

parliamentarian dead who had 'fallen within pistoll shot of the Castle' before they were delivered naked for burial. Parliamentarian soldiers and surgeons claimed the diamond ring and bracelet of one of their own dead officers as 'their due', until their commander threatened 'to deal with them, as with enemies, if they did not deliver the same to be sent to his lady'.<sup>114</sup> In the often complex question of claims to battlefield property, appeal was made to the customary 'old law of warr'.<sup>115</sup> Yet as a reminder, finally, that men did not fight for economic motives alone, we should note that soldiers would sometimes forgo the 10s. reward paid for captured enemy colours, preferring to cut them up and wear the pieces as trophies.<sup>116</sup>

Another means of preventing non-performance by troops—its role was hardly more positive—was an appearance of equity in dealing with them. The administration of military law as a means of enforcing discipline and extracting desirable military behaviour has already been discussed; but the law imposed on soldiers, like the demands made on them for action, had to appear equitable if it was not to become a further ground for discontent. This did not mean that either the law or the demands were necessarily 'fair' in any abstract sense. War, like life, was intrinsically unfair: at the simplest level, why should Joseph Lister escape service and Thomas Slie die of wounds received at Sheffield, leaving his widow only the consolation of £2. 12s. 0d. in back pay?<sup>117</sup> From a practical military standpoint, however, it was desirable that punishments, rewards, and demands should not appear to reflect personal favouritism or caprice. Courts martial not only laboured conscientiously to discriminate between degrees of culpability and to impose penalties accordingly, they also used the paper so often placed on the offender to publicize their reasons for differential penalties: it served to inform as well as to humiliate. Punishment could be summary but it should not appear arbitrary. The use of lots in assigning soldiers to dangerous or unpopular duties was similarly designed to support an appearance of impartiality. At Bridgewater, when the parliamentarians decided on the difficult storm, '[l]ots were drawn for every one to take their posts, some to storm, some to be reserves, others to alarm'.<sup>118</sup> The procedure was routine, as in the case of Nehemiah Wharton's company in which watches were regularly assigned 'by lot'. Men selected in this way were hardly volunteers, but the choice could be seen as random, impartial, and equitable.<sup>119</sup> Lots also had their part in pre-battle incentives: 'They had cast lots for the spoil of us', a parliamentarian reported of the royalists at Preston in 1648.<sup>120</sup>

<sup>114</sup> Carte, *Letters and Papers*, 1. 129; Mastin, *History and Antiquities of Naseby*, 117; *Mercurius Aulicus*, 1173 [properly 1181], 27 Sept. 1644; Vicars, *Burning-Bush*, 34, in *Magnalia Dei Anglicana*; Woolrych, *Battles of the English Civil War*, 78.

<sup>115</sup> Symonds, *Diary*, 245. <sup>116</sup> Woolrych, *Battles of the English Civil War*, 78.

<sup>117</sup> Lister, *Autobiography*, 34; PRO SP 28/25, fo. 139; Ellen Slie at least succeeded in collecting her £2. 12s. 0d. promptly.

<sup>118</sup> Sprigge, *Anglia Rediviva*, 69.

<sup>119</sup> Wharton, 'Letters from a Subaltern Officer', 2. 322, 324, 326; *Journal of Sir Samuel Luke*, 1. 1; Elton, *Compleat Body of the Art Military*, 184, 187; Lithgow, *Siege of Newcastle*, 24.

<sup>120</sup> 'Memoirs of Captain John Hodgson', in Slingsby, *Original Memoirs*, 119.



Finally, the struggle to produce effective armies and troops with a basic level of competence was tied to their organizational structure and to hierarchies of command and division of labour. Much depended on the control, example, and exhortation of regimental colonels and majors and the junior officers who commanded troops of horse and companies of foot. They in turn depended on their non-commissioned officers whose duty it was to turn raw recruits into soldiers who could understand and obey orders, handle and care for their weapons, act in unison, and stand fast in action. The hierarchy of organization was designed to convert the plans of the general—usually formulated after debate within a council of his senior officers—into action by common soldiers, by way of colonels, majors, captains, lieutenants, sergeants, corporals, lance-corporals ('Lanspassadoes'), veteran soldiers (who could be given greater responsibility and whose status was signalled by their placement in formations), and so ultimately down to the common or garden rank and file. Elton, an old soldier, explained the specific responsibilities of each rank in this hierarchy, and although they inevitably overlapped in practice they revealed the articulation of a system that, through its descending roster of duties, covered the operations of the army from general to new recruit.

At the head of the regimental structure was the colonel. He had overall responsibility for his regiment, overseeing its officers, exercising certain judicial and investigative powers, advising the field commander and executing his plans. As in the case of Colonel Gage, he could imprint a character on his regiment's general conduct and on its conduct of particular operations. His primary assistant was the 'Serjeant Major', whose place was one of 'great pains and toile', for it was he who prepared a regiment for action, disposing companies and captains, checking terrain and quarters, deciding on the placement of guards, and on occasion exercising the whole regiment.<sup>121</sup> Next came the captains and lieutenants responsible for the regiment's individual companies or troops. A captain of foot, for example, organized the drawing up of his company and should be 'a good *Posture-man* himself', so that he could correct men who handled their arms 'in an undecent and slovenly' manner, while evidence of his expertise was said to improve the cheerfulness and confidence of his troops. More generally, he was to administer petty justice and 'to have a fatherly care of his Souldiers', which included not only caring for the sick and wounded but also not skimming his men's pay. Finally and hopefully, 'he ought to be very religious, temperate, and discreet, faithfull in his trust, valiant in the field against the face of his Enemy'.<sup>122</sup> In real life, however, captains might be decorative or gentlemanly figureheads who left the hands-on management of their companies to their lieutenants, many of whom were old military professionals. It was the lieutenants, as their captains' deputies, who had the most immediate and regular role in producing soldiers who knew what to do in battle, for it

<sup>121</sup> Elton, *Compleat Body of the Art Military*, 183–5.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.* 184.



was they who exercised their companies 'in *Military Motions, Skirmishings, and False-firings in the pan*', and who supervised the non-commissioned officers, oversaw exercises, and monitored the men's military skills.<sup>123</sup> Majors and lieutenants in fact provided the professional backbone to the officer corps in its relations with non-commissioned officers and men. Armies depended on them, as the depositories and disseminators of professional knowledge, to act as partners to experienced senior officers and to counterbalance the consequences of inexperienced gentlemen colonels and of green or lazy captains who commanded troops and companies.<sup>124</sup>

The influence of sergeants and corporals on the rank and file was even more immediate than that of lieutenants, and a survey of their duties reveals the importance of the diaspora of veterans of European wars and artillery garden training who could transmit their skills to the expanded forces of the civil war, and train a new generation of non-commissioned officers to remedy the ignorance of 'freshwater' soldiers.<sup>125</sup> Sergeants were the aides and agents of their captains and superior officers; to them, as skilled practitioners of their trade, the practical, day-to-day running of a military unit could be entrusted. They corrected the faults of those who mishandled their arms and, in exercises, drew the men up in the files appointed by their captains and placed chosen soldiers in positions of honour (as file-leaders, for example). On the march the sergeant's place was not at the head of his particular group or 'division' of men but on the flanks where he could make sure that the whole company kept rank and order. If a man was out of order the sergeant was advised to 'cast in his *Halbert* between their ranks, to cause him to march even a brest with his right and left-hand men'.<sup>126</sup> In skirmishes it was his duty to see that musketeers kept evenly abreast, their muskets at the ready, and that they fired in unison; he was also to teach them how to 'fall off' and then rally, a practical skill given the incidence of flight. He had other duties: to convey offenders to prison or to the provost marshal; to fetch the company's ammunition, powder, and match; to obtain the 'word' for the watch each evening and transmit it to those authorized to receive it; to direct his corporals in setting sentries, to make frequent rounds and, if he found one asleep, 'to commit him to the hand of justice'.<sup>127</sup> He was, effectively, the

<sup>123</sup> Elton, *Compleat Body of the Art Military*, 181.

<sup>124</sup> See the requirements set out for Scottish regiments in 1639: captains and ensigns might be 'noblemen or gentlemen', but colonels, lieutenant-colonels, and sergeant-majors (the 'prime officers') 'should be men of skill, and must be sent for out of Germany and Holland', as should lieutenants and sergeants. *CSPDom. 1638-1639*, 409.

<sup>125</sup> See Parker on the success and failure of such 'old souldiers' in transmitting continental professionalism to raw recruits. Parker, *Military Revolution*, 175-6.

<sup>126</sup> Elton, *Compleat Body of the Art Military*, 180. This suggests that there was at least an ideal of orderly marching and, taken with the presence of drummers on the march, that armies sometimes—depending on road and other conditions—achieved the 'cadenced step' the existence of which in 17th-cent. armies has recently been questioned.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*



company's site manager, responsible for its preparation for battle and its conduct in battle and camp.

With corporals we move to the hands-on micro-management of 'squadrons' within each company. A corporal's duties included teaching his men the use of pike and musket; keeping a roll of his squadron, notifying his sergeant when a soldier's name was deleted, and then training his replacement; distributing victuals, powder, bullet, and match, and providing wood, coal, and candles when the squadron was on guard. He was also particularly charged with setting out guards and sentinels, safeguarding the 'word', making sure that his men were vigilant and prepared for action, and enforcing silence around guard posts. As the authority figure in closest touch with the men he was to note and make the best use of his experienced soldiers and, more generally, to 'have an eye to . . . lives and manners'. He should protect the interests of the sick and wounded, taking care of their baggage and money, and be a model to his men, 'sober, wise and discreet, for the avoiding of ill example unto others'.<sup>128</sup>

These were clearly councils of perfection, although based on a realistic map of military division of labour, and Elton regretted that some through sloth failed to learn their proper attributes.<sup>129</sup> Nevertheless this organizational map, with its gradations of responsibility, duties, and command, reveals the ways in which, through that division of labour, the plans and precepts of high command could be translated into something like the intended action, and it places the innumerable small actions of the war within a larger pattern. It also reveals the vital role of the non-commissioned officers in fielding an army. Sergeants served as the liaison between officers and men and were general overseers of company skills and discipline, while corporals provided the small-scale training, care, and oversight that endeavoured to make the best of the armies' imperfect raw material.

The professional soldier Robert Monro had recognized that even the best of plans and organizations still confronted problems of chronic inattentiveness and unsoldierly habits, and he offered practical, common-sense remedies: give commands from the front; capture attention by a prologue and secure eye-contact; require silence (otherwise the men would be 'babbling one to another'); enforce exact obedience to commands; ensure silent movement in regular ranks with no rattling of arms.<sup>130</sup> Civil war officers and their sergeants and corporals attempted by similar means to produce effective armies. The best instructors were characterized by expertise that bestowed authority and by the clarity and accessibility of their instructions as they drilled their men. As Elton explained,

He that intends to exercise a Body of men, must truly know what he shall command, and so to give his directions unto the Souldiers, as they may aptly make ready execution of

<sup>128</sup> Ibid. 178-9.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid. 181.

<sup>130</sup> Monro, *Expedition*, 187.



the same. He must at such times above all the rest, assume unto himself the confidence & presence (as near as he is able) of a complete Souldier.<sup>131</sup>

Ideally the instructions given to the troops should be specific and understandable, as in the following directions by which a body of men could change the direction in which it faced while remaining in the same place. They demonstrate the care with which actions were deconstructed, but also the complexities involved in training 'freshwater soldiers':

The left foot is always to be kept fixed like the *hinge* of a door, and unto what hand or part they shall be commanded to face, every particular Souldier is immediately to turn his body upon the *ball* or *center* of his left foot by *wheeling*, until he hath brought his *Aspect* unto the place commanded.<sup>132</sup>

Officers who could give such commands and men who could follow them were on the way to becoming 'complete Souldiers'. With time the armies of both sides contained increasing numbers of such men, but both armies also still contained men—including 'complete Souldiers'—who on many occasions were the despair of their officers.

## ROUNDHEADS AND CAVALIERS

These soldiers, restive, dilatory, spurred on by threat, incentive, and occasional inspiration, do not sound very like the godly, disciplined New Model army of legend, but nor do they on aggregate sound like Goring's uncontrolled ravagers of the west country. They continued to be forgetful, negligent, destructive, wasteful, and riotous, but with luck and effort these attributes could be kept within limits and the damage they inflicted on army efficiency and civilian welfare controlled. As the war went on, more troops became better trained and 'soldierly' as commanders laboured to impose professional standards on their recruits. As early as the end of August 1642, for example, an order had already come down to the troops at Coventry that 'all soildiers should attend their colors every morne by sixe of the clock to march into the feilde to practise'.<sup>133</sup>

Attention to drill and basic tactics produced more reliable and cohesive troops and more effective deployment. So soldiers learnt to follow a standard set of orders, to hold their fire and to maintain it at a regular rate, and to march or trot at a steady pace. Cromwell and his Ironsides are the best-known of

<sup>131</sup> Elton, *Compleat Body of the Art Military*, 21.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid. 22. *The Grounds of Military Discipline*, a verse broadside detailing the motions that a good soldier should master, may have daunted rather than enlightened the reader, as it explained at length how to 'Open, close, face, double, countermarch, wheel, charge, retire: Invert, Convert, Reduce, Trope, March, Make readie, Fire.' It is reproduced in James Scott Wheeler, *The Making of a World Power* (Stroud, 1999), following p. 152.

<sup>133</sup> Wharton, 'Letters from a Subaltern Officer', 2. 317.



the courageous, resolute, and disciplined bodies that emerged, but although they reached their height in the New Model army these characteristics were not confined to parliamentary troops.<sup>134</sup> Nor should we forget that although the godly soldier may have believed that he was God's instrument doing God's work, faith was not a substitute for professional competence. Despite the rhetoric of its clerical supporters, the New Model was a professional army, not a missionary organization. Oliver Cromwell's letters to Fairfax on military affairs were strikingly secular, and references to God's mercies and assistance were occasional if heartfelt. Instead they were concerned with the business of war, with troop movements and tactical priorities and estimates of enemy strength.<sup>135</sup>

In spite of heroic efforts by officers and non-commissioned officers that led to notable improvements over time, however, casual, low-level, almost homely deficiencies continued to accompany more dramatic offences like flight and desertion. A 'Drawbridge . . . accidentally left down', for example, enabled a royalist party to capture an important prisoner; a corporal drunk at the wrong time wrecked plans for a surprise attack. Even on their critical marches after Naseby royalist 'neglect of guarding' led to the surprise of a large body of cavalry by parliamentarians who 'found all their horses at grass, and some of the men asleep, some a swimming, and the rest carelessly resting in the fields'. Shortly afterwards, on a misty morning, negligent parliamentarians were in turn surprised.<sup>136</sup> At times there was good-tempered bipartisan recognition of a universal problem. In June 1645 the royalists were able to capture Hougham House in Lincolnshire because the defenders, ignorant of their approach, were asleep; so they manacled their prisoners' hands, tied their feet, and laid them on the ground beyond the moat 'to take another nappie if they could'. There they were found by the parliamentary relief, who 'first laughed heartily at [them], and then instantly unbound them', after which they retook the house.<sup>137</sup>

Even in the New Model old military deficiencies were not exorcised, if they were better controlled, and civilians still suffered in traditional ways from the presence of soldiers. In both armies the moral and pious still deplored what they could not control. After the Restoration an old royalist, a 'Loyal Indigent Officer', regretted the character of many of his fellows:

Some hold themselves no Souldiers, till they can Gracelessly . . . thunder out Bloody Oaths; Common Swearing maketh one apt to forswear himself, which is a fearfull sin . . . 'Tis a horrid Sin, . . . some out of Passion, and some out of Custom, makes nothing of it in their Drinking: Which Sin made us odious in the sight of God and Man.

<sup>134</sup> For accounts of civil war practice, and for directions for drill, see Firth, *Cromwell's Army*, 93-5, 130-4, 137-41, 383-5.

<sup>135</sup> Abbott, *Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, 1. 336-7, 341-2, 346-7, 368-9.

<sup>136</sup> Rushworth, 5. 622; Carte, *Letters and Papers*, 1. 131, 133; Bodl. MSS Clarendon, 34, fo. 25.

<sup>137</sup> Vicars, *Burning-Bush*, in *Magnalia Dei Anglicana*, 157-8.