

in advancing the W.S.C.'s agenda and how his business and that of the W.S.C. interacted.

Because of its nature, this is a book than can be dipped into as well as read from cover to cover. The reader will find much of interest and diversion and the detailed and copious footnotes will offer a deeper engagement with the source material. It deserves a place on the bookshelf of anyone with an interest or fascination with maps. The production is up to the usual high standards of Four Courts Press.

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THE MILITIA IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY IRELAND: IN DEFENCE OF THE PROTESTANT INTEREST.
By Neal Garnham. Pp x, 198. Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press. 2012. £65.

In the early modern period, throughout the Atlantic world, the right to bear arms was a cherished badge of citizenship. More than the right to vote, legal ownership of a firearm marked a person out as a full member of the state, nation or polity and was therefore a highly prized prerogative, not to be bestowed lightly or carelessly, and certainly not on those whose previous actions or current demeanour rendered them suspect. (On these latter grounds, for most of the eighteenth century, Irish Catholics and Scottish and Irish Presbyterians qualified for exclusion.) In many countries – notably England, Scotland, the American Colonies, but also, though less clamorously, in France and the Low Countries – this worship of weaponry in private hands revealed itself in impassioned debates about, and demands for, a well-regulated militia. Such a force of armed part-timers, citizens residing at home, civilised by the presence of their wives and children and defending their localities, was widely seen by those mindful of potential threats to civil rights as both morally superior to, and an essential counterweight against, a professional army whose members were notoriously shut away in gloomy barracks where they were bereft of homely comfort and subjected to savage discipline; and hence, it was declared, all too easily deployed by an oppressive prince against his subjects and their liberties.

Hitherto, the 'militia issue' in various countries has received well-merited attention from historians: J. R. Western, *The English militia in the eighteenth century* (London, 1965), John Robertson, *The Scottish Enlightenment and the militia issue* (Edinburgh, 1985) and Joyce Lee Malcolm, *To keep and bear arms: the origins of an Anglo-American right* (Cambridge, MA, 1994) might all be commended in this regard. Unusually, we may say that Irish historiography too has been relatively well served in this area: Sir Henry McAnally's pioneering study, *The Irish militia 1793–1816: a social and military study* (Dublin, 1949) was reviewed by G. A. Hayes-McCoy in *I.H.S.*, vii, no. 26 (Sept. 1950) pp 127–9, where he pronounced it to be 'a valuable addition' to Irish military history and then went on to criticise it for focusing on the 'trees rather than the wood', i.e. largely ignoring the Irish militia's bad conduct during the 1798 rebellion. More recently, Ivan F. Nelson has supplemented though not superseded McAnally in his *The Irish militia 1793–1802: Ireland's forgotten army* (Dublin, 2007), where he offers a fuller account (and defence) of the Irish militia during the rebellion. Neal Garnham's book takes its place among these earlier accounts of the Irish militia. He situates the Irish militia issue (or 'issues' as he insists) among those already addressed by Robertson, Western and others in their specific national contexts, and he breaks new ground in focusing on the early history of the militia in Ireland, tracing its origins from the early seventeenth century, through the eighteenth century and concluding, after a number of ebbs and flows, with the setting up in 1793 of the Irish militia that was the subject of McAnally's and Nelson's labours. A central theme is that the force established in 1793 was one whose composition was very far from that envisaged by its earlier promoters – indeed was diametrically opposed to it.

In investigating the pre-history of the militia of 1793, Garnham has cast his net very widely indeed and his use of manuscript sources – it is striking how slim these are – and printed material, especially pamphlets, has been exemplary. It is unlikely that he has overlooked anything of significance, and his book can be welcomed as an important addition to the growing volume of works on Irish military history.

A demand for a militia – more accurately a *Protestant* militia – had emerged during the commonwealth, was further pressed under the restoration and in 1666 meaningful action was taken to establish one on a statutory basis. By 1672, according to Sir William Petty this ‘Protestant militia’ could muster some 24,000 men. Disbanded under James II and then reformed by William III as a war measure, the force proved useful in hunting down tories and rapparees. However, it proved almost impossible to have it re-established on a statutory basis and it was not until 1716 that this was done. Garnham offers three causes for this delay. First, there were constitutional difficulties, for a militia bill might be regarded as a money bill, and money bills were fraught matters in the 1690s and later, and best avoided, Second, there were demographic issues: because it was proposed to exclude Catholics and dissenters, the question arose, were there enough members of the Church of Ireland to fill a militia? Third, there was the perennially pressing problem of finance: where would the money come from to pay for the proposed militia?

Finally established, at least for a time, on a statutory basis in 1716 the Irish militia was open to all male members of the Church of Ireland aged between sixteen and sixty years: officers were to be nominated by lieutenant governors of each county, there was to be four days’ training each year and the force was to be paid for by a county cess. (Catholics had to pay double.) That was on paper; the reality was rather different. Over the next forty years there were only three full arrays, in 1719, 1745 and 1756 – and this last array produced the amazing total of 140,000 Protestants in the militia. Garnham accounts for this figure by claiming that the total was simply a head count of all eligible Protestants. Snapshots of the militia’s duties during these decades reveal them pursuing rapparees, escorting prisoners, and turning out for ceremonial duties (royal birthday celebrations and the like) when called upon. A constant complaint was the lack of weapons: there were never enough to go around from central stores, very many were lost or stolen, and a significant number accompanied their owner to a new life in the New World, for while Presbyterians were formally excluded from the ranks of the militia, they were admitted in Ulster, even serving as officers despite the Sacramental Test. Indemnity Acts had to be passed to head off legal challenge, at least until 1756 when commissions were formally opened to dissenters. Garnham sees militia service in Ireland during these years as others have viewed it in other countries – as a form of active patriotism that proved a strong bonding force among citizens and soon offered a certain standing to both the men and the officers. Some militia ranks even became hereditary, being passed down from father to son and much sought after for their social cachet.

It was in the 1760s that the militia became associated with opposition politics in Ireland. This was much later than in other countries and can be explained by the unique circumstances of conquest and colonisation pertaining to Ireland. Unlike in England, we are told, Protestants in Ireland had no strong objection to a standing army, for they regarded it as a prime defence of their ascendancy, and the civil libertarian rhetoric of the militia debates in England and Scotland during the early eighteenth century was heard much less frequently here. Garnham dates the beginning of the adoption of the militia as an opposition cause in Ireland to the fall-out over the attack on Carrickfergus, County Antrim, in 1760 by a French force led by Thurot, a French privateer. The shambolic response of the Irish militia to this crisis was much derided at the time, but Garnham successfully argues that the real loser in the matter was the lord lieutenant, the Duke of Bedford, castigated for failing to issue in good time the necessary weaponry and ammunition. Thereafter the lack of a proper Irish militia was used as a stick with which to beat the Castle administration. Henry Flood was to the fore in this matter, especially during the so-called augmentation crisis of 1768–9, when Lord Townshend, then lord

lieutenant, sought to increase the regular army strength in Ireland, at the expense, it was alleged, of a well-regulated militia.

So far as Dublin Castle was concerned, an established militia was an expense and a risk that it could ill afford. The Castle was certain a militia formation would cut across recruitment to the regular army in Ireland, and as before, the lack of Protestant numbers was a drawback. And, a further negative consideration: the turbulent – the ‘Hearts of Oak’ of Ulster and Whiteboys of Munster – and the riotous – the anti-Union riot of 1759 in Dublin had not been forgotten – would no doubt be admitted to any such body and thus acquire arms and training. As a result of these objections, throughout the 1770s, Dublin Castle remained steadfastly opposed to putting an Irish militia on a renewed statutory footing. In the event, it was to be the Irish volunteers of 1778 who stepped forward to fill the void left by the absence of a legal militia.

In an important chapter, Garnham argues that the volunteers were essentially the Irish militia under a different name and that both performed rather similar tasks. The vaunted independence of the volunteers, he claims was bogus: they accepted government arms and government approval, and their officers did not want commissions from the crown lest they were ordered to serve far away from hearth and home. In any case, there was a close overlap in membership between former militia and volunteer officers. Moreover, the militia on occasion could prove to be just as political as the volunteers: volunteer involvement in politics was ‘not a totally new departure’ (p. 120). Nor were the volunteers responsible for the ‘constitution of 1782’: though here Garnham rather undermines his own case by declaring quite erroneously that Poyning’s law was ‘to all intents and purposes’ repealed in 1782 (p. 103), while later he speaks of ‘the repeal of Poyning’s law’ (p. 168). And of course, the volunteers, as the names of their companies make clear, emulated the old militia in their uncompromising anti-Catholicism. Until mid-1782 ‘it is hard to detect any great Catholic involvement in the volunteer companies’, writes Garnham (p. 114). In short, the volunteers have to be considered ‘as a *militia* [sic] force, because that is what they were’ (p. 122).

Such bracing revisionism of an oft-told tale is welcome in so far as it forces the reader to re-evaluate long-held views. However, there is the danger that in seeking to say something striking the evidence might well be left behind: if the new volunteers were simply the old militia writ large then why was the Dublin Castle administration so determined to replace them, first with provincial regiments or fencibles, and then with a new militia? And why were the volunteers viewed with such apprehension if they were only a revitalised Irish militia? The novelty of the volunteers can be overlooked. The election of officers by the men, the swift assault on trade restrictions, quickly followed by the attempt to redress constitutional grievances, and their stance on Catholic relief, revealed the volunteers of 1778 to be a new force in Irish life and politics, one that was corrosive of both the social and political fabric of Irish society. It has long been apparent that the volunteer structure owed much to the earlier militia organisation, but unlike the militia, the volunteers posed a direct threat to a society based on deference and to a political arena that was hitherto severely circumscribed. This was why Dublin Castle and some Irish politicians regarded them with fear and loathing.

From being a favourite measure of the Irish opposition in the 1770s, a well-regulated Irish militia became a key government policy objective in the 1780s, principally as a means of doing away with volunteering. The volunteers had shown no interest in disbanding after the war with the American colonies, their original reason for existing. Garnham traces the evolution of this policy with skill, and he concludes his study with a detailed consideration of the passing of the 1793 militia act. This act set up the militia armament that would be the subject of later works by McAnally and Nelson. The Irish act was modelled on the English one that essentially constituted a militia as an adjunct, or reserve and later nursery for the regular army, and was designed as a defence force in the war with revolutionary France. However, it differed radically and decisively from all earlier plans for an Irish militia in a single central point: the Irish militia of 1793 could

admit Catholics. The *Protestant* militia proposed by Irish patriot politicians from the 1760s on, and by British ministers including William Pitt throughout the 1780s, had been comprehensively replaced by an Irish militia that would inevitably be predominantly Catholic in its rank and file though with mostly Protestant officers.

This astonishing turnaround constituted a revolution for Irish Catholics as far-reaching as the roughly simultaneous winning of the franchise in Irish county elections. Garnham's explanation for this 'shift', as he styles it (p. 166), is ingenious: Irish M.P.s passed the militia act of 1793 unaware ('largely unknowingly', p. 167) that Irish Catholics would be admitted to the ranks of the new force. Thus the Irish Protestant elite sleepwalked into the great concession of the eighteenth century. There may be something in this. Garnham rightly notes the lack of anguished analysis or heated rhetoric by participants in the debates surrounding the militia act. After all, an exclusively Protestant militia, long an object of desire for opposition politicians, and latterly for the British government, was to be replaced by, in essence, a Catholic one: how could this go through the Irish parliament largely unchallenged if not through ignorance of the implications of the proposed measure of 1793, or even as a result of 'a mild measure of deception' (p. 163)?

There are, however, alternative explanations that might be considered. First, Garnham comprehensively ignores the ongoing dilution of the armed forces of the British crown through Irish Catholic recruitment. Since the Seven Years War (1756–63) Irish Catholics, in flat defiance of various exclusionary acts, had infiltrated the Marines, the East India company army, the Royal Navy and the regular army, especially the Royal Artillery. In short, Irish Catholic recruitment to the military was not a new idea in 1793: it was an established fact. Hence the concession allowing Irish Catholics to hold commissions on the Irish establishment or permitting them to serve in the militia was not a bolt out of the blue in 1793: it had been coming for some time. Second, it was clear from the outset that the war with revolutionary France would not be a limited one on the model of earlier conflicts. The coming war would be a war of ideas and of peoples: ideology would be important but numbers would be vital; and therefore the potential reserves offered to the British war machine by Irish Catholic recruits would not be ignored. There seems to have been a general, if reluctant, acceptance among Irish politicians that Irish Catholic recruitment had to be an element in the British mobilisation against France. Lastly, the declaration of war by France on Britain, the passing of the militia act, and the enactment of a radical measure of Catholic relief were all intimately linked. No one who reads the correspondence between the British government and Dublin Castle in the months prior to the militia act and the Catholic Relief Act of 1793 can miss that connection. Catholic relief in 1793 was designed to ignite enthusiasm in the breasts of the Catholic gentry and middle classes for the coming war with France. A *Catholic* militia was a key element in that strategy. Irish Protestant M.P.s knew well what was going on but they did not protest because they were beaten down by threats of abandonment from William Pitt and Henry Dundas. They were also bemused, even bewildered, by the swift 'shift' in British government attitudes as regards an Irish militia and the aspirations of Irish Catholics. Some M.P.s even argued for full Catholic emancipation rather than the ludicrous half-way house or semi-citizenship Irish Catholics were left with: they had been given the right to bear arms, at least in the militia and regular army, and had been given the vote, but as yet had been denied seats in parliament. In desperation, some Irish M.P.s began to contemplate a legislative union as an exit strategy from a seemingly unwinnable, low-intensity war against Irish Catholic numbers.

Neal Garnham's study of the Irish militia in the decades before 1793 raises many questions: but this is because it is a well-researched and well-argued work. It is provocative and challenging, and generally persuasive overall though not convincing in parts. It is a distinguished addition to the shelf of books on Irish military history.

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