
Despite recent valuable work, the eighteenth-century British army continues to be rather ill-served by historians, but in her scholarly and nuanced account of Scotland’s relationship with the army, Victoria Henshaw seeks to fill this lacuna. The book covers a turbulent period, encompassing the 1707 Union and two unsuccessful Jacobite rebellions which prepared the way for consolidation of the Hanoverian monarchy and Scotland’s cooption into Great Britain and her Empire. The subject is unavoidably controversial, and much contemporary historical work has been undermined by fairly transparent partisanship.

The book’s core consists of five chapters, ranging from the nature of the military presence and experience in Scotland, to issues of loyalty and identity, and Scotland’s developing military infrastructure. Dr. Henshaw’s main focus is on the army within Scotland and (less prominently), Scots serving in the army. A lengthy bibliography and useful illustrations detail an impressive body of research, though a few more illustrations would have been helpful. Conversely, the introduction is unnecessarily lengthy, and, together with 68 pages of endnotes, betray the book’s origins as a doctoral thesis, as do the rather formulaic “conclusions” to each chapter.

An emphasis on Scottish distinctiveness fittingly permeates the book but one of the key organizing themes and aims is to (successfully) dispel the pervasive but simplistic Highland/Lowland dichotomy. Unlike Ireland, with its separate establishment, Scottish integration was a logical and key element of political union. In explaining the transition of
Scottish troops from mercenaries to loyal regimental troops, Dr. Henshaw identifies numerous concentric loyalties and identities, including the Covenanting tradition of military service, and broad support for the Protestant Succession. It is convincingly argued that, for many Scots, assimilation was facilitated by clan loyalty to a military aristocracy being in some ways analogous to the hierarchical and class dimensions of the British military establishment.

For those of higher social status, patronage and clientage might induce loyalty but they did not always succeed. Dr. Henshaw demonstrates how decisions to support or oppose Jacobitism arose from a multitude of factors—from a principled defence of Scotland’s ancient rights and privileges to naked self-interest, and many points in-between. Even loyalists like Forbes and Argyll were troubled and conflicted in responding to events, while others, most famously and emblematically Lovat and Murray, struggled to reconcile old clan loyalties to the new realities of Hanoverian centralized power. These dilemmas also underscored formation and strength of auxiliary forces, whose existence was additionally blighted by legal, constitutional, and financial complexities. The loyalty and efficiency of auxiliaries was variable—perhaps charitably, Dr. Henshaw suggests inexperience and resource misallocation as explanations for mediocre performance. The remit and conduct of irregular forces deserve further research, though it may be laborious work tracing organizations whose origins and administration were highly localized.

The final chapter on military installations details how, after 1715, purpose-built barracks (the first in mainland Britain), and Wade’s Highland road-building program transformed Scotland’s military infrastructure and landscape. Prevailing political, geographical and social conditions led to increasing militarization with Fort William, Fort Augustus, and the Vauban-inspired Fort George in the Great Glen.
representing a formidable uncompromising statement of military power and political authority. Dr. Henshaw resists using emotive terms like “army of occupation” but the main raison d’etre for the presence of military forces in Scotland was to neutralize Jacobitism rather than, as in England, repelling foreign invasion. Fine granular detail is provided of the operational capacity, placement, and strategy of fortifications, while the military and commercial value of road-building is well-delineated and contextualized.

There are a few significant omissions. There is little explicit content on Scotland’s place within the fiscal-military system, either before or after 1707. The colonial experience is not pursued very far, an omission that may have been remedied through discussion of Hechter’s theory of ‘internal colonialism,’ and there is no discussion of foreign troops serving the Hanoverian army in Scotland. Occasionally, the book tends toward a survey, especially when departing from the chronology, and though the prose is generally crisp there are some instances of passive voice and repetition. More rigorous proof-reading and copy-editing would have been beneficial, as there are a few egregious errors, such as “Adams family” rather than “Adam family”. (p. 157) Despite these shortcomings and omissions, Dr. Henshaw has produced a fine, scholarly account which is even-handed in its approach and conclusions. The continuous threat of Jacobitism frames every aspect of the subject, and while it cannot realistically be otherwise, inclusion of hitherto neglected areas impacting and influencing the relationship between Scotland and the British army represent a valuable addition to the existing literature. As such, the book will interest specialists and general readers alike, while providing a solid basis for further research.

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