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**A Gloucestershire Regiment in the Seven Years' War**

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# A Gloucestershire Regiment in the Seven Years' War

By J. W. WYATT

'GLOUCESTER, May 22nd, 1756. This day at noon war was declared in this city against France with the solemnity customary on such occasions'. So Robert Raikes described in the *Gloucester Journal* how the people of this city heard that the Seven Years' War had begun.

During that war the 28th and 61st Regiments of Foot, which later became the 1st and 2nd Battalions the Gloucestershire Regiment, served with distinction. The 28th took part in the capture of Louisburg and in the victory on the Heights of Abraham which culminated in the capture of Quebec. They fought in the battle of St Foy, the capture of Martinique and of Havana, and in the conquest of Cuba.<sup>1</sup> The 61st, raised in 1756 as the 2nd Battalion The Buffs, sailed to the West Indies in 1758 and took part in the capture of Guadeloupe, then, its ranks sadly reduced by sickness, returned to England.<sup>2</sup>

Neither of these regiments had at that time any connection with Gloucestershire; not until 1782 did they become the North and South Gloucestershire Regiments respectively.<sup>3</sup>

There was, however, a regiment raised in Gloucestershire for the Seven Years' War which has been almost completely forgotten in our county and is not mentioned in any of our county histories. This regiment, the 57th Foot, later became the 1st Battalion the Middlesex Regiment, but though a history of that regiment records that it was raised in Gloucestershire and Somerset it does not mention that it was then known as the Gloucestershire Regiment. The regiment played an important if uneventful part in a war which laid the foundations of the British empire and shaped the future history of three continents. It should not be forgotten in the county of its birth.

It was obvious at the beginning of 1756 that war with France was coming, and equally obvious that the British army, neglected as usual in eight years of peace since the war of the Austrian Succession, would not be strong enough to fulfil its tasks, so a belated effort was made to increase its strength. Various counties were asked to raise, or complete the raising of, a regiment of foot. Gloucestershire was asked to complete the raising of Colonel Arabin's regiment, the 59th. Early in 1757 this regiment, with others, was re-numbered and became the 57th Foot. To avoid confusion it will be called the 57th throughout this article.

Colonel John Arabin with the nucleus of his regiment marched into Gloucester in the first few days of March<sup>4</sup> and lost no time in setting about his task of recruiting, for as early as 6 March several men were impressed in the city.<sup>5</sup> In the absence of barracks, soldiers were billeted in the inns and it was also customary in Gloucester to quarter troops in the east and west gates of the city.<sup>6</sup> It is unlikely that the soldiers were welcomed by the innkeepers, who were paid only 4*d.* a day for a soldier's board and lodging, including the six pints of small beer with which he had to be supplied.

1. D. Scott Daniell, *Cap of Honour* (1951), 44-52.

2. *Cap of Honour*, 36-8.

3. *Cap of Honour*, 65.

4. *Gloucester Journal*, 9 Mar. 1756.

5. *Ibid.*

6. Gloucestershire Record Office, Gloucester city chamberlain's accounts, GBR 1399/1504, 20 Sept. 1756.

The payment did not vary with changes in the cost of living and when the price of corn rose—it almost doubled in 1756—was so inadequate that in the winter of that year innkeepers in Leicestershire handed in their licences rather than have troops billeted on them and in Suffolk one of the members of Parliament paid innkeepers an extra penny a day from his own pocket.<sup>7</sup>

A notice appeared in the *Gloucester Journal* of 23 March appealing to able-bodied men of a minimum height of five feet five inches to enlist in the regiment 'intended to be recruited and completed in the county of Gloucester'. It offered a bounty of three guineas to voluntary recruits and stated that they would be discharged at the end of three years or at the end of the war.

The following week the lord lieutenant, the earl of Ducie, of Woodchester Park, published this notice in the *Journal*:

'The advertisement in last Gloucester Journal for raising soldiers . . . being not thoroughly understood, it is thought proper to be more particular. The County of Gloucester, it is hoped, will take upon it the raising and completing Colonel Arabin's, to be called the Gloucestershire Regiment, with which no other is to interfere in the raising of men. The Lord Lieutenant stays in this county only to forward this work, thinking it, at this time, a more important one than his attendance in Parliament; and though the public motives are so strong that any argument of a more private nature may appear trifling, yet he can't forbear saying he shall take the sending of men to list as a particular and personal favour done to himself. Such men as are within reach of Woodchester Park will be welcome to come there and receive the additional money to make up three guineas clear. . . . At places more remote, it is settled for the recruiting officers nearest them to advance the whole money.—The same thing is doing in the counties all round us; and it is hoped this rich and populous one will not be the last in completing a regiment it is to give its own name to, and which may so soon be wanted'.

Colonel John Arabin was of French Huguenot descent. His father, Bartholomew D'Arabin, fought for William III at the battle of the Boyne and settled in Ireland. John was born in 1700 and joined the army at the age of seventeen. In the Jacobite rising of 1745 he commanded the St George's (8th) Dragoons and in 1749 became lieutenant colonel of the 2nd Horse (5th Dragoon Guards). In January 1756 he was authorized to raise a new regiment of foot, of which he was to be colonel, by recruiting in any part of Great Britain. He made his first headquarters at Manchester and two companies, one from the 3rd Foot (The Buffs) and one from the 20th Foot (later the Lancashire Fusiliers), were posted to him as the nucleus of his regiment.<sup>8</sup> He had been recruiting in places as far apart as Lincolnshire and Sussex before coming to Gloucester.<sup>9</sup>

Lord Ducie called a meeting of the nobility, gentry, and clergy of the county of Gloucester on 19 March 'to consider what may be thought proper to be done in the present hazardous and critical situation of affairs'.<sup>10</sup> He opposed a proposal that a subscription should be raised by the gentry in order to increase the bounty paid to recruits because 'people would have thought they had done when they had paid their money; everybody's business would have been nobody's business. . . . The three guineas we give, as nobody bids against us, will bring in all who would have any thought of listing though more were offered'. What was needed, he said, was not money but 'authority'.<sup>11</sup>

The ways in which the gentry, as landlords and employers, could exert authority to bring in recruits are obvious; as magistrates and parish officers they could exert more. By an act of Parliament of 1696 all debtors serving imprisonment could be impressed. By the Mutiny Act of 1702 convicted felons who chose to enlist could be pardoned. An act of 1703 empowered magistrates to impress any able-bodied man who had no lawful employment or visible means of maintenance.<sup>12</sup>

The exertion of the authority which the lord lieutenant had in mind at the meeting, and when

7. *Glouc. Journ.* 4 Dec. 1756.

8. C. L. Kingsford Smith, *The Story of the Middlesex Regt.* (1915), 2.

9. *Glouc. Journ.* 11 and 25 May 1756.

10. *G. J.* 16 Mar. 1756.

11. Gloucestershire Record Office, D340a/C26/3.

12. Col. H. de Watteville, *The British Soldier* (1954), 69.

he wrote of 'sending of men to list' as being a personal favour done to himself, probably lies behind many an entry in county records. John Dennis from Buckinghamshire, committed to Winchcombe bridewell in March 1756 'for want of giving a good account of himself', enlisted in the 57th and was discharged from gaol. Richard Allard of Honeybourne and Peter Green of Weston Subedge, committed to the same bridewell for being 'idle and disorderly' in 1757, and James Tyler, confined in the county gaol for refusing to give sureties as the putative father of an illegitimate child in January 1758 were also enlisted and discharged.<sup>13</sup> In November 1760 Thomas Hammond and his wife were, or were likely to become, a burden on the poor rate at Wotton. Before a settlement order to remove them to Ashleworth, their place of settlement, was executed, Thomas Hammond was in the army so only his wife was removed.<sup>14</sup>

Despite any authority exerted, or the three guineas bounty, recruitment into the 57th was slower than the lord lieutenant expected and he was looking to see if there was 'any underhand business to discourage enlistment, though none appears'. Letters received in the county from Gloucestershire men enlisted into some of the other new regiments complained that they were 'bit and the promises made them not kept'. This, the lord lieutenant wrote, 'though I daresay without foundation, does us already much mischief'.<sup>15</sup>

It is not surprising that willing recruits were difficult to obtain, for the soldier's pay was poor, his conditions of service deplorable. The infantry private's pay had been fixed at 8*d.* a day as far back as 1660 and at that figure it remained, regardless of increases in the cost of living, until 1783. Nor did the soldier receive the whole of that princely sum; fourpence of it was paid to the person on whom he was billeted and a further twopence retained by the regiment for clothing and other necessities.<sup>16</sup> After further charges had been deducted—a halfpenny a week for Chelsea hospital, a halfpenny a week for the regimental surgeon, another for the regimental agent, and a fee to the paymaster general of the forces—all that remained for the soldier's personal use was a few pence a week.<sup>17</sup>

Discipline was harsh and brutally enforced. At a court martial in Gloucester in June 1760 John Long, a private in the Norfolk Militia found guilty of desertion, was sentenced to 'five hundred lashes with a cat of nine tails from the hands of the drummers at two several punishments and after the last punishment to be drummed out of the regiment with a halter about his neck'.<sup>18</sup> The sentence was duly carried out at the foot of the gallows, which at that time stood on the Town Ham.<sup>19</sup> In Bristol in 1762 two men of the Glamorganshire Militia found guilty of accepting bribes from French prisoners of war to allow them to escape, were given a thousand lashes each in three instalments, drummed out of the regiment, and then handed over to the press-gang for naval service.<sup>20</sup> During the Jacobite rebellion of 1745 a regiment was raised in Gloucestershire by the earl of Berkeley and stationed in Bristol. When some of the men were to be lashed for desertion, some of their comrades mutinied and made an unsuccessful attempt to prevent the sentence being carried out.<sup>21</sup>

There was no pension for the disabled soldier or for the old soldier who had served his time, though a few were maintained in Chelsea hospital and a few more received out-pensions from the same source. When he returned from foreign service he was disembarked at any port and given a 'pass' entitling him to ask for alms from the general public or the officers of the parishes through which he tramped his way home. The pass was signed by an officer and stipulated the time and route of his journey. Records of small payments to sick or discharged servicemen tramping home

13. Glos. R.O., Q/SG1/1756/8.

14. Glos. R.O., Q/SR/Epiph. 1761.

15. Glos. R.O., D340a C26/3.

16. de Watteville, *Brit. Soldier*, 57.

17. *Brit. Soldier*, 81-2.

18. Public Record Office, W.O.72/4.

19. *G.J.*, 25 June 1760.

20. *G.J.*, 15 Nov. 1762.

21. *G.J.*, 8 April 1746.

are frequent in the accounts of parish officers and the county treasurer. Early in 1749 the treasurer paid £13 16s. to 224 discharged soldiers, seamen, wives and children.<sup>22</sup> Evidently a regiment returning from the war of the Austrian Succession had been disbanded in Bristol and the men were tramping home through Gloucestershire. In January of the same year lord Loudoun's Highland Regiment was disembarked and disbanded at Yarmouth to tramp home. A fortnight later letters from Yorkshire reported that four hundred of the men had 'suffered extremely by cold and want, being retarded by the severity of the weather and not having sufficiency to carry them home, and that they make grievous complaints as they pass along, some of their homes being beyond Inverness.'<sup>23</sup>

It is small wonder that willing recruits were scarce and that authority was necessary to obtain more; less wonder that 'authority' was used, for it could at one and the same time swell the ranks of the army and relieve parishes of the burden of supporting able-bodied paupers. Centuries before conscription was officially introduced into Britain there had been a rudimentary form of conscription, but only of the ne'er-do-well, the unemployed and the poor.

Desertion from the army was frequent in the 18th century and added to the difficulty of raising the regiment. Notices giving names and descriptions of deserters and offering rewards for their apprehension are common in the *Gloucester Journal* of the time; the names of fourteen deserters from the 57th appear in a period of four months: William Jones, 17 years of age, born at Imbury, enlisted at Tewkesbury; John Workman, 26, born at Cambridge, enlisted at Sodbury; Michael Coleman, born at Westbury, enlisted at Tewkesbury.<sup>24</sup> Many of them had probably been unwilling recruits, like John Dennis from Winchcombe bridewell who deserted when the regiment was en route for embarkation.<sup>25</sup>

By the end of April, however, seven companies of the 57th were complete, though recruiting had, perforce, been extended into Somerset. The *Gloucester Journal* reported, 'Glocester, May 8th. This week marched from hence for Exeter, Colonel Arabin's Regiment of Foot.' Major Townshend remained in Gloucester to supervise the completion of the regiment and recruiting parties remained in various parts of the county for a week or two, by the end of which the remaining three companies were complete and marched to Exeter to join their comrades. At full strength the regiment consisted of a colonel, lieutenant-colonel, major, and about 30 other commissioned officers, five staff officers (chaplain, adjutant, quartermaster, surgeon, and surgeon's mate), 30 sergeants, 20 drummers and 700 rank and file including 30 corporals.<sup>26</sup>

The statement that the 57th marched out of Gloucester 'this week' suggest that the whole regiment did not leave on the same day but marched to Exeter by companies or groups of companies. This was the usual method of moving regiments for it facilitated feeding and billeting along the route. But one would like to think of the regiment enjoying one moment of glory and leaving the county city in full martial splendour, to the roll of drums, the citizens lining the street to wave farewell. After they had gone, more than twenty regiments and independent companies came beating for recruits in Gloucestershire<sup>27</sup> to fight at Minden, Quebec and in other famous victories; but, as the first Gloucestershire Regiment of the regular army, the 57th won no fame in battle though it gave useful service. If it included some idle fellows they had plenty of time to indulge that propensity in seven years of monotonous service before being forgotten by their native county. As a regiment they never returned to Gloucestershire and many never returned at all, for though very few fell in battle many were killed by disease.

The 57th wore red coats, waistcoats, and breeches, with white linen gaiters coming halfway up the thigh. Their coats and three-cornered hats had lemon coloured lace and facings. The regimental

22. G.R.O., Q/F Ac 1.

23. *G.J.*, 31 Jan. 1748/9.

24. *G.J.*, 30 Mar. 1756.

25. *G.J.*, 25 May 1756.

26. P.R.O., W.O. 17/1774, Monthly returns, Gibraltar.

27. *Gloucester Journals* of period.

colour was lemon yellow with 59 on a red ground in the centre. The drummers were dressed in reverse colours, yellow coats with red facings. They wore high conical caps, lemon colour in front, red behind, with a badge of drums and flags and at the base a red flap bearing the white horse of Hanover and the motto *Nec aspera terrent* (Nor do hard things frighten us). The grenadier company, the tallest men in the regiment, commanded by lord Boyd, wore caps like the drummers except that their badge was the royal cipher and crown. The officers wore high boots instead of gaiters, a crimson silk sash, and gold lace. The men had two broad buff belts, one round the waist to carry a bayonet, one over the left shoulder to carry a pouch for powder and shot for the musket with which they were armed. In addition to the musket, the grenadiers were armed with swords and carried match-cases for the grenades. The sergeants were armed with swords and halberts—the proverbial pike-staff, plain to be seen, round which the men could rally. Officers carried swords and half-pikes, though the officers and sergeants of the grenadier company carried fusils instead of pikes.<sup>28</sup> The regimental baggage was carried by civilian transport, and with it travelled wives and children who usually accompanied regiments when stationed in Britain and shared billets with the men in return for domestic or nursing duties.<sup>29</sup>

When the 57th was completed at Exeter by the arrival of the three remaining companies it was under orders to sail for Gibraltar. It marched to Plymouth, arrived there on 1 June, embarked soon after, and arrived at Gibraltar at the end of that month.<sup>30</sup>

A belief was prevalent at the time that these newly-raised regiments were for home defence and could not be sent abroad without the men's consent. The *Gloucester Journal* of 15 June 1756 published a letter from Bristol stating that 'incendiary letters have been sent to several gentlemen of a neighbouring county on account of the transportation of some new-raised troops to America, it being (say their friends) contrary both to public and private agreement at the time of their inlisting, which was only for three years, and to defend their native country from the invasion of the French.'

What caused this belief? Some recruits may have been deceived by unscrupulous recruiters. Possibly they confused the newly-raised regiments with the regiments of the county militia, for a bill to renew the militia was being considered by parliament at the time. The giving of a county title to the new regiments may well have caused confusion, for until this time regiments of the regular army had been known only by their number or their colonel's name. Eleven years earlier, during the Jacobite rebellion, the earl of Berkeley had raised a regiment in Gloucestershire. That regiment had been for home-defence only and was disbanded in 1746, immediately after the suppression of the rebellion, and long before the war of the Austrian Succession had ended.<sup>31</sup>

Whatever the reason, the belief that they had enlisted for home service only was so firmly held by one new regiment, the 54th, raised by colonel Campbell in Wiltshire, that when ordered to embark for Gibraltar it had to be disarmed and 'marched to the dockyard, followed to the gates by the garrison with bayonets fixed and muskets loaded to keep guard while they were . . . reviewed . . . and were immediately embarked without any disturbance except heavy complaints at their being sent abroad.' This account in the *Gloucester Journal* was followed by a note, no doubt by Robert Raikes, 'Contrary to the terms of the advertisement and the promises made them at the time of inlisting.'<sup>32</sup>

However, the 57th embarked without incident. Almost two years later, on 14 March 1758, the following notice appeared in the *Gloucester Journal*:

'Whereas it hath been industriously reported that the Fifty-Seventh or Gloucestershire Regiment was sent abroad without the knowledge or consent of the men inlisted in the county for three years, or during the war; This is therefore to assure the public that upon Col. Arabin's

28. Kingsford Smith, *Mdx Regt.*, 2-3.

29. de Watteville, *Brit. Soldier*, 124.

30. *Mdx. Regt.*, 4.

31. *G.J.*, 1 July 1746.

32. *G.J.*, 1 June 1756.

receiving orders to embark at Plymouth for Gibraltar he assembled his regiment at Exeter and told them if any one of them had any objection to go abroad he would discharge him immediately; which was so far from being accepted by any one that they gave three huzza's and embarked soon after at Plymouth with the greatest cheerfulness.'

Of the wives who accompanied the men, a limited number, usually six to each company, were customarily allowed to embark with their husbands. The others, like discharged soldiers, were given a 'pass' entitling them to ask for relief as they tramped their way to their place of settlement. There they and their children would be maintained by the parish poor rates, for soldiers' wives and soldiers' widows were paid no government allowance. Nor did they usually go home to mother, where they would be welcomed, for on marriage a woman adopted her husband's place of settlement. Soldiers, perforce, lead a roaming life, picking up their wives on their travels, so their place of settlement was often a place the wife had never visited, where she had no friends, and where even her husband, if he had served many years in the army, might well be unknown. Women like Anne Hedges deserved better treatment from the country they had served so well. Born in New York and married to a private in the 22nd Regiment, she served with her husband in many places in the Seven Years' War. She was, herself, wounded in Martinique and, on recovery, stayed in the hospital there as a nurse. Her husband died at his post in Florida and after the war she came to Britain in the Solebay hospital ship and landed in Leith. From there she was tramping to Ross-on-Wye, where she believed her husband was born and where he had enlisted at the age of seventeen, when she was found 'wandering and begging' at Upper Slaughter, apprehended as a vagrant and sent on to Ross.<sup>33</sup> She was one of many soldiers' wives and widows who tramped the roads of Britain in the 18th century. Duplicate passes for 42 women apprehended as vagrants during the periods 1746-53 and 1764-5 are preserved in the County Record Office. Of these women seventeen were wives or widows of soldiers, two more of ex-soldiers. With them were twenty children.<sup>34</sup>

If the men of the 57th embarked with the greatest cheerfulness their ability to remain cheerful must have been sorely taxed when they arrived in Gibraltar. The news was bad: Britain was making her usual disastrous start to a war. Without waiting for a formal declaration of war, a French army of fourteen thousand men had landed in Minorca, then a British possession. The British Mediterranean fleet under admiral Byng fought an indecisive battle with the French fleet on 20 May, after which Byng withdrew to Gibraltar, fearing that this would be the next enemy objective. He repaired his ships, disembarked a thousand sick men, and took aboard reinforcements in preparation for a return to Minorca, where a small British force under eighty-years-old general Blakeney was making a gallant defence of the castle of St Philip at Port Mahon. Before he was ready to sail he received orders to return to England to face a court martial for failing to do his utmost against the enemy. He was pronounced guilty and, despite appeals from Pitt and the French admiral against whom he had fought, was executed by a firing-squad on the quarter-deck of his own ship in Portsmouth harbour. Possibly it was a shot from a Gloucestershire man which killed him. Fifty years later John Venn, aged eighty-four, a pauper in Dursley workhouse, hanged himself in his bedroom. At the coroner's inquest evidence was given that Venn had been one of the six marines ordered to shoot Admiral Byng and had often been heard to say that he was sure that his ball had killed him.<sup>35</sup>

Admiral Hawke, who was sent out to replace the unfortunate Byng, arrived in Gibraltar on 3 July and continued preparations to relieve the garrison at Port Mahon. He took on board troops from Gibraltar, including some companies of the 57th, and sailed for Minorca on 10 July.<sup>36</sup> He was too late: the gallant defenders had surrendered on 28 June after a siege of 70 days. They were allowed to march out with the honours of war and be taken to Gibraltar. Hawke's fleet cruised off the coasts of

33. Glos. R.O., Q/RV2.

34. Glos. R.O., Q/RV 1 and 2.

35. Glos. R.O., D260, 8 Sept. 1806.

36. *Mdx. Regt.*, 4

Minorca and Spain for three months without event and returned to Gibraltar on 2 October, and the men of the 57th who were aboard disembarked.<sup>37</sup>

Their cruise had not been pleasant. The *Gloucester Journal* of 2 November reported that letters dated 24 September received from Hawke's squadron advised that 'the fleet had been very sickly, and that had it not been for the fresh provisions on board some French transports bound to Minorca, which providence threw in their way, half the ships' companies would have died.'

The companies which had remained in Gibraltar were in little better plight, for they were short of provisions and accommodation and the arrival of the defenders of St Philip's had added to the shortage. 'The brave fellows from St Philip's are sickly, ill-provided for, and many of them perish for want.'<sup>38</sup>

Conditions improved in the next few weeks. The men from Minorca were evacuated to England and the shortages of supplies and accommodation reduced. Robert Raikes occasionally published extracts from letters from 'an officer in Gibraltar', probably one of the 57th whom he had met in Gloucester. One letter in the *Journal* of 23 November reported that the garrison had quite recovered from the sickness with which it had been afflicted.

A letter dated 20 October reported, with surprising disregard of military security, that 'by water our defence is very weak; for if once we should lose the dominion by sea, we could not keep the town for three weeks as there are several parts of the coast without the least fortification and with a small fleet they would immediately destroy us.'

The governor, lord Tyrawley set about building batteries and works to strengthen the defences.<sup>39</sup> No doubt the 57th was engaged in this work and for some weeks, too, must have been busy with drill and musketry practice, for most of the men had received little, if any, training when they embarked. Under lieutenant colonel Wilkinson this was probably not an enjoyable experience for he was described by general Wolfe as 'a martinet and parade major.'<sup>40</sup> He was transferred, with the same rank, to the 36th Regiment in July 1759 and major Townshend of the 57th was promoted in his place.<sup>41</sup>

In October 1756 some men of the regiment took part in a minor engagement with Spanish troops when the governor of Algeciras refused to hand over a British ship taken there by a French privateer. Admiral Hawke sent in 25 armed shallops to retake the ship and bring it out of the harbour which was protected by Spanish cannon. The Spaniards opened fire, killing 43 British soldiers and seamen and wounding eleven. Nevertheless, the action was successful and the British ship was brought safely into Gibraltar harbour.<sup>42</sup> Among those killed was ensign William Townshend of the 57th.<sup>43</sup>

On 16 February 1757 Colonel Arabin died and was succeeded by Sir David Cunynghame of the 25th Foot. It was at about this time that the regimental number was changed from 59th to 57th. Some men of the 57th may have served occasionally as marines with the fleet.<sup>44</sup> There is no evidence of this in the monthly returns from the garrison commander from September 1759 onwards, but returns before that date have not been preserved.

Another letter from the officer in Gibraltar, dated 15 December 1757, reported that a siege was expected in the spring and preparations for it were being made. There were then eight good regiments and two companies of artillery in the garrison, and batteries for over 200 guns more than there had been three years previously. Fresh meat and other provisions were in regular supply from Barbary.<sup>45</sup>

However, early in 1759 the governor, the earl of Home, was complaining to the War Office of

37. Ibid.

38. *G.J.*, 2 Nov. 1756.

39. *G.J.*, 28 Dec. 1756.

40. *Mdx. Regt.*, 5.

41. P.R.O., S.P.41/25. War Office directives, 11 July and 3 Aug. 1757.

42. *G.J.*, 11 Jan. 1757.

43. *Mdx. Regt.*, 5.

44. Ibid.

45. *G.J.*, 21 Feb. 1758.

the weak state of the regiments and asking for reinforcements.<sup>46</sup> A recruiting party of four officers, five sergeants, five drummers and about eight men, under the command of captain Weldon, had been sent back to England to drum-up recruits. It was in Gloucestershire in the summer of 1760, at Stonehouse, Minchinhampton and Berkeley, amongst other places, and was also recruiting outside Gloucestershire until June 1762, with apparently little success. Some of the few men recruited soon deserted: Thomas Eacott of 'Hollow' Ampney [? Ampney Holy Rood or Ampney Crucis], Thomas Golding of Fretherne, and Thomas Wilkins of Frocester deserted at Chichester in August 1760.<sup>47</sup>

Lord Barrington, referring the governor's complaint to William Pitt, stated that he believed the deficiencies in the regiments resulted not from neglect by the recruiting officers but from 'the scarcity of men' in the country.<sup>48</sup> In July lord Home again drew attention to the weak state of the regiments in Gibraltar and the difficulty of recruiting in Britain. He hoped that British subjects in captivity in Barbary would soon be released, including 80 soldiers, and asked leave to take them into the regiments.<sup>49</sup>

Lord Barrington's reference to the scarcity of men was well-founded. Long before the end of the war recruiting parties were scraping the barrel in their search for recruits. William Phillips, brushmaker of Bristol, who deserted from a recruiting party in Gloucester in 1760 was described as 'of yellow complexion—his stomach a little swelled owing to a cough he has had for 6 or 8 months past, and his knees bending in.'<sup>50</sup>

Probably few recruits were so decrepit, but deserters described in the *Gloucester Journal* include a number with physical defects. In 1756 recruits into the 57th had a minimum height of five feet five inches; in 1761 captain Knox's independent company, enlisting at Wotton-under-Edge, was accepting recruits of five feet one inch.<sup>51</sup> A report in the *Gloucester Journal* of 17 January 1763 stated that 'Britain is so much drained that . . . last year the officers of the army did not raise above 600 recruits . . . and there is not a ship in commission exclusive of flag-ships that is not greatly deficient in her complement of hands.'

Each month garrison commanders sent a return to the War Office of the strength of the regiments under their command. The monthly returns from Gibraltar for the first three years of the war have not been preserved; the earliest which has is dated 30 September 1759. From then they are complete, except for six months, until the war had ended.<sup>52</sup> During that time there were six regiments of foot in Gibraltar: three of the older regiments, the 6th, 7th and 13th; and three newly-raised regiments, the 53rd, the 57th, and the 54th which had embarked so unwillingly for foreign service. There were also two companies of artillery numbering just over 200 men.

Monotony and boredom breed discontent and probably some of the men, particularly those of the 54th Regiment, still nursed a smouldering resentment of having been sent overseas, so it is not completely surprising that the *Gloucester Journal* of 18 November 1760 reported a plot to mutiny. A letter from Portsmouth stated that news had been received from a Spanish ship that seven hundred men of the garrison of Gibraltar had signed an agreement to mutiny. They intended to murder the governor, sack the town and open the gates to the Spaniards, and they had already nailed thirty cannons when the plot was disclosed to the governor by a private who had been forced unwillingly to sign. Reports in the *Gloucester Journal* of the time are usually remarkably accurate, and this report is substantially confirmed by a letter from the governor, lord Home, to lord Barrington dated 9 October 1760. This states that he had received information of a mutinous conspiracy by several soldiers for making themselves masters of the garrison, and had held a court martial on Robert Reid of the 6th Regiment, 'who, being yesterday found guilty and sentenced to death,

46. P.R.O., S.P.41/25, Home to Barrington, 23 Apr. 1759.

47. *G.J.*, 2 Sept. 1760.

48. P.R.O., S.P.41/25, Barrington to Pitt, 7 June 1759.

49. P.R.O., S.P.41/25, Home to Barrington, 2 July 1759.

50. *G.J.*, 23 Dec. 1760.

51. *G.J.*, 3 Mar. 1761.

52. P.R.O., W.O. 17/1774-6.

I ordered him to be marched immediately from the court and hanged on the Public Parade.' Reid asserted his innocence at the place of execution but had confessed more than once when in confinement. Four or five more men had been arrested but were obstinate in denial and lord Home was unable to ascertain the names of other conspirators, the number involved, or their plan of action. He had deferred their trial in the hope of discovering the whole scheme but was inclined to believe that the number of men involved was not as great as at first suspected.<sup>53</sup> The *Gloucester Journal* of 23 December reported that two more men had been executed and that a court martial was trying other mutineers.

At that time England was not at war with Spain but relations between the two countries were strained, and had the mutiny been successful Spain would certainly have taken Gibraltar. England declared war on Spain on 2 January 1762 and, though the Spaniards made no attack on Gibraltar, the garrison must have been very much on the alert.

By then the war was coming to a close. Britain and France signed preliminaries of peace at Fontainebleau on 3 November 1762 and the war finally ended with the Treaty of Paris on 10 February 1763.

By the terms of the treaty Minorca was restored to Britain and the 57th was sent to take possession, captain Clifford's company being the first to land on 1 June 1763.<sup>54</sup> Two other regiments from Gibraltar soon followed. The 57th stayed in Minorca for nearly five years, suffering much from sickness before it was posted to Ireland, landing at Cork on 30 May 1768. Long before then the Gloucestershire men, enlisted for duration of war, had been discharged, and the regiment had no further connection with our county. After the Napoleonic Wars it became The West Middlesex Regiment and in 1881 the 1st Battalion of the Middlesex Regiment, the Duke of Cambridge's Own. In 1966 it lost its Middlesex title when it was amalgamated with other regiments to form The Queen's.

The exact date when the Gloucestershire men were discharged is difficult to ascertain, as monthly returns from Minorca exist only for July and August of 1763.<sup>55</sup> A War Office directive dated 15 April 1763 ordered that the three regiments in Gibraltar raised in 1756 should be reduced to nine companies of two sergeants, two corporals, a drummer, and 28 privates; a total of 297 men.<sup>56</sup> The 54th was reduced on 31 July when the discharged men of that regiment left Gibraltar,<sup>57</sup> but the 57th was still at normal strength on 31 August. It was after that date, but during the autumn of 1763, that the 57th was reduced in strength<sup>58</sup> and the Gloucestershire men returned after an absence of about seven and a half years.

How many of them returned? Because the monthly returns are incomplete only an estimate of the number who died is possible. At the end of September 1759, when the 57th had been in Gibraltar for 39 months, it was under strength by 118 men. A few men may have deserted but, obviously, about 110 men had died, and that number must be increased by the number of any reinforcements who had arrived up to that date. The regiment was in Gibraltar for a further 44 months. In the 38 months for which returns exist 51 men died. If the death rate was similar in the 6 months for which there are no returns that number would be 59, making a total of about 169 deaths in Gibraltar. Five deaths were recorded by the two monthly returns from Minorca. As the regiment was there for at least four months, deaths in Minorca may be estimated as ten. This makes a total of about 179 deaths, 24 per cent of the 750 non-commissioned officers and men who left England, and this is a conservative estimate, for it is unlikely that the regiment received no reinforcements before September 1759.

Unlike the dead of later wars, these men have no memorial. Let them not be forgotten in Gloucestershire.

### November 1975

53. P.R.O., S.P. 41/25, Home to Barrington, 9 Oct. 1760.

55. P.R.O., W.O. 17/2236. Monthly returns, Minorca, 1763.

57. P.R.O., W.O. 17/1776, 31 Jan. 1764.

54. *Mdx. Regt.*, 5

56. P.R.O., S.P. 41/25.

58. *Mdx. Regt.*, 5.