Artillerymen, both those who protested and those who remained quiescent, were influenced primarily by a powerful barrack-room culture. Men of the three old infantry regiments faced and responded differently to a choice between the regimental culture and that of the barrack-room. These explanations of course simplify and exaggerate reality. Evidence of all three can be detected in many units, and contradictions, complexities and ambiguities must be recalled throughout. Such an interpretative matrix, however crude, at least suggests the complexity of the phenomenon and the connections between it and the broader culture of mid-Victorian Britain.

## Chapter 7

### 'Free-born British subjects': class, populism and the new regiments' protests

The experience of the European regiments of the Bengal army formed during the rebellion was more uniform than that of their older counterparts, but can be reconstructed in less detail. Among the cavalry, all but the 5th regiment protested openly, and some, notably the 2nd at Meerut and the 4th at Allahabad, were seriously disturbed.<sup>1</sup> The three new infantry regiments reveal a wider range of response. The 4th took a prominent part in the disturbances at Allahabad early in May, and a month later was ordered to Cawnpore to separate it from the cavalry. The 6th remained largely 'very quiet and orderly', despite an abortive attempt to arrange a strike and the encouragement of a Catholic priest alerting men to their grievances.<sup>2</sup>

Lack of critical material impedes detailed investigation. No officer's papers exist for any unit; transcripts of the courts of inquiry are brief or lost, newspaper and private accounts are rendered treacherous by rumour and hearsay and official reports conceal as much as they reveal.<sup>3</sup> The detailed, albeit often speculative, reconstruction of units' interior life possible for the old units is therefore not feasible for the new corps. For only the 5th Bengal European Regiment, stationed at Berhampore in lower Bengal, the sole unit mounting an organized mutiny, can the protest be reconstructed in detail. Though impeded by lack of critical sources (particularly the transcript of its court of inquiry), scrutiny of the 5th reveals, inadequately but better than for any other unit, its dynamics as an improvised military community.

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The cantonment of Berhampore had been established during the British occupation of Bengal a century before, and was celebrated for its imposing double-storeyed barrack blocks and riverside esplanade.<sup>4</sup> Diminishing in importance as the military frontier moved away to the

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1. The 5th cavalry's quiescence demands explanation. Only half the size of the others, it had been drilled rapidly into efficiency by the former Queen's dragoons' riding master. Its indifference to the protest may be explained by its isolation, the example of the artillery units in the division, and by its larger proportion of former Queen's dragoons.

2. Events in the 6th can be reconstructed from the papers reproduced in PP 1860, pp. 57, 59, 113 and 143-4

3. Robert Spottiswoode's *Reminiscences*, Edinburgh, 1935, includes ten pages on his time as a cornet in the 3rd cavalry. J.M. Brereton in his article, 'The white mutiny', *History today*, Vol. XXIV, April 1979, pp. 257-64; 274, refers to an unpublished manuscript memoir of Edward Rivett-Carnac, a cornet of the 4th cavalry. The manuscript, in private hands, could not be traced.

4. And perhaps for the state of the Gora bazaar, hard against them, according to the *Hurkaru*, 2 July 1859, 'one of the filthiest Bazars in India'.

north-west, it had by 1859 become a minor station, abandoned by European troops before the rebellion as unhealthy. Early in 1859 it housed the disarmed 63rd Bengal Native Infantry and the 5th infantry. A correspondent to the Delhi gazette expressed the hope (wryly in hindsight) that the 5th posting to Berhampore would enliven what had become a backwater.<sup>5</sup>

The regiment's senior officer, Major Frederick Maitland, was a quarrelsome man, evidently representative of the less enterprising sepoy officer. In the view of Colonel Edward Holdich, who commanded the Queen's recruits at Berhampore until April 1859, Maitland was 'disposed to take too much on himself'.<sup>6</sup> His efficiency seems not to have matched his pretensions: correspondence from his former regiment discloses a carelessness which greater responsibility failed to eradicate.<sup>7</sup> Only seven of Maitland's 22 officers were present early in 1859. Accessible only from Hodson's biographical summaries of their careers, and references in the official record relating to the regiment, they appear to be representative of the run of sepoy officers, victims of circumstance as much as their men. Formerly of the 5th Bengal Native Infantry, they had no experience of commanding Europeans.

Their former regiment had not been a 'crack corps'. 'Nearly annihilated' in the Afghan debacle in 1842, it suffered severe losses from fever during a posting to Dacca in the mid-1840s and never regained cohesion or efficiency.<sup>8</sup> Under Maitland at Umballah in May 1857, it had broken into mutiny on the same day as the more bloody rising at Meerut, but had been pacified and forgiven, only to be disarmed on 28 May, coincidentally by the 2nd Fusiliers. In August its sepoys at last broke, fleeing to join the rebel force in Delhi.<sup>9</sup> Maitland and his fellows joined the mass of apprehensive sepoy officers seeking employment. By the time they were ordered to join their new corps many had secured rewarding situations, which they reluctantly surrendered to assume a responsibility few appear

**Major Frederick Colthurst Maitland (1808-76), 5th Bengal European Regiment. b. Calcutta, son of Calcutta solicitor; comm. 1825; served with several regts of Bengal native infantry and contingent forces, 1827-58; Lieutenant Colonel, 1860; Colonel 1866, Major General 1871**

**Colonel Edward Alan Holdich (1822- ) commanding Berhampore depot and later Gondah station, 1859. Comm. 1841; served first Punjab war; South Africa 1848-52, Burmah 1853; commanded Cork and Dublin districts 1871-6; KCB 1875**

**Captain Mortimer John Slater (1824-63), 5th Bengal European Regiment. b. London, son of John Slater, artist; comm. 5th Bengal Native Infantry, 1840; served first Afghan war; d. returning to Britain**

5. Delhi gazette, 20 January 1859

6. Holdich diary, 8 January 1859, SRM

7. Copy letter book of Capt Henry Wilson, 5th Bengal Native Infantry, NAM, 7412-125

8. Bengal hurkaru, 21 November 1845

9. G.H.D. Gimlette, A postscript to the records of the Indian mutiny; London, 1927, pp 81-3

to have relished. Maitland and Captain Mortimer Slater joined the station staff at Umballah, forwarding provisions to the forces on campaign down the Grand Trunk Road. No detailed account of the demeanour of the 5th's officers survives. Their regiment's fate suggests their resemblance to the sepoy officers posted to command European troops, described by 'an old soldier' as those who 'by their ignorance of their duties, and absurd system and bearing, gave so much offence to their men'.<sup>10</sup> Just how offensive may be gauged from the comments of 'An officer of a Bengal European regiment of 16 Years' service', who described his men in a newspaper widely read in barrack-rooms as 'London-cockney scum of the earth'.<sup>11</sup>

The 5th's non-commissioned officers, most from the 2nd Fusiliers, with a few from the Queen's 29th Foot, were old soldiers. Seemingly a representative sample of the old corps' rank and file, 'soldier-like [and] intelligent', they asserted their identity on arrival by quarrelling with the sergeants of the Queen's depot sharing the station.<sup>12</sup> Its rank and file, all but a handful recruits enlisted in 1858, were drawn from all over Britain and Ireland. As the first parties of recruits arrived in January 1859 the adjutant, Lieutenant Lancaster Davies and Sergeant Major, John Mooty, began the men's military training. All spent long hours of drill on Berhampore's parade ground, under Drill Sergeant Daniel Barry and his corporals. Mostly still at sea in November 1858, the men's transfer to the Queen's army made no recorded impact on the recruits. By the time of General Order 480's promulgation, however, the men had evidently become aware of the issue.

**Lieutenant Lancaster Byron James Davies (1833-67), Adjutant 5th Bengal European Regiment. b. Jamaica, son of an army officer turned surgeon; comm. 11th Bengal Native Infantry, 1853; trsf. 3rd BER 1856; trsf. to 5th BER 1858; d. Jamalpore, Bengal**

**Sergeant Major John Mooty, No. 1/902, 5th Bengal European Regiment. Weaver, of Ahaghill, Antrim. enl. Ballymena, March 1848; Cressy, October 1848; served 2nd European Bengal Fusiliers, trsf 5th BER, 1858; trsf. 104th, November 1860; disch. 1862**

**Colour Sergeant Daniel Barry, No. 28/380, Drill Sergeant, 5th Bengal European Regiment. Labourer of Bristol, enl. at Bristol, April 1849, aged 29 Bucephalus. Served 2nd European Bengal Fusiliers, trsf to 5th 1858 as drill sergeant; discharged August 1859**

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10. Naval and military gazette, 20 August 1859

11. Friend of India, 14 July 1859

12. Lt Col Kenneth Mackenzie to Birch, 27 June 1859, PP 1860, p. 256; Holdich diary, 7, 13 January 1859, SRM

On 2 May, within hours of the outbreak at Meerut and therefore in ignorance of it, men of the 5th committed the 'white mutiny's' first overt act of protest. After hearing the order read out, two companies showed what Maitland called a 'riotous disposition', refusing to parade. After last post Ensign Oliphant, the day's station subaltern, found a group of men 'making a disturbance', refusing to retire. Some shouted, 'Three cheers for the Company! Three groans for the Queen!'. Two privates were confined in the conjee house, one for drunkenly stating that 'I do not belong to Her Majesty', the other for inciting men to rescue him from the quarter guard. The following afternoon Private John Harty appeared in one of Berhampore's three barrack blocks, wearing the letters 'EIC' in his cap, with coloured ribbons or papers fastened to it, beating a tin pot and, in the words of his charge sheet, 'inciting the men ... to mutinous conduct'.<sup>13</sup> Maitland, commenting that 'feeling about the bounty has now quite ceased', referred the cases to the commander of the Presidency Division, Sir John Hearsey.<sup>14</sup> Though a hero of the rebellion (having personally disarmed the mutinous Mangal Pandey - source of the nick-name - in 1857) Hearsey prudently referred them to Clyde, who ordered that the cases be deferred until the outcome of the crisis was clear.

Ensign James Stuart Oliphant (1838-64), 5th Bengal European Regiment. Comm. Bengal native infantry, 1857; died of wounds received in the Umbeylah campaign, November 1864

Private John Harty, No. 100, 5th Bengal European Regiment. Labourer, of Dungorney, Cork; enl. Cork, June 1858, aged 20

Major General John Bennett Hearsey (1793-1865) commanding Presidency Div., 1856-65. Comm. 1807; served Bengal native cavalry; served Bundelcund, Rewah, Nepal war, third Deccan war, Bhurtpore, second Punjab war; KCB 1856

Though outbreaks convulsed other stations, during May Berhampore remained quiet. Indeed, on 24 May, the Queen's birthday, the station enjoyed festivities seemingly as wholeheartedly as the men of the 2nd Fusiliers at Delhi. Following a formal parade 'well contested' sports enlivened the parade ground - foot races, high jumps, pony and sack races, concluding with a pig hunt. The men displayed good spirits and order. That evening the sergeants hosted a ball. With Sergeant Barry as MC and under transparencies bearing the motto, 'God save the Queen', officers, civilians and their ladies danced, accepting refreshments served by twenty 'youths' dressed as waiters. Between polkas and galops guests enjoyed songs by the 'European serenaders', after which Sergeant Major Mooty proposed the loyal toast. Major Maitland congratulated all on their display of good feeling, commenting that it refuted the 'calumnies' of the Englishman's correspondent on the regiment's state.<sup>15</sup>

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13. 'Charge submitted against No. 100, Private John Harty ... ', PP 1860, p. 65

14. Maitland to Maj Arthur Ross [AAG, Presidency Division], Berhampore, 6 May 1859, PP 1860, p. 241

15. Mofussilite, 3 June 1859

Within weeks, however, the atmosphere at Berhampore changed. On 17 June Colonel William Lennox, the station commander, reported the 5th as 'passively disobedient'. Two hundred of its 372 men fit for duty occupied one of the large barrack blocks facing the parade ground (see Illustrations 14a & b). For the following eight days they refused duty, being supplied with rations though denied grog and punkahs. Not until 25 June, when a force of Queen's troops under Lieutenant Colonel Kenneth Mackenzie steamed up from Calcutta, did the men return to duty.

Determining precisely what occurred at Berhampore presents intriguing difficulties in disentangling rumour from reliable accounts. Lennox and Maitland's brief and unhelpful official reports frustrated their superiors, as they do the historian.<sup>16</sup> 'Of private accounts', however, Richard Birch noted, 'there is no deficiency'.<sup>17</sup> News of the mutiny circulated through private correspondence and newspapers, often conveying rumours, exaggerated or false reports. Singular accounts appeared in newspapers - that, parodying military discipline, the men elected their own 'captains', that their 'colonel', wearing a ramrod as a sword, ordered men flogged, that they erected banners proclaiming 'Welcome to civilians'.<sup>18</sup> Mackenzie, however, reported his inability to confirm the accounts 'in the smallest degree'.<sup>19</sup> The published and private accounts emphasise the Anglo-Indian community's hysteria in the face of their guarantors' protest. The reports prompted what the Delhi gazette called 'universal execration': its editor expressed the hope that the 5th would be reduced to submission 'even at the price of decimation'.<sup>20</sup>

The origins of the 5th's protest are obscure, particularly in the light of the feeling reported three weeks before. The predominance of young soldiers may have weakened the few old soldiers'

Colonel William George Lennox (1798-1884), 63rd Bengal Native Infantry. Comm. 1818; served first Afghan war, Gwallor war, first Punjab war; Lieutenant Colonel, 1853 (served with six regiments in six years)

Colonel Kenneth Mackenzie (1811-73). Comm. 92nd (Gordon) Highlanders, 1831; won renown by securing Smith O'Brien during Irish uprising of 1848; staff positions in Ireland and the Crimea; served Central India 1858; AAG, Bengal, 1859; served second China war, Fenian disturbances Ireland, 1865-66; died accidentally while AAG at Horse Guards

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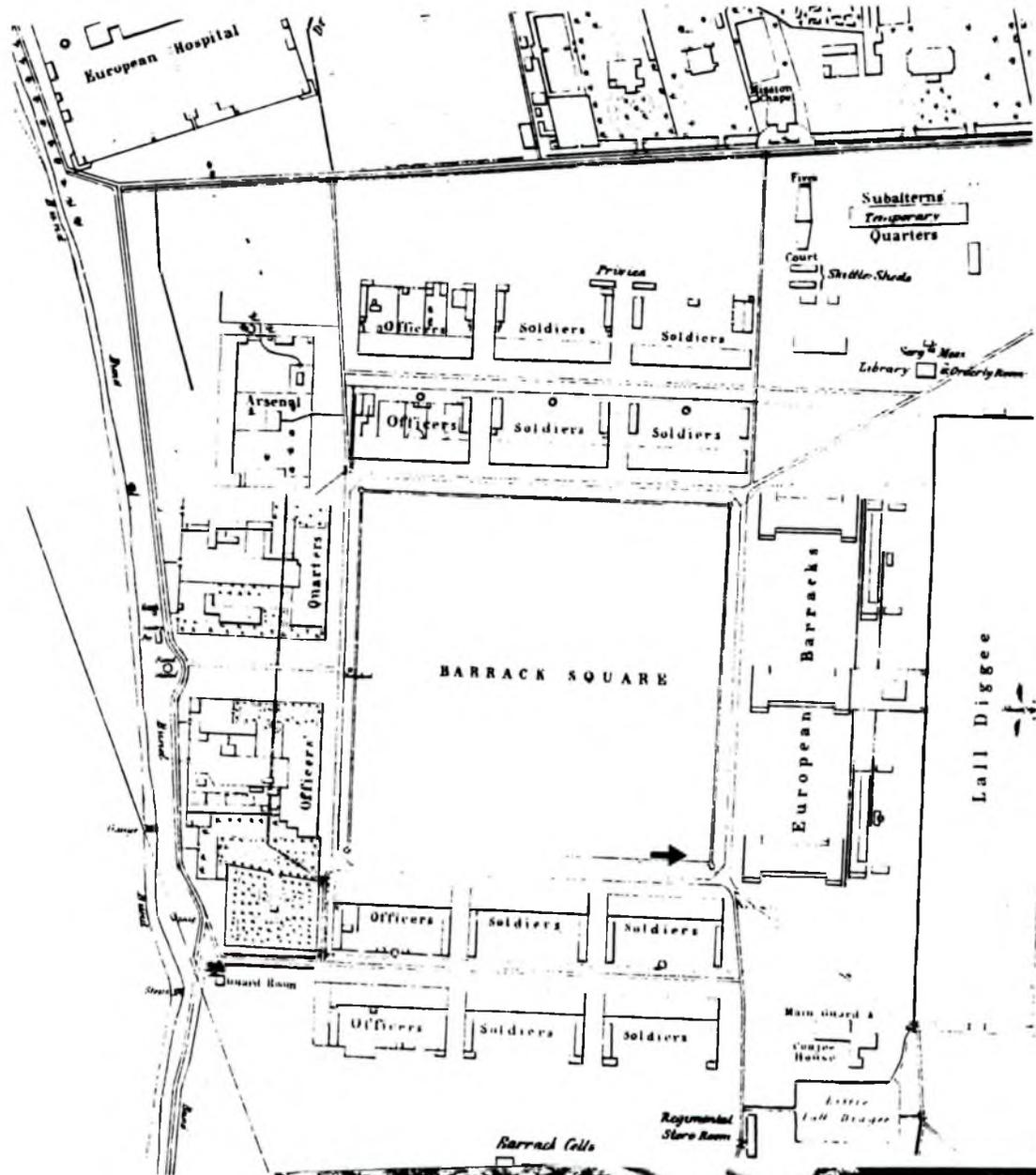
16. They appear in the Military Proceedings, but are most accessible in PP 1860, pp 233-34, 238, 241, 251, 254-55 and 259-60.

17. Birch to Hearsey, 24 June 1859, PP 1860, p. 244

18. Private letters carrying reports of the outbreak, presumably from military and civil officers, and from civilians at Berhampore appeared in the mofussil press within a week after the outbreak began. (Electing officers) Journal of Capt Mark Walker, 22 June 1859, NAM; C.W. Allen to Capt Vaughan, 3 July 1859, Rose private letter book, BL; Delhi gazette, 30 June 1859. (Flogging) Allen's Indian mail, 11 August 1859; (banner) Englishman, 22 June 1859.

19. Mackenzie to Birch, Berhampore, 2 July 1859, PP 1860, p. 318. The story of the flogging was later contradicted: Allen's Indian mail, 27 August 1859

20. Delhi gazette, 5 July 1859



**Illustrations 9 a & b**

The south double-storey barrack block at the cantonment of Berhampore occupied by men of the 5th Bengal European Regiment in June 1859. Berhampore was abandoned as a cantonment in 1870 and has barely altered since. This building now houses the offices of the District Magistrate of Murshidabad. (Photograph by the author, November 1987.) The plan (IOLR maps CX4, 'The cantonments and civil station of Berhampore ... showing improvements to May 1859') shows the direction from which the photograph was taken.

caution. It is not clear why the men should have taken a step more extreme than any other unit in the entire protest. Observers resorted to the familiar explanations of ringleaders and combination, though neither satisfactorily explains why so many men acted so rashly. Maitland reported that on 16 June he had heard that deserters from Allahabad had been seen around the cantonment, and that men had received letters from the 6th infantry.<sup>21</sup> The appearance of deserters presents particular difficulties. Though Maitland reported apprehending one (no record of his trial appears in the Military Proceedings or General orders), the surviving casualty rolls disclose that no men deserted from up-country cavalry units in the months preceding the outbreak, nor from the 4th infantry.<sup>22</sup>

At least two potential 'ringleaders' can be identified, Lance Sergeant James Best and Private William Marshall. Best, a recruit of 1858 whose promotion implies a gift for leadership, appears briefly in the official record and then disappears. Private Marshall, however, became notorious in the columns of mofussil newspapers. Embodying the force's assertive demeanour, he addressed the divisional commander personally.<sup>23</sup> Maitland, unfamiliar with European troops, described him as 'a madman'. Marshall in turn expressed his view of his new officers during an altercation with the regiment's new adjutant in July. Reprimanded for leaving his rifle dirty, he threw it down, exclaiming, 'I am a Civilian, and ought not to carry a Rifle at all'. Ordered to be confined, he replied

Lance Sergeant James Best, No. 164, 5th Bengal European Regiment. Walmer Castle, 1858

Corporal William Marshall, No. 1754, 5th Bengal European Regiment. Labourer of Glasgow, enl. Glasgow, November 1855, aged 25; Roman Emperor, 1855

Blast your eyes to hell, do you call this dirty; you Sepoy Officers, that has spoiled this Regiment'.<sup>24</sup>

Assuming that Marshall was not insane, his exasperation with officers who understood little of how to manage a European regiment is explicable. On inspecting the regimental defaulters' book Mackenzie found that the 5th's officers had adopted a ludicrously lenient disciplinary policy, repeatedly forgiving insubordinate men reported by sergeants.<sup>25</sup> The officers' attitude

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21. Maj F. Maitland, 'Statement of occurrences in Her Majesty's 5th European Regiment', 23 June 1859, PP 1860, p. 259

22. Bengal muster rolls and casualty returns 1859, IOLR, L/MIL/10/181, for the 1st, 2nd, 3rd & 4th BELC and the 4th BER

23. Maj F. Maitland, 'Statement of occurrences in Her Majesty's 5th European Regiment', PP 1860, p. 260

24. Bengal general orders, 1859, p. 423, Proceedings of a GCM, 29 July 1859, IOLR

25. Mackenzie to Birch, 27 June 1859, PP 1860, pp. 256-8

explains why, despite their organizing the ball, several sergeants and even colour sergeants expressed dissatisfaction at the transfer.<sup>26</sup>

The 5th experience of the protest emphasises the awkwardness of officers, non-commissioned officers and men, the lack of mutual trust or understanding and the importance of individuals in shaping the responses of relatively small groups. What the abundant, albeit confusing, accounts of events at Berhampore do not provide, however, are insights into the motivations of the participants. In order to acquire these, it is necessary to make the most of the imperfect sources and to focus on the recruits as a whole.

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Though legally soldiers, few recruits regarded themselves as such, and attempts to consider the new corps as military communities, an approach offering satisfactory explanations of the older units' experiences, offer little. None of the new regiments had developed the institutional cohesion or identity of established corps. The transcripts of the courts of inquiry disclose dissatisfaction with military life in general or with particular corps, suggesting their relative incoherence as military communities. Those of the 2nd cavalry particularly contain many incidental remarks indicating the men's feelings. 'Soldiering and me fell out, sir', one Irish carpenter ruminated feelingly, 'the first day I landed in the country'.<sup>27</sup> Aware of the hazards of India, none needed an inducement to leave. 'I wouldn't be a soldier in this country if I got my weight in gold', declared another with finality.<sup>28</sup> Another had 'tired of soldiering for a soldier has too many masters to please'.<sup>29</sup> Others expressed dissatisfaction with the regiment, confirming Mansfield's apprehension of the cavalry's inefficiency. A man without bedding, for example, had been allowed to shift for himself for five months.<sup>30</sup> Another alleged that men transferred from older corps had been favoured: 'a man has no chance unless he's a volunteer', claimed a former Blackburn labourer while a former stonemason from Liverpool complained that 'if one man commits a fault the whole regiment gets punished'.<sup>31</sup> The 2nd cavalry's rank

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26. Capt Charles Graeme; Lt C.P. Hunter to Lt L. Davies [Adjutant], 23 June 1859, PP 1860, p. 262

27. Testimony of Pte W. Edwards, 2nd BELC, Meerut inquiry, PP 1860, p. 359

28. Testimony of Pte L. Sullivan, 2nd BELC, Meerut inquiry, PP 1860, p. 343

29. Testimony of Pte S. Thomas, 2nd BELC, Meerut inquiry, PP 1860, p. 328

30. Testimony of Pte W. Williams, 2nd BELC, Meerut inquiry, PP 1860, p. 522

31. Testimonies of Ptes B. Graley; J. Whitlock, 2nd BELC, Meerut inquiry, PP 1860, pp. 371, 344

and file had developed neither an understanding of the European force's ways nor an attachment to it as an institution.

Men recruited during the rebellion comprised roughly forty per cent of the strength of the artillery, nearly three quarters of the infantry and practically all of the cavalry. Their part in the protest, though resembling that of their older comrades, betrays significant differences in the conception and expression of apparently similar grievances. Arguably the distinguishing feature of the young soldiers' protest is that it was not in essence a military protest. Lady Canning characteristically dismissed the protest as 'a Manchester strike', a robust view somewhat at odds with her fears of it inflaming the native army.<sup>32</sup> Some contemporaries agreed. Henry Durand, though contesting that the protest was the result of 'combination', conceded that the force included 'recruits from manufacturing districts, expert at strikes, and ... unleavened with older hands'.<sup>33</sup> Drafted into new regiments reversing the usual proportions of old and young soldiers, recruits essentially remained civilians. Before courts of inquiry, for example, many habitually addressed officers as 'gentlemen' or 'Your Honour' rather than 'sir'. Indeed, many recruits thought of the protest as an industrial dispute, and spoke and acted accordingly. At Allahabad, men of the 1st cavalry and the 4th infantry elected delegates to represent each troop and company. They and many others submitted petitions stating their case. Many officers and men regarded the entire protest, in fact, as a 'strike'.<sup>34</sup>

Durand's explanation is plausible, and superficially satisfactory. Recruits appear to have acted as they would have in the workshops and factories they had left. Brigadier St George Showers, watching Queen's troops escort disaffected gunners into confinement at Agra, described them as acting 'more like workmen and labourers than disciplined soldiers'.<sup>35</sup> While offering a direct connection between barrack-room and workshop, the approach is, however, less useful than it would at first seem in penetrating the recruits' conception and expression of grievance. The life

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32. Hare, *The story of two noble lives*, Vol. III, p. 49. Lady Canning used the same expression in one of her periodic reports to Queen Victoria, 18 May 1859, RA, Z.502/58.

33. 'Memorandum by Colonel Durand', 4 January 1860, PP 1860, Vol. L, p. 85

34. Holdich diary, 11 May 1859, SRM; Maj Gen C.A. Windham [Commanding Lahore Division], PP 1860, p. 55; Clyde to Canning, Simla, 18 May 1859, Canning papers, WYA, Vol. 70; No. 134; Mansfield to Inglis, Simla, 19 May 1859, Mansfield letter book, NAM. Military protest in India had previously been described as striking rather than mutiny: Indian newspapers reporting the protests of sepoys refusing to lose *batta* by marching into Scinde in 1844 referred to them as 'strikes'. Familiarity with the European soldiers' customary vigilance over conditions of service presumably led Sir John Kaye to refer to soldiers' protest as 'strikes'; Kaye, *A history of the sepoy war*, Vol. I, p. 298.

35. Showers to Bradford, Agra, 19 May 1859, PP 1860, p. 132

of the contemporary workplace is, as one of its recent scholars has conceded, 'opaque'.<sup>36</sup> Scarcity of sources and the secretive culture of workplace organization (partly a reaction to coercive industrial law) limits knowledge of the ways in which masters and men behaved, both ordinarily and during disputes. It is tempting to argue that the actions of recruits in 1859 might extend as well as build on understanding of working practices. Working from so narrow an empirical base can produce an interesting and novel superstructure of interpretation, but one liable to instability from the insecurity of its foundation.

For several units it is possible to construct detailed profiles by occupation and region, and to correlate them with testimony before the courts of inquiry. No discernible pattern emerges. The men testifying from the 2nd cavalry, for instance, had followed dozens of occupations, many conveying but the vaguest impression of their work before enlistment. No region or occupational group predominated. Comparisons of the testimonies of, say, the dozen men each associated with Birmingham ironworking shops or Lancashire textile trades is disappointingly intractable, revealing little beyond the repetition of the catchphrases current in the regiment. The three Blackburn weavers, for example, all described the Company as 'broke up', but before the court, if not before each other, revealed nothing of their industrial experience. Locating men from areas known to have sustained industrial action during the 1850s, Preston or Glasgow, say, establishes geographical congruence, without necessarily demonstrating the influence of ideas acquired in industrial disputes. Broadening the focus to entire industries barely revises the picture. In three troops of the 4th cavalry, for instance, eleven men testifying mentioned that they had been seamen. It is possible that seafaring expectations of fo'c'sle negotiation may have led seamen to influence their fellows, but again the incidence is insignificant.

In the absence of computer-assisted analysis the evidence remains intractable. Paradoxically, however, the conclusion lends confidence to generalisation. For as they lay on their cots during the stifling summer days, debating the options they faced - to testify, to declare themselves, to accept discharge - the barrack-rooms constituted virtually a parliament of British working men. This, perhaps, provides a key to the recruits' coherence in protest. Richard Price argues persuasively in his study of industrial relations in the Victorian building trades that workers, in the absence of formal occupational organizations, pursued industrial grievances through 'autonomous work groups'. Electing and supporting improvised committees, presumably comprising older, more experienced and articulate men, groups of men employed on particular sites bargained with foremen and builders over particular issues. Though ostensibly concerned

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36. Clive Behagg, 'Secrecy, ritual and folk violence: the opacity of the workplace in the first half of the nineteenth century', in Robert Storch, (ed.), Popular culture and custom in nineteenth-century England, London, 1982, p. 154

with wages and conditions, industrial relations represented in essence 'a struggle for power' over the process of work; what Price calls 'work control'.<sup>37</sup> The mobility of many single men (and perhaps a third of those enlisting in 1857-58 were 'on the tramp') ensured their familiarity with working as members of such groups. The relevance of their occupational experience is therefore not that life in a cotton mill or nail maker's shop provided a particular vocabulary of grievance, but that workers in many trades shared essentially similar expectations and approaches to the resolution of grievance. Though never having worked alongside one another, they might have reacted to the soldiers' grievance as they would have to a problem over wages or conditions in the workshops, foundries or building sites they had left.

Industrial experience evidently underlay many men's attitudes to the protest. Every man's account book made clear the punishment for mutiny, while the risks and the rewards of protest surely raised the possibility of violence between those differing over actions proposed.<sup>38</sup> The tensions resembled those of an industrial dispute. Cautious men, apprehensive of exposing themselves before authority, never appeared before the courts: their views are largely irrecoverable. Others explained their apprehension. Asked why he hadn't previously made clear his dissatisfaction with the transfer, a young gunner replied that 'I thought it time enough, sir, when all the rest came up'.<sup>39</sup> The evidence hints at what might have occurred in barrack-rooms, mess houses and canteens beyond officers' observation. Men of J troop of the 1st cavalry, for instance, at first attempted to remain aloof from the protest, asking to be moved to other barracks 'as they were afraid of the men from the other troops'. They then relented and appeared before the court.<sup>40</sup> Several officers suspected that men had been intimidated into participating in or conniving at protest. At Meerut the president of the board identifying those electing for discharge considered that many men were afraid to state their intention to stay.<sup>41</sup> Many must have wavered between fear of official discipline and the possibility of their comrades' censure. In the 6th infantry fear of official reaction seems to have overcome the desire to express grievance. Private James Dillon's testimony to the court convened at Hazareebaugh, for example, reveals the choices they faced in deciding whether to participate. His barrack-room,

Private James Dillon, No. 352, 6th  
Bengal European Regiment. Enl.  
Carlow, September 1858; disch. 883

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37. Richard Price, Masters, unions and men: work control in building and the rise of labour, 1830-1914, Cambridge, 1980, p. 9

38. Account book of Gnr Thomas Perrott, Artillery recruit, 1858-59

39. Testimony of Gnr J. Millard, 4/4th BA, Meerut inquiry, PP 1860, p. 213

40. Testimony of Pte John McEven, 1st BELC, 'Proceedings of a Special Court of Inquiry ... at Allahabad', PP 1860, p. 631

41. Lt Col E. Price to AAG, Meerut Division, Meerut, 8 July 1859, PP 1860, p. 643

he stated, had received several unsigned notes from other companies asking how many would refuse to turn out for parade. Dillon's room 'sent back word that we would all turn out and do our duty as soldiers'. Dillon himself found one such note, lying on a mess table, which he recalled read:

Dear Brothers, we write to you these few feeling words as brothers, as we may call you. Please send us the word how many of you will turn out for parade.

Dillon sought a friend's guidance, who advised him to reply that 'none will stay away from parade', and threw it outside. 'If the paper is found here', he told the rather obtuse Dillon, 'we shall be blamed for it'.<sup>42</sup>

The influence of previous occupational experience is particularly apparent among those, such as artisans or clerks, who had worked for small masters in commerce or other than manufacturing industries. Such men compared enlistment to a contract of employment. A former rope and sail maker, in conceding that the transfer had not materially affected him, nevertheless insisted that 'I agreed to serve the Company, and the contract is at an end. Like as if I had agreed to serve a man who became bankrupt'.<sup>43</sup> A former photographer spoke for many in musing that 'I don't see how I could be made to serve a master I didn't engage to'.<sup>44</sup> Editorials in local newspapers endorsed (and presumably fostered) such views. In discussing the troops' perception that their enlistment established a contract between them individually and the Company, the Mofussilite commented that 'we do not see how the interpretation of one [party] ... can be considered as settling the matter in dispute'.<sup>45</sup> The force of the analogy must have been sharpened by the men's awareness that employers in Britain annually prosecuted thousands of employees for breach of contract.<sup>46</sup> Old soldiers also compared their terms of enlistment to contracts, suggesting how deeply embedded within working-class culture was the notion of the inviolability of contracts.

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42. Testimony of Pte James Dillon, 6th BER, 'Proceedings of a Court of Inquiry ... at Hazareebaugh', PP 1860, pp. 280-81

43. Testimony of Gnr Francis Burton, 2/4th BA, Meerut inquiry, PP 1860, p. 172

44. Testimony of Gnr W. Harden, 4/4th BA, Meerut inquiry, PP 1860, p. 205. See also pp. 121, 123, 155, 172 for instances of men drawing analogies with employment contracts.

45. Mofussilite, 15 April 1859

46. Daphne Simon, 'Master and servant', in John Saville, (ed.), Democracy and the labour movement: essays in honour of Dana Torr, London, 1954, pp. 160-200

Artisans, prominent in contemporary workers' movements, may also have influenced their fellows' protest. The figure of the shoemaker, for example, has been celebrated as

**Corporal J. Gordon, 2nd Bengal European Light Cavalry, Shoemaker, of Belfast, attested at Belfast, November 1857**

'popular philosopher and politician'.<sup>47</sup> Can their 'proverbial radicalism' be discerned in testimonies before the courts of inquiry? Again, the evidence is weak. The 2nd cavalry, the new regiment with the most expansive transcripts, contained twenty-one former shoemakers, from England, Ireland and Scotland, fifteen of whom were literate. Several referred to points of principle before the court. A Corporal Gordon declared that he thought that his contract with the Company was 'void', as if he were standing up to an overbearing master.<sup>48</sup> Most, however, doggedly stated facts and asserted rights like dozens of their fellows. If the 'political shoemakers' of Meerut referred among themselves to abstractions they kept their cards close to their chests when individually confronting military authority. On the basis of the only surviving vestiges of men's formal testimony no direct connection can be found between industrial experience and their attitude to the protest.

That so many men from all over Britain and Ireland testified so uniformly suggests, however, that they conceived the issue as a point of principle at a more fundamental level than an industrial dispute or political debate. At a deeper, cultural level the recruits expressed an inarticulate but sincere awareness that the issue involved a contest between 'them' and 'us'. In his own version of his exchange with 'Sir Napier' at Morar, Private Brown expressed his outrage at what 'they' had done. The soldiers' protest was informed by imprecise but no less powerful understandings of political principles, conceived in elemental and totemic terms: 'them' and 'us', 'rights' and 'justice'.

The transcripts disclose how the protest drew on and reflected communal concerns and understandings. Though examined individually (and, as far as can be ascertained, out of earshot of their fellows) men offered testimonies which simultaneously expressed a composite view. Asked whether they would take discharge, many replied that their decision depended on their comrades'.<sup>49</sup> It is clear that within the relative security of their rooms men discussed what to do. They decided whether to appear before the court, what to say and whether to accept discharge. Debates occurred at every level: between messmates and those sharing barrack-rooms and within troops, companies and even regiments. Mates conferred before appearing before courts of inquiry. In the 2nd cavalry, for example, two men (enlisted within days of

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47. Eric Hobsbawm & Joan Scott, 'Political shoemakers', in Hobsbawm, Worlds of labour: further studies in the history of labour, London, 1984, p. 108

48. Testimony of Pte J. Gordon, 2nd BELC, Meerut inquiry, PP 1860, p. 263

49. For the 2nd cavalry, eight between pp. 345-52; PP 1860

each other and therefore probably also shipmates) testified one after the other that the oath they took at enlistment merely enjoined them 'not to use any vile language against Her Majesty'.<sup>50</sup>

Scrutiny of even the most laconic transcripts reveals patterns of consultation and collusion. Men of the 3rd cavalry at Meean Meer, for instance, were apparently permitted to utter one sentence in response to the question, 'Have you anything to say regarding the transfer?' Expressions recurred within troops and smaller groups. Of the first twelve men called from 'A' Troop six referred to the Company being 'broken up'. Half way through the troop twelve men stated that they considered themselves 'free men'. In 'G' Troop three out of eighteen declared that they had enlisted for the Company 'only', but the next day 21 out of 53 men of 'E' Troop used the same expression. Though examined individually their statements reflect a collective shaping, from mates agreeing to entire troops following a party line. Many of the groups using such expressions comprised fifteen to twenty men, the number accommodated in Meean Meer's barrack-rooms. Apprehensive of individual encounters with authority and conscious of what they risked by appearing, men carefully weighed, debated and rehearsed what they would say, each room deciding what its members should stress, one choosing to emphasise, say, the legality which they saw as the foundation of their case ('I enlisted for the Company only'), another deciding to state a definite demand ('I claim my discharge').<sup>51</sup>

The 4th cavalry's transcripts suggest not just the fact of debate, but its philosophical basis. Its members differed over whether they should claim discharge as a 'right', or as an indulgence. Twenty men of 'E' troop appeared before the court assembled at Lucknow between six and nine on the morning of 1 June. Four men stated that they 'wish for ... discharge but do not claim it as a right', while three made clear that 'I claim it as a right'.<sup>52</sup> Though no other regiment concentrated on whether the claim was a 'right', a third of the 4th's men testifying referred to the question. Its prominence derived from debates which had occurred within the regiment in the months preceding. The dispute (seemingly resolved in favour of requesting rather than demanding discharge) was not simply a matter of principle. The decision reflected, perhaps, a shrewd guess that their case would be better served by temperate request. Imperfectly recoverable from the transcripts, the recruits' collective response points to the importance of the protest and the inquiries it prompted as a window into the world of working men of mid-Victorian Britain and Ireland.

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50. Testimonies of Ptes T. Cameron and J. Casey, 2nd BELC, Meerut inquiry, PP 1860, p. 265

51. Meean Meer inquiry, PP 1860, pp. 94-101

52. Lucknow inquiry, PP 1860, pp. 589-91

However various were their interpretations and actions, old and young soldiers appear to have shared a range of assumptions deriving from their civil experience. In testifying to the courts of inquiry they referred to the 'rights' they believed they enjoyed and felt were under threat, to notions of the importance of oaths and to the importance of contractual obligations. In considering the significant differences between units, between Englishmen and Irishmen and between old and young soldiers, these unifying values should be recalled. Central to the soldiers' understanding of the transfer was that it infringed not merely the legality of the terms of their enlistment as soldiers of the Company, but a fundamental, if often nebulous, conception of 'justice'. A deeper understanding of the motivations of the protest calls upon a familiarity with what Patrick Joyce describes as 'the mental world of the articulate workingman'.<sup>53</sup> Indeed, it calls upon, and even extends, the approach outlined in his *Visions of the people*, exploring the 'family' of populisms shaping the Victorian working man's understanding of the social and political order. In this, a world previously hardly scrutinised by historians, we necessarily enter regions of conjecture and speculation. It is an ignorance largely shared by those collecting much of the surviving evidence. Perceptive officers, however, recognised that the protest was no mere 'Manchester strike'.

Even before transcripts reached headquarters Mansfield realized that the protest's strength derived from traditional concepts of right. After interviewing Colonel Edwin Johnson on his return to Simla from Meerut Mansfield told a correspondent that the men 'stood on their rights as Englishmen'.<sup>54</sup> Many men referred to 'rights', though few defined explicitly what they might have been. (Indeed, though many men were literate, they often exhibited a rudimentary grasp of the system deciding their fate: one bombardier, asked to define an Act of Parliament, replied that it was 'a company of Lords sitting together'.<sup>55</sup>) Others understood the issue intuitively or at best inarticulately: 'I want to be righted', said one man, 'but do not understand my rights. I wish to go home'.<sup>56</sup> Imprecision strengthened rather than eroded their confidence. Among the dogged assertions of rights, however, courts also heard a few men define or obliquely refer to principles underlying their case. A few men, particularly Scots, echoed liberal if not radical

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53. Joyce, *Visions of the people*, p. 210. An impression of how men might have discussed the issue in the barrack-rooms is apparent in chapter 1 of Robert Tressall's bitter novel *The ragged trousered philanthropists*. [1914], London, 1948

54. Mansfield to Clerk, 11 May 1859, Mansfield private letter book, NAM. Johnson, adjutant general of the artillery, was another Company's officer who had prospered at headquarters during the rebellion.

55. Testimony of Bdr H. Hamilton, 2/1st BHA, Meerut inquiry, PP 1860, p. 147

56. Testimony of Pte William Brown, 4th BELC, 'Proceedings of a Special Court of Inquiry ... at Lucknow', PP 1860, p. 597

political theory. An Aberdonian blacksmith objected to the transfer because it 'doesn't appear to consist with reason'.<sup>57</sup> A Dundee clerk decried it as 'arbitrary'.<sup>58</sup> A Glasgow compositor declared it to be 'inconsistent with true British principles'.<sup>59</sup>

Despite one of the catch-cries at Meerut - 'We will not soldier for the Queen'-republicanism as such was irrelevant.<sup>60</sup> While rumours circulated that men had called for 'three groans for the Queen', at Meerut and Berhampore, neither the person nor the institution became an issue, even among Irishmen.<sup>61</sup> Rather, the issue appears to have been the primacy of customary rights, to the exclusion of loyalty to a monarch remote rather than revered. A line from a broadside ballad, 'Jone o'Greenfield junior', part of a vigorous Oldham tradition of popular verse, put the case succinctly. The ballad celebrated the independence of an archetypal weaver hero, 'John of Greenfield', who had 'nought again th' King, but likes a fair thing'. The sentiment reflected a widespread popular belief; the verse from which the line came became 'household words' in mid-Victorian Lancashire.<sup>62</sup>

If any one idea permeated the protest it was that, as another Scot put it, the transfer had infringed the men's rights as 'free-born British subjects'.<sup>63</sup> This notion, the one explicitly ideological statement made by more than one individual throughout the protest, appears most clearly not, as might be expected, from the brief exchanges before the courts of inquiry, but from a report of a more lengthy interview

Lieutenant General Marcus Beresford, Commanding Mysore Div., Madras army. Comm. 1817

John Baird, No. 3684, 1st Madras European Fusillers. Surveyor and millwright, of Eaglesham, Renfrewshire; enl. Glasgow, August 1857, aged 28; volunteered to 102nd Fusillers, 1861

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57. Testimony of Gnr John McKenzie, 4/4th BA, Meerut inquiry, PP 1860, p. 186

58. Testimony of Gnr John Duffin, 4/4th BA, Meerut inquiry, PP 1860, p. 191

59. Testimony of Pte J. McIntyre, 2nd BELC, Meerut inquiry, PP 1860, p. 326

60. Not that it was entirely absent: an Irish Bombay artilleryman was sentenced to thirty lashes and two years' hard labour for telling a colour sergeant 'We will have our just rights ... they may go and \_\_\_\_ the Queen': Proceedings of a European General Court Martial, Mhow, 6 June 1859', Rose letter book, BL, Add. Ms. 42812.

61. Elsmie, *Thirty-five years in the Puniab*, p. 57. At Berhampore, men reportedly called for 'Three groans for Mrs Queen': *Delhi gazette*, 10 May 1859

62. Joyce, *Visions of the people*, pp. 237-9. At the same time, traces of anti-monarchical sentiment inherited from earlier in the century may have influenced some men. In 1842 the *Hurkaru* had re-printed a report from the *Naval and military gazette* recording how a Chartist 'mob' hounded a recruiting sergeant, shouting, "'To hell with the Queen" ... "To hell with those that enlist": 6 August 1842.

63. Pte John Miller, a Scot, formerly a draughtsman, enlisted in 1854, Dugshaie inquiry, PP 1860, p. 538

between General Marcus Beresford, the commander of the Mysore Division, and a man named Baird, also a Scot, of the Madras Fusiliers. Beresford, anxious to learn more of the attitude of his command, in mid-May interviewed the man at his colonel's suggestion. He was a 'good soldier', 'of better family' than most soldiers and 'well educated', recommended for secondment to the Public Works Department: yet another of the Indian army's aspirants. An 'able disputant', he and Beresford spent an hour and a half debating the issue, arguing as equals. Baird put the soldiers' case, arguing that the transfer nullified his oath, necessitating discharge or re-enlistment with bounty. More importantly, he discussed the roots of his objection to the manner of the transfer: '[w]hen the feudal times ceased', he explained, 'man ceased to be a slave, to be transferred over as his masters pleased'. 'As a free-born Englishman', he expected 'free consent, asked and given'.<sup>64</sup> Baird grounded his argument not in relatively recent ideologies of class conscious reform, but in essentially conservative notions of rights legitimated by usage and custom. In this events in Indian barrack-rooms reflected the 'master plot' of British history, as Patrick Joyce puts it, that 'the "true people" of England ... have been excluded from their birthright'.<sup>65</sup> The presence of Irish and especially Irish Catholic men naturally diluted awareness of a 'common English, Protestant heritage'.<sup>66</sup> An elemental (if inarticulate) sense of denial of liberty, however, one of the roots of Irish popular national feeling, may have provided sufficient common ground to dissipate sectarianism, particularly in that the issue was neither religious nor national.

Defining in abstraction the principles at stake proved to be difficult, particularly given the circumstances under which most testimonies were collected, in the formality of the courts of inquiry. Some defined negatively the freedom they felt they had lost, such as Private Peter (alias Edward) Martin; significantly, perhaps, a former shoemaker. Martin argued in a petition that following the transfer he was 'no more a free man than the serfs of Russia', raising again overtones of feudalism.<sup>67</sup> Many more argued by analogy, summoning an entire menagerie of similes in the course of their statements and

Private Peter Martin, 3rd Bengal European Regiment. Shoemaker, of Enniskillen, Fermanagh; enl. Liverpool, May 1856, aged 20; disch 883

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64. Demi-official letter, Gen Marcus Beresford to Gen Sir Patrick Grant 20 May 1859, PP 1860, pp. 749-50. Baird's view echoes the common contemporary impression that the 'Norman yoke' displaced traditional freedoms; see Christopher Hill, 'The Norman yoke', in Saville, Democracy and the labour movement, pp. 11-66. Only two men named Baird served in the regiment in 1859, the other a servant of County Kildare. I am grateful to Mr Ian Baxter of the India Office Library and Records for searching for these and many other men's records.

65. Joyce, Visions of the people, p. 332

66. Ibid., p. 174

67. Pte Edward Martin, 3rd BER, to 'the Brigadier Commanding Gwalior Division', Morar, 12 May 1859, PP 1860, p. 112

petitions. Men said that they had been treated like sheep, horses, bullocks and guns, 'so much Indian stock', 'a herd of camels', or 'a dog or a goat sold in the bazaars'.<sup>68</sup> The most telling comparison 'like slaves', contrasted powerfully with the notion that they were 'free-born'.<sup>69</sup> Their assertion of possessing a certain kind of freedom even while subject to military discipline drew strength by harnessing the evocative and unwitting support of Lord Palmerston, a potent contemporary symbol. In debating the first, abortive Government of India bill in February 1858 Palmerston had declared in the Commons that if troops enlisted by the Company disliked changes following the transfer, 'I think in common justice they will be entitled to their discharge'.<sup>70</sup> He spoke in support of a bill that, in the event, did not become law, and in a reforming cause to which he had no particular commitment, but this proved no handicap. The endorsement of the most popular politician of the time clearly became a talisman to the men. Particularly after his celebrated 'Civis Romanus sum' speech of 1850, Palmerston had become a figure of immense popular prestige.<sup>71</sup> His apparent endorsement of the men's position became for the authorities an embarrassment. Word of it had reached India a year before, through the Overland mail of 17 February 1858. Resurrected and disseminated by the mofussil papers, it became widely known throughout Bengal by the time the courts of inquiry convened. Both old and young soldiers believed and deployed this argument against their transfer, clearly reflecting a widespread belief that they acted with the sanction of a higher power independent of their standing as soldiers under discipline. 'This', confided the garrulous Gunner Flemming, 'is what the men are building on': 'I hope Lord Palmerston will see my statement', declared a Glasgow baker.<sup>72</sup>

Even more representative of the force as a whole, because it derived from a belief deeply rooted in both English and Irish popular consciousness, was the soldiers' perception of the importance of oaths. In a semi-literate society oaths bound those embarking on the many minor transactions punctuating working-class life. Oaths united those engaged in agrarian protest or

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68. PP 1860, pp. 55, 301

69. PP 1860, pp. 76, 613

70. The critical passage appears in PP 1860, p. 272

71. For example, in 1853-54 he had become drawn into the great Preston lock-out, though his involvement did the 'turn-outs' no good: H.I. Dutton & J.E. King, 'Ten per cent and no surrender': the Preston strike, 1853-1854, Cambridge, 1981, chapter 8

72. Testimony of Gnr J. Flemming; Testimony of Gnr J. Morrison, 2/1st BHA, Meerut inquiry, PP 1860, pp. 152; 161. It is tempting to attribute Flemming's unusually revealing testimony to his having enlisted in India. Presumably a soldier's son, having grown up in India he missed out on the training in reticence imparted to his metropolitan fellows, and imbibed instead the forthright demeanour of the European force.

trades unionism in both Britain and Ireland.<sup>73</sup> Trades' societies relied upon oaths simultaneously to conceal and confirm identity: on joining a benevolent lodge Thomas Wright encountered the legacy of repression, enduring 'a long and senseless rigmarole ... in effect an oath not to reveal the secrets of "the order"'.<sup>74</sup> Oaths lubricated commerce - 'a pound of tea', complained the economist J.D. Tuckett (in the course of arguing that promiscuous oaths encouraged falsehood) 'cannot travel ... from the ship to the consumer, without costing half a dozen ... at least'.<sup>75</sup>

Central to both the legal opinion endorsing the transfer and the men's case in opposing it was the question of whether the men were bound by their oaths of attestation. On enlistment every soldier had sworn an 'Oath of Allegiance and Fidelity':

I ... do make oath that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty ... and will observe and obey all orders ... of the generals and officers set over me. ... And that I will be true to the ... Company ...<sup>76</sup>

Though believing the transfer itself unjust, many found the existence of the oath an obstacle not to be lightly disregarded. Gunner John Bain declared that

Gunner John Bain, No. 8424, 2/1st Bengal Horse Artillery. Blacksmith, of Leith; enl. Edinburgh, January 1855; Roman Emperor, 1855; disch. 883

I should have considered I was committing a mortal sin had I taken a wrong oath, and I remember what oath I took.<sup>77</sup>

Men debated the ethics and the politics of the issue. A company of the 4th infantry petitioned that an oath 'binding on our conscience', would 'not allow us to serve Her Majesty as a soldier'.<sup>78</sup> Some sought refuge in legalism, asserting that oaths has been incorrectly

73. Michael Beames, Peasants and power: the Whiteboy movements and their control in pre-famine Ireland, Brighton, 1983, pp. 34-5

74. Thomas Wright, Some habits and customs of the working classes, [1867], New York, 1967, p. 70

75. J.D. Tuckett, A history of the past and present state of the labouring population, [1846], Shannon, 1971, p. 681

76. General Order 883 reminded every soldier of the oath he should have sworn by citing it verbatim, PP 1860, p 236. Its meaning had been canvassed before the select committee which considered the extending the Company's charter in 1852. Lt Gen Sir George Pollock, prominent in the first Afghan war, declared that it bound the Company's men to 'do whatever the Crown may desire to have done in India': PP 1852-53, Vol. XXVII, minutes of evidence, p. 41, q. 577.

77. Testimony of Gnr John Bain, 2/1st BHA, Meerut inquiry, PP 1860, p. 148

78. 'Petition of the Grievances &c. of No. 6 Company, virtually belonging to the late East India Company, which is no longer in existence', PP 1860, pp. 53-4

administered. A cavalryman, for example, claimed immunity because 'I never kissed the book ... there were too many of us'.<sup>79</sup> Others, though ill and desperate to escape India, accepted that they could not claim discharge as a right: 'If ... I am bound by the oath I have taken I am quite willing to serve'.<sup>80</sup> That many men had been incorrectly attested confused the issue and buttressed the common belief that they were no longer bound by the oath they had sworn on enlisting for the Company. Men repeatedly testified that the oath had been administered by constables or magistrates' clerks, or contended that the prescribed form had not been observed. Clearly the fact and the form of the oath were of immense importance to these men. 'It is impossible', wrote Mansfield, 'to be acquainted with the habits and thoughts of English peasantry and not be aware that a vast number of men are quite sincere in this scruple'.<sup>81</sup> Moreover, the scruple was evident among both old soldiers and recruits. A careful investigation of their resolution of the dilemma reveals the protest to have been as much about differences within the ranks as between men and authority.

As the outspokenness of the Scots on matters of principle suggests, the protest exhibited an ethnic dimension, one intimately connected to the societies the men had left in enlisting, and one which emphasises the importance of considering the civil connotations of an ostensibly military phenomenon. Even as they identified themselves as 'men of Great Britain and Ireland', as the petition stating the 'Aggrievances' of the 1st cavalry put it, ethnicity seems not to have divided the protesters.<sup>82</sup> At the same time, Englishmen, Irishmen and Scots did act differently. Though no Irishman spoke of the rights of 'free-born Englishmen', all referred to the importance of oaths, contracts and rights. Scots, the products of both a superior education system and, in Glasgow at least, sharp industrial divisions, particularly articulated the intellectual bases of the men's case. Ethnic differences were also significant in that while in the new regiments virtually all recruits decided to accept discharge, in the older regiments disproportionately few Irishmen accepted discharge. When asked what they planned to do if offered discharge Englishmen tended to answer 'I'd go home and work for my living' - incidentally betraying the conviction that soldiering was not work. Irishmen, thinking perhaps of the poverty and uncertainty of the land they had left, were less sure of their future as civilians. The varying realities of poverty and opportunity at home therefore acted upon all those soldiers contemplating their future. For the Bengal Artillery the consequence was to intensify the Irishness of a force in which

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79. Testimony of Pte Patrick Gallagher, 4th BELC, Lucknow inquiry, PP 1860, p. 597

80. Testimony of Pte Thomas Luson, 4th BELC, Lucknow inquiry, PP 1860, p. 591

81. Mansfield to Higgins, 31 July 1859, Private letter book, NAM

82. 'The Aggrievances and Claims of the ... 1st Bengal European Light Cavalry', PP 1860, p. 64

previously it had been exaggerated. After the discharged men's departure nearly half of those remaining were Irish.<sup>83</sup>

The soldiers' protest, then, derived from powerful, if often unspecified values central to the working people of mid-nineteenth century Britain. A vague belief in 'rights', the authority of Palmerston's endorsement and the power of the sense of oaths, all underlay the men's understanding and actions. All derived not only from the barrack-room culture but also from British and, to a lesser extent, Irish society at a fundamental cultural level. None was explained fully or articulately: indeed, the recruits' youth and the formality of the courts' proceedings precluded explicit reference to principle. Nor were working men accustomed to express such abstractions. As T.E. Lawrence observed of the men with whom he lived as an RAF recruit in the 1920s, 'abstract words come from their lips rare and uneven, stinking of print'.<sup>84</sup> It would be unreasonable to hope for more articulate statements of beliefs which did not exist explicitly or even consciously. The protest therefore provides an unexpected, if cloudy, window into a world which, though the object of intense interest, retains a frustrating obscurity. In that it illuminates relationships within and between classes which gave nineteenth century Britain much of its dynamism, a study of the soldiers' protest provides a point of departure for reflections on the nature of that society.

Unlikely as it might at first seem, a study of the events of 1859 may even contribute to British social history's celebrated debate over the 'making' of the working-class. Until recently, participants sought to establish the point or period at which a politically self-conscious working-class can be regarded as having become a reality. Edward Thompson and Eric Hobsbawm define the poles of the debate. Thompson, in The making of the English working class, argues that the tensions of industrialization and political repression transformed plebeian culture, producing a political radicalism which by the 1830s articulated a formed political consciousness. Others, accepting the reality of a working-class culture and nascent political and industrial expressions of its interests, follow Eric Hobsbawm in locating the formation of a self-consciously political working class in the late nineteenth century.<sup>85</sup> If the soldiers' protest derived from contemporary understandings of the fundamental relationship between rulers and ruled, it may reveal whether the protesters saw themselves as part of a self-conscious working-class in the Thompsonian sense, or whether they can be seen as Hobsbawm's precursors. As young men of about 21 the recruits did not comprise a representative sample of British working

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83. Muster rolls and casualty lists, Bengal Artillery, 1859, IOLR, L/MIL/10/182

84. T.E. Lawrence, The mint: a day-book of the RAF depot ... by A/c Ross, London, 1955, p. 130

85. E.J. Hobsbawm, 'The making of the working class 1870-1914', Worlds of labour, pp. 194-213

men. Even so, their protest cannot be seen purely or even largely as an explicit identification with the working-class supposedly 'made' thirty years before.

Recent scholarship has focussed on the adequacy of class as the fundamental explanation for that historical experience. That the barrack-rooms exhibit a culture of the labouring poor but hardly of a politically self-conscious working-class, corroborates the work of Patrick Joyce, whose *Visions of the people* has provided an interpretive context for what might otherwise have been regarded as inexplicable and uncomfortable evidence. In its bold and speculative identification of 'populism' rather than of 'class' as the engine of working people's reactions to the social changes experienced by nineteenth century Britons, Joyce's work provides a key impetus to the historical understanding of the century.<sup>86</sup>

The men's protest encompassed a great variety of understandings and responses, from the abstract and sophisticated to the concrete and rudimentary, from the wordy to the wordless. Indeed, some made their point symbolically rather than literally, calling on traditional expressions of protest. At Berhampore, for example, John Harty's resort to beating pots to express his feelings seemed to draw on the traditional practice of the 'charivari'.<sup>87</sup> Traditional protest itself used parody extensively.<sup>88</sup> Harty's be-ribboned cap mocked the recruiting sergeants' paraphernalia which had induced men to enlist originally.<sup>89</sup>

In the transcripts of the courts of inquiry, however, as with the surviving papers of ordinary soldiers before the rebellion, literate men claimed a disproportionate share of attention. Given the likelihood that men heard and perhaps

Gunner William Thomson, No. 9914, 2/1st Bengal Horse Artillery. Clerk, of Kilmarnock, Ayr; enl. Glasgow, February 1857; *Vittoria*, June 1858; disch. 883

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86. 'Populism' in Joyce's sense evades succinct definition. He argues that the validity of the concept emerges from the relationships evident between identities of, for example, locality, gender, occupation - and class - in a society over time. In this he works from and transforms one of the central tenets of Thompson's analysis of the transformation of the working people of early industrial Britain, that class exists in a relationship arising from experience, not as a category defined by objective considerations of occupation or income.

87. E.P. Thompson, "'Rough music": le charivari anglais, *Annales. Economies. Societies. Civilisations*, Vol. 27, 1972, pp. 285-312. Paul Pickering's 'Class without words: symbolic communication in the Chartist movement', *Past and present*, No. 112, August 1986, pp. 144-62, shows how important the less accessible expressions of protest could be for movements involving numerous illiterate people.

88. Graham Seal, 'Tradition and agrarian protest in nineteenth-century England and Wales', *Folklore*, Vol. 99, 1988, No. 2, pp. 146-69; Bob Bushaway, *By rite: custom, ceremony and community in England 1700-1880*, London, 1982, chapter 5

89. As did a 'pocklemation' displayed by recruits at Allahabad: G.F. Edmondstone [Lt Gov, NW Provinces] to Canning, 7 May 1859, Canning papers, WYA, Vol. 21, quoted in Shibly, *The reorganisation of the Indian armies*, pp. 82-3

repeated others' arguments, the testimony of articulate men assumes a particular importance. A Gunner William Thomson represents the articulate and influential recruit. A Scot and a clerk, Thomson had enlisted during the winter of 1857-8. His testimony before the court at Meerut embodies his fellows' views. Like many exchanges occurring at Meerut, his examination resembled a debate rather than a simple interrogation. Thomson contested the official interpretation of the soldiers' oath of allegiance, accepting its importance but arguing that it denoted no more than an oath of allegiance. Reminded by the court that the transfer occurred 'by the law of the land', he declared 'I consider that when two parties enter into a contract, one party ought to have his say as well as another'. Asked whether Lord Palmerston's speech had influenced him, Thomson stated that he had read of it in the Times and had discussed it with his comrades. 'I consider it', he concluded, 'the opinion of a great statesman'.<sup>90</sup> Lacking comprehensive or reliable insights into the recruits' motivations, Gunner Thomson's testimony illuminates the ideas which may have prompted the recruits at Allahabad, Meerut, Meean Meer and, pre-eminently, Berhampore, to act as they did.

The peculiar power of the soldiers' protest was that it drew on these various 'populisms' simultaneously. Within the one troop might have been old soldiers who explained that the transfer breached the usages of the service; labourers with hazy ideas of rights but who understood combining for protection; clerks able to give intuition a gloss of principle with talk of contract, and older men able to speak for and perhaps lead their less articulate messmates. The soldiers' protest therefore offers a 'vision of the people': partial, involving a small and highly selective portion of the working men of mid-Victorian Britain. It suggests an important, if paradoxical conclusion. Since the recruits acted in accordance with the attitudes and practices of the labouring poor of Britain and Ireland - having at best imperfectly assimilated those of the obstreperous barrack-room culture - they intrude into and interrupt the European soldiers' history. Their presence in the Europeans' barrack-rooms complicates a protest already frustratingly enigmatic. And yet they comprised a substantial part of the force, whose impatience with the constraints of military life largely determined the protest's success. That their motivation in doing so was civilian rather than military emphasises the importance of considering military history in the light of the society from which its members derive.

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90. Testimony of Gnr W. Thomson, 2/1st BHA, Meerut inquiry, PP 1860, pp. 168-9

## Chapter 8

### 'Mutinous combination'?: barrack-room culture and the artillery's protest

In the summer of 1859 the Bengal Artillery's three thousand men were distributed between some thirty-six troops or companies scattered from Dinapore in the east to Peshawur in the extreme north-west. The gunners' reactions to their transfer varied greatly between units. Some remained wholly unaffected while others were suspected of orchestrating the entire protest. Only a detailed, if selective, survey can hope to make sense of their otherwise perplexing variety, not least because the available sources, scarce and fragmentary, relate unevenly to men dispersed across Bengal. The artillery units' diversity of composition and circumstance precludes confident generalization. Since they experienced the protest not as the brigades and battalions in which they were nominally organized but as the smaller troops and companies in which they customarily served, tracing the dynamics of the protest is arguably possible with greater precision for a few well documented units. Scrutiny of the experience of several relatively well documented units representing different responses reveals how the dynamics of the barrack-room culture influenced crucially the gunners' response to the choices confronting the European force in 1859.

Lieutenant Colonel Edward Kaye's 2/2nd horse artillery troop had been divided during the closing operations of the rebellion, and during the soldiers' protest was distributed between Gondah and Allahabad. The Allahabad men, though remaining aloof from the discontent, were suspected of inciting the recruits' unrest.<sup>1</sup> The experience of the detachment at Gondah, however, can be reconstructed from several complementary sources. Soon after news of the outbreaks at Meerut and Allahabad reached the detachment its commander, Lieutenant Robert Franks, paraded the men and addressed them, asking his men to express their grievances. Assuring those who spoke that he would transmit their views to the authorities, he asked in return that

Lieutenant Colonel Edward Kaye (1815-92), Bengal Horse Artillery Brother of Sir John Kaye; comm. 1835; served first Afghan and second Punjab wars; Captain, 1850; ret. as hon. Lieutenant General, 1872

Lieutenant Robert Roche Franks (1835-88), 2/2nd Bengal Horse Artillery. Comm. 1853; Lieutenant, 1857; ret. as hon. Major General, 1884

Gunner William Mackenzie, No. 8482, 2/2nd Bengal Horse Artillery. Comb cutter, of Edinburgh; enl. Glasgow, April, 1854; Nil; disch. 883

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1. George Couper [Secretary to the Government of the NW Provinces] to Secretary to the Government of India, Home Department, Allahabad, 11 May 1859, PP 1860, p. 41

they continue to perform their duty. The informal negotiation characteristic of the force therefore ensured that no overt acts of protest occurred at Gondah.<sup>2</sup> Gunner William McKenzie, in a letter to a friend in Tombs's 2/1st at Meerut written a few days before Franks's intervention, discloses that the troop was 'very much dissatisfied', liable to 'follow your example' and would have acted sooner but for being divided.<sup>3</sup> Franks's offer to pass on complaints in return for forbearance tipped the balance from the open protest instigated from the barrack-room to a resolution deriving from the culture of the force. Franks may have been aware of his men's feelings because, as Charles Robinson explained, officers 'have to walk up & down the Stables for an hour & a half morning and evening to see the Horses [are] properly cleaned'.<sup>4</sup> Though the gunners at Gondah corresponded with other units during the protest they gave 'not the slightest sign of discontent' throughout the protest.<sup>5</sup> Quiescence, however, signified not recantation, but certainty. On 6 August 47 of the troop's 102 men marched out, cheering ironically: cheers not returned by the Queen's troops remaining.<sup>6</sup> The cheers were premature: joining detachments leaving Lucknow, they were struck by cholera on the journey to Calcutta.<sup>7</sup>

Among other units remaining undisturbed was the 120-strong 2/5th foot artillery, the only former Company's unit at Dinapore, the auxiliary cantonment to Patna. Presumably aware of their isolation from sympathetic units, early in May its men concealed their feelings, the station commander describing them as 'sulky and dogged'.<sup>8</sup> No further reference to the company appears in the official record until 30 June, when sixty one men declared their intention to accept discharge.<sup>9</sup> Despite this paucity of evidence much can be deduced of the debate which

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2. Lt R. Franks to Lt Col E. Kaye, Camp Buddenshaw, 22 May 1859, Military consultations, 24 June 1859, No. 422, IOLR, P/191/26

3. Gnr William McKenzie to 'Jim', Gondah, 17 May 1859, PP 1860, p. 199. Clerks at headquarters evidently mistakenly transcribed McKenzie's initial as 'M', but William McKenzie was the only man of that name in the unit.

4. Lieutenant Charles Robinson to his sister Emily, Meerut, 23 February 1858, IOLR. Robinson had also been at Gondah, with the 3/1st horse artillery.

5. Holdich diary, 11 July 1859, SRM

6. Holdich diary, 6 August 1859, SRM. Holdich records 37 men leaving, while the Bengal casualty returns list 47, IOLR, L/MIL/10/182

7. Robinson to Emily, Gondah, 13 September 1859, IOLR

8. Telegraph message, Brig. Patrick Gordon to Birch, Dinapore, 11 May 1859, PP 1860, pp. 38-39

9. 'Nominal roll of ... 4th Company, 5th Battalion, Bengal artillery ...', 30 June 1859, PP 1860, p. 694

must have occurred within the company by comparing the ethnicity, ages, former trades, ships and other details available from the complementary muster and casualty rolls. In the month between nomination and departure at least twelve men withdrew their names while six appear to have changed their minds and elected to go. Eventually 68 remained and 51 left.<sup>10</sup> Analysis of men's decisions is complicated by the nature of the barrack-room culture. From enlistment to pension, the Company's soldiers had always placed a premium on individual advantage, and many must have decided to go or stay based on a close calculation of personal interest.

The two groups differed most obviously in their length of service. Those remaining had served on average for eight years, those leaving just over four. All of those leaving were gunners, and all of the company's non-commissioned officers decided to stay, one bombardier only submitting and then withdrawing his name. Occupationally, those remaining included four former clerks (as well as the former medical student and surveyor) while those leaving included just one clerk, and he had been born in India. Those remaining therefore had or were likely to prosper from the service. That their prospects were an important consideration is evident from the unit's ethnic composition. A third were English, almost half Irish and the remainder either Scots or 'country-born', proportions not reproduced among those choosing to leave. Nearly sixty per cent of those remaining were Irish, compared to less than a third of those leaving. More than twice as many Englishmen chose to leave than their proportion would have suggested. Perhaps Irishmen, thinking of their prospects in the impoverished country they had left, chose to risk remaining, while Englishmen, many with a trade, saw their chances of finding jobs as easier.

Not all decisions, however, were made individually. Groups of shipmates evidently decided to remain. Of the 39 men from the *Vittoria* of 1858, 34 chose to go, but six men, perhaps from one sub-section, rescinded their applications. Patterns of townies' decisions are difficult to detect in such a small unit, but the company's three men from Clonmel decided to return, though having arrived on different ships, and though Irishmen generally were more likely to stay. Any conclusions must be tentative, but they sketch out some of the grounds on which men debated their decisions. If the experience of this one company of foot artillery is representative, the protest tested relationships within the ranks as well as between officers and men.

At the opposite end of Bengal, the units of the Peshawur Division were almost entirely unaffected by protest. Their quiescence, though less open to exploration (because protest not

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10. This and other discrepancies between the rolls reproduced in PP 1860 and the muster rolls cannot be resolved, except that the two rolls were not compiled simultaneously and on their arrival in Britain accompanying documentation was either missing or incomplete.

passivity generates paper) can also largely be explained within the context of the European regiments' culture. Located at the entrance to the Kybher Pass, Peshawur was the key station for the defence of the north-west frontier, and was strongly held. In 1859 the division included three foot companies and three troops of the 2nd horse artillery brigade, all of which had remained in the Punjab during the rebellion, seeing no action. Practically unaffected by the disruption or reinforcements of the rebellion, their tranquillity requires explanation. In that units posted to the frontier were effectively on active service, men may have decided not to risk the more severe penalties liable to be inflicted on those serving in the face of the enemy. Men elsewhere made clear that they expressed their dissatisfaction at the transfer only after the rebellion had ended. The 4/2nd horse artillery, at Rawul Pindee, also differed in that it had been reformed during the rebellion from a disbanded native troop, and included many Queen's soldiers transferred to the Europeans. It was reportedly 'in an excellent state' in June, and may have deterred open expression of grievance.<sup>11</sup> Most important, though, the men's concerns were countered energetically by Sir Sydney Cotton, the divisional commander. Besides intercepting correspondence Cotton attempted to dissuade men from believing reports arriving from the south. 'Hellfire Jack' Olpherts, a charismatic figure enjoying great popularity following his exploits in the rebellion, exercised a strong influence in the barrack-rooms. As with the fusiliers at Delhi, by late May their forbearance became a source of pride. Cotton observed the ball organized by the artillery to mark the Queen's birthday, at which a sergeant major 'feelingly alluded to the sad events prevailing elsewhere', and declared that he and his men were 'deeply devoted to Her Majesty'.<sup>12</sup>

The reactions of gunners at the Bengal Artillery's headquarters at Meerut were particularly significant. The first openly to express discontent, their threat to march on Delhi emphasised the gravity of the protest. The authorities suspected them of instigating the entire 'combination'. Officers obtained what they considered to be corroborative evidence of conspiracy and realised, contrary to expectation, that the outbreak had occurred virtually without warning. Both suggested not just that the protest was a conspiracy, but that it was a disciplined movement implicating the recruits stationed at its depot, old soldiers and even non-commissioned officers.

Meerut appears, admittedly on inconclusive and circumstantial evidence, to have been the epicentre of the protest. Officers learned that an outbreak had been 'the talk in the barracks for weeks', though not a single old soldier or sergeant had advised their officers of what all

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11. Norman to Birch, 25 June 1859, enclosing a 'Confidential and Inspection Return', India military consultations, August 1859, No. 177, IOLR, P/191/28

12. Cotton, Nine years on the north-west frontier. pp. 261-63

believed must have been unmistakable signs of disquiet if not conspiracy.<sup>13</sup> Queen's officers expected non-commissioned officers and old soldiers to enforce subordination at all times. At Meerut, however, 400 men were able to meet at night without disclosure. It was 'curious', Clyde reported to Cambridge, that information of what had occurred at Meerut came first from a Queen's soldier transferred to the Company's force.<sup>14</sup> This dereliction more than any other damned the Bengal Europeans in the view of their new commanders. It implied that the protest originated not among discontented recruits but among the old soldiers themselves. The evidence of old soldiers' involvement is ambiguous. For the 6th infantry, for example, though clearly disproportionately reluctant to appear before courts of inquiry, older men were as eager to accept discharge.<sup>15</sup> Letters received by the 6th from the disaffected 3rd may have been written from and to old soldiers, letters to which the regiment's commanding officer attributed fifty recruits' refusal to parade.<sup>16</sup> Because old soldiers at Meerut responded to an order to parade 'almost to a man', however, it seems unlikely that they could for long have persuaded recruits to risk punishment while themselves remaining unsuspected.<sup>17</sup> For Mansfield, however, corroboration that the protest was planned rather than spontaneous came when in June he noticed that at the stations worst affected 'general good conduct' prevailed. He thought the men 'for the time obedient, by order of their delegates'.<sup>18</sup>

The contemporary notion that 'ringleaders' spread disaffection must be treated with caution. For example, one officer blamed his men's unrest on their contact with disaffected men while passing through Meean Meer, yet the commander at Meean Meer attributed his men's unrest to the influence of those passing through.<sup>19</sup> The more or less simultaneous and widespread appearance of protest, accepting that some conspiratorial letters passed between friends, may be explained by the influence of information transmitted by newspapers on men sharing both broadly similar military and civilian cultures and the same grievance. Dearth of evidence confounds attempts to determine the old gunners' part in the protest. Any indication can be

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13. Clyde to Canning, Simla, 18 May 1859, Canning papers, WYA, Vol. 70, No. 134

14. Extract, Clyde to Cambridge, 11 May 1859, Wood papers, IOLR, Vol. 85

15. For example nine old soldiers testified but 36 took their discharge: Hazareebaugh inquiry, PP 1860, pp. 695-700

16. Capt F. Wroughton to Birch, 22 May 1859, PP 1860, p. 59

17. Bradford to Mansfield, 2 May 1859, PP 1860, p. 68

18. Copy, Mansfield to Maj Gen W.F. Foster, 5 June 1859, Wood papers, IOLR, Vol. 85

19. Windham to Mansfield, Meean Meer, 12 May 1859; Brig. J.K. M'Causland, [Commanding at Sealkote] to Windham, 18 May 1859, PP 1860, pp. 55,131

seized on as proof and implication that they were responsible while, in the great tradition of conspiracy theories, lack of evidence in no way impedes speculation and innuendo. There is, however, besides the strong circumstantial evidence that no old soldier or sergeant alerted his officer, evidence that old soldiers instigated as well as connived at attempts to orchestrate protest.

Explanations based on suspected conspiracies must, of course, be treated with great caution, but we should also beware of automatically disregarding the possibility simply as evidence of the authorities' fears. For Clyde, proof came soon after the outbreak began. Officials watched the post offices as soon as the scale of the Meerut outbreak became apparent, intercepting letters addressed to European soldiers. The resultant surveillance was of dubious legality and imperfect - of ten letters sent from Meerut on 2 May, for example, nine evidently reached their destinations.<sup>20</sup> Even so, the letters obtained convinced Clyde and Mansfield that they faced an 'extensive combination'.<sup>21</sup> These letters therefore justify detailed examination. They provide invaluable examples of what soldiers wrote to each other, complementing the more extensive evidence of what they said to their officers and what their officers recorded of them.

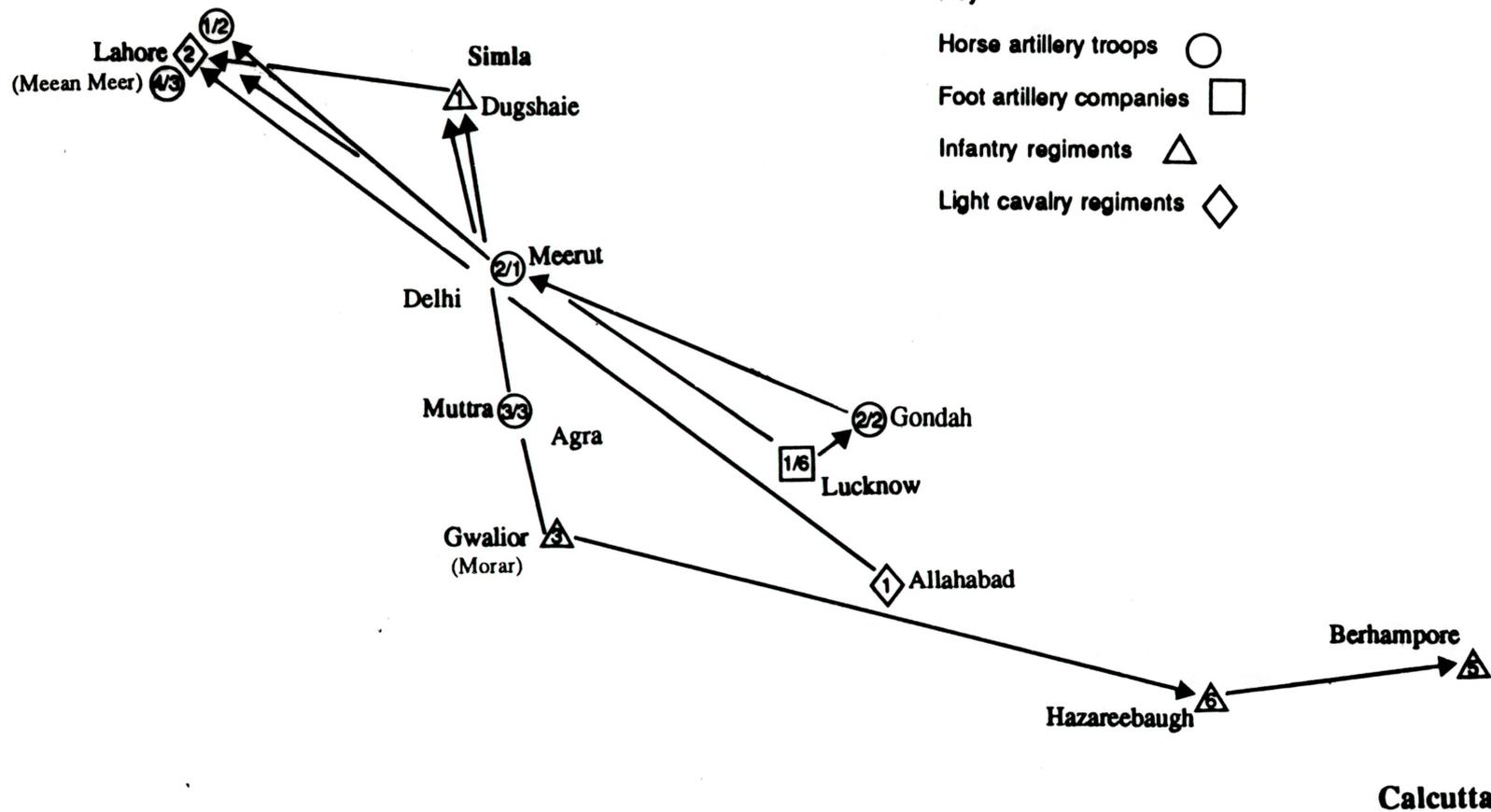
We do not know what proportion of letters were intercepted, or which units they passed between. The letters, and reports of letters sent or received, suggest several possibilities. Though it is likely that the letters intercepted were but a fraction of those sent, they provide the single most important source in determining the protesters' motivations, arguments and plans. Map 7 shows the origins and destinations of all known communications which the military authorities regarded as evidence of the troops' combination. Accepting them as shards of a pot whose dimensions are unknown, they nevertheless justify detailed consideration. At the same time, their limitations must be recognised. None, for example, reached their destinations, and can therefore have had no influence on what their intended recipients thought or how they acted: only letters which escaped the authorities did so, and therefore escape our scrutiny also. All date from after the promulgation of General Order 480, and therefore reveal nothing of whatever was planned in anticipation of the decision. These qualifications notwithstanding, the letters at least suggest how men throughout the force regarded the transfer, supplementing the

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20. Under Secretary to Home Department to Military Secretary, 25 September 1860, Canning papers, WYA, Vol. 136, No. 2809. Indian authorities apparently did not consider the relevant debate surrounding the legality of opening of Chartists' private mail by the Home Office, documented in David Vincent's *Literacy and popular culture*, Cambridge, 1989, pp. 230-33. Charles Napier advised Dalhousie a decade before that the military authorities could not open private correspondence 'except on some occasion which would bear out such an act' (Napier to Dalhousie, 5 January 1850, in Napier, *Life and opinions*, Vol. IV, p. 220). As soldiers the men's civil liberties were unspecified but limited, and the protest, presumably, was just such an occasion.

21. Mansfield to Foster, 5 June 1859, Private letter book, NAM

Peshawur



PS 1992

Map 7: Soldiers' letters intercepted, 1859

To follow page 182

transcripts of the courts of inquiry. Given that they convinced the authorities of the nature of the movement they faced, the letters are particularly important as indications of the men's response to the protest.

Intercepted letters reveal how the relationships bonding European barrack-rooms were fundamental to the soldiers' conception and expression of their grievances. Many passed between 'shipmates', 'townies' and 'chums'. Shipmates naturally enquired what distant friends might do. A 'John Kilgallen', writing from Gwalior, for example, asked friends in the 1st Fusiliers to 'let me know is my draft going home or not'.<sup>22</sup> Such decisions were as much collective as individual.

Whether they signify a combination, however, is at best ambiguous, and at worst a grotesque exaggeration. Men certainly sought and offered information on events and feelings in other units, but few were plainly conspiratorial. Farrier Andrew Murphy, writing from the 3/3rd horse artillery at Muttra, after complaining of the denial of the Delhi prize money, told a friend, Private Patrick Denine of the 1st Fusiliers, how he would 'like to see the shop lighted in four or five places', a cryptic allusion explained by his declaration that 'if God don't crush them for their Tyranny he is not a just man'. This, however, was as subversive as most letters went, and Murphy's main purpose in writing was to ask 'what you are going to do, are you going home or remaining in the Country'.<sup>23</sup>

Indeed, the letters resemble closely those which passed between men before the rebellion. They follow the same formulae: 'if you are alive I take the favourable opportunity of writing these few lines to you hoping to find you and all your comrades in good health as this leaves me at present'.<sup>24</sup> They ask after friends and individuals, and discuss rather than foment protest. Certainly men were wary of letters being opened and seized, a reflection perhaps of the troops' awareness of their superiors' sensitivity rather than a sign of the subversive content of their letters.<sup>25</sup> Assuming that station commanders forwarded the most incriminating letters, and that

**Bombardier (Farrier) Andrew Murphy, No. 7704, 3/3rd Bengal Horse Artillery. Blacksmith, of Arglass, Cork; enl. Cork, March 1852; St Croix, December 1852**

**Private Patrick Denine, No. 1716, 1st European Bengal Fusiliers. Labourer, of Greenagh, Cork; enl. Clonmel, September 1848; Northumberland, August 1849 (also Denneen)**

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22. 'John Kilgallen' to Patrick McNahan and John Corrigan, Gwalior, 21 May 1859, Military consultations, 17 June 1859, No. 582, IOLR, P/191/25. His name, which does not appear on the muster rolls, was either a device to evade detection or a transcription error in a source recording a letter copied at least twice before.

23. Farrier Andrew Murphy to Pte Patrick Denine, Muttra, 20 May 1859, Military consultations, 17 June 1859, No. 581, IOLR

24. John Kilgallen to McNahan and Corrigan, IOLR

25. Cpl Byrne's anonymous friend warned him to 'Take notice to this letter, and see if it be opened, for fear of you know': Military Proceedings, No. 585, IOLR

Clyde entered a selection of these in the Military Proceedings for the governor general and secretary of state to appreciate their tenor, these letters offer the most serious indictment. The available selection therefore suggests vectors by which soldiers learned of and discussed others' opinions, but they do not bear out Clyde's contention that a small group of 'ringleaders' orchestrated the protest.<sup>26</sup>

Many officers readily seized on the explanation that the protest was the result of a combination, accepting the slender evidence of the intercepted letters. Finding a conspiracy relieved the authorities of the need to enquire too closely into the relationships between officers and men generally. Of the major protagonists only Henry Durand found the theory unsatisfactory though, as a proponent of the force's retention, he had no cause to doubt its fidelity.<sup>27</sup> At the same time, the protest did appear to spread between and occur within stations in ways neither random nor spontaneous, and several outbreaks were said to have been sparked by individual or written approaches from units already affected.<sup>28</sup> The military authorities, like the historian, were unable to charge individuals.

If the protest was planned, who were its 'ringleaders', and why? Two months after the outbreak, as he realized how the Europeans' officers had been 'hoodwinked' and the numbers of old soldiers choosing their discharge became apparent,

**George Ebenezer Wilson Couper, BCS. Secretary to the Government of the North-West Provinces; later Chief Commissioner of Oudh and Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab, KCB**

Clyde confided that 'the old Soldiers of the Bengal Artillery' were 'the prime movers and ringleaders'.<sup>29</sup> Other observers agreed. George Couper, an official at Allahabad, noted how many gunners (mostly men of over eight years service) remained aloof, though he suspected that they had 'incited their younger comrades to revolt'.<sup>30</sup> Since the few letters from infantry and cavalymen were apparently innocent of conspiratorial intent, while the scant evidence derives from gunners, the conspiracy, if it existed, must be sought in the artillery.

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26. Clyde to Canning, 7 July 1859, Canning papers, WYA, Vol. 70, No. 137

27. 'Memorandum by Colonel Durand', PP 1860, Vol. L, p. 85

28. Brig. Gordon at Dinapore worried that 'The movement seems to be extending downward' from the NW Provinces into Bengal: PP 1860, p. 39. Indeed, incidents at stations lower down the Ganges did follow those in the north-west. As noticed in the account of the protest at Berhampore, 'deserters' were supposed to have incited unrest.

29. Clyde to Canning, 7 July 1859, Canning papers, WYA, Vol. 70, No. 137

30. PP 1860, p. 41

Of the dozen or so letters which passed between soldiers in 1859 only one actually attempted to co-ordinate resistance.

Evidence of conspiracy comes from an unlikely source.

Charles Grey, who served in India in the 1880s, wrote a series of historical articles for Indian newspapers,

presumably between the world wars. Having seen 'many

letters and telegrams in the file of the white mutiny ... in the Old Record office at Lahore' (not all of which were included in the military consultations), he described how at 'indignation meetings' non-commissioned officers formed 'committees ... to draft and forward petitions'.

Denied their claims, Grey wrote that the men then 'again held secret councils and decided that on a given day, all should refuse duty all over India'. Remarkably, Grey then named 'the originator of the scheme and the leader' as a horse artillery gunner, 'James Macdonald', at Meerut.<sup>31</sup> Only one horse artillery troop was stationed at Meerut: Tombs's 2/1st.

If one unit exemplified the best qualities of the Bengal Europeans in the rebellion it was Henry Tombs's 2/1st troop. Under the most renowned of the force's many bold officers the 2/1st had fought from May 1857 to May 1858 at the Hindun, throughout the siege of Delhi, the capture of Lucknow and the campaign in Rohilcund. Because its casualties had been relatively light, the troop evidently retained the force's vigorous culture.<sup>32</sup> When General Bradford reported the outbreak at Meerut he singled out Tombs's troop as more reliable than any other European unit.<sup>33</sup> Protesting men of the 2nd cavalry disliked its demeanour: one of its troop sergeants overheard a cavalryman say, 'Major Tomb's [sic] troop will not join; we will burn their barracks over their heads'.<sup>34</sup> Its men's disinclination to imperil their futures while recruits were prepared to advance their grievance may explain their reticence, but that so few of its young soldiers accepted their discharge (seven of those enlisted during the rebellion) indicates that Tombs's abilities as a leader were not limited to battle.<sup>35</sup>

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31. Charles Grey, 'The European soldiers of Bengal', typescript in my possession, pp. 236-7. The file, held by the Government of the Punjab Archives, Pakistan, could neither be consulted nor be copied for this thesis.

32. Contrary to Durand's testimony to the Peel Commission (when he claimed that the troop had been recreated following the rebellion) its nominal rolls show that in fact only 34 of its 146 members in 1859 had enlisted after the outbreak of the rebellion: PP 1859 (I), Vol. V, p. 234, q. 5395; Bengal muster rolls and casualty returns, 1859, IOLR, L/MIL/10/182

33. PP 1860, p. 14

34. Telegraph message, Bradford to Mansfield and Birch, 3 May 1859, PP 1860, p. 12

35. James Brind, another hero of the siege of Delhi, seems also to have prevailed upon his men to remain quiescent. He reported from Umballah on 20 May that 'cheerfulness and right British spirit' animated the 4/3rd horse artillery: Lt Col James Brind to Maj Robert Firth [Off<sup>r</sup> Assistant Adjutant

Charles Grey (1863?-1945)  
Labourer, of Canterbury, Kent; enl.  
East Kent Regiment, August 1882,  
aged 19. Joined unattached list,  
1892; served with 1st Punjab  
Volunteer Rifles; ret. 1903; may  
have joined the North-Western  
Railway, 1905; ret. 1918



**Illustration 10**

Colonel Henry Tombs, displaying the rewards of his service in the rebellion. He wears the Victoria Cross, the Order of the Companion of the Bath and campaign medals for Maharajpore and the Punjab wars (NAM neg. no. 63481).

And yet, evidence hints that a member of this unusually loyal unit may have been one of the leaders of whatever organized protest existed. The 2/1st's muster rolls do not include Grey's 'James McDonald', who must have been

Gunner John McDougall, later charged with having infringed the Articles of war by inciting mutiny.<sup>36</sup>

McDougall had written on 1 May to Gunner Thomas Gosland of the 1/2nd horse artillery at Meean Meer, shortly

after the meeting at which four hundred men had discussed their response to General Order 480.<sup>37</sup> Directed to 'My dear friends' (though there is no indication of the identity of other men addressed), like other letters intercepted it follows the conventions of the soldier's letter, opening by expressing pleasure that 'you were both in the full enjoyment of very good health, as I am, my dear friends'. Having described how the 2/1st, the 4/4th foot artillery and the 2nd cavalry were still deciding how to respond, McDougall then told his friends how a meeting was to be held that night 'at the Munkey Tank for to apint a day of strike'. He revealed how 'our first troop' (that is, the 1/1st horse artillery, at Gondah, 280 miles south-west, in Oudh) was 'ready to make for Meerut at our cowl [call]', and how the 3/3rd horse artillery at Muttra, the 1/4th and 4/1st foot companies at Delhi were 'going on very stady'. The Queen's horse artillery and the 75th at Meerut had assured them that 'not a man will fire a shot at any of us'.

Gosland's troop, he said, was the only troop 'at a stand', that is, undecided. McDougall begged that Gosland not allow his letter to be seen by sergeants, but asked him to show it to 'as many of the gunners you like'.

It is perplexing that McDougall was neither an old soldier nor a recruit. A groom from Inverness, he had enlisted before the rebellion, but only just, on 29 April 1857, in London, and had arrived on the Agamemnon in November 1857. Posted to Tombs's 2/1st, he had seen action in 1858. Gosland, also a Scot, had been an engineer, of Barony in Glasgow, who had enlisted in January 1857 but had travelled to Bengal aboard the transport Amazon, arriving the

Gunner John McDougall, No. 9471, 2/1st Bengal Horse Artillery. Groom, of Inverness; enl. London, April 1857; Agamemnon, November 1857; disch. 883

Gunner Thomas Gosland, No. 9296, 1/2nd Bengal Horse Artillery. Engineer, of Barony, Glasgow, enl. Glasgow, January 1857, aged 24; Amazon, November 1857; Served as Sgt and Provost sgt 1858; disch. 883

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General Artillery], Umballah, 20 May 1859, Military consultations, 17 June 1859, No. 447[?], IOLR, P/191/25. The troop remained outwardly quiet, though ultimately 68 men took their discharge, 35 having shortly before transferred from the Bombay Fusiliers, presumably having conferred before deciding; Muster rolls, L/MIL/10/182.

36. In the absence of the original records, the discrepancy can only be explained as a transcription error.

37. McDougall to Gosland, PP 1860, pp. 28-9

same month. He, it seems, had spent the rebellion in the Punjab.<sup>38</sup> Unless they knew each other before enlistment, the two can only have met on the way to or at the Meerut depot while awaiting posting to their troops early in 1858. From internal evidence in the intercepted letter they had corresponded before. McDougall at least may have feared that the transfer might injure his prospects. After his arrest he was described as 'a fine looking young fellow, who was first on the list for promotion'.<sup>39</sup> Despite clear evidence of his guilt Canning prudently declined to court martial him for fear of further inflaming the protest.<sup>40</sup> As a Scot and an intelligent young horse artilleryman McDougall fits the stereotype of the ambitious Company's soldier. As the author of at least ten letters clearly fomenting resistance to authority he appears to contravene it. Like 'Bill Banks' in Peter Bailey's article proposing that 'respectability' may have been but one guise adopted by working men, Gunner McDougall is an enigma. In attempting to identify the 'real' Bill Banks Bailey suggests that for all the manifestations of respectability, such men 'preserved a distinct and irreducible class identity'.<sup>41</sup> The 'real' John McDougall occupied both roles: his case substantiates the ambiguity of respectability and the persistence of class identity. As a groom, exposed to if not mingling with his social superiors, McDougall also occupied the socially marginal position seemingly characteristic of the Company's ambitious recruits.

Most officers did not believe that McDougall acted individually. Establishing the likely leaders of such a combination might seem to be impossible at such a remove with such imperfect sources, particularly since the force's commanders were unable to identify more than a handful of possibilities. Considering the evidence in the light of the culture of the Europeans' barrack-rooms suggests, however, a group of possible candidates. McDougall's marginality - neither rank recruit nor old soldier - suggests that those co-ordinating a combination might be found not among old soldiers and non-commissioned officers (though such men may have connived at the movement) nor among recruits (though they may have been implicated). Rather, they might be found among men of an intermediate standing, experienced enough to know their way about the force but not so old as to have acquired a stake in remaining. The hypothesis is supported in two ways: first, by similarities in the length of service of a number of men charged with

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38. Biographical details on McDougall appear in PP 1860, p. 733, and on Gosland in the Register of European soldiers, IOLR, L/MIL/ 10/126 and the artillery discharge papers, IOLR, L/MIL/10/308, and on both in the Bengal Artillery's muster and casualty rolls, L/MIL/10/182

39. Telegraph message, Montgomery to Clyde, Lahore, 7 May 1859, PP 1860, p. 71

40. Birch to Norman, 22 August 1859, PP 1860, pp. 732-33

41. Bailey, 'Will the real Bill Banks please stand up', p. 337

inciting dissatisfaction in 1859; and second, by incongruities in the composition of a group seemingly with little incentive to protest.

Those suspected of instigating unrest were often men of between three and five years' service. For example, after three weeks of quiet, men of the 1/3rd horse artillery at Sealkote held a noisy meeting to assert their rights on 27 May.<sup>42</sup> Thirty men gathered outside their barracks, addressed by a Gunner Charles McCarthy, 'a man whose whole career since he has been in the service, some five years, has been one perpetual resistance to legitimate authority'.<sup>43</sup> Major Alfred Light at Morar, in reporting 23 of his 110 men as dissatisfied, described each man's character. While thirteen were 'young hands', the men included not only three under trial or punishment (who might reasonably be unhappy with military life) but two corporals and a Gunner Frederick Oakley, 'lately reduced from quartermaster serjt'.<sup>44</sup> William Marshall, the former Glasgow labourer supposedly elected 'colonel' of the 5th infantry, had also served for five years, having allegedly been 'kicked out' of two Queen's regiments.<sup>45</sup> Similarly, though the Bombay Europeans were generally quiescent during the protest, the one substantial incident which occurred involved such a man. Sir Hugh Rose's private letter book discloses that in June a hundred recruits at the Bombay artillery depot at Ahmednuggur, alarmed at a misreading of Mansfield's orders permitting courts of inquiry and by reports of petitions submitted by men of the 3rd infantry at Morar, met to discuss their 'rights'. The meeting had been called by a man who had previously served in the Queen's army.<sup>46</sup> The Bombay man

Gunner Charles McCarthy, No. 7985, 1/3rd Bengal Horse Artillery. Labourer, of Bandon, Cork; enl. London, April 1853; Lord Dalhousie, December 1853; disch. 883

Bt Major Alfred Light (1823-?), 2/5th Bengal Artillery. Son of a Royal Artillery officer; comm. 1842; Captain, 1857; commanded Recruit Depot, Bengal Artillery, Meerut, 1857; ret. as hon Major General, 1878

Gunner Frederick Oakley, No. 6788, 2/5th Bengal Artillery. Labourer of Hackney, Middlesex; enl. London, November 1849, Camperdown, October 1850; disch. 883

Private John Devlin (also Devilen), 3rd Bombay European Regiment. Weaver, of Portadown, Armagh; enl. Portadown, March 1853, aged 20. Disch. with ignominy, June 1859

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42. The 1/3rd moved during May: Map 6 shows the troop at its first station.

43. Capt Arthur Rotton to Maj Henry Bishop [Adjutant 3rd BHA Bde], Sealkote, 30 May 1859, Military consultations, 24 June 1859, No. 422, IOLR, P/191/26; PP 1860, p. 249

44. Indeed, nine tenths of the 3rd infantry, the most seriously disturbed old corps, had served for less than five years. The predominance of young soldiers presumably not only contributed to its dissatisfaction but also impeded the influence of the old soldiers' impulse toward prudence.

45. Bengal army muster rolls and casualty returns, 1859, IOLR, L/MIL/10/181; Allen's Indian mail, 14 September 1859

46. Rose to Lugard, Poona, 22 June 1859, Rose public letter book, BL, Add. Ms 42812

flogged for abusing the Queen, Private John Devlin, had served for just over six years and held an 'indifferent' character.<sup>47</sup>

In the eyes of suspicious Queen's officers the most likely conspirators were the Bengal Europeans' numerous former clerks. Some 233 such men were members of the Bengal Artillery in 1859, 77 of whom elected to take their discharge and 156 chose to stay, a proportion reversing the trend within the European force as a whole.<sup>48</sup> Clerks might therefore seem to have been the willing auxiliaries of subordination. Comparing their decision with their year of enlistment reveals that most men of over ten years service chose to stay, while those enlisted during the rebellion were at best equivocal. The older men's choice is easily explained: most held or expected to obtain desirable situations, and apparently preferred to take their chances in India than risk not finding work at home. Younger men faced a more difficult decision. Young enough to compete for work in civil life, they also knew of both the prospects and the hazards of remaining. An examination of the actions of an emblematic (if not representative) soldier, reveals the relationship between the two and their possible significance in shaping the protest.

Among the many individual petitions submitted by gunners was 'The Humble Petition of Josiah Henderson', a gunner of the 2/6th foot artillery at Agra.<sup>49</sup> A clerk, Henderson had enlisted in his native London in 1852 a month before his

**Gunner Josiah Henderson (1821-?),  
No. 7725, 2/6th Bengal Artillery.  
Clerk, of London; enl. London,  
September 1852, Gloriosa; disch.  
883**

thirtieth birthday. He was therefore about ten years older than most recruits. He had served in India for six years, and had seen action during the mutiny. Henderson had sent his petition directly to Clyde after St George Showers had declined to forward it.<sup>50</sup> He had petitioned his superiors at least twice before. While seconded to the Electric Telegraph Department in 1854 he had been disciplined, and presumably remanded, after objecting to a superior 'seriously maligning his character'. In 1858, while on campaign, he had attempted to remonstrate against an unspecified grievance and had been told to 'go to his tent for a fool'. Gunner Henderson therefore exemplifies two of the characteristic features of the former clerks of the Company's service: the clerk's capacity to prosper and the Europeans' readiness to voice grievances. In his 1600-word petition Henderson argued that the terms of his enlistment precluded transfer to the

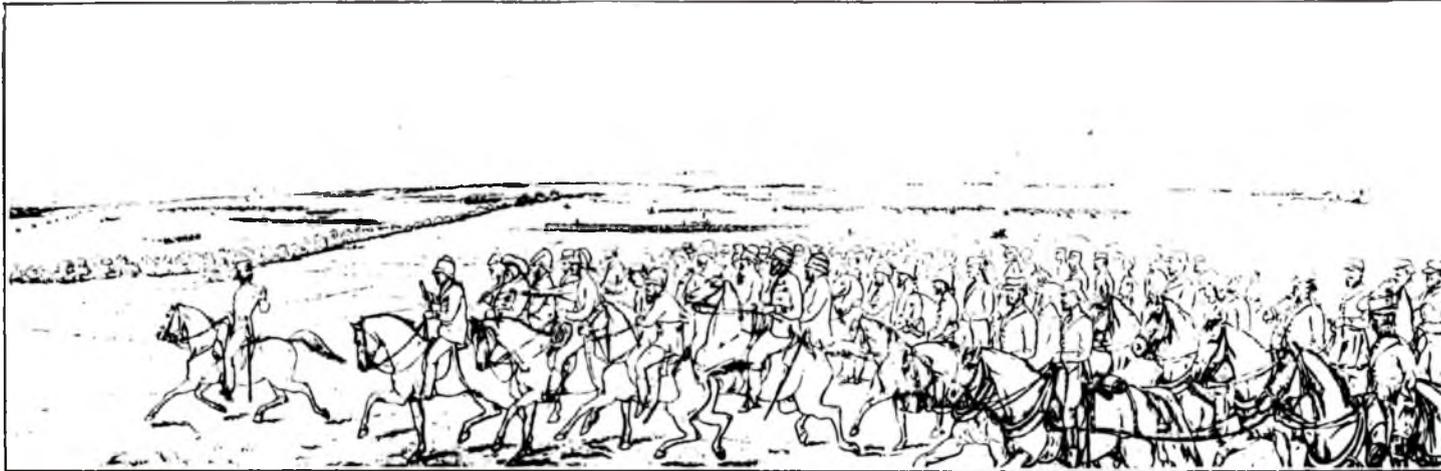
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47. 'Proceedings of a European General Court Martial', Mhow, 6 June 1859, Rose public letter book, BL

48. Muster rolls and casualty returns, Bengal Artillery, 1859, IOLR, L/MIL/ 10/182

49. PP 1860, pp. 195-7

50. Henderson's petition is particularly noteworthy because Clyde in turn sent it to Canning to persuade him of the soldiers' case: PP 1860, p. 194



(1)

(2)

(3)

(4)

(5)

**Illustration 11**

Sir Colin Campbell and his staff riding with Henry Tombs's 2/1st BHA at the opening of the battle of Bareilly, 5 May 1858. The sketch, by Lt Col Henry Crealock, illustrates the familiarity between key members of the European force and the staff officers confronting the force's protest a year later. Henry Tombs (1); Sir Colin Campbell (2); Sir William Mansfield (3); Henry Crealock (4); Henry Norman (5) (from Memoir of Major-General Sir Henry Tombs, reproduced with the permission of Brigadier K. Timbers, Royal Artillery Institution).

Crown. He cited the precedent of the men of the Company's St Helena garrison, which when disbanded in 1836 were offered a choice of discharge or bounty. He maintained that the hazards of Indian service were such that it would be just to allow those who had served the former Company to return home. When in June Henderson was asked to decide, he elected to take his discharge.<sup>51</sup> Nor was he unique. Sir Henry Bartle Frere, Chief Commissioner of Scinde, sought out men from the Sirhind Division as they passed down the Indus to embark from Kurrachee. After speaking to 'great numbers' of soldiers, he found, as well as 'thoughtless, uneducated youth', that 'by far the greater number were men of a far different stamp - well educated for their station, and thoughtful'.<sup>52</sup> The intelligence and ambition characteristic of the artillery therefore contributed significantly to its demise, especially through such marginal men.

The Queen's army's suspicion of literate men as 'lawyers' might seem to have been justified. Other officers noted the influence of literate men. In its first mention of the Meerut outbreak, for example, the Delhi gazette speculated that 'some sea lawyer' had incited the unrest.<sup>53</sup> General Beresford, while inspecting the Madras Artillery at Bangalore in June, recorded his suspicion that its writing master had 'exerted a very evil influence over his ignorant comrades'.<sup>54</sup> It is possible, therefore, that articulate men such as Josiah Henderson were among the 'ringleaders' vainly sought by the authorities. They could persuade as well as inform. Accustomed to leadership since serving as pipe-clay sergeants on board transports, they more rapidly reached positions of influence, learning their way about the force without necessarily acquiring an interest in its survival. Most former clerks remained quiet, others, ambivalent, protested against the transfer and then stayed. A few, identifiable from the muster lists, articulated otherwise inchoate objections to the force's transfer. They included, for example, a lawyer's clerk aged 31, one of only two bombardiers in a company to claim discharge, and two former clerks, one a sergeant, who had arrived in India on the same ship.<sup>55</sup> If the protest was a combination - and the variety of reactions among artillery units argues that it was at best an imperfect one - then the conspirators' identities remain obscure. The

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51. Muster rolls and casualty returns, Bengal Artillery, 1859, IOLR, L/MIL/10/182

52. Minute by Sir H.E.B. Frere, 21 February 1860, PP 1860, Vol. L, pp. 157-58

53. Delhi gazette, 5 May 1859

54. PP 1860, p. 763. Iltudus Prichard, formerly editor of the Delhi gazette, attributed the entire protest to 'lawyers' and 'unprincipled villains'; The administration of India, pp. 39, 40.

55. Bengal muster rolls and casualty returns, Bengal Artillery, 1859, IOLR, L/MIL/10/182

suggestive conjunction of literacy and men under five years' service might, however, bring us as close to finding the instigators of the combination as is now possible.<sup>56</sup>

Accepting this mixture of fact, inference and speculation suggests that literate but not necessarily old soldiers led the protest. But the hypothesis does not explain why they should have done so. That they might have encouraged recruits to agitate for a decision which would also benefit themselves accords with the realities of barrack-room life. We have seen how power resided with old soldiers and that recruits, as Bancroft's story of the remount convoy showed, were very much subject to their authority. But if, in the terminology of detective fiction, 'opportunity' offers no obstacle, 'motive' presents considerable difficulties. Why would men who were best placed to take advantage of the prospects which the Bengal army offered wish to imperil their chances, or leave a service which seemingly promised so much? Their officers were equally perplexed.<sup>57</sup>

Given the ambition which individual soldiers had exhibited before the rebellion and the force's importance as a route to the prosperity accessible through promotion to the Town Major's list, particularly among the artillery, many men worried about the transfer's effects on their future. While formerly situations had been reserved for men of the Company's service, many feared that despite the 'guarantee' of the Government of India Act their monopoly might end.

Indeed, in January 1859 Mansfield and Colonel William Pakenham, the Adjutant General of Queen's troops, had raised with Canning the prospect of opening such situations to royal non-commissioned officers.<sup>58</sup> Later that year, Sir Francis Head, proposing strategies intended to 'improve in every possible way our own Army' - that is, the imperial as opposed to the local - also suggested ending the Company's monopoly.<sup>59</sup> The men's fears were therefore well founded though - newspaper speculation and 'leaks' from men on the Town Major's list within headquarters offices aside - they could not have known of such plans. Though secondments to

**Colonel Hon. William Lygon Pakenham, Adjutant General of Queen's troops, Bengal army. Comm. 1837; served as Adjutant General in the Crimea**

**Sir Francis Bond Head (1793-1875) Contributor to the Quarterly review. Comm, Royal Engineers, 1811; Lieutenant Governor, Upper Canada. [Identification uncertain]**

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56. The hypothesis hinges on the number of identifiable clerks in the force. Recalling that numerous literate artisans enlisted buttresses, though hardly proves, its value.

57. See, for example, Inglis to Mansfield, Allahabad, 8 May 1859, PP 1860, p. 51

58. 'Memo by CofS for the guidance of Col. the Hon W. Pakenham', 2 January 1859; p. 701; Memorandum, 5 January 1859, p. 706, Mansfield memoranda, IOLR

59. Untitled minute, 18 July 1859, Wood papers, IOLR, Vol. 85. The identification of the author of this minute is uncertain. As a contributor to the Quarterly review, Head may have acted as a sort of mid-Victorian think-tank.

the Public Works Department continued, men may have noticed that promotions to the list had declined in the wake of the rebellion. The levies raised during it had no European sergeants, so in February 1859 only thirty sergeants served with native regiments, compared to over 150 in 1857.<sup>60</sup> About a hundred sergeants had in the meantime been remanded to their units, most to the artillery. Gunners, the major source of staff sergeants, may therefore have been particularly anxious. Most troops or companies included several men - like Frederick Oakley - who had been obliged unwillingly to return, perhaps losing rank in doing so. The Mofussilite calculated that formerly a soldier had notionally a one in ten chance of securing advancement, but with a larger European force the chances became minimal: 'What advantage has the old Soldier to obtain by staying in the country?', it asked.<sup>61</sup>

When testifying before courts of inquiry, gunners complained that the transfer had injured their prospects, though such detailed statements are available only for Meerut. Gunner James Ford, formerly an engine fitter and a man who had enlisted during the rebellion in search of advancement, had soon after arriving at Calcutta in 1858 found a situation as a percussion-cap maker at the Dum-Dum arsenal. Following the transfer, for reasons his officer did not explain, 'a number of hands were turned off', and he was remanded to Tombs's 2/1st horse artillery troop.<sup>62</sup> Gunner Ford was a recruit, but his comrade, Gunner William Hill, had spent seven years in India, and explicitly stated his grievance, that 'there won't be so many chances of getting good situations'.<sup>63</sup> Fitzroy Fitzherbert, a civil engineer who had enlisted only in June 1858, had already paid for his discharge (thereby confirming that the established pattern of men enlisting to gain advancement persisted through the rebellion). Fitzherbert was aggrieved that Queen's troops were now, he believed, to be admitted to the Commissariat Department, infringing the 'guarantee'.<sup>64</sup> Again,

Gunner James Ford, No. 10034,  
2/1st Bengal Horse Artillery.  
Engine fitter, of Uxbridge,  
Middlesex; enl. London, April 1858;  
Marla Hay, September 1858; disch.  
883

Gunner William Hill, No. 7426,  
2/1st Bengal Horse Artillery.  
Grocer of Tiverton, Cheshire, enl.  
London, November 1851;  
Soubahdar, 1852

Sergeant Fitzroy Fitzherbert, No.  
10694, 2/4th Bengal Artillery.  
Engineer, of Plymouth; enl.  
London, June 1858, Sir Robert Sale,  
October 1858; disch. 883

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60. 'Return of the actual strength ... in the three presidencies', PP 1859, (II), Vol. XXIII, p. 4

61. Mofussilite, 10 May 1859

62. Meerut inquiry, Testimony of Gnr J. Ford, PP 1860, p. 152. The industrial expression is significant.

63. Meerut inquiry, Testimony of Gnr W. Hill, PP 1860, p. 157. Like the Peshawur gunners, Hill believed that it would have been wrong to have pressed the men's claim until the rebellion had been suppressed.

64. Meerut inquiry, Testimony of Sgt Fitzroy Fitzherbert, PP 1860, p. 226

Charles Grey's account corroborates this explanation, claiming that old soldiers and sergeants were more concerned than recruits 'being ... candidates for staff jobs, now so much harder to obtain'.<sup>65</sup> It is possible that many old soldiers felt this grievance keenly, but, seeing the numbers of recruits testifying, decided that there was no point their being identified with protest, and prudently kept silent.

In another sense, intriguing silences hint that the suggestion of a conspiracy may not be unreasonable. Three important accounts do not refer at all to the events of 1859. Sergeants Bancroft, Crummie and Carter were by then all senior non-commissioned officers; Bancroft in the 5/1st horse artillery at Philibeet in the Punjab and Crummie in the 3/1st at Gondah from mid-June.<sup>66</sup> Though Carter was in Debroogurgh in Assam, he kept in touch with men in his former regiment, the 2nd Fusiliers, the only European unit to remain practically unaffected by the protest. Yet, in otherwise detailed memoirs, none referred to the protest or recounted how it affected him. It is therefore possible that they knew of a movement but, if they did not join it, chose not to denounce it, as was their duty.<sup>67</sup>

The conundrum can be resolved by viewing the protest not simply as a movement by aggrieved soldiers against a tactless government. Rather, the diversity of protest indicates that the transfer and the subsequent announcement that discharge or bounty was 'inadmissible' precipitated debate within the Europeans' barrack-rooms, in which men with different interests and aspirations sought to attain their own ends. The process is apparent only by inference from its effects, but it explains why the Meerut units protested openly while those at Gondah effectively struck a bargain and those at Peshawur remained loyal. Each group acted in accordance with, but emphasised different aspects of, the force's culture. Archetypes such as scholars and blagards explain some men's responses, as did, characteristically, the strength of their attachments to some officers. Men who hitherto had been resigned to remaining in India saw and seized an opportunity to escape. Some scholars, seeing their aspirations thwarted, fostered protest in order to escape. Others, identifying with the regimental culture which until then had never so clearly been presented as an alternative to that of the barrack-room, chose to support authority. The diversity of reactions among the European force's gunners argues against the existence of a combination. The protest was a combination only in that it harnessed both the 'dynamic of autonomous regulation' which Richard Price divines among the masons,

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65. Grey, *The European soldier in Bengal*, p. 237

66. In 1859 the 5/1st was a native troop, but later became European.

67. It is tempting to posit that if senior non-commissioned officers were Masons (as was Carter), then a 'combination' encompassing officers and soldiers might have existed. There is, naturally, not a shred of evidence for such a theory.

carpenters and bricklayers on Victorian building sites and the traditions of the 'committee of the whole troop'. Paucity of evidence precludes greater precision.

**Illustrations 12 a & b**

Two extremes of the rank and file of the Bengal Europeans in the white mutiny. Staff Sergeant Nathaniel Bancroft (left), judging by his medals photographed just before the Europeans' incorporation into the Queen's army, represents the force's senior non-commissioned officers, whose role in the protest remains so ambiguous. William Perrott, an unposted gunner at the Meerut recruit depot, embodies the otherwise faceless recruits who protested in 1859 and took their discharge (from From recruit to staff sergeant and reproduced with the permission of Mr David Perrott).



## Chapter 9

### 'Success to our brave Colonel': regimental communities and the 'old' infantry regiments' protest

If the old regiments of the Bengal Europeans represented a cluster of communities linked by a common culture, then explanations for the outbreaks of protest reported throughout the force may be found in the expression of that culture within each community. The force's central institutional bond linked officers and men within units, while the central cultural bond linked men within barrack-rooms. In the protest of 1859, therefore, the culture of the regiment contended with the culture of the barrack-room for control of the force. Though at Meerut, scene of the first and most serious outbreak, the culture of the barrack-room apparently prevailed, across the force as a whole the result remained ambiguous. The key to understanding the contest between these bonds lies therefore in the varied experience of the three old infantry regiments during the summer of 1859. Though unsettled, the 1st Fusiliers' men refrained from openly expressing their feelings. The 2nd remained almost wholly restrained, while the 3rd infantry mounted a sustained collective protest.

The 1st Fusiliers' experience is opaque, owing to a dearth of sources and a reluctance to wash dirty linen publicly.

Despite the claim of its first historian (an officer serving in 1859) that 'no single instance of insubordination' occurred, some of its men evidently shared the feelings of their comrades elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> Colonel Douglas Seaton attributed

the unease he detected to irregularities over pay and clothing. The disorder in its men's accounts was partly a consequence of the lack of adequate standing orders and partly of the haste with which the regiment left for active service in 1857, when all the regimental books were left at the depot. Subsequent casualties rendered sorting them out a nightmare. The resultant seemingly trivial complaints (such as the failure to record in account books actions at which men had served) concealed deeper tensions.<sup>2</sup>

The fusiliers' barrack-rooms were clearly deeply divided over their attitude toward the protest which they knew (from newspapers and letters) had developed at other stations. When a court of inquiry convened, varying numbers from each company appeared before it: ten from number

Colonel Douglas Seaton (1810-60), 1st European Bengal Fusiliers, 1857-59. Comm. 1829; served first Punjab war, second Burmah war, rebellion, 1857-58; furlough as Bt Colonel 1859. Sir Hugh Rose dismissed him as 'neither popular nor esteemed'

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1. Innes, *History of the Bengal European Regiment*, p. 530

2. Seaton to Mansfield, Dugshaie, 11 May 1859, PP 1860, pp. 76-7; Military despatch to India, No. 340, 30 September 1859, IOLR, L/MIL/3/2093

1 company (eight on the last day, five days after it had been summoned), but forty from number 2.<sup>3</sup> Though about half of the regiment's men were old soldiers less than a quarter of those appearing before the court had served for five years or longer.<sup>4</sup> Whatever older soldiers felt, they revealed it before officers reluctantly, and clearly decided collectively whether to appear. Young soldiers, almost three-quarters of those appearing before the court, also decided collectively to come forward. Of the twenty five men of number six company who appeared, fifteen had served one year and seven months, and were therefore almost certainly shipmates.

Most men simply asserted the essence of the soldiers' case, put by Corporal Patrick Byrne:

I want my discharge, sir ... because I enlisted to serve the Honourable East India Company, and was not sworn to serve Her Majesty, and I feel aggrieved at being transferred over to her service, and getting no recompense for it at all...<sup>5</sup>

Corporal Patrick Byrne, No. 2473, 1st European Bengal Fusiliers. Labourer, of Clonmel, Tipperary; enl. London, May 1854; served Delhi, Lucknow; conduct 'very good'; promoted corporal, September 1858; disch. 883

Others, usually literate men, often formerly printers or clerks, gave more complex reasons for their dissatisfaction. Private Ingham Britcliffe, for instance, who had looted so enthusiastically at Delhi, based his objection on the points of principle infusing the entire protest. He dismissed the oath he had sworn at enlistment as merely

an oath binding on every subject; my soldier's oath was to the Company, and no other ... I consider that since the Proclamation I've fulfilled my contract ...<sup>6</sup>

Men testifying often seized on particular phrases, evidently the product of barrack-room debate: 'since the Proclamation' was one of the 1st's. The court's officers questioned men to test whether statements were 'a mere lesson got off'.<sup>7</sup>

Several men's responses to the court of inquiry suggested tensions within the regiment. On being asked whether he sought discharge one man replied that he was willing to stay, but not in the 1st.<sup>8</sup> Three members of one company, all with twelve years' service or more, made clear

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3. 'Proceedings of a Special Court of Inquiry ... at Dugshaie' ('Dugshaie inquiry'), PP 1860, pp. 536-76

4. 45% serving for seven years or more, 55% with over five years' service; PP 1859 (I), Vol. V, appendix to minutes of evidence, Appendix No. 40, p. 33

5. Testimony of Cpl Patrick Byrne, Dugshaie inquiry, PP 1860, p. 551

6. Testimony of Pte Ingham Britcliffe, Dugshaie inquiry, PP 1860, pp. 549-50

7. Interpolation by court, Dugshaie inquiry, PP 1860, p. 558

8. Testimony of Pte William Palmer, Dugshaie inquiry, PP 1860, p. 571

their dissatisfaction. One expressed his annoyance at being deprived of good conduct badges after applying for a transfer to the artillery, another declared that he would 'willingly give up double my service to get away from this regiment'.<sup>9</sup> Seaton conceded that even his 'best men' felt that they had been 'unhandsomely treated' over the transfer, though they disavowed being influenced by letters received from other units.<sup>10</sup>

A more substantial indication that the 1st's officers did not enjoy their men's confidence came in a letter to Sir Richard Garrett at Umballah from Colonel John Cox, a Queen's officer who had chaired the Dugshaie inquiry.<sup>11</sup> Early in July an anonymous old soldier of the 1st Fusiliers had visited Cox. Before enlisting (around 1848) he had been a servant to Cox's brother. Walking the twelve miles from Dugshaie to Kussowlie, the man asked whether he should take his discharge. He revealed the old soldiers' belief that their previous service would not count toward pensions, and his view that only a handful of men would remain. In the event, Cox's informant exaggerated his comrades' unease, in that half took their discharge, though his estimate reflects their uncertainty. The information confirmed Wood's belief that the Europeans' officers 'knew as little of their European as they did of their native soldiery'.<sup>12</sup> The man also expressed his comrades' concern that their accounts were still in disorder, a critical matter in that they could be used to substantiate subsequent claims for medals, pensions and compensation. Clyde believed that the Europeans' lack of pay and quartermasters 'added in a most extraordinary degree to the difficulties of Commanding Officers', especially for newly-raised regiments.<sup>13</sup> In the absence of a paymaster such matters were the responsibility of individual captains. That the 1st's should not by May 1859 have rectified the disorganization of the rebellion suggests a curious and dangerous negligence. Despite the relative scarcity of evidence relating to the 1st, it is clear that a deteriorating relationship between men and officers, and particularly the influence of old soldiers, critically shaped its men's response.

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9. Testimony of Pte Michael O'Neil, Dugshaie inquiry, PP 1860, p. 563

10. Seaton to Mansfield, Dugshaie, 11 May 1859, PP 1860, p. 76

11. Col J.W. Cox [13th Light Infantry] to Garrett, Kussowlie, 8 July 1859, Wood papers, IOLR, Vol. 85. Garrett passed Cox's letter to Sir Charles Wood, presumably through Clyde or Canning.

12. Wood to Canning, 11 July 1859, Wood papers, IOLR, Letter book 1

13. Abstracts of military letters received from India, 30 November 1859, Cambridge papers, IOLR, pos 7158

The 2nd Fusiliers, the only major European unit to avoid any open expression of dissatisfaction during the protest repays particular scrutiny. Since the fall of Delhi it had been garrisoned in the palace within the Red Fort at Delhi.

Alexander Boyd, who had earned Cadell's scorn, had been replaced as colonel in 1858 by Markham Sherwill. Prone to deliver improving homilies (which earned him the nickname 'Martin Tupper') Sherwill restored the regularity for which it had been noted under Showers.<sup>14</sup> In this he was supported

by Kendal Coghill, still adjutant and the guardian of the fusiliers' reputation. Coghill imposed a strict regime on both officers and men, contrasting with the Europeans' alleged laxity. When George Eaton arrived as an ensign in July 1858 (one of the 'flood' of cadets whom Mansfield bemoaned) his first parade was to witness a flogging - 'not a very pleasant start', he recorded in his diary.<sup>15</sup> Eaton himself incurred Coghill's displeasure, in a terse exchange of chits after Eaton was apparently absent from drill. Coghill demanded an explanation:

Sir I have the honour to inform you that I was at drill ... but was rather late.

Coghill admonished in reply

Sir ... I must request your punctual attendance ... Irrespective of the ill effects which an example must have on the ... men it deprives you of ... instruction it is so necessary to impart ...<sup>16</sup>

Orders in the 2nd, Eaton recorded, were obeyed 'instantly, without remark, without reply', and included in his diary dialogue purporting to reflect its style:

"Soldier, you must be like the clock; march, turn[,] halt and above all not a word."

"But Colonel ..."

"To the Quarter Guard for two days ..."

"If you would but listen to me ..."

"For four days" ...

"It is an injustice"

"To the Congee House for a week" ...

Such is the summary justice of a regiment.

Colonel Markham Eeles Sherwill (1814-65), 2nd European Bengal Fusiliers, 1859-61. Comm. Bengal native infantry, 1830; trsf. to 2nd BER, 1839; served second Punjab war; ret. 1861

Lieutenant George Eaton (1840-64), 2nd European Bengal Fusiliers, 1858. Of Grantham, Lincs, 9th child of a surgeon; comm. 1858; Vittoria, 1858; trsf. to 73rd Bengal Native Infantry

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14. Coghill to his sister, Janet, Delhi, 27 May 1858, NAM

15. Lt George Eaton, 'The Life, Diary and Adventures of Tittleyupshebumpshe', IOLR, Mss.Eur.D.747, p. 45. It describes his service with the 2nd Fusiliers from July to November 1858, when he left, coincidentally, for the 73rd Bengal Native Infantry.

16. Eaton diary, IOLR, p. 55

Eaton's little play may appear to have occurred in the orderly room of the Red Fort, but it was in fact derivative, having first appeared in Lights and shades of military life, a translation with critical commentary of a French text on military life and discipline by none other than Sir Charles

Surgeon Edward Hare, 2nd European Bengal Fusiliers. A/Surg 1842; Surg. 1853; Opinions of Hare varied. Richard Birch judiciously called him 'skilful', Montague Hall 'an ass', another subaltern 'a splendid cholera Doctor'

Napier, not the least of the curious connections between him and the Bengal Europeans.<sup>17</sup>

Showers's legacy of 'regularity' fulfilled Napier's ideal, as scrutiny of surviving character sheets testifies.<sup>18</sup> Its surgeon, Edward Hare, though oddly preoccupied with devising experimentally ways of water-proofing soldiers' clothing, appears to have echoed the regiment's traditional reluctance to allow good men to leave. In replying to the questionnaire circulated to gather evidence for the Indian sanitary commission, he observed that 'the loss of even one non-commissioned officer must necessarily be followed by corresponding want of order'.<sup>19</sup>

Sherwill had sought to allay his men's apprehension since November 1858.<sup>20</sup> When in May 1859 unrest became evident at nearby Meerut, Coghill declared that he would stake his commission on holding his regiment aloof from the

Brigadier Hugh Troup (1803-79), Commanding at Delhi, 1859-60. Comm. Bengal native infantry, 1820; served staff and regimental appointments, 1820-59; furlough 1860 to death

contagion.<sup>21</sup> He pretended to have adopted a simple, if brutal, approach, of 'forming the Committee to investigate the case - give a hearing to all those who appeared respectfully & shoot any who showed open mutiny or violence'.<sup>22</sup> In fact, Coghill and Sherwill's handling of their regiment was more subtle and, from the authorities' perspective, effective than other regiments'. On 5 May, as news from Meerut reached Delhi, by letter and newspapers, the 2nd paraded for the station commander, Brigadier Hugh Troup, to witness the presentation of long service and good conduct medals (and the accompanying annuity), a broad if coincidental reminder of the rewards of fidelity. Referring openly to the Meerut men's threat to march on Delhi, Troup praised the steadiness of Tombs's 2/1st horse artillery at Meerut and stressed the 'folly' of those who imagined that Europeans could survive in the Indian summer without

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17. Eaton diary, IOLR, p. 74; Charles Napier, Lights and shades of military life, London, 1850, p. 395. In 1857, according to William Napier, the book 'continue[d] to have a considerable circulation': Life and opinions, Vol. I, p. 475.

18. Discharge papers, 2nd EBF, IOLR, L/MIL/10/310, part 3

19. PP 1863, Vol. XIX, Part II, Appendix, answers to questionnaire, p. 182

20. Canning to Clyde, 18 November 1858, Canning papers, WYA, Vol. 70, No. 63, refers to a letter from Sherwill published in the Delhi gazette

21. Coghill to 'Gig', Delhi, 27 July 1859, NAM

22. Coghill to 'Jos', Delhi, 28 May 1859, NAM

rations. Troup, a Company's officer, compared the privileges of pay and pensions enjoyed in the former Company's service, unwittingly fostering the awareness of differences between the two forces.<sup>23</sup>

Sherwill gave over the following three days to 'athletic sports', including running and sack races, pitching shot, donkey races, quoits, football and chasing a greased pig.<sup>24</sup> 'All is serene', Troup reported to Simla on 8 May.<sup>25</sup> A week later the sports were staged again. On the last day the regiment's 'Ethiopian Serenaders' - evidently a minstrel troop - entertained the men. 'Clod Hopper' reported fragments of their patter. The interlocutor asked, 'Who has been the most distinguished this season?' Other serenaders suggested the Nana Sahib or Tantia Topee. 'Sambo' declared, however, that it was 'Dumpy Paisa'. He then asked 'What is the great doubt of Delhi?' Others suggested the supply of beer in the hot season or (ominously) the prospect of receiving the Delhi prize money, but

Banjo revealed to his admiring hearers that the great doubt of Delhi was the doubting of H.M.'s most faithful regiment the 2nd Bengal Fusiliers!

This was applauded as 'the great joke of the morning'.<sup>26</sup> Troup duly reported this to headquarters, noting with satisfaction that 'when mischief is intended people don't previously publicly joke'.<sup>27</sup> Coghill and Sherwill saw the success of their tactics on 30 May when Sir Richard Garrett inspected the regiment and on asking if any man had any complaints was met by silence.<sup>28</sup> The authorities acknowledged the men's restraint by holding a 'grand fete', at which the regiment's celebrated band was prominent and the sergeants urged the colonel to propose the loyal toast.<sup>29</sup>

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23. Delhi gazette, 7 May 1859

24. Ibid. 14 May 1859. The festivities presumably occurred within the Red Fort at Delhi, where the fusiliers were quartered.

25. Telegraph message, Troup to Mansfield, 8 May 1859, PP 1860, p. 72

26. Delhi gazette, 17 May 1859. See Michael Pickering, 'Mock blacks and racial mockery: "nigger" minstrel and British imperialism', in J.S. Bratton (and others), Acts of supremacy, pp. 179-236, for a discussion of the role of minstrels in shaping imperial ideology.

27. Troup to Mansfield, Delhi, 14 May 1859, PP 1860, p. 80

28. Delhi gazette, 7 June 1859

29. Ibid. 11 June 1859

Festivities, however, could not in themselves have persuaded the fusiliers to remain aloof. Their officers contested powerful identities and feelings which gave the men real choices. Intercepted letters suggested that some men corresponded with friends at other stations.<sup>30</sup> As the largest unit stationed at the powerful symbol of Delhi its fidelity was critical to the protest's spread. A fusilier sergeant visiting the foot artillery companies at Delhi overheard (and reported) a gunner say, 'If the Fusiliers will only whistle we will take the guns into the palace'. Sherwill, however, overheard one of his men reply, 'If they do come we will throw them off their horses'.<sup>31</sup> The sports and fetes were only the most visible sign of the struggle occurring within the fusiliers' ranks that summer, between the culture of the barrack-room and the community of the regiment. They must have been accompanied by careful, if less public, attempts to retain the men's confidence, with officers and sergeants speaking to men individually, countering their arguments and attempting to persuade them of the futility of resistance. Sherwill and Coghill's methods are apparent from a letter from Henry Crealock, Mansfield and Norman's assistant adjutant general, congratulating Coghill on his regiment's refraining from displaying 'feeling'. Drawing on his experience as a regimental officer in the Queen's 90th Light Infantry, Crealock hoped that Coghill would 'let it float through your ranks how much gratified and edified we were up here'.<sup>32</sup> The affair was therefore settled domestically: Troup did not convene a court of inquiry.<sup>33</sup> Attachment to the regiment defeated the solidarity of the barrack-room. By late May, as every other European unit proved unreliable, the men of the 2nd, 'walk[ed] about like peacocks with ten tails'.<sup>34</sup> Given their vociferous protest over the Delhi prize money, the fusiliers' restraint was all the more notable. Word of Coghill's success reached Mansfield, who

Lieutenant Colonel Henry Hope Crealock, Assistant Adjutant General at Clyde's headquarters, had served in the Crimea and on Mansfield's staff in the Rohilkund campaign in 1858

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30. Gnr Richard Walsh to Gnr John Whelan, Lucknow, 17 May 1859, Military consultations, No. 582, 17 June 1859, IOLR, P/191/25. Walsh told Whelan at Meean Meer of the 'state of feeling manifested by the 2nd Europeans at Delhi'. Since every newspaper report referred to the 2nd's steadfastness, Walsh's information probably came from private letters from men of the 2nd. Walsh and Whelan were shipmates, and presumably communicated with other men from the Maria Soames in the 2nd Fusiliers.

31. Lt Col G. Vaughan Maxwell [88th Foot] to Bradford, Delhi, 7 May 1859, PP 1860, p. 31. The 88th was also at Delhi, and Maxwell had spoken to Sherwill.

32. Lt Col H.H. Crealock to Coghill, Simla, 15 May 1859, Coghill papers, NAM

33. Unfortunately for the historian: had he done so the reconstruction of the 2nd's response to the crisis, given the complementary evidence from officers' papers and the Delhi gazette, might have been less speculative.

34. Coghill to 'Jos', Delhi, 28 May 1859, NAM. Coghill's analogy may have been prompted by his recollection of the 'hundreds' of wild peacocks which populated Delhi ridge throughout the siege: Heathcote journal, VBM.

'took it to the Lord Sahib'. Coghill reacted with the opportunism characteristic of the Company's service. Aware that he was 'in favour "in Court"', he opened 'a series of duns to the Military Secretary' soliciting an appointment. Receiving an assurance of Norman's aid, he was later disappointed to learn that Queen's officers were liable to benefit from all available appointments.<sup>35</sup>

Having worked so hard to forestall unrest, Coghill was shocked when in July 354 fusiliers, including 21 sergeants or corporals, declared their intention to leave.<sup>36</sup> He claimed bitterly that Canning, the 'ever to be somethinged Govr Genl', had 'cut the very ground from under my feet & washed up the Company's Army'.<sup>37</sup> That the loss was proportionately identical to the 1st emphasises the degree to which similar grievances motivated older soldiers across the force. The force's culture suggests an important explanation for the old soldiers' involvement in the protest. Just as every man had chosen the terms upon which to serve - crudely, whether as ambitious 'scholar' or apathetic 'blagard' - the crisis of 1859 compelled them to choose anew. Those resigned to serving and probably dying in India must surely have found the possibility of release disorienting. The prospect of escape years early explains the intensity of feeling within the barrack-rooms. Coghill, having struggled to retain his men's sense of attachment to their regiment, was ultimately defeated by the more powerful yearning for home which so many had suppressed for so long. In condemning Canning's surrender in granting wholesale discharge he raged that 'anyone but a fool or an idiot must have foreseen [sic] the effect of such an order'. Employing a significant and familiar analogy Coghill admitted that '[y]ou might as well offer any convict or exile in the penal settlements his freedom'.<sup>38</sup> Many believed that old soldiers, motivated by distaste for the ennui of cantonments, instigated the protest to obtain a free passage home, with the prospect of re-enlistment at the end of a holiday. Edwin Thomas of the 3rd infantry referred scathingly - and perhaps enviously - to the discharged men enjoying a 'spree'.<sup>39</sup> In that a fifth of the ten thousand men discharged enlisted in the Queen's army over the winter of 1859-60, within

Captain Edwin Thomas (1822-69),  
3rd Bengal European Regiment.  
Son of a Calcutta attorney; comm.  
1839; Captain, 1854; served first  
Afghan war, Gwallor war, second  
Sikh war, rebellion; ret. as  
Lieutenant Colonel, 1867  
(identification uncertain)

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35. Coghill to 'Jos', Delhi Palace, 28 May and 14 June 1859, NAM

36. McCance, History of the Royal Munster Fusiliers, Vol. I, p. 206

37. Coghill to 'Gig', Delhi, 27 July 1859, NAM

38. Ibid

39. Lt E. Thomas to Lewin Bentham Bowring [Private secretary to Canning], Allahabad, 6 September 1859, Canning papers, WYA, Vol. 108

months of arriving in Britain, old soldiers do appear to have capitalized on the protest to enjoy a brief holiday with friends and family before resuming their trade.<sup>40</sup>

That in the end 45 of Coghill's men eventually withdrew their applications, however, indicates that even in the face of imminent freedom the regimental identity which had sustained the 2nd through the protest prevailed. The men's confidence in their officers, and particularly in Sherwill and Coghill, perhaps made the difference. Coghill, though like every officer in the regiment volunteering to secure a furlough by accompanying the discharged men home, remained to rebuild his regiment.

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Colonel William Riddell's 3rd Bengal European Regiment was stationed at Morar, 200 miles south of Delhi, in central India. Formed only in 1853, it had first seen active service during the rebellion, though remaining within a few marches of Agra. Confined for much of 1857 in Agra fort, to a civilian refugee its young soldiers were 'quite worn out with

**Bt Colonel William Riddell (1805-75), 3rd Bengal European Regiment. b. Edinburgh; comm. 1823; served Bengal native infantry, Bhurtpore, first Afghan war, second Punjab war, rebellion; furlough October 1859; retired as hon. Major General, 1861**

... extra work'.<sup>41</sup> Veterans of the Delhi Field Force scornfully regarded them as 'sleek' when in October 1857 they relieved the fort.<sup>42</sup> The 3rd participated in no major actions except the disastrous battle at Sussia (which, despite losing 100 killed and wounded, its men regarded not as a tactical defeat, but as a successful fight against heavy odds). Later it joined columns suppressing rebellion around Agra, harassing operations involving much hardship and little credit.<sup>43</sup> Riddell, known to his men as 'Old Bill-a Nick', was a lethargic field commander (Sir Hugh Rose described his Agra Column as 'the Immovable Column') and an indifferent regimental disciplinarian.<sup>44</sup> The 3rd had been unlucky in its formation, composition and early experience. Many of its original officers, like Riddell, had been posted from sepoy corps, and shared the sepoy officers' shortcomings. Its original non-commissioned officers, drafted from

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40. 'Return of the number of men ... who have re-enlisted, since their arrival in England', PP 1860, p. 831. Note that despite its title the return includes enlistment in Ireland and Scotland.

41. R.M. Coopland, A lady's escape from Gwalior and life in the fort of Agra during the mutinies of 1857, London, 1859, p. 147

42. Bouchier, Eight months' campaign against the Bengal sepoy army, p. 99

43. PP 1857-58 XLIV, Pt 4, pp. 869-70 gives a brief account of its operations during the rebellion

44. Rose to Cambridge, Poona, 22 May 1859, Rose letter book, BL, Add. Ms. 42812

the 2nd Fusiliers, George Carter described as 'badly conducted ... useless persons'.<sup>45</sup> The regiment had suffered severely from a cholera epidemic in June 1856, in which 124 men, 5 women and 15 children died.<sup>46</sup> Though about half of the other ranks were Irish, many former labourers, the 3rd reflected the force's characteristic mix of scholar and blagard. Private Brown copied into his journal a ballad composed by a comrade describing the battle of Sussia. It not only illustrates the vigour of the literate culture of the barrack-room (and its connection to the ballad culture of the labouring poor), but also suggests how soldiers respected their officers' conduct in battle. Two of its seven verses read:

Colonel Riddle gave the word to take the village by storm,  
 Twas there our gallant Major received his deadly wound,  
 And many a brave hero fell, all in that bloody fray,  
 As we did fight them ten to one in the village of Sussia.

Lieutenants Pond, Fellow[e]s and bold McPherson too,  
 Did boldly lead us to the charge, though our numbers were but few,  
 We drove them from their stronghold, and forced them to give way,  
 And we showed them British valour, on the field of Sussia.<sup>47</sup>

The ballad suggests that their officers' bravery and leadership in battle earned their men's regard: the last verse begins, 'Success to our brave Colonel, may he ever have command'. The 3rd's events of 1859 would have caused many to rescind the wish.

The 3rd's reactions to the crisis are clearer than for any other European unit. Not only were several long letters intercepted, but the transcript of the court of inquiry, details of courts martial, newspaper reports and Private Brown and Lieutenant White's memoirs also permit an analysis rich in nuance. Whether deriving from the divisional commander or anonymous privates, the contemporary sources generally accord in reconstructing the regiment's protest. Their authors' differing perspectives, however, allow relationships within the regiment to be plotted in unusual detail, highlighting the various groups' motivations and actions.

Having left Agra in January, the regiment was dispersed in the summer of 1859 between the devastated cantonment of Morar, the nearby fort of Gwalior and the station of Seepree, 75

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45. Carter jot book, 30 September 1853, IOLR

46. Brown private journal, NLS

47. Brown private journal, NLS. The entire ballad is reproduced at Appendix D.

miles down the road to Bombay.<sup>48</sup> That the regiment's men were dissatisfied after the announcement of their transfer to the Crown in November may be inferred from Private Brown's journal. A sober young man with evangelical leanings, prone to record improving resolutions in his journal, John Brown was attached to his corps and respectful of his superiors. In this he seems to represent an important 'type' in the Company's Europeans, a scholar. If Brown's feelings were representative, the men were depressed at the prospect of spending another summer on the plains. His response to the order to march was melancholy: 'O Liberty! O Freedom! may I shortly throw off the chain of Slavery ...' Brown, and presumably other men, laboured under the grievance that their service in the rebellion had not been appropriately recognised, Brown copying into his journal a lengthy article, probably from the Mofussilite, on the subject.

Though on 8 May one of the Seepree detachment's sergeants reported dissatisfaction, promulgation of General Order 480 caused no immediate disquiet at the regiment's headquarters at Morar.<sup>49</sup> At 'gunfire' (before five) on the morning of 10 May the 'dressing bugle' warned men that the parade was imminent. A 'great noise' in the barrack-rooms turned into 'loud and lusty cheers': it was the second anniversary of the sepoy mutiny at Meerut.<sup>50</sup> Riddell arrived on the maidan expecting to find five companies of his regiment, but saw only a handful of sergeants and 'a few old hands'. He sent them to fetch the rest. Then, with his officers, he made for the noisy barrack-rooms. Officers and sergeants begged the men to put on their equipment and form up, without success. At length, after two companies had been cajoled into parading, the men consented to assemble, but without belts or arms. They heard an address on 'the impropriety of their conduct', delivered in what Riddell told his superior was 'a firm and decided manner' but which Private Brown derided as 'soft soap'.<sup>51</sup> Standing on his dignity, Riddell then dismissed a parade over which he actually had no control.

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48. The 3rd shared Morar with the Queen's 71st and the 2/5th Bengal Foot Artillery (the reinforced remains of the battery destroyed under D'Oyley at Sussia). Commanded by Alfred Light, who had distinguished himself by securing the magazine during the outbreak at Meerut in 1857, the 2/5th arrived at Morar late in April, only to be immediately quarantined from smallpox. Its members therefore played little part in the protest.

49. Demi-official letter, 8 May 1859, PP 1860, p. 86

50. Brown private journal, NLS

51. Riddell to Brigade Major, 1st Brigade, Gwalior Division, Morar, 10 May 1859, PP 1860, p. 48; Brown private journal, NLS

While most men continued at least to salute and mount guards, some refused to answer roll calls, and were confined. The afternoon saw more serious disorder.

Though after the debacle on the parade ground the men seem to have been left alone, early in the afternoon Lance

Sergeant John Stewart entered the barrack-rooms of Number 1 Company. Private John Lallas confronted him, telling

him, 'It is better for you to be off; you have no business

here'. Stewart evidently summoned other sergeants, who ordered several other privates to take Lallas to the quarter guard. All refused, one punching a sergeant. By three o'clock, the hottest part of the day, at least five men sweltered in the tent which served as a guard room, the sergeants on guard doubtless as uncomfortable as their prisoners.<sup>52</sup>

At five that evening a parade was again called, under the brigadier commanding at Morar, Colonel Charles Stuart.

Only a third of the men appeared, without arms. The rest were 'hanging about their barracks', having resolved during

the day 'not to turn out until their grievances were properly rectified'.<sup>53</sup> Stuart asked those on the maidan not to disgrace themselves by such acts of 'gross folly' then, like Riddell, went into the barrack-rooms and addressed the men. He would have preferred to have convened a drum head court martial to have 'vindicated discipline by then and there inflicting whatever punishment might have been awarded', but he had been warned against this by Mansfield.<sup>54</sup>

Stuart's harangue had little effect. After dark thirty or forty men rushed the quarter guard tent, attempting to rescue the prisoners. A further six men were arrested in the attempt. The prisoners were eventually re-taken, after Stuart (and not Riddell) personally took a party into the barracks. Tempers flared. A private was confined after refusing to arrest another, telling a sergeant "'Don't point at me; keep your hands down'". Native servants became victims. One soldier beat a camp follower, warning a sergeant that "'If I catch him again, I'll kill him'".<sup>55</sup>

**Sergeant John Stewart, 3rd Bengal European Regiment. Labourer, of Abaghbeg, Monaghan; enl. Waterford, November 1853, aged 23. Volunteered for 107th Foot, 1861**

**Private John Lallas, 3rd Bengal European Regiment. Labourer, of Glanmire, Cork; enl. Cardiff, June 1853, aged 22; Lord Dalhousie, 1853. Disch 883. Also Lalls**

**Colonel Charles Shepherd Stuart, Bombay army, Brigadier commanding Morar-Gwallor, 1859; Commiss. 1819; served 1st Bombay European Fusiliers**

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52. Reconstruction from the record of cases within the regiment tried by general court martial, Bengal general orders, 1859, IOLR

53. Stuart to Norman, 11 May 1859, PP 1860, p. 49

54. Ibid

55. Bengal general orders, 1859, p. 464, Proceedings of a GCM 22 August 1859, IOLR

The day ended in confusion, with men arguing over what they should do, prisoners at large in the barracks, sergeants confronting abusive privates and officers unsure of their authority.<sup>56</sup>

For a further week the 3rd remained disturbed, the men mounting guards but refusing to parade: 'there is great work in our Regiment', as one soldier wrote to a friend.<sup>57</sup> With the Queen's troops at the station apparently unaffected and ready to move against them, relations between the two forces deteriorated. Brown described how 'Jock' of the 71st Light Infantry boasted that the 3rd 'stood a poor chance' if the 71st was 'called upon to chastise us for Mutiny', and that with his Enfield rifle 'I could take you off your pins at 900 yards'. The European knocked the Scot down, retorting, 'I can take you off your pins at arms length'.<sup>58</sup> Reports reaching Britain from Bombay (presumably based on private letters from officers) described Morar as 'within a hair's breadth of a bloody solution'.<sup>59</sup> Whether this exaggerated the likelihood of collision the crisis damaged the relationship between officers and men seemingly strengthened during the rebellion. Whatever admiration Riddell had inspired as a leader in battle dissipated in the protest. Rather than enforce authority within the regiment personally, as had Sherwill at Delhi, he sent the 24 men charged on 10 May for trial at general courts martial, a sign of his uncertain leadership.<sup>60</sup> Their proceedings indicate the officers' lack of confidence. Of the 22 found guilty nine were sentenced to more than two years in prison, five to between five years and life. On being directed by Sir Robert Napier (the divisional commander) to revise the sentences, the courts awarded two men even more severe sentences, and eight were ordered lashes, since the late 1840s a rare punishment in the European force. Clyde's remarks on most cases reveal his anger at the court's severity, and he remitted or released in every case. Private Lallas, who had warned Sergeant Stewart away from the barracks, received four years' imprisonment, revised to seven, with fifty lashes. Clyde, angrily pointing out that in India such a punishment was 'nearly equivalent to a sentence of death',

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56. The events of 10 May can be partially reconstructed from the sparse details of offences recorded in the General orders, from which it is apparent that men of the grenadier and number 1 companies were most disturbed in the afternoon, and men of numbers 4 and 7 companies in the evening. Other sources include the reports of Maj Light, Col Riddell and Brig. Stuart in PP 1860, pp. 47-9

57. Anon to Cpl Patrick Byrne, 1st European Bengal Fusiliers, Morar, 29 May 1859, Military consultations, 17 June 1859, No. 585, IOLR, P/191/25

58. Brown private journal, NLS

59. Times, 12 July 1859, 5a

60. Bengal general orders, 1859, IOLR

reduced it to one year's imprisonment.<sup>61</sup> His officers though perhaps sharing his sense of betrayal, may not have approved of his response. Lieutenant Thomas, accompanying the discharged drafts of the 3rd to Calcutta recorded his annoyance at the want of "'tact" and savoir fair' among 'COs', presumably including his own.<sup>62</sup>

On the 14th Stuart appealed to Napier, still searching for rebels in the Seronge jungles. One of the few Company's generals to have prospered in the rebellion, Napier had originally been an engineer rather than a regimental officer, and seems to have underestimated the Europeans' feeling. He believed that 'ten minutes' conversation' might convince them of the 'absurdity' of their conduct.<sup>63</sup> Arriving on 17 May, he immediately convened a court of inquiry, and heard himself the complaints of Pond's grenadier company, at which Private Brown appeared. Clyde's intention in holding the inquiries also succeeded at Morar. Satisfied with the opportunity to express their views, the men consented to attend parades and on 20 May marched obediently in review.<sup>64</sup>

Though 'perfectly respectful' to Napier the men's stance remained unchanged.<sup>65</sup> Throughout the court of inquiry they consistently, and, indeed, repetitively argued that the transfer had breached the terms of their enlistment. Their statements, Napier concluded, were 'well studied and guarded'.<sup>66</sup> So similar do they appear that they must have been the product of either improbably thorough collusion or careless paraphrase by the court. Undeterred by the men's unanimity, Napier attempted to persuade them through a display of 'military eloquence' in the contemporary style. On the 20th, after a parade in which the regiment performed well, Napier addressed the men. In delivering a 'long yaren', as one man called it, Napier appealed to them as a fellow member of the European force.<sup>67</sup> Significantly, he chose to describe an incident said to have occurred in the battle of Ferozeshah. Brown recorded how he spoke of 'the Artillery of ours [ie the Company's Europeans] ran short of ammunition' while 32 Sikh guns

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61. Bengal general orders, 1859, p. 450, Proceedings of a GCM 2 August 1859, IOLR (emphasis in original)

62. Lt E. Thomas to L.B. Bowering, Allahabad, 6 September 1859, Canning papers, WYA, Vol. 108

63. Napier to Mansfield, Camp Deepnakhhera, 11 May 1859, PP 1860, p. 85

64. Telegraph message, Napier to Mansfield and Birch, 20 May 1859, PP 1860, p. 58

65. [Napier to Mansfield], 17 May 1859, PP 1860, p. 44

66. Napier to Mansfield, 23 May 1859, Military consultations, 17 June 1859, No. 584, IOLR, P/191/25

67. Anon to Byrne, Morar, 29 May 1859, Military consultations, No. 585, IOLR

fired into the 1st Fusiliers. 'One of the youngest Soldiers in the Corps' stepped forward, saying, 'we require no artillery, all we want is the order to charge'. The anecdote recognizably appears in Innes's History of the Bengal European Regiment.<sup>68</sup> Significantly, however, in Innes's account the challenge to 'take those guns' comes from Lieutenant John Lambert, one of Innes's fellow officers, whose death, following the loss of a leg at Sobraon two months later, Napier witnessed.<sup>69</sup> Unless Brown recorded the story wrongly (which is unlikely, since Lambert was by no means the youngest officer, let alone soldier, and telling the correct version would have been pointless) Napier evidently turned the story to suit his purpose. He called the 3rd 'a fine lot of young lads ... as good soldiers as your brother Regiment'. Napier's judgement was faulty. Brown described the address as 'blarney in first rate style': few were persuaded.<sup>70</sup> Napier then told the men that they 'would all get their discharge if they take things quite[sic] and attend their parades as before'.<sup>71</sup> This parade was more than simply a misjudged attempt to reverse strong feelings. It represented yet another confrontation between the force's institutional culture and the culture of the barrack-room, in which the barrack-room triumphed.

Napier's speech effectively admitted that the men had won their point. It was no coincidence that of the four letters intercepted from Morar three were written after this parade, conveying news of their success to former comrades in the very regiment which Napier had held up as the repository of military virtue. In June two-thirds of the regiment, the highest proportion of any corps raised before the rebellion, including 45 non-commissioned officers, decided to take their discharge.<sup>72</sup> In September, Riddell was replaced.

Men ventilated their views in several ways, each illuminating the complex relationships within barrack-rooms and companies and between officers and men. The initial outbreak on 10 May was planned (in the canteen the previous night according to Private Brown). Old soldiers and sergeants, however, seem neither to have instigated nor disclosed the plan. A man formerly of the 1st Fusiliers, who had left his old regiment under a cloud, told a friend at Dugshaie why he refused to 'turn out' on 10 May.<sup>73</sup> He seems to have regarded the protest as liable to benefit him nevertheless. 'I was not such a fool', he wrote, 'but I think it will do a good turn to some one or

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68. At p. 388

69. Ibid. p. 408

70. Brown private journal, NLS

71. Anon to Byrne, 29 May 1859, Military consultations, IOLR

72. Record of service, 107th Regiment [3rd Bengal European Regiment], WSRO

73. The expression has connotations both military (ie to parade) and industrial (ie to strike). The usage here appears to be the former, but the conjunction is suggestive.

another'.<sup>74</sup> Other soldiers adopted a common mode of expressing grievance, indirectly, complaining about trivial and apparently irrelevant matters in order to make their dissatisfaction clear. In the 3rd many men complained that they had not been compensated for kit lost in the regiment's hasty withdrawal from Agra cantonment to the fort in June 1857. Though officers testified that most men's claims could not possibly be accurate, Riddell recognized that they arose from disappointment at missing out on batta and prize money in the rebellion.<sup>75</sup>

Two Edinburgh men - 'scholars' - submitted closely reasoned petitions, which even the Naval and military gazette grudgingly conceded were 'ably drafted'.<sup>76</sup> While William

**Private William Ewing, 3rd Bengal European Regiment. Printer, of Edinburgh; enl. London, June 1854; Royal George, 1854. Disch. 883**

Ewing, formerly a printer, argued the transfer's illegality, John Kean, formerly a labourer, grounded his case on principle. The transfer, Kean declared, was 'repugnant to

**Private John Kean, 3rd Bengal European Regiment. Labourer, of St George, Edinburgh; enl. London, December 1853. Disch 883**

his feelings both as a man and a British subject'. Drawing on newspaper articles and quoting Palmerston's celebrated speech, Kean cited an editor's view that if the Company were to lose its charter the entire force, 'from the highest General to the lowest sepoy drummer boy' would have to be re-enlisted or 'sent about their business'.<sup>77</sup> The 3rd was said to have submitted a petition to the House of Commons, which was also published in mofussil papers.<sup>78</sup> Sir Hugh Rose, darkly but impotently observing events in Bengal from Poona, considered that their effect was 'contagious'.<sup>79</sup>

In deciding whether to voice complaint, claim discharge or remain - or at least remain silent - men called on various webs of association. Most, drawing on personal connections within the regiment, are irrecoverable. Only those who looked beyond the regiment can be reconstructed, and then only sketchily. Friendships formed far from India provided an important vector,

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74. 'John Kilgallen' to McNahan and Connegan, Morar, 21 May 1859, Military consultations, No. 582, IOLR, P/191/25

75. Riddell to Brigade Major, 1st Brigade, Gwalior Division, Morar, 11 June 1859, PP 1860, p. 436-7

76. Naval and military gazette, 9 July 1859

77. 'The humble petition of John Kean', PP 1860, p. 111

78. Maclagan, 'The white mutiny', p. 287, states that it appeared in the Calcutta Phoenix of 3 June 1859. Neither copy nor clipping of the issue could be located. I am grateful to staff of the WYA for their assistance in searching for it.

79. Rose to Sir Edward Lugard, Poona, 22 June 1859, Public letter book, 1859, BL, Add. Ms 42812

drawing on bonds of trust deeper than military service. One man, a former clerk, mixed family news with a discussion of the protest, ending his letter 'Your affectionate cousin'.<sup>80</sup> An anonymous man in the 3rd infantry, whose letter would presumably be identifiable to its recipient from clues such as handwriting, suggests the importance of such attachments. The transcript in the Military consultations records how in writing to Corporal Patrick Byrne of the 1st Fusiliers he told how he had '[met] with a great deal of the Colonel men of the [Queen's] 89[th] Regt'.<sup>81</sup> In passing on local gossip the man told of how he had heard from 'a chap [of] the name of George Tailborth' who had worked in 'grubles steam mill' 'a great deal of yarns about the town Girl[s]'. He told of how a woman had asked him to accompany her to Australia, since he was likely to gain a discharge. 'Colonel men' is, however, a mistake. From a reference to the 'Cashil Road' he clearly meant 'Clonmel', Corporal Byrne's native place. At least five men from Clonmel were serving in the 3rd, all of whom took their discharge in 1859. The 1st included at least five more Clonmel men, three of whom had enlisted in the same year, and it is possible that they discussed the question among themselves as word of the protest spread.<sup>82</sup>

If relationships between officers and men critically forestalled protest in the 2nd, it is worth considering why the 3rd's officers failed to inspire a similar confidence. The railway engineer John Blackett, who had known the regiment at Agra, regarded the disparity between the two as a fundamental cause of the regiment's disorder. 'What Asses', he wrote to his mother, 'But what can one expect from raw Irish recruits & such officers!'<sup>83</sup> A comparison of the two corps' captains and lieutenants in 1859 indicates the significance of apparently minor differences in composition and experience between otherwise similar units and suggests insights into the maintenance or deterioration of that relationship.<sup>84</sup> Both the 2nd and 3rd nominally included fourteen captains, but in the summer of 1859 only five were present in each. Of their twenty-two lieutenants only fourteen in the 3rd and thirteen in the 2nd were not detached on staff or

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80. Walsh to Whelan, Lucknow, 17 May 1859, Military consultations, IOLR

81. Anon to Byrne, Morar, 29 May 1859, Military consultations, 17 June 1859, No. 585, IOLR. The letter reproduced in PP 1860 (at p. 201) is incomplete and in fact omits the most significant passages. The editor's identity and location, whether in Calcutta or London, is unknown.

82. Alphabetical annual descriptive long roll, 3rd Bengal European Regiment, 31 August 1859; Alphabetical annual descriptive long roll, 1st European Bengal Fusiliers, 1 September 1859, Muster lists and casualty returns, 1859, IOLR, L/MIL/10/181

83. John Blackett to his mother, Koonespore, 27 June 1859, IOLR

84. Ensigns may be disregarded: as junior officers they had little influence and are in any case inadequately documented.

civil employment, or on furlough. Both units therefore made do with fewer officers than comparable Queen's regiments.<sup>85</sup>

The contrast between the two corps was not, therefore, simply attributable to the numbers of officers present. Indeed, in most respects they are strikingly similar.<sup>86</sup> Most were sons of working gentry; military officers, medical men, merchants or lawyers, many born overseas or in India. Most had seen some active service, usually in the rebellion. The only aspects in which the officers of the two regiments differ is, moderately, in their disciplinary records and, more significantly, in their military experience.

Only one officer of the 2nd, Charles Blair, the senior lieutenant present, had been court martialled - twice, for drunkenness in 1853 and 1855, being acquitted the second time. Several of the 3rd's officers, however, had or would shortly be charged with offences exemplifying the European officers' casual conception of their military obligations. Lieutenant Samuel White, despite his clerical background and evangelical profession (believing that the battle of Sussia would have been won had it not been fought on a Sunday), had twice been court martialled.<sup>87</sup> Reprimanded in 1852 he had been sentenced in 1854 to lose seniority for 'conduct unbecoming' in having 'importunately solicited ... leave [in] very provoking language'.<sup>88</sup> Even as the men of the 3rd charged on 10 May awaited trial, Lieutenant Robert Stevenson was tried for 'conduct unbecoming' in having been unable to account for Rs937 of his company accounts, or indeed perform any duties, while suffering from delirium

Lieutenant Charles Richard Blair (1830-1907), 2nd European Bengal Fusiliers. b. Mhow, father Bengal officer; comm. 1846; served second Punjab war; GCM 1853, 1855; invalided, 1861; ret. as hon. Major General, 1874

Lieutenant Samuel Dewé White (1825-?), 3rd Bengal European Regiment. Son of a headmaster; comm. 59th Bengal Native Infantry, 1844; served first Punjab war; trsf. 3rd BER, 1853; GCM 1852, 1854; served rebellion; Lieutenant Colonel, 1870; retired as hon. Colonel, 1875

Captain Robert Stevenson (1821-?), 3rd Bengal European Regiment. b. at sea, son of an officer of the Queen's army; comm. Bengal native infantry, 1838; served rebellion, Agra and Central India; GCM 1859, 1860; ret. February 1861

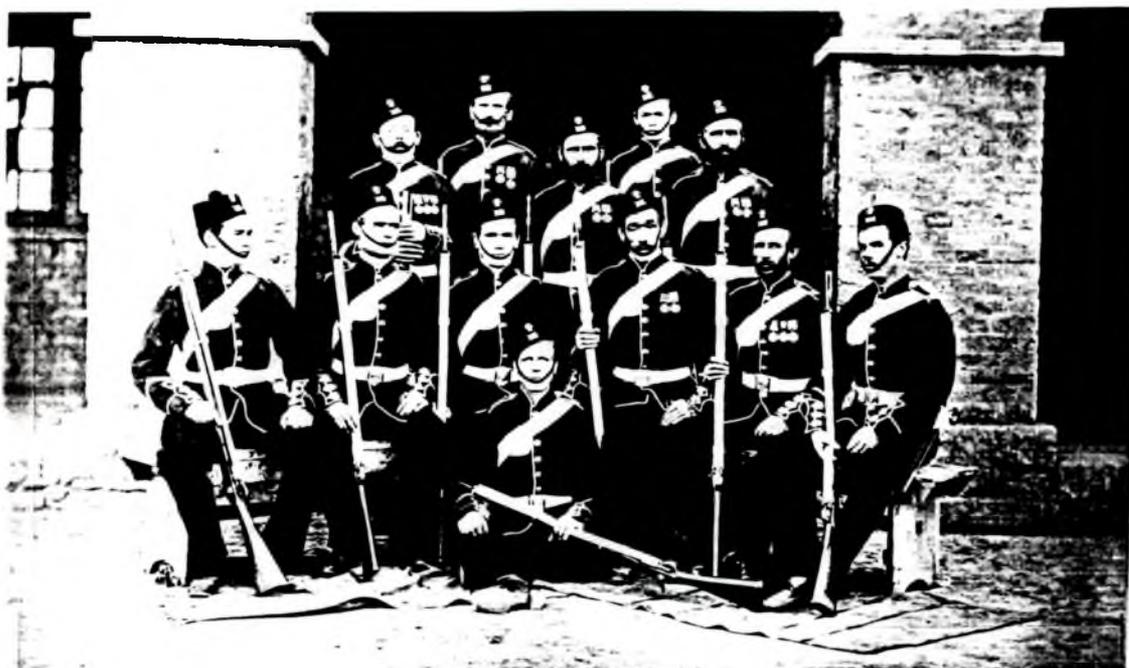
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85. East India register, 1860, pp. 102-5. An undated 'Memoir on military matters by Lord Derby' in Sir Charles Wood's papers, includes a table, 'Officers of Line Regiments present + absent', IOLR, Vol. 86. Evidently compiled around 1859, it shows that twelve Queen's regiments in Bengal averaged 7.25 captains and 19.25 lieutenants 'with the regiment'. The Europeans thereby breached a standing general order of 1853 referred to in the memoir specifying that a minimum of six captains be present.

86. Biographical details obtained from the Hodson index, NAM

87. Samuel Dewé White, 'Reminiscences of the great sepoy revolt', Westminster review, Vol. CL, October 1898, pp. 448-62

88. Bengal general orders, 1854, p. 586, Proceedings of GCM, 29 September 1854, IOLR, L/MIL/17/2/303



**Illustration 13**

Privates of the 1st European Bengal Fusiliers (by then the 101st Royal Bengal Fusiliers) at Peshawur in 1864. The number of medals indicates their probable service, including the Punjab wars, the rebellion and the Umbeylah campaign. The old soldiers in this group are those who decided not to seek discharge in 1859, but who exercised such a decisive influence within the barrack room. The photograph suggests that old soldiers may have asserted a monopoly on whiskers (NAM neg. no. 24181).



**Illustration 14**

Officers of the 3rd Bengal European Regiment), 1861, including several individuals mentioned in the text: Colonel Edward Darvall (1), Captain Alexander Pond (2), Captain Robert Stevenson (3) and Captain Edwin Thomas (4). Captain Thomas Fellowes, praised in the soldiers' ballad, 'The heroes of Sussia', lies with his dog in the foreground. The dispirited impression of this group contrasts with that of the officers of the 101st, depicted in Illustration 17a (NAM neg. no. 75593).

tremens. Though found not guilty of insobriety, he was ordered to repay the missing money, a sentence which Clyde confirmed reluctantly.<sup>89</sup> These cases hardly amounted to gross dereliction, but viewed against the sepoy officers' general laxity of conduct they suggest an explanation for the lack of confidence between men and officers in the regiment.

Contemporary military society operated according to an implicit bargain: soldiers owed a duty of obedience while officers were constrained to observe a code of honour.<sup>90</sup> Just as domestic service revealed to millions of working-class women notions of middle-class respectability, so men's contact with their officers gave soldiers insights into gentlemanlike behaviour, and its absence. Indeed, contemporaries held that officers' observance of honourable conduct buttressed their men's subordination: 'the spirit of aristocracy', Charles Napier observed, 'is strong among ... soldiers'.<sup>91</sup> The 3rd's officers arguably failed to fulfil this code, tacitly sanctioning their men's abandonment of the 'soldierlike' ideal. Napier's characteristically uncompromising judgement appears in George Carter's jot book: 'No good regiment ever had bad officers'.<sup>92</sup>

The tensions of May 1859 critically weakened the comradely rapport born of the shared perils of the rebellion. That esteem could so rapidly evaporate suggests that the 3rd's officers transgressed powerful, if latent, sanctions. Though recalling that John Brown's perspective was but one in the regiment, his strictures on Riddell's 'mean stratagems ... to coax the men to stop' perhaps explain his men's dramatic loss of confidence. Brown recorded his outrage that 'he was the sole means of blighting many ... a persons only prospect'. Instead of

considering it a credit to his Regiment by men getting employment out of it, he would try his utmost efforts to stop the men from getting away.<sup>93</sup>

That Brown should have referred to the restriction of his comrades' 'prospects' suggests that the transfer's effects on men's ambitions may have affected infantrymen as well as gunners.

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89. Bengal general orders, 1859, p. 322, Proceedings of a GCM 6 June 1859, IOLR, L/MIL/17/2/308

90. See, for example, 'W', 'Present conduct and discipline of the army', Colburn's united service magazine, Part 1, 1833, p. 453: 'the high respectability of the officers' conduct has enabled them to exercise far greater control over their men'.

91. Undated newspaper clipping, Dr John Grieve collection, Mitchell Library, Glasgow

92. Carter jot book, IOLR

93. Brown private journal, NLS

The careers of officers of the two corps differ critically in another respect. While only one officer of the fusiliers had served with sepoy corps (the brandy-tipping Alexander Boyd) at least twelve of the seventeen officers of the 3rd commissioned before 1856 had done so. The captains had spent around fourteen and the six senior lieutenants between five and ten years in units following a different ethos of command to that understood in European corps. In this the 3rd's officers fulfilled Mansfield's prediction that sepoy officers would be unable to command European troops.

The protests of May 1859 confronted the experienced men of the old regiments with a choice between attachment to their regiment and identification with the culture of the barrack-room: in effect, between authority and community. Those of the 1st evaded, declaring their choice by neither denouncing the feelings they heard expressed nor openly expressing their dissatisfaction. Those of the 2nd were persuaded not to disgrace their regiment by joining the protest, though, honour satisfied, they did not feel obliged to remain. The 3rd's, withdrawing support from officers who had never completely won their confidence, revealed in the crisis the power of the barrack-room.

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Mismanagement and disorder marked the discharged men's departure as much as it had their enlistment and formation. Anxious to be rid of them, the authorities compelled them to travel through the sickly monsoon, resulting in much

Acting Corporal Henry Jones, No. 2957, 4th Bengal European Light Cavalry. Labourer of Lambeth; enl. London, November 1858, aged 20; disch. 883 [identification uncertain]

discomfort and disease. Sir John Inglis sent away a steamer overcrowded 'but not dangerously' when cholera struck Cawnpore. They did not escape. A tenth of the 800 aboard contracted cholera on the journey to Calcutta.<sup>94</sup> One, Henry Jones, in claiming compensation for the loss of his kit, recorded how he had been 'conveyed to the Hospital [at Benares] ... labouring from Cholerah', the only one of seven to recover.<sup>95</sup> All suffered 'inconvenience and hardship' from the chaos of the force's accounts.<sup>96</sup> Men's pay remained unsettled, and on arrival in Britain nominal rolls and accounts were missing.

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94. Inglis to Birch, 2 September 1859, India military consultations, 30 September 1859, No. 585, IOLR, P/191/29

95. Pte Henry Jones, nd, Soldiers' references, IOLR, L/MIL/5/362, Part 6

96. Military despatch to India, 6 January 1860, No. 4, IOLR, L/MIL/3/2094. The aggrieved men anxiously applying for their arrears of pay would have derived little comfort from learning that the resultant 'vexatious and protracted correspondence' produced in the 'Soldiers' references' a lode worthy of detailed study.

Following their apparent victory men awaiting discharge showed 'scanty respect' for their officers.<sup>97</sup> Though nominally under discipline the men's officers were unable or unwilling to exert authority. Their sergeants, immune from either sanction or incentive, were 'worse than useless'. Men awaiting shipping assembled rowdily at Chinsurah committing 'serious outrages', including robberies and a murder.<sup>98</sup> The 53rd Foot was despatched to restore order.

Shipping was hastily assembled and by the end of the year some twenty ships had sailed for Britain. The nightmare voyage of the Great Tasmania caused a minor scandal, though its significance lies more in the implications of the reaction it engendered. The Great Tasmania, a 'frigate built' sailing vessel launched in 1855, had been intended for the Australian passenger service, and had previously served as a troopship.<sup>99</sup> Carrying almost a thousand discharged men, including some 450 of the 3rd infantry, all under Captain Alexander Pond, hero of Sussia and John Brown's company commander, the Great Tasmania arrived in the Mersey in March 1860. Feverish men clad in light Indian uniforms were carried shivering in open carts through the rain to the Liverpool workhouse infirmary.<sup>100</sup> Fifty-two men died on the voyage or following embarkation, of scurvy and associated complications, including dysentery, and pulmonary conditions aggravated by their sailing into a northern winter without warm clothing. Dozens of others suffered from exposure, fever and malnutrition. The case provoked widespread consternation: a Mr Thomas Clarke of Baltimore, Maryland, reading of the 'fearful mortality' aboard the vessel, wrote to East India House enquiring after his son in the 3rd infantry.<sup>101</sup>

An inquest in Liverpool found the Bengal army's commissariat system culpable.<sup>102</sup> The Military Department in Calcutta accepted the lowest tender per head, Rs164/8,

**Captain Alexander Pond (1821-?), 3rd Bengal European Regiment. b. Dumbarton, father merchant; comm. 30th Bengal Native Infantry, 1843; Captain, 3rd BER, 1857; served first Punjab war, Santhal revolt, rebellion (Sussia, Agra); commanded troops, Great Tasmania, 1859; Lieutenant Colonel, 1869; Lieutenant General, 1889**

**Lieutenant Henry Goschen (1837-?), 3rd Bengal European Regiment. Comm. 58th Bengal Native Infantry, 1856; ret. 1866**

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97. Clyde to Canning, 8 August 1859, Canning papers, WYA, Vol. 70, No. 137B

98. Maj T.A. Dalzell [Commanding Chinsurah Depot] to Birch, 27 September 1859, India military consultations, 30 September 1859, No. 368, IOLR, P/191/29

99. Michael Stammers, The passage makers, Brighton, 1978, pp. 107, 153, 172,

100. 'Abstract Return of ... Troops ... on Board the Ship Great Tasmania', IOLR, L/MIL/10/320

101. Thomas Clarke to EIC, nd, Soldiers' references, Part IV, IOLR, L/MIL/5/362, Part 4

102. Times, 22 & 23 March 1860, 12c-d; 12e

compared to over Rs190 for six other transports.<sup>103</sup> A board of survey in Calcutta passed the provisions but on sailing they were found to be foul. Committees convened on board found beer 'sour and unwholesome', salt beef 'bad', preserved milk 'unfit for issue', biscuit 'imperfectly baked', mouldy and so thick and hard it could not be broken.<sup>104</sup> A doctor boiled peas for six hours but found them still inedible. The drafts' officers pointed to the men's fecklessness, Lieutenant Henry Goschen of the 3rd infantry, the vessel's adjutant, claimed that embarkation at Chinsurah had been 'one continued scene of drunkenness', with men trading their blankets for liquor.<sup>105</sup>

The officers' anxiety to evade responsibility may have derived from their awareness that they had evidently exercised as little vigilance over the men as over the stores. Evidence taken by a court of inquiry into the death by drowning of a Private William Boylan suggests that they left the troops largely to their own devices, with consequent bullying unchecked. One of Boylan's mates said that shortly before he had been reported overboard he had seen him

Private William Boylan, 5th Bengal European Regiment. Labourer, of Monaghan; enl. Monaghan, September 1858, aged 21; disch. 883 November 1859; drowned Great Tasmania, December 1859

Gunner John Gatherall, No. 8303, 2/5th Bengal Artillery. Engineer, of Govan, Glasgow; enl. July 1854; Collingwood, December 1854; disch. 883

crying, a man of another unit having 'struck and kicked him in the mouth'. Later, following a 'scuffle', Boylan disappeared.<sup>106</sup> Captain Pond appears to have fulfilled his obligations to the letter but no further. John Gatherall, formerly of Light's 2/5th foot artillery at Morar, wrote seeking his discharge papers from India House after embarkation. The vessel was in 'such great distress' that he had sought lodgings in Liverpool. On returning to collect his papers he was told by the acting sergeant major that 'my name had been called ½ Hour before and on that account I would require to write for it ... that was Captain Pawn's [sic] orders'.<sup>107</sup>

Shortly after their disembarkation, Charles Dickens, in the guise of 'The uncommercial traveller', visited the Great Tasmania's survivors in the Liverpool workhouse. In his essay,

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103. Military Department to Wood, 8 September 1859, Military and Marine Letters from India, No. 157 of 1859, IOLR, L/MIL/3/81

104. 'Original proceedings of committees assembled on board the "Great Tasmania"...', IOLR, L/MIL/5/521

105. 'Papers connected with the mortality amongst the Discharged soldiers on board the "Great Tasmania"', Canning papers, WYA, Vol. 114, No. 489

106. 'Proceedings of a Court of Inquiry', IOLR, L/MIL/5/521

107. John Gatherall to EIC, Glasgow, 12 April 1860, Soldiers' references, IOLR, L/MIL/5/362, Part 1. Another man complained that rather than approve another man's travel to his place of enlistment, Pond told him to 'go where I choose': John O'Dea to EIC, Kildessart[?], 15 April 1860, Soldiers' references, Part II, IOLR, L/MIL/5/362, Part 2.

'The Great Tasmania's cargo', Dickens described and reflected upon the soldiers' suffering.<sup>108</sup> The essay, both moving reportage and controlled invective, attacked the official inhumanity which, as a newspaper put it, 'managed [men] out of their lives'.<sup>109</sup> Dickens introduced an official, Dr Pangloss, who asserted, like his namesake, that the beef, beer, peas and biscuit were all 'the best of all possible', as were the authorities which ordered and approved them and the officers who supervised the voyage. Dickens recorded his conversation with a sergeant, 'a man of very intelligent countenance'.<sup>110</sup> The sergeant agreed that men had sold blankets before embarking, but on the understanding that bedding would be supplied, and contested statements made at the inquest, asserting that many men lacked hammocks for the entire voyage. Impressed by the men's forbearance and dignity, Dickens chided 'a nation that tamely suffers such intolerable wrong to be done in its name'.

The Great Tasmania became the East India Company's Scutari, reminding appalled newspaper readers of the sufferings of the Crimea six years before. It contributed to the awareness that society owed soldiers the duties of humanity. 'In this enlightened and practical age', a leader began (in commenting on a European cavalryman's suicide) 'the soldier has ceased to be looked upon as a mere machine, without the faculty of thought or the power of free action'.<sup>111</sup> The events of 1859 had also demonstrated the soldiers' capacity for thought and power of free action. It may have done for India what the Crimean blunders did for the British army, accelerating the existing impetus for humanitarian reform.

Sir Hugh Rose, reading the official and unofficial reports shortly after arriving in Calcutta in the monsoon of 1860, considered that the episode exemplified the shortcomings of the Indian army. He blamed the men's poor health partly on their 'continual excesses', but felt that the officers commanding at Fort William and at the Chinsurah depot should have exerted firmer control. Brigadier Smith, the officer commanding at Fort William, 'lost sight of the Queen's regulations respecting the embarkation of troops', Rose demonstrating his mastery of the minutiae of such matters by quoting the relevant passage. Rose felt that Captain Pond, Lieutenant Goschen, the ship's medical officer, Dr Thomas Fernandez and its captain, were

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108. Charles Dickens, 'The Great Tasmania's cargo', in The uncommercial traveller and reprinted pieces etc., London, 1958, pp. 73-82, originally published as one of a series of sombre essays in All the year round in 1860; see Peter Ackroyd, Dickens, London, 1990, pp. 872-73.

109. Allen's Indian mail, 27 June 1860

110. Substantiating Bartle Frere's impression of the European soldiers, Dickens quoted the master of the workhouse (who had 'had a pretty large experience of troops') that 'better conducted men than these he had never had to do with': The uncommercial traveller, p. 79.

111. Allen's Indian mail, 22 August 1860

culpable.<sup>112</sup> Profoundly critical of the Indian army's constitution and customs, deeply disturbed with the consequences of Clyde's lenient management of the previous year's protest, Rose at last occupied a position which would allow him to challenge and change the system which had allowed the soldiers' protest and the suffering it entailed aboard the Great Tasmania.

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112. Sir Hugh Rose, Memorandum re "Great Tasmania" [nd but evidently circa 18-21 August 1860], Rose papers, Public letter book, BL, Add.Mss. 42813

## **PART IV: TRANSFORMATION**

### **'One empire, one army': the transformation of the Bengal Europeans, 1860-75**

**Chapter 10 'The Punishment for Mutiny': the Europeans' military culture  
challenged, 1860-61**

**Chapter 11 'A darkness beneath the lamp': amalgamation, 1861**

**Chapter 12 'Melancholy patchwork': the Bengal Europeans' demise, 1861-75**

Our regimental schools and libraries have raised ... a host of very  
clever well-read private soldiers with powerful minds ... now as Lord Bacon  
has justly said that knowledge is power, what will be the increase of power if  
knowledge is well drilled and carries a musquet and bayonet?

Sir Charles James Napier to Lord  
Ellenborough, 12 October 1852

## Chapter 10

### 'The Punishment for Mutiny': the Europeans' military culture challenged, 1860-61

The transports' departure for Britain left fundamental questions unresolved: was a local force necessary, desirable or reliable; to what did its officers and men owe allegiance; above all - could two European forces co-exist in British India? These questions were effectively answered in the relationship between the Commander-in-Chief of the British army in India and members of the European force over the year 1860-61. Though the Bengal army had lost six of its ten thousand Europeans, the protest had not extirpated what its commanders regarded as the contagion of resistance to authority. Granting discharges had disabled its military capacity without affecting the culture of assertion motivating the protest. Indeed, successful protest had confirmed the force's distinctive culture. That culture implicitly challenged the Commander-in-Chief's authority, instigating a contest resolved only with the demise of the countervailing force.

Sir Hugh Rose, victor of the rebellion in central India, became the Queen's army's agent in nullifying the threat from the European force and incorporating it into an imperial army. Indeed, the final contest between the traditional adversaries resembled a contest of wills, between the mass of the Europeans and Rose himself.<sup>1</sup> Though aware of his promotion since January 1860, Rose did not actually take office until June. In the meantime, Clyde, increasingly tired, forgetful and disagreeable, hung on fruitlessly as Commander-in-Chief, his decline all the more marked for a breach with Mansfield.<sup>2</sup> On arriving in Calcutta Rose quickly formed an harmonious working relationship with Canning, establishing a more assertive claim to the direction of military affairs than had Clyde. Though ostensibly answering to the Governor General, Rose's primary allegiance was to the Queen's army and its Commander-in-Chief. A protégé of Palmerston (whose attention presumably he had attracted during his diplomatic tenure in the Levant) Rose had not been a favourite of Cambridge when

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1. It must be acknowledged that the scarcity of sources originating from officers or men of the European regiments is such that the contest is mainly apparent, and is unavoidably presented, from Rose's own papers, supplemented by a selection of papers from the Military Proceedings held in the National Archives of India, a few memoirs and newspapers.

2. Sir Hugh Rose to Sir Edward Lugard, Mahabaleshwar, 26 March 1860, Rose papers, Public letter book, BL, Add.Ms 42813. Mansfield's hopes of obtaining Clyde's position had not been realized; he passed up command of the China expedition in the mistaken belief that he would succeed Clyde.

in 1857 he had been appointed unexpectedly to command the Central India Field Force.<sup>3</sup> His performance in central India appears to have eased Cambridge's reservations and, sharing a disdain for the Indian army's laxity, the two worked together to effect its transformation.

In refreshing contrast to most aspiring architects of a reconstructed Indian army, Rose's vision was moral rather than organizational. The tables of establishments forming the staple of debate of many military reformers had no place in his scheme for its renewal. Though favouring the 'regular' against the irregular system of regimental organization (in which he backed the losing faction) he was largely unconcerned with the details of numbers of men and the units into which they could be formed. His vision for change involved the infusion of qualities of discipline and subordination into men and officers he regarded as conspicuously lacking in either. Rose sought to institute, in contrast to the idiosyncratic lottery prevailing in the Bengal army, a 'system of just reward and punishment', by which 'the good soldier is certainly rewarded and the bad is punished'.<sup>4</sup> He was practical and pragmatic. Disregarding many of the absurdities of contemporary uniform, he favoured an approach Canning described as 'duck frocks and no stocks'.<sup>5</sup> Adopting existing proposals to introduce workshops, coffee rooms and the military equivalents of 'rational recreation', he aimed at 'infusing military feeling' in the force.<sup>6</sup> His intention, expressed in his first general order on assuming command, was to 'promote the welfare, uphold the discipline and maintain the renown' of his armies.<sup>7</sup> Within a year of assuming command Rose was 'winning golden opinions' from a military press highly critical of the Indian army's shortcomings.<sup>8</sup>

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3. G.B. Malleon, Essays and lectures on Indian historical subjects, London, 1876, p. 288; Panmure papers, Vol. II, p. 413

4. Rose to Canning, Boohaunpoor, 23 December 1858, Rose public letter book, BL, Add.Ms 428812

5. Canning to Viscount Sydney, 18 June 1860, Hare, The story of two noble lives, p. 107. 'Duck frocks' refers to loose, cooler coats; 'stocks' were tight leather collars intended to keep soldiers' heads upright and rigid.

6. Rose to Lugard, Poona, 25 November 1859, Rose public letter book, BL, Add. Ms 428813

7. General Order 291, 4 June 1860, Rose papers, 'Correspondence during various commands in India', BL, Add. Ms 42807

8. Naval and military gazette, 24 November 1860

Incorporating Her Majesty's Indian Forces into the Queen's army proper would involve two major confrontations: the revision of the culture of its officers and the subjection of the force's rank and file.

Concurring with Wellington on Indian officers' shortcomings, Rose scorned the sepoy officers' 'unmilitary feeling', quoting Napier in condemning their 'loose discipline'.<sup>9</sup> He cherished a patrician notion of military duty

**Lieutenant Henry Benjamin Blake (1829-?), 3rd Bengal European Regiment. Son of a Madras officer; comm. 47th Bengal native infantry, 1845; trsf. 3rd BER, 1853; dismissed by GCM, 1860**

which his experience with the Bombay army had confirmed rather than challenged. Shortly before the attack on the rebel fortress of Jhansi, for example, he discovered Lieutenant William Dick of the Bombay Engineers shielding one of his sergeants from a charge of looting. Though both the offence and Dick's action were characteristic of the Europeans, the officer's neglect of his duty offended Rose's conception of honour. He allowed Dick to redeem his lapse by joining the storming parties about to launch the assault, in which Dick was killed.<sup>10</sup> Several charges brought against officers of Europeans early in his term directed Rose's attention to their officers' propensity to transgress the gentlemanly code. In 1860 Captain Robert Stevenson of the 3rd infantry would again be acquitted of embezzling his company's funds, though his brother officer Lieutenant Henry Blake would be dismissed for having misapplied Rs603 of his men's money. Rose declined to allow Blake to 'return to the society of his brother officers'.<sup>11</sup>

The Europeans' rank and file, however, in the meantime occupied Rose's attention. They had once threatened and might again imperil the subordination of his army, and during 1860 he sought primarily to meet that danger. Though supreme commander in India, Rose's ability to modify the powerful culture of his most refractory corps turned out to be paradoxically limited. While he could advance the troops' material conditions (a concern which he pursued vigorously) he could remodel barracks more easily than the attitudes of their occupants. In attempting to curb the idiosyncratic approach to command characteristic of the European force,

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9. Rose to Cambridge, Mahabaleshwar, 21 May 1859, Rose papers, public letter book, BL, Add. Ms 42812

10. Denys Croll, 'F. Whirlpool VC', p. 87, Australian War Memorial, PR84/8

11. Bengal general orders, 1860, p. 507, Proceedings of a GCM, 15 August 1860, IOLR, L/MIL/17/2/309 The 3rd's officers' disreputable and quarrelsome impression is buttressed by the dismissal in 1860 of Lt William Lee. Formerly an ensign in the Queen's 57th Foot, Lee left the regiment in the Crimea to marry, against the advice of his fellow officers. He too was cashiered by Rose for 'gross misconduct in money matters': Bengal general orders, 1860, p. 585, Proceedings of a GCM, 6 November 1860.

for example, Rose could only censure a court condoning a gunner accused of abusing his commanding officer as a 'highland robber'.<sup>12</sup> His comments on the proceedings of general courts martial, and his power to confirm their sentences, provided a measure of his intentions, though no indication of their efficacy. His inability to prevent indiscipline by men and lax enforcement by officers compelled him to seek more effective ways of converting the European force to the subordination he and other Queen's officers expected. Lacking Napier and Clyde's gift of spanning the gulf between headquarters and barrack-room, Rose was obliged to resort to dramatic measures to impose his will. Circumstances therefore conspired to provoke in Rose's first year as Commander-in-Chief confrontations between him and his soldiers which both reflected and affected the tension which the European force experienced.

Despite his reputation as a successful commander, Rose's ability to impose his will on an army fell short of his operational skill. His initial relations with his troops were marked by a misjudgment which must have inspired little confidence. During the rebellion and Clyde's easygoing and finally negligent term the practice of troops keeping pets in barracks had grown to proportions which Rose considered disruptive. Irritated by cantonments overrun by animals, he ordered in September that they be culled and regulated. The order provoked intense resentment: at Peshawur, a station notable for quiescence during 1859, men 'maddened by indignation at what they considered an act of unfeeling tyranny' butchered all their birds, monkeys and dogs out of spite.<sup>13</sup>

In the year between promulgation of the general order conceding discharge to the disaffected men of the Bengal European force and Rose's arrival the European force remained in limbo. Old, tired and denied Mansfield's judgement, Clyde lost his acumen and energy. Neither seeking to revivify the denuded force's morale, nor actively pursuing the Queen's army's intention to eliminate it, he occupied rather than exercised the command. By not seeking to change its culture he therefore effectively confirmed it, making Rose's task all the harder.

The departure of so many men left every European unit demoralized and militarily ineffective. In the cavalry, many men had not mastered riding by the end of 1860, while the large

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12. Bengal general orders, 1860, p. 551, Proceedings of a GCM, 8 October 1860, IOLR

13. Allen's Indian mail, 22 October 1860. An impression of the number and variety of soldiers' pets in barracks in mid-Victorian India is available from Herbert Compton, (ed.), A King's hussar: being the military memoirs ... of a troop-sergeant-major ..., London, 1893, in T.H. McGuffie's anthology, Rank and file, London, 1964. The incident evokes the Paris printers' retaliatory slaughter of cats portrayed in Robert Darnton, The great cat massacre and other episodes in French cultural history, New York, 1984, pp. 75-104.

proportion of volunteers in the Bengal Artillery consigned most units to long and wearying training.<sup>14</sup> Even formerly committed officers revealed their disillusionment with what they saw as their men's perfidy. Kendal Coghill, who perhaps had more reason than most to resent his men's departure, nevertheless spitefully penalized men who had exercised their rights. Justifying his refusal to submit the names of discharged men qualified for the Delhi prize money, he explained,

I gave none of our men who claimed their discharge ... Prize certificates, as there was no ... direct order granting it - they all had their service extracts in their pocket ledgers, so they may help themselves - the brutes.<sup>15</sup>

George Cracklow, posted to the still ruined station of Muttra, found his gunners 'low spirited and down on their luck'. Oppressed by his own meagre prospects, he became apathetic, further depressed by the 'grumbling, insubordinate set of brutes' of his troop.<sup>16</sup> Further ill will appeared in the presentation of Victoria Crosses to men who had in the meantime accepted discharge. Sergeant McGuire and Drummer Ryan, formerly of the 1st Fusiliers, who had saved their comrades' lives by their actions in the assault on Delhi, were presented with their crosses by the Town Major at Fort William. The arrangement was unusual, with most awards presented by the Commander-in-Chief. As 'Time expired Soldiers awaiting discharge' they were excluded from the vice-regal ceremony held nearby at which an officer received his cross from Canning.<sup>17</sup>

Those remaining might have been presumed to be content. Dissatisfied men had left: 'loyal' men received in September 1859 a 'boon' of two years additional service as a reward for fidelity.<sup>18</sup> The regiments' replenishment with recruits compounded their disciplinary woes. As

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14. Rose to Canning, 21 December 1860, Rose papers, Public letter book, BL, Add.Ms 42813

15. Coghill to Military Secretary, 12 May 1860, Canning papers, WYA, Vol. 136

16. Broehl, Crisis of the raj, p. 273

17. Crook, Evolution of the Victoria Cross, p. 52; Campbell [Military Secretary] to Brig. Smith [Commanding Fort William], 20 July 1859, Canning papers, WYA, Vol. 141, Public letter book, Vol. 2, 1858-59. In a further act of official spite Clyde forbade the children of discharged men to remain at the Lawrence Asylum at Sanawar: Military consultations, No. 392, January 1859, NAI.

18. Wood to Canning, 19 September 1859, Wood papers, IOLR, Letter book 1. The measure was a mixed success: the gratuity allowed old soldiers to leave, further weakening the leaven of experienced men. John Brown of the 3rd Europeans, for instance, exploited the boon to take his discharge two years early.

civilians, imbued with the independence which the young soldiers had exhibited in 1859, few recruits had been effectively disciplined while waiting at the depots. The Bengal hurkaru, for instance, reported how a private, evidently at the Barrackpore depot, called an officer aside with 'Here I want to speak to you'.<sup>19</sup> Former sepoy officers were ill equipped to counter such an attitude. Despite the authorities' intentions, up to a third of some drafts had previously served in the Company's force and had re-enlisted, suggesting either subterfuge on their part or slackness on that of the recruiting officers.<sup>20</sup> These men, Rose believed, further 'contaminated' a force already tainted, perpetuating the culture which Rose and his commanders sought to extinguish. Indeed, no sooner had Rose assumed command than an issue emerged which appeared to renew protest among a force which Rose saw as chronically discontented.

The Europeans' demoralization is not surprising. What is startling is the paucity of evidence, contrary to all contemporary expectations, of actual insubordination. Queen's officers and the British military press predicted that the European force would complete the work of 1859 by continuing widespread unrest. Rose's correspondence, Canning's papers, the military proceedings and the local newspapers in fact disclose very few instances of indiscipline among the force in the six months following the mass discharges of 1859. The general orders reveal that only one soldier appeared before a general court martial on a disciplinary charge before October, though two officers did (both of the 3rd infantry).<sup>21</sup> The force was arguably less volatile in 1860 than in any year in the previous decade. The Europeans, however, tarred by the brush of the protest, were suspect and dispirited. Men of the 6th infantry, for example, which had weathered the crisis of the previous summer as well as most new corps, reportedly combined to oppose the impending amalgamation. The allegations, emanating from a hospital sergeant who could not produce the letters he claimed proved his point, were refuted by its surgeon.<sup>22</sup> The remaining Europeans sensed the disfavour in which they were held. One gunner, embodying the force's assertive demeanour, expressed his confusion, and perhaps that of his comrades, in a letter to the Hurkaru. 'Ubique', by turns boastful and pleading, upbraided the editor for failing to 'advocate the ... just claims' of the 'poor unfortunate men of the late

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19. Bengal hurkaru, 21 September 1859

20. Rose to Cambridge, Agra, 31 January 1861, Rose papers, BL, Public letter book, Add. Ms 42813

21. Bengal general orders, 1860, pp. 493, 507. In addition, two men of the 2nd fusiliers were charged with theft and a man of the 6th infantry with perjury.

22. Rose to Canning, 15 August & 13 September 1860, Canning papers, WYA, Vol. 71; Surgeon G.E. Moreton to Bowring, Calcutta, 29 September 1859, Canning papers, WYA, Vol. 136

E.I.C. Service'. He warned that 'great numbers of us are respectably connected' and that they would not suffer 'disparagement', but conceded that 'you have lost a fine army'. Paraphrasing Shakespeare, he went on:

Very good, as Orthella [sic] says we have done the State some service and they know it, but ... Delhi and Lucknow are forgotten[;] all is over<sup>23</sup>

The Queen's troops' refusal to support practically the protest of 1859 did not allay their commanders' anxiety over their reliability. Many had arrived in India having expected to spend time at home following the Crimean war, and were 'more or less disgusted with Indian service'.<sup>24</sup> That Queen's troops appear generally to have been more volatile than their partisans have allowed must have exacerbated the authorities' apprehension. Rose learned of several regiments showing signs of indiscipline. Men of the 75th (still only 'improving' after their supposed complicity in 1859) behaved with 'studied insubordination'.<sup>25</sup> Even the 93rd Highlanders, favoured by Clyde and distinguished during the rebellion, was 'behaving badly' under a series of inefficient commanding officers.<sup>26</sup> Disciplinary problems were also reported from several Royal Artillery units.<sup>27</sup> 'Instances of aggravated insubordination', Rose complained to Cambridge, 'are only too frequent'. He attributed his troops' restiveness to the success of the previous year's 'dangerous combination' and to the 'very inadequate punishments' Clyde had sanctioned.<sup>28</sup>

Queen's troops' sensitivity to even minor impositions is indicated by the failure to extend income tax to other ranks (a consequence of the Indian government's chronic fiscal woes). Though it would have cost privates only Rs4/3 annually the imposition did not proceed.<sup>29</sup> The new editor of the Delhi gazette, still acting as the government's mole (presumably having read

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23. Bengal hurkaru, 28 July 1859

24. Copy, Brig. Sir David Wood to Mr Alick Wood, 1 July 1860, Wood papers, IOLR, Vol. 85

25. Rose to Cambridge, nd, circa 10 October 1860, Rose papers, BL, Public letter book, Add. Ms 42813

26. Rose to Forrester, Calcutta, 21 September 1860, Rose papers, BL, Add. Ms 42813

27. Rose to Cambridge, Calcutta, 18 June 1860, Rose papers, BL, Add. Ms 42813

28. Rose to Cambridge, Calcutta, 20 July 1860, Rose papers, BL, Add. Ms 42813

29. 'Tables showing the bearing of the Income tax upon certain ranks ...', March 1860, Canning papers, WYA, Vol. 114, Miscellaneous papers

letters from soldiers addressed to the paper), advised that 'great excitement' prevailed, and that men were 'pretty unanimous in their determination to resist'.<sup>30</sup> Officials assured him that they contemplated no such imposition.<sup>31</sup> The troops' tenderness persuaded the authorities to consider publishing a Soldiers' friend, an official journal conveying 'correct facts and sound opinions', countering the influence of papers less well disposed than the Delhi gazette. Deriving directly from the 'false notions, mischievous agitation & excitement' of the previous year, sample sheets were printed before the proposal lapsed.<sup>32</sup>

It is immaterial that the Europeans did not actually threaten Rose's army's discipline. The protest of 1859 sufficiently explains the authorities' foreboding. Sir Charles Wood recognized its legacy would be 'a permanent nucleus of discontent'.<sup>33</sup> Mansfield foresaw that 'the recollection of this [the protest] will for ever remain in the ranks of the local Indian Army', rendering the force even less reliable in the eyes of its traditional adversaries.<sup>34</sup> The apprehension coloured the authorities' response to the troops' reactions to the extension of the Queen's army's control.

The solution, Queen's officers agreed, was to confirm and extend the royal army's control over the European force. The Horse Guards' aim in opposing the force's expansion during the rebellion had not been realized: indeed, the European force posed a greater threat as Her Majesty's Indian Forces than it had under the Company. While before 1859 the European force had been an irritant, a source of disciplinary weakness and a rival in the distribution of commands and patronage, Queen's officers generally believed after the protest that it actually threatened their army's existence. Brigadier David Wood complained in July 1860 not only of the local Europeans' inferiority, but also of the Government of India abetting them in their resistance to royal authority. He advocated unity at the peril of imperial disaster:

**Brigadier Sir David Edward Wood (1812-94), Royal Artillery. Son of MP; educ. RMA Woolwich; comm. 1829; served South Africa, Crimea, rebellion (Lucknow, Oudh, Rohilcund), KCB, 1858; commander, Woolwich garrison, 1869-74**

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30. W. Place to Military Secretary, Agra, 17 March 1860, Canning papers, WYA, Vol. 136
31. [Military Secretary's office] to W. Place, 17 March 1860, Canning papers, WYA, Vol. 136
32. Noah Chick [Calcutta journalist and compiler of Annals of the Indian rebellion] to Military Secretary, Calcutta, 2 August 1860, Canning papers, WYA, Vol. 136
33. Wood to Canning, 11 July 1859, Wood papers, IOLR, Letter book 1
34. Mansfield to Sir George Clerk, 11 May 1859, Mansfield letter book, NAM

One Army, One Artillery, One Mutiny Act, One Queen's Regulations, One Queen, and One Empire ... or else more horrors, more miseries, ... and finally ... total annihilation of British rule in India ...<sup>35</sup>

During the protest of 1859 Clyde remarked to the Duke of Cambridge that in asserting their rights the men had begun 'a revolution', one which, unless 'completed by Authority from home ... there will be no safety'. This, Clyde emphasised, 'cannot be regarded too seriously'.<sup>36</sup> However sympathetic Clyde may have been to the soldiers' case in 1859, his perception of the danger they posed prevailed. His military secretary, though agreeing that 'the Govt. had no right to transfer the men's services', concluded that the scale of the protest signified that the Europeans' officers 'have not now and never had the influence over their men which belongs to the officers of our line', and that he would consider the mutiny 'a great benefit' if it caused 'the ... extinction of a local European army'.<sup>37</sup>

Cambridge feared that the 1859 protest could affect the line regiments' discipline, presumably by both the example of the Europeans' victory and the re-enlistment of 'discontented and mutinous men' in Britain.<sup>38</sup> Papers passed to Sir Charles Wood reveal the Horse Guards' designs. A minute of July 1859 candidly stated that

in arranging our future Military occupation of India, ... our first great aim should be to improve in every possible way our own Army

The first of thirteen proposals intended to accomplish this aim was the abolition of the local army.<sup>39</sup>

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35. Copy, General Sir David Wood to Alick Wood, 1 July 1860, Wood papers, IOLR, Vol. 85

36. Copy, Clyde to Cambridge, 10 July 1859, Wood papers, IOLR, Vol. 85

37. Col A.C. Sterling [Military Secretary to Clyde] to Stuart [Military Secretary to Canning], Simla, 4 June 1859, Canning papers, WYA, Vol. 108

38. Cambridge to Wood, 22 August 1859, Wood papers, IOLR, Vol. 62

39. Untitled minute by Sir F. Head, 18 July 1859, Wood papers, IOLR, vol. 85. Again, the author may have been Sir Francis Bond Head. Whether Lord Ripon, the Under Secretary of State for War, endorsed this aim is unclear. In the light of Florence Nightingale's description of the War Office in 1859 - 'a very slow office ... in which the minister's intentions can be entirely negated by all his sub-departments' - the pursuit by War Office officials of such an agenda may be accepted as plausible: Hampden Gordon, *The War Office*, London, 1935, p. 53.

Intense debate occurred within and between the Horse Guards, the War Office and the India Office over the prospect of amalgamation. In deciding how to resolve the problem of the continuing existence of the European force, Sir Charles Wood confronted two powerful and irreconcilable lobbies. The Queen's army, personified by Cambridge, sought a unified military system in which a local army had no place. The 'old Indians', personified by the Council of India, deeply conservative and alarmed for the future of its clients, the officers of the Indian army, sought its survival. Escalating a long-running debate, both sides marshalled actuarial opinions demonstrating the cheapness of their proposals, in both lives and money.<sup>40</sup> The outcome of the soldiers' protest renewed controversy over the European force's future. Wood, increasingly short with a Council 'imbued with old Indian prejudices' and unaware of changing political realities, variously neutralised, bullied or ignored his Indian advisers.<sup>41</sup> In Bengal, however, Rose confronted an unsympathetic local military administration retaining real power over military policy and administration. While Queen's troops outnumbered the Europeans seven to one, and while Queen's officers occupied most divisional and, less extensively, brigade and station commands, the force retained a separate administrative and disciplinary structure. Winning over, negating or suppressing the power of this institution involved Rose and his confederates in a prolonged bureaucratic and political struggle for the military control of the Indian empire.

The royal army did not simply seek to capture the prize of Indian patronage. Critics opposed the continuation of two British armies in India as irrational. Indeed, the premier advocate of the rationalization of Britain's Indian army, virtually the architect of the revolution, was an officer of the Bengal army, Henry Norman. Norman's role in the negotiations preceding amalgamation points not only to the politics of the process, but, ironically, also reveals him as the quintessential example of the opportunism of the old Bengal army. Following his exertions at Clyde's headquarters during the rebellion and the protest of 1859, Norman returned to Britain on sick leave. Rather than merely rusticate at Weston-super-mare he capitalized on his reputation and his relative proximity to the centre of power, exerting an influence on the future of the Indian army at its temporal and political fulcrum. In January 1860, uninvited but probably supported by recommendations, he offered to assist Wood in reconstructing the

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40. Sir Alexander Tulloch to Wood, 14 March 1860, Wood papers, IOLR, Vol. 81

41. Cambridge to Wood, 22 August 1859, Wood papers, IOLR, Vol. 62

European force.<sup>42</sup> Like every other influential person whom Norman had encountered, Wood was impressed by his energy, intelligence and integrity, and he soon became a trusted confidant in the delicate process of negotiating the force's fate. Norman was not, however, the only Indian army officer seeking to influence the decision. Henry Durand, Canning's representative before the Peel Commission of 1858-59, also advised Wood, countering Norman's reformism with more cautious counsel.<sup>43</sup> The contenders, whose ambitions matched their intellects, represented not simply divergent attitudes to the Indian army's future, but the polarisation of generations: significantly, Durand had entered the service in 1825, within a year of Norman's birth. Though aware of each other, almost certainly neither knew the details of the other's advice. Durand blundered. Presuming to school Wood, he misread the prevailing impulse, arguing against any change, and exceeded his role as military adviser by an excessive interest in the politics of the issue.<sup>44</sup> He and Wood fell out in June 1860 (over the use of information Durand regarded as confidential) just as the home authorities began considering in earnest the structure of the new India army.<sup>45</sup> Norman therefore retained the field, as Assistant Military Secretary to the Duke of Cambridge he discreetly became indispensable over the succeeding vital discussions.

Norman's ultimate success derived not only from his more tactful demeanour (a skill doubtless acquired through long contact with senior officers less acute than he) but also because his position rested on a genuine vision. The most important of the several 'great principles' on which he based his scheme was

that every European, be he officer, non-commissioned officer or soldier, should be alike a soldier of Her Majesty without any distinction of service whatever<sup>46</sup>

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42. Wood to Norman, 3 February 1860, Wood papers, IOLR, Vol. 66, 'Letters from Norman'. Sir John Lawrence, evidently introduced him at the India Office; Lee-Warner, Memoirs of ... Norman, p. 224.

43. See Wood papers, 'Letters from H.M. Durand', IOLR, Vol. 67

44. Durand to Wood, 19 November 1859, Wood papers, IOLR, Vol. 67; Wood to James Wilson, 10 March 1860, Wood papers, IOLR, Letter book 2

45. Durand to Wood, 30 June 1860, Wood papers, IOLR, Vol. 67

46. H.W. Norman, 'Memorandum on the Amalgamation of the Adjutant General's Departments of Her Majesty's British and Indian forces', 25 October 1861, in 'Original report of the Royal Commission on memorials of Indian officers ...', IOLR, L/MIL/5/323

In this Norman transcended the parochialism of his service, speaking for an imperial vision in advance of the sectarianism and opportunism of both his erstwhile comrades and his ostensible allies of the Queen's army.

Not until May 1860, a year after the outbreak of the soldiers' protest, did Wood finally decide: against the local force.<sup>47</sup> The issue would, however, take a further year to determine the details of a complex concordat. Resolution of the local force's fate was plagued not only by the competing interests of home and Indian governments, but by tensions between the India Office and Horse Guards and within the military establishment in India. Not least, the responses of the officers and men of the European force would critically influence the eventual outcome.

Wood first proposed introducing a bill to discontinue enlistment for Her Majesty's Indian Forces, compelling all those entering the force to accept 'General service' rather than 'local', Indian, service. In this Norman suffered his only substantial rebuff, in that Wood's allowing the rump of a separate local service produced what Norman called 'a half and half Amalgamation', liable to perpetuate rather than eliminate differences between the two.<sup>48</sup> Mindful of the men's volatility in 1859, Wood explained that after ten years (the usual term of enlistment) 'there cannot be a man who has a claim to be kept in India'.<sup>49</sup> Resolution of the remaining differences between the Horse Guards and India office was marred only by Canning's last minute attempt to resurrect his 1858 proposal of a large local army. Inspired by senior former Company's officers who were alarmed at the likely extinction of their service, Canning proposed raising twenty four new European regiments exclusively for local service.<sup>50</sup> Wood, exasperated at Canning's subversion, denounced his proposal as 'utterly impractical': 'I cannot make an army, merely to dispose of ... cadres of officers', he admonished, and ignored it.<sup>51</sup>

The European Forces Bill, supported overwhelmingly by Queen's officers and by the Times and the Morning chronicle, passed on 2 July by 282 votes to 53, its only opponents the local

47. Wood to Canning, 18 May 1860, Wood papers, IOLR, Letter book 2

48. Norman memorandum, IOLR, L/MIL/5/323

49. Wood to Canning, 3 July 1860, Wood papers, IOLR, Letter book 3

50. Canning to Cambridge, 26 April 1860, Cambridge papers, Abstracts of military letters received from India, 1860-64, No. 109, IOLR, pos 7158

51. Wood to Canning, 18 June & 6 September 1860, Wood papers, IOLR, Letter book 3

officers' champions and those wary of extending the Horse Guards' patronage. Though writing that the bill's passage 'might be considered as disposing of the matter', Wood begged Canning to make clear that men enlisted for Indian service would remain there.<sup>52</sup> In September, therefore, Canning and Rose accordingly issued General Order 918. Emphasising their intention to 'save the men of Her Majesty's Indian Forces from any mistake on a subject so nearly affecting their feelings and their interests', the order informed the troops that the act would merely 'put a stop to recruiting for Military Service, exclusively in India'.<sup>53</sup> Like general orders issued by his predecessor, Rose's attempt at conveying official decisions to his men would also prompt unforeseen and ominous reactions.

Once again, the soldiers' interpretation of legislative change and official explanation was to be decisive. Overland and local newspapers had reported and discussed debate over the proposed bill.<sup>54</sup> The prospect of their service's amalgamation with the imperial force, even if they remained in India, renewed the men's concern. Again the first expressions of disquiet came from gunners at Meerut. In August Lieutenant Colonel Alfred Huyshe, commanding the Bengal Artillery there, reported that his men were discussing the implications of the coming change. Again the Mofussilite (edited by John Lang, regarded by Rose as a dangerous radical) 'excit[ed] the minds of the men'.<sup>55</sup> Huyshe, himself unsure of what the act would bring, countered the Mofussilite's articles in the still compliant Delhi gazette, but feared their effects on 'our unhappy service'. Little direct evidence survives of the men's concerns. Huyshe reported that they feared that amalgamation would result in the 'mixing up' of Queen's and former Company's units, 'and this they consider would be a hell to them'. Early in September Huyshe became convinced that most men looked to obtain discharge. He believed that an assurance of never being asked to

Lieutenant Colonel Alfred Huyshe (1811-80), Bengal Artillery. Comm. 1827; served Gwallor war, second Punjab war, rebellion; became Inspector General of Artillery; General, 1877; ret. 1880

John Lang (1817-64) Barrister, journalist, novelist and editor Mofussilite, c. 1859-61. b. Australia; went to India as a barrister. Rose described Lang as 'a QC of great talent and high education', but who, convicted of fraud, embittered by the inevitable rejection by respectable society, and aggravated by alcoholism, he had taken to attacking the institutions of authority. H.G. Keene's A servant of 'John Company', corroborates all but Lang's criminal past. Lang's Wanderings in India, articles reprinted from Household words, however, reveal more mild satire than radicalism.

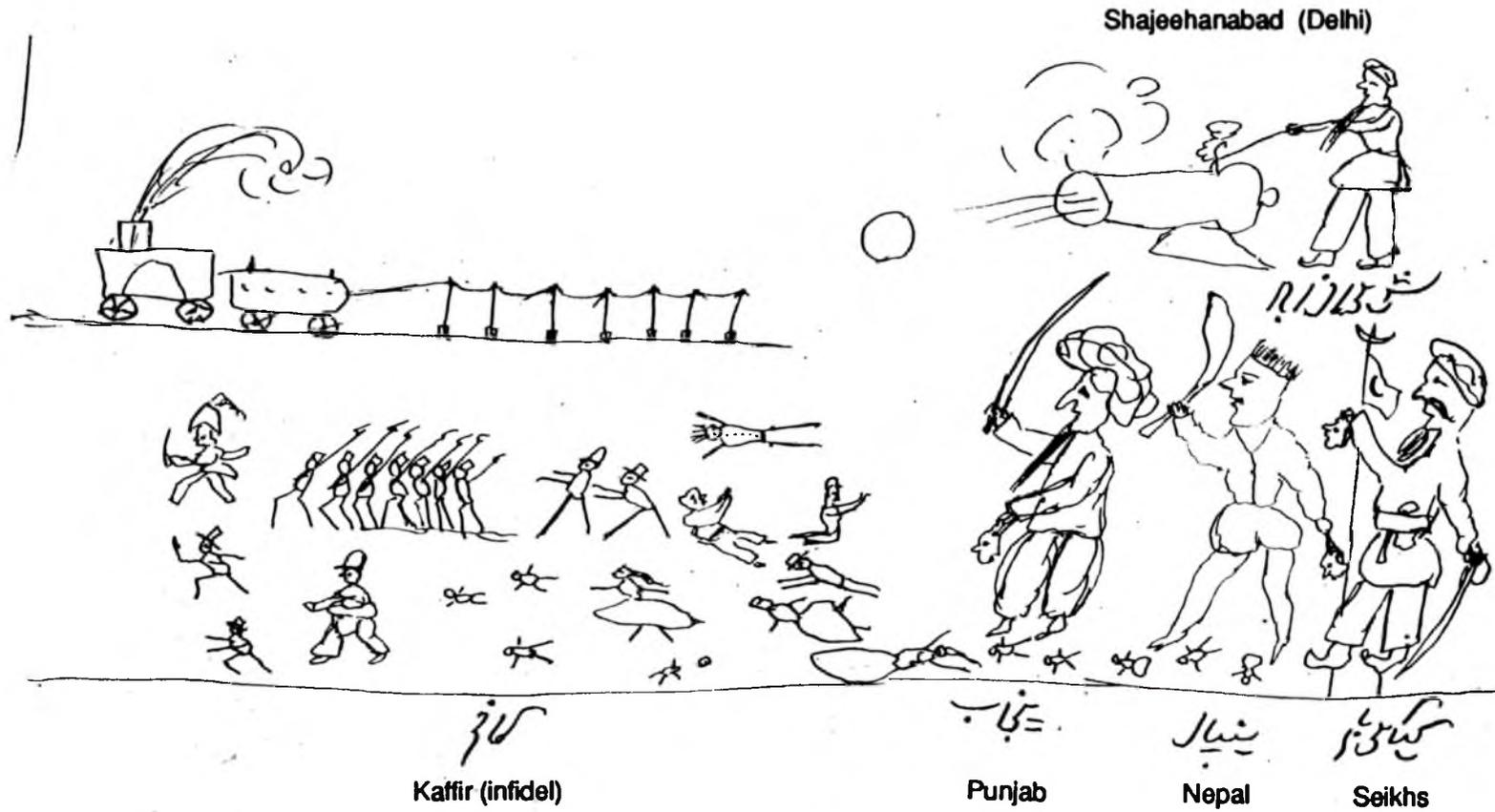
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52. Wood to Canning, 3 July 1860, Wood papers, IOLR, Letter book 3

53. Bengal general orders, 1860, p. 452B, 15 September 1860, IOLR, L/MIL/17/2/309

54. For example, Allen's Indian mail, 27 June 1860

55. Lt Col Alfred Huyshe to Bowring, Meerut, 18 August 1860, Canning papers, WYA, Vol. 108



**Illustration 15**

The cartoon 'in a miserable imitation of Punch' sent anonymously to Charles Wingfield, Chief Commissioner of Oudh and forwarded to Canning in September 1860 (Canning papers, WYA, Vol. 108, no. 7637).

leave India would be insufficient, but felt that 'they are determined to lay hold of any handle for repeating the game of last year'. Fearful that further resistance could 'annihilate the old Regiment', Huyshe nevertheless hoped for 'a few severe examples':

the men here are clearly of an idea they can coerce the Gov<sup>t</sup> and that ... they are sure to get what they demand.<sup>56</sup>

The only consolation Huyshe could offer was that the absence of any sign of sympathy on the part of royal troops. Given the unrest Rose had already noted, Huyshe's reassurance may not have counted for much.

The spectre of native rebellion again accentuated the danger of military mutiny. Charles Wingfield, Chief Commissioner of Oudh, sent Canning a cartoon, 'a miserable imitation of the style of Punch', which he had received anonymously (see

**Charles John Wingfield (1820-92),  
Commissioner in Oudh, 1859-65.  
educ. Westminster and Haileybury;  
BCS, 1839; ret. 1865; KCSI, 1866;  
MP, 1868-74**

Illustration 14). It reminded the authorities of their continuing vulnerability. 'Evidently the production of a European', it showed Sikhs, Goorkhas, Muslims and Hindoos combining to drive the British from India.<sup>57</sup> Had it reached the press (and he suspected members of his administration would have leaked it), Wingfield felt, 'it would have been accepted as convincing proof of wide spread disaffection'.<sup>58</sup> The cartoon's author is unknown. Its imperfect English - the envelope in which it arrived was addressed 'To Cheif Commissioner' - and use of Urdu raise the possibility that it was the work of a European soldier. The pattern of 1859 appeared to re-emerge: the smooth execution of official plans disrupted by the actions of a few soldiers. As in 1859, the reactions of the barrack-room unwittingly influenced events, shaping the European force's future, and again the 5th Bengal European Regiment acted as a catalyst.

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In November 1859 the remaining members of the 5th moved 250 miles up the Ganges to Dinapore, the major cantonment for the province of Behar. Its new station also housed a Queen's regiment, the 73rd Foot (surely no accident) and the

**Lieutenant Colonel Arthur Sanders  
(1812-95), 5th Bengal European  
Regiment. Comm. Bengal native  
infantry, 1831; served in regimental  
and staff positions; trsf. to 5th BER  
1859; ret. as hon. Major General,  
1861**

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56. Huyshe to Bowring, Meerut, 5 September 1860, Canning papers, WYA, Vol. 108

57. Mr Salim Quaraishi of the IOLR independently considered the calligraphy to be European.

58. C.J. Wingfield to Bowring, Lucknow, 6 September 1860, Canning papers, WYA, Vol. 108

4/5th company of the Bengal Artillery. The unfortunate Major Maitland had been replaced as commanding officer by Colonel Arthur Sanders, while Lieutenant Lancaster Davies resumed the duties of adjutant. John Mooty remained sergeant major.

The 5th heard General Order 918 read at parades on the 20th and 21st of September. The men at first listened impassively, but following the second parade men were heard 'screaming out, one answering another ... simple shouting, no words were used'.<sup>59</sup> That evening, after last post, a crowd of about fifty men rushed through their own lines toward the neighbouring artillery barracks. Here, according to the charge later laid against three 'ringleaders', they

shouted, cheered, whistled, and called out that "they wanted their rights;" that "they wanted their discharge;" "who has rifle and ammunition?"<sup>60</sup>

Robert Macnininie, the gunners' sergeant major, rallied his men, repelling the intruders with drawn swords, arresting two. Though stones were later thrown at the sergeants' mess, by eleven the lines were quiet.

**Staff Sergeant Robert Macnininie, No. 6175, 4/5th Bengal Artillery. Farmer, of 'Dunleery', Louth; enl. Dublin, January 1848; Cressy, November 1848; promoted ensign, November 1860. Name also McNimney, etc.**

While a minor affair compared to the previous year's protest, the outbreak was to have profound consequences for the European force. Brigadier John Welchman, commanding the station, convened a court of enquiry into the incident. The enquiry, which effectively tried the regiment, and particularly its officers and non-commissioned officers, revealed more than any would have preferred.

**Colonel John Welchman (1803-70), 1st European Bengal Fusiliers. Comm. Bengal native infantry, 1823; served second Burmah war, rebellion, 1857; wounded at Delhi commanding 1st Fusiliers; commanding at Dinapore, 1860; Major General, 1864; commanded Presidency Div., 1865-68; furlough 1867 to death**

Their testimony reeks of self-justification, evasion and convenient amnesia. Much comprised what Rose described as 'the tattle of barracks and mere hearsay'.<sup>61</sup> As the most detailed account of the interior life of any European corps, however, the transcript points not only to the

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59. 'Proceedings of a special Court of Enquiry assembled ... for the purpose of investigating ... the late mutinous outbreak in Her Majesty's 5th Regiment Bengal European Infantry' [26 October 1860], L/MIL/7/12736, Collection 275. Orders were normally read out twice, for the benefit of illiterates.

60. Bengal general orders, 1860, p. 546, 19 November 1860, IOLR

61. Minute, May 1861, IOLR, L/MIL/7/12736, Collection 275

pathetic condition of the 5th Europeans, but also to the wretched predicament of the entire force in the wake of the soldiers' protest of the year before.

Welchman's enquiry revealed fatal defects in the links binding the regiment as a community, particularly in three of the individuals critical to a regiment's cohesion; the commanding officer, adjutant and sergeant major. Sanders, its commanding officer, had clearly been ineffective, vainly testifying that he had 'never heard of any dissatisfaction', and exposed as a cypher to Davies, the adjutant. Davies was shown to have inspired fear but not confidence. Regarded as a 'Tartar', he was 'hated by nearly every man', unable to excuse harshness in the name of efficiency. Significantly, Davies had little previous experience of European troops, having served with the 3rd infantry in 1857, when he may have imbibed Riddell's flawed regime.<sup>62</sup> Sergeant Major Mooty, Davies' deputy in the maintenance of order and regarded by him as a 'sober, honest, good soldier', was shown to have been drunken, corrupt and inefficient. Drafted from the 2nd Fusiliers, Mooty had enriched himself at his men's expense, and with the adjutant's connivance. Though denounced by James Dunbar, the surgeon (who in epitomising the surgeon's role as 'the light on the hill' became the only member of the regimental staff to emerge from the affair with any credit), Mooty continued to turn a profit by watering down the canteen rum, maintaining a carriage and several horses. In accordance with the entrepreneurial customs of the force, when asked by the President of the Canteen Committee to submit correct accounts, Mooty replied that 'he had never heard of such a thing', and attempted to strike a deal whereby he would pay a dividend in return for a free hand. Sanders and Davies inexplicably refused to act upon the various charges against the sergeant major, alleging the unfitness of all other contenders.

**James Dunbar, Surgeon, 5th Bengal European Regiment. b. Calcutta, October 1815, son of an uncovenanted civil servant; A/Surg. 1851; Surg. 1856 (63rd and 73rd Bengal Native Infantry)**

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62. T.C. Anderson, Ubique: war services of all the officers of H.M.'s Bengal army, Calcutta, 1863, p. 175. Anderson's book, the work of an officer of the Bengal army, may have been impelled by a desire to remind Queen's officers of the achievements of officers of the former Company's army, the more so because Hart's army list provided scanty details of their service.

The inquiry revealed how the regiment's company officers, all formerly of sepoy regiments with no experience of Europeans, possessed little understanding of their duty and less inclination to pursue it. Niggling and apparently trivial complaints of unsettled accounts revealed their laxity in precisely those aspects of interior economy on which their men set such store. Most denigrated the regiment's non-commissioned officers as, for example, a 'miserably inefficient and drunken set' but had themselves ignored clear signs of dissatisfaction, revealing the naivety with which sepoy officers had been charged. Captain William

Cunningham, from whose company the outbreak had issued, had failed to report that shortly before the outbreak many of his men had withdrawn money from the savings bank, explaining to him that men had lost their savings following the 1859 outbreak. In a telling exchange with a man subsequently arraigned for having 'excited Mutiny', Private Isaac Price told Cunningham that '[I]f the men were to mutinize they would lose their money'. 'Why, you don't mean mutiny, do you?', Cunningham is supposed to have replied. 'Oh dear me, no, Sir', Price replied, apparently satisfying the hapless captain. Anxious to evade blame for a mess they had been unable to foresee or fix, some were alarmed into revealing more than they cared. Another officer admitted having said 'the Court will find out nothing, our men will not peach': as it happened, with misplaced confidence.

In fact, though unable to speak as freely as their superiors, their men did 'peach'. The regiment's staff sergeants, the hospital sergeant, orderly room clerk and other sergeants revealed with considerable circumspection the regiment's weaknesses. At the same time, though, they too were vulnerable to the familiar charge that they should have detected, deterred or denounced the outbreak before it occurred. The court decided that while young soldiers had instigated the outbreak, old soldiers and non-commissioned officers had at least turned a blind eye to the men's concern at the implications of the order. On the evening of the outbreak it was alleged that liquor had been served 'unsparingly' in the canteen, with the supervising 'pegging' sergeants' knowledge. When the crowd entered Number 1 Company's room before moving on to the artillery, its occupants, mainly old soldiers, merely called out, 'It is no use stopping here, there are no recruits in this Barracks'.

**Captain William Robert Cunningham (1819-99), 5th Bengal European Regiment. Comm. 1837; Captain, 1852; served first Afghan war, second Punjab war; ret. as hon. Major General, 1875**

**Private Isaac Price (1840-67), No. 608, 5th Bengal European Regiment. Shoemaker of Dudley, Staffs, enl. Tower Hill, December 1858; Undaunted, 1859; convicted of mutinous conduct and transported to Western Australia, 1860-62; ticket of leave; drowned off Fremantle**

Authority in the 5th Europeans was therefore inconsistent, hesitant or tainted, too distant or compromised to inspire the young or deter the disaffected. The manifest failings of the regimental staff do not, however, explain the origins of the

**Sergeant Edward Johnstone, No. 112, 5th Bengal European Regiment. Shoemaker, of Dublin; enl. Dublin, June 1858, aged 20; trsf to 1st EBF, 1860; volunteered to 101st Fusillers, 1861**

outbreak itself. Indeed, the witnesses called were primarily asked to concentrate upon either the detail of the night's events or the officers and non-commissioned officers themselves.

Evidence of the state of mind of those involved and onlookers from other companies remained scarce. Evidence of 'combination' remained elusive. Davies refused to concede that it was other than 'a drunken row got up on the spur of the moment by a few of the discontented men'. Not until the final witness was the court offered a candid insight into the ostensible cause of the enquiry, the attitudes of the regiment's privates. Sergeant Edward Johnstone's part in the events of 21 September is obscure, as is the reason for his appearance. He provided, however, one of the few disinterested testimonies explaining the men's conduct. 'The men have always had a wish to get home', he explained simply. Johnstone's draft learned of the force's transfer to the Crown on its arrival in October 1858, hailing it 'with delight as a good omen for returning home'. Letters from home and from 'Comrades in the local force', newspaper reports and the courts of inquiry ordered by Clyde bolstered their 'sanguine hopes of returning home'. The failure to hold such an enquiry in the 5th resulted in the 'disaffection' at Berhampore. Those compelled to remain had looked 'with envy' at the discharging drafts passing through Berhampore. '[T]his never left their minds', and when amalgamation seemed likely 'served as a hope to the Force[']s men, and acted in a similar manner on their minds'. Promulgation of General Order 918, Johnstone explained, 'foundered all their hopes', and a few men 'acted on the impulse of the moment'. He affirmed that 'there was no ... combination' but added, obscurely, that 'perhaps the men who incited the affair have got off'. Johnstone's explanation of the outbreak, that it was inspired by the homesickness which oppressed so many of those exiled to India, seems disconcertingly simple. At the same time it places a different complexion on the wordless cries of those learning that they were to be denied a chance to leave India.

Whatever feelings oppressed its protagonists, the 5th's outbreak epitomises the tensions inherent within the European force following its expansion, demonstrating that the discharges after the 1859 protest deferred rather than exorcised the resultant conflicts. The court found that 'a feeling of uneasiness and disaffection had existed among the young Soldiers of the Fifth'.<sup>63</sup> Despite evidence that its officers had failed to check disaffection the court blamed the regiment's non-commissioned officers and old soldiers for the outbreak, describing as the

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63. 'Proceedings of a special Court of Enquiry ...', IOLR, L/MIL/7/12736, Collection 275

'grossest absurdity' protestations of their ignorance of their younger comrades' concern. The 'strike's' causes, it concluded were 'so conflicting that it becomes difficult to draw a correct conclusion beyond a general desire to get home'. Despite their uncertainty over the men's motives, the military authorities had no doubts over their actions. Six men, including the facetious Isaac Price, were eventually identified and tried, all sentenced to fourteen years' transportation for their part in the outbreak of 21 September. The European force's climactic crisis therefore ultimately derived from the Europeans' fundamental ambivalence towards India. Coinciding with and feeding off the tensions contributing to the previous year's protest, it was aggravated by the force's familiar shortcomings: old soldiers' willingness to incite or capitalize on the recruits' grievance, young soldiers' unfamiliarity with the system they challenged, officers' inability to discern and guide their men's feelings.

Rose, anxious over the state of his Queen's regiments, appears to have regarded the 5th's disaffection as a test of his authority, and resolved not to repeat what he saw as Clyde's errors. He asked courts martial to revise more severely two sentences, and in confirming them issued an 'explicit and warning General Order'. Alerting 'all ill-disposed Soldiers' of the consequences of 'indulg[ing] this spirit of cavilling and insubordination which paves the way to Mutiny', he reminded his troops of the aims he expressed on assuming command ('to promote the welfare, uphold the discipline, and maintain the credit of Her Majesty's Armies in India'). He affirmed that 'these words were meant to be a warning, especially to the 5th', and indicated his intention to 'visit, with instant and signal punishment, the slightest attempt to renew the wicked and insubordinate excesses of last year'.<sup>64</sup> True to the principles of punishment and reward, he confirmed sentences transporting men arrested on the evening of the 21st, and promoted Sergeant Major Macnininie to ensign.<sup>65</sup>

Reports of the 5th's outbreak alarmed observers apprehensive of the repercussions of the previous year's protest. The leader writer of the Mofussilite, traditionally a newspaper sympathetic to soldiers, now claimed to 'read daily of fresh acts of insubordination' among the Europeans. He attributed this indiscipline to 'the new popular theory that "a soldier is a

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64. Bengal general orders, 1860, np, 22 October 1860, IOLR

65. Promotion was hardly a stroke of unambiguous good fortune for Macnininie. Though Rose undertook to find for him a position 'advantageous to himself as to the service', Macnininie spent at least the next eighteen years in India, possibly dying at the old European invalid depot at Chunar. Probably because he could not afford to live in Britain on a lieutenant's pay he elected, ironically considering the reason for his promotion, to remain as a member of the local forces. Had he declined a commission he would have been able to retire to Britain on a relatively generous pension: The official quarterly Army list of HM's forces in Bengal, 1860-78.

reasoning being and ... not a machine". These 'Military lawyers', he held, 'are the curse of a regiment'. They 'make the barrack a debating room; leading the minds of the soldier in one direction - that of opposition to constituted authority'. The writer expressed the hope that Sir Hugh Rose would not show to mutineers the same 'lenity' as Lord Clyde.<sup>66</sup>

Within days of the 5th's men hearing Rose's unmistakable admonition, an apparently trivial incident precipitated the regiment's final crisis. After dark on the evening of 25 October Lance Sergeant James Eades ordered Private William Johnson, a member of the barrack picket, to confine Private Henry Shields for refusing to go to his cot. Johnson refused repeatedly to do so, and was in turn confined and charged with disobeying a lawful command. Tried by general court martial, he was found guilty and sentenced to be shot.<sup>67</sup> Disregarding the court's recommendation to mercy (on the grounds that at 23 Johnson was 'perfectly responsible') Rose approved and confirmed the sentence. Johnson's offence was no worse than many committed in the 5th. His death was, however, 'necessary for the good of the Army and of the State'. Rose succinctly expressed his views in remarks accompanying the general order. Disobedience of orders, he wrote, was 'one of the worst and most dangerous crimes that a Soldier can commit'. It could cause, he warned, 'the defeat of an Army in the field; the success of a Mutiny; the downfall of a State'.<sup>68</sup> In a real sense Rose regarded William Johnson's refusal to apprehend a man refusing to go to bed as a direct challenge to the continued subordination of his entire army. Rose described the 5th as a regiment characterized by 'the insolent opposition to all authority', the 'very numerous bad men' of which had since May 1859 sought unjustified concessions - discharges, passages to Britain, fresh bounty and the option of re-enlistment. 'They had no more right to these things', he concluded, 'than they had to property which was not their own.' The Europeans' challenge to authority culminated at last in a drama carefully choreographed for its greatest impact.

**Lance Sergeant James Eades, No. 445, 5th Bengal European Regiment. Of New Windsor, Berkshire; enl. London, October 1858, aged 20; trsf to 6th BER, 1860; volunteered to 101st Fusiliers, 1861**

**Private William Johnson, No. 526, 5th Bengal European Regiment. Servant of London, enl. at Westminster October 1858. Eveline. Executed by firing squad, Dinapore, 12 November 1860**

**Private Henry Shields, No. 140, 5th Bengal European Regiment. Carpenter of London; enl. London, June 1858; sentenced to 14 years penal servitude, 1861**

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66. Mofussilite, 9 October 1860

67. Bengal general orders, 1860, p. 530D, 7 November 1860, IOLR

68. [Special un-numbered] General Order, 7 November 1860, papers of Col. H. Warre [Acting Military Secretary], NAM, 8112-54-44

William Johnson was executed at dawn on 12 November. The scene that morning was no less dramatic or squalid than any other military execution. However, in the light of the European force's temper and apprehensions and of Rose's intentions, it acquired a significance which was to affect the relationship between the European force and the authority with which it enjoyed such an ambiguous relationship. Johnson's execution becomes another of the crucial vignettes marking the Europeans' transformation; the bond linking him and the Commander-in-Chief yet another of the exchanges between the powerful and the powerless which punctuate and dominate that process.<sup>69</sup>

The bugles sounding reveille in the chilly dawn roused few men in the barracks at Dinapore, for many had woken earlier, knowing what the morning would bring. As the troops turned out of their cots and dressed their conversation was subdued. By five thirty they had assembled before their barracks in the fog. As it cleared in the growing light they marched toward Dinapore's Grand Square, forming three sides of a hollow square. Twelve men marched out of the ranks of the 5th Bengal European Regiment, joined a few minutes later by a hospital dhoolie escorted by a party of the Queen's 73rd Foot. Johnson, dressed in blue serge, emerged from the dhoolie, his arms bound. Led by the provost marshal, a macabre procession slowly marched around the parade. The 73rd's band, its drums muffled, played Handel's Dead march in *Saul*. The firing party followed, then a coffin carried by four men of the prisoner's company, and Johnson himself accompanied by a chaplain. The escort brought up the rear. Johnson, unexpectedly composed, looked directly at his comrades as he passed the regiment.<sup>70</sup>

The band and escort withdrew, leaving the firing party facing Johnson twenty paces away. The chaplain retired and Johnson knelt. In the silence the brigade major read the general order from the Commander-in-Chief detailing the charge and sentence, a test of Johnson's composure during the five minutes it must have taken. The provost marshal pulled a cap over Johnson's face. Advancing to within eight paces from the prisoner, the firing party looked to the provost marshal for his signals. A wave; they raised their rifles to the ready. Another, they brought them to the shoulder. A third wave, and twelve rifles discharged, acrid grey smoke concealing

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69. Sources for Johnson's execution include: the *Times*, 22 December 1860, *Friend of India*, 22 November 1860, and the *Englishman*, 17 November 1860.

70. Johnson's last days had been spent in spiritual contemplation in the company of the station's chaplain, W. Crawford Bromhead, whose account may have consoled Rose that though painful, the execution had at least worked in Johnson a change of heart (necessarily short-lived). Bromhead's report, dated 14 November and preserved in Vol. 71 of the Canning papers, complements newspaper accounts of the execution and disbandment.

the tableau from the silent spectators. As it cleared, Johnson could be seen lying on his back in a pool of blood, dead. The provost marshal returned his revolver to its holster.

Commands rang out among the surrounding units. As the band broke into a lively march the troops marched past the coffin in ghoulis review. The coffin was placed in the waiting dhoolie and taken away for burial. Again the regiments halted, the 73rd forming in front of the 5th, the guns of Macnimirie's loyal artillery loaded with grape shot on either flank. The 5th was ordered to pile its rifles, men of the 73rd moving between the men and their arms in anticipation of resistance. It was a scene in which many old soldiers among the 5th had participated during the rebellion, in disarming sepoy corps. Its officers had seen their regiment disarmed for a second time. The station commander read another general order disbanding the 5th in disgrace, reducing all of its sergeants to the ranks and distributing its men to the other regiments of Bengal European infantry. Shocked by the execution, and cowed by the guns, they offered no resistance. Under the heading, 'The Punishment for Mutiny', the Friend of India reported the moment, recording how old soldiers wept, 'writhing' under the disgrace. 'They must have felt', the paper's correspondent mused, 'that they were but reaping what they had sown, that ... their sin had found them out'.<sup>71</sup> The first party left Dinapore the next morning, marching without arms for distant Roorkee. The 5th Bengal European Regiment had ceased to exist.

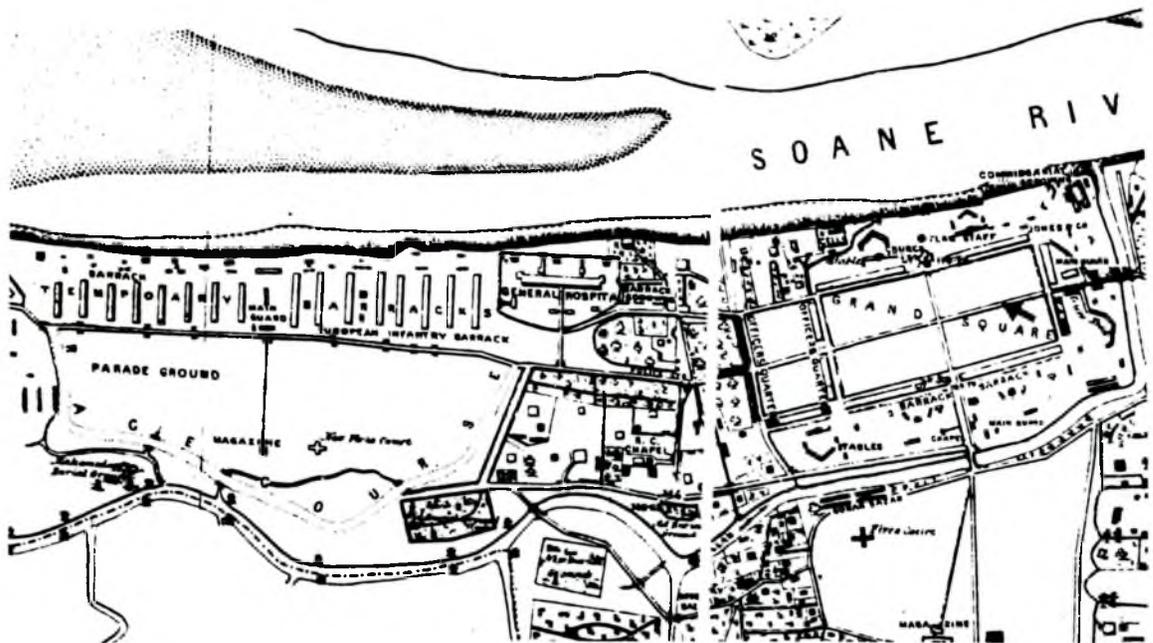
The execution and the dramatic disbandment which followed had - and was intended to have - a deep effect far beyond those witnessing it. The general orders carried out on parade that chilly November dawn were also read out before every European troop, company and regiment in Bengal, presumably provoking discussion in the barrack-rooms. John Brown recorded that the news caused 'sorrow and indignation' in the 3rd infantry. He was so affected by it that he copied the orders and a newspaper account of the execution, placing it next to the 'moral and practical observations' in his 'commonplace book'.<sup>72</sup> Descriptions of the scene came not only from the mofussil and overland papers, amplifying the bare narrative of Rose's order, but also from the parties of the disbanded regiment, which within months had been distributed into the remaining five regiments of Bengal European infantry. The impact of the execution and the resultant disbandment was so powerful that long after distorted accounts of the event still circulated in Indian barrack-rooms among soldiers who had not been born in 1860.<sup>73</sup>

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71. Friend of India, 22 November 1860

72. Brown private journal, NLS

73. A man present that day described the scene to Charles Grey in 1890; Grey, 'The European soldiers of Bengal', unpublished typescript in the author's possession. Grey enlisted in a regiment



**Illustrations 16 a & b**

The Grand Square at Dinapore, scene of Private William Johnston's execution on 12 November 1860, photographed by the author in November 1987. Dinapore is still a military station, and the church in the distance is now that of the Bihar Regiment of the Indian Army. The plan (IOLR maps, CVIII 24, 'Cantonment and environs of Dinapore', 1863-64) shows the direction in which the photograph was taken. In 1860 the 5th Bengal European Regiment occupied the temporary barrack blocks to the west of the Grand Square.

Johnson's execution seems also to have deterred Anglo-Indian opinion - and particularly its shapers, the mofussil press - from openly advocating the Europeans' soldiers' cause. The Englishman, condemning the 5th's men as 'unmanageable' expressed sympathy for the ineffective Colonel Sanders. '[H]e has not lost caste', it reassured him in a revealingly Anglo-Indian expression, 'either as a gentleman or officer'.<sup>74</sup> Indeed, the 5th's officers escaped relatively lightly. Though both Sanders and Davies were dismissed, they evaded court martial because Rose regarded a conviction by fellow officers as unlikely.<sup>75</sup> Rose's stern punishment won the confidence of the newspapers: 'a man has arisen amongst us, and we may hope for the future', the Englishman pronounced sententiously.<sup>76</sup>

Over the cool season of 1860-61 Rose observed personally the effects of Johnson's execution. Embarking on a tour of European units between Dinapore and Delhi, he subjected them to searching inspections. He had two purposes: to judge whether any and which might survive the coming amalgamation, and to continue his mission to impart the required degree of subordination among the most troublesome of his corps.

Kendal Coghill, still adjutant of the 2nd Fusiliers, bore 'Sinbad's load' when Rose inspected the regiment at Roorkee. Coghill, and presumably other European officers, believed that Rose and the Horse Guards wanted 'to make out that we were a service unfit to keep on' and so 'determined to try and find fault'. He described Rose's visit, in which he

inspected every book minutely, questioned every man, asked if he had any cause of complaint, inspected every man[']s kit ... and even made the children in school read and spell to him to see if they were educated.

Rose then took the regiment on parade for three hours, calling out every officer in turn, asking difficult questions and requiring them to answer by ordering the appropriate manoeuvre, 'Light Infantry and echelons being his hobby'. Coghill at least did well. Either because Rose discovered that he was related to a family friend or because of the regiment's performance,

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which he called the 'Bermondsey Brigands' (evidently the 1st Battalion the Buffs) in 1881. His memoir and other manuscripts passed through an Australian branch of the family. I am grateful to Ms Ross Beeby for generously allowing me access to Grey's manuscripts, which will shortly be deposited in the IOLR.

74. Englishman, 17 November 1860

75. L/MIL/7/12736, Collection 275

76. Englishman, 17 November 1860

Rose offered him a staff job, which later fell through.<sup>77</sup> By the time Rose reached Meerut late in January both officers and men realised that their future depended on the impression Rose gained. He expressed his pleasure (evidently without intentional irony) at the 'zeal[,] efficiency and ... good feeling displayed by all officers and men and their wish, so evident, to gain my approbation'.<sup>78</sup> Entering messes boasting tables spread with clean cloths and dressed with flowers, Rose found 'men and officers ... anxious that I should not think that they complain in anything'.<sup>79</sup>

The inspections tested the Europeans' officers as much as their men. A 'little boy', an ensign of the maligned 6th infantry, called out to drill the corps 'proved himself a pocket Turenne'. The 6th's major, however, erred in making a formal complaint on his men's behalf in their hearing.<sup>80</sup> Rose noted and corrected Indian officers' social deficiencies. Observing that the officers of the 4th cavalry 'rode ill' (curiously - they might have been expected to be good horsemen even if indifferent soldiers) he gave them 'a hint on the subject'.<sup>81</sup> Johnson's execution, he noted with approval, had had 'a very beneficial effect' on the Europeans' officers, who pointedly expressed their approval of his severity. Officers of the disgraced 5th infantry endorsed the new regime with the fervour of converts. One petitioned the adjutant general, complaining that a court had awarded a sentence insufficiently severe.<sup>82</sup> Such signs of eagerness gratified Rose. He sought to engineer a change in the way in which the force conducted itself. After returning from his tour of inspection he assured Cambridge that he would 'not be dissatisfied with them after 6 months', reporting that his rigour had 'had the best results', with officers and men 'manifestly eager ... to efface the recollection of unfavourable antecedents'.<sup>83</sup>

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77. Coghill to 'Jos', 19 February 1861, NAM

78. Rose to Lt Col George Swinley, Delhi, 27 January 1861, Rose papers, Public letter book, BL, Add. Ms 42813

79. Rose to Cambridge, Calcutta, 30 March 1861, Rose papers, Public letter book, BL, Add. Ms 42813

80. Rose to Canning, 14 October 1860, Rose papers, Public letter book, BL., Add. Ms 42813

81. Rose to Canning, 21 December 1860, Rose papers, Public letter book, BL, Add. Ms 42813

82. Rose to Grenfell [identity unknown], Umballah, 18 February 1861, Rose papers, Public letter book, BL, Add. Ms 42813

83. Rose to Cambridge, Calcutta, 30 March 1861, Rose papers, Public letter book, BL, Add. Ms 42813

Despite the tablecloths and flowers and the attentive, uncomplaining men he encountered, Rose's inspections coincided with increasing concern among the European corps over the implications of the impending amalgamation. Away from the formal inspections, he learned that debate within the barrack-rooms remained as fervent as ever. The men of the 3rd infantry, for example, had been discussing the impending amalgamation 'in an unsoldierlike manner in combination with other ... Regts'.<sup>84</sup> Within two months of Johnson's execution and the 5th's disbandment, most European corps were reportedly unsettled, even regiments relatively unaffected in 1859, such as the 2nd Fusiliers and the 5th cavalry. Briefly considering breaking up the affected cavalry, Rose settled for moving Queen's units to nearby stations to 'prevent foolish ideas'.<sup>85</sup> Officers variously attempted to persuade their men of the folly of resistance. One gunner, for example, complained that his copies of the Englishman had for three months failed to arrive, implying that officers tried to prevent access to what they saw as inflammatory papers.<sup>86</sup> Other men were persuaded of the folly of resistance more subtly. At Barrackpore the 6th infantry attended a lecture on mutiny. A missionary, Mr Taylor Havelock, reminded the men of the advantages of 'manly adherence' to the 'constitution of the British Army', and the 'evils' consequent on 'the spirit of discontent'. Havelock 'explained' the cause of the 5th's 'mutiny' and disbandment, leading many of his audience to profess satisfaction with their position.<sup>87</sup>

Political and military authorities in Britain and India had naturally begun to consider the organizational form of the European force after its incorporation in the imperial army.<sup>88</sup> Before news of the Dinapore outbreak had reached Britain, Rose, Canning and Cambridge had advised Wood that the local corps, following the cessation of recruiting, should be amalgamated as they diminished through discharges and death, a process Wood called

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84. Rose to Col. William Mayhew [Adjutant General, Bengal army, 1857-61], Burdwan, 23 October 1860, Rose papers, Public letter book, BL, Add. Ms 42813

85. Rose to Canning, Agra, 1 February 1861, Rose papers, Public letter book, BL, Add. Ms 42813

86. Englishman, 9 October 1860

87. Englishman, 26 November 1860. Havelock's lecture reflects the increasing interest shown in soldiers by evangelicals, and its potential consequences in securing greater subordination: see Olive Anderson, 'The growth of Christian militarism in mid-Victorian Britain', English historical review, Vol. LXXXVI, 1971, pp. 46-72.

88. Wood to Canning, 18 August 1860, Wood papers, Letter book 4, IOLR

'doubling up and dying out'.<sup>89</sup> Discharging more men would invite 'another exodus', and further unrest over bounty for those wishing to remain, and Wood naturally found 'a good deal to be said' for allowing the troublesome local corps simply to wither away.<sup>90</sup> Rose, however, having recently seen at first hand the affected regiments, decided that despite the protest of 1859, the outbreak of 1860 and the force's legacy of indiscipline, his 'assertion of discipline and efficiency' had achieved 'the best results'. Unwilling to sacrifice so large a proportion of his army and perhaps under-estimating the difficulty of effecting the transformation he believed they needed, he advocated the Europeans' retention.

For most writers on the 'white mutiny' William Johnson's execution has marked, as Michael Maclagan puts it, 'a sombre end to a sorry episode'.<sup>91</sup> While the execution signified his regiment's disbandment, and while it may have temporarily cowed members of the European force, it did not curtail the culture on which the force rested.

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89. Wood to Canning, 10 October 1860, Wood papers, Letter book 4, IOLR

90. Wood to Canning, 19 November 1860, Wood papers, Letter book 5, IOLR

91. Maclagan, 'Clemency' Canning, p. 249. Michael Edwardes, one of the most prolific authors on the period, considered that with Johnson's execution 'the Company's army had finally ceased to exist' (Red year: the Indian rebellion of 1857, London, 1975, p. 148); Sir John Fortescue considered that following it 'all trouble came to an end': History of the British army, Vol. XIII, p. 529.

Despite the impact of the Dinapore execution and disbandment, Sir Hugh Rose would again confront that culture as he sought to incorporate the men into the imperial army. Having weathered a further assertion of the European force's independent spirit, Rose's task became the conversion of a force whose demeanour he had denounced into a reliable part of the British army. Even as Rose, Canning and their staff completed the details of the proposed amalgamation another significant transaction occurred between a private soldier and the Commander-in-Chief which exemplifies the European force's distinctive culture and explains why Rose so determinedly engaged in a contest of will with the force.

In March 1861 the Mofussilite, ever ready to discomfit officialdom, published two letters from an anonymous recruit.<sup>1</sup> Unimportant in themselves (in that they appear to have prompted no reaction, at least among their readers) the letters are critical to the understanding of the relationship between rulers and ruled in the army of British India and to its connections with contemporary society. The first, headed 'Nonsense!', ingenuously sought to learn 'upon what principle the remnant of the Bengal Artillery ... are treated in the extraordinary manner in which they are?' A complex and rather confused ramble, in essence the letter connected abuses and inefficiency in conducting artillery recruits up country to Meerut with the low esteem in which soldiers in India were held. Rose must have particularly been offended that its anonymous author asked

What makes the soldier's coat a horror to his own countrymen? Does wise Sir Hugh Rose know anything about the matter? ... or would he rather shoot down the first man that dares to speak about it?

Later in March a second letter appeared, headed 'Who'll serve the Queen?' and signed 'Simon von Knickerbocker'. The article opened and closed with Urdu epigrams exemplifying the discord between the former Company's Europeans and the Queen's army. The first, 'As you sow, so [shall you] reap', echoed the Friend of India's pronouncement on William Johnson's execution, and suggested how the Europeans' reaction to the transfer could be explained by their distinct culture. The second, enigmatically couched, 'There is a darkness beneath the

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1. Mofussilite, 5 & 29 March 1861

lamp', hinted that the author realised that his gesture would not halt the extinction of the force in which he had served.<sup>2</sup>

'Simon von Knickerbocker' connected the soldiers' unease over developments within the British army in India with the wider cause of 'reform'. Its author this time revealed more of himself and the eclectic sources of his philosophy. Professing to be 'a man of limited education', he nevertheless admitted having 'dabbled ... in the Greek and Latin classics, English, French, German and even Chinese philosophy'. The 'whole action' of his life, however, had been based on a Greek copy of Aesop's fables, the 5th, 6th and 7th chapters of St Matthew's gospel (containing, as well as the Lord's prayer, the beatitudes) 'and the newspapers'. An 'aged man', he cited the radical philosopher William Godwin, in averring that in military life 'the rights, privileges and happiness of the whole are absorbed by the self-aggrandizement, tyranny and comfort of the few'. The British soldier, he claimed, 'has suffered contumely, wrong and degradation long enough'. Connecting the European soldiers' cause with the broader crusade for administrative and political reform, he declared that '[i]t must and shall end, as every other abuse has ended'. The article concluded with a passionate denunciation of the inadequacies of the selection of non-commissioned officers within the European force, one which accords with the descriptions of the idiosyncratic workings of favouritism apparent before the rebellion. The letters are rich in contemporary allusion; more detailed textual scrutiny would doubtless reveal more of the sources of the ideological foundations of the author's thought.

Colonel George Swinley, commanding the Bengal Artillery at Meerut, took some weeks to identify the author. (Perhaps he wrongly sought an 'aged' autodidact - the author turned out to be in his mid-thirties - though men with a knowledge of the classics would seem to have been rare in the recruit depot.) At length, however, Gunner Benjamin Franklin

Langford was charged, as 'a wholesome and necessary example' with 'conduct prejudicial to good order and military discipline'. He had first 'seditiously and wickedly' attempted to prevent men volunteering into the royal service, by publishing 'letters calculated and designed to bring into contempt the service of the British soldier in India, and to excite and stir up discontent in

**Brigadier George Henry Swinley (1806-67) Commanding Artillery, Meerut, 1861-62. Comm. Bengal Artillery, 1823; served first Burmah war, first and second Punjab wars; AAG Bengal Artillery, 1849-56; furlough 1856-59; trsf. to RA 1861; Inspector of Artillery, 1862-67**

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2. I am indebted to Dr S.A. Rizvi and to Dr Richard Barz of the South and West Asia Centre, ANU, for translating the epigrams. The author evidently took them from an Urdu translation of the Bible. The first is evidently Galatians 6:7. Scrutiny of several concordances could not disclose the original of the second, however, probably because in translation from the King James Bible to Urdu and back again the text became corrupted.

the ranks'. Second, he had 'made grossly disrespectful and calumnious mention of His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief'.<sup>3</sup> Found guilty, he was sentenced to only a year's imprisonment with hard labour.<sup>4</sup> Curiously, Rose forbore from adding remarks in confirming the sentence, perhaps considering a dignified silence more appropriate, anticipating the Englishman's judgement that 'hissing should be left unnoticed'.<sup>5</sup> With the promulgation of his sentence, however, Benjamin Franklin Langford disappears from the record. A search of the Royal and Bengal Artillery personnel records and the relevant records of European deaths in India reveal no hint of his fate.<sup>6</sup>

Gunner Langford, however, occupies a critical position in the European force's transformation. In the light of the events of 1859-60 he becomes an emblematic figure, representing the force's assertive ethos and its connections with contemporary society, a figure engaging with many of the broader themes informing what might otherwise be regarded as a minor military squabble. The outline of Langford's military career is apparent (though at times ambiguously) from the detailed records available uniquely from the Military Department's documents.<sup>7</sup> Little is known of his life before enlistment. His name bespeaks a philosophical, if not radical, inheritance borne out by subsequent events. Formerly a 'teacher' of Newtownbarry in Wexford, he appears to have profited from the library of 200 volumes bequeathed to the town's school: it is tempting, but unfounded, to evoke the libertarian inheritance of the Irish hedge schoolmaster.<sup>8</sup> Langford first enlisted far from his native place, at Exeter in February 1848, aged almost 22. He admitted having served in the 81st Foot for three months, having

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3. Bengal general orders, 1861, p. 239, Proceedings of a GCM, 28 May 1861, IOLR, L/MIL/17/2/310

4. Since Langford's trial occurred after the amalgamation, which as will be seen went smoothly, the authorities' lenity may have signalled their desire not to excite the European force.

5. Englishman, 29 June 1861

6. The PRO's (incomplete) indexes to the Royal Artillery casualty returns for the 1860s, WO 25/3305, 3308, 3311 & 3313-17, do not reveal his fate, nor do the registers of Bengal burials in the IOLR.

7. Langford's service career can be reconstructed from the Registers of European soldiers, L/MIL/10/125 and 129, the depot embarkation lists, L/MIL/9/79, the muster rolls and casualty returns, L/MIL/10/178 and Bengal general orders, 1852. Anomalies nevertheless exist. The Town Major's list for 1858 refers to him as 'Private, Assistant Overseer', so it possible that he enlisted three times, for the second time just before the rebellion. He does not appear in the muster for 1859, but distance precluded an exhaustive check of this possibility.

8. Samuel Lewis, A topographical dictionary of Ireland, 3 vols, London, 1850, Vol. II, p. 399

purchased discharge, experience which, with his education, explains his appointment as a 'pipe-clay' sergeant aboard the transport Collingwood. Serving as a gunner for less than two years, he became in 1850 an assistant overseer with the Public Works Department (a rapid elevation even by the standards of the old force), though a subsequent appointment to the same position in 1852 suggests that he had at some time been remanded for an unknown infraction of discipline. Langford must have added Urdu to his stock while training as an overseer, though the quotation with which the second letter opens, classical rather than idiomatic, suggests that his command exceeded the minimum required to direct labourers. He demonstrated his eclectic scholarship in 1854, the year in which he purchased his discharge, by publishing in Lahore a verse epic, Alvin of Erie, or the Mourner's choice. An extraordinary volume, it includes besides the long title poem miscellaneous verse previously published in Anglo-Indian newspapers and translations into Urdu of songs such as 'Drink to me only with thine eyes'. He is supposed to have stated (perhaps at his court martial, the record of which is lost) that he had been 'intimate with Mr President Lincoln' - Alvin of Erie is set around the Great Lakes, suggesting that he had travelled to America, perhaps before his enlistment.<sup>9</sup> In September 1859, however, he enlisted again, in Her Majesty's Indian Forces, this time claiming to have been employed as an engineer, and arrived in Bengal late in 1859. His draft's journey from Calcutta to Meerut, marked by neglect and abuses in issuing rations (including 'evaporating' rum and bullocks without hearts or kidneys), evidently so different from his earlier experience, appears to have prompted him to complain through the traditional medium of the paper favouring soldiers.

Benjamin Langford was therefore no ordinary 'unposted gunner'. Not only educated, but also imbued with a vigorous tradition of radical reform, he also spoke with a knowledge (and the assumptions) of the force which Rose's regime threatened to change. He was the archetypal product of that force: a 'scholar' of the type common in the Company's force, the young, ambitious man able to win the advantages of promotion before securing the goal of so many soldiers, discharge by purchase. Moreover, he had experienced the Queen's army, both briefly as a recruit and as an observer of it during Napier's term as Commander-in-Chief, at the height of the insubordination crisis of the late 'forties and early 'fifties. He clearly saw both the differences between it and the force he had joined and the ways in which Rose sought to subordinate the one to the other. That he should express his views in print (as well as,

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9. Rose to Cambridge, 15 May 1862, Rose papers, Public letter book, BL, Add. Ms 42814. If so, his intimacy was personal rather than literary: a search of the (incomplete) Lincoln papers in the Library of Congress and Lincoln's Collected works disclosed no surviving reference. I am grateful to the staff of the Library of Congress' Manuscript Division for their assistance.

presumably, individually to his fellow recruits) is not, perhaps, surprising. That he should so openly criticise the Commander-in-Chief at so sensitive a time, in letters bound to be traced, testifies both to his individual conviction and to the vigour of the assertive traditions within which he thought and acted.

Langford was remarkable in the range and expression of his idiosyncratic views, but he was not unique. If the mid-Victorian barrack-room is to us an obscure place, the figure of the 'radical soldier' lurks in its darker corners, by his nature covert, revealed by prosecution or more rarely by self exposure. A few such men are known. Sergeant Pearman is best known, through his published memoir, The radical soldier's tale.<sup>10</sup> Charles Grey, who as a young soldier in the 1880s heard of William Johnson's execution, was another. In his memoir he rails against Victoria as 'a self centred sour tempered and imperious old woman' and officers, 'the monocle men'.<sup>11</sup> He too concealed his views in an institution by definition hostile to dissent. Other radical soldiers can be discerned despite their understandable desire for invisibility: Joseph Lingard, formerly a shoemaker and after discharge the Chartist Northern star's agent in Barnsley;<sup>12</sup> Alexander Somerville, persecuted for writing to a newspaper, seeking to deter soldiers from infringing popular liberties<sup>13</sup>; or the most influential soldier-clerk of all, William Cobbett.<sup>14</sup>

As the pages of mofussil newspapers testify, the army in which Benjamin Langford served long accepted men expressing their views. In a sense, then, it was the impending incorporation of the former Company's force by the more rigorous Queen's army which made Langford into a radical soldier, in that the code which Rose sought to implement defined as subversive what

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10. First published as Sergeant Pearman's memoirs (London, 1968), its radical content expunged by its editor, the Marquess of Anglesea. An unexpurgated version edited by Caroline Steedman appeared in 1988 as The radical soldier's tale.

11. Charles Grey, 'Soldiering in Victorian days: a memoir and sketches', Lahore, 1941, typescript copy in author's possession, pp. 7, 137, now donated to the IOLR

12. Dorothy Thompson, The Chartists: popular politics in the industrial revolution. Aldershot, 1984, p. 155

13. Alexander Somerville, The autobiography of a working man, [1848], London, 1951, pp. 161-229 and PP 1831-32, Vol. XXVII, Report of the court of inquiry ... on the case of Private Alexander Somerville, pp. 371-449, for an indication of the severe reaction which radical soldiers could provoke.

14. The most detailed account of Cobbett's challenge to military despotism is found in George Spater's William Cobbett, the poor man's friend, 2 vols, Cambridge, 1982, VI. I, Chapter 2, 'The soldier's friend'.

Langford had regarded as legitimate. Given the importance which the force attached to self expression, the new climate undermined one of the essential foundations of its corporate existence. In this sense Langford's letters directly challenged Rose, the one embodying the old order, the other the new.

Though Rose abstained from public debate with Langford, his correspondence reveals the extent to which he saw Langford's letters not simply as an eccentric if annoying expression of individual opinion, but more as the mark of the system he sought to transform. Before Langford's identity was revealed Rose had written to Cambridge, reporting on the 'good deal of excitement' evident in anticipation of the general order ordering the formal amalgamation of the two services. He complained that the local force contained 'more men worse than the ordinary run of "bad men"'. These, he observed were 'of better station, and education', but were 'tainted with the sort of political feeling which displayed itself in the discharge question'. The Mofussilite's 'mischievous' letters reflected this feeling.<sup>15</sup> Rose believed them to be the work of one of the 'many ill disposed Soldiers & Lawyers[,] originally perhaps attorneys clerks who [sought to] ... frustrate the wish of the Govt.'<sup>16</sup> Langford, a 'lawyer' if not literally an attorney's clerk, turned out to be precisely the demon Rose had anticipated would be behind the Mofussilite's letters.<sup>17</sup> Beyond the politics of the Indian army, Rose and Langford represent the greater contest over the ownership of Britain, the critical dynamic of British history over the nineteenth century.

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As Langford's prosecution proceeded, the European force confronted the second of the great decisions forced upon its members as a consequence of the transfer from Company to Crown. By the end of 1860 the Government of India, the India Office and Horse Guards had at last decided the Europeans' fate. Dogged by the confusion inseparable from complex negotiations conducted at long distance, the agreement almost collapsed at the last minute. Just when Wood

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15. Rose to Cambridge, Calcutta, 11 April 1861, Rose papers, Public letter book, BL, Add.Ms 42813

16. Rose to Canning, 9 March 1861, Rose papers, Public letter book, BL, Add. Ms 42813

17. Langford's erudition substantiated Wellington's suspicion of the wisdom of allowing soldiers to read. It is worth noticing that Richard Parker, leader of the Nore mutineers in 1797, had been a clerk. The only member of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force to be executed for mutiny in the 1914-18 war had been a 'Bohemian journalist': Christopher Pugsley, On the fringe of hell: New Zealanders and military discipline in the first world war, Auckland, 1991, pp. 139-44.

thought he had established that men would no longer be re-enlisted for local service, Canning informed him (at the instigation of Bengal officers determined to preserve the force's Indian identity) that he had done so. Wood patiently pointed out the implications of his action. It was not what he had done, so much as having reported it officially in a public despatch. Wood's concern was not simply that inconsistency could embarrass the ministry, but that the issue was 'not a mere Indian Question. The doctrine involves a question of rights of every soldier in the Queen's army.'<sup>18</sup> The soldiers' response to the impending amalgamation was therefore of concern more widely than the European force.

In a testimony both to Rose's fairness and the force's fundamental quality, he recommended that most of the force be retained. Cambridge accepted the recommendation, perhaps reluctant to lose the European corps altogether. Irrespective of its supposed indiscipline, in the face of Parliamentary reluctance to sanction increases in the army and the army's perennial weakness in Britain, he would have been unlikely to sacrifice them as establishments able to be re-built with the passing of their cadres. Queen's officers seem not to have doubted the Europeans' potential as soldiers. In November 1859 a sharp exchange between the War Office and the India Office prevented Queen's recruiting officers boarding the returning transports to enlist former European soldiers.<sup>19</sup> Rather, their misgivings lay in the combination of men and officers in the regimental communities which had recently so troubled them. In the event, therefore, the European force was to 'double up' but not die out. The promulgation on 10 April 1861 of the royal warrant incorporating Her Majesty's Indian Forces into the British army proper finally ended the separate existence of the former Company's regiments. Artillery units received new designations as part of the Royal Artillery, the three senior regiments of European infantry in each presidency entered the line as the 101st to 109th Foot, and the three senior regiments of Bengal European Light Cavalry became regiments of light dragoons. Changes in nomenclature were sweetened by the touches of sentiment curiously valued by soldiers; the senior regiment in each presidency became 'royal'.<sup>20</sup>

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18. Wood to Canning, 9 December 1860, Wood papers, Letter book 5, IOLR

19. See 'Letters to [and from] Horse Guards 1859', IOLR, L/MIL/2/1049

20. Though not the 2nd Fusiliers, despite its loyalty in 1859: it was awarded in 1867 the compensatory distinction of the red cap band to which 'royal' regiments were entitled: McCance, History of the Royal Munster Fusiliers. Vol. II, p. 94.

Doubtless recalling the consequences of attempting to impose a solution devised in Britain, as in 1859, Wood sensibly left to Canning and Rose the details of the arrangement.<sup>21</sup>

'Amalgamation' was, of course, the Queen's army's term for the assimilation of the former Company's force. Already the junior force had been required to conform to the senior in many aspects of training and administration.<sup>22</sup> The Bengal Artillery received Royal Artillery drill books<sup>23</sup>; the infantry received uniforms made to the royal army's patterns<sup>24</sup>, accounting and inspection periods were altered to conform.<sup>25</sup> From mid-April, however, all officers and men of the European force were required to elect for general service, local service or (for those eligible) discharge. If the alignment of equipment and procedures had been awkward, inducing the men to transfer proved to be, as Rose recognized, 'very delicate'.<sup>26</sup>

Given the Europeans' volatility, and particularly following the 5th's outbreak and disbandment, the authorities' apprehensions over the opening of 'volunteering' were understandable.

Facilitated by a cash bounty and open canteens, but closely supervised by Queen's officers, the 'volunteering' proceeded more smoothly than expected.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, as Henry Norman reported to Wood, 'nothing could have been more successful'.<sup>28</sup> Virtually all the 1st Fusiliers and all but 36 of the 3rd, opted to transfer, so many recruits that two provisional regiments had to be formed to accommodate them.<sup>29</sup> The European staff sergeants at Fort William marched up in a

21. Rose to Cambridge, Calcutta, 8 March 1861, Rose papers, BL, Public letter book, Add. Ms 42813

22. Clyde, for example, had in 1859 asked Keith Young to consider the integration of the two forces' legal codes, seeking to eliminate the anomalies which had caused so much 'doubt and irregularity': Young to Birch, 13 August 1859, Military Proceedings, 2 September 1859, No. 475, IOLR.

23. Military despatch to India, No. 127, 29 March 1860, para. 15, IOLR, L/MIL/3/2094

24. Regimental digest, 3rd Bengal European Regiment, 17 August 1858, WSRO

25. Outram to Wood, 22 November 1859, Military and marine letter from India, No. 228 of 1859, IOLR

26. Rose to Canning, 27 April 1861, Rose papers, Public letter book, BL, Add.Ms 42813

27. At Meean Meer Lt Charles Scott of the Royal Horse Artillery described it as '[a] regular case of "drinky for drinky"', with former Bengal gunners standing the RHA men 'any amount of liquor': diary, NAM, 8405-22. See also Rose to Cambridge, 11 April 1861, Rose papers, Public letter book, BL, Add.Ms 42813.

28. Norman to Wood, 22 June 1861, Wood papers, IOLR, Vol. 66

29. Rose to Cambridge, 4 June 1861, Rose papers, Public letter book, BL, Add.Ms 42813

body to volunteer for the Queen's army; in the Bengal Artillery, 3039 opted for general service and only 312 for local.<sup>30</sup> The troops' unexpected willingness presents another of the conundrums permeating the Europeans' demise.

The motives of those choosing to remain with the rump of what became known as the 'Local force' were mixed but relatively clear. It became an uncomfortable assortment of men of long service and usually good conduct and men of short service often with poor characters. Knowing the racial sensitivity of contemporary Britain, many with Eurasian or native wives presumably felt they could not return to Britain. Others, within a few years of discharge with good characters and pensions in the offing, saw no reason to incur the risk of an unfamiliar style of command. Some young men appear to have chosen the local force on the expectation that it would offer, as it proved, an easy billet. The conduct sheets preserved with its members' discharge certificates reveal that it maintained the casual disciplinary style of the old force: the conduct of a man convicted of twelve offences between 1861 and 1869 was described as 'fair'.<sup>31</sup> The few hundred soldiers of the Local force soon became an irrelevance. Its companies survived into the early 1870s, rapidly diminishing as their members' periods of enlistment expired.

The European troops' eagerness to embrace a prospect which previously had precipitated a mutiny requires explanation. As with the protest of 1859, the force's composition and culture provides a clue, supplementing the scanty direct evidence. As alarmist references in Rose's correspondence suggest, during the months preceding the transfer intense discussion had occurred within barrack-rooms over the prospect men faced. In contrast to 1859, however, the absence of formal courts of enquiry left no evidence of it. There is no reason to doubt, however, that the events of 1860-61 were as thoroughly discussed. The offer of a bounty of up to Rs50, graduated by length of service, evidently tempted many to remain.<sup>32</sup>

In addition to the inducement of the bounty it is likely that Rose's attention in the year since he assumed command, his decisive action over the Dinapore protest and the regimental officers' supervision and persuasion paid dividends. His firmness certainly precluded the suggestion

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30. Rose to Cambridge, 4 May 1861; Rose to Wood, 8 June 1861, Rose papers, Public letter book, BL, Add. Ms 42813

31. Extracts from Regimental Defaulters' Book, Discharge papers of Pte William Carroll, Local Infantry, Miscellaneous papers of soldiers discharged, IOLR, L/MIL/10/323, Part 1, folios 109-113

32. Arthur Owen, in his Recollections of a veteran, implied that offer of the bounty deterred a second outbreak; p. 85

that discharge could be granted to any but those having served ten years or more. It is equally likely that in contrast to 1859 this time the soldiers' fundamental desires worked in favour of the decision the authorities sought. Opting for general service made the possibility of departure from India and a return home possible, while local service condemned a man to remain in India for his original term of service. As in 1859 a large proportion of the force was new to military service, having enlisted in the year preceding the cessation of recruiting in mid-1860. It is possible that as in 1859 older soldiers considered encouraging recruits to press for discharge but were deterred by the response which the 5th had received six months before.

Clearly for some the change was traumatic. Christopher Jordan, formerly a groom and sergeant major of the 1st Fusiliers from November 1857, volunteered in April 1861 for the 101st. Within three months he had been tried, reduced to private and imprisoned for an unrecorded offence, working his way to corporal, sergeant and finally sergeant major again between March and August 1862. For a man who had served for fourteen years without a single court martial to lapse so dramatically suggests some connection with the changes within the unit for which he was responsible.<sup>33</sup>

**Sergeant Major Christopher Jordan, 101st Royal Bengal Fusiliers. Groom, of Worcester; enl. Dublin, April 1847; served 1st European Bengal Fusiliers, Burmah, Delhi, Lucknow, Umbeylah; wounded in the right leg at Delhi; disch. October 1869; joined the permanent staff of the 4th Volunteer Battalion of the King's Regiment at Liverpool, 1870, in which capacity his conduct was found 'worthy of the highest praise'**

Though ending the European force's existence as an institution the warrant's promulgation did not and could not curtail the culture it expressed. In deciding whether to accept re-engagement, for example, a man of the 3rd infantry - another groom - attempted to negotiate with his officers in the manner familiar to the European force. Private Charles Parker, charged with drunkenness on the eve of volunteering, attempted to use his freedom to choose to mitigate his sentence. Acknowledging his guilt, Parker brought to the court's notice his previous service, that he had been thrice wounded in the rebellion, and asked that it atone for the three occasions on which he had been tried for drunkenness. He assured the court of his 'earnest desire ... to re-enlist in this my first & only Regiment ... and thus obtain a Soldier's pension', undertaking to repay clemency with virtue.<sup>34</sup> The strength of the men's belief in their right to deal directly with authority became apparent even from Macminie's 'loyal' artillery company, two men of which presented petitions to Rose

**Private Charles Parker, No. 537, 3rd Bengal European Regiment. Groom, of Melksham, Wilts.; enl. at Cardiff, July 1853, aged 20. Slightly wounded, August 1857; volunteered to 107th Foot, 1861**

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33. Discharge papers, 101st Foot, Jac - You, 1855-72, PRO, WO 97/1679

34. Brown private journal, NLS

when he inspected it after the 5th infantry's outbreak. After all that had occurred in the 5th a handful of old soldiers demonstrated how persistent (or obtuse) the barrack-room could make men by actually requesting the boon of discharge.<sup>35</sup> As would become apparent over the following decade, the force's assimilation would reveal the tenacity of its culture.

In the meantime, the amalgamation exposed the dilemma of the force's officers. For them the announcement of amalgamation presented more complex choices, and a significantly smaller proportion chose general service. Of the 1st Fusiliers' 39 officers only 17 accepted general service; of the 2nd's 41 only 15.<sup>36</sup> For many officers acceptance of general service represented the lesser of two evils, and many did so with regret. Others remained with the force they had known.<sup>37</sup> Even the force's luminaries, whose future within a larger imperial force must have appeared brighter, revealed their misgivings. Two officers, both of whom had prospered in the rebellion exemplify many Indian officers' ambivalence. As his comments to the 3rd infantry at Morar in 1859 indicated, Robert Napier's attitude toward the European force's extinction remained equivocal. He had previously admitted that he sympathized with the soldiers' complaints.<sup>38</sup> By mid-1861, having returned from commanding a division in the second China war, he sat as military member on the Viceroy's Council, known to be 'an anti-amalgamationist' though (unlike Outram, his predecessor) 'not a fierce one'.<sup>39</sup> Vincent Eyre, a leading reformer of the European force before the rebellion and a hero of the rebellion, wrote to Canning on the very eve of amalgamation expressing his misgivings. Rose saw the letter as a 'reproach to the Bengal Artillery', telling Canning of the 'surprise and pain' with which he read it, affirming that 'no officer, - no matter what his rank, or the indulgence and confidence with which he has been treated ... should have

Lieutenant Colonel Vincent Eyre (1811-81), Bengal Artillery. Addiscombe 1827-28; comm. 1828; served first Afghan war; commanded force relieving Arrah 1857; commanded artillery at capture of Lucknow; Inspector General of Ordnance, 1862; ret. as Major General, 1863; KCSI 1867

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35. Rose to Canning, 7 November 1860, Dinapore, Canning papers, WYA, Vol. 71

36. Innes, *History of the Bengal European Regiment*, pp. 530, 533

37. The choices of officers exemplifying the culture of the Bengal army before the rebellion were consistent. Maitland, Slater, Fenwick and Cunningham of the 5th infantry remained as 'locals'. Christopher Hassall, the 'black sheep' of the 48th, died on furlough as the volunteering proceeded.

38. In a private letter to an unidentified correspondent he had remarked that the soldiers, though 'guilty of conspiracy, had really some grounds of complaint': copy of private letter, 20 November 1860, Wood papers, IOLR, Vol. 85

39. Rose to Cambridge, 8 June 1861, Rose papers, BL, Public letter book, Add.Ms 42813

so far forgot himself as to address his Commander in Chief in such a strain'.<sup>40</sup> Napier and Eyre's apprehensions undoubtedly reflected misgivings shared by their less distinguished, and therefore less accessible, fellows.

Long overshadowed by the more numerous and noisy soldiers, the choice of local or line compelled the Bengal army's European officers to reveal their dissatisfaction with the transformation confronting their force. Though the younger and more active saw professional and personal challenges and opportunities in becoming eligible for service outside India, many others preferred to remain in the local service. The disparities of wealth and social standing which had so sharply distinguished Queen's and Company's officers before the rebellion likewise prevented their merger. Though exaggerating his Indian experience ('Nobody has mixed more with Indian officers than I') Rose appreciated their apprehension. Their opposition to amalgamation, he wrote, 'is almost exclusively a question of self interest'. 'They are generally married and have large families', he told Cambridge, '[t]hey cannot afford to lose their appointments'. Though privately many would agree that the deficiencies of the Indian military system explained the protest of 1859 and justified amalgamation they 'always add[ed]':

"amalgamation would ruin us, the Horse G[uar]ds would fill the staff appointments with their own men ..." This is a fixed idea which no arguments can eradicate.<sup>41</sup>

Any change proposed to the officers' terms and conditions of service jeopardized the certainty on which they had depended. The Government of India Act had assured them that their rights and privileges would be secure. Traditionally vigilant over matters of remuneration and recompense, they regarded with suspicion and hostility proposals which might erode their perquisites. 'Jealousies' of long standing persisted: even as the army faced the soldiers' protest the authorities debated the distribution of higher commands between the two armies.<sup>42</sup> Even Henry Norman, if anyone the architect of the new army, reminded Wood that 'faith must be kept & justice done as regards all the officers of the late Company's army'.<sup>43</sup>

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40. Rose to Canning, 4 May 1861, Rose papers, BL, Add. Ms 42806

41. Rose to Cambridge, Poona, 26 September 1859, Rose papers, Public letter book, BL, Add. Ms 42812

42. 'Copy of recent correspondence ... on the apportionment of divisional commands between the line and local troops', PP 1860, Vol. L, pp. 212-25

43. Norman to Wood, 3 February 1860, Wood papers, IOLR, Vol. 66

European officers had long concealed their apprehension over their fate under the new arrangement. By early 1860, as Norman wrote to Wood, the officers of the Bengal army were 'in a state of complete uncertainty', oppressed by 'a feeling of despondency and anxiety'.<sup>44</sup> Having passed their professional lives in the certainty of promotion, pay and pension - the vagaries of mortality notwithstanding - they found the indecision following the rebellion profoundly disquieting. By the time the order amalgamating the two forces at last appeared, they had endured three years of debilitating uncertainty. Their response to the changes which the rebellion and its aftermath brought to the Indian army intensified the tensions long evident between the two forces. Rose therefore confronted an equally intractable culture among the Europeans' officers, and faced even greater difficulty in bending them to his will. Indeed, in the long term, it is arguable whether he, his colleagues and successors prevailed at all.

Though the protest of 1859 has overwhelmingly been presented as a movement exclusively of soldiers, their officers were as concerned over the fact and implications of the transfer. Unrest, protest and mutiny among their men confronted officers with a dilemma. Though in many cases sympathetic, perhaps hoping that the soldiers' protest might achieve gains for them, they could hardly adopt the same methods to voice their grievances. Apprehensive of their incorporation in and subordination to a service which had traditionally disdained them, they were understandably apprehensive of what the future might bring.<sup>45</sup> Rose, however, regarded officers and soldiers' actions as essentially identical.

Both were of a Political description. Both allowed a grievance to neutralize the rights of discipline. Both allowed a professional complaint to assume the form of a collective disaffection.<sup>46</sup>

It is tempting, therefore, to attribute the two protests to essentially the same source: the vigour of the Bengal Europeans' culture, which for both officers and men placed a high value on both economic security and on assertive defence of material reward. More fundamentally, accepting

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44. Norman to Wood, 9 February 1860, Wood papers, IOLR, Vol. 66

45. Hints exist that some officers were not unhappy at their men's expressing themselves so forcefully. At Berhampore Kenneth Mackenzie wrote 'I do not feel that the officers of the 5th are pleased at order being restored': Mackenzie to Stuart, Berhampore, 29 June 1859, Canning papers, WYA, Vol. 139. A soldier's remark that his officer 'told us to take the EIC off our caps as there was no Company' suggests that some officers took little pains to present the transfer positively: PP 1860, p. 205.

46. Rose to Cambridge, Calcutta, 20 July 1860, Rose papers, Public letter book, BL, Add. Ms 42813

that the Europeans' ranks were populated by a great many men who sought military service rather than starve, that both officers and men included many marginal or middling men suggests that they acted from essentially similar motivations. The critical role within the barrack-room by literate men of ambivalent class reinforces the congruence between the two groups.

Despite their reticence, the officers' concerns are dimly visible. Maintaining a prudent silence, no courts of enquiry recorded their views as for their men. Mofussil newspapers spoke volubly on their behalf but published relatively few

**Captain Alexander Braithwaite Fenwick (1818-63), 5th Bengal European Regiment, 1858-60. Son of a clergyman, Isle of Wight; comm. 1836; served first Afghan war**

letters by officers directly affected by the transfer. Just as the actions of the soldiers of the 5th infantry reveal the motivations and dynamics of the barrack-room, its officers' reactions suggests how European officers perceived the Europeans' crisis. If, as seems likely, they are representative of the Company's officers generally, their reactions to their men's outbreak provides insights into the culture against which the Queen's army collided in seeking to reform the Indian army. When in June 1859 Lieutenant Colonel Kenneth Mackenzie took Queen's troops to Berhampore to overawe the 5th's mutiny, his orders required him to assume command of the regiment and its officers. Mackenzie, an experienced regimental officer, reported on their deficiencies and on their reactions to the Queen's army's intervention. Major Maitland, Birch declared, had 'failed in his duty'.<sup>47</sup> Captain Mortimer Slater, the next senior, was 'no officer in our conception of the word'. Only Captain Alexander Fenwick could be 'partly trusted', and shortly replaced Maitland as acting commanding officer.<sup>48</sup> Mackenzie found the 5th's officers 'much aggrieved at what they call a Queen's officer being placed over them'. Rose, observing from Poona, passed on a private letter from Mackenzie in which he described them 'nearly as mutinous as the men'.<sup>49</sup> The mutiny at Berhampore was more significant than its remote location and satisfactory resolution would suggest. Queen's and Company's officers felt that 'the whole of Her Majesty's Indian Army is affected by the step that the Government have taken'.<sup>50</sup> Both saw Mackenzie's intervention as proof of the Queen's army's dominance.

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47. Birch to Norman, [c. 20 July], Military Proceedings, No. 57, 5 August 1859, IOLR, P/191/28

48. Mackenzie to Stuart, Berhampore, 4 July 1859, Canning papers, WYA, Vol. 139

49. Rose to Sir Charles Yorke [Military Secretary to Cambridge], Poona, 19 August 1859, Rose papers, BL, public letter book, Add. Ms 42812

50. Mackenzie to Stuart, 29 June 1859, Canning papers, WYA, Vol. 139

At the time of the outbreak at least three of the regiment's officers were preoccupied with redressing personal grievances arising from the rebellion, pursuing the postal campaigns so characteristic of the Bengal army. Major Maitland laboured under official censure he had suffered as a consequence of the mutiny of his former regiment, the 5th Bengal native infantry, in 1857. In August, despite having been subjected to unwelcome prominence, both in the newspapers and at headquarters as a result of the mutiny at Berhampore, he petitioned for the censure to be rescinded.<sup>51</sup> Captain Fenwick pursued throughout the summer a claim to share in the Delhi batta.<sup>52</sup> Captain Slater not only appealed against what he saw as Fenwick's supersession, and refused to recognise his authority, but also asked to be returned to the less demanding appointment as Pension Paymaster in Oudh. Richard Birch informed Slater's divisional commander that his removal had 'already occurred to Government', and he had been posted accordingly.<sup>53</sup> Slater was, however, fortunate to escape with no more than admonition for what Clyde considered a 'very improper appeal'. Canning's Council considered Slater's case and decided that, presumably given the officers' sensitivity, trial by court martial would be 'inexpedient'.<sup>54</sup> That at the height of the crisis a European regiment's senior officers pursued such claims explains if not confirms the Queen's officers' disparaging view of Company's officers. Their evading retribution may be seen not as gentlemen shielding their own, but, rather, as a precaution against further protest by officers of the former Company.

The 5th's officers might be considered untypical. However, the actions of officers whose former service and present positions merited unambiguous praise substantiates the disparity in expectation between Rose and the Indian army's officers. Rose's frustration with officers unwilling to adapt to the changes which he foreshadowed is evident from a letter admonishing his own aide de camp, Lieutenant Harry Lyster, a native infantry officer

**Lieutenant Harry Hamon Lyster (1830-1922). Comm. 1848, 48th, 72nd Bengal Native Infantry; Interpreter and ADC to Rose, 1857-61; VC, 1858; Captain, 1861; Bt Lieutenant Colonel, 1870; commanded 3rd Gurkhas, 1879-80; Lieutenant General, 1891; ret. 1892**

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51. Maj Frederick Maitland to Campbell [Military Secretary], Berhampore, 20 August 1859, Canning papers, WYA, Vol. 136

52. Fenwick to Adjutant General, 7 April 1859, Military consultations, July 1859, , No. 640, IOLR, P/191/27; Fenwick to Military Secretary, 20 July 1859, Canning papers, WYA, Vol. 136; Birch to Offg DAG, 23 August 1859, Military consultations, 5-26 August 1859, No. 234, IOLR, P/191/28

53. Hearsey to Birch, No. 36, 25 July 1859; Birch to Hearsey, No. 37, 1 August 1859, Military consultations, August 1859, IOLR, P/191/28

54. Norman to Birch, No. 432, 18 August 1859, Military consultations, 23 September 1859, IOLR, P/191/29

whose gallantry during the central India campaign gained him a Victoria Cross and Rose's patronage. Unfortunately for Lyster, Rose wrote immediately after returning from a Queen's birthday parade commanded by Brigadier St George Showers. Though he had been a formidable disciplinarian while commanding the 2nd Fusiliers, Showers' grasp of parade ground manoeuvre had lapsed. Perhaps feeling obliged to issue orders personally, he committed 'numerous errors ... in the simplest matters of drill'.<sup>55</sup> Rose saw in the clubbed parade a further sign of the European force's persistent deficiencies.

Evidently still furious, Rose demanded to know why Lyster had been 'abusing in no unmeasured terms' the amalgamation then in progress. Refuting Lyster's claim that he wished 'to get rid of Indian officers', Rose accused him of retailing 'twaddle in the papers'. He countered Lyster's imputation by detailing recent appointments to deserving European officers. He reminded Lyster that he had given desirable appointments to European officers (including making Kendal Coghill brigade major at Barrackpore, thereby fulfilling his undertaking while inspecting the fusiliers in February). Asserting that they had secured promotion because they had 'proved themselves capital Adjutants', Rose declared that 'if they deserve it - they will be shoved up the ladder'. Lyster, he wrote scathingly, would 'never make a career in the Army'. 'You did excellent work', he conceded, recalling Lyster's numerous hazardous forays in action, '[b]ut you prefer Studs or Tea ... things which do not give much trouble'. 'I do not give app[ointmen]ts for jobs' he concluded, witheringly.<sup>56</sup> That a member of Rose's personal staff, an officer selected as a symbol of his good will toward the Indian army, should refer so tactlessly and disloyally to the most sensitive issue concerning his chief doubtless alerted Rose that the reformation of the Bengal army's officers would be more protracted than even his battle to transform its other ranks.

No sooner had he berated his ADC than Rose confronted an even more blatant contravention of the spirit which he sought to instil. In June 1860 Rose learned that James Brind, the hero of the batteries at Delhi and now commander of a horse artillery brigade at Meerut, had submitted 'a most insubordinate and improper letter of complaint' directly to Sir Charles Wood, complaining of 'injustices' against himself and his

**Brigadier Richard Horsford (1801-69), Bengal Artillery. b. Antigua; comm. 1819; served Bhurtapore, first and second Punjab wars; Captain, 1836; Colonel, 1861,**

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55. Memorandum for the Adjutant General, 24 May 1861, Rose papers, Public letter book, BL, Add. Ms 42813

56. Rose to Lyster, 24 May 1861, Rose papers, Public letter book, BL, Add. Ms 42813. The extraordinarily perilous acts for which Lyster received the VC are detailed in Creagh, *The Victoria Cross*, p. 64.

fellow officers. Brind's superior, Brigadier Richard Horsford, though aware of the letter, had merely endorsed Brind's services, rather than condemning its 'remarkable impropriety'.<sup>57</sup> The incident exemplified for Rose the essential problem of the old European force: he described the letter as 'the most improper and extraordinary ... which ever passed through his hands'.<sup>58</sup> Brind's action, scandalous from the perspective of the Queen's army, accorded with the Bengal officers' notions of acceptable conduct. It was, Rose told the Royal Artillery officer replacing the errant Horsford, 'an assertion of rights & principles which it is dangerous that any officers, or soldiers should hold'.<sup>59</sup> Moreover, Rose connected the officers' conduct with their troops' restiveness over the previous year:

no one can be surprized that when two of the chief officers ... at Meerut express such sentiments in May 1860, their men should have conducted themselves at Meerut as they did in May 1859.<sup>60</sup>

Exhibiting surprising restraint, Rose removed both Brind and Horsford from their commands, but 'in a manner the least likely to be painful to their feelings or to excite attention'. The 'example', however, he hoped would 'have a very beneficial effect' on those who had expected their tenure of two of the most prized posts in the corps to have been longer.<sup>61</sup> Brind, in the time-honoured manner of Bengal officers, petitioned against the decision, both to Rose and Clyde, conceding only that 'unhappily my language shewed ignorance of the strict rules ... by which correspondence with superiors should be regulated'.<sup>62</sup>

Rose's lenity derived from policy rather than charity. He reflected that aspiring Indian military reformers (notably Charles Napier and John Jacob) had estranged those whom they wished to sway. Rose realized that his proposed transformation of the Indian army would fail 'unless

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57. Rose to Cambridge, Calcutta, 18 June 1860, Rose papers, Public letter book, , BL, Add.Ms 42813. The letter itself appears not to have been recorded in the Military Proceedings.

58. Mayhew to SGIMD, Calcutta, 28 June 1860, Military Proceedings, July 1860, No. 107, NAI

59. Rose to Col John Fordyce, Calcutta, 9 July 1860, Rose papers, Public letter book, BL, Add. Ms 42813

60. Rose to Cambridge, 18 June 1860, Rose papers, Public letter book, BL, Add.Ms 42813

61. Rose to Cambridge, 20 July 1860, Rose papers, Public letter book, BL, Add. Ms 42813

62. Brind to Lt Col Edwin Johnson, Mussoorie, 29 August 1860, Military Proceedings, October 1860, No. 490, NAI

those who are to be reformed are kept in good humour'.<sup>63</sup> He therefore sought to win over the Bengal army's officers with even more finesse than he had employed with its men: the more so since exemplary execution necessarily remained outside his repertoire. Judicious praise and censure therefore remained the most useful tool to hand. In imposing his will on a refractory force Rose contended with an often vituperative local press, and with the insidious influence of rumour, traditionally a potent weapon in Anglo-Indian intrigue. In July 1860, for example, he felt compelled to refute a report that he had ordered a European corps out to drill in the heat of the day. The rumour, he complained to Canning, 'was calculated to hurt me'.<sup>64</sup>

Rose, Cambridge and Queen's officers generally sought to eradicate this fractious and self interested temper. They employed several complementary strategies to accomplish their aim: wresting the initiative from the Bengal army to the Queen's army, inducing officers to volunteer for general service, persuading unsuitable officers to retire and creating a 'staff corps'. All would excite bad feeling. Both the aims in general and each strategy in turn brought Queen's officers, and especially the Commander-in-Chief, into direct and at times open conflict with officers formerly of the Company.

Antipathy between senior Queen's and former Company officers intensified as the local force's fate became apparent. Whereas previously the Queen's troops' staff hierarchy had grafted contingents of fighting troops onto an administrative structure predominantly staffed by and catering to the Bengal army, the local force's eclipse in the aftermath of the

**Major General Sir Edward Lugard (1810-98), Secretary for Military correspondence, War Office, 1859-61. Comm. 1828; served first Afghan war, first and second Punjab wars, Persia war, rebellion (Lucknow); Major General, KCB, 1858; ret. 1880**

rebellion had decisively transformed the balance of power. Though yet filling few staff appointments, Queen's army officers now appeared likely to control the Indian army, a prospect intensifying traditional rivalries. Conflict between the two forces became apparent not only at the trials of men such as Gunner Langford, but at the very apex of the military hierarchy of British India, between Rose and what he described to Sir Edward Lugard as 'the old Bengal party'.<sup>65</sup> This signified the conservative senior officers of the Bengal army, particularly the 'secretariat' of permanent staff officers heading the administrative departments in Calcutta.

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63. Rose to Cambridge, Poona, 26 September 1859, Rose papers, Public letter book, BL, Add. Ms 42812

64. Rose to Canning, 22 July 1860, Rose papers, Public letter book, BL, Add. Ms 42813

65. Rose to Lugard, Mahabaleshwar, 7 April 1860, Rose papers, Public letter book, BL, Add. Ms 42813

Advising Canning in opposition to the Queen's Commander-in-Chief, they had prompted him to endorse several of the more awkward gambits in determining the Europeans' fate, such as the original ambitious proposal for an expanded European force and its revival at the last minute. Apprehensive members of Calcutta clubs, such as the United Services Club, (which Rose had been told comprised 'chiefly of [Commissariat] Officers[,] retired & inefficient officers ... to say the least ... radical') offered moral support.<sup>66</sup>

The Bengal secretariat was personified (and perhaps actually led) by Richard Birch (1803-1875), Secretary to the Government of India's Military Department. A member of an established Anglo-Indian family, Birch had been commissioned in the Bengal native infantry in 1821. As his entry in the Dictionary of national biography coyly put it, however, his 'numerous circle of relations ... insured his rapid promotion, and almost continuous service on the staff. Soon leaving his regiment for the judge advocate general's department, he returned to strictly military duty only briefly, as a brigadier in the second Punjab war. In the course of his ascent Birch aroused much rancour and few admirers who did not thereby seek to profit. Birch's unpopularity may have also derived from disparagement of his wife, whom even a protégé called 'an aged half-caste of vast rotundity'.<sup>67</sup> Scorned by the forthright Charles Napier, Birch was said to have benefited from Dalhousie's quarrel with Napier and to have been appointed to spite the Commander-in-Chief.<sup>68</sup> Whatever the means of his advancement, he became in 1852 Military Secretary, the most senior member of the Indian army, rivalling in power the Commander-in-Chief.<sup>69</sup> Pamphleteers hostile to Canning's administration considered Birch unequal to the responsibility. In a characteristic burst of invective, George Malleison described

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66. Rose to Cambridge, Gwalior, 22 November 1862, Rose papers, Public letter book, BL, Add. Ms 42814

67. John Beames, Memoirs of a Bengal civilian, London, 1961, p. 88

68. 'One who has served under Sir Charles Napier' [George Malleison], The mutiny of the Bengal army, London, 1857, pp. 14-15. Malleison's choice of pen-name for this, the celebrated 'red pamphlet', emphasises the extent to which Napier continued to dominate military politics in India. At the same time Malleison himself possessed a gift for arousing contention. In denigrating 'pretentious Anglo-Indian writers' Sir John Fortescue described his 'pseudo-historical writings' as 'inaccurate, slovenly and untrustworthy': A history of the British army, Vol. XIII, p. 469.

69. Properly, Secretary to the Government of India in the Military Department. By regulation, for example, all correspondence between the two forces passed through his hands: General regulations of the Bengal army, Section XVII

him as 'shallow', 'sycophantic', 'an ignoramus', unable to write an intelligible order.<sup>70</sup> Charles Napier's confederates (including Malleeson) accused him, not altogether unfairly, of having precipitated the 1857 rebellion by having disregarded warnings of the consequences of introducing the Enfield cartridge to sepoys.<sup>71</sup> Both Canning and Campbell should have realised his shortcomings during the rebellion: Canning once reprimanded him publicly for retaining but failing to discharge authority over reinforcements arriving at Calcutta.<sup>72</sup> By early 1860, however, he had evidently established an ascendancy over both which would lead to intense antagonism as the Queen's army asserted its control over the former Company's forces. Writing from Bombay while awaiting news of Clyde's departure, Rose recorded his belief that, 'L<sup>d</sup> Clyde is entirely ... under the influence of L<sup>d</sup> Canning who any baby knows is under that of Gen Birch'.<sup>73</sup> Birch, he thought, feared Rose's arrival as 'being likely to modify the old Indian system of military errors'. He could not but think that Birch had 'induced L<sup>d</sup> Clyde to stay in order to further and protect their own little pet system of reorganization'.<sup>74</sup> None of the principal Queen's officers esteemed him. Cambridge called him 'an enemy'.<sup>75</sup> Rose felt that Birch embodied the worst features of the old Bengal army, 'a man of no talent'; 'the beau ideal of off-reckonings'.<sup>76</sup>

In 1860 'the old Bengal party' had attempted to anticipate their force's absorption by convening a committee, ostensibly to investigate military economy, but extending its interest to organization, possibly attempting to forestall amalgamation. Its members included other influential Indian

**Major General George Balfour (1809-94), Madras army, Member, Military Finance Committee. son of a 'shipmaster' of Montrose; comm. Madras Artillery, 1825; Madras Military Board, 1849-57; War Office, 1868-71; KCB, 1871; MP, 1872-92**

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70. [Malleeson], The mutiny of the Bengal army, pp. 14-15 Henry Meade derided him as 'utterly ignorant', displaying tenacity of purpose only in retaining his considerable salary: The sepoy revolt: its causes and its consequences, London, 1857, p. 18.

71. Holmes, A history of the Indian mutiny, p. 79n

72. Ramsay, Rough recollections of military life and society, Vol. I, pp. 244, 249-50

73. Rose to Lugard, Mahabaleshwar, 7 April 1860, Rose papers, Public letter book, BL, Add. Ms 42813

74. Ibid

75. Cambridge to Wood, 7 February 1862, Wood papers, IOLR, Vol. 63

76. Rose to Cambridge, 9 April 1860, Rose to Lugard, 17 July 1860, Rose papers, Public letter book, BL, Add. Ms 42813 Charles Wood concurred, finding him 'more a lawyer than a soldier', but still a 'most injudicious man': Wood papers, IOLR, Letter books 2 and 4

officers, notably Colonel George Balfour, ('very radical and ultra Indian', as Rose described him). While visiting Rose at Poona, Balfour betrayed his feelings by his bitterness toward the Duke of Wellington 'for an opinion he had given about the Indian Army'.<sup>77</sup> Evidently neither army had forgotten Wellington's strictures.

Throughout the negotiations preceding the European force's incorporation Rose and the Bengal secretariat played out the covert rivalry between the two services, all the more abrasively as the denouement of the long-standing jealousy appeared to approach. One sought the eradication, the other the survival, of a military institution and culture: deciding who and what would control the British army in India. Contrary to Rose's wishes, Canning, presumably at Birch's instigation, convened early in 1861 a special commission to recommend on the implementation of the amalgamation. The commission had been formed while Rose hurried to Calcutta from the Punjab, his tour of inspection interrupted. He therefore had no opportunity to advise against it, but attempted as a member of the Governor General's Council to oversee its deliberations. Headed by Birch, the commission consisted exclusively of former Company's officers. Though including Robert Napier and Vincent Eyre, officers whom Rose described as 'excellent', the commission's first report attempted to alter rather than interpret Wood's directions, recommending proposals calculated to excite dissension and jealousy between the two forces. 'I never saw a case where self-interest played a greater part', Rose wrote in exasperation.<sup>78</sup> Canning and Rose re-wrote the second report, but its members so assiduously pursued their apparent intention to dislocate the amalgamation that Canning suppressed its third report, and the commission lapsed after several months of futile but disruptive deliberation. Eventually Canning and Rose devised the details of the amalgamation.<sup>79</sup> Canning had displayed his accustomed political naivety in thinking those most apprehensive of amalgamation could supervise its implementation.

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77. Rose to Lugard, 7 April 1860, Rose papers, BL, Add.Ms 42813

78. Rose to Cambridge, 22 May 1861, Rose papers, Public letter book, BL, Add. Ms 42813

79. Rose to Cambridge, Calcutta, 8 March; 23 March 1861; nd, [21-23 April?], Rose papers, Public letter book, BL, Add. Ms 42813

Opposition to the Indian army's subordination as part of an imperial force came from within the Councils established to advise the Viceroy and the Secretary of State. In this James Outram acted as what an outraged Mansfield called 'a class leader'.<sup>80</sup> Outram, a Bombay officer widely hailed by Indian army officers as 'the Bayard of India', became one of Napier's principal antagonists following Outram's attempts to claim the conquest of Scinde as his own work. (His

**Lieutenant General Sir James Outram (1803-63), Military member of Viceroy's Council, 1858-60. Comm. Bombay native infantry, 1819; held various political appointments, 1831-56; Major General, 1854; Resident in Oudh, 1854-55; KCB, 1856; commanded in Persia war, 1856-57; Chief Commissioner of Oudh, 1857; besieged in Residency at Lucknow, 1857**

acceptance of the nick-name carried a wry sting: it had been bestowed by Napier before their quarrel.<sup>81</sup>) Outram commanded the British force in the Persian war of 1856-57 and won further renown in the rebellion for his chivalric (but militarily dubious) refusal to supersede Havelock in the first relief of Lucknow. In the murky factional politics of the Indian army, Outram was a Company man: his ascent for one pamphleteer 'an admirable illustration of what awaits those who do the Company's bidding'.<sup>82</sup> Though still a regimental lieutenant colonel, he sat on the Viceroy's Council as Military member from May 1858 to July 1860. Throughout his term Outram pleaded against the absorption of the local force. His role in opposing the Europeans' absorption was, however, rather less than chivalric: Wood claimed that his minute was actually written by an unknown person in Britain and that his signature merely bolstered its authority.<sup>83</sup> Though further exciting apprehension among Indian officers, Outram's opposition failed to halt the inexorable progress of amalgamation.

The retirement of Outram in July 1860 and of Birch in December 1861 signified the rout of the Bengal secretariat. Birch's replacement as military secretary by Henry Norman, loyal to the champions of amalgamation, persuaded Cambridge that 'now everything will go on smoothly in Army matters'.<sup>84</sup> It was a rash prediction, but with Norman advising Rose as he had

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80. Mansfield to Cambridge, 13 May 1860, Wood papers, IOLR, Vol. 85

81. Lionel Trotter, The Bayard of India. London, 1925, p. 81

82. John Bruce Norton, The rebellion in India: how to prevent another. London, 1857, p. 120. As ambitious as any subaltern, Outram repeatedly and unsuccessfully pressed his claim to the VC; Maclagan, 'Clemency' Canning, p. 295

83. Wood to Canning, 30 March 1860, Wood papers, IOLR, Letter book 2

84. Cambridge to Wood, 7 February 1862, Wood papers, IOLR, Vol. 62. The details of the transition are not fully apparent from the personal papers forming the basis of this study. Norman's acting as 'Assistant Military Secretary' for over a year, presumably with the intention of reporting on or curtailing Birch's autonomy, hints at the politicking which accompanied the amalgamation.

Cambridge, no unforeseen threat to the successful integration of the two armies could come from the ranks of its staff officers. Norman's disinterested rigour is apparent in his persistently pressing for the incorporation of the two adjutant general's departments, (one for former Company's troops and one for Queen's troops) still operating after the formal amalgamation. One of the old system's principal failings had been the divisive separation of the two armies. Amalgamating their policy and disciplinary staffs could more than anything else cement their union. An administrative rationalist, Norman urged that the two be merged even while anticipating that he would thereby be 'very injuriously affected'.<sup>85</sup>

Attempts to reduce its promotion lists produced further tension between Rose and the Bengal army's regimental officers. The lists were full of old officers collecting pay without necessarily performing duty, and junior officers still idle for want of regiments. Secure in the 'guarantee' enshrined in the 1858 Government of India Act officers could not be coerced, but had to be induced to retire. The 'retirement scheme', as it became known, apparently proposed by Wood, essentially sought to reduce the Bengal army's European officers by a fifth, about thousand men, preferably those older and less active. Upon learning of the plan in April 1861 Rose optimistically expected that a thousand older officers could be persuaded to accept retirement, tempted by annual pensions of £956 irrespective of merit or service.<sup>86</sup> Anglo-Indian opinion remained sceptical of the need for and consequences of the proposal. Even Norman, an advocate of reform, thought it mischievous, believing that many able officers might be tempted by the pension while older officers would remain to qualify for colonels' allowances.<sup>87</sup> In May 1861, however, local newspapers published details of the plan, injuring its prospects by the sort of innuendo for which their editors had such a gift, and confirming Norman's pessimism. In the event only a few were persuaded to retire.

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Scrutiny of the extensive Military Proceedings preserved in London and New Delhi would presumably reveal its operation.

85. Norman to Wood, 22 June 1861, Wood papers, IOLR, Vol. 66. Indeed, he failed to be appointed head of the adjutant general's department of the unified army precisely because he lacked experience in commanding Europeans.

86. Rose to Cambridge, 4, 9 May 1861, Rose papers, Public letter book, BL, Add. Ms 42813

87. Norman to Wood, 22 June 1861, Wood papers, IOLR, Vol. 66

The Bengal secretariat's resistance and the older officers' reluctance to accept retirement did not, however, signify a universal hostility among the Bengal army's officers. Their reaction to the impending amalgamation fractured essentially along generational lines, confirming the polarisation which had become evident during and after the rebellion. Wood

**James Wilson (1805-60),** Conservative MP, 1847-59 (In first winning election in 1847 he defeated Matthew Higgins, the liberal journalist); Finance member of the Supreme Council of India, 1859-60, charged with resuscitating India's denuded treasury after the rebellion and transfer

summed up the essential divide: 'all the old officers are against change', he told the financial authority, James Wilson, 'and most of the young ones for it'.<sup>88</sup> Those accepting imperial service in 1861 necessarily mostly comprised regimental officers, ensuring that the 'new' regiments' officers displayed a more amenable attitude to the requirements of conforming to the imperial service than their less adaptable colleagues remaining in Indian service.

While the Bengal officers' objections to the process and conditions of amalgamation had presented Rose with incidental but annoying obstacles in achieving amalgamation, the Indian officers' most determined stand occurred over the creation and implementation of the idea of a staff corps. The creation of a staff corps had long been foreseen by those concerned to rectify the Bengal army's manifold deficiencies.<sup>89</sup> If the difficulties of devising a satisfactory system of officering the Indian army were manifold, the solutions offered were immensely complex. Proposals for the Bengal army's reform devised over the preceding thirty years had attempted to solve several fundamental and related problems. Promotion proceeding by seniority within regiments produced disparities between regiments, unnecessarily retarding the promotion of good officers and leading to a concern to secure a well paid appointment rather than serve with a regiment. The consequent growth of 'bonus' or retiring' funds to induce seniors to retire had imposed severe burdens on many officers. Using officers to supplement inadequate administrative services had placed a premium on extra-regimental attachment and had left those unable to obtain lucrative staff situations dissatisfied with regimental service. Penury and debt had induced officers to serve for as long as possible in the hope of securing colonels' allowances and higher pensions. The officers' notorious shortcomings derived ultimately therefore from the system of promotion and remuneration under which they served. The transformation of the values permeating the force would be so much more difficult if these fundamental conditions remained unaltered.

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88. Wood to James Wilson, 27 February 1860, Wood papers, Letter book 2, IOLR

89. According to Philip Melvill, a staff corps had been mooted in Hastings' time (the 1780s) and continually revived unsuccessfully: PP 1857(II), Vol. XVIII, p. 28, q. 575

The various schemes proposed came, Wood concluded, to 'much the same thing', though the plan adopted owed much to Norman's grasp of detail in framing it.<sup>90</sup> The essence of the staff corps was that officers would be promoted regimentally for the purpose of determining their seniority within their units, but would be able to be available for service with civil and military departments. Framing regulations achieving such a comparatively simple aim without infringing the guarantee in which Indian officers placed such faith proved to be a formidable task, which would burden Wood for his remaining six years in office, and oppress Norman for the best part of the next decade. The resultant scheme, with all the qualifications, amendments and exceptions imposed after prolonged opposition by Indian officers and their allies, was one of the most elaborate regulatory mechanisms of an age notorious for its willingness to produce and digest quantities of close type. A detailed consideration of the scheme's origins and evolution is impracticable.<sup>91</sup> The staff corps essentially provided the security to which Indian officers had always aspired. Its foremost attraction to younger officers was that provided (as Norman explained in one of the many minutes patiently submitted to dazed superiors and confused colleagues) 'Certain staff employment and certain rise without the liability to lose their prospects from any cause save inefficiency or misconduct'.<sup>92</sup> With promotion guaranteed and pay generous (infantry subalterns commenced on annual salaries of £390, receiving £725 as captains in twelve years) opposition might seem to be difficult to understand. Irrespective whether they elected to join it, however, the staff corps affected every officer of the Indian army. In the decade following the amalgamation it would cause rancour and controversy directly countering its intention. Indeed, it is arguable that opposition to the staff corps resulted ultimately in a dogged and Pyrrhic victory for refractory officers, the paradoxical triumph of the old Bengal army's spirit of self interest. Its significance, however, has been inadequately appreciated, in that it reveals abiding tensions between the Indian army's officers and the continuing ambivalence of their relationship with their counterparts in the Queen's army and their political superiors, a 'darkness beneath the lamp' which the succeeding decade would expose.

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90. Wood to Canning, 18 May 1860, Wood papers, Letter book 3, IOLR

91. Shibly, The reorganisation of the Indian armies, describes in detail the staff corps scheme and the administrative changes it underwent.

92. H.W. Norman, 'Memorandum on the question of the alleged grievances of the officers of the Indian army', 19 March 1866, Military miscellaneous minutes by Maj Gen H.W. Norman, 1863-76', NAI. The staff corps rules and explanatory correspondence appear in PP 1865, Vol. XXXVIII, pp. 493-542.

Throughout his term as Commander-in-Chief in India Sir Hugh Rose contended with lingering expressions of the culture he sought to tame. Both officers and men continued, though with decreasing vigour, to embody the community to which they belonged. In the four years between the amalgamation and his departure in March 1865, Rose continued and largely prevailed in his struggle to reform the new European regiments in the image of their erstwhile rival. The Indian army in the decade following its amalgamation, T.J. Hovell-Thurlow declared, represented a 'melancholy patchwork'.<sup>1</sup> Aspects of the old lingered alongside the new imperial army created in the aftermath of rebellion and the turmoil which followed.

Amalgamation at first appeared to rest on insecure foundations. Barely a year after the amalgamation, in May 1862, Rose learned that again at Meerut gunners formerly of the Bengal and now of the Royal Artillery had expressed

**Gunner Kinsella's identity presents a problem; even his name is unknown. It is possible that he was one of several men with similar names serving in both the artillery and infantry.**

'objectionable feelings'. Recruits (clearly, men of at least two years service) discussed the validity of their declarations to serve in the royal service, while a Gunner Kinsella, provided yet another challenge to the unaccustomed authority of the Queen's army.<sup>2</sup> Kinsella had been ordered, with twelve other men, to perform an hour's drill as a punishment for not having folded up bedding. Aggrieved, evidently claiming that the order contravened the oath he took to serve the Company, in accordance with the common practice of the old force, Kinsella asked to see his officer. Though the details are obscure, the authorities appear to have seen in his refusal to obey a challenge to the authority of the new regime. He was tried and convicted of using 'mutinous and seditious language calculated to ... excite dissatisfaction', and discharged with ignominy.<sup>3</sup>

Again, the authorities acted in apprehension of parallels with earlier unrest. Keith Young, the Judge Advocate General, mindful of events at Meerut in 1859, foresaw 'dangerous

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1. T.J. Hovell-Thurlow, The Company and the Crown, Edinburgh, 1867, p. 23

2. Kinsella, supposedly a man of 3½ years' service, cannot be located in the Bengal Artillery's muster roll for 1859, and, in the absence of complementary documentation, must remain unidentified.

3. Puzzlingly, Kinsella's case does not appear in the General Orders for 1862. It may have been promulgated by a special general order (as occurred at Dinapore in 1860). Details of it are accessible from the Military Proceedings in the NAI and Rose's correspondence.

consequences' requiring 'the immediate display of authority'.<sup>4</sup> Anticipating further unrest, the authorities at Meerut intercepted the post. Kinsella's mates were also uneasy: one was overheard predicting that 'the end of this will be that some of these men will be shot'. Rose, sanctioning Kinsella's 'immediate punishment and degradation', believed that it had forestalled 'any further display', directing that a 'strong warning' be read to each battery at the station.<sup>5</sup> In justifying his action Rose referred to the protest of 1859 and the 5th infantry's outbreak in 1860. Significantly, in view of one of the soldiers' main objections in 1859, that the transfer violated their oath of enlistment, in censuring Kinsella Rose commented that 'In all Armies, as well as in all Societies, the repudiation of an oath ... is held to be disgraceful'.<sup>6</sup>

Despite this prompt and decisive action, however, within three months reports from Meerut revealed that 'a vestige of unfavourable feeling' had again become evident within the old Bengal Artillery units at Meerut.<sup>7</sup> Rose's severity derived not only from fear that the unrest of 1859 might recur, but from the simultaneous manifestation of similar sentiments by officers at the station. He learned that Henry Tombs, the horse gunners' idol of the rebellion and, like Brind, commander of a horse artillery brigade, had also expressed dissatisfaction with amalgamation. Tombs, evidently in a private letter which reached Edwin Johnson, adjutant general of the artillery, had shown that 'he, and other officers of his corps, do not entertain a very proper feeling with respect to their position in the new Royal Artillery'.<sup>8</sup> Tombs claimed that the officers' declarations for general service had been rendered invalid by obscure legal difficulties. Moreover, he stated ominously, and even threateningly, that 'any feeling amongst the officers is sure to find its way amongst the men'. A sergeant major had already reported that a man of Tombs's troop shared his sentiments, expressed in 'a very earnest communication' to his

**Rev. Milward Burge, Assistant  
Chaplain, Bengal Ecclesiastical  
Establishment, appt. 1852**

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4. Officiating Adjutant General to SGIMD, Simla, nd August 1862, Military Proceedings, September 1862, No. 711, NAI

5. Rose to Cambridge, 15 May; 13 June 1862, Rose papers, Public letter book, BL, Add. Ms 42814

6. Officiating Adjutant General to SGIMD, Simla, nd August 1862, Military Proceedings, September 1862, No. 711, NAI.

7. Rose to Cambridge, 1 August 1862, Rose papers, Public letter book, BL, Add. Ms 42814

8. Rose to Elgin, 3 May 1862, Rose papers, Public letter book, BL, Add. Ms 42814

officer.<sup>9</sup> The connection between officers and men's feelings became clear when, as Gunner Kinsella's case came to trial, Rev. Milward Burge, a chaplain at Meerut, pointedly preached a sermon on the text, 'Fear God and honour the King'. Burge directed 'an energetic comment and warning as to what he supposed was going on in the new Royal Artillery' to a congregation including Queen's gunners and hussars. His sermon provoked an official complaint not only from Tombs and his officers, but also from Brigadier Swinley, hitherto Rose's confidant. Burge in return cut Tombs. The station commander averted further acrimony by persuading both over dinner to bury the hatchet, 'the best and thoroughly British way of settling a difference'.<sup>10</sup> Though Rose had declared that Tombs's distinguished record would not protect him from retribution, he evidently realised that to pillory one of the force's heroes would inflame rather than placate its men, and, acting 'with the utmost caution', merely reprimanded him.<sup>11</sup> Rose recognised that he confronted not merely vexatious individuals, but the products of long-standing understandings. Tombs, he explained, though 'animated by the best feelings of loyalty', acted in accordance with the conceptions of discipline permeating the old force. These, he explained,

led officers, when their personal feelings, or interest, were concerned, to express, unrestrained by feelings of high discipline; or to write in newspapers, opinions ... prejudicial to military subordination ...<sup>12</sup>

Tombs's narrow escape did not curb his predilection to express himself intemperately: in 1865 he offended Sir John Lawrence by offering gratuitous criticism. 'His political views are crude', Mansfield explained in mitigation.<sup>13</sup>

Rose determined to undermine what he called 'the traditions of Meerut' by diminishing the station's importance as a potential focus of discontent.<sup>14</sup> He decided to relocate its recruit

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9. Officiating Adjutant General to SGIMD, Simla, nd August 1862, Military Proceedings, September 1862, No. 711, NAI

10. Rose to Elgin, 7 June 1862, Rose papers, Public letter book, BL, Add. Ms 42814

11. Rose to Cambridge, 15 May 1862, Rose papers, Public letter book, BL, Add. Ms 42814

12. Rose to Cambridge, 3 June 1862, Rose papers, Public letter book, BL, Add. Ms 42814

13. Mansfield to Lawrence, 11 May 1865, Lawrence papers, 'Correspondence with Commander-in-Chief, 1864-67', IOLR, Mss.Eur.F.90/59

14. Rose to Cambridge, 15 May 1862, Public letter book, Rose papers, BL, Add. Ms 42814

depot and school, severing the connection between recruits and the old soldiers of the horse artillery permanently located there. He eroded further the Indian artillery's autonomy by recommending that the Select Board of Artillery (which, sitting at Meerut determined technical and internal matters) be abolished, replaced by the addition of an Indian representative on the Select Committee of Ordnance convened at Woolwich in Britain.<sup>15</sup>

As he had foreshadowed on assuming command, Rose's reconstruction of the Bengal army would be guided by both praise as well as punishment. In attempting to create regiments free of the 'laxity' hitherto characterising them, he recognized that the selection and encouragement of its officers would be critical. As the officers' decisions became clear in mid-1861, Rose examined the regimental officers who had elected to leave the local force and chance their future with the Queen's army. He advised Cambridge how it would be 'good for the service, politic and conciliatory' to

**Frederick Octavius Salusbury (1825-1905), 1st European Bengal Fusiliers/101st Fusiliers, 1843-71. Comm. 1843; served first Punjab war, second Burmah war, rebellion, 1857-58; Umbeylah campaign, 1863; ret. as hon Major General, 1871**

**Bt Colonel Phillip Harris (1805-69) 101st Royal Bengal Fusiliers. comm. 1824; served in regiments of Bengal native infantry, 1834-57; served Gwallor war; Major General, 1865**

promote such men. Rose suggested that their promotion would not only enhance the European corps' efficiency, but would 'inaugurate your R[oyal] H[ighness's] command ... most favourably'. It would 'reward [those] ... who from a good and Mil[itary] spirit have made [a] sacrifice in a pecuniary point of view by volunteering'. There were, he decided 'some first rate officers' among the new corps, singling out Frederick Salusbury (now of the 101st Fusiliers) as 'excellent'.<sup>16</sup> Finding and testing new officers with whom to entrust the former Company's regiments provoked much tension. In selecting Salusbury Rose felt compelled to supersede Major Alexander Hume, on whom his colonel, Philip Harris, had reported unfavourably. This in itself caused 'embarrassment' because the colonel had derived his adverse impression from Hume's junior officers: both Harris and Hume were relieved of their positions.<sup>17</sup>

Despite his severity over the 5th infantry's outbreak at Dinapore, Rose displayed a considerable tolerance in re-shaping the European officers' understandings of what the Queen's army considered acceptable. Late in 1862 he pondered the consequences of promoting George Swinley to the influential position of inspector of artillery (which he tactfully did not offer to a

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15. Rose to Cambridge, 3 July 1862, Rose papers, Public letter book, BL, Add. Ms 42814

16. Rose to Cambridge, 4 June 1861, Rose papers, Public letter book, BL, Add. Ms 42813

17. Rose to Cambridge, Simla, 18 April 1862; Rose to Norman, Simla, 16 May 1862, Rose papers, Public letter book, BL, Add. Ms 42814

Royal Artillery officer). Swinley's promotion, he realized, would place the outspoken James Brind in line for a more senior command. Brind had since his reprimand exhibited 'a most conciliatory manner'.<sup>18</sup> As he had when determining whether the European force should remain, Rose risked restoring Brind to favour. He in turn became inspector general of artillery in 1865 (a critical post in integrating the two artillery forces) and achieved command of the Sirhind Division before retiring in 1877. Rose's judicious blend of praise and censure increasingly gained the confidence of Indian officers. At the same time his criteria did not include sentiment. '[O]ld and hopelessly inefficient officers ... retard instead of promoting amalgamation', he explained to Cambridge, and were eased out of responsible commands.<sup>19</sup> Rose's policy persuaded younger officers to mute, if not abandon their criticism of his regime. Charles Macgregor, though believing amalgamation to be 'a deliberately iniquitous scheme', elected to join the staff corps in order to be assured of promotion. In considering how to promote a plan to improve cavalry training (and thereby advance his own prospects) he decided not to take the Bengal officer's customary course. '[W]riting in the papers does no good', he mused in July 1861, 'I should only be snubbed if I signed my own name'.<sup>20</sup>

In the aftermath of the rebellion, the soldiers' protests and the force's incorporation into the British army proper the military effectiveness of the European corps suffered. In mid-1861 the results of the presidency musketry competition revealed that regiments formerly of the Company had lost

**Bt Colonel Edward Darvall (1806-85), 3rd Bengal European Regiment. Son of Queen's dragoons officer; comm. Bengal native infantry, 1823; served first Burmah war, rebellion; Major General, 1865; General, 1877**

the military skill which even their critics had often conceded. Queen's regiments occupied the first eighteen places. The 6th infantry, slated for disbandment following the amalgamation order, had nevertheless vindicated its defenders by coming 19th. The three older regiments followed, all below the average score, with efficiency conforming to seniority. At 39th and 42nd respectively, the 104th and 107th were the two lowest-scoring infantry regiments, beaten even by cavalry units which regarded musketry as irrelevant.<sup>21</sup> The results confirmed the findings of the half-yearly inspections which reached Rose. The 107th in 1862 received a 'most unfavourable' report, with its commanding officer (Edward Darvall, who had replaced William

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18. Rose to Cambridge, 2 October 1862, Rose papers, Public letter book, BL, Add. Ms 42814

19. Rose to Cambridge, Simla, 31 May 1863, Rose papers, Public letter book, BL, Add. Ms 42814

20. Macgregor, Life and opinions, Vol. I, p. 170-71

21. General Order, 16 November 1861, General Orders HM Forces

Riddell) found to be unfit for command.<sup>22</sup> Though the reports themselves appear not to have survived in British or Indian archives, precluding detailed comparisons of the 'old' and 'new' Queen's regiments, the fragmentary extant references suggest that as military institutions the new European corps had suffered severely from the turmoil of the preceding years. Rose appreciated that units could not recover effectiveness rapidly, though the rebuilding of the new regiments appeared to take much longer than anticipated. In May 1864, five years after its formation, Rose inspected the 21st Hussars. 'I cannot say that I was pleased', he wrote, with admirable understatement. 'They did nothing, scarcely, well, and were ignorant altogether of some essentials of instruction'. Its commanding officer declined to allow the regiment to charge 'as the men would be "all over the country"'. Though 'a gentlemanlike, mannered man', who meant well, he lacked judgement and, like a succession of old officers formerly of the Company, he was replaced. 'I think that the best thing', Rose concluded resignedly, 'would be that the Regt should begin de novo'.<sup>23</sup>

Corroboration of the effects of the turmoil of amalgamation on the Europeans' military efficiency can be found in their first test in battle following the amalgamation - during the Umbeylah campaign of 1863. Late in 1863 the Government of India determined on destroying a colony of 'Hindustani fanatics' sheltering in the Chamla valley, north of Peshawur.

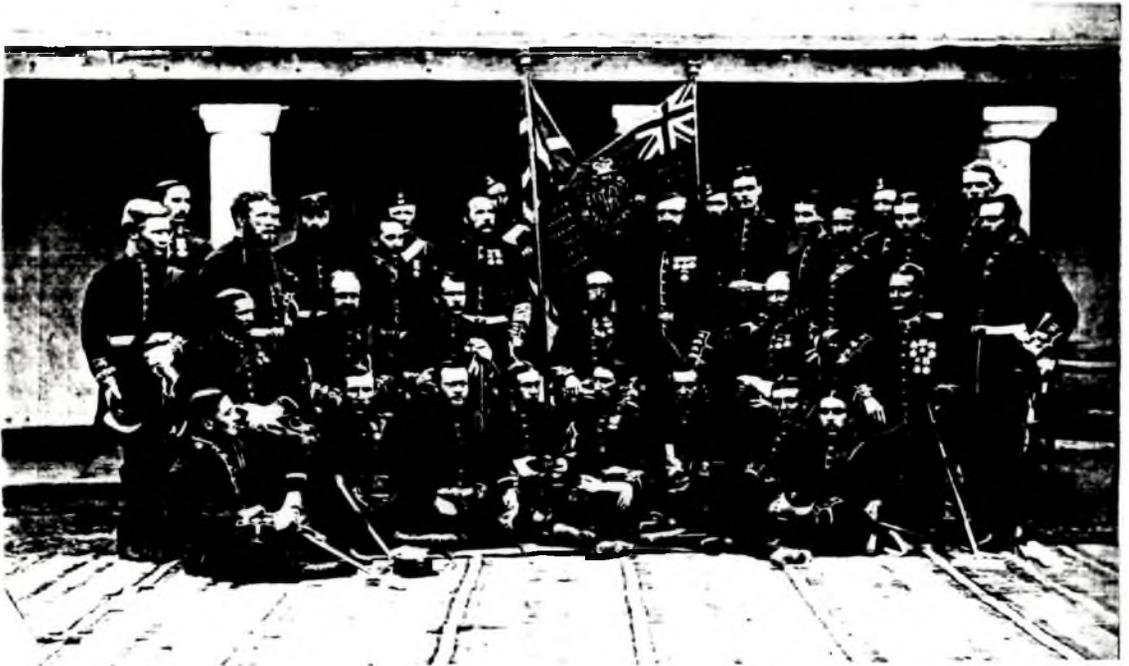
**Neville Chamberlain (1820-1902).  
Comm. 1837; served first Afghan  
war, Gwalior war, second Punjab  
war and on the NW frontier, in  
which he was wounded repeatedly;  
AG at Delhi, 1857; Commander-in-  
Chief, Madras, 1876-81; Field  
Marshal 1900**

Salisbury's 101st, part of the Rawal Pindee garrison, joined a column under Sir Neville Chamberlain which in October 1863 marched toward the Buner country. Chamberlain, a former Company officer, an experienced commander though at 43 relatively young, had performed well in the rebellion. The campaign, undertaken with groundless optimism, was mishandled at unreasonable cost, almost a fifth of the British force becoming casualties. Confronted by up to 25,000 Bunerwals, Chamberlain's 5,000 British and Indian troops became trapped for two months in the rugged Umbeylah pass. The experience may have inspired the game of snooker, which Chamberlain later devised. Individual members of the 101st performed well: George Fosbery, who had once vegetated at Allahabad, gained a Victoria Cross serving with the 101st. Though hardly disgraced, the regiment did not live up to the reputation it had gained at Bhurtapore, Ferozeshah and Delhi. Exposed at the notorious Crag

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22. Rose to Cambridge, Simla, 16 July 1862, Rose papers, Public letter book, BL, Add. Ms 42814

23. Rose to Lord George Paget, Simla, 9 May 1864, Rose papers, Public letter book, BL, Add. Ms 42816



**Illustrations 17 a & b**

The 101st Royal Bengal Fusiliers, Peshawur, 1864. The officers (top) and the sergeants and staff sergeants grouped about the regiment's colours testify to the intense institutional pride which the fusiliers retained following their incorporation into the Queen's army. Colonel Frederick Salusbury sits beneath the regimental colour (NAM neg. nos 75596 & 24179).



picket, a detachment 'bolted ... in a scandalous manner'.<sup>24</sup> The loss of the Crag picket reflected the character of the old European force. Having stood a Bunerwal attack for most of the day 'an officer ... and a whole company of his men were seized with a remarkable desire to leave the fight', while other officers, encouraging their men to remain, lost heavily.<sup>25</sup> The position, overlooking the British camp and critical to its safety, had to be retaken by the Queen's 71st, Goorkhas and Punjabees. That the detachment had lost eleven killed and 42 wounded - half its strength - and that the 101st later took another commanding position in a wild bayonet charge did little to expunge what was seen by all as a disgrace. Irrespective of the campaign's futility, the fusiliers' fate must have saddened those who had seen its men at Delhi.

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The amalgamation affected the Europeans differently and in ways too subtle to detect without the detailed personal sources which allow the reconstruction of the force's culture before the rebellion and during the soldiers' protest. The European regiments' discharge certificates suggest something of their composition, and of soldiering's effects on individuals. Discharge papers give an impression of regiments which conformed neither to the European force as it had been nor of the Queen's army as it was often portrayed. The two groups mixed in the barrack-rooms, each learning from and responding to the other, but creating regimental cultures in which aspects of the old for a time persisted.<sup>26</sup> Despite Rose's concern to eradicate what he regarded as inappropriate customs, they clearly persisted. He complained to Cambridge that the non-commissioned officers of one artillery brigade 'still retained the old & bad custom of hiring a writer for the purpose of writing their reports, & signing their names'. Another custom still apparent was that of wearing plain clothes 'in and out of Barracks'.<sup>27</sup> Such nonchalant attitudes toward military dignity were gradually purged.

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24. A.G. Hartshorne, *Diary of the Sittana campaign*, Newcastle, 1864, np, quoted in Jonathon Chittleborough, *Sir Robert's picnic: the Ambela [Umbeylah] campaign of 1863*, BA Hons, University of Adelaide, 1972, p. 69

25. Annand, *Cavalry surgeon*, pp. 295-6

26. The soldiers' responses to the changes they experienced in the 1860s are practically irrecoverable. The reconstruction of the Bengal Europeans as regiments of the British army is hampered by both the absence of records and the reluctance of regimental historians to deal fully with periods of peace or to reveal their subjects' blemishes. Paucity of evidence compels an unavoidable reliance on a limited range of sources, and particularly Rose's correspondence.

27. Rose to Cambridge, Simla, 20 May 1863, Rose papers, Private letter book, BL, Add. Ms 42814. Engaging a writer does not necessarily imply illiteracy among sergeants, though given

The Europeans adjusted slowly to their incorporation into a larger and more formal army, perhaps never as individuals entirely accepting their subordination to the Queen's army. Distinctions of terminology and dress, for example, assumed a symbolic importance after amalgamation. In 1864 a testimonial from men who had seemingly welcomed the transfer hinted at their ambivalence. Addressed to 'Sergeant Major Mark Crummie E Battery 2nd Brigade R[oyal] H[orse] A[rtilillery]' (the old 5/1st's designation since 1861), it nevertheless continued, 'in memory of the recollections of the old Troop receive our best wishes'.<sup>28</sup> In 1869, an inspecting officer ordered the 103rd (formerly the 1st Bombay Europeans) to remove the red cap band which it had worn as a regimental distinction from before amalgamation. The order caused 'intense indignation', even though relatively few men would have served the Company. That the inspecting officer was Henry Tombs suggests, however, that even he could relinquish attachment to the force's traditional prerogatives.<sup>29</sup> Rose's policy of rewarding good and chiding bad may have won over many sceptical soldiers. Nathaniel Bancroft, for example, regained the staff sergeant's stripes of which Tombs had deprived him after Rose interceded with Wood to secure his re-instatement.<sup>30</sup>

Individual and institutional memories within the force resisted the impositions of the larger army. Arthur Owen recalled that the Audit Branch's refusal, presumably in the 1860s, of pension claims by former Company's troops

**Private Richard Goggan, No. 219,  
European Invalid Battalion.  
Labourer, of Macroom, Cork; enl.  
February 1849; served 2nd  
Fusiliers, 1849-58; disch. 1869**

caused a 'hubbub', a contest illuminated by the case of an individual petitioner.<sup>31</sup> Richard Goggan, formerly of the 2nd Fusiliers, had been invalided to Chunar after being wounded in the thigh at Delhi. Deemed unfit for further service, Goggan in 1868 contested a medical board's recommendation to award a pension of 9d a day, submitting a 'humble petition' directly to the Commander-in-Chief, a right few Queen's soldiers would assume. After describing his service he argued that 'at the amalgamation of the Hon'ble Company with the Crown' he had been

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Langford's allegations of corruption and favouritism in selecting men for promotion it might. Rather, it suggests a casual approach to regimental responsibility increasingly foreign in the Queen's service.

28. Crummie papers, ERO (my emphasis).

29. N.H.C. Dickinson, 'Notes on infantry uniforms', Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research, Vol. XX, No. 77, Spring 1941, p. 54

30. Bancroft's 'record of service', reproduced on the endpapers of From recruit to staff sergeant, includes the note that in 1861 Wood agreed to Rose's proposal to restore Bancroft to 'the privileges with regard to pension' which he had forfeited following his clash with Tombs in 1857.

31. Owen, Recollections of a veteran, p. 86

'informed [that] the Rules regarding Pension ... should remain sacred'. Goggan claimed that under the Company he should have received a daily pension of 1/-10d, and urged that his grievance be rectified. Goggan lost his appeal, partly because he overstated his claim, but his case suggests that within the barrack-rooms of the units of the former Company's army its men maintained a lively awareness of both their rights and the means by which they had traditionally sought to enforce them.<sup>32</sup>

The bases of the old European force's differences rapidly eroded after the amalgamation. No longer a route to 'fortune and preferment', the European corps surely attracted fewer men seeking advancement. Men of the 'middling class', with all the aspiration and tension their presence entailed, became a smaller and less significant element in their barrack-rooms, which gradually became indistinguishable in composition from those of other line regiments'. Rose particularly sought to end the instability resulting from its members' departure for the Town Major's list. Referring in 1863 to Robert Napier's advocacy of an unattached list for soldiers, an extension of the old Town Major's list, Rose countered that the device

must tend to bring about the same unfavourable results which were ... the cause of the shortcomings and disasters of the late Company's Army'.<sup>33</sup>

Extra-regimental employment, one of the great inducements for the old European force, diminished markedly soon after amalgamation. In 1856 376 men, all of whom had come from the Company's 16,000 Europeans, occupied positions as warrant officers in India. By 1861 that figure had grown to 620, but thereafter candidates for unattached positions came from the entire British force, numbering 75,000.<sup>34</sup> The impact upon any single unit of the few men detached annually was therefore minimal. Nevertheless the argument continued. In 1873 Robert Napier (by then Commander-in-Chief in India) revived the issue. Responding to the claims of the Inspector General of Recruiting that withdrawing men from regiments for staff employment harmed morale, Napier noted that in the five years 1868-72 only 748 men had been detached. Drawing on his knowledge of the old European force, he argued that the

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32. Discharge papers of Pte Richard Goggan, Invalid Depot, Miscellaneous papers of soldiers discharged, IOLR, L/MIL/10/323, Part 2, folios 214-19

33. Rose to Cambridge, 28 June 1863, Rose papers, Public letter book, BL, Add. Ms 42814

34. PP 1863, Vol. XIX, Table 2, Military force employed in India in 1856 and 1861, p. 173

practice would act as an incentive.<sup>35</sup> Irrespective of the arguments, policies introduced after 1861 vindicated the fears expressed by some in 1859 that the Europeans' absorption by the Queen's army would diminish their prospects. Indeed, by 1885 'natives' widely filled positions once occupied by men of the former Company.<sup>36</sup> Men of the 'middling class' found little to tempt them to enlist in the new British army serving in India, a slight change numerically, perhaps, but one which surely helped to shape the army which Kipling celebrated. His was an army which largely focussed on regimental rather than individual advancement. The issue demonstrates the imperial authorities' concern to avoid what they saw as the old force's defects.

Those defects had been apparent in the disproportionate numbers of Europeans tried by court martial. Disciplinary measures, though crude, suggest inferences. The proportions of general courts martial originating with units transferred from the Company explain the authorities' concerns over the new regiments' subordination.<sup>37</sup> In 1862 three of the Bengal army's thirteen cases came from the new corps, while the following year six of fifteen men belonged to artillery units formerly of the Bengal Artillery. In 1865 the regiments of the old Company accounted for almost as many cases as the rest of the Queen's regiments combined (eleven to twelve respectively). The number, proportion and nature of cases tried by general courts martial do not, however, indicate the relative extent of delinquency, since too few offences were tried by general court martial to allow a reliable extrapolation. Rather, they suggest changes in feelings and relationships within the force.

The General orders contain summaries of charges and findings, occasionally accompanied by remarks by the Commander-in-Chief commenting on offences or sentences. They record not only the types of offences accorded the most serious trials, but also the impressions which the authorities wished to convey to the soldiers who would hear of them on parade. In sending cases for trial by superior tribunals, officers commanding appear often to have sought to suppress particular aspects of the old force's culture, pointing out morals in hopes of changing attitudes among the European force. In February 1862, for example, an old soldier formerly of the 2nd cavalry, stood trial at Fort William for 'using threatening and abusive language' toward an officer. 'That \*\*\*\*\* there ... has called us all mutinous scoundrels, and if I got him aboard

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35. 'Effect of withdrawing men from regiments for staff employment', Abstracts of letters from India, No. 228, 23 October 1873, p. 440, India papers, No. 28642, SOAS

36. G.F. Browne, 'Should the European army in India continue ...?', Journal of the Royal United Services Institution, Vol. XXIX, No. CXXIX, 1885, p. 303

37. Bengal general orders, 1862-65, IOLR, L/MIL/17/2/311-14

ship I would do for him'. Directed by another officer to carry bedding to a boat, he retorted that 'I can't do it, I'll pay a cooly', and on being ordered to said 'You found coolies for us in the mutiny, and I am damned if you shant do it now.' The man was imprisoned for two years with hard labour for his outburst: a warning to others to consider carefully before standing on the customs formerly prevailing in the European force.<sup>38</sup> In October 1863 a bombardier was tried at Meean Meer for having struck a Queen's officer who unexpectedly appeared in his barrack-room, saying, 'What is an officer doing here, this is no place for an officer'. Though recommended to mercy on account of his long service and good character, Rose approved and confirmed his imprisonment for two years with hard labour.<sup>39</sup> Hints of 'combination' were repressed decisively: in January 1864 three men of the 20th Hussars, one an old soldier, were sentenced to imprisonment at Rawul Pindee for having 'in combination, used violence against their superior officer', a lance sergeant. Frederick Salusbury presided over the court: Rose 'approved and confirmed' the sentence.<sup>40</sup>

Discharged men enlisting in the Queen's army realised that formerly acceptable ideas and practices were now forbidden. The evidence is slight, but according to its surgeon, former Company's soldiers enlisting in the 10th Foot early in 1860 'attempted to disseminate their particular doctrines'. Their new comrades conveyed to such men at barrack-room court martials their rejection of notions acceptable and usual in the Company's force.<sup>41</sup> Even more speculative evidence hints at the impression which former regiments of the Company aroused among soldiers of the Queen's army. Kipling's 'barrack-room ballad', 'Belts', published in 1890, records a street fight between men of 'an Irish regiment and English cavalee'.<sup>42</sup> The narrator, an Irishman, recalls how 'They called us "Delhi Rebels," 'an we answered "Threes

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38. Bengal general orders, 1862, p. 109, Proceedings of a GCM, 7 February 1862, IOLR, L/MIL/17/2/311

39. Proceedings of a GCM, 2 October 1863, Bengal general orders, 1863, p. 493E, IOLR, L/MIL/17/2/312

40. Proceedings of a GCM, 18 March 1864, Bengal general orders, 1864, p. 149, IOLR, L/MIL/17/2/313

41. Gordon, Recollections of thirty-nine years in the army, pp. 155-6. The number of former Europeans enlisting in line regiments, and how they were regarded, is apparent from E.A.H. Webb's History of the 12th The Suffolk Regiment 1685-1913, London, 1914, which quotes the memoirs of an officer who as a subaltern in 1859 noted the arrival of 'not a few' former Europeans, 'fine men, but the enervating Indian climate had left its mark on a good many of them': p. 275.

42. Charles Carrington, (ed.), The complete barrack-room ballads of Rudyard Kipling, London, 1973, p. 36

about!'", before the men attacked with belt buckles, the traditional weapon of the barrack-room. The cavalry regiment is easily identified as the 14th Light Dragoons, which at the battle of Chillianwallah in the second Punjab war retreated in confusion, riding through a British field hospital in its haste.<sup>43</sup> 'Delhi Rebels', however, poses a problem. The obvious possibility, that the name derived from the siege of Delhi, is impossible; in fact because no Irish regiment served at Delhi, and in logic in that 'rebels' makes no sense. However, both the 1st and 2nd Bengal Fusiliers served at Delhi, formally became Irish regiments after 1881 and had long included many Irishmen in their ranks. Moreover, the nickname 'Delhi Rebels' accords (from the perspective of 'loyal' Queen's regiments) with the Europeans' conduct in 1859. That the regiments ostensibly involved served neither together nor in Dublin merely underscores Kipling's artistic licence. He could easily have heard of the rivalry from serving or former soldiers; at school he had known a veteran who had served in the Punjab wars, and in any case 'took liberties with his substratum of fact'.<sup>44</sup> It is arguable, therefore, that at least one former European regiment was stigmatised in ways directly deriving from the 'white mutiny'.

The new corps conformed to the practice of other regiments of the Queen's army. In contrast to the Company, recruits embarked in regimental drafts under the control of officers and non-commissioned officers. It is apparent too that Rose and the general officers responsible for the new corps attempted to alter their culture by the military equivalent of social engineering, the judicious use of allowing Queen's troops to volunteer into new corps. The 107th's discharge certificates suggest that the authorities sought to dilute the old European force by drafting men from Queen's regiments leaving India, with particularly large drafts arriving early in 1863. It is possible that this strategy actually perpetuated the turbulence it was intended to suppress: in 1862 the brigade major at Barrackpore complained of volunteers to European corps trespassing in the Governor General's garden.<sup>45</sup> The men's certificates reveal that men transferred from Queen's regiments were twice as likely to appear before a court martial, and almost three times

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43. See, for example, the description of Surgeon G.E. Morton of the 6th Bengal European Regiment to L. Bowring, 29 September 1859, who recalled how the cavalry 'rode over us', a rout described in despatches as 'flank movements'. 'I confess at the time', Morton wrote 'I thought we were running away. It must have been my ignorance'. Canning papers, WYA, Vol. 136, No. 1909. The light dragoons blamed officers of the Bengal Light Cavalry for the rout, claiming that they mistakenly turned the order 'three s right' into 'three s about': Hugh Cook, The Sikh wars: the British army in the Punjab, 1845-49, London, 1975, pp. 176-77.

44. Charles Carrington, Rudyard Kipling: his life and work, London, 1978, p. 148. In his autobiography he professed to knowing 'The Private Soldier in India ... fairly well': Rudyard Kipling, Something of myself, Penguin, 1977, p. 64

45. Maj R.J. Edgell to Military Secretary, 1 January 1862, Canning papers, WYA, Vol. 136

**Table 7**  
**British armies in Bengal, 1856, 1862**

The changes wrought in the Bengal army by the rebellion and its aftermath are apparent in comparing the composition of British force in Bengal on the eve of the rebellion and during Rose's tenure as Commander-in-Chief.

	1856	1862
Queen's cavalry regiments	1	7
Queen's infantry regiments	15	36
European infantry regiments	3	-
Native infantry regiments	109	61
Native cavalry regiments	34	40
European artillery batteries	45	59
Native foot artillery batteries	12	5

Several trends are apparent: the substantial increase in the imperial force, and its virtual monopoly of artillery (most, however, taken over from the Company), but also the substantial decrease in native infantry, with virtually all those retained organized on the 'irregular' system.

**Table 8**  
**Generational differences among Bengal officers**

Officers' reactions to the changes they confronted in the rebellion and its aftermath depended critically on their age and experience: on the existence of identifiable generations. The point is evident in considering when key figures discussed in this thesis were either born or commissioned. Few of those commissioned around 1825 adapted to the transformed army; few of those born around 1825 did not. Those commissioned after 1850 generally prospered.

**Commissioned c. 1825**

1823 Edward Darvall, Henry Johnson, William Riddell, George Swinley, John Welchman, Keith Young; 1824 Mortimer Slater, Henry Tombs, Henry Wilson; 1825; Frederick Maitland, St George Showers, George Balfour; 1826 Robert Napier

**Born c. 1825**

1824: Charles Blunt, Henry Tombs, Hugh Wilson; 1825: Edwin Johnson, George Malleon, Fred Salusbury, Samuel White; 1826: Colin Cookworthy, Henry Norman

**Commissioned post-1850**

Kendal Coghill, George Cracklow, James Dunbar, George Fosbery, Montague Hall, James Hills, Charles Macgregor, Fred Roberts, Charles Robinson, Edwin Thomas, Thomas Walker

as likely to appear in the regimental defaulters' book. As always, men could be persuaded to volunteer, and colonels evidently attempted to send undesirable men to regiments which they already believed to be poorly disciplined. The new regiments therefore imported as well as produced delinquents, further souring their already precarious reputations.<sup>46</sup>

The new regiments' characters altered variably, however. Over the three years 1862-64 the net gains or losses of recruits, re-enlistments and deaths in the artillery, infantry and cavalry reveal the differences between regiments and suggest their importance in the eyes of the authorities. Mortality naturally and steadily drained the regiments of old soldiers - 605 over the three years, a rate much lower than before the rebellion. (Though the diminishing mortality was unmistakable, protagonists in the debate over Indian sanitary reform characteristically differed over the figures.<sup>47</sup>) Only 190 time-expired men re-enlisted, but most (134) in the infantry. At the same time over 2500 recruits arrived, suggesting that the older men were rapidly diluted by young men who had known nothing of the old force. In fact 90% of recruits joined the five artillery brigades, only two men arriving in the 101st and no more than 141 in the 104th. Since the old Bengal artillery received about seventy times more recruits than re-enlistments (compared to about sixteen times for 'old' Royal Artillery units in India) it seems that the authorities deliberately attempted to replenish the old Bengal Artillery to alter the balance of power within its barrack-rooms. The authorities may have deliberately sought to weaken a barrack-room culture which had once exerted such power.<sup>48</sup>

Clearly Rose did not wholly succeed in melding units formerly of the Company's force to his understanding of subordination during his term of command. Over the decade, however, a transformation occurred. Again, a disciplinary measure hints at the transformation which the force experienced. Considering in detail the statistics for cases tried by district courts martial

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46. Discharge papers, 107th Foot, All-You, 1855-72, PRO, WO 97/1687

47. The Indian Sanitary Commission gave annual mortality in 1863 as 6.9%, a figure contested by Henry Norman, who reckoned it as 2.24% in his minute 'On the Report of the Commissioners appointed to enquire into the Sanitary State of the Army in India', 30 April 1864, 'Military miscellaneous minutes by Maj Gen H.W. Norman 1863-76', NAI. The relatively high figure advanced by the sanitary commission may have been a product of Florence Nightingale's manipulative strategy to overstate the urgency of reform; see F.B. Smith, Florence Nightingale: reputation and power, London, 1982, chapter 4.

48. [Returns relating to the British army in India, 1860-64], India papers, No. 118332/1, SOAS. The cavalry regiments, created during the rebellion, mostly comprised young men and neither lost many from illness nor received recruits. The infantry regiments acquired about as many re-enlistments as new recruits, changing more gradually than the other arms.

in Bengal for periods in three years, 1862, 1866 and 1870, it is apparent that the new regiments' disciplinary peculiarity diminished. In 1862 'old' regiments each sent an average of two cases of insubordination to district courts martial. The new regiments recorded an average of 4.8. All five courts martial in the cavalry in Bengal that year came from the three new hussar regiments, with none from the five old units. In 1866 the same relationship obtained, with new regiments sending proportionately more cases to trial. In 1870, however, the average number of cases from Queen's regiments exceeded those from the new regiments.<sup>49</sup>

By then, however, as Sir Charles Wood had anticipated in negotiating the amalgamation, the new regiments contained few who had enlisted for the Company or known its regime. By 1868 only 1,347 other ranks remained.<sup>50</sup> Their discharge papers reveal the steadily diminishing proportions of old soldiers, as they left, many 'unfit for service', suffering from ailments reflecting the conditions and the costs of life in an Indian barrack-room: dysentery, syphilis, rheumatism, 'monomania', or simply 'wornout' or 'broken down'. Less than a third received full pensions.<sup>51</sup>

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For the Europeans' officers, and particularly for those who had felt unable to volunteer for imperial service, the decade following the amalgamation involved more protracted and, for many, more painful adjustment. Indeed, in that they served for longer terms than the men, the Bengal army's local officers became the last exemplars of its distinctive culture. While their men had been required simply to accept a new relationship with authority, their officers were expected to attain and sustain a new and often uncongenial ethos in the performance of their duties. The former Company's regiments' incorporation into the British army occurred as that army's understandings of officers' obligations changed significantly. Stemming from the reformist movement evident from about the 1830s, officers as a whole assumed a more paternal

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49. District courts martial, Bengal, 1862, 1866, 1870, PRO, WO 86, Judge Advocate General's office, Courts Martial abroad - registers, /12, /15, /17. Because by the mid-1860s former Company's regiments were posted between presidencies, by the end of the decade seven of the nine transferred from the Company served in Bengal. Even so, they sent only ten cases to trial in total. The years were selected at random.

50. Charles Clode, The military forces of the Crown: their administration and government, 2 vols, London, 1869, Vol. I, p. 270

51. Discharge papers, 101st Foot, Jac-You, 1855-72, PRO, WO 97/1679

and professional stance.<sup>52</sup> During the late 1850s and early 1860s a number of works of instruction appeared enshrining these precepts.<sup>53</sup> The introduction in <sup>1850</sup> ~~1858~~ of competitive examinations for promotion doubtless intensified this movement, and several works of guidance appeared aimed at preparing aspiring subalterns for promotion. Though emphasising the mechanics of regimental duty rather than explicitly discussing 'leadership', they indicate how Queen's army officers joined the process of 'professionalisation' apparent in contemporary Britain.<sup>54</sup> Such a commitment was little apparent in the more casual old European force, particularly among officers who had commanded sepoys. The military press also published articles making clear the obligations of command, such as 'The art of command considered with reference to the duties of regimental officers', in the Journal of the Royal United Services Institution, to which the messes of several new regiments subscribed.<sup>55</sup> Their officers could not, however, be regarded as avid readers of professional literature: only the 101st and 103rd numbered more than one subscriber, while no members of the messes of the 102nd, 105th or 109th subscribed.<sup>56</sup>

Whether through official prescript or informal pressure by senior officers and peers, following the amalgamation the changes in the officers' tone evident from before the rebellion intensified, becoming more congruent with that of the Queen's service. Officers largely and increasingly observed the proscription of public comment stipulated in regulations.<sup>57</sup> Those becoming drunk publicly were presumably subjected to stringent criticism within messes: court martial~~s~~ for drunkenness declined markedly in the 1860s. While it is difficult to tell whether

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52. Lt Scott's diary reveals the paternalism becoming more strongly entrenched in the Queen's army. During the hot weather of 1861 Scott left Simla for his Royal Horse Artillery troop at Meean Meer, to help counter an outbreak of cholera; Scott diary, NAM

53. See, for example, Edward Alexander, Military examination for junior officers of infantry, np, 1859; T.E. Knox, Note book for all infantry officers, Calcutta, 1861; William Malton, Sinnott's military catechism, London, 1860; E.W. Sandys, The subaltern military officer and his duties, London, 1863; Anthony Walshe, A catechism and hand-book on regimental standing orders, London, 1852. From advertisements in these and other books it is apparent that many of these works were available from booksellers in Calcutta.

54. See W.J. Reader, Professional men: the rise of the professional classes in nineteenth-century England, London, 1966

55. A. Cunningham Robertson, 'The art of command considered with reference to the duties of regimental officers', Journal of the Royal United Services Institution, Vol. VIII, 1865, pp. 178-97

56. Ibid., Vol. VII, 1864, pp. xliv-xlv.

57. Codified as Regulations applicable to the European officer in India, London, [1865]

indebtedness actually declined, public scrutiny of defaulters ceased. Courts of request fell into abeyance during the rebellion, and in 1869 the Judge Advocate General proposed that they be abolished.<sup>58</sup>

The officers' adjustment to the changes to which they were subjected became particularly difficult given both the degree to which the amalgamation materially harmed them and challenged the culture of self expression within which they had lived. Many resented disclosing their standing by having to choose. Rose emphatically reassured Norman, probably aware of his influence:

No one in the Army thinks the least the worst of officers because they elected for Local Service; everybody shakes them as warmly, by the hand ... Everybody knows that they were obliged to elect for Local Service by private reasons ...<sup>59</sup>

That 'everybody' knew that the 'private reasons' were usually insufficient means aggravated rather than eased their discomfiture. The case of Captain Francis Brown illustrates the degree to which financial considerations continued to influence officers' choices even in the reconstructed European corps. Brown, a member of a Bengal Civil Service family, had joined the 1st Fusiliers just before the rebellion, in which he won a VC for rescuing a soldier of his company from rebel cavalry at Narnoul. In 1861 he volunteered for general service as a member of the 101st Fusiliers. As brother officers had anticipated, the expenses of remaining with the regiment were considerable. Brown's diary records how in 1865 he found himself 'getting deeper & deeper into debt, & unless I get a staff app[ointmen]t don't see any way out of it'. His colonel, Frederick Salusbury, telegraphed to ask whether he wished to enter the staff corps. Brown's answer, addressed to a trusted superior, was frank: 'Not unless I get good appt.'. Shortly after he joined the Teraie Conservation Survey, filling civil engineering positions until joining the unemployed supernumerary list in 1893.<sup>60</sup>

**Captain Francis David Millett Brown (1837-95), 1st European Bengal Fusiliers/101st Fusiliers. Comm. 1855; VC, 1857; elected for local service 1861**

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58. Delhi gazette, 9 June 1859; Judge Advocate General to Under-Secretary of State for War, 2 March 1869, Judge Advocate General's office letter books, PRO, WO 81/118

59. Rose to Norman, Simla, 16 May 1862, Rose papers, Public letter book, BL, Add Ms 42814

60. A. McKenzie Annand, (ed.), 'Colonel Francis David Millett Brown, VC ...', Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research, Vol. L, No. 201, Spring 1972, pp. 29-41. The location of Brown's diary, which he maintained from 1864 to 1869, is unknown.

The issue rankled for years, though only in the mid-1860s (coinciding with Rose's departure) did opposition mobilize. The locals' advocates adopted various approaches, from the sentimental to the menacing. In 1864, for instance, the Mofussilite published a story in which the narrator allegedly encountered a little boy near Kussowlie, in the hills, who refused an invitation to catch butterflies, tearfully (if inexplicably) explaining, 'My father is a Local'. 'All that night', the remorseful narrator concluded, 'the wan and pitiful face of the Local's son appeared in my dreams'.<sup>61</sup> By expressing their antagonism to the new arrangement Indian army officers acted in accordance with their customary propensity to voice grievances freely. Observing the more stringent regulations imposed just before the rebellion, few identified themselves in letters to newspapers or in pamphlets, but the carping tone audible before the rebellion remained, as did the latent prospect of combination. Noting Anglo-Indian newspapers' unanimity in supporting the officers' case, the Daily news warned in 1865 that

The lesson taught by the mutiny of the East India Company's European regiments a few years ago, should not be forgotten.<sup>62</sup>

'Veritas', writing to the Naval and military gazette, evoked the nightmare of rebellion, reminding his readers that 'the fidelity of the army' was 'that arch ... upon which the fabric of our authority stands'. He conjured the spectre of a sepoy army 'commanded by a body of discontented officers ... brooding over their wrongs and ... complaining loudly over their grievances'.<sup>63</sup> The warning had substance, in one case in terms echoing the soldiers' protest of 1859. Samuel White, formerly of the 3rd infantry, expressed the anti-aristocratic view that 'many clear-headed ... men in our middle-classes would make better Governor-Generals [sic] than noblemen like ... Dalhousie or CANNING'. Denying that he vented the 'splenetic effusions of a disappointed man', White asserted that 'every freeborn Englishman has an

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61. These and other letters and leaders appearing in British and Indian newspapers were published as a pamphlet, India papers, No. 29632 (12), SOAS

62. Daily news, 23 February [1865], in Ibid

63. Naval and military gazette, 12 January 1865, in Ibid

undoubted right to ... ventilate his own opinion'.<sup>64</sup> The reactions of Sir William Mansfield, Rose's successor, to such disturbing imputations is unknown.<sup>65</sup>

Clearly, Rose's innovations in the style of command in India did not wholly mollify Indian officers' feelings toward the staff corps, which most nevertheless eventually joined.

Devised on rational principles, the original staff corps scheme soon became encrusted with the barnacle of

qualification and exception. Reviewing the decade following the 1858 Act, Iltudus Prichard (formerly editor of the Delhi gazette) regarded the army amalgamation as a failure essentially because of the difficulty of integrating the two forces' officers. The staff corps, he claimed, generated

Iltudus Thomas Prichard (1826-74), editor, Delhi gazette c. 1859. son of a doctor; educated at Rugby; formerly an officer of the Bengal native infantry, comm. 1845; Lieutenant, 1848; author of several novels; d. Mussoorie

volumes of orders and counter-orders, modifications, amendments, incessant interference with vested rights and subsequent concessions, [and] inextricable confusion of local lists, staff corps, and regimental cadres.

This, he declared, testified to the 'hopelessness' of a 'task most imprudently attempted'.<sup>66</sup> Norman and Wood alone understood its labyrinthine workings: 'You seem to have got it all wrong', Wood admonished John Lawrence when the hapless viceroy attempted to award brevet rank to retired officers.<sup>67</sup> Norman mastered the minutiae of the scheme, virtually memorizing the cadres of the Indian army's dozens of corps and the regulations which governed their promotions.<sup>68</sup> In fact, the staff corps scheme, though complex, need not have been unworkable. What Prichard called the 'matted mass of complications' it spawned derived largely from the Indian officers' determined rear-guard action in fighting its imposition over the following decade. The scheme's became immediately and immensely complex in order to

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64. White, A complete history of the Indian mutiny, p. 271. White published his memoir in 1885, but there is no reason not to suppose that he and his fellow officers did not entertain and express such views twenty years before, while actually experiencing the disdain against which they protested.

65. No extensive papers exist for Mansfield, and he has not been accorded a biography.

66. Prichard, The administration of India, Vol. I, p. 42. A former sepoy officer, Prichard presumably reflected officers' views.

67. Wood to Lawrence, 2 January 1865, Wood papers, Letter book 19, IOLR

68. Hovell-Thurlow, The Company and the Crown, p. 210

accommodate numerous anomalous individual cases. Encouraged by parliamentary advocates, Indian army officers waged a determined pamphlet campaign against its provisions, gaining two royal commissions (in 1863 and 1866) and securing many minor concessions. Sir Charles Wood and Henry Norman spilled much ink unsuccessfully defending their scheme from dilution. The controversy acquired unpleasantly vituperative undertones. Norman, as a former sepoy officer, endured 'some degree of strain' from the coldness of erstwhile comrades.<sup>69</sup> In 1870 he fended off allegations that he had personally benefited from its introduction, in that he rose from lieutenant to colonel in just six years.<sup>70</sup>

Opposition to the staff corps centred on three main issues: the reduction in the number of colonelcies available following the amalgamation, the collapse of the 'retiring funds' and anomalies in the rates of promotion between officers. The officers' case rested on the 'guarantee' enshrined in the 1858 Act. Like the soldiers in 1859, the officers' response nicely combined points of principle and more pragmatic calculations of the effects of the measure they opposed.

Many if not most officers nursed grievances against the scheme: by 1866 over 900 officers had lodged petitions protesting against its provisions.<sup>71</sup> Individual officers' complaints reveal their collective disposition. Their grievances invariably related to matters of detail, often obscure points difficult to understand, let alone summarize for the purposes of illustration. The complaint of a captain of the 6th infantry, for example, was less complex than most:

Having entered the service in 1846 ... my rank is now [1865] that of a Captain ... never having joined [the staff corps] ... I consider that I have lost my position in rank among my contemporaries and juniors - and unless back rank is given me, I can never reverse this supersession.<sup>72</sup>

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69. Lee-Warner, *Memoir of ... Norman*, p. 237

70. 'Memorandum by Major General the Hon'ble H.W. Norman, C.B.', Simla, 21 August 1871, 'Military miscellaneous minutes by ... Norman', NAI. The leading critic in this episode was Maj Gen George Balfour, the 'ultra-Indian' who had plagued Rose in 1860. The officers' tenacity is evident from a War Office memorandum compiled in 1878 summarizing the matter and detailing the authorities' concessions. It presumably signified their anticipation of further claims; WO 33/32, 'Memorandum relative to officers formerly of the Indian army', PRO.

71. PP 1866, Vol. XXVII, Report of the commissioners appointed to inquire into the complaints ... from officers of the late Indian armies, p.21

72. Memorandum by Captain James Augustus Grant, 'Letters from former EIC officers', IOLR, L/MIL/5/524

Among the thickets of dates of commission, years of service, steps in promotion, cadres and instances of supersession, however, lurks the Indian officers' familiar spectres of exile and genteel poverty. Though officers' submissions rarely referred to actual sums of money, their essential points concerned entitlements which they feared losing. 'Supersession' was no mere matter of honour: in a service in which promotion to colonel proceeded by seniority it might mean the difference between comfortable and penurious retirement. The officers' grievances therefore particularly related to the 'two great prizes' of the Indian army, colonels' allowances and the bonus payment, the former money anticipated, the latter money invested and expected to be returned.<sup>73</sup>

Many officers served on only in the hope that they would eventually succeed to the handsome allowances paid to colonels. In his submission 'Colonel Wilson' revealed the desperation activating many:

There are many officers with large families who can never retire - & have but one hope that they may live to succeed to the allowances<sup>74</sup>

The contraction in the number of colonelcies following the disbandment of native regiments seriously affected their chances of retiring in comfort. Since the 1858 Act had supposedly assured their privileges, officers' felt justified in the lengths to which they pursued their claims. Few distinguished between the consequences of the changes in the native army's composition following the rebellion and the effects of the transfer and amalgamation.<sup>75</sup>

The most bitter and sustained opposition surrounded the abolition of the Indian army's retiring funds. The establishment of a staff corps necessarily overturned the elaborate 'bonus' or 'retirement' funds maintained in most

**Captain William George Keppel (1835-1922), 8th Bengal Native Infantry and 6th Bengal European Regiment. Son of a clergyman; comm. 1853; Captain, 1864; SC, 1866; ret. as Major, 1871**

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73. Anon, The Indian artillery as incorporated with the Royal Artillery. [London?], 1865, p. 8

74. Memorandum on the Indian Staff Corps, IOLR, L/MIL/5/524

75. The distinction is significant. The unreliability of the old Bengal native infantry resulted in its forming a smaller proportion of the reconstructed army (and as irregular regiments, with a sixth as many European officers as before the rebellion) inevitably diminishing opportunities for its officers. See Wood to Canning, 18 May 1860, Wood papers, IOLR, Letter book 3; Wood to Robert Napier, 9 January 1861, Letter book 6

messes. Officers on the staff list remained in regimental cadres in order to regulate their promotion relative to each other. No new officers, however, joined the regimental lists, but were placed on a general list. As Captain William Keppel of the 6th infantry explained,

we have no juniors, to whom to look for our bonus on retiring & therefore have no chance of getting our money back.<sup>76</sup>

The bonus funds' dubious legality made compensation at first unthinkable. Though formally prohibited, they had been countenanced under the fiction that payments merely 'add[ed] to the comforts of a senior officer on his retirement'.<sup>77</sup> Many officers contracted large debts, regarding the investment as a sinking fund which they would eventually recover, usually with interest, when they in turn retired. Some officers, having paid up to three or even five thousand pounds for their steps, found that they would receive nothing.<sup>78</sup> The belief that in the new European regiments (in deference to their less affluent original cadres remaining non-purchase corps) the practice continued fuelled the disaffected officers' grievances.<sup>79</sup> Conscious that their losses - said to total two to three million pounds - would burden an Indian treasury still convalescent following the impositions of the rebellion, Wood remained unsympathetic.<sup>80</sup> His successor, Lord Cranborne, however, took a less legalist approach. Employing an analogy in keeping with the force's mercantile character, he argued that servants injured by unexpected actions of a master were entitled to compensation, and in 1867 he authorized that the sums invested up to 1861 be re-imbursed.<sup>81</sup> This belated concession, regarded as one made as much to 'stay an agitation most mischievous ... and inconsistent with the attitude that officers should assume towards their Government' as

Robert Arthur Talbot-Gascoyne  
Cecil, Lord Cranborne (1830-  
1903) Secretary of State for India  
1866-67. Later Third Marquis of  
Salisbury; Conservative prime  
minister 1885-6, 1886-92, 1895-1902

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76. Memorandum by Capt William Keppel, IOLR, L/MIL/5/524

77. General Order, 2 May 1838, quoted in Anon, The regimental retiring funds of the Indian army, [London, 1866?], p. 5

78. Memoranda by Lt Col Robert Shaw; Lt Col Alexander Silver, IOLR, L/MIL/5/524

79. The regimental retiring funds of the Indian army, p. 10

80. 'Aliquis', How not to do it, np, [1866?], p. 13

81. A 'Return of all officers ... who have applied ... for a repayment of their individual contribution to regimental bonus funds' details claims, amounts paid and reasons for reducing or refusing compensation: PP 1868-69, Vol. XLVI

to redress a wrong, left many dissatisfied.<sup>82</sup> Some received considerably less than the bonus they had anticipated, 'as if', one of their representatives put it, 'an insurance office were to give back subscriptions only, instead of the sum insured for'.<sup>83</sup>

The protracted campaign in search of redress of individual and collective grievance should not obscure the scheme's success. Many officers obtained more rapid promotion, greater allowances or pensions or some return on their irregular if not illegal investments. The staff corps' opponents altered neither the fact of its existence nor its effects on those who had declined imperial service. Most, indeed, eventually had reason for satisfaction. Those on the staff list who proved themselves competent at commanding native troops in the reconstructed presidency armies remained in active employment and rose, slowly but surely, to senior rank, if not always the lucrative appointments coveted before 1861. Those seconded to civil appointments, perhaps for their entire service, also enjoyed productive careers and generous pensions. The scheme could do little, however, for officers unfitted to perform duty in a very different army to that which they had entered, and many suffered a pathetic fate. In 1871 almost one in ten of the 1178 officers on the Bengal army's staff list remained unemployed.<sup>84</sup> Some, as a report to the Duke of Cambridge (presumably from the adjutant general's department in Calcutta) put it, were 'highly respectable' but were no longer fit for duty. Others, eligible for employment, were idle due to 'long absence or unsatisfactory conduct'. A third group, number unspecified, exhibited 'irregular or intemperate habits' but had evaded court martial.<sup>85</sup> These officers spent their time 'passed about from one miscellaneous duty to another', following a 'desultory career' as cantonment magistrates, extra staff officers, and locums on 'general duty'.<sup>86</sup> An officer who encountered 'general list' officers as a subaltern recalled some posted to 'command' remote forts on the north-west frontier where they 'brought up large families in the casemates'; a reflection of the economic dilemma which led them to

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82. Hovell-Thurlow, The Company and the Crown, p. 23

83. Anon, The principal grievances of the officers of the Indian army. [London, 1866?], p. 21

84. Abstracts of letters from India, 'Appointment of probationers for the Staff Corps', No. 242, 1 July 1871, India papers, No. 28642, SOAS. This after in 1868 officers had been forbidden to refuse uncongenial duties, a provision which compelled many to retire: Ibid. No. 470, 14 December 1868.

85. Abstracts of military letters from India, 'Report on officers whom it is not advisable to continue in active employment', No. 25, 15 February 1871, Cambridge papers, IOLR

86. Abstract of letters from India, 'Disposal of officers unfit for active employment', No. 17, 1872, India papers, No. 28642, SOAS

decline 'general service' in the first place.<sup>87</sup> Many hung on, 'altogether unqualified for any employment under the present constitution of the Army', sitting out the years between promotions until they could retire with relief on a moderate pension.<sup>88</sup> An embarrassment to the imperial authorities (particularly financially, as officers rose in rank and pay and, finally, in pension), the problem would not rapidly dissipate.<sup>89</sup> In 1872 it was calculated that since in 1866 those serving were guaranteed colonels' allowances after twelve years as lieutenant colonel, the list would persist after 1900.<sup>90</sup>

Formation of the staff corps confirmed a further division among the Indian army's officers, introducing a new inflection on Kendal Coghill's characterisation of cantonment society as divided into an 'upper' and a 'lower' current. The old, inflexible and apathetic became a new lower current, serving out their time the familiar manner, expecting a pension eventually and allowances in the meantime, relics of an attenuated and increasingly marginal military culture. Those willing and able to adopt the attitudes and style of the Queen's army became the new upper current. While the lower diminished by death and retirement, the upper grew by the recruitment of subalterns admitted not through the supplication of the genteel poor, but (because entrants to the staff corps came from the British army) through channels dominated by the Queen's army's networks of influence. A survey of entrants to the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst in 1860 established that over half of the cadets' fathers gave their occupation as 'gentleman', in contrast to the five per cent of the last generation of Company's cadets.<sup>91</sup> Since a rebuilt Indian army founded on the irregular system required about a sixth as many regimental officers as before 1857, applicants were able to be screened for social acceptability as well as military aptitude.

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87. MacMunn, The Indian mutiny in perspective, p. 261

88. Abstract of letters from India, No. 470, 14 December 1868, India papers, No. 28642, SOAS

89. In 1862 the staff corps held 344 generals and field officers; in 1868, because of their inexorable promotion, 1036: Shibly, The reorganization of the Indian armies, p. 241-2

90. Abstracts of letters from India, 'Disposal of officers unfit for active employment', No. 17, 1872, India papers, No. 28642, SOAS.

91. C.B. Otley, 'The social origins of British army officers', Sociological review, (NS), Vol. 18, 1970, p. 224. Edward Spiers's The late Victorian army 1868-1902, Manchester, 1992, chapter 4, provides the most recent survey of the composition of the British army's officers during the late nineteenth century. He confirms both that the abolition of the purchasing of commissions had little effect on the social composition of officers, and that obtaining a commission was a means of confirming and securing a standing in landed society.

Coghill's terms, signifying exclusive social circles, are particularly apt. Like its prototype, the upper current appears to have comprised networks of congenial individuals. It encompassed many of the most successful of the generation who profited so much from the crisis of rebellion and protest through which they passed between 1857 and 1861 - Coghill, Norman, Keith Young, Allan and Edwin Johnson, George Malleon, and Fred Roberts - who became part of a wider circle of friendship and increasing influence (see Illustration 19).

Friendships such as those formed on Delhi ridge were grafted on to the traditional and progressively less relevant patronage networks of the Bengal army, new alliances leading to the creation of new patterns of influence. Most agreed that in the reconstructed army the back stairs influence once the norm had been supplanted by a system less liable to abuse, but others countered that if the patrons had altered the rules remained. '[F]avouritism', concluded Jones-Parry, 'still exists, though it runs in a different channel'.<sup>92</sup> The Horse Guards' back stairs, however, were less accessible than those of the Directors', and many favoured under the Company suffered under India's new rulers, fulfilling the forebodings expressed before and during the rebellion. Indeed, it would be worthwhile testing and demonstrating whether and how this process occurred by seeking to chart the fortunes of sons of officers who elected for local and general service in 1861. In contrast to the prevailing impression that the post-1861 Indian army was founded on established military dynasties, it may be that in fact two Indian armies existed, the post-1861 one including but by no means encompassing all those represented before amalgamation. Such a study could reveal the social decline of a large group of otherwise middle-class British families.<sup>93</sup>

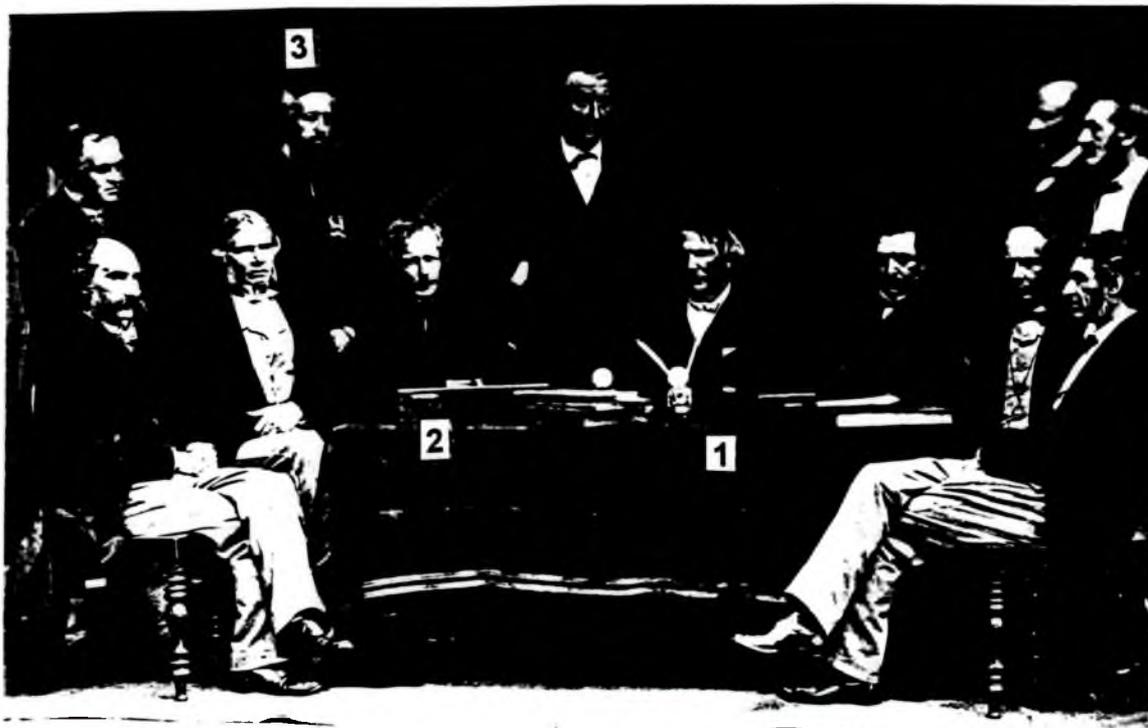
Jim Harris encountered the new system on returning to India in 1864. Having obtained three years' leave (without explaining quite how) Harris set out, in the classic Anglo-Indian fashion, to find a congenial appointment. Jockeying for a seat at dinner near Lawrence, the viceroy, and soliciting interviews with civil and military secretaries, he perplexedly remained unemployed. ('On account of his record', scrawled his annotator.) Though always on 'the best of terms with Viceroys', he recorded ingenuously, 'Commanders-in-Chief,... have looked upon me with a different eye'. ('And with reason', wrote his unsympathetic critic.) Clearly the manner of

Captain Allen Bayard Johnson (1829- 1907), Bengal army. Son of Sir Henry Johnson, Bart; brother of Edwin Johnson; comm. 1846; served Burmah and rebellion; posted to but did not serve with 5th Bengal European Regiment, 1858-60; a long-serving member of the Government of India's military secretariat following the rebellion; Military Secretary at the India Office, 1877-89; KCB 1889

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92. Jones-Parry, *An old soldier's memories*, p. 281

93. Chapter 8 of Barbara Kerr's study of Thornhill family, *The dispossessed: an aspect of Victorian social history*, London, 1974, hints at this process.



**Illustrations 18 & 19**

Recognition of Henry Norman's contribution to the integration of the Indian army within a larger imperial system brought him into the Viceroy's Council (top). He is standing here (3) in the company of Sir Hugh Rose (2) and Lord Lawrence (1) in the early 1860s (National Portrait Gallery neg. no. P426). The new 'upper current' (below). A group of officials and ladies at Simla in the mid-1860s, suggesting the connections between those who thrived in the reconstructed Bengal army following the rebellion and its aftermath. The group includes Henry Norman (1), Henry Tombs (2) and Allen Johnson (3). One of the few officers connected with the 5th Bengal Europeans to have prospered, Johnson was the younger brother of Edwin Johnson, the 'Norman of the artillery' (IOLR Photo 220b).



finding officers for situations, while still dependent on personal contact and recommendation, had altered during his absence. The staff corps, Harris decided, was 'one of the biggest swindles ever perpetrated by a Government'.<sup>94</sup> Arriving near the end of Rose's term as Commander-in-Chief, Harris encountered the results of the change for which Rose worked. Accustomed to appointments distributed, as Prichard put it, according to 'petticoat influence, intrigue and favouritism', Indian officers received with 'a sneer of disbelief' Rose's declaration that 'patronage should go by merit, and by merit only'. Long unpopular, it was said that even Rose's Indian army critics eventually acknowledged his achievement.<sup>95</sup> In May 1865, shortly after Rose had relinquished the command in favour of Mansfield, George Malleison, a leader of Anglo-Indian opinion, published a valedictory article in the Calcutta review. Malleison praised Rose's reforms of the soldiers' conditions of service and the officers' tone, describing his achievement as a 'silent revolution'.<sup>96</sup> The tribute represents the triumph of the reformist agenda which Charles Napier framed two decades before.<sup>97</sup>

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For the remainder of their service in India the former Company's regiments saw no active service. It is unlikely that they were deliberately reserved from action: the 1860s and early 1870s were largely uneventful except for minor punitive expeditions on the frontiers. On the other hand, it is unlikely that any other sequence of nine line regiments went for so long without seeing action, arousing suspicion that the authorities formally or otherwise decided to await what they saw as the new corps' rehabilitation. In 1864 John Adye, deputy adjutant general of the artillery confided that though 'the new brigades have fallen into the new system ... on paper ...

Lieutenant Colonel John Adye (1819-1900), Commanding Royal Artillery in Madras, 1859. Comm. Royal Artillery, 1836; served Crimea; Assistant Adjutant General, Royal Artillery in India, 1857-58; Deputy Adjutant General, Royal Artillery, India 1863; KCB, 1873; CofS to Wolseley in Egyptian campaign, 1882; Governor of Gibraltar, 1883-86

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94. Harris, 'China Jim', pp. 145-8

95. Prichard, The administration of India, p. 62

96. Malleison, Essays and lectures on Indian subjects, p. 283

97. The extent of the transformation eventually wrought within the Indian army's officers is suggested by a confidential circular issued by the Commander-in-Chief's military secretary in 1938, censuring an officer for seeking to influence a posting by 'bring[ing] indirect influence to bear by means of private letters to officers at Army headquarters'. The contrast between 1938 and 1838 - when officers could not secure advancement except by such means - is evident. The circular appears in the unaccessioned papers of Brigadier Keith Dawson, Indian army, presently held by the Australian War Memorial.

until they go home we shall never get our system introduced'.<sup>98</sup> The relative inactivity of garrison service allowed the regiments to be re-shaped. By 1870 inspecting general officers ceased to find fault systematically with the former Company's corps; five infantry regiments were assessed as 'satisfactory and the two cavalry as 'highly satisfactory'.<sup>99</sup> The passage of time and the rigours of service gradually told on the men of 1861. Mortality, invaliding and discharge steadily diminished the proportion who had served before the rebellion or who had observed the events of 1859-60. As the new regiments prepared to return 'home' they were diluted all the more. In 1869 the 102nd Royal Madras Fusiliers allowed men to volunteer to other regiments in India, and 205 men dispersed to twenty-one other corps.<sup>100</sup> While this may have effectively fragmented what was once a coherent culture, it seems paradoxically to have disseminated through the barrack-rooms of British India an awareness of the notions which underlay the ethos of the Company's force. It was in this way that Charles Grey learned in the 1880s of the execution at Dinapore, a story handed on in barrack-room folklore to later generations. It is probably coincidental that in the early 1870s the authorities detected a wave of cases of insubordination once again plaguing the British army in India, but impossible to connect it to the arrival in other regiments of men who had known the old European force.<sup>101</sup>

Prejudice against the old European force within the British military establishment died slowly. In 1864, as Robert Napier was about to succeed Mansfield as Commander-in-Chief in Bombay, Sir Charles Wood warned him (surely needlessly) of 'a very general belief' within the Queen's army that the Indian army's discipline was inferior. Wood assured Napier of the support of himself and Cambridge, but thought it best that 'you should be apprised of this [feeling] in order that you may not let anything occur, accidentally even, which would strengthen it'.<sup>102</sup> Napier evidently succeeded in gaining and retaining Cambridge's confidence.

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98. Adye to Lt Col R. Biddulph [Military Secretary, Madras army], Peshawur, 11 February 1864; H. Biddulph, (ed.), 'The Umbeylah campaign of 1863 and the Bhutan expedition of 1865-66', Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research, Vol. XIX, No. 73, Spring 1940, p. 44

99. [Inspection report, 1870-71], Northbrook papers, India papers, No. 31413/22, SOAS

100. H.C. Wylly, Neill's 'Blue caps', 2 vols, Aldershot, nd, Vol. II, p. 144

101. Abstracts of military letters from India, 'Military prison discipline in India', No. 2, 7 December 1870, Cambridge papers, IOLR

102. Wood to Napier, 3 December 1864, Wood papers, Letter book 19, IOLR

In 1879 he championed Napier against Garnet Wolseley as commander in Zululand, losing to the Cabinet's infatuation with that irritatingly successful general.<sup>103</sup>

As early as May 1863 Rose had anticipated sending a brigade of the new Royal Artillery 'home'. The move would be, he advised Cambridge, 'a practical result & proof of amalgamation, breaking up local ties & producing identity of feeling'.<sup>104</sup> Not until December 1868, however, did the first new unit embark for Britain - the 101st - and the first artillery did not leave until 1872.<sup>105</sup> The infantry regiments embarked in order of seniority: not until 1877 did the 109th reach Britain. This in itself surely signified that the amalgamation failed to create 'identity of feeling'. As Wood had foreseen in considering the implications of amalgamation, even though those volunteering for general service had accepted their obligation to serve wherever sent, the former Europeans' tenderness obliged the authorities to proceed carefully for fear of inflaming sensitivities all too apparent in 1859-60.

Nor did their 'return' to home service necessarily imply the completion of their transformation. The seemingly trivial (and apparently apocryphal) tale of the 102nd's mascot - a tiger named 'Plassey' - on its arrival in Dover reveals how distinctive the 'returning' regiments may have been. Plassey apparently caused consternation among local civilians. 'It occurred to nobody', recalled the teller of a mess anecdote, 'that what seemed normal in Lucknow might look different in a small coastal town in Kent'.<sup>106</sup> Greater, if equally uncorroborated, detail allows an insight into the changes the 103rd experienced on its return. In 1871 a twenty-year-old brushmaker named Robert Blatchford pursued a romantic whim and enlisted in the army, joining the 103rd Royal Bombay Fusiliers, the regiment which Tombs had offended in 1867 by ordering its cap bands to be removed. Blatchford arrived at the 103rd's depot at Parkhurst on the Isle of Wight, just as the regiment returned from India. His memoir, My life in the army, conveys a powerful portrait not just of life in the barrack-room, but also of a regiment, which Blatchford called the Ramchunders, still exhibiting many of the hallmarks of the distinctive

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103. Lehmann, All Sir Garnet, p. 245-6

104. Rose to Cambridge, Simla, 31 May 1863, Rose papers, Public letter book, BL, Add. Ms 42814

105. M.E.S. Laws, Battery records of the Royal Artillery, 1859-1877, Woolwich, 1970, p. 16

106. Miles Noonan, More tales from the mess, London, 1985, p. 11. I am grateful to Mrs P.A. Godfrey of the Dover Library for attempting to corroborate the story in the Dover express. Though either fictitious or exaggerated, the story at least illuminates the perception that regiments formerly of the Company were perceived as different to those of the line.

culture of the Company's Europeans.<sup>107</sup> Despite losing men to disease in the decade since its transfer, and presumably a contingent volunteering to remain in India before departure, the men of the 103rd returned from India with

much hot sunshine in the blood and a good deal of money in the pockets ... in the words of their own argot, "going wide".<sup>108</sup>

Men still used Anglo-Indian slang (such as 'pultan' for regiment or 'ringtail' for recruit). The 'types' inhabiting the Company's barrack-rooms survived: scholars, such as the Irishman who prayed in a 'mad blend of Erse, English and Latin', blagards, such as the old soldier who, in the cells after an absence of five days, demanded 'a "doc-doc-doctor to prove him shober"'. It included a former medical student and a Mooty-like sergeant major 'uneducated, unscrupulous, and wicked'. Among the Ramchunders' officers were those recognisably Anglo-Indian: colonels needing prompts to conduct drill; a major whose habits included

sit[ting] in his shirt sleeves ... colouring short clay pipes and reading the cheapest shilling shockers.

Evidently 'Cockney' officers outlived the amalgamation, as did their easy relationship with their men.<sup>109</sup> The major, 'a human old soldier' asked his servant what the men thought of him. Told that 'They call you a d\_\_\_\_d old woman, sir', he replied, 'Hah! I'm hanged if I didn't think so!'<sup>110</sup> The choice which the officers confronted in 1861, however, largely ensured that they would conform to the expectations of the Queen's service. Those who elected to enter general service did so knowing what would and would not be acceptable in a mess, and few changes occurred to the regiment's officers at or after its return.<sup>111</sup>

107. Robert Blatchford, My life in the army, London, [1910] Blatchford drew closely upon his six years with the 103rd in his novel, Tommy Atkins of the Ramchunders.

108. Blatchford, My life in the army, p. 16

109. The Dover express, for example, noted that the 102nd included on its arrival in Britain twelve lieutenants who had served longer than ten years, both an indication of its officers' lack of options and a sign that 'the generosity of Government towards it has been strictly confined to words': 21 April 1870.

110. Ibid., p. 27

111. H.G. Hart, The new annual army list, London, 1868-75

No such subtlety accompanied their men's adjustments to the requirements of home service in the Queen's army. The regiment was said to have 'taken things easy in India, and was reported slack'. The corps, in which so much of the mores and character of the old force survived, was deliberately re-shaped in the months following its arrival in Britain. Blatchford recalled that a new sergeant major and two drill sergeants arrived from the Guards. Working from the premise that 'old Indian sergeants ... were no use to him', the new sergeant major set about breaking and replacing the regiment's existing non-commissioned officers. The process, as Blatchford described how the sergeant major, assisted by Sergeants 'Quex' and 'Bonass', received the roll calls at tattoo, was crude.

If [the sergeant-major] ... "wanted" a non-commissioned officer he would stop short in front of him and say:

"You've been drinking, sergeant."

"No, sir."

"Sergeant Quex, Sergeant Bonass, see this sergeant."

The two minions "saw" the sergeant, certified that he was "drunk, sir", and marched him off to his quarters under arrest. ... The final result was the "smashing" of the fated non-commissioned officer.<sup>112</sup>

At the hands of the Guards sergeants the men, Blatchford wrote, 'were treated with much less ceremony'. The Queen's army's notions of discipline supplanted the Europeans' easy-going customs. A sergeant, for instance, narrowly escaped a charge for saying 'Jack, will you loop that tent up?' rather than 'Jones, loop up the tent'.<sup>113</sup> Whether other 'Indian' regiments received similar treatment on returning to Britain is unknown, though the 101st's difficulties in coping with the unfamiliar fatigues of home service (such as carrying coal and filling straw palliasses)

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112. Blatchford, My life in the army, p. 17. Sgt Bonass appears as a villain in Tommy Atkins of the Ramchunders. Blatchford's military recollections acquired a softer tone by the time he published the autobiographical My eighty years in 1931.

113. Ibid., p. 78

amused "comrades" in garrison'.<sup>114</sup> Arthur Owen recorded the 'lamentations' of men of the 102nd, who ruefully reflected that in India soldiers 'truly did lead the life of a gentleman'.<sup>115</sup>

By the time the last of the former Company's regiments returned home the earliest arrivals had embarked overseas. Allocated new regimental depots, their sense of collective identity diminished. Under the Cardwell re-organization of 1881 five were allocated to recruiting districts in Ireland, becoming battalions of southern Irish regiments. In 1922, following the establishment of the Irish Free State, they were abolished. Those allocated to English county regiments disappeared with the end of the empire they were created to serve.

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114. Gordon, Recollections of thirty-nine years, p. 229

115. Owen, Recollections of a veteran, p. 101

## Conclusion

### 'Single men in barracks, most remarkable like you'

If in the decade following their absorption into the imperial army the Ramchunders finally came home, in a sense, the old European force had never really left Britain. Their reasons for enlisting, their ambitions, and the relationships which sustained and strained their units, exemplified aspects of contemporary British society. In that sense the experience of what might appear to be a small and seemingly remote force can arguably assume a more significant complexion as an aspect of British social history.

This thesis argues that the attitudes and behaviour of officers and men owed much to class relations of contemporary Britain, particularly in determining who sought to join the Company's service and why, and in the relationships within and between ranks. The European force's crisis exposed the centrality of this connection, as Sir Hugh Rose recognised in censuring both Private William Johnson and Gunner Kinsella, with his reference to 'all Armies, as well as ... all Societies'. However, as this thesis's treatment of the nuances of mess and barrack-room life makes clear, military society is not solely explicable in terms of the broader civil society from which it emanates. Military culture derives from but is also distinct from its parent society. The Company's soldiers shared a culture which, while influenced by that of both civil society of Britain and Ireland and that of the Queen's army, was also distinctive. The constellation of beliefs, attitudes, values, expectations, actions and responses collectively identifiable as the culture of the Company's Europeans tenaciously impelled its members to hazard protest and mutiny.

That the soldiers' protest also coincided with the great London builders' lock-out of 1859 is surely more than coincidental. Not that the two were in any way directly connected, but they arose from essentially the same source, the struggle for power between masters and men.<sup>1</sup> That such a protest should have occurred at such a time, even in places as remote from the metropolis as Berhampore or Gondah, reinforces the contemporary realization that soldiers were '[n]o longer mere food for powder', but, as even the Naval and military gazette conceded, 'soldiers are citizens'.<sup>2</sup> Journalism's adoption of the army as a fitting subject of interest accelerated the transformation of the soldier from a remote automaton to a figure deserving greater consideration. In this the protest of 1859-60 marks a significant change, not simply in

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1. The dispute is discussed in Price, Masters, unions and men, pp. 45-54. The National Association for the Promotion of Social Science, Trades' societies and strikes, London, 1860, provides a contemporary perspective.

2. Naval and military gazette, 15 December 1860

middle-class attitudes towards the soldier, but, by extension, toward the class from which soldiers emerged. Its popular acceptance is signified by the 'barrack-room ballad' in which Kipling's celebrated 'Tommy' speaks for men in the ranks:

We aren't no thin red 'eroes, nor we aren't no blackguards too,  
But single men in barracks, most remarkable like you.<sup>3</sup>

The reactions of the Company's Europeans during the crisis of transfer and amalgamation illuminates, however, more than simply their dynamic military culture. Because the Company's service attracted members of the respectable working-class, this thesis has illuminated 'the most elusive people in Victorian England'. The question which 'Sir Napier' put to John Brown in the mess room at Morar cantonment that summer morning in 1859, 'Well my man, what grievances have you to state?' was answered by men corresponding more to the mass of respectable working men than to the conventional stereotype of the Queen's soldier. That literate and intelligent men - Fitzroy Fitzherbert, Josiah Henderson, Edward Martin, or William Ewing and John Kean, the scholars of Morar - notably articulated their response in 1859 corroborates the connection which Janet McCalman drew between respectability, aspiration and political engagement. It also challenges the conventional view that 'respectable working-class families' felt a 'deeply rooted prejudice against military service', at least for the Company's service before it was subsumed within the larger imperial army.<sup>4</sup>

Soldiers were hardly accepted as citizens because of the events of 1859, but it was no coincidence that in the 1860s the middle-class largely, if reluctantly, conceded the right of respectable working men to participate in the parliamentary governance of Britain. Their acceptance of the second Reform Act in 1867, which most clearly reflects the 'transformation' of contemporary Britain is merely the most obvious sign of the process of social change of which the soldiers' protest forms a minor part.<sup>5</sup> As Charles Napier had perceived, the deference expected of labouring people, and of those who laboured as soldiers, would not long survive the extension of literacy and the growth of the self- and collective consciousness accompanying it. The soldiers' protest involved many men patently soldiers in name only, who accomplished so much with remarkably little violence. It is possible that they contributed to the impression, generated from phenomena as diverse as the shilling days at the Crystal Palace

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3. Rudyard Kipling, 'Tommy', in Charles Carrington, (ed.), The complete barrack-room ballads of Rudyard Kipling, p. 32

4. Edward Spiers, The late Victorian army, p. 146

5. Other indications of social change which came to a head at about the same time include the passing of the Obscene Publications Act of 1857 and the growing concern over venereal disease, part of the process which F.M.L. Thompson characterises as The rise of respectable society.

to the peaceful protest of the last great Chartist marches, that working men could be trusted not to destroy the institutions opened to them. The soldiers' protest forms part of mid-Victorian Britain's great transformation, as the 'rise of respectable society' shaped what a radical journalist anticipated, perhaps prematurely, as a 'new, more harmonious and infinitely nobler state'.<sup>6</sup>

The enquiry motivating this thesis sought to explore the relationship between military and social history, attempting to establish that the connections between the two were more substantial than practitioners of either persuasion had previously allowed. The 'white mutiny', a phenomenon seemingly exhibiting a correspondence of military and social concerns, provided a fruitful test of this hypothesis. Essentially the old soldiers' protest derived from the regimental and barrack room cultures of the old Bengal Europeans, while that of the young soldiers originated in political concerns of men more civilians than soldiers. What was arguably the single most important development in the history of British military policy in India, an event which until 1947 determined the nature of Britain's military occupation, was, therefore, the consequence of conceptions of 'rights' held by men barely soldiers at all. These men unwittingly frustrated the designs of those ostensibly charting the transition of British India from trustee of a private company to a dominion of the Queen's empire. The conclusion, besides subverting the impression that significant events are dictated by anything other than chance and circumstance, points to the largely undocumented influence of the society of Victorian Britain on British India.

In a sense the transformation of the Company's European force from distinct and independent rival of the Queen's army to indistinguishable and subordinate component of it mirrors a broader change which arguably occurred in British society over the course of the century. The contest between the Queen's and Company's armies which culminated in the events of 1859-61 reflected the stresses of a society confronting change and its attendant tensions. The Queen's army was a profoundly conservative institution, its officers grounded in the landed gentry and its men drawn (though decreasingly) from agricultural labourers. The Company's officers were drawn from the aspiring and often insecure commercial middle-class, its men from among uneasy urban artisans - the middling class. Representing two contenders for the possession of Britain the victors of the contest for control of the armies of India in fact lost the larger contest. Ironically, just as the Horse Guards subordinated its rival, the composition of <sup>the Queen's army's</sup> ~~its~~ own officers began to change. With the characteristically English gift for incorporating and neutering rather than confronting and risking defeat by opposition, the officers over the fifty years covered by

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6. Douglas Jerrold's shilling magazine, Vol. 1, No. 1, January 1845, p. 23, quoted in McCalman, Respectability and working-class radicalism in Victorian London, p. 41

this study accepted and accommodated members of the very group which had formed the core of the Company's European officers, the commercial middle-class.

The soldiers' protest began in 1859, a year nominated, in 1859: entering an age of crisis, as one of the most significant of the century.<sup>7</sup> 1859 signified a point, its editors proposed, at which the intellectual, ideological and political uncertainties and anxieties of the modern age could be seen as having begun. Since, as even 1859's editors accepted, crisis and transition can be detected in most 'ages', the notion must be seen as being unduly influenced by the ideological conflicts of the 'cold war' prevailing in its year of publication, 1959. Since, however, John Stuart Mill's On liberty, Charles Darwin's On the origins of species and Samuel Smiles's Self help all appeared in 1859, the idea, even if it rests on nothing more than coincidence, is intriguing. If, for example, 1859 had seen only the appearance of Dickens's A tale of two cities and FitzGerald's The rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam the idea might have seemed untenable. That the British army in India should also encounter a protest, moreover one essentially deriving from tension between ruler and ruled of Victorian Britain, lends point to at least considering the events of that year as part of the process of shaping the social relationships which were to dominate British society at least up to the 'crisis of class society' which Harold Perkin identifies as occurring in the decade surrounding the Great War.<sup>8</sup>

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For their protagonists the events of the rebellion, protest and the amalgamation brought vastly different fates.<sup>9</sup> Those able to accomplish the transition from soldiers of the Company to soldiers of the Queen - such as Robert Napier, Henry Norman, Henry Tombs and Fred Roberts - prospered. Robert Napier, despite Wood's ominous advice, left his command in Bombay as Lord Napier of Magdala, having in Abyssinia concluded successfully and almost bloodlessly one of the classic Victorian small wars. Succeeding Mansfield as Commander-in-Chief in India in 1870, his success helped to reassure Indian officers of their acceptance within the imperial army. Henry Norman successfully pursued a career as an Indian and colonial administrator, as Governor of Queensland confronting another 'strike', by shearers, one with consequences as profound for the nascent Australian labour movement as the soldiers' protest

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7. Philip Appleman, William Maddern and Michael Woolf, 1859: entering an age of crisis. Bloomington, 1959

8. Harold Perkin, The rise of professional society: England since 1880. London, 1989, Chapter 5

9. Biographical details, unless otherwise specified, have been taken from diverse but standard references cited previously, including biographies and regimental histories, but primarily the Dictionary of national biography, Creagh, The Victoria Cross and the Hodson index, NAM

had been for the Indian army. In 1893 he declined the Viceroyalty because of ill-health.<sup>10</sup> Henry Tombs repaid Rose's clemency in full. Early in 1865 Rose selected him to command a column in the force invading Bhootan. Remaining a charismatic figure to the Indian army, his acceptance of the imperial army's ethos presumably helped others to adjust to the change. As a major general from 1867 Tombs held several divisional commands. Had he not died early he seems to have been destined for high command. Fred Roberts took up the position in the quartermaster-general's department for which he had risked so much, over the following decade acquiring a reputation as a staff officer. Awarded command of the Kohat Field Force in 1879, after completing his celebrated march from Kabul to Kandahar during the second Afghan war he became Commander-in-Chief in Madras and, in 1885, India. Beloved by troops as 'Bobs', he accomplished much for their welfare, implementing the reformist agenda he had acquired as a subaltern with the Bengal Horse Artillery. In 1900 Roberts returned to active service to retrieve British fortunes in South Africa following the disasters of 'black week', a war in which smokeless powder and khaki confounded the heroic deeds of his youth. Dying while visiting the British Expeditionary Force in France in 1914, Roberts' influence persisted into the Great War through the affiliations and patronage of his 'Indian ring', which competed with the 'African' ring of Garnet Wolseley. In this the once despised Indian army in a sense eventually, if briefly captured the Queen's army's citadel.

Less exalted officers pursued their careers in accordance with their talents and the dictates of fate. Henry Durand, who had unsuccessfully opposed the local force's abolition, returned to the political service, dying in a freak accident - killed in an elephant howdah passing under a gate while visiting a maharajah. More conventional officers achieved modest success. Frederick Salusbury, who as adjutant had inspired awe in young Montague Hall in Burmah, accepted imperial service, rose to command the 101st and retired as an honorary major general as it served in the incongruous snow of Nova Scotia. Montague Hall, in turn, commanded the regiment when it became the Royal Munster Fusiliers in 1881. Kendal Coghill, returning in 1870 to regimental service after holding the staff appointments Rose opened to him, briefly achieved command in 1882 of a cavalry regiment, the 19th Hussars, formerly the 3rd Bengal European Light Cavalry. George Fosbery, though gaining a Victoria Cross at Umbeylah, preferred to continue to dabble in ballistics (as he had as a subaltern at Cawnpore), retiring in 1877 to perfect his innovative but now obscure 'Paradox gun'.<sup>11</sup> Less enterprising members of

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10. Geoffrey Serle, (ed.), *Australian dictionary of biography*, Melbourne, 1988, Vol. 11, pp. 37-38. See illustrations 18 and 19. Among the many coincidences attending this thesis was that Norman's grave, in Brompton Cemetery, lay virtually beneath the window of the room which I occupied while researching in London for seven weeks in 1990.

11. Creagh, *The Victoria Cross*, p. 82

the former Company's services remained on the army list for a further sixty years: the last survivor of the Bengal Engineers retired in 1923, dying in 1930.<sup>12</sup>

Those who failed to meet the challenges imposed by the changes through which the Bengal Europeans passed enjoyed less satisfactory and sadder destinies, many dying prematurely. Despite his shortcomings, Rose allowed St George Showers to retain the Presidency Division, and he died in command in Calcutta in 1865. 'Old-Bill-a-Nick' Riddell, removed from the 3rd infantry after its outbreak in 1859, proceeded on furlough, retired in 1861 as an honorary major general without returning to India, and died in 1875. Frederick Maitland, disgraced after both of the regiments he commanded mutinied - the 5th infantry twice - 'did general duty at Meerut for several years' before retiring as a major general in 1871, dying in suburban London five years later. Mortimer Slater, escaping to the safety of the Pension paymaster's office, rose in his turn to lieutenant colonel, dying at sea while travelling home on furlough in 1863, as did his brother officer, Alexander Fenwick. Lancaster Davies, the 'Tartar' of the 5th, achieved promotion to captain only in 1866 before dying in 1867 aged 34. For many individuals the staff corps meant years of tedium and waste. The papers of Richard Chadwick, preserved in the India Office after his family could not be traced, reveal the poignancy of the plight of an officer who had transferred to the staff corps. Interleaved with duns for accounts are pleas for employment and the bland replies of private secretaries:

At present, I regret to say there is no vacancy in any of the Corps ... to which you are eligible...<sup>13</sup>

Among the Europeans' soldiers, those volunteering to other corps or attached to departments and other agencies remained after their regiments left for Britain. They retained an aura of difference in an army truly comprising soldiers of the Queen. By the mid-1870s, however, most men who had served in the European regiments in 1859 had gone: died, invalided, discharged or repatriated with their units. Once discharged the fates of all but a handful are unknown. Some certainly achieved the ambitions of their youth. George Carter retired in 1861, becoming a military stores clerk at the Tower of London and later in Halifax and Bermuda.<sup>14</sup> Mark Crummie retired in 1864, becoming a timekeeper. Comfortable in old age, in 1890 his will included shares in the Hull and Barnsley West Riding Junction Railway and

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12. E.W.C. Sandes, The military engineer in India. Vol. I, pp. 369-70. Their widows exhibited an even greater longevity. The Hodson index reveals that the last, Louisa, widow of Robert Franks, who commanded the disaffected horse gunners at Allahabad in 1859, died in 1955.

13. Military Secretary to the Viceroy to Chadwick, 8 November 1870, Effects of Major Richard Chadwick, IOLR, Mss.Eur.F.133/8

14. Carter jot book, IOLR

Dock Company and that symbol of Victorian earthly achievement, a piano.<sup>15</sup> Echoes of others' fate survive. The evangelical Colonel Dawes corresponded with men whom he had led to Jesus. In a letter to Mark Crummie he passed on news of former comrades ('Sturges ... is in the police at Leeds ...').<sup>16</sup> Once outside the depot gates and beyond the reach of the Military Department's records, however, most dispersed into obscurity.

By the most exquisite of ironies, those transported to Western Australia following the outbreak at Dinapore achieved the most identifiable success. All six members of the 5th Bengal European Regiment transported for their part in the outbreak of 21 September 1860 can be traced in colonial records. Robert Kirk, a labourer from Dungannon, received a ticket-of-leave in 1865 and a decade later sailed for Britain, returning perhaps as the successful emigrant. Several evidently prospered at the expiration of their sentences. Henry Bolton, a former labourer from Uxbridge, became a builder, employing seven men in Perth. John Wilson, a labourer from Stockport, also employed six men, on properties near Bunbury. Isaac Price, Captain Cunningham's facetious interlocutor at Dinapore, drowned as a self-employed boatman off Fremantle in 1867.<sup>17</sup>

There remained in India, however, men who expressed the Europeans' temperament for longer than any others. The Company's soldiers had always demonstrated a greater willingness to stay in India after discharge, partly from having married Eurasian or native women, perhaps because the pains of separation left them with nothing at home to which to return.<sup>18</sup> The pattern continued after the transfer: of 110 men leaving the 101st in the 1860s, eight nominated India as their intended place of residence.<sup>19</sup> Those remaining included John Mooty at Allahabad and Nathaniel Bancroft and Arthur Owen at Simla, Bancroft retiring after running

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15. Crummie papers, ERO

16. Lt Col Michael Dawes to Mark Crummie, 22 July 1862, Crummie papers, ERO

17. Biographical details of military convicts James Boallen, Henry Bolton, Robert Kirk, Isaac Price, Timothy Riley & John Wilson appear in Rica Erickson, (ed.), The bicentennial dictionary of Western Australians pre-1829-1888, 4 vols, Perth, 1988, pp. 248, 254, 2867 & 3346, and Dictionary of Western Australians 1829-1914, 3 vols, Perth, 1979, Vol. II, pp. 44, 437, 453 & 592. Unfortunately, the compilers consistently render the location of the men's courts martial, Dinapore, as 'Singapore'.

18. Thomas Quinney recorded a case of a blagard ('one of the greatest drunkards in the regiment') who, after reforming secured promotion and a furlough. After a few months he returned to India because 'home seemed to have lost all its charms': Sketches of a soldier's life, p. 145. Art imitated life in Benjamin Franklin Langford's poem 'The Invalid', whose protagonist also returns to India after finding that at home 'all he loved were sought by him in vain' (see Appendix D for the full text).

19. Discharge papers, 101st foot, Airey-Hugh, 1855-72, PRO, WO 97/1678

the Lunatic Asylum at Calcutta for 22 years, Owen serving as a policeman and auction agent until obliged by blindness to retire.<sup>20</sup> Almost fifty years after their force's dissolution, the pension rolls of what had been the Bengal army revealed that a handful of old men still collected their stipends, the last survivors of the European force in India. These men lived to reap the modest rewards to which so many had aspired in the force's heyday - a pension, a bungalow in the hills, the respect of the foremen, box-wallahs and minor functionaries with whom they lived.<sup>21</sup>

If the pensioners staying on in the civil lines of British India represent the force's successes, 'blagards' also remained as a reminder of the old force. As ever, their experience is difficult to recapture, but glimpses of a few men might stand for many. Frank Richards, who served in India in the 1900s in the Royal Welsh Fusiliers, recorded in his well known memoir, Old-soldier sahib, how even then he encountered several former soldiers of the Company.<sup>22</sup> Given the currency of Richards' memoir, the man he called the Bacon-wallah is probably the only soldier of the Company readily recognised by those unfamiliar with the Europeans. The Bacon-wallah, then aged around eighty, had enlisted in 1837, and had served in the rebellion, probably in the artillery, before taking his discharge as time expired shortly after. After travelling about India as a vagrant for twenty years he married a Eurasian, establishing a piggery with the dowry. Seeing him squatting over a hookah, Richards could not discern his race. Richards recalled 'a few more old John Company soldiers' who also wandered about the country from cantonment to cantonment accepting the hospitality of the barrack-rooms before moving on.<sup>23</sup> Regarded as relics of the distant past, the pensioners may still have helped to shape the young soldiers' response to an India on the verge of yet more dramatic change. The Bacon-wallah complained that "the country was fast going to the dogs ... the way some of the natives were now strutting about".<sup>24</sup>

The local force acquired a nostalgic aura: there was, wrote a supporter, fondly quoting Lord Ellenborough, 'more romance in the ranks of the Bengal artillery than in any similar number of

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20. Discharge papers of Private John Mooty, 104th Bengal Fusiliers, PRO, WO 97/2055; Bancroft, From recruit to staff sergeant, Appendix C

21. Bengal unattached list muster roll, January 1907, IOLR, L/MIL/10/251. The successes of Owen's children illustrates the upward mobility which enlistment brought to an indeterminate number: his sons included a civil servant, an engineer, a railway official, an accountant and a doctor.

22. Frank Richards, Old-soldier sahib. London, 1965, pp. 83-5

23. McCance, History of the Royal Munster Fusiliers, Vol. II, p. 103, refers to the regiment's warrant officers and sergeants honouring a former Company's soldier in 1903.

24. Richards, Old-soldier sahib, pp. 86-7

men in the world'.<sup>25</sup> Occasional suggestions appeared that it might be revived, hopes natural among emigrés for the restoration of a deposed regime.<sup>26</sup> In 1885 the Royal United Services Institution debated the question in a special issue of its journal: pointlessly, as it happened.<sup>27</sup> Following the introduction of short-service enlistments it became futile to expect young men to willingly serve for twenty or more years in India. Ironically, the late-Victorian cult of Tommy Atkins which developed as a part of the romance of empire made much of the special place which India occupied for and to the soldier. Exemplified by Kipling's tales of his Soldiers three, India became the British army's second home - 'perhaps its first', as Corelli Barnett put it.<sup>28</sup> Whatever exotic appeal India may have had as a place for adventure - and the barely accessible views of the rank and file have not been explored - it surely did not approach what the men of the Company's Europeans saw in India half a century before: a route not just to adventure or death, but perhaps also to economic independence, respectability and even prosperity.

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25. Anon, 'Recruiting and army reform', Calcutta review, Vol. 43, 1866, p. 471

26. The 'ultra-Indian' Maj Gen George Balfour, for example, urged the select committee inquiring into the army in India and the colonies to revive a European force of 30,000 (with 20,000 royal 'auxiliaries'); PP 1867, Vol. VII, qq 3649-54. See also F.J. Mouatt, 'The British soldier in India', Journal of the Royal United Services Institution, Vol. 10, 1866, p. 362. Edward Spiers refers tantalisingly briefly to Wolseley's 'determined quest' in the late 1870s to sever the Horse Guards control over the Indian army; The late Victorian army, p. 155.

27. Journal of the Royal United Services Institution, Vol. XXIX, No. CXXIX, 1885

28. Corelli Barnett, Britain and her army 1509-1970, Penguin, 1974, p. 278

## Appendix A

### Note on theory, sources and methods

If history is more a patch-work quilt than a seamless web this thesis has been shaped from a most eclectic rag-bag, though of textures and colours selected according to a design. It has drawn on a diverse range of sources, from conventional 'blue books' and 'papers' (of both commanders and soldiers) to literary, linguistic, pictorial, graphic and statistical evidence. In particular, it seeks to employ 'vernacular evidence' of the otherwise inaccessible life of the barrack-room, in soldiers' slang, songs, funereal inscriptions and graffiti.<sup>1</sup> It reflects the academic pre-occupations of our time by incorporating where relevant concerns of ethnicity, gender, language, class and age. It has attempted to maintain analytical rigour without sacrificing the human concern indispensable in a multiple biography. As befits an enquiry seeking to connect otherwise disparate experiences and fields of research across a broad chronological period, its tone is more often speculative than conclusive. The limitations of time, the inherent form of a thesis and, above all, unevenness of evidence, have imposed a less confident tone than any either writer or reader would have preferred. In a work such as this, as two scholars of elusive popular radicals put it: 'the mood of empathy and the language of possibility become the legitime tools of understanding'.<sup>2</sup>

A subject of juvenile curiosity, the Company's Europeans first attracted purposeful research for me in 1978 through a casual interest in mutiny in general and the brief career of the 5th Bengal European Regiment in particular. Over the following decade this interest lay fallow, fertilized by visits to the principal locations of the white mutiny and desultory investigations into available sources. At its formal commencement as a thesis early in 1989 it was conceived as an exploration via the events of 1859 into the connections between the military and social history of Victorian Britain. It soon extended to encompass the culture which made possible the soldiers' protest and which contributed largely to the European force's demise.<sup>3</sup> In identifying and approaching the sources which lead me to complete this task I drew upon and acted under a range of influences. This appendix documents and discusses those issues.

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1. The term is Victor Neuberg's in his Victorian popular literature, Penguin, 1977, p. 12. Some of the issues in using such material are discussed in Peter Stanley, "A horn to put your powder in": interpreting artefacts of British soldiers in colonial Australia', Journal of the Australian War Memorial, No. 13, October 1988, pp. 9-13.

2. Edward Royle & James Walvin, English radicals and reformers 1760-1848, Brighton, 1982, p. 11

3. The course of the project since its formal commencement is relevant. From March 1989 to September 1990 I was enrolled as a part-time candidate. From September to November 1990 I spent ten weeks on archival research in Britain and India. From June 1991 to July 1992 I worked full time on writing the thesis, and thereafter resumed part-time status until submission.

This thesis attempts to synthesize the hybrid approach of 'military social history'. That it concerns a subject both British and imperial is, from a methodological and theoretical perspective, virtually incidental. The relationship between military and social history is, however, critical to its conception and execution. It seeks to articulate an approach deriving from the 'new military history', the theoretical orientation of historians interested in pursuing the study of military institutions within a broader historical context.<sup>4</sup> The implications of the new military history, however, have yet to be fully explored, particularly in its relationship to parallel developments in social history as a whole. Reacting against the analytical inadequacy of the traditional style of military history, historians of the 'war and society' school have often displayed a sophisticated awareness of the nuances of politics within elites, such as in tracing the cabals of generals or politicians. However, I do not believe that they have satisfactorily considered relationships of power within military institutions, or between the military and classes and groups in society generally. Sadly, 'new' military historians have generally failed to attract social historians to ask questions about military institutions and their relationships with wider societies. This may be the result of the new military history still being regarded as the preserve of military historians. While further fragmentation in a discipline already deeply fissured by increasingly exclusive sub-specialisms is undesirable, it is necessary to re-formulate the study of military institutions and society around a new rubric: military social history.<sup>5</sup>

Military social history has two complementary aims: to integrate the study of military experience more closely into the study of society, and to apply the social historian's questions, concepts and concerns to the study of the military as a network of social and political relationships. This will be attempted by drawing on the full range of conceptual and technical tools developed by social historians. At the same time, it should benefit from the command of the technicalities of terminology, organization and function which is such a necessary part of the military historian's skills. I therefore attempt not to invent a new field, but to articulate an historical approach to explaining the relationship between military institutions and the societies which sustained them, a method which other studies have previously exhibited without having necessarily having formulated a formal approach.<sup>6</sup>

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4. For a useful summary of the approach, see John Whiteclay Chambers, 'The new military history: myth and reality', The journal of military history, Vol. 55, No. 3, July 1991, pp. 395-406

5. The term is not new, being first used in 1984, by Edward Coffman in 'The new American military history', Military affairs, Vol. XLVIII, No. 1, January 1984, pp. 1-5, though it has not been taken up.

6. A source of continuing inspiration as a model of how the history of a society and its armed forces may be integrated with insight and humanity has been Bill Gammage's The broken years: Australian soldiers and the great war, Canberra, 1974. Several works on armed forces of north America may also be seen as exemplars. Studies of colonial forces and their society and of the experience of black Americans in the military (the latter inescapably based on an appreciation of broader racial relationships) indicate the potential value of considering the relationships between armed forces and western society. Late colonial north America has inspired several studies linking a

Military social historians should do for military organizations what social historians have done for civil society: place at the centre of their analysis concepts of class and culture as well as the political relationships they imply. It is therefore a study of the changing relationships of power between officers and men, between each and the military authorities, and between the commanders of the British army in India. The balances of power within regiments in many ways paralleled class relationships in Britain, and at some points can only be understood in relation to contemporary British and Anglo-Irish society.

Fundamentally, however, this thesis contributes to the understanding of the British army in the nineteenth century. The constitutional and operational framework of the army from 1815 to 1914 has long been clear. Since 1975, however, a new direction in British military history in the nineteenth century has become apparent, one which increasingly sits uncomfortably under the 'war and society' rubric and which has tended towards a more integrated understanding of the connections between the army and society. Edward Spiers's pioneering The army and society 1815-1914, while generally more concerned with the army than its society, suggests fruitful points of departure for further research, in, for example, the composition and attitudes of both officers and other ranks. Hew Strachan's studies of reform and the pre-Crimean army, building on an awareness of the early-Victorian concern for administrative reform, have revised accepted notions that serious reform began as a result of that war. At the end of the period, Tim Travers's The killing ground, uses 'the Western Front as a model by which middle- and upper-class Edwardian society can be better understood'.<sup>7</sup> Yet even works offered as social history show how much remains to be achieved. Diana Henderson's Highland soldier provides a detailed account of the highland regiments' distinctive composition and experience. Though presented as 'military social history', by ignoring connections between class, ethnicity and military experience she has produced a curiously old fashioned social history.<sup>8</sup>

Recent work suggests that military history can illuminate more than the institutions with which it deals and can connect with wider concerns. Several studies, on flogging, on the volunteer movement and on women and the mid-Victorian army, offer perspectives unfamiliar to military historians, drawn from political, social and feminist history.<sup>9</sup> Much remains to be accomplished, however. Soldiers remain one of the few significant social groups to be rescued from obscurity by social historians.<sup>10</sup>

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military force with its social context: Fred Anderson's A people's army: Massachusetts soldiers and society in the seven years' war, London, 1984, has been a particular encouragement.

7. Tim Travers, The killing ground: the British army, the western front and the emergence of modern warfare 1900-1918, London, 1987, p. xxii

8. Diana Henderson, Highland soldier: a social study of the highland regiments, 1820-1920, Edinburgh, 1989

9. For example, Harry Hopkins, The strange death of Private White: a Victorian scandal that made history, London, 1977, uses the inquest into the death of a hussar who died after a flogging to

One of the fundamental issues confronting the historian of mutiny, crime or protest is the need to justify a concentration on what sociologists call 'deviance'. This study is founded on the assumption that a study of aberrant behaviour can illuminate the normality it disrupts. In so framing the enquiry, John Prebble's account of mutiny among highland regiments, 1743-1804, offered a reminder of the validity of portraying a culture (and as it happened, its disintegration) through the unlikely medium of a study of military protest.<sup>11</sup>

The great exception to the deficiency of published works on the history of the Indian army is, of course, the 'Indian mutiny', the subject of a massive outpouring of memoirs and histories for fifty years after 1857 and of several recent influential studies.<sup>12</sup> The early works have provided a lode of contemporary evidence which has enriched an otherwise poorly documented force. Of the recent works, Eric Stokes's The peasant armed must be noticed because it provides another intellectual model for this study. 'Sceptical of overarching theories', Stokes investigated the rebellion around Delhi, seeking

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examine opposition to corporal punishment as an aspect of the radical crusade for reform. Ian Beckett, Riflemen form: a study of the rifle volunteer movement 1859-1908, Aldershot, 1982; Hugh Cunningham, The volunteer force: a social and political history 1859-1908, London, 1975, show how a force dominated by artisans expressed and transmitted conservative and patriotic values central to the definition of the lower middle-class of late Victorian Britain. Myna Trustram, Women of the regiment: marriage and the Victorian army, Cambridge, 1984, connects the military and the patriarchal nature of Victorian society.

10. We still lack substantial studies of, say, the military response to Chartism and other popular movements, studies of the army and the empire, and of its part in repressing (and, in the Fenian crisis of the 1860s, in fostering) Irish nationalism, all key issues in nineteenth century British history in which the army played a central part. Such studies might not simply provide a clearer understanding of the nature of the army as an institution, but might extend our understanding of the relationship between army and society in ways which would illuminate both. For example, emigration as a response to the economic dislocation of early industrial Britain has been examined extensively; exhaustively for post-famine Ireland. Enlistment, long a resort of young, unskilled men, may have represented one choice among several, including tramping, internal and overseas migration. What were the connections between them? Analysis of enlistment statistics (abundant in the case of the Company's force) in conjunction with the fluctuations of trade and agriculture may provide clues. It is striking how often letters from Company's soldiers echo the preoccupations of emigrants' letters: not simply in their wonder at the novelty of their new life, but in their desire to convey the material good fortune many encountered.

11. John Prebble, Mutiny: highland regiments in revolt 1743-1804, Penguin, 1985

12. Military historians for over a century have referred to the events of 1857 as the 'Mutiny'. Recent scholarship, and particularly Eric Stokes's The peasant armed: the Indian revolt of 1857, Oxford, 1986, has rendered traditional term misleading. Moreover, in a work dealing with another 'mutiny' to perpetuate the conventional term might confuse. The events of 1857, therefore, are referred to as the 'rebellion', and those of 1859-60 as the 'white mutiny'.

particular reasons, district by district ... why certain groups rebelled, and others did not... [h]e broke down ... large caste categories into smaller functional and even clan groupings in whose enduring interests he found an explanation for behaviour.<sup>13</sup>

In reconstructing the experience of the Company's Europeans this thesis similarly attempts to penetrate the hidden worlds of the barrack-room and the officers' mess in an attempt to do for the European force what Eric Stokes did for Rohilkund in the rebellion. It is - literally in parts - 'Subaltern studies', methodologically if not ideologically, in that it strives to locate those who might otherwise have been inarticulate or unheard. This is a worthy aim not because it is necessarily virtuous to give voice to the dumb, but because a comprehensive understanding of the substance and relevance of an historical relationship can only be obtained by noticing all of those involved. In the case of the European officers and men of the East India Company's Bengal army, however, the inarticulate include, surprisingly perhaps, the officers as much as their men. Problems of evidence intrude at every level and are addressed throughout.<sup>14</sup>

It is therefore appropriate to discuss the nature of the evidence on which I have drawn to reveal the world of the barrack-room and officers' mess of the European force. This thesis is a 'multiple biography', using the experiences of a group of individuals to illuminate broader concerns. The careers of a number of men exemplify the stresses with which the army wrestled, and their experiences over that decade form one of the structural joists on which the argument rests. Among officers they include men who coped with and prospered from change, and those who found only bitterness and frustration in the new Indian army. The comparatively rich range of sources relating to the Company's European soldiers allows those who would otherwise be denied prominence to appear as individuals, albeit often as vignettes rather than as principal characters.

Any study of large groups of the partially literate beyond reach of direct contact faces difficulties in locating, evaluating and using the available evidence, difficulties which must be confronted. The European soldiers of the Company's army appeared to present the kinds of difficulties endemic to studies of the labouring poor of nineteenth-century Britain, in that I expected the extant sources to be scarce and fragmentary. As it happened, however, much more material was available than had been expected, including several sources of great richness - a function of the character of the force as I

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13. Thomas Metcalf, The aftermath of revolt, New Delhi, 1990, p xiv

14. As a study in both the military history of British India and British social history, this thesis is based on two differing research strategies. Archival research has been directed entirely to the experience of European officers and men of the Bengal army, and to the response of the military authorities to them. The connection between this and British social and labour history has been explored entirely through secondary material. To do otherwise would have impoverished the Indian side while making the British side impossibly time-consuming.

encountered it. Even so, that available presented difficulties in interpretation which are apparent, and deficiencies remain which have influenced the resultant work.

Several kinds of sources allow the reconstruction of the culture of the Company's Europeans. Some fifty collections of letters or other documents created by soldiers between 1839 and 1860 exist in public or other collections in Britain. Several not only provide an understanding of the nature of military service in the Company's army, but are unrivalled in that no comparable range of sources exists for the larger Queen's army, arguably for anywhere for the period 1815-1914, certainly not for early Victorian India. Several are outstanding: George Carter's 'jot book', John Brown's 'commonplace book', Mark Crummie's reminiscences and the letters of John Ramsbottom, William Braithwaite and John Luck, without which this thesis would have been much the poorer. This unpublished material is supplemented by a handful of soldiers' memoirs and other works.<sup>15</sup>

The great majority of soldiers, who did not rise so high, are, however, also able to be recaptured from a variety of documents. A number of minor letters or other papers exist, many preserved for other than sentimental reasons. At the opposite end of the spectrum from what were evidently cherished family possessions are the many documents, including wills, letters and notebooks, held by the India Office on behalf of men whose relatives could not be traced. Collectively these soldiers' papers constitute a record of human experience of great emotional power, one which, like the force to which they belonged, has been virtually neglected.

Biographical notes on seventy-nine soldiers appear in the margins of this thesis. An analysis of their composition as a group suggests that the private sources used extensively in this thesis are broadly representative of the force as a whole.

The 79 men may be categorised thus:

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15. Thomas Quinney's Sketches of a soldier's life in India (1853), Jerimiah Brasyer's Memoirs (1892), Arthur Owen, Reminiscences of an Indian mutiny veteran (1915) and N.W. Bancroft's From recruit to staff sergeant. The latter, first published in 1900, has been available as a facsimile since 1979, and has long influenced perceptions of the Bengal Horse Artillery. William Bingham's The field of Ferozeshah (1848), Benjamin Franklin Langford's Alvin of Erie, or the mourner's choice, Lahore, 1854, and Robert Blatchford's My life in the army (1910) may also be included. The authors of these sources were exceptional, in that they troubled to record their experiences, at the time or later, and that most were successful, reaching senior non-commissioned rank.

<b>Ethnicity</b>	English	Irish	Scots	Welsh	country -born	unknown /other
Sample (number)	27	29	16	1	2	6
Sample (per cent)	34.1	36.7	20.2	1.2	2.5	5.0

This distribution compares quite closely with a sample of the ethnic composition of one ship per year carrying recruits to Bengal:

34.6%	48.3%	14.8%	1.5%	nil	0.6%
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It will be apparent that while Irishmen are slightly under-represented in the sample, Scots are similarly over-represented.

### **Presidency and arm of service**

The 79 men served in the following units:

1st European Bengal Fusiliers	9
2nd European Bengal Fusiliers	5
3rd Bengal European Regiment	7
5th Bengal European Regiment	11
6th Bengal European Regiment	1
Bengal Horse Artillery	19
Bengal Artillery	12
2nd Bengal European Light Cavalry	2
3rd Bengal European Light Cavalry	1
5th Bengal European Light Cavalry	1
Bengal Sappers and Miners	1
Bombay infantry	6
Bombay artillery	2
Madras infantry	2
Madras Sappers and Miners	1

While men of the old infantry corps appear to be appropriately represented, Bengal gunners predominate, with men of the new regiments (particularly the light cavalry) greatly under-represented.

### **Fate**

The fates of those featured in the thesis differ substantially from that of recruits joining the Bengal Europeans over the thirty years preceding the rebellion, in that, not surprisingly given the concentration on the events of 1859, a disproportionately large proportion secured discharge in 1859. Nevertheless, their fates included:

discharged

discharged with ignominy	1
executed	1
transported	1
died or killed in action	12
commissioned	2
volunteered to Queen's army	12
unknown	16

The qualification of the numbers discharged in 1859 notwithstanding, it is evident that the evidence deriving from or relating to the rank and file of the Bengal Europeans constitutes a reasonably representative sample of the force.

The Company's officers are similarly well served by available official records, and in the Hodson biographical index held in the National Army Museum, are accessible as individuals. Private records, though naturally proportionately more plentiful than those of their men, are by no means abundant, and though adequate and often inadvertently revealing, are often less frank. The deficiency is rectified by several types of sources unavailable for the other ranks. Officers' memoirs are plentiful, particularly for the 'mutiny', while the officers' grievances following the Company's transfer in 1858 are expressed in newspapers, Parliamentary and official papers and a number of pamphlets. It is nevertheless notable that the reconstruction of the sub-culture of European officers before 1857 rests on less substantial foundations than are desirable, partly because they were disinclined to write publicly or privately, and that much of what survives either represents a fraction of their personal correspondence or the more prolific records of their critics.

Official records constitute the second major category of primary source material. The quantity of official material held in the India Office Library and Records is overwhelming. The East India Company's determination to document for its directors in Britain everything of consequence (and much of no consequence at all) occurring in India was remarkable. Even mundane questions were passed up the chain of command: Dalhousie estimated that as governor general he saw over 20,000 documents annually.<sup>16</sup> Much of this mass was in turn referred to India House with recommendations from the Commanders-in-Chief and cart loads of explanatory documents, considered by the Military Secretary, the directors and often the Board of Control, with answers transmitted to India to be passed down the pyramid. Soldiers' records, particularly the registers of recruits (which often chart subsequent service), embarkation returns and discharge certificates allow the military service of virtually all individuals to be traced (given sufficient time). The annual muster and casualty returns permit detailed statistical analysis. Complementary collections exist in the National Archives of India

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16. Dalhousie to Sir George Couper, 2 October 1852, Baird, *Private letters*, p. 227

(including soldiers' wills) and the Public Record Office (referring to men who remained in the British army after 1861). Though virtually no records generated within regiments have survived, the massive collections of Military Consultations or Proceedings document exhaustively both issues of general policy and individual soldiers' encounters with authority. Though no proceedings of courts martial have survived, the Bengal General Orders provide details of charges, sentences and judgements on men tried by general courts martial.

For the white mutiny itself, besides references in official records generally, a vast collection of transcripts of soldiers' testimonies before courts of enquiry and official correspondence was published as a Parliamentary Paper in 1860. Since it records verbatim the appearances of about two-thirds of the Bengal Europeans before the courts of enquiry established to investigate the soldiers' grievances, it represents the largest single source concerning the ordinary soldiers of the Victorian army. Though its value does not correspond with its bulk, as is apparent from the discussion of the evidence in Part III, the shortcomings of the process of recording the men's testimonies, and even more their reluctance to speak openly before authority.<sup>17</sup>

When considered in relation to the broad range of complementary official records the available private records allay any misgivings that the lives, feelings and attitudes of the Company's Europeans may have been lost. The nature of much of this evidence requires a sensitivity to the circumstances of its creation and the nuances of its expression.

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17. Few major collections of private papers exist, but those relevant, notably of Lord Canning, Sir Hugh Rose, the Duke of Cambridge and Sir Charles Wood provided sources without which this such would not have been possible. Each provides access to a range of perspectives on events in India following the rebellion, not only at the level of those ostensibly making the decisions affecting the future of the Indian army, but, more critically, revealing the tensions which existed between and within the military hierarchy. Of the major figures I was unable to establish whether or where Lord Clyde's papers may be held.

## Appendix B

### Glossary of Anglo-Indian military slang

Robert Blatchford, who served in the regiment formerly the 1st Bombay Fusiliers, recalled that 'the common speech of the barrack-room was unprintable', and it has certainly largely gone unrecorded.<sup>1</sup> Barrack-room speech - a mixture, as a correspondent to the Bengal hurkaru wrote in 1839, of 'good Irish, bad English, indecency [and] blasphemy' - included many terms of Hindoostanee current among Anglo-Indians generally.<sup>2</sup> Its flavour is suggested by John Ramsbottom, who in writing to his friend Jack (rather than to his family as in most surviving letters) sent him a slip of paper bearing 'a few words of cuntry Language'. Mindful of John's caution to 'look privetly and don't let the females see it', Jack destroyed it.<sup>3</sup>

A dictionary of British military slang is long overdue. This glossary is a partial and preliminary attempt at that task. It includes many terms specific to the Company's Europeans, but because much of the language used in the Europeans' barrack-rooms was common among British soldiers generally (such as 'townee' or 'new lights') and to civilians (such as 'chum' or 'top heavy'), it also includes terms used in the Queen's army which might otherwise not have been noticed. No attempt has been made to incorporate examples from existing dictionaries of historical slang.<sup>4</sup>

The terms recorded here suggest both the value and the hazards of vernacular evidence. Several for example, refer to drinking, reflecting its importance within the barrack-room. The number of citations for particular terms is so few (except for common terms such as 'shipmate') that often considerable caution must be taken in drawing inferences from them. The most fruitful source, Nathaniel Bancroft's From recruit to staff sergeant, for example, may reflect usages wider than the European force. 'Gum tickler', for instance, seems to have entered general slang thirty years before Bancroft heard it. At the same time, significant aspects of barrack-room life, such as death and sex, are not represented at all.

Besides evoking nuances of the European soldiers' experience (such as identity, in terms such as 'ours', 'Fogs', 'spurs', 'shipmates', 'townies', 'chums', 'country-born' and 'nigger') the glossary suggests that one of the European force's minor legacies may have been a linguistic one. Several terms passed into general slang, but have been dated as arising after the European force's demise. It is possible,

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1. Robert Blatchford, My life in the army, pp. 118-119
  2. Bengal hurkaru, 14 December 1839
  3. Pte John Ramsbottom to 'Jack', Kurrachee, 29 August [?October] 1856, BL
  4. Pre-eminently, Eric Partridge's A dictionary of historical slang, Penguin, 1972

then, that the Europeans carried with them into the Queen's army in 1861 slang terms formerly specific to them which subsequently gained wider currency.<sup>5</sup> Even so, it must be acknowledged that the difficulty of distinguishing between the Queen's army and the Europeans (in that both presumably picked up Anglo-Indian expressions) renders problematic any inference based on such limited evidence.

The glossary includes terms used among soldiers (and, when specified, Addiscombe cadets and officers). It includes Hindoostanee terms used in the text, with definitions usually based on Hobson-Jobson. Sources, usually having appeared elsewhere in the thesis, have been shortened to authors' surnames.

Bagdadder	a dealer in spirits or other goods within the barrack-room (Bancroft)
Bheesty; bheestie	a water carrier
Black classes	Hindoostanee lessons (Coghill)
Blackies, going to the	secondment to a native corps on the Town Major's list (Welchman; Peel Commission)
Blue lights	men of an evangelical persuasion; according to 'One who was there' exclusive to the 79th Foot. <sup>6</sup>
Boots	called in the barrack-room to establish whether a 'cuffer', or story, should continue. See 'Spurs' 2. (Blatchford; Grey)
Cantonment	a military station; also cantonments
Chin strap	nick-name of a (or possibly the) sergeant major at Warley in 1844; also 'Old Blucher' (Crummie)
Chip	a rupee (Bancroft); from c. 1870 a sovereign (Partridge)
Chity fry	old soldiers (Quinney); origin unknown
Chuck up	to resign a commission (officers' slang) (Porter <sup>7</sup> )
Chummie	a friend; a variant on chum, recorded of the 3rd Bengal European Regiment at Agra, 1857 (Raikes <sup>8</sup> )
Coachbuilders	evangelical men in the 71st Light Infantry ('One who was there')

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5. These terms include 'chip', 'dixie', 'gulpins', 'pegging', and 'ringtail'.

6. 'One who was there', At the front, being a realistic record of a soldier's experiences in the Crimean war and Indian mutiny, Paisley, 1915, p. 258

7. Neil Porter, The army of India question, London, 1860

8. Charles Raikes, Notes on the revolt in the North-Western Provinces of India, London, 1858

Congee house	the regimental cells, so called from the rice water diet once imposed, congee being water in which rice had been boiled
Cooly; coolie	a hired labourer, a menial
Cot	a bed; not 'charpoy', evidently a later usage (Hobson-Jobson)
Cot-mate	a friend, a chum (Blatchford TAR)
Country-born	Europeans born in India; in 1859 one man in twelve of the Bengal gunners remaining in India had been born in India
Dhobie	a washerman
Dhoolie	covered litter carried by four men, usually used to transport wounded or sick men
Dixie	tin pannikins issued to soldiers in India; from the Urdu (Crummie)
Double header	a double issue of grog, that is, four drams (Quinney)
Fogs, or Old fogs	foot artillery gunners (Bancroft); possibly derived from an archaic term for an invalid or garrison soldier (Partridge)
Griff; griffin	One newly arrived in India, applied for about a year: origin unknown.
Gulpins	A recruit (Bancroft); 'a simpleton' in general slang from c. 1860 (Partridge)
Gum tickler	the morning's first swallow of rum; the second was termed a gall buster (Bancroft); general slang during the first half of the century (Partridge)
Hatters	evangelical men of the 93rd Highlanders ('One who was there')
Hill trots	bowel disorder common in hill stations (Gray <sup>9</sup> )
Jacket, to get a	to secure a posting to the horse artillery, from its distinctive laced jacket (Roberts)
Maidan	open parade ground, often grassed
Mofussil	up-country, the interior, as opposed to 'at the presidency' - Calcutta
New lights	persons of an evangelical persuasion (Hervey <sup>10</sup> )
Nigger	natives. Presumably always common in the barrack-room, the term supposedly gained currency among younger officers

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9. Diary of Lt William Gray, Bengal Artillery, 1 September 1847, NAM, 6807/201

10. Charles Allan, (ed.), A soldier of the Company: life of an Indian ensign 1833-43. London, 1988

in the decades before the rebellion, a symptom of the estrangement which precipitated the rebellion. It was used widely during the rebellion.

Ours	1. the unit to which a man belonged (Bancroft) 2. the Company's European force (Brown commonplace book)
Pegging	to supervise drinking in the canteen (Carter); 'tippling' from c. 1870 (Partridge)
Pipeclay sergeants	non-commissioned officers appointed from among recruits aboard transports (MacMullen)
Plumpers	recruits (Quinney)
Pop	ginger beer (Surgeon Hare; Peel Commission); in general usage from c. 1812 (Partridge)
Puckered	placed on a charge (Ramsbottom)
Pultan	regiment; from the Hindoostanee
Punkah	a fan swinging from the ceiling. introduced in bungalows in the late eighteenth century and into barracks from 1848
Raggies	undress jacket (officers' slang) (Kaye, <u>Peregrine Pulteney</u> )
Rig away	dressing bugle; a call sounded to warn men to dress for parade (Carter)
Ringtales	recruits (Blatchford, Bancroft); used generally c. 1860-1914
Rum-johnny	a prostitute, from the Hindoostanee, `ramjan': 'a pleasing woman'
Sailor	a man able to treat his fellows (Blatchford)
Sale's bucks	men of the 13th Light Infantry who had served in Afghanistan under Sir Robert Sale (Carter)
Shaves	camp rumours (Young); general from c. 1813, but popular during the Crimean war and the rebellion
Shipmates	men arriving in India aboard the same vessel (Quinney, Bancroft, Braithwaite and Ramsbottom)
Sicklegaurs	native servants employed to clean accoutrements
Slogging	to fight; particularly, to resolve differences by fighting (Bancroft); general from c. 1859 (Partridge)
Spun	to fail, Addiscombe slang (Kaye, <u>Peregrine Pulteney</u> ); presumably in the past tense
Spurs	1. the response to 'boots!' if men wished a cuffer to continue (Blatchford, Grey) 2. possibly the nick-name applied to horse artillerymen (PP 1860)

Swat	to study, Addiscombe slang (Kaye, <u>Peregrine Pulteney</u> ); evidently informing the broader usage 'to study hard', becoming general at university (and presumably at public school) from c. 1870 (Partridge)
Sykses	the soldiers' pronunciation of 'Sikhs' (Maude)
Taps	punishment for minor offences in the 2nd European Bengal Fusiliers in the 1850s, reporting in full dress to the quarter guard (Coghill in McCance, p. 188)
Top heavy	drunk (Carter); included as a further example of a drinking term apparently but not actually specific to the Company's force, since it had been in general use since the seventeenth century (Partridge)
Townee; townie	one hailing from the same place in Britain or Ireland (Bancroft, Maude, Raikes, Waterfield)
Warley box	the box issued to recruits at Warley before embarking for India; one key opened all (Crummie)
Yeos	the Company's European troops (Bancroft, <u>Delhi gazette</u> )

## Appendix C

### Glossary of military terms

This list is organized alphabetically by abbreviation. For the hierarchy of ranks within regiments, see Appendix E, Ranks and pay.

Adjt	Adjutant: the officer responsible for a unit's administration and discipline
AG	Adjutant General: the officer responsible for discipline and administration of the army as a whole, assisted by deputies and deputy assistants (DAG and DAAG) on divisional staffs
BA	Bengal Artillery (usually denoting foot artillery)
Bdr	Bombardier: the artillery equivalent of corporal
BELC	Bengal European Light Cavalry
BER	Bengal European Regiment, the title preceding the change to 'fusiliers' in the 1840s
BHA	Bengal Horse Artillery
BLC	Bengal Light Cavalry: the ten regiments of regular native cavalry, all of which mutinied in 1857, the European officers of which formed the officers for the Bengal European Light Cavalry
BM	Brigade major: the staff officer assisting a brigadier
Bn	battalion; the administrative unit of foot artillery, consisting of four companies each about 100 strong.
Brig.	Brigadier: an appointment conferred on a colonel involving the temporary command of a station or brigade
BS&M	Bengal Sappers and Miners
Bt	Brevet: a step in rank open to majors and upward, providing seniority but not pay, and primarily useful for acquiring command and other appointments, especially on active service
By	Bombay
Capt.	Captain: the commander of a company
Col	Colonel: either an honorary appointment (carrying the perquisite of the coveted 'colonels' allowances) or involving command of a station or brigade

Company	the sub-unit of infantry regiments and foot artillery battalions, each about 100 men strong
Comet	the most junior cavalry officer
Cpl	Corporal: a non-commissioned officer junior to a sergeant
DAG, DAAG	see AG
EBF	European Bengal Fusiliers: correctly if not logically rendered
Ens	Ensign: the most junior infantry officer
Foot	Regiment of Foot: the usual short form for the formal title of infantry regiments in the Queen's army
Fusiliers	originally (in the seventeenth century) applied to troops detailed to guard artillery, by the nineteenth a title conferred as an honour
Gen.	General: the highest ranking general; often the rank of the Commander-in-Chief in India
Gnr	Gunner, an ordinary soldier of the artillery
Lt	Lieutenant: a subaltern officer, senior to an ensign but junior to a captain; in the Bengal army often commanding a company or a troop
2/Lt	Second Lieutenant: the most junior artillery or fusilier officer
LI	Light Infantry: originally skirmishers, by 1857 denoting little significant difference from line infantry
Lt Col	Lieutenant Colonel: the actual commander of a regiment of infantry or a battalion or brigade of artillery
Lt Gen	Lieutenant General: next senior to a major general; the rank often held by the Commander-in-Chief in India
Mad.	Madras
Maj.	Major: second-in-command of a battalion, regiment or artillery brigade
Maj. Gen.	Major General: the lowest rank accorded the title general at the time; a commander of a division
Pte	Private; an ordinary soldier of the infantry or cavalry
QMG	Quartermaster General: the staff officer responsible for the supply and operational deployment of a force. Like the AG assisted by a hierarchy of DQMGs and DAQMGs.

QMS	Quartermaster Sergeant: ranking next to a sergeant major, the senior non-commissioned officer responsible for a unit's supplies, arms and material requisites
RA	Royal Artillery: the artillery of the Queen's army, which in the nineteenth century first served in India in 1857
Regt.	regiment: the usual form of organization for infantry and cavalry, with establishments of about 800 and 400, and organized in companies and troops, respectively
RHA	Royal Horse Artillery: the light artillery of the Queen's army
SGIMD	Secretary to the Government of India, Military Department: the permanent head of the Government of India's military officials; for the period 1852-61, Major General Richard Birch.
Sgt	Sergeant: a non-commissioned officer
Sgt Maj.	Sergeant Major: the senior non-commissioned officer of a regiment, battalion or brigade
S/Sgt	Staff Sergeant: senior non-commissioned officers filling staff positions at unit or other headquarters, such as schoolmaster sergeant, armourer sergeant
Surg.	Surgeon: the medical officer of a regiment, etc.; also part of a hierarchy, of assistant surgeon (A/Surg.) surgeon and surgeon major.
Town Major	the officer responsible for administering Fort William, Calcutta, and for receiving and forwarding recruits and despatching invalids. Formerly responsible for the Town Major's list, by the 1840s the responsibility had apparently passed to the Adjutant General of the Bengal army. The office was lucrative and, in its proximity to the army's authorities, influential. <sup>1</sup>
Tp	troop: the sub-unit of both cavalry and horse artillery, about 50 and 100 men strong respectively

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1. This note is based on inference rather than on duties specified in official documents.

## Appendix D

### Soldiers' verse

Several surviving examples of verse composed or recorded by soldiers suggest its value in indicating otherwise inaccessible aspects of their lives. Like the examples of slang recorded in Appendix B, the selection is hardly representative. It does not include songs resembling the fragment which Charles Grey recalled hearing in the canteen of the Bermondsey Brigands, such as:

Sally in the Garden sifting cinders  
 The wind \_\_\_\_\_ windows  
 Sally in the Garden shelling peas  
 The hair \_\_\_\_\_ knees<sup>1</sup>

Nor does it include the impromptu and therefore ephemeral verses like the 'doggerel song' which some of Arthur Owen's comrades composed after the battle of Futtepore in 1857:

With our shot and shell  
 We made them smell hell  
 That day at Futtepore.<sup>2</sup>

Even so, these songs, verses and poems reflect aspects of soldiers' lives, amplifying and complementing impressions accessible from other sources. The first section comprises 'informal' verse evidently composed, perhaps collectively, by soldiers of the Company's European regiments - genuine 'barrack-room ballads'. Only 'Sweet is the hour', which speaks of the separation which tormented many soldiers, and the headstone inscription clearly ante-date the rebellion, though 'Oh India' expresses the ambivalent feelings towards India common to many men throughout the period in question. 'Who killed Tantia Topie', a parody of 'Who killed cock Robin', sharply satirizes the long pursuit of the rebel leader, composed perhaps by a scholar/blagard and suggesting the vigour of the articulate barrack-room culture. 'The battle of Sussia' and 'Old George's' 'The storming of Delhie', among the few accounts of an action produced by ordinary soldiers, reveal more than any other examples how the soldiers' ballad drew upon and was couched within the conventions of the contemporary 'folk' song. The congruence illustrates the connections between civil and military life with which this thesis deals.

The second section offers a selection of verse composed by individual soldiers in a consciously literary vein. William Bingham's volume of verse 'written to divert the ennui and lassitude of a military life

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1. Charles Grey, 'Soldiering in Victorian days', p. 64

2. Arthur Owen, Recollections of a veteran of the great Indian mutiny, p. 35

in barracks' is also couched securely within the boundaries of contemporary literary convention. A stanza from 'The soldier's farewell to England' is quoted at the beginning of Chapter 2. His 'The field of Ferozeshah', despite hints of the horrors encountered in the battle, reveals little of the soldiers' reactions to the experience of combat. A portion only need be reproduced. More illuminating is the excerpt from his 'Past and present; or, random thoughts in Hindostan', which, despite its dramatic melancholia, evokes the isolation which an unsympathetic barrack-room could inflict on its less robust inhabitants.

By contrast, Benjamin Franklin Langford's 'The invalid', though necessarily a product of its time in form, conveys real insights into the predicament of men whose service led to their estrangement from native land and family. His 'Song of India No. 1' expresses in more refined language the sentiments of the barrack-room's 'Oh India', a coincidence which emphasises the unity of the barrack-room culture. The poem encompasses several of the dominant themes in the Europeans' experience: the prospect of glory or the other rewards of 'fickle Fortune', the 'friendship' of the barrack-room, the 'hope' which sustained men, and the 'memory' which variously tormented or buoyed them against their exile. Only in his assertion that 'Love wanders thro' this far famed land' was Langford guilty of wishful thinking, and even then he may have intended the stanza to have an ironic effect appreciated only by those who understood how slim were the average recruit's prospects of Love finding a target for his 'bow in hand'. Since Langford published letters and probably verse in the Mofussilite before his first discharge in 1854, it is possible that a comprehensive survey of the mofussil papers known to be favoured by soldiers, such as the Mofussilite and the Delhi gazette, would yield further examples.

Besides verse by the two soldiers known to have published poems, the second section includes poems by 'Nicholas Michell', who may have been a soldier, or who may as a civilian reflect contemporary literary taste within the barrack-room. Though the stock of mediocre Anglo-Indian verse needs no replenishment, his 'We'll yield no inch of Indian ground' evokes the retributive passions of the rebellion which soldiers shared and acted upon.

## I Barrack-room verse

### 1. 'Oh India'<sup>3</sup>

Oh India! Land of milk and honey  
 Gold and silver, rice and curry!  
 Land of snakes and reptiles evil  
 Land of heat (t'would scorch the devil!);  
 Land of tatties<sup>4</sup>, land of chatties<sup>5</sup>  
 Land of jellavies<sup>6</sup> and chapatties<sup>7</sup>.  
 Land of bheesties<sup>8</sup>, land of coolies<sup>9</sup>  
 Land of punkahs<sup>10</sup>, land of dhoolies<sup>11</sup>.  
 Land of rundees<sup>12</sup>, land of bundees<sup>13</sup>,  
 Land of war and subzee mundees<sup>14</sup>.  
 Land of mosquitoes, bugs and flies  
 Land of sandstorms and bad eyes;-  
 Land! where lots of things combine  
 To make the soldier's life divine!

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3. Carter jot book, IOLR

4. A screen of wet, fragrant grass roots, which, hung over a door or window provided some relief in hot weather. Unless specified all explanations of Indian terms are based on Hobson-Jobson.

5. A spherical earthen pot, used to hold water.

6. Possibly a delicacy, perhaps 'jaggery', the fermented juice of the Palmira tree.

7. Unleavened wheat cakes, the staple bread of upper India.

8. A water carrier, supplying water from a goatskin mussick, see Illustration 6a.

9. A hired labourer; a menial.

10. A swinging fan used to cool rooms.

11. A covered litter, used to carry sick and wounded men.

12. Meaning unknown.

13. Meaning unknown.

14. A clue to the verse's origin. The Subzee Munde (‘vegetable market’) is a suburb of Delhi. Though by then George Carter had left the corps, the 2nd Fusiliers took a prominent part in the bitter fighting occurring there during the siege in 1857. One of his former comrades probably passed the verse on to him.

2. 'Sweet is the hour'<sup>15</sup>

Sweet is the hour that brings us home  
 Where all will spring to meet us;  
 Where hands are striving, as we come,  
 To be the first to greet us.  
 When the world hath spent its power & wrath  
 And care been sorely pressing,  
 'Tis sweet to turn from our roving path,  
 And find a fireside blessing.

3. Inscription on the headstone of a man of the 1st Bengal Europeans,  
buried at Ghazepore in 1825

I'M BILLETED HERE BY DEATH,  
 AND HERE I MUST REMAIN  
 WHEN THE TRUMPET SOUNDS,  
 I'LL RISE AND MARCH AGAIN.

ERECTED BY HIS COMRADES<sup>16</sup>

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15. Brown private journal, NLS

16. McCance, History of the Royal Munster Fusiliers. Vol. I, p. 100. The inscription points to the connections between the Queen's and Company's forces: an almost identical rendering appears on the headstone of a man of a Queen's regiment, buried near Hassan's Walls stockade on the Great Western Road in New South Wales in the 1830s. Evidently a piece of barrack-room folklore, we may conjecture that the verse circulated across the empire and its armies, meeting soldiers' needs to commemorate their fellows.

4. 'Who caught Tantia Topie'<sup>17</sup>

Who caught Tantia Topie  
 'Twas I, said the Nigger<sup>18</sup>  
 With spade, sword and trigger  
 I caught Tantia Topie  
 Who caught Tantia Topie  
 'Twas I said Pat Meade<sup>19</sup>  
 By palaver & speed  
 Who else did the deed-  
 Who caught Tantia Topie  
 'Twas I said our Showers<sup>20</sup>  
 By hot haste and dours  
 He funk'd me, he did, by the Powers  
 Who caught Tantia Topie  
 'Twas I said Dunbar  
 With my spies near & far  
 & Maung Sing thro' my own [?Komisdar]  
 Who caught Tantia Topie  
 'Twas I said Maun Sing<sup>21</sup>  
 Who planned the whole thing  
 To save my own neck from the string  
 Who caught Tantia Topie  
 Not I, said old Mac<sup>22</sup>  
 But I hunted the pack  
 & when they get back  
 We'll put in, one and all for the lack

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17. 'Composed by a sergeant of the 3rd Bengal Europeans Jany 1860', Showers papers, CSAA, A71

18. Possibly a slighting reference to loyal sepoys.

19. Major Richard Meade, commander of an irregular cavalry corps raised during the rebellion, captured Tantia Tope in April 1859. 'Pat' appears to be a nick-name.

20. 'Our Showers' appears to have been Captain Charles Showers (a more fortunate member of the 14th Bengal Native Infantry than Archie Wood), and not Daniel St George Showers, formerly commanding officer of the 2nd Fusiliers.

21. Man Singh, Rajah of Marwar, who betrayed and captured Tantia Topee in April 1859.

22. Unknown

5. The Battle of Sussia<sup>23</sup>

Twas on the 5th of July, eighteen hundred and fifty-seven,  
That our bugles sounded the turn-out, in the forenoon at eleven,  
To go and fight those Rebel dogs, and show them British play,  
And we did fight them ten to one, on the field of Sussia.

These rebels opened fire on us, with their round shot and shell,  
But our Artillery quickly answered them, when many a rebel fell,  
Their Cavalry surrounded us, so numerous were they,  
But still we fought them ten to one, the field of Sussia.

Colonel Riddle gave the word to take the Village by storm,  
'Twas there our gallant Major received his deadly wound<sup>24</sup>,  
And many a brave hero fell, all in that bloody fray,  
As we did fight them ten to one in the Village of Sussia

Lieutenants Pond, Fellow[e]s and bold McPherson<sup>25</sup> too,  
Did boldly lead us to the charge, though our numbers were but few,  
We drove them from their stronghold, and forced them to give way,  
And we showed them British valor, on the field of Sussia.

Brave Captain D'Oyley, whose loss we felt too well,  
In the act of pointing his gun, he mortally wounded fell,  
Dont be afraid my men he said, We'll shurely win the day,  
And he still continued to command, on the field of Sussia.

One name I wish to mention, who's worthy of your praise,  
It is the monsier Jordon, on that field his body lay,  
Five of the rebels he cut down, before they did him slay,  
Like a son of France he did advance, on the field of Sussia.

Success to our brave Colonel, may he ever have command,  
And many opportunities, to lead us sword in hand,  
As he did so gallantly, on that eventful day,  
May he ever be remembered by the Heroe's of Sussia.

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23. Brown private journal, NLS

24. By an extraordinary coincidence, the 'gallant major' was in fact the same George Thomas who in 1852 had reflected in 'disrespectful and unjustifiable terms' on Napier's strictures over officers' indebtedness. See chapter 2.

25. Pond, see chapter 9; Lieutenant Cooper Mackinnon Navarine Fellowes, 3rd Bengal European Regiment. Comm. 1845. McPherson's details could not be obtained.

6. The storming of Delhie  
14th September 1857<sup>26</sup>

Near 51 years ago I well remember when a terrible struggle took place on the 14th of September, Guns belged forth like awfull thunder; strong walls were rent assunder. Amidst this terrible fire and smoke which served the storming party as a cloak, too rush forward and the Loud Hurrah to storm that Breach Nothing could - Bar -

Head long they went and down that trench up rises the ladders their courage was not quenched by the awfull fire that came from the wall, and made them more determined as their Comrades Fall; too gain that Breach was their Heart Desire though in site of Death from - the Enemys Fire -  
But this is what I have to relate, my Comrades where left to their Fate, the Ladders served out was far too short to reach that Hole in the Wall called the Breach.

But Hark - what is that - - there comes an awfull sound from the Cashmere Gate, it is Blown Down, By those Noble Men when Duty calls, unheeding the Bullets that came from - The wall - Too Hang that Bag of Powder and attach it to the gate, Fire the Fuse, Ere it [is] too Late.

The waiting Troops now Rush Forward, there comes that British Cheer, Victory - Victory - Hurragh - Hurragh - But after Victory comes a cheerfull but solem Knell, from our Gracious Queen and Country too the Victors and those who Fell, Too uphold the British Honour and that Flag, For Freedom, For Courage, It Never - Draged -

May God Bless our Honoured King, to rule our Country and too Bring, Peace, Prosperity and all that is Good Unity and Love had from our Heavenly Father - Almighty God - Old George B.A.

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26. 'By one who was there A soldier of the 2nd Bengal Fusiliers', Coghill papers, NAM

## II Poems

### 1. William Bingham, 'The field of Ferozeshah' (excerpt)<sup>27</sup>

11.

The shout! the cheer of victory!  
 As through the line it ran,  
 The fire which gleam'd in ev'ry eye  
 Prov'd each a gallant man:  
 And onwards sprung that British line  
 After the flying foe;  
 Not reeking of the treach'rous mine,  
 The Sikh had spread below,  
 But all at once the thunder  
 Of that dread mine awoke;  
 The earth was rent asunder,  
 As the tornado broke.  
 Many were blown into the air;  
 Many a shattered corse [sic] was there; -  
 No time to breathe a word of prayer;  
 No time for grief or fell despair!  
 But 'twas as though ten thousand shells  
 Were bursting all around:  
 Or demons with sulphureous [sic] hells  
 Had here a vantage found.

12.

Our line recoil'd, as well they might,  
 Struck for the moment with affright;  
 And truly 'twas a horrid sight,  
 For human eye to view.  
 Our comrades thick around us bled,  
 While legs and arms about were spread:  
 'Mid mangled corpses of the dead:  
 And they were not a few...

14.

But quick our line was form'd again,  
 And o'er the carnage-reeking plain,  
 Was heard the word, Revenge!  
 Revenge! was then our battle cry;  
 The deafening shout might rend the sky, -  
 Hurrah! hurrah! revenge!  
 Oh! that I had a Byron's pen,  
 Or Raphael's pencil rare,  
 To seize upon the moment, when,  
 Burst forth that deaf'ning cheer.

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27. From The field of Ferozeshah, pp. 9-11. The extract comprises three stanzas describing the moment in the battle when the British infantry advanced into the Sikh entrenched camp.

2. William Bingham, 'Past and present; or, random thoughts in Hindostan' (excerpt)<sup>28</sup>

What is the past? Let memory tell,  
Of joys which are for ever flown;  
And how remembrance casts a spell  
O'er hours in Hindostan, - alone...

Among a thousand of my kind  
I run a solitary race:  
I cannot find a fellow mind,  
Nor see a sympathetic face...

Books are to me a source of joy,  
As there, and alone I find  
Pleasure without the least alloy;  
And fancies suited to my mind.

But what's the use of thought and care?  
I'll strive to do the best I can;  
And should my country need me here,  
I'll shew at least, that I'm a man.

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28. Ibid. pp. 58-60

3. Benjamin Franklin Langford, 'The invalid'<sup>29</sup>

*O terque quaterque beati,  
Queis ante patrum, Troja sub moenibus altis  
Contigit oppetere!*<sup>30</sup>

VIRGIL *AEn. Liber I. 94-96*[?]

*O socii - neque enim ignari sumus ante malorum -  
O passi graviora, dabit deus his quoque finem!*<sup>31</sup>

VIRGIL *AEn. Liber I. 94-96*

## I.

He sees his home, in dreams, even as of yore,  
He saw it in his waking hours - when burning  
To wander forth, and seek this fatal shore,  
He felt his parents last embrace - and turning  
Without regret, he gave his last adieu  
To kinsmen, friends - loved objects not a few.

## II.

Thirty long years! - Yon mountains are the same:  
These gushing rills are still as bright and pure,  
As when, in youth, and strength, and hopes of fame,  
He dared the burning blast of Indian plains t'endure;  
The village spire yet towers among the trees, -  
E'en as when first it's[sic] pinnacle was raised to woo the breeze!

## III.

But where are they? - The inmates of that home,  
The aged ones who stroked his infant head;  
And blessed him when he quit his father's dome?  
Alas a change is there; for all are dead,  
And the young friends he loved in time ago,  
Now sleep beneath the sod which once they sported on!

## IV.

"God's will be done!" - hath not the wanderer changed,  
Have not the wrinkles gathered on his brow?  
Hath not his soul been from his home estranged,  
By time and war, and strange events which bow  
Man to the dust? - for scant upon his head,  
The silver locks proclaim his youthful lustres fled.

## V.

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29. Benjamin Franklin Langford, *Alvin of Erie*, pp. 163-65

30. The Penguin translation of Virgil's *Aeneid* renders these lines as 'How fortunate were you, thrice fortunate and more, whose luck it was to die under the high walls of Troy before your parents' eyes!' I am grateful to Dr Peter Londey for making available his classical erudition in translating this and other Latin quotations.

31. 'Friends of mine, we have long been no strangers to affliction, and you have had worse than this to bear. Now, as before, Providence will bring your suffering to an end.' The lines actually appear shortly before Book I, line 207.

But when the solemn stone which rears,  
 Its pure transparent surface o'er the graves,  
 Where sleep the loved ones of his tender years,  
 Beneath the cypress bough, which sadly waves,  
 Its shadows o'er their dust, - a bitter tear  
 Falls on his cheek, emblem of grief sincere.

## VI.

Have ye not seen his glance of deep despair,  
 And heard the groan which shook his aged frame?  
 His snowy locks tossed by the damp, cold air,  
 The only one who bears his father's name!-  
 Methought I heard him sigh for that far land,  
 Where first he weary trod upon the burning sand!

## VII.

Perchance he doth return, to join again  
 His pensioned friends, who fight their battles o'er;  
 Since all he loved were sought by him in vain,  
 Naught now can bind him to his native shore,  
 He gladly gazes on the waters blue,  
 Which shut his home, for ever from his view!

## VII.

God help thee, thou poor wanderer! - be thy dreams  
 Sweet as the guiltless ones of infant years,  
 When thou wert wont to truant by the streams  
 Of fatherland! For soon, nor sigh nor tears  
 Shall vex thee more, as o'er thy welcome grave  
 Legions shall tramp, and ring the war songs of the brave!

1st July 1853

4. Benjamin Franklin Langford, 'Songs for India, No. I'<sup>32</sup>

"There's pleasure in this sultry land'  
*Forsan et haec olim meminisse juvabit*<sup>33</sup>

Aeneid I. - 207

There's pleasure in this sultry land,  
 Where fickle Fortune's bound us.  
 There's glory on her battle fields,  
 Bright laurels for the brave;  
 And sighs for him who gladly yields [sic]  
 His breath for a warrior's grave!

There's friendship in this sunny land,  
 Of conquest and of fame;  
 Voices that make each heart expand,  
 And fire each sinking frame.  
 Voices of those, who self-exiled,  
 First hailed us on the deep:  
 The tedious hours with song beguiled,  
 And soothed our souls to sleep!

Love wanders thro' this far famed land,  
 To render gay the hours; -  
 With quiver slung, and bow in hand,  
 He ranges for Eastern bowers:  
 Where stately palm or tamarind,  
 With varying shadow dances;  
 And yon pale moon so sweetly kind;  
 Smiles on a lover's glances!

Hope is a dweller in this land,  
 She hath a temple here; -  
 And calms the soul with soothing wand,  
 And brings our homesteads near! -  
 When self-exiled youth we came,  
 She urged us on our track;  
 And when returning - still the same,  
 She guides our footsteps back!

And memory haunts this sunny clime,  
 When musing o'er the hearth  
 Of childhood's home, and olden time,  
 When first we roamed the earth.  
 But many a score of friends of yore,  
 Do still afar sojourn;  
 Friends whom, perchance, we see no more,  
 Till ashes fill our urn!

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32. Benjamin Franklin Langford, *Alvin of Erie*, pp. 243-44

33. 'Perhaps one day you will enjoy looking back even on what you now endure.'

5. Nicholas Michell, 'We'll yield no inch of Indian ground!'<sup>34</sup>

We'll yield no inch of Indian ground!  
 O land! shine aim to quench the torch  
 That better souls would light for thee  
 Thy wish to grope in darkness' porch,  
     Thy wish to cling to misery,  
 Shall, e'en for thine own weal, be vain,  
 Britain and Light shall triumph o'er thee,  
 Crush black Rebellion's murdered reign,  
 And to calm reason, peace, restore thee,  
     Our cannon's thunder may awake  
     Echoes in many a startled dell,  
 And the red falchion vengeance take,  
     And Mercy tales of suffering tell,  
     Yet the baptism of blood to flow,  
 Will cleanse the land from horrors freed,  
     As thunder sends its flood below,  
     And power, healthier skies succeed.  
 But might we lose thee? never, never!  
     Vain hope, by self, thyself to sever  
     From the strong "lion" of the sea,  
 Whose eye is lightning, fang is power,  
 Who, though he slumbers for an hour,  
     Will rush refreshed to victory!  
 Ay, Britain swears no force shall tear  
     The land of gold and guns away,  
 Though all hell's demons now seem there,  
     And Murder lays her red arm bear,  
     And shrieks from women rend the air,  
     And shivers white Dismay.

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34. Brown private journal, NLS

## Appendix E

### Ranks and pay, 1858

Ranks in the Company's Europeans essentially followed the practice of the Queen's army. The pay of each rank, however, differed between arms and included varying allowances depending on a man's location and circumstances. Horse artillery and cavalry were highest paid, followed by foot artillery then infantry.<sup>1</sup> For clarity this table shows the monthly pay of the infantry.<sup>2</sup> Officers' pay included allowances payable in the field or in garrison over 200 miles from Fort William, including standard batta, tentage and forage allowances. Soldiers' pay appears to have been calculated 'exclusive of dry rations'. The table includes the number of each rank or appointment nominally within a regiment. Though usually the non-commissioned ranks would be filled to establishment, up to half of the officers would be on leave or detached to civil, political or staff appointments at any time.

#### Commissioned officers

Colonel	1	£ 1124 per year <sup>3</sup>
Lieutenant colonel	1	Rs 1432/4/-
Lieutenant colonel	1	1032/4
Majors	2	789/3/-
Captains	14	415/6/-
Lieutenants	22	256/10/-
Ensigns	10	202/12/5

#### Appointments

Adjutant <sup>4</sup>	1	257/-/-
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1. Horse artillery lieutenants, for example, received Rs265 per month to the infantry lieutenant's Rs256. Among other ranks, horse artillery gunners received Rs13/15/7 compared to the infantry private's Rs11/12/6.

2. Details are taken from PP 1859(I) Vol. V, Appendix 51

3. An honorary appointment only, the chief purpose of which was to distribute colonels' allowances. The occupant had little connection with the regiment, beyond nominal ceremonial and the occasionally sentimental.

4. The adjutancy, potentially involved much hard work, especially in a European corps. Like the position of interpreter and quartermaster, it was held by one of the lieutenants, thereby doubling his pay.

Interpreter and Quartermaster	1	177/-
Medical officers <sup>5</sup>		
Surgeon	1	715/6/-
Assistant Surgeons	3	286/10/-
Non-commissioned officers and men		
Staff sergeants <sup>6</sup>		
Sergeant Major	1	44/7/10
Quartermaster sergeant	1	38/7/10
Schoolmaster sergeant	1	42/7/5
Armourer sergeant	1	22/7/5
Orderly room clerk	1	29/14/8
Hospital sergeant	1	22/7/5
Drum major	1	22/7/5
'Non-effective' staff <sup>7</sup>		
Drill sergeant	1	14/-
Drill corporal	1	7/-
Pay sergeants	10	7/-
Schoolmistress	1	15/-
Librarian	1	8/-
Savings bank clerk	1	8/-
Provost sergeant	1	10/2/-

Other non-commissioned officers

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5. Medical officers held honorary rank only. Though paid somewhat more than their equivalent ranks, captains and lieutenants, their work was substantially greater.

6. The ranking reflects ambiguities of pay and status. Quartermaster sergeants were paid less but ranked higher than Schoolmaster sergeants.

7. 'Non-effective staff' positions, usually allocated to non-commissioned officers, enabled men to augment their pay. The schoolmistress was usually a soldier's wife or daughter.

Colour sergeants	10	29/15/6
Sergeants	40	22/7/5
'Other ranks'		
Corporals	50	15/15/-
Drummers	20	14/2/9
Drummers (half pay)	20	7/1/14 <sup>8</sup>
Privates	800	11/12/6

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8. Usually 'boys', the sons of soldiers, enlisted in their early teens and 'entertained' to 'man-service' at 18.

## Appendix F

### **Titles of European regiments**

The intricacy of the British army's regimental nomenclature often baffles those uninterested in or unaware of its significance. The changes summarised here reflect the institutional fates of the regiments formerly of the East India Company's Bengal army which the British army absorbed in 1861. Details of the names and dates of the Company's European regiments are often contradictory; the following details, while not uncontested, represent those generally agreed. As will be apparent, the institutional descendants of the Bengal army's European corps have no separate existence today, in that all have been variously disbanded or amalgamated. Though regimental zealots might believe that the former incarnations might survive as part of increasingly larger amalgamated regiments, the process by which this occurs is more mystical than actual.

#### **Infantry**

The three infantry regiments which survived the 1861 amalgamation experienced several major changes. In 1881 each received a new title as part of the reforms initiated by the Secretary of State for War, Edward Cardwell. In 1922 the two Irish regiments were disbanded following the creation of the Irish Free State. Following the loss of India and the contraction of both imperial responsibility and financial capacity, most county regiments lost their second battalions, while the round of amalgamations in the 1960s rationalised the battalion-county nexus virtually out of existence.

**1st European Bengal Fusiliers** formed c. 1680 as independent companies; formed into the Bengal European Regiment, 1756; several times expanded and reduced until a 2nd Bengal European Regiment was formed in 1839; 1841, 1st Bengal European Light Infantry; 1846, 1st European Bengal Fusiliers; 1861, 101st Royal Bengal Fusiliers; 1881, 1st Battalion, the Royal Munster Fusiliers; 1922, disbanded.

**2nd European Bengal Fusiliers** raised 1839 as 2nd BER; 1850, titled 2nd European Bengal Fusiliers; 1861, 104th Bengal Fusiliers; 1881, 2nd Battalion, the Royal Munster Fusiliers; 1922, disbanded.

**3rd Bengal European Regiment** raised 1853; 1861, 107th Bengal Infantry Regiment; 1881, 2nd Battalion, Royal Sussex Regiment; 1948, amalgamated with 1st Battalion; 1966, merged into The Queen's Regiment.

As Chapter 10 explains, the **5th Bengal European Regiment** was disbanded in November 1860 following the mutiny at Dinapore. The **4th** and **6th** regiments of Bengal European infantry did not long survive the 1861 amalgamation.

## **Cavalry**

The lineages of British cavalry regiments are even more confusing. Though not affected by the Cardwell reforms, most experienced several changes of title in the late nineteenth century and two or even three amalgamations during the twentieth.

**1st Bengal European Light Cavalry** raised 1857; 1861, 19th Hussars; 1902, 19th (Alexandra, Princess of Wales's Own) Hussars; 1908, 19th (Queen Alexandra's Own Royal) Hussars; 1921 19th Royal Hussars (Queen Alexandra's Own); 1922, amalgamated with 15th The King's Hussars to form 15th/19th The King's Royal Hussars; 1992, amalgamated with 13th/18th Royal Hussars

**2nd Bengal European Light Cavalry** raised 1857; 1861, 20th Light Dragoons; 1862 20th Hussars; 1922, amalgamated with 14th King's Hussars to form the 14th/20th Hussars; 1922, amalgamated with the Royal Hussars

**3rd Bengal European Light Cavalry** raised 1857; 1861, 21st Light Dragoons; 1863, 21st Hussars; 1897, 21st Lancers; 1899, 21st (Empress of India's) Lancers; 1921, 21st Lancers (Empress of India's); 1922, amalgamated with 17th (Duke of Cambridge's Own) Lancers to form 17th/21st Lancers; 1993, amalgamated with 16th/5th The Queen's Royal Lancers

The **4th and 5th Bengal European Light Cavalry** did not long survive the 1861 amalgamation.

## **Artillery**

Under the general order amalgamating the former Company's Europeans an the Queen's army, three brigades of horse and six battalions of foot artillery of the Bengal army became part of the Royal Artillery. Numerous changes in the organization nomenclature of the Royal Artillery renders difficult the task of tracing their institutional descent.

## **Engineers**

Men of the Bengal Sappers and Miners and officers of the Bengal Engineers were asorbed into the Royal Engineers in the least painful transition of the amalgamation. Though officers often adopted the form of Royal (Bengal) Engineers, similarity of professional identity ensured that their incorporation into the royal army was relatively uneventful.

## **Other presidencies**

Infantry, artillery and engineers of the Madras and Bombay Europeans were likewise absorbed into the royal army, the details of which need not be given here.

## Appendix G

### Proposal for a doctoral thesis, September 1988

'The white mutiny, 1858-60: a study in military social history'.

1. Introduction
2. Synopsis of the mutiny
3. Historiography
4. Relevant work
5. Proposed inquiry
6. Sources
7. Methodological issues
8. Progress to date
9. Schedule

#### 1. Introduction

I propose to consider the mutiny of the East India Company's European troops primarily from the perspective of the military social historian, in the context of the episode's relevance to imperial and British social history. The thesis will draw upon much hitherto unused primary material to enquire: who were the mutineers; how and why did they protest; upon what attitudes was the protest based and how and with what consequences was the mutiny met?

#### 2. Synopsis of the mutiny

The essential sequence of events of the 'white mutiny' is relatively straightforward. With the formal dissolution of the company on 1 November 1858, following the sepoy mutiny of 1857-58, its European forces became part of the British army as Her Majesty's Indian Forces. Many of the former Company's 15 000 European troops objected to the decision, claiming that their rights had been infringed in that they were arbitrarily being 'handed over like bullocks', and seeking at least the payment of a bounty to mark their transfer. The British and Indian governments at first disallowed the men's claims and refused to consider discharge or bounty.

Over the hot season of 1859 most of the stations of northern India housing the former Company's troops saw acts of protest and defiance; on 24 May, for example, Queen Victoria's birthday, the 1st Madras Fusiliers refused to cheer the Queen. The hastily raised and partially-trained infantry and cavalry regiments of the Bengal army were particularly seriously affected, and in June 1859 men of the 5th Bengal Europeans at Berhampore defied their officers for a week before succumbing to a force of Queen's troops sent from Calcutta.

The authorities did not accept the legality of the men's claims (though some, including Lord Clyde, the Commander-in-Chief in India, recognized the justice of their case) but the discontent at length persuaded them to accede to the troops' demands. In June 1859 a general order permitted all men attested to serve the company who desired discharge to leave India, and 10 000 did so. Many of those who had been compelled to remain (because they had been attested to serve the crown), even though their comrades had secured their release through protest, remained dissatisfied. In October 1860 men of the 5th Bengal Europeans, now at Dinapore, again rose in revolt. The mutiny was swiftly suppressed and, following the intervention of the new Commander in Chief, Sir Hugh Rose, one man was executed and the regiment was disbanded in disgrace. The remaining regiments were in 1861 formally absorbed into the British army. This brief account of the affair fails, of course, to convey the complexity of the men's demands, the conflicting pressures on the authorities in Britain and in India in meeting the demands and the implications of the mutiny for British military policy in India.

### 3. Historiography

The white mutiny has been referred to in most surveys of the aftermath of the mutiny or of the history of the army in India, generally cursorily and often partially or inaccurately. Interest in the episode generally derives from its relevance to the history of British India, but its wider reference to military history and even British social history has gone almost entirely unconsidered. No writer has remarked upon- and the point really is remarkable- that the white mutiny was the largest single most successful mutiny ever seen in British military history. In a matter of months the former Company's European soldiers succeeded, without bloodshed and largely even without direct confrontation, in obtaining their demands. That they succeeded was, of course, mainly due to their obviously strong bargaining position. British India had barely weathered the recent sepoy mutiny in Bengal and was in no position to invite further unrest if open European resistance were to prompt a resurgence of sepoy revolt. Though the European troops apparently did not explicitly exploit this advantage, it was continually in the minds of those who dealt with their demands.

While most writers recognize the potentially dramatic context in which the mutiny occurred, few, notably Professor Michael Maclagan in 'Clemency' Canning (1962) and his essay 'The White Mutiny' in Essays in British History (1965), R.J. Moore in Sir Charles Wood's Indian Policy (1966) and possibly Thomas Metcalf in The Aftermath of Revolt India 1857-1870 (which I have yet to obtain), relate the mutiny closely to the debate being conducted about the re-construction of the Indian army. Nevertheless it is apparent in most works that that the broader significance of the mutiny was to resolve the question of how India should be garrisoned; whether by a 'native' army, a European army permanently based in India or, as it happened, by a rotating garrison of Queen's troops in conjunction with a native army. The mutiny ensured that the option of the local force was not

feasible. The effects of this outcome may have influenced more than simply military history. "The white mutiny", wrote Roger Beaumont in The Sword of the Raj

forced the British to take a major step toward the ultimate self-government by adapting [sic] a form of local defense that would go a long way over the years to creating for millions of Indians [in the Indian Army] a self-image of nationhood that could come from no other source. Thus Indian nationalism grew out of the barrel of a British gun.

Whether or not this claim draws too long a bow, the white mutiny was an imperial crisis of considerable importance, and deserves a more thorough consideration than it has hitherto received.

Existing works treating the mutiny exhibit, in varying degrees, several deficiencies. A number perpetuate misconceptions and inaccuracies or repeat as fact hearsay and rumour and require clarification or correction.

The episode has generally been discussed from the perspective of the authorities' alarm at the mutiny, with the protest itself treated more a colourful backdrop (such as the soldiers' graffiti at Meerut, reading 'John Company is dead- we will not soldier for the Queen' etc.) than as a critical element in a confrontation between ruler and ruled. The social context of the troops' protest has hardly been considered. Most works, for example, mention the troops' belief that the transfer from Company to Crown infringed their rights, but none ask what their conception of rights might have been, from where it derived or how it was articulated. Such questions, the province of the military social historian interested in the social context of military organizations, will, I consider, help to produce a more comprehensive understanding of the nature of the protest.

Most accounts draw upon a limited range of sources, generally several relevant volumes of Parliamentary Papers (especially LI 1860, 'Papers connected with the late Discontent among Local European Troops in India', which reproduces documents relating to the 1859, but not the 1860, disturbances) a handful of memoirs and, in the case of Professor Maclagan, the papers of Lord Canning, Governor General 1856-62. As the section of the proposal dealing with sources will demonstrate, the potential sources are much more extensive.

Despite the authoritative treatment in Professor Maclagan's works of the official reaction to the soldiers' protest, existing works deal inadequately with crucial aspects of events of 1858-60. The motivations and actions of the main figures - Canning, Lord Clyde, Sir Hugh Rose, Lord Stanhope, Sir Charles Wood- are reasonably clear, though those of commanders and their staffs require further exploration. More importantly, the military and social context of the 'European troops' officers has barely been considered. The proposed thesis would seek to establish for the first time the attitudes and actions of these men. For example, Michael

Edwardes, whose four-page summary in Red Year is one of the most satisfactory of the generally brief accounts of the mutiny, remarks of the officers of the 5th Bengal Europeans that they 'seemed to have been incapable of of maintaining discipline'. In considering their calibre as disciplinarians, however, the context of these officers' service needs to be understood. They were formerly of the 5th and 6th Bengal Native Infantry, regiments which had been disbanded as disloyal in 1857. Many had not done regimental duty for some years, and none were experienced in handling half-trained unwilling recruits from an urban and industrial background none understood. How prepared were these officers to deal with a second mutinous regiment?

Similarly, the European troops themselves, whose actions form the core of the mutiny and the thesis, have barely been considered in existing accounts. Who were they? Why had they enlisted; under what compulsion and circumstances? What were their backgrounds; what attitudes did they carry with them into military life? How did they differ from the soldiers of the older regiments of the company? A prosopographic\* study of one or more regiments will help to provide a collective profile of these hitherto anonymous men.

Nor do the mutineers appear in existing accounts as individuals, with the exception of the unfortunate Private William Johnston, whose execution in November 1860 effectively ended the mutiny. Individual soldiers, however, appear to have played an important role in shaping the course of events. In the 5th Bengal Europeans Privates John Marshall and John Harty and Lance Sergeant Best seem to have been critical in leading the protest of June 1859, while Sergeant Major John Mooty seems, through weakness and venality, to have contributed significantly to the regiment's unfortunate fate. Though the mutiny involved several thousand men their distribution in up to twenty regiments or battalions across India suggests that particular individuals were important in articulating ideas and information and perhaps in co-ordinating action.

No existing study has examined the mutiny from the perspective of the military culture of mid-nineteenth century Britain. Much of what transpired in the white mutiny is explicable in terms of the values, practices, conventions and expectations of the contemporary army, with the important qualification that in this case the picture is complicated by the presence of Anglo-Indian 'sepoys officers' on the one hand and half-trained working class English or Irish recruits on the other. It must be recognized that the former were significantly different to line officers of the Queen's army, the latter hardly soldiers at all, and that both collided in the old and new regiments of presidency armies with distinct, long-standing military traditions of their own. The resultant mix presents a rich field of study.

Many of the mutineers, for example, seem to have reacted to their military grievances as if they were still on the factory floor: the mutiny was referred to as a 'strike' even by the

\* 'description of social and family connections and career'.

army's chief of staff. If the white mutiny is to be fully understood it must also be considered as an exotic outlier of British urban working class social history. Indeed, it was in many ways handled as a strike: only one soldier was executed, the customary punishment for mutiny, though hundreds were technically guilty of the offence. Though the authorities may have acted, as the historian of the British army, Sir John Fortescue, put it, 'with a lack of imagination which amounted to stupidity', they ultimately acquired sufficient acumen to respond in a way which recognized the character of the protest. In this the military officers concerned - at least those with experience of European troops- acted as they had to similar, though small scale, protests which were such a feature of the early Victorian army. The officers of the 1830s, '40s and '50s knew, as one put it, that 'soldiers are accustomed to express themselves', and they generally responded to such expressions not as the military asses of popular imagination but as moderately efficient managers of an army which reflected the tensions which a changing Britain was experiencing.

Lastly, a study of the white mutiny offers an opportunity to explore from the sketchy sources available, the hidden world of the Company's European soldier in India, whose experience is even more obscure than the lives of his comrades in the Queen's service. The sources relating to the mutiny offer challenges in reconstructing the relationships within the European regiments, both between soldiers and between officers and men. Official and private sources include a number of documents by or about soldiers: a few memoirs, reports of meetings between soldiers and officers, soldiers' letters, petitions to officers and newspapers, even soldiers' slang, songs and grafitti. All suggest interpretive possibilities which, used with sensitivity and insight might substantially enlarge our understanding of the barrack-room culture of the mid-nineteenth century army in India.

#### 4. Relevant work

As far as can be ascertained the white mutiny or the Company's European regiments have not been the subject of a post-graduate thesis. A search of theses 1861-1988 from Dissertation Abstracts International by the National Library of Australia's Computer Search Service revealed that no theses have been completed on British military policy in India in the mid-nineteenth century.

Anthony Bruce's A Bibliography of the British Army, 1660-1914, however, refers to a doctoral thesis by A.H. Shibly 'The reorganisation of the Indian armies, 1858-79' (University of London, 1969). While this evidently touches upon the white mutiny (Dr Shibly published an article on the subject in the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh in 1972) as suggested by its date range it apparently deals largely with the 'native' forces.

My own work on the early-Victorian army has centred on the experience of the British army in Australia. I have produced the following works in which my interest in military social history is apparent:

- '“A mere point of Military Etiquette”: the Norfolk Island mutiny of 1839, The Push from the Bush: a Bulletin of Social History, No.7, September 1980.
- '“Oh! the sufferings of my men”: the 80th Regiment in New South Wales in 1838'; The Push from the Bush, No.11, November 1981.
- The Remote Garrison: the British Army in Australia, 1788-1870, Kenthurst, 1986 [A popular work aimed at family and local historians]
- 'Soldiers and fellow-countrymen in colonial Australia', in M. McKernan and M. Browne, (eds), Australia two centuries of war and peace, Canberra, 1988.
- 'A horn to put your powder in': interpreting artefacts of British soldiers in colonial Australia', Journal of the Australian War Memorial, No. 13, October 1988.

In these works I have considered the lives of soldiers, extending my knowledge of the British army, particularly in the period 1830-50, and developing an approach to military social history which recognizes that soldiers exist in a military and a social context, both of which need to be treated if their experience is to be considered adequately. In these works, and in my Litt. B. thesis (which dealt with community organizations and the voluntary war effort in a South Australian town during the second world war) I have treated, but not, I hope exaggerated, the place of protest in considering relationships within social groups. I have recognized that while the evidence which emerges from what sociologists call 'deviance' provides valuable insights, and while much can be learned about social organizations through the crises they may experience, squeaky wheels do indeed get the grease, and attention should not simply focus on organizations in terms of protest, dissent or mutiny.

## 5. Proposed inquiry

It will be apparent from the foregoing discussion that I intend to approach the white mutiny from a different perspective to that of Professor MacLagan, the only other academic historian to have considered the episode at length. I propose to consider the mutiny as a study in military protest in the context of: the military culture of the Company's European forces; British perceptions of India in the aftermath of the sepoy mutiny; the contemporaneous debate over the reconstruction of the Indian army and the culture of the men involved.

## 6. Sources

I have located a broader range of sources than has been used by any previous writer on this subject, and hope to locate a still greater variety of hitherto untapped evidence. Besides the obvious sources of the Times or Hansard the following primary sources are expected to be consulted.

- The most important single source on the subject is Parliamentary Papers, 1860, Vol. LI 'Papers relating to the late Discontent among European Local Troops in India'. This volume reproduces the reports, correspondence and orders relating to the mutiny in 1858 and 1859. I am unaware of the location of the original papers and of papers which evidently should have been included but were not but am attempting to find them. A number of other volumes dealing with the army in India are also relevant. All Parliamentary Papers are accessible at the National Library of Australia.
- The papers of the 1st Earl Canning, Governor General and Viceroy of India 1856-62, held in the Leeds Archives Department are vital, as Michael Maclagan's biography indicates. I have not yet consulted these papers.
- Military and other records held in the India Office Library and Records (IOL) present a rich but surprisingly unexplored source on the character of the European troops and on the course of the mutiny. The nominal rolls and discharge papers of the European regiments allow the construction of a reasonably complete profile of the units, while the court of inquiry into the 1860 disturbances offers particularly productive insights into the 5th Europeans particularly. I have consulted this material but it requires several weeks further work, particularly on the Bombay and Madras European regiments.
- The diary and letter book of Colonel Edward Holdich, commander of the Berhampore recruit depot in 1859, is held in the Staffordshire Regiment Museum, Lichfield. I have asked for this source to be photo-copied.
- The British Library holds the papers of Sir Hugh Rose, Commander-in-Chief in India, and of Major General Sir John Hearsey, commander of the Presidency Division at the time of the mutiny, and possibly other relevant manuscript material. The Library's printed collections will of course be a source of rare memoirs and other contemporary works.
- The discharge and service certificates of men who chose or were obliged to remain in the army from 1859 are held at WO97 in the Public Record Office (PRO), London. These documents will help to balance the India Office sources, which mostly relate to men who were discharged.
- The PRO may hold internal documents relating to the staff of the Commander in Chief, India, which reveal the military authorities' response to the mutiny, but I have yet to establish this.
- I am presently corresponding with the National Archives of India (NAI) to establish whether the records of the Adjutant-General's Department for 1859-60 are held in India; they appear not to be in the PRO or the IOL. Other relevant series held in the NAI include, Military Letters to and from the Court of Directors, 1790-1859, and Military Proceedings 1799-1859.

- Contemporary newspapers, particularly those published in India, provide many details which contribute to the detailed analysis of the mutiny and which qualify or challenge impressions prevailing in official sources. Newspapers which I have noted include: The Englishman and Military Chronicle, The Mofussilite, the Bengal Hurkaru and Indian Gazette, Allen's Indian Mail and the Friend of India. I have yet to locate and note others, including the Calcutta Phoenix.
- Local newspapers in Britain may provide details of the circumstances surrounding the enlistment of men in the Company's army in 1858 (eg recruiting parties and offices, the state of trade etc.) but a survey of the Liverpool Mercury and the Stockport Advertiser for 1858 (two towns where men were enlisted in some numbers) was not particularly productive.
- Useful articles in contemporary journals, such as Colburn's United Service Magazine and the Calcutta Review have been located, and other serials might prove to be fruitful. All likely journals are available in Australia.
- Contemporary official sources, such as the Bengal General Orders, The East India Register and Army List, The New Annual Army List and Militia List and similar sources for the period 1857-60 have been located and noted or copied, as have relevant directories and gazetteers.
- A number of memoirs refer to the events of 1858-60, including at least: William Lee-Warner, Memoirs of Field Marshal Sir Henry Wylie Norman (London 1908), Robert Spottiswoode, Reminiscences (Edinburgh, 1935), G. R. Elsmie, Thirty-Five Years in the Punjab, 1858-93 (1908), Richard Temple, Men and Events of My Time in India (London, 1882) and J H Rivett-Carnac, Many memories (London 1910). A number of other memoirs relate to places or people connected with the white mutiny.
- The State Library of Victoria has an extensive collection of British-Indian material, including memoirs, pamphlets and periodicals, which I have yet to consult.
- The Ames Library at the University of Minnesota apparently has a large collection of South Asian military works. I will investigate this.
- The lives of the East India Company's European rank and file are presently obscure. I hope to gather hitherto unused documentary material by seeking soldiers' letters, particularly for the period 1858-60, through philatelic and genealogical societies in Britain and the United States. This appeal has already turned up letters from men who served in India which reveal something of their attitudes. The India Office Library's Record of Manuscript Letters may also hold useful letters relating to officers and possibly to 'other ranks'.

- In 1986 and 1987 I travelled to India and visited the cantonments of Berhampore and Dinapore, the scene of the two most serious outbreaks of the mutiny, and also several other sites connected with the episode. Using contemporary maps of the cantonments in conjunction with documents and field work will contribute to a detailed reconstruction of the events of 1859 and 1860 where necessary.

It will also be necessary to consider extensively the literature on contemporary civilian protest, mutiny as a particular form of protest, the history of the British army in the nineteenth century, and British policy in India during and after the mutiny.

## 7. Methodological issues

A study of mutiny presents several problems of evidence. Firstly, despite the richness of the documents reprinted as Parliamentary Papers, there is the fundamental problem of determining what happened. It is apparent that, especially in using unofficial sources (such as newspaper reports, including letters from correspondents, and memoirs), this is not always straightforward.

There is also the problem of locating the documentary evidence which reveals the thoughts, discussions and disagreements within the military establishment which is generally not apparent from the published record.

Evidence in most cases of popular protest is usually one-sided in that the views of the mass of protestors are generally not recorded. In the case of the white mutiny this is a less acute problem, since the proceedings of courts of enquiry held after the men's feelings became known provides direct access, in a limited way, to the explanations and statements of almost every man involved. At the same time the stereotyped form of this evidence poses some difficulty, as does the apparent absence of critical proceedings, including those of the 5th Bengal Europeans. The use of other soldiers' views, expressed through letters and less formal means, will require the application of interpretive understanding and insights based on studies of nineteenth century popular culture.

## 8. Progress to date

I first became interested in the white mutiny in 1978, but began serious work on the subject only in 1986, when, in preparation for a trip to India began working on the relevant Parliamentary Papers and published accounts. In India I visited Calcutta, Berhampore, Lucknow and Agra, all sites connected with the mutiny. In 1987, while in London, I worked at the India Office Library and Records, identifying, copying and noting material relating to the mutiny in the Bengal presidency, and again visited India. I travelled to Dinapore and worked on contemporary periodicals in the Indian National Library in Calcutta.

I have developed a bibliography of potentially relevant works on historiographical questions, nineteenth century British history, mid-Victorian social history, the British army in the nineteenth century and British India, and am reading my way into the topic before embarking on detailed research on the white mutiny itself.

### 9. Schedule

Assuming that I will commence work on the thesis in earnest in 1989, and that I will be studying part-time, I expect to follow this schedule:

- 1989 - work in Canberra and State Library of Victoria and locating sources elsewhere
- 1990 - three-four months in Britain, working on the Canning papers, the British Museum, the India Office Library and possibly other British social history collections and possibly two weeks in the National Archives of India.
- 1991-93 - writing

My employer, the Australian War Memorial, has a post-graduate studies assistance scheme which allows absence of up to one year on full pay to officers pursuing relevant professional qualifications. If this thesis is judged to be sufficiently relevant to my work I would be able to devote more time to the thesis, but, as I have shown, it would be feasible without this leave.

Peter Stanley  
2 September 1988

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Parliamentary papers  
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3. From microfilm copies in the library of the University of Leeds, kindly provided by Dr Edward Spiers. Some of Cambridge's letters appear in the Wood papers in the IOLR, while Clyde's correspondence is part of both Wood's and Canning's papers.

India papers' of Lord Northbrook

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1857-58, VII Report of the select committee on colonization and settlement (India)

1857-58, X Report from the select committee on East India (transport of troops)

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1857-58, XLII East India, military force 1850-57; Boydell's traction engine; East India (additional troops)

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- 1859(I), V Report of the commissioners appointed to inquire into the organization of the Indian army [Peel Commission]

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- 1859(II), XXIII General and district courts martial, 1853-58; Strength of forces

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1865, XXXII Army estimates

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