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Ensign Hill: a Credible Defence?

Abstract

Ensign William Hill of the First Battalion Surry Militia was tried by Court Martial in 1760 for compromising his honour by for behaving ‘in a manner unbecoming an officer and a gentleman by associating, drinking and lying with the private men’. This paper examines the case, and particularly Hill’s defence, in the light of a set of three social models developed to help to understand the organizational culture of the British Army, and tailored to the eighteenth century through study of contemporary first hand accounts. The models are found to give insights which provide a coherent, ethnographically based, explanation the line of defence taken by Hill. The implications of using an ethnographic approach based on the models are that such an approach can provide sharper illumination of areas of history that have been hitherto deep in the shadow

Keywords: British Army, Eighteenth Century, Honour, Court Martial, British Army Culture

Introduction

Arthur N. Gilbert published an article over thirty years ago (1976) which explored the tension between the formal Law under which British Army officers served (a combination as now of the Law of the Land and Military Law) and the unofficial but widely recognized code of conduct surrounding honourable and dishonourable behaviour. He illustrated his article with cases taken from the records of Courts Martial housed in the then Public Record Office at Kew, London¹. His conclusion was that the very ambiguities and uncertainties that were endemic to the code of honour were an advantage to the Army: they allowed both sides to a dispute to air their views in public at a Court Martial, and, by making the proceedings formal

reduced the pressure on those involved to submit to the social pressure that demanded that honour be defended in the illegal violence of the duel.

Gilbert's article is convincing and well constructed, but, by his own admission there is an intriguing loose end in one of the cases. This is the Court Martial of Ensign William Hill of the First Battalion Surry Militia.

Hill's rank of Ensign was the most junior commissioned rank in the regiments of foot in the British Army. He was tried by a General Court Martial in 1760 for behaving 'in a manner unbecoming an officer and a gentleman by associating, drinking and lying with the private men' (W.O. 71/47, September 1760) both of which violated the unwritten code of honour within the British Army, and the mores of gentlemanly conduct that were abroad in the wider British society. The prosecution's case was compelling: Hill had first been seen drinking at an Inn with private soldiers and subsequently on the same evening to allow a private soldier into his quarters for the night to share his bed, and he did not dispute these facts. It is all the more surprising, therefore, that during his trial he put up a spirited defence, attempting to establish that what he had done was *not* dishonourable, and did *not* reflect on the honour of his Regiment. How could this be so?

The first thought of a twenty-first century observer might reasonably be to read the charge of 'lying with the private men', combined with the undisputed fact that Hill shared his bed with a private soldier, as a *prima facie* case of homosexuality. This, however, is a distraction and should be put aside. Sodomy was a capital crime in the eighteenth century (www.oldbaileyonline.org)ⁱⁱ and Hill was neither charged with sodomy nor was the possibility of such an offence mentioned anywhere in the Court Martial papers. The accusation was no more and no less that Hill was being familiar enough with a private soldier as to share sleeping quarters with him.

So, what could have been the basis of Hill's defence? This article offers a possible explanation based on an ethnographic approach. In so doing it continues the author's project begun in 2009 (Kirke, 2009) to explore the use of ethnographical methods to historical events in the British Army using first hand material. The research aim is to gain improved insights into historical conundrums through the exploration of the lived experience of the social groups involved.

Ethnography and History

The eighteenth century British Army, as it has done ever since, lived with a strong organizational culture (Kirke, 2009). Soldiers were bonded together in officially prescribed groups in a transportable community: 'transportable' in the sense that a complete unit, with its own command, operational, logistic, and social systems, could be taken from one place to another to engage in military operations or to comprise the local garrison. In this respect they represented a coherent and bounded community, with many features in common with what Goffman has called 'a total institution', a 'place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life.' (1968: xiii).

In the British Army of the time of Ensign Hill's trial a distinction needs to be made between the 'marching' regiments and the militia. The former were liable to deployment anywhere in the world whilst the latter, although they moved *en bloc* to wherever they were sent and conserved their sense of community, were for home service only (for repelling invasion and providing assistance to the Government in keeping order) and were kept, as far as possible, reasonably close to the local area in which they recruited. In the case in point, Hill's company of the First Battalion the Surry Militia were based at Sisinghurst (*sic*) in Kent on the day that the offences allegedly took place (24 July 1760), mounting guard (W.O. 71/47)ⁱⁱⁱ.

Although all regiments had their own sense of community and formed a discrete and bounded social group, they were not of course isolated from their national and regional culture. Soldiers of all ranks drank in taverns, and before the purpose-built barracks appeared in the late eighteenth century they were billeted among the local community, and officers readily interacted with the local gentry and middle class. Furthermore, regimental culture was connected to the culture of the wider society at several points with many shared cultural elements, sometimes called 'memes' (Distin, 2005). For example, the code of honour among army officers was closely connected with that of the middle and upper classes in wider British society. In both environments a man's honour was his most precious possession and should be defended with his life if necessary. If he did not defend it he would lose the support of his friends and risked being sent to Coventry, becoming a non-person among them (Odintz, 1988: 492-574; Brumwell, 2002: 89-91, for instance).

This then is the broad social milieu inhabited by Ensign Hill and his soldiers. They lived a life with a strong organizational culture centred on the regiment, with elements that chimed with, or was influenced by, the wider British society from which they came. How can this culture be accessed?

Although the normal ethnographic methods of participant observation and interview are of course impossible, the use of contemporary documentary sources can provide accounts of daily life in small social groups which can be treated ethnographically, and this method is by no means new. In essence, the ethnographer is standing at one remove from the observer's position and, frustratingly, unable to ask any questions of those involved. However, these difficulties can be largely offset if the bulk of the material is large enough and if it comes from several sources, all embedded in the same social milieu. Notable in this field is the study by David Warren Sabean of peasant life in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Germany. Drawing on a substantial body of formal documents, including baptism, marriage and burial records, records of land sales, mortgages and taxes, and the recorded proceedings of criminal and civil court actions, he draws a clear and lively picture of life at local level. As he put it himself in his Introduction (1990: 37):

'What we find in this study are activities, structures, processes, and logics that simply are not visible outside of the local context If we want to know about the content of this 'premodern' kinship system, we can only get at it by patiently tracing out genealogies from small geographical regions and piling up examples of kin actually interacting. If we want to recover the tenor of marital relations inside a particular context of production, we have to examine all the anecdotes we can find for the logic

of confrontation, the strategies of subsistence and survival, the fabric of rights and obligations, and the coherence of life trajectories. If we want to understand the moral and social relationships which bound together and divided houses and families, we have to examine in detail the tactical language, spatial interaction, and practical everyday exchanges.’

The principal drawback in Sabeau’s study is the absence of informal material. Every word that is available was collected for official purposes to do with legal and administrative events in the community. Fortunately, the personalities of the protagonists and the fine detail of their experiences often shine through the formally recorded words, especially in the witness statements recorded in the legal proceedings. However, it is likely that an even more vivid and perhaps more detailed ethnographic work could have been produced if there had been personal written material to complement the official.

The work by Ladurie on a community in late thirteenth and early fourteenth century France (1978) is an example where such informal evidence is apparent, albeit within formal records. Ladurie provides a detailed account of the social lives of the members of a small mountain village community. This account is remarkably fresh and immediate and provides a convincing image of the lived experience of those who inhabited an otherwise remote and inaccessible time in history. This is made possible by the survival of a body of written evidence gained from interrogations carried out by the Inquisition in its investigation into the Albigensian heresy in that area. The records were kept under the direction of an individual, Jacques Fournier, who was both rigorous and meticulous. Although this register, like Sabeau’s raw material, is another set of formal records, the vast bulk of these records are verbatim statements by the individuals concerned and amount to a large body of interview material. Once again, caution must be exercised in accepting the statements uncritically, this time because of the threatening circumstances under which they were collected, but the book gives us another example of how the minutiae of daily life can be reconstructed from documentary evidence.

Robert Parker has also provided us with ethnographic insights into a small community in the remote past, this time the inhabitants of the now vanished town of Dunwich in East Anglia. This work is intriguing and informative and it is written with an informal air, personal and direct, albeit with some poetic licence. He tells us that he is providing

‘... truth. Not the *whole* truth. That will never be known. If it ever existed, it now lies somewhere out there at the bottom of the sea, or mingles with the insubstantial breezes that caress the cliff-top grass. But something like the truth.’ (Parker, 1978: 13)

Although this book does not have the academic status of Sabeau’s and Ladurie’s it too demonstrates that the minutiae of daily life in the past can be recoverable through written documents and, when recovered, subjected to analysis to reveal the social processes going on within the social group.

Such works show that capturing the lived experience of people in small groups in the past from written sources is perfectly possible and well established in the scholarly

literature. But what of the military groups of Ensign Hill's time? Nicholas Rodger has shown the way in his work on the Royal Navy of the eighteenth century (1988). He provides what amounts to a convincing and scholarly ethnography, using both official documents and unofficial ones such as personal letters, memoirs and diaries. Mingling the skills of the historian and the social scientist he provides a coherent description of the social construction of the human groups on warships, their social relationships, behaviour and interactions, their concerns and motivations.

For the British Army of the eighteenth century there is as yet no equivalent of Rodger's work, no coherent ethnography of the British Army of the eighteenth century, and in particular the *milieu* in which Ensign Hill lived his life. There are, however, two relevant PhD theses which show what might be achieved. The first, by Glen Stepler, examines the life of private soldiers through themes such as recruiting, conditions of service, pay, and discipline. The second, by Mark Odintz is a magisterial study of the background and lives of British Army officers in the mid eighteenth century. Of the two, Stepler's is somewhat disappointing from the ethnographic point of view. Its thematic approach illuminates our understanding of the conditions under which soldiers of that era lived, but it does not describe their daily lives in any detail. Odintz's on the other hand provides a large amount of low level detail on the lives of British officers, garnered from contemporary formal and informal documents. Although not an ethnography in itself, this work contains much that is close to ethnography in the widest sense.

A complementary step has been taken by the author as part of his analysis of British Army culture over the past 300 years in *Red Coat Green Machine: continuity in change in the British Army 1700 to 2000* (Kirke, 2009). This book examines the behaviour of British soldiers between 1700 and 2000 using memoirs, letters and diaries for the periods where direct contact with individuals was impossible. In effect, this means that most of the Cold War material was gathered at first hand while earlier periods relied more and more on documentary sources. The bulk of such sources were written by the participants themselves, a mixture of officers and non-commissioned personnel, and were chosen because they illuminated the minutiae of daily life and thus the playing out of the process and logic of low level organizational culture, the *milieu* in which Ensign Hill's activities took place.

The author's main theme was to generate and demonstrate a set of social models that could be used by historians and ethnographers to understand the small details of everyday life in the Army over the entire period. While not comprising an ethnography *per se* the book can therefore be viewed as a portal through which an ethnographer might attempt to enter the arcane world of the British Army at any period between 1700 and 2000 and a framework within which they might work. In the process of generating the models a great deal of ethnographically relevant material was discovered, and this material, in combination with the models, will be used to address Ensign Hill's case in this paper.

The Models

There are three models in the set. The first identifies four separate bodies of rules, ideas, and conventions of behaviour that are expressed in the attitudes, assumptions and expectations revealed in voices of the British soldiers in all eras studied. These

are modelled as four domains or modes of behaviour described as ‘*social structures*’^{iv} in the model.

The *formal command structure* is the structure through which a soldier at the bottom receives orders from the person at the top. It is embedded in and expressed by the hierarchy of rank and the formal arrangement of the unit into layer upon layer of organizational elements. It contains the mechanisms for the enforcement of discipline, for the downward issue of orders and for the upward issue of reports, and it provides the framework for official responsibility. The second is the *informal structure*, which consists in unwritten conventions of behaviour in the absence of formal constraints, including behaviour off-duty and in relaxed duty contexts. An important element in this structure is the web of informal relationships within the unit which is set out below. This conventional contrasting of formal and informal does not fully encompass British soldiers’ organizational culture. Two further *social structures* are needed fully to model the field revealed in the soldiers’ accounts of their lives. These are the *functional structure* and the *loyalty/identity structure*. The former represents soldiers’ attitudes and feelings towards attributes and behaviour that can be called ‘soldierly’ – anything in their shared mental models to do with the business of being a soldier. Elements in this *social structure* might include, for example, wearing equipment and accoutrements properly, military skills with such things as weapons, the creation and management of creature comforts in the field and acceptable behaviour in battle (however these aspects were defined in the regimental organizational culture). The *loyalty/identity structure* models ideas about ‘belonging’ and ‘identity’. Each soldier in any era was a member of a number of different groups, in ascending order of size. He would owe his allegiance to them as a corporate body in which all members shared an identity and to which all belonged. He would be expected to give his unequivocal support at all levels – to maintain an attitude that all of them are ‘the best’ and to defend their reputation - but the level at which he would express his identity as a member of the group and his loyalty to it at any particular time would be set by the level of comparison in the current situation. Thus in the eighteenth century an infantry soldier would give his support to his company in comparison to other companies and his battalion in comparison to any other battalion. Thus the level at which he expressed ‘we are the best’ is dependent on the comparison created by the context.

The behaviours identified in the different *social structures* are markedly different. Nobody would be expected to behave in an informal way on a formal parade, for instance, or behave tactically during a relaxed evening drinking with his friends. This observation led the author to characterize an *operating structure* in the model. This is the *social structure* of the moment, the one appropriate to the situation. The conventions represented in particular *social structures* are only relevant (and only played out) when that domain or mode is being practised: hence the term ‘*operating structure*’. Thus the model can be used to describe and analyze in a single framework some marked differences in soldiers’ behaviour in the same group but in different contexts.

The second model addresses personal, non-sexual, relationships within British military groups^v. Such relationships can be placed in a field defined by the two axes of closeness and differences in rank, as follows:

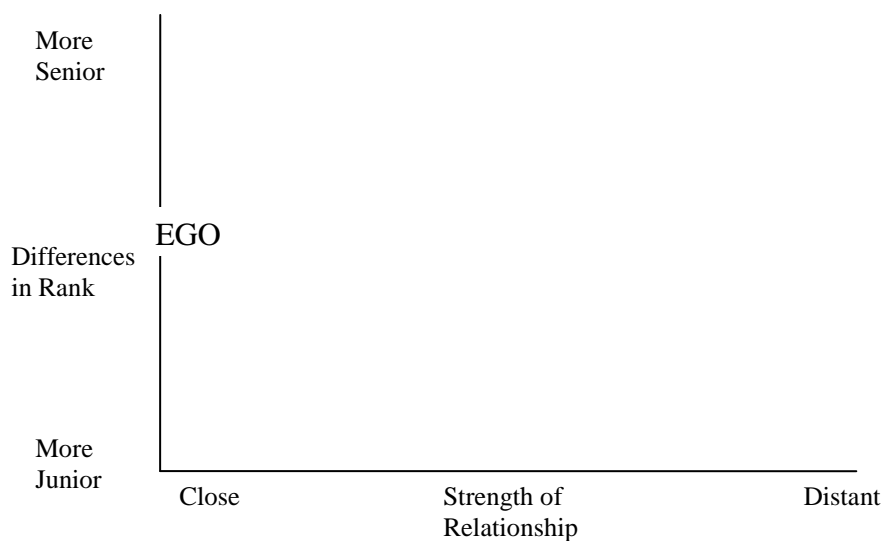


Figure 1: Field of Informal Relationships

‘EGO’ is an individual somewhere in the middle of the rank system (a sergeant perhaps, or a captain) who is senior to some of his colleagues and junior to others.

If the forming of relationships within military groups were random then there would be a random scattering across the field in Figure 1, with some relationships being closer than others and some with equals, seniors and juniors. However, because the rank system demanded obedience and deference from junior to senior, socially equal relationships could only be forged within narrow bands of rank – lieutenants with lieutenants and ensigns and perhaps captains, but not ensigns with majors; privates with corporals but not privates with sergeants. Nevertheless, strong informal bonds did form between individuals of unequal rank, and still do. This is a social phenomenon called *association* in the model, comprising a relationship of mutual trust and respect, sometimes expressed as a mixture of paternalism from the senior and deference from the junior, which can provide strong and enduring ties within the military group. Several mid-eighteenth century examples are given in personal memoirs. For instance, Odintz writes of the 12th Regiment of 1781 that ‘Adam Tweedie, a newly joined subaltern, found William Picton, by now the Colonel of the regiment and a brigadier in the garrison [of Gibraltar], ‘a man of whom I shall ever entertain the highest opinion...Colonel Picton had...been as a father to me.’^{vi} (Odintz, 1988: 78-9). Similarly, Roger Lamb writes of a time in the 1770s when he was serving as a corporal in the 9th Regiment that he ‘obtained the good will of ... Major Bolton who ever afterwards while he stopped with the regiment befriended me’. (Lamb, 1811: 95). An example of *association* between a sergeant and his private soldiers is given in William Todd’s journal when on the 23 December 1756 (while still a private soldier in 30th Regiment) that

‘My old Comrade Serjeant Merrin got in with Mrs Cooper at the sign of Ld Marlboroughs Head Canterbury in Cantury-burys Lane & he got himself remov’d to her House for Quarters. I very often Vissitted them & was made on of the Best, as he was made paymaster Serjeant and he could not make up

his Accounts without me, so he ask'd the Quartermaster to have me with him in Exchange of an other Man.' (Todd, 2001: 17)

Another type of informal relationship that has regularly been described in military first hand accounts is more distant than *association* but nevertheless provides a means for informal communication and personal interaction. In spite of the social distance prescribed by the rank structure individuals of widely different rank or status within the rank structure would operate a relationship described in the model as *informal access*. Each can speak with the other, regardless of the rank distance between them because they have something in common within the military structure. Thus officers can approach any of the soldiers under their command at any time to have an informal conversation with them, and the soldiers can approach their officer (albeit perhaps without the same degree of freedom to choose the occasion – they need to take or create an opportunity to exercise this relationship). Corporal Todd was an expert in the deployment of this relationship, as he showed in October 1758 when he jumped the queue for applying for a furlough (a rare privilege) by going to see his Commanding Officer (also his Company Commander),

'This morning after Roll callings I put on my new Cloaths & went to my Lieutt Collonel, Sir William Boothby, to Let him know I had got them Alter'd, & disired he would please to let me have a furlow. And he told me I should & Order'd me to go to the Serjeant Major to get him to fill me one up & bring it to him & he would sign it for two Months, the time he promis'd it me. (Todd, 2001: 105)

The third model concerns the attitude to formally published rules. It might be thought that in the disciplined world of the Army rules were to be obeyed and everyone lived by them. Furthermore, in the eighteenth century, punishments for military rule infringement were harsh by today's standards, including capital punishment and flogging for rank and file, and disgrace (a serious social penalty) and dismissal from the service for an officer. Nevertheless, there were unstated conventions for disobeying or at least bending rules. An obvious example is the prevalence of dueling among British officers which was required by the honour mores of the time in the wider society in general, and particularly so in the close daily engagement with honour within the Army. This tension between illegality and social demands is beautifully illustrated in a case described in a contemporary memoir by William Hickey (1913: 292-4). He reports that a certain Captain Scawen went to a friend of his to ask him to be his second in a duel but found him not at home. He then met his commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Lake, with whom he apparently had a relationship of *association* because he felt able to ask him immediately to be his second as time was running short. Unfortunately, Scawen did not notice that Lake was wearing his sash and was thus officially 'on duty', and because he was on duty he had to abide by the Law and order that Scawen place himself under arrest to prevent him from dueling. Scawen disconsolately confined himself to his quarters and prepared to miss his duel and face the consequent disgrace. Lake immediately then went to see the General commanding the area who had Scawen's arrest officially withdrawn. In doing so, the General clearly bent the law but was not apparently in any fear of prosecution.

Corporal Todd (now in the 12th Regiment) adds another example of rule-bending/breaking from this era when he describes trading between British soldiers and their enemies the French on campaign in Germany in 1761. 'Upon our Advance posts, in several places, our Centinals & theirs talks together, & Buys or sells one to another Bread, Geneva, Tobacco etc' (2001: 171).

Rule bending and rule breaking was addressed by Erving Goffman in *Asylums* (1968). Observing mental patients and staff in a lunatic asylum he noted that there was informal agreement among them that some rules could be broken or bent and some had to be strictly observed. The bending/breaking of rules he called 'secondary adjustments', allocating the term 'primary adjustments' to rule-observing behaviour. He divided secondary adjustments into 'contained' and 'disruptive', the latter being aimed at spoiling the smooth running of the organization and the former simply to make life easier for those carrying them out, measures such as shortcuts, unofficial perquisites, corner cutting in administration and so on. The author has expanded Goffman's model as applied to disciplined organizations by dividing contained secondary adjustments into two sub-categories, *legitimate* and *illegitimate secondary adjustments*. The former are considered permissible through custom and practice and specifically permitted by the person on the spot with the most authority, while the latter are known to be against the rules and will attract sanctions if they are discovered, and thus tend to be hidden from those in authority^{vii}. This pattern of behaviour has been present in the British Army from at least 1700 and probably earlier. The cases above could, for example, be analyzed as follows using this model. Scawen is exercising a *secondary adjustment* in agreeing to engage in a duel. Given the social pressure to fight for one's honour he behaves as if it were a *legitimate secondary adjustment*. Lake, because he is on official duty, is obliged to apply *primary adjustments* and puts Scawen under arrest, but makes every effort to have the sanction removed by appealing to a higher authority to allow it as a legitimate bending of the rules. Todd and his fellows are engaging in a widely accepted secondary adjustment by trading with the enemy but see nothing wrong in it, thus establishing that at least in his mind it is a *legitimate secondary adjustment*. Had a figure of authority disagreed, then the soldiers would have been in trouble and discovered that it was indeed illegitimate.

Ensign Hill's Defence

The evidence at Ensign Hill's trial established a stream of events as follows. On the evening of 24 July Hill arrived at the Inn at Sisinghurst where he was quartered, to discover a party of private soldiers, a corporal (Corporal Bat) and a sergeant from his company drinking in the room through which he had to pass to get to his bedroom. It was late enough for the waiters and hostlers of the inn to have gone to bed, so he asked the corporal to help him remove his boots (which he could not do by himself). Having got rid of his boots, Hill stayed with his men for about forty-five minutes. During this time they all drank alcoholic drinks and one of the soldiers, Private Canvin, asked Hill if he could stay in his quarters (and thus sleep in his bed) because his own quarters were too far away and he was afraid of the journey back. Hill agreed and the soldier slept in his room. Thus the facts of 'drinking and lying with the private men' were formally established. But was his conduct infamous and scandalous? Hill claimed that it was not.

During the hearing of the witnesses Hill vigorously tried to show that, although he did indeed sit and drink with his men he preserved a social gap between them consistent with the social and military rank differences between them. For example, he, and members of the Court Martial Board sought to establish that the soldiers behaved with respect in the way they treated their headgear. Corporal Bat clearly remembered doffing his hat to the officer when he entered the room as a mark of respect, and Hill attempted with partial success to establish that the soldiers kept their hats on (as a sign presumably that they were not relaxed) when he was with them. None of the private soldiers claimed that they had had a friendly conversation with him (as between equals), and when asked they all said that they did not look upon him as ‘a companion’ that evening but as ‘an Officer’. The majority had never drunk in an inn with him before or since, though one of the prosecution witnesses (Private Thomas Chappel) said that he had drunk with him after a cricket match earlier in the month. This is an intriguing statement because the Board did not pursue it as an issue, possibly because informal cross-rank meetings after playing cricket were a special case in that Regiment though this cannot be confirmed^{viii}. In his final statement, Hill said that he ‘condescended’ in drinking with the men and ‘the men continued to preserve that respect which is due to an Officer and look’d upon and behaved to me as such during the whole time of my being with them.’

To the charge of ‘lying with the private men’ Hill offered no defence. He did not dispute the fact and simply said that the soldier was afraid of the journey home and he acceded to his request to share his quarters with him. The sharing of sleeping arrangements with acquaintances appears to have been common practice in the eighteenth century, much as a modern householder might share their house by offering a spare bed or space on the floor or on a sofa to a stranded friend today. His error – and this he admitted in his final speech – was not to think it was more than a trivial every-day act for an officer to do so for one of his soldiers.

‘As to the other circumstance of my admitting a soldier upon his request and being a great way from his quarters to take part of my bed with me for one night, I never ‘till I received a copy of my charge, apprehended that such [?conduct] would be imported to me as a fault, and a fault of so high a nature as to be deem’d worthy [of] the notice and censure of a Court Martial.’

He simply pleaded ‘youth and inexperience in the Martial Law’.

Discussion

Was Gilbert right to consider Hill’s defence puzzling? If we view it through the models outlined above, an entirely logical and clear line emerges. Hill was charged with compromising his honour, and his defence amounted to a series of statements that he kept the proper relationship between himself and his soldiers. In the informal surroundings of the inn, the *operating structure* have been the *informal structure*, where the range of informal relationships would be an important social resource. He sat with his men and drank, certainly, but only in the spirit of *association* or *informal access*. He showed in his trial that he made sure that they acted with respect. This statement chimes well with the expectation of respect and paternalism contained in the relationships. In the absence of a servant at the inn he used an existing relationship of *informal access* to approach his corporal and have him help him off

with his boots (a task he could not have performed alone). Far from making himself their equal by ‘drinking with the private men’ therefore, Hill was acting within the accepted military customs of the time. Viewed in this way, Hill certainly had a coherent defence to that part of the charge.

With respect to the charge of ‘lying’ with one of his soldiers, Hill resorted to an appeal to the practice of the social system beyond the Army. He implied, but did not specifically claim, that it was something that would not have created any excitement in English society and so he did not think twice about it. He seems to have viewed it at the time as, at the very most, a *legitimate secondary adjustment* and discovered to his chagrin that it was viewed by the authorities of the Army as a serious *illegitimate secondary adjustment*.

The stream of events, therefore, and Hill’s robust defence of the charge of associating and drinking with private soldiers, can be described and explained in the light of the military organizational culture of the time. Seen in the light of the model it is not surprising that he took the line he did right up to his final speech. Sadly for him, viewed through the stern filter of the *formal command structure* represented by the Court Martial, once the facts had been established a defence based on the lived experience of Army culture in informal circumstances was not enough. And there was the matter of Private Canvin’s overnight stay anyway. Hill was found guilty. His punishment was to make a formally prescribed statement to his battalion, paraded to hear him do so. It consisted in two main elements: first an admission that he had been found guilty by a General Court Martial for ‘behaviour unbecoming an officer and a gentleman’ and second a plea for forgiveness from the ‘whole corps’ (i.e. his battalion) ‘for the dishonour this my behaviour may have reflected on them’. Interestingly, this apology is framed in the *loyalty/identity structure* as asking pardon for an offence against them as a corporate body.

Conclusion

This article has described how significant elements of regimental level culture in the British Army can be inferred from documentary evidence, and in particular from contemporary letters, memoirs and diaries, and that with the help of the three models outlined above an understanding of the lived experience of British soldiers in the eighteenth century can be developed. In particular, this ethnographic approach has been demonstrated as useful in addressing, as a case study, apparently anomalous elements in a Court Martial.

The implications of studies such as this are significant. They demonstrate that the ethnographic approach using the models and aimed at a more detailed understanding of the daily lives of British soldiers and their organizational culture, can provide sharper illumination of areas of history hitherto deep in the shadows.

NOTES

ⁱ Now called the National Archive.

ⁱⁱ See, for example, the transcripts of the Proceedings of the Old Bailey – London’s Criminal Court, 1674-1913 <http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/ccc/index.jsp>, and as a particular example in the same time frame as Hill’s case, the trial of Thomas Andrews

<http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/ccc/browse.jsp?id=t17610506-23-off123&div=t17610506-23#highlight>

ⁱⁱⁱ All quoted material connected to Hill’s trial are from this source.

^{iv} All words that are specific to the models are printed in *italic* font.

^v For a fuller explanation of this model see Kirke (2009: 29-45),

^{vi} Quoted from Tweedie Papers, Tweedie to his Father, Gibraltar, 9 Oct.1781.

^{vii} For a full treatment in a late twentieth century setting of secondary adjustments in the Army see Kirke (2010)

^{viii} Such a consideration would certainly hold true in the later twentieth century Army as sporting events are established as a special informal circumstance where differences in rank can be minimized but it cannot be inferred on such grounds that armies of previous eras had developed this custom.

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