

# The Great War



The Great War:  
Localities and Regional Identities

Edited by

Nick Mansfield and Craig Horner

**CAMBRIDGE**  
**SCHOLARS**  

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**P U B L I S H I N G**

The Great War: Localities and Regional Identities,  
Edited by Nick Mansfield and Craig Horner

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## CONTRIBUTORS

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**Paul Burnham** studied briefly at the University of East Anglia in 1974, was a shop floor engineering worker for twenty-five years, and has been a housing officer since 2004. He has history degrees from London Metropolitan University and Birkbeck College. His concern with the formation of working-class consciousness in the epoch of the two world wars has informed both his article, the “Squatters of 1946”, published in *Socialist History*, 25 (2004), and the present study of the Great War and its aftermath.

**Paul Fantom** read economics at the University of Manchester, followed by a BA and a further MA in history at the Open University. He is currently a part-time research student supervised by Professor Carl Chinn at the University of Birmingham, and it is anticipated that his doctoral thesis “Community, Patriotism and the Working Class in the First World War: The Home Front in Wednesbury, 1914–1918” will be submitted in 2014.

**Keith Grieves** teaches history and education at Kingston University and held a fellowship at the Museum of English Rural Life, Reading University, in 2011–12. He is undertaking a project on *Open Spaces after the Great War: Reafforestation, Remembrance and Recreation* and has recently given papers on this theme at the Imperial War Museum and the National Memorial Arboretum.

**Craig Horner** has published on Edwardian motoring and society. He is co-editor of the *Manchester Region History Review* and book reviews editor of the *Journal of Transport History*. From 2015 he will take on the editorship of *Aspects of Motoring History*, the journal of the Society of Automotive Historians of Britain.

**Nick Mansfield** spent over thirty years working in museums including twenty-one as director of the People's History Museum in Manchester. He is the author of *English Farmworkers and Local Patriotism, 1900–1930* (2001), *Buildings of the Labour Movement* (2013) and over forty journal articles. He is Senior Research Fellow in History at the University of Central Lancashire and currently writing a book on work, class, politics and the nineteenth-century British military.

**Martin Purdy** is a former newspaper editor who spent a number of years working as a freelance First World War advisor for the BBC's *Who Do You Think You Are?* magazine. In 2008 he wrote a book for the BBC (republished in 2013) on how to research servicemen and women of the Great War, and is the co-author of *Doing Our Bit* (Moonraker, 2008) and *The Gallipoli Oak* (Moonraker, 2013). Martin has published academic papers on Spanish tourism under Franco, Gallipoli and the East Lancashire legacy, and the role of Roman Catholic military chaplains in the Great War. He is presently completing AHRC-funded doctoral research work with Lancaster University.

**David Swift** read history at Girton College, Cambridge before completing an MRes at the University of York. He is now completing his PhD at the University of Central Lancashire, supervised by Nicholas Mansfield, exploring aspects of patriotic labour.

**Bonnie White** is a lecturer in the Department of History at St. Francis Xavier University, Canada. She has published several articles on Britain in the First World War. Her current work, a monograph on the women's land army in First World War Britain, seeks to recontextualize the organization within the broader context of British agriculture between 1890 and 1919.



## INTRODUCTION

NICHOLAS MANSFIELD

The Menin Gate, Ypres, August 1964. As a small boy I am there with my father and my uncle Charlie, a former Tommy who had married a French woman and had just retired after forty years' working life as a gardener with the War Graves Commission. Two men in dirty blue overalls (firemen, I later learnt) rode up on their bikes through the drizzle. They dismounted, drew out bugles from saddlebags and played a sad lament to us – the only people present – which reverberated in the vast structure. The two veterans of two successive world wars stiffened; “The Last Post”, whispered my father. Revisiting the same site in 2003 was a complete contrast, with hundreds of tourists and coach parties of British schoolchildren and a well orchestrated but moving performance; part of a Flanders experience, which could easily tip over into a rather obsessive and unhealthy heritage industry. As the conflict now slips beyond living memory, both popular and professional historians can become misty-eyed and sometimes incapable of rational debate when the Great War is mentioned. As the public history jamboree triggered by the conflict's centenary explodes in 2014, this book is published to seek to understand how the conflict moulded local and regional identities in Britain.

Every family was affected by the Great War and being large, mine certainly was. As a child I heard about the uncle who enlisted at fifteen, the only brother of three who survived the battle of the Somme, the improbable coincidental meetings of brothers in the middle of France, and the conscripted uncle who ate soap in an unsuccessful attempt to fail his army medical, only to be killed in the last weeks of the conflict. All it needed to complete this cinematic script was the bible stopping the proverbial bullet. But it was not all about fighting. I also heard about the mother who still did the daily washing for her three sons when they were billeted in the Corn Exchange of their home town for the first three months of their service. A carpenter grandfather turned down by the army with a heart condition spent the war building huts on Salisbury Plain, where his helpers, German PoWs, made a great fuss of the little boy who was to become my father. One of my mother's early memories was being met

from school by her soldier brother on his home leave before going to France and an early death. I knew intimately the memorial shrine constructed in a little used front room by bereaved female relations and the Labour Club built by unemployed returning soldiers. Though our French relatives were unique in our close knit neighbourhood, the fiftieth anniversary and in particular the screening of the influential BBC TV series *The Great War* seemed to rekindle interest. All the old men in the street – former Tommies to a man – were avid viewers and it helped the Great War emerge from the shadow of the “good war” of 1939–1945, which had a more positive image with its worldwide defeat of fascism, followed by the establishment of the NHS, the welfare state and full employment. The contributions to this book grapple with many of these community issues that I encountered in childhood.

I came across the Great War again in the early 1980s, doing an oral history project on the farmworkers’ union in East Anglia. I visited old activists expecting to talk about the union but they wanted to talk about the war. They viewed the conflict as a key part of their lives and saw no incongruity in being socialist activists whilst volunteering for the armed forces. Later while researching farmworkers in the Welsh Marches, in this same period, I found a more intense local patriotism mixed with ancient ethnic suspicion of the Welsh but also allied with trade unionism and briefly even socialism, before new conservative rural cultural institutions became consolidated. These developments were analyzed in my *English Farmworkers and Local Patriotism, 1900–1930* (2001). But both parts of the country evidenced a widespread feeling that something positive needed to emerge from the “blood sacrifice” and comradeship of the trenches and the factory floor. Some of these themes are pursued in the chapters presented here. Sometimes this was through significant political changes such as those described by Paul Fantom with his chapter on labour and patriotism in the Black Country. Elsewhere these demands were varied, incoherent and transient as outlined in Paul Burnham’s account of the local and national activities of the huge but now largely forgotten radical ex-service organizations.

The Great War was one of the prime motors of social change in modern British history. The growing impact of the state on production, employment and welfare soon came to affect most aspects of the lives of United Kingdom citizens. Indeed 1918 saw for the first time the adoption of mass democracy with the enfranchisement of women and working-class men, which triggered massive changes in political allegiances in the following decades. Culture and technology at all levels were transformed and maps redrawn with Irish independence signposting the future decline

of empire. But how did these fundamental changes vary from locality to locality? Taken together did they drastically alter the long-established importance of regional variations and identities within British society in the twentieth century? Was there a common national response to these unprecedented events or did strong local and regional forces cause significant variations? Was it “Never the Same again” or “Business as usual”?

This was the objective of the conference “The Great War: Localities and Regional Identities” held at Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) in June 2012 and organized by the editors of this book, Craig Horner and Nick Mansfield. It was held under the auspices of the Manchester Centre for Regional History at MMU, and the Institute for Local and Family History at the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) in Preston and was supported by the Imperial War Museum North and the Western Front Association. Over one hundred delegates consisting of both professional and amateur historians listened to twenty excellent papers from established academics and post-graduate students describing how the conflict impacted on various parts of the United Kingdom. Seven are published in this volume and a further eight – all concerned with north-west England – will appear in a special Great War number, volume 24 – of the *Manchester Region History Review*.

The chapters presented here detail how communities coped with the war’s outbreak, its upheavals, its unprecedented mass mobilization on all fronts and its unforeseen longevity. The questions considered include: “Was class conflict exacerbated by war or did shared hardships and united patriotic goals bring formerly opposing classes together?”; “Did recruiting in different parts of the country show the development of distinctive regional voluntary patriotisms?”; “After the introduction of conscription was there any room for regional divergencies?”; “Did women find their own distinctive voice in the workplace or was their role as homemakers reinforced?”; “Did the pioneering local working-class movements, active from the middle of war, feed on protest or on patriotic conformity?”; “Did working-class people achieve lasting new structures in co-operatives, local constituency Labour parties and trade unions, or did post-war depression deaden striving for a better world in favour of peace, quiet and an easy life?”; “In post-war politics did the patriotism of most of the labour movement make the Labour Party electable locally, or did it prefigure the National Government, Stanley Baldwin and a generation-long Conservative hegemony?”; “How did municipalities react to government intervention on an unprecedented scale?”; “Did they support intervention, acquiesce or protest?”; and “Afterwards did they want to commemorate publically, mourn privately or just forget the horror with renewed spirituality?”

Robin Barlow's chapter "Military Tribunals in Carmarthenshire, 1916–1917" is based on his University of Aberystwyth doctorate and examines recent publications about the heretofore little studied but vitally important conscription apparatus. He concludes that attempts by central government to impose national standards on how to deal with those seeking to avoid compulsory military service, including the minority conscientious objectors, were largely circumvented by the local tribunals. In particular the ethnically based radical and nonconformist traditions of west Wales were continued and indeed strengthened by the war, resulting in a comparatively high success rate for appellants and a significantly lower percentage of Carmarthenshire men serving in the latter half of the war.

Paul Burnham's section, "The Radical Ex-Servicemen of 1918" is a crucial contribution to the growing literature on ex-servicemen. The National Federation of Discharged and Demobilised Soldiers and Sailors was an avowedly grass-roots campaigning organization. Former officers were excluded unless they had risen through the ranks and it saw itself in direct opposition to the officer-led and Conservative Party-influenced comrades of the Great War. Both organizations though were active in every part of the United Kingdom and both claimed memberships in the hundreds of thousands. Burnham demonstrates that the very federal structure of the Federation led to considerable local variations in policies and politics. In some places the Federation regarded itself as part of the labour movement, where elsewhere right-wing, anti-Bolshevik elements predominated. Its often confused and contradictory policies, and its lack of funding led the Federation into the umbrella British Legion in 1921. Here, once basic pension reforms were implemented and buoyed up by the profits of the wartime canteens, centralized conservatism prevailed.

Both Burnham's and Paul Fantom's inputs help reveal the truly forgotten and often localized role of working-class people – especially through the labour movement – in the conflict. In 1914 the labour movement had largely supported the war effort. Appeals by trade union leaders to oppose German aggression led to over 250,000 of its members to enlist by Christmas 1914, with 25 percent of miners volunteering before the introduction of conscription. Typical was "Colonel" John Ward, the leader of the Navvies' Union and MP for Stoke on Trent. To "fight Prussianism", he raised three pioneer battalions from his members and led them to battle in France, Italy and Russia. The Labour Party entered Lloyd George's coalition government with leader Arthur Henderson becoming a member of the war cabinet. Trade unions at home grew enormously during the conflict, especially amongst unskilled and women workers. By the end one in three of the workforce was organized. Whilst previously regarded

as anathema in polite circles, having proved their patriotism, unions, post-war, were accorded a significant role in society.

Paul Fantom's chapter "Industry, Labour and Patriotism in the Black Country: Wednesbury at War, 1914–1918" is based on research for a University of Birmingham PhD. In it he traces the significance of the conflict on local trade unions and the Labour Party and indicates that its patriotic war record in industry, local government and on the battlefield was crucial to making the party electable in the post-war period. The chapter is a major contribution to the debate on modern politics and the growing allegiance of working-class people, and how they identified with Labour to achieve an increasingly large twentieth-century hegemony.

Professor Keith Grieves is a distinguished Great War historian whose books and biographies on politics, manpower and the role of government have made a notable contribution to the historiography. More recently he has worked on commemoration, loss of memory and the interwar countryside. His chapter, "Commemorating the Fallen in Surrey's Open Spaces after the Great War" focuses on a county which, though adjoining the largest metropolis, retained a rural distinctiveness in the face of growing suburbia and newly empowered day-trippers. The use of open spaces as war memorials enabled the region to fulfil its emotional and practical needs in the difficult post-war period. In addition the involvement of local regiments strengthened the very identity of the county against the various threats of modernity.

The continuance of local government and the provision of basic services like housing during the war had received no attention at all from historians. The chapter from Dr Bonnie White, of St Xavier University, "Wigwams and Resort Towns: the Housing Crisis in First World War Devon", is groundbreaking in every way. Service industries, such as the building trade, virtually ceased with the outbreak of war with workers either enlisting or becoming unemployed. The holiday trade, on which both rural and seaside suburban Devon depended, was also drastically curtailed. Belgian refugees were quickly accommodated in the West Country, but being dependent on charity, landlords were reluctant to let their properties. White discusses this critical Home Front problem for the first time and analyzes the sharp conflict involving class, ethnicity and localism.

Martin Purdy's "Roman Catholic Army Chaplains and Claims of a Working-Class 'Advantage' in the Great War" challenges a widespread view that Roman Catholic padres had a closer relationship to ordinary soldiers than those of other denominations and were seen more frequently on the front line. Other writers have claimed that this was because RC

priests were more likely to have working-class, or at least Northern or industrial, origins. In a skilful analysis of the class and regional backgrounds of Catholic priests and Anglican vicars of various localities attached to the armed services, Purdy argues that the established argument is merely a stereotype.

David Swift's chapter, "Labour Patriotism in Lancashire and London, 1914–18" is a further contribution to the lost story of labour patriotism and is mainly derived from his current doctoral research at UCLan. He compares and contrasts two vastly different regions which exhibited diverse fortunes for the pre-war labour movement. But both areas of the labour movement demonstrated overwhelming support for the war effort, with trades unions particularly active in recruiting and sustaining their members in the forces. Swift argues that both in Lancashire and London the war united the left and provided a patriotic and pragmatic socialism which successfully recruited supporters and voters. After the major expansion of the electorate in 1918 this made the Labour Party electable on a regional and then national basis.

2014 will see extraordinary and unprecedented attention given to the First World War. In the United Kingdom this fascination is reflected in the enormous growth of often unfocussed amateur histories meeting a demand for this war which seems to have no counterpart amongst other European countries, even with the former protagonists. The current misty-eyed fixation on its military aspects threatens to devalue the vast consequences of the struggle which still matter in British society a century later. This context therefore emphasizes the importance of the present volume in examining how the struggle shaped Britain's regions in diverse ways.

The centenary commemorations risk becoming mired in a tired litany of Mons, Somme, Jutland and Passchendaele, just as the British Expeditionary Force did in the mud of Flanders. There is a danger of over-concentration on the military history with the large national commemorations and in the programme of community-based projects to be funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. It is important that the obsessive fixation on its military aspects does not devalue the huge social, economic, political and cultural consequences of the struggle which still reverberate a century on. In the face of the raw and numbing effect of the vast scale of the public history of the war, which can only get more powerful as the centenary engages, this book celebrates the local and regional identities and nuances that still matter a century on.

*Manchester, December 2013*

# MILITARY TRIBUNALS IN CARMARTHENSHIRE, 1916-1917

ROBIN BARLOW

Most historians of Wales – and Welsh historians – have followed the lead set by K. O. Morgan, who declared that the people of Wales wholeheartedly supported Britain’s participation in the First World War.<sup>1</sup> Phrases such as “jingoistic fervour” and “patriotic frenzy” are frequently found in the literature, generally based on erroneous figures purporting to show that proportionately more Welshmen volunteered for service than either Englishmen or Scotsmen.<sup>2</sup> In fact, the opposite was true. Taking enlistment as a percentage of estimated male population in July 1914, England’s contribution was 24.02 percent, Scotland’s 23.71 percent, and Wales’s 21.52 percent. When the figures for voluntary enlistment are examined, a similar picture emerges: 6.61 percent of Scotland’s estimated population in July 1914 voluntarily enlisted, compared to 6.04 percent for England, and 5.83 percent for Wales.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, the response to the war by the people of Wales cannot be given blanket treatment; there were differences, for example, between north and south Wales, rural and urban areas and Welsh-speaking and non-Welsh-speaking areas. Other ways must therefore be found to try and assess local attitudes to the war.

This paper argues that the workings of the military tribunals of Carmarthenshire offer an interesting way of gauging local attitudes towards the war, in terms of the decisions handed down by the tribunals, in the way the tribunals were perceived by the local communities and, most

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<sup>1</sup> Kenneth O. Morgan, *Wales 1880–1980: Rebirth of a Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 159–63.

<sup>2</sup> J. Graham Jones, *The History of Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1990), 135; Philip Jenkins, *The History of Modern Wales, 1536–1990* (London: Longman, 1992), 343; David Ross, *Wales: History of a Nation* (New Lanark: Geddes & Grosset, 2005), 222.

<sup>3</sup> *Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire during the Great War* (London: HMSO, 1922), 364.

importantly, in the way in which the applicants were regarded by the populace.

In 1914, Carmarthenshire was a county of contrasts and diversity: to the south and east were anthracite coalfields, industry and growing urbanization centred on towns such as Llanelli, Ammanford and Carmarthen; to the north and west, agriculture, and especially dairy farming, was the dominant economic activity. The county became known as the “cows’ capital” of Wales, “prosperously lactic”. Carmarthenshire was – and is – a predominantly Welsh-speaking area and a staunchly nonconformist one. In 1914, the Liberal Party dominated local politics.

Little has been published on the work of military tribunals, largely because most tribunal papers were destroyed after the war. However, the papers of W. R. James, clerk to the Kidwelly Municipal Borough (MB) tribunal, have been deposited at the Pembrokeshire Record Office (although Kidwelly is in Carmarthenshire) and also the Cardiganshire appeal tribunal papers have been deposited in the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth.<sup>4</sup> The greatest source of information on the work of the tribunals is from the local press and never have Gustave Flaubert’s words been more accurate, that “writing history is like drinking an ocean and pissing a cupful”. This paper is largely based on reports published in the *Carmarthen Journal*, *Llanelli Mercury* and the *Amman Valley Chronicle*; all three papers carried a significant number of column-inches reporting the work of the tribunals, especially in 1916.

In October 1915 Lord Derby had been appointed director-general of recruiting in a final effort to retain the system of voluntary enlistment for the armed forces. The resulting Derby scheme temporarily did so, but once it had failed, the argument against conscription became unsustainable. The heavy casualties at the battle of Loos and the need for reinforcements in time for the spring campaign on the Western Front pushed the Asquith government to introduce conscription for the first time in British history. The Military Service Act of January 1916 brought conscription for single men aged between eighteen and forty-one, extended in May 1916 to include married men.<sup>5</sup>

The Military Service Act necessitated a system for dealing with those men who wished to obtain exemption, whatever the reasons. The Derby scheme had introduced a system of tribunals and whether for reasons of

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<sup>4</sup> Pembrokeshire Record Office (PKRO), ref: D/LJ/945; National Library of Wales, ref. CTB2.

<sup>5</sup> For background on the introduction to conscription see John Rae, *Conscience and Politics: The British Government and the Conscientious Objector to Military Service, 1916–1919* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), 1–67.



expediency, efficiency or convenience, this machinery was adopted for the purposes of the Military Service Act. Local tribunals were to be appointed by the local registration authorities, and in practice these were the same tribunals as under the Derby scheme, with an increased membership from an average of five members to perhaps ten or more. In Carmarthenshire, the tribunals corresponded to the urban and rural districts of the county. Throughout England and Wales, 1,805 tribunals were set up, and in most cases councillors formed the majority group on the tribunals. It was also intended that local citizens with legal experience and representatives of organized labour would be included. The town clerk or council clerk usually became the tribunal clerk. In addition, a military representative was appointed to each tribunal, who was often a retired or serving military officer, but this was not always the case. His purpose was simply to obtain as many men as possible for the armed forces and his official position gave him the right to question applicants and to appeal against any decisions of the tribunal. Sixty-eight appeal tribunals were also set up, largely corresponding to the administrative counties, hence the Carmarthenshire appeal tribunal. Finally, there was a central tribunal, to hear appeals referred to it by the individual appeal tribunals.<sup>6</sup>

In February 1916, the Local Government Board (LGB) had issued instructions for the guidance of tribunals when dealing with applications for exemption. There were four main grounds for such a ruling: firstly, that it was in the national interests to retain the man concerned in civilian employment; secondly, serious hardship would ensue if the man were called up; thirdly, ill-health or infirmity; and fourthly, on grounds of conscientious objection.

Despite the lack of documentary evidence, tribunals continue to be perceived as bodies which co-operated with the military authorities, in order to maintain a supply of men for the army, and which were largely unsympathetic to the local population. As Grieves has noted, the “historical record has remained highly coloured by assessments which were produced by arch-opponents of the tribunal system”.<sup>7</sup> For example, Beatrice Webb criticized the tribunals at an early stage in their history: “The most biased judge on the bench could not have equalled, in malicious bias, the old gentlemen who are now sitting on the claims for exemption”.<sup>8</sup> John Graham, a Quaker chaplain and chairman of the Friends’ Peace

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<sup>6</sup> *Forty-fifth Annual Report of the Local Government Board, 1915–1916*, PP 1916, XII, Cd 8331, 22–4.

<sup>7</sup> K. R. Grieves, “Military Tribunal Papers: The Case of Leek Local Tribunal in the First World War”, *Archives*, 16, no. 70 (1983), 149.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Grieves, “Leek tribunal”, 149n.

Committee during the war, wrote that tribunals were “groping about with a lack of evidence” and consequently “fell back on their prejudices”. When the result was in doubt, “the verdict of the Tribunals generally went against the applicant [...]. Whilst success was impossible, they need not have failed as badly as they did. In few cases did they obtain the confidence of those whose destiny they decided”.<sup>9</sup>

K. O. Morgan has written dismissively that “tribunals were loaded in favour of privilege and position, with not a labourer or working man in sight on the bench”.<sup>10</sup> The reality was often quite different. If the Kidwelly MB tribunal is examined, we find that two members were both named as “labour representatives”: Edmund Cole, a colliery carpenter, and David Rowlands, a tinsmith worker. The chairman was Thomas Reynolds, mayor and an alderman of the borough, who was an overseer at the munitions factory at Pembrey. The other members were: David Anthony, a farmer and an alderman of the borough; Thomas Griffiths, a doctor and also the medical officer of health for the borough; John Morgan, another farmer and a councillor; and David Thomas, a schoolmaster and councillor. As one would expect, all seven members of the tribunal were resident in the town of Kidwelly and their ages varied from forty-four to sixty-two. The picture sometimes drawn of applicants pleading their case before a battery of elderly colonels had little basis in fact. As Rae has commented, “the gulf between the applicants and the tribunal members was essentially one of age”.<sup>11</sup> The average age of the Kidwelly tribunal was fifty, which was slightly younger than the average age of two other tribunals of which studies have been made: the Leeds tribunal was fifty-five, and the York tribunal fifty-two.<sup>12</sup>

The LGB did not have the opportunity to exert any significant influence on the selection of tribunal members, or the way they carried out their duties. It was essential that tribunals should retain discretionary powers both in the way they organized themselves, and to decide each individual case on its merits.<sup>13</sup> Consequently, it was impractical and undesirable to impose any real uniformity on the tribunals. In Carmarthenshire,

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<sup>9</sup> John Graham, *Conscription and Conscience: A History 1916–1919* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1922), 68.

<sup>10</sup> Morgan, *Wales 1880–1980*, 164.

<sup>11</sup> Rae, *Conscience and Politics*, 55.

<sup>12</sup> A. R. Mack, “Conscription and Conscientious Objection in Leeds and Yorkshire in the First World War” (MPhil diss., University of York, 1982).

<sup>13</sup> For a useful and detailed examination of the situation in Northamptonshire, see James McDermott, *British Military Service Tribunals, 1916–1918: “A very much abused Body of Men”* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011).

the period February to May 1916 was marked by the tribunals trying to establish a *modus operandi*, whilst being overwhelmed by the number of cases to be heard.

## The Work and Decisions of Tribunals

The workload of the tribunals was heavy and there is little doubt that they worked extremely hard. For example, by February 23, 1916 it was reported that Carmarthen Rural District (RD) tribunal already had over 500 cases to deal with. One applicant from St Clears said, “everyone in his parish was appealing and he thought he would follow suit”.<sup>14</sup> Llandovery RD tribunal dealt with eighty-eight cases at its meeting on March 2, 1916,<sup>15</sup> and Llanelli MB tribunal, dealt with over 150 cases on the same date.<sup>16</sup> By September 28, 1916, the workload had increased to such an extent that the Llanelli tribunal had to be split in to two to hear over 200 appeals simultaneously; each tribunal sat with only four members and a clerk.<sup>17</sup> On October 5, 1916, the same tribunal was again split to hear over 300 cases.<sup>18</sup> The Cardiganshire appeal tribunal met weekly or sometimes twice-weekly from March 15, 1916 until September 24, 1918. It criss-crossed the county, sitting in Aberystwyth, Lampeter, Newcastle Emlyn, Cardigan and Aberaeron. The papers of the tribunal are littered with claims for overnight accommodation and travelling expenses for the members. It must be remembered that members of the appeal tribunal would also have been members of their local tribunal (and probably chairman), their local district council and also Cardiganshire county council.

David Davies, a local landowner and farmer, living near the village of Myddfai, five miles south of Llandovery, provides another good example of the time-consuming nature of tribunal work. He was chairman of the Llandovery RD tribunal and also a member of Llandovery RD Council and Carmarthenshire County Council. To reach the county town he would ride a pony and trap to Llandovery station and then take a train to Carmarthen.<sup>19</sup> The meeting of Llandovery RD tribunal on January 2, 1917, chaired by Davies, lasted for seven hours and heard thirty-eight cases. The *Llanelly Mercury* commented on the local tribunal that “their work is an

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<sup>14</sup> *Carmarthen Journal*, Feb. 25, 1916.

<sup>15</sup> *Carmarthen Journal*, Mar. 10, 1916.

<sup>16</sup> *Llanelly Mercury*, Mar. 9, 1916.

<sup>17</sup> *Llanelly Mercury*, Oct. 5, 1916.

<sup>18</sup> *Llanelly Mercury*, Oct. 12, 1916.

<sup>19</sup> Personal testimony of David Williams to the author.

arduous one and they are not to be envied for undertaking it. They deserve the sympathy of the public more than their rebuke".<sup>20</sup> One member of Carmarthen RD tribunal wrote, "I have been sentenced to twelve months hard labour at the tribunal".<sup>21</sup>

The atmosphere at individual tribunal hearings is very revealing, giving a good indication of the prevailing local attitudes towards the war. The hearings generated great public interest and considering they were held during the working day, attracted large crowds. For example, the meeting of Llandovery RD tribunal on March 2, 1916 aroused, it was reported, "considerable interest", with the cases "being keenly followed by the large number present".<sup>22</sup> When the Carmarthenshire appeal tribunal met on June 1, 1916, one case evoked "loud cheers from the crowd at the back of the hall". The chairman demanded that they "must really have no such expressions of feeling in court".<sup>23</sup> The council chamber at Burry Port, it was reported, became "quite inadequate for the crowd interesting themselves in this important work"; when the tribunal met on June 20, 1916, every chair was occupied, and "a large number failed to enter".<sup>24</sup>

The conservative-leaning *Carmarthen Journal* commented:

Viewed in the light of the crying scarcity of labour, the crowds of young men who come in from the country to listen to the appeals before the Carmarthen Rural District Tribunal provide a curious commentary on the question of exemptions. At each sitting the room is crowded with lusty young agriculturalists, many of whom have no business there apart from the fact that they have come to hear the appeals, yet they have all had temporary, if not absolute exemption on the ground that they are "indispensable" on the farms, which – they say – could not be carried on without them.<sup>25</sup>

On March 9, 1916, the Llanelli MB tribunal heard the case of J. O. Thomas, who was appealing for exemption on the grounds of conscientious objection. Thomas was employed as a baker's vanman and he was asked by alderman Nathan Griffiths, a member of the tribunal, whether it was "consistent to deliver bread to soldiers". He replied, "I am not killing the soldiers by giving them bread". This brought "laughter and loud applause" from those present, prompting the chairman to say, "If

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<sup>20</sup> *Llanelly Mercury*, Mar. 16, 1916.

<sup>21</sup> *Carmarthen Journal*, Feb. 18, 1916.

<sup>22</sup> *Carmarthen Journal*, Mar. 10, 1916.

<sup>23</sup> *Carmarthen Journal*, June 9, 1916.

<sup>24</sup> *Llanelly Mercury*, Mar. 16, 1916; June 22, 1916.

<sup>25</sup> *Carmarthen Journal*, Apr. 7, 1916.

there is any demonstration again, the court will be cleared, and it will not be open to the public. We are not going to allow any section to applaud in that way". After further questioning, alderman Griffiths said, "It's no use arguing with this man", which brought "laughter" from the public, one of whom called out, "because he is a better man than you", prompting "more laughter".<sup>26</sup> What does this tell us about the attitude of those from the locality about the war? One might have expected them to have seen the applicants as shirkers who should have been sent off to the war, but the opposite was the case. Sympathy lay with the applicant, not the tribunal.

This is also confirmed by the actual decisions of the tribunals where applicants were treated with a fair degree of leniency and exemptions were the rule rather than the exception. Of the first seventy cases dealt with by the Kidwelly MB tribunal only three applicants were refused exemption: a carpenter's labourer and two herdsman. Those who were successful included a shopkeeper, a bricklayer's labourer, a flannel merchant, a postman, a blacksmith and a hotel proprietor. On December 8, 1916, the Kidwelly tribunal dealt with thirty-seven cases and all were granted conditional or temporary exemptions. It was deemed "expedient and in the national interests" that instead of being employed in military service, men should remain employed as a chauffeur/groom, painter/decorator, boot-dealer and draper, saddler, jobbing builder and plasterer, fisherman and bill-poster/glazier/rural postman.<sup>27</sup> When applicants sought exemptions, they frequently did so on numerous grounds to give themselves the best chance of success. David Phillips, a twenty-eight-year-old master-butcher applied for exemption in April, 1916. He claimed to have the largest and oldest butchery business in Kidwelly and his widowed mother and three sisters were dependent on the business. Phillips claimed he was also a slaughterman and buyer and a sole-trader. In addition, he had the care of two horses, a brother serving in the Somerset light infantry and he farmed some land which he owned. He concluded his case by arguing that it was "in the national interests that the food supply of the civil population should be looked after". He was granted a temporary exemption.<sup>28</sup>

The Llanelli MB tribunal met for the first time on February 24, 1916 and heard fifty-nine cases; of the twenty-one which were reported, only five men were refused an exemption from military service. All had applied for exemptions on grounds of the economic distress which would result if they lost their employment as variously a shop manager, oilman, gaslight employee, fruit-shop employee, carter and brewery worker. The next

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<sup>26</sup> *Llanelly Mercury*, Mar. 16, 1916.

<sup>27</sup> PKRO, D/LJ/935.

<sup>28</sup> PKRO, D/LJ/941.

meeting of the tribunal heard 150 cases, although the details of only thirty-one were reported; of these, four were refused exemption, yet a cycle agent, a chemist's assistant and a pianist were all amongst those granted an exemption. The longest temporary exemption granted to any applicant was that to the estate manager at Stradey castle, of six months.

Llandovery RD tribunal met on March 15, 1916 and dealt with thirty-five cases, granting exemptions in thirty-two of them. The vast majority were agriculturalists and of those refused one was a timber haulier, one a farmer's son with three brothers working on the 450-acre farm, and one was an unemployed collier.<sup>29</sup> On April 14, 1916 there were five cases and four exemptions, and on May 26, 1916 twenty-six cases and twenty-four exemptions.<sup>30</sup> On June 27, 1916, eighty-two cases were heard, and in only one case was an exemption not granted.<sup>31</sup> On September 26, 1916 a further seventeen farmers, farmers' sons and farm servants were all granted exemptions and in other cases, a bootmaker from Llanddeusant (an isolated village of approximately thirty inhabitants), and a gardener from Gwynfe, were granted exemptions, with the chairman commenting, "gardeners are scarce in that district".<sup>32</sup> On October 13, 1916, all seventeen applicants were granted exemptions including men in varied occupations such as postman, mason, timber haulier, wheelwright, motor driver and gardener.<sup>33</sup> The one divergence from this pattern of exemptions occurred on October 27, 1916, when sixty-eight cases were heard, and nine were dismissed, including three farmers, a wheelwright from Llansadwrn, a tailor from Caio, a timber-feller from Llangadog, and a grocer from the same village.<sup>34</sup> On November 7, 1916, there were twenty-seven cases heard from agriculturalists, and all were granted conditional or temporary exemptions.<sup>35</sup>

## Military Representatives

A military representative was appointed by the War Office to appear at every tribunal hearing throughout the country. This work was carried out voluntarily at local tribunals, but was a paid appointment at appeal tribunals. Its role was quite simply to obtain as many men as possible for

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<sup>29</sup> *Carmarthen Journal*, Mar. 24, 1916.

<sup>30</sup> *Carmarthen Journal*, Apr. 21, 1916; June 2, 1916.

<sup>31</sup> *Carmarthen Journal*, June 2, 1916.

<sup>32</sup> *Carmarthen Journal*, Sept. 29, 1916.

<sup>33</sup> *Carmarthen Journal*, Oct. 20, 1916.

<sup>34</sup> *Carmarthen Journal*, Nov. 3, 1916.

<sup>35</sup> *Carmarthen Journal*, Nov. 10, 1916.

the army, and it was only on rare occasions that objections were not raised to an exemption from service. John Rae has written that military representatives believed, “almost to the point of obsession, that if they did not take a tough line on claims for exemption, the army would be cheated of the recruits it needed”.<sup>36</sup>

Criticisms of the status and influence of the military representatives by contemporary critics of the tribunal system have often coloured the historical record. In Carmarthenshire, despite the blunt and often rude approach of many military representatives, tribunal chairman – and solicitors appearing on behalf of applicants – generally managed to protect the rights of the individual. A good example of the attitude of one tribunal chairman is provided by W. B. Jones of the Llanelli RD tribunal, who was a councillor and justice of the peace. At the tribunal meeting on October 16, 1916, a commercial traveller named Joshua Williams appealed for exemption and the following exchange was reported between chairman Jones, and the military representative, Captain Morton Evans:

Chairman: There are two million soldiers rotting in the country today.

Capt Evans: I don't think that is a fair remark to make.

Chairman: Why not? What I say is quite true.

Capt Evans: You don't know whether you are right or wrong.

Chairman: [...] Some men who joined the Army at the commencement of the war are still in this country, and there are some who have not been outside a certain Fort, drawing handsome salaries while they are doing nothing. (This remark drew much applause from the public present).<sup>37</sup>

Views such as this, publicly stated, indicate that it would be a challenge to obtain the numbers of men required by the War Office.

At Cwmamman Urban District (UD) tribunal, the military representative certainly did not always get his own way. On June 5, 1916, the following exchange took place:

Clerk: Don't you talk to me like that.

Capt Edwards: I am asking questions and you interrupt me.

Clerk: You ask me civilly. I won't take it from you or anybody else (applause from the crowd).

Capt Edwards: Please yourself.

Clerk: (To the Chairman) I ask you to protect me against the Military Representative.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Rae, *Conscience and Politics*, 66.

<sup>37</sup> *Llanelly Mercury*, Oct. 19, 1916.

<sup>38</sup> *Amman Valley Chronicle*, June 8, 1916.

On July 6, a solicitor appearing for an appellant objected to the military representative putting a question. Captain Edwards responded, “Don’t interfere; sit down, you will hear your case called later on”. The solicitor replied: “I object to these insulting remarks. I ask for your protection as Chairman of the tribunal”. The chairman sided with the solicitor, commenting, “I will protect you”.<sup>39</sup> When the Cwmamman tribunal met on June 5, 1916, every applicant was granted an exemption, leading Captain Edwards to complain that he had sat for two-and-a-half hours and not got a single recruit. Evans Davies, a member of the tribunal asked ironically “Do you think we have done anything wrong?”<sup>40</sup>

S. O. Davies, writing in March 1916, had little doubt about what he saw as the insidious influence of the military representatives:

At present, the members of the Tribunals willingly connive at the domination of the military representative. This individual is almost invariably the dominant personality, whose opinion or recommendation becomes absolute law. He is allowed to badger, bluster and sneer at the applicant. Generally the military representative is a man of some educational attainment who very rarely fails to score at the expense of the uneducated and unaided applicant.<sup>41</sup>

John Graham asserted that military representatives, “often in khaki”, were “a standing counsel against every application” who “dominated weak Tribunals” and “were treated with a deference not granted to their opponents”, often using their position to “browbeat and intimidate applicants”.<sup>42</sup> W. Llewelyn Williams MP had complained of “the insolence of military representatives”.<sup>43</sup>

There is a great deal of evidence of the hectoring and rude approach of military representatives, but little evidence that it had any positive effect on the decisions of tribunals. At the meeting of Carmarthen RD tribunal on March 22, 1916, Captain Margrave appeared as military representative. A Trelech farmer, who had a medical certificate showing he was unfit for work, applied for exemption for his farm servant. Captain Margrave commented, “I think a little hard work would do you good . . . you look very well”. The farm servant was granted a temporary exemption of eight months. A Rhydargaeau farmer who similarly applied for exemption for his farm servant was told by Captain Margrave to “get out of that armchair

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<sup>39</sup> *Amman Valley Chronicle*, July 8, 1916.

<sup>40</sup> *Amman Valley Chronicle*, June 15, 1916.

<sup>41</sup> *Llanelly Mercury*, Mar. 9, 1916.

<sup>42</sup> Graham, *Conscription and Conscience*, 66.

<sup>43</sup> *Llanelly Mercury*, Mar. 23, 1916.



in the chimney-piece and do something on the farm". He was also granted a temporary exemption of eight months. A Llanpumpsaint farmer who produced a medical certificate for his son was told, "I don't believe in these certificates. They are only waste paper to me". The applicant was granted an absolute exemption.<sup>44</sup> In all three cases, Captain Margrave had objected to any exemption being granted, yet the decision of the tribunal was to ignore this. On August 5, 1916, John Griffiths from Abernant appealed for exemption for his twenty-year-old son, due to his own ill health and inability to work his forty-eight-acre farm. When he produced a medical certificate to the Carmarthen RD tribunal, Captain Margrave asked, "How much did you pay for it?" and then continued, "I suppose it all depends whether you get exemption or not what you pay for it". Griffiths' son was granted an absolute exemption.<sup>45</sup>

Military representatives were also aided by advisory committees, which were set up by the War Office in all areas, originally under the Derby scheme, to investigate the background to all cases for exemption. Army Council Instruction No. 1930, sent to military representatives, stated:

It is of the utmost importance to secure the assistance of Advisory Committees in preparing contested cases coming on for hearing before Tribunals, by the investigation of grounds for exemption set out by applicants. In most cases, it is hoped that members of Advisory Committees will [...] be able to render valuable assistance in securing the necessary particulars. Further assistance can, if necessary, be obtained from the staff of recruiting offices, and School Attendance Officers are usually able and willing to render useful service in this connection.<sup>46</sup>

The information provided was thus useful to the military representatives. For example, when a Whitland farmer appealed to Carmarthen RD Tribunal on March 22, 1916, for exemption for his farm servant, the military representative stated: "This farmer owns his farm and can afford to pay for labour, and I think he should sacrifice some money in a national emergency like this".<sup>47</sup> The appeal was refused.

The military representatives treated most applicants with condescension and only a perfunctory interest in each individual circumstance. As they saw it, the successful prosecution of the war depended on finding the men to fight and the process began in the military tribunals of districts

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<sup>44</sup> *Carmarthen Journal*, Mar. 24, 1916.

<sup>45</sup> *Carmarthen Journal*, Aug. 11, 1916.

<sup>46</sup> PKRO D/LJ/939, Army Council Instruction No. 1930, Oct. 8, 1916.

<sup>47</sup> *Carmarthen Journal*, Mar. 24, 1916.

throughout Wales and beyond. The military representatives were often ill-mannered, aggressive and sometimes even slanderous, but it seems that the members of the Carmarthenshire tribunals were not prepared to be brow-beaten by them, and generally made their judgements independently.

### Decisions of the Tribunals

Whilst this study is largely dependent on reports in the local press which tended to highlight controversial or unusual cases, the experience of Carmarthenshire would seem to suggest that applicants to the tribunals, except those applying for exemptions on grounds of conscience, were treated with a fair degree of leniency and exemptions were the rule rather than the exception. At a national level, between March 1, 1916 and March 31, 1917, 371,500 men were compulsorily enlisted. However, up to April 30, 1917, 779,936 men had been exempted from service by the tribunals, meaning that approximately one man was compulsorily enlisted for every two men granted an exemption by a tribunal.<sup>48</sup> The statistics for Carmarthenshire show an even greater propensity to exempt applicants. Taking the cases reported which came before the tribunals of Llandovery MB, Llandovery RD, Newcastle Emlyn RD, Llanelli MB, Llanelli RD, Carmarthen MB, Carmarthen RD and Kidwelly MB, approximately one man was enlisted for every nine men exempted.

Although it is not possible to make an absolutely watertight case, because not every appeal before any tribunal was reported in the local press, the weight of evidence would certainly seem to suggest that the tribunals in Carmarthenshire were sympathetic towards those men under their jurisdiction. This is true not only in rural areas of the county, where many of the applicants would have been personally known to the members of a tribunal, but also in the urban areas where this was less likely to be so. Similarly, one might have expected more exemptions in rural areas because of the need to preserve a viable workforce to keep the nation fed, but exemptions were equally likely amongst all manner of occupations in the towns. Given that the LGB had “impressed upon tribunals the urgent need of releasing for the Army all men who can reasonably be spared from civil life”,<sup>49</sup> there are two possible explanations for this attitude of the tribunals: firstly, that those men who came before them fitted the various criteria laid down by the LGB for exemptions; or secondly, that the

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<sup>48</sup> *Statistics of the Military Effort*, 367.

<sup>49</sup> *Forty-sixth Annual Report of the Local Government Board, 1916–1917*, PP 1917–18, XIII, Cd 8697.

tribunals did not want to force men in to the army and only in extreme cases were they prepared to do so.

This provides strong evidence for the argument that support for the war, even as early as 1916, was not necessarily forthcoming in Carmarthenshire both in terms of the number of men applying for exemptions from military service and the readiness with which tribunals were prepared to keep men out of the army. Cyril Pearce, in his study of opposition to the war in Huddersfield, came to a similar conclusion.<sup>50</sup>

One, perhaps isolated, incident provides an interesting example of how the local population viewed compulsory enlistment. On September 11, 1916, two police officers, sergeant H. Lewis and PC D. Davies, went to Llansaint to arrest a conscript who had failed to report himself. The *Llanelly Mercury* reported:

the man, instead of coming quietly as was expected, showed fight, and being a powerfully built man, the struggle for some little time was between the officers and himself, but soon others of the inhabitants joined in against the police, who were very badly treated, the Sergeant receiving a nasty blow on the head which particularly stunned him and several kicks on the body. PC Davies received a nasty cut on the face and several bruises. The prisoner was rescued and the police had to retire beaten.<sup>51</sup>

The situation in west Wales was deemed to be so bad that the matter was actually raised in parliament by Stuart Wortley MP on March 16, 1916:

I have been in Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire, and Cardiganshire for ten days, and I am thoroughly disgusted with what I have seen and heard of the recruiting. They are exempting everybody. I cannot mention names, but one public character who attests people and pays them 2s 9d tells everyone to “get an appeal paper at once and see So-and-so, and he will help you to fill it in”. You would think it was an election day to see them running about looking for influence to get out of serving their country [...] the whole of the Nonconformist ministers are working against the Act, and, if attested, using influence to get exemption.<sup>52</sup>

It is unlikely that applicants to the tribunals took matters in quite such a cavalier way. For many, to appear before a panel was undoubtedly an ordeal, especially when the tribunals placed unfair pressure on the families of those applying for exemptions. For example, Llanelli MB tribunal met on October 19, 1916 to consider the application for exemptions of two

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<sup>50</sup> Cyril Pearce, *Comrades in Conscience* (London: Francis Boutle, 2001).

<sup>51</sup> *Llanelly Mercury*, Sept. 14, 1916.

<sup>52</sup> *Parliamentary Debates (Commons)*, 5th ser., vol. 75, col. 2357, Mar. 16, 1916.

brothers, Luther and Simon Ley, both furnacemen from Llanelli. The chairman, alderman D. James commented, "The object in getting you two here together was to decide which of you should go to the Colours. Have you considered the matter?" Simon Ley responded, "Yes, I am prepared to go provided my brother is allowed to remain".<sup>53</sup> At the Kidwelly MB tribunal in March 1916, Mrs Rees of Park Forge applied for exemptions for her son, and also another blacksmith, who were both essential employees of her business. The tribunal retired and "after a considerable time spent in discussing the matter", exempted one of the employees but left Mrs Rees to decide who it should be.<sup>54</sup> On March 21, 1916, Llandeilo RD tribunal heard the case of a farmer from Llanfynydd who applied for exemptions for his two sons, aged nineteen and twenty-one. The farmer was asked by the chairman of the tribunal, "which is the best boy on the farm?" The farmer replied "I cannot answer that". The tribunal decided to exempt only one son, and the father was to decide which one it should be.<sup>55</sup> The psychological pressures of war spread far and wide.

On November 21, 1916, Harry Evans, a collier from Furnace near Llanelli, committed suicide when he received notice calling him for military service. He had "threatened to commit suicide before he would join the colours". The coroner's jury passed a verdict of "deceased, while of unsound mind".<sup>56</sup> In the same month, Gunner John Evans, Royal Garrison Artillery, was found hanging from a tree at Morfa Farm, Johnstown. He had appealed to his local tribunal, but had been refused exemption. The coroner commented that he "should not have been sent to the army if he were in that state of health"; the jury's verdict was "suicide during temporary insanity".<sup>57</sup> In January 1917 William Daniel, a farmer from Llangendeirne, was found hanging from a chain in a stable. He had been "worrying a great deal about joining the army, and was afraid he would be called up at the beginning of the year". The coroner's jury passed a verdict of "suicide by hanging whilst of unsound mind".<sup>58</sup>

## Conscientious Objectors

If we turn now to those who applied for exemption on grounds of conscience, a different picture emerges. Although conscientious objectors

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<sup>53</sup> *Llanelly Mercury*, Oct. 26, 1916.

<sup>54</sup> *Llanelly Mercury*, Mar. 23, 1916.

<sup>55</sup> *Carmarthen Journal*, Mar. 31, 1916.

<sup>56</sup> *Llanelly Mercury*, Nov. 23, 1916.

<sup>57</sup> *Carmarthen Journal*, Dec. 1, 1916.

<sup>58</sup> *Carmarthen Journal*, Jan. 5, 12, 1917.

numbered only 16,500 (approximately 0.06 percent of all those who were conscripted) the attention given to their cases far outweighs their numerical strength.<sup>59</sup> John Davies estimated that there were at least a thousand conscientious objectors in Wales, proportionately a greater number than the rest of the United Kingdom.<sup>60</sup> The Military Service Act had stated that any certificate of exemption could be “absolute, conditional, or temporary, as the authority by whom it was granted think best suited to the case, and also in the case of an application on conscientious grounds, may take the form of an exemption from combatant service only, or may be conditional on the applicant being engaged in some work which in the opinion of the Tribunal dealing with the case is of national importance”. Although the ambiguity of the wording of the act led to some tribunals being reluctant to grant absolute exemptions to conscientious objectors, John Rae estimated that tribunals granted some form of exemption to 80 percent of all such applicants.<sup>61</sup> In 1916 in Huddersfield, the figure was 59 percent.<sup>62</sup> From the evidence of the local press in Carmarthenshire, the percentage of exemptions in the county seems to be far less. For example, between March 3, 1916 and August 3, 1916, the *Llanelly Mercury* gave details of twenty-one men who applied for exemptions as conscientious objectors; only four were granted, and seventeen were rejected. This also accords with the situation in neighbouring Cardiganshire; K. O. Morgan concluded that “Prosperous farmers and solicitors, and former high sheriffs in Cardiganshire, acted rigorously to suppress or imprison those who adopted an anti-war stand on grounds of conscience”.<sup>63</sup>

When reading the reports of the appeals by conscientious objectors, what is immediately apparent is that the questions asked by the military representatives, and members of the tribunals, were similar – if not identical – across the county. Indeed the LGB issued a circular to all local tribunals, containing ten questions which had to be asked. It stressed that “to justify exemption on grounds of conscience, it is not sufficient to show that opinions are held against war: there must be proof of *genuine conscientious conviction*”. The answers to the questions had then to be submitted to the LGB.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Rae, *Conscience and Politics*, 71.

<sup>60</sup> John Davies, *A History of Wales* (London: Allen Lane, 1993), 500.

<sup>61</sup> Rae, *Conscience and Politics*, 131.

<sup>62</sup> Pearce, *Comrades in Conscience*, 168.

<sup>63</sup> Morgan, *Rebirth of a Nation*, 164. See also Dewi Eirug Davies, *Byddin y Brenin* (Swansea: Tŷ John Penry, 1988), 159–60 (in Welsh), for how two conscientious objectors were questioned in Cardiganshire.

<sup>64</sup> PKRO, D/LJ/941.

The first reported cases of conscientious objectors came before Llanelli RD tribunal on March 7, 1916, when seven men appealed for such exemptions. All were subjected to ferocious and aggressive questioning by the chairman, W. B. Jones, alderman Nathan Griffiths, and especially from the military representative, Captain Evans. There was no attempt to consider the sincerity or otherwise of the beliefs of the applicants and all exemptions were refused.<sup>65</sup> On March 1, 1916, a farm servant from Newchurch appealed to Carmarthen RD tribunal for exemption, claiming conscientious objection; the questioning he was subjected to was typical of many cases:

Clerk (J Saer): You object to killing?

Appellant: Yes.

Clerk: Do you object to killing men or animals or what?

Appellant: Yes, men.

Clerk: And animals?

Appellant: Yes, I cannot kill an animal too.

Rev J Herbert: Do you eat meat at all?

Appellant: Yes.

Rev Herbert: How can you get meat without killing animals?

Appellant: There are butchers about the place.

Clerk: So long as someone else does the killing, you will eat?

Appellant: Yes.

Clerk: And as long as someone else kills Germans, you are willing to enjoy the privilege following that?

Appellant: Yes.

Clerk: Supposing you saw a German killing your sister. What would you do?

Appellant: I could not stab him.

Rev Herbert: You don't object to shooting him, but you would not stab him?

Appellant: Yes.

Capt Lewes (military representative): If you cannot kill a horse when he is dying you will be quite useless on the farm.

Appellant: I would shoot the horse.

Capt Lewes (to the Tribunal): He has not much ground to stand on. If he can kill a horse he can kill a German.

Unsurprisingly the appeal was refused, and the man was conscripted.<sup>66</sup> Virtually every conscientious objector was asked a question, along the lines of: "what would you do if you saw a German molesting/ killing/

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<sup>65</sup> *Llanelly Mercury*, Mar. 9, 1916.

<sup>66</sup> *Carmarthen Journal*, Mar. 3, 1916.