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Abstract. The aim of this article is to determine what conclusions the available sources allow us to make about the nature of Scottish service and sacrifice in the Great War. The article finds that contemporary sources do not lend themselves well to statistical analysis of Scotland's manpower contribution in the Great War. The lack of an agreed definition of who counted as a Scot makes establishing an exact number of Scottish war dead impossible. It establishes that in trying to quantify the Scottish manpower contribution historians have relied too heavily on statistics produced in the 1970s by Jay Winter, which, while broadly accurate, mask the nuances of armed forces recruitment in Scotland.

Keywords. Scotland, Great War, military, losses, statistics, British Army, Royal Navy, Royal Flying Corps, myth, memory

In July 1927, the Scottish National War Memorial at Edinburgh Castle opened to the public in a ceremony of ‘quite exceptional dignity and impressiveness’.1 Created to commemorate Scotland's sons who had died in the Great War, the memorial became a focal point for national mourning, and added an imposing physical dimension to a long-established Scottish military tradition. For one journalist present at the unveiling ceremony, the memorial was ‘an emblem and a testimony of the nation’s grief and the nation’s achievement’, which itself was ‘of a magnitude [and] a kind unsurpassed and unexampled in the story of any country, even in the bloodstained and glorious annals of Scotland’.2 The central focus of

1 Scotsman, 14 Jul. 1927.
2 Scotsman, 15 Jul. 1927.
the memorial was the shrine – a stone of remembrance on which stands a casket containing the names of all Scots who died in the conflict. By commemorating those who died while serving in Scottish regiments, those born in Scotland, and others who had a claim to Scottish ancestry, the memorial adopted – and continues to adopt – an inclusive definition of Scottishness, and highlighted the importance of war to notions of Scottish national identity in the early twentieth century.

The Scottish National War Memorial was distinct among the plethora of local and national monuments built across Britain in the aftermath of the Great War. As Jenny MacLeod noted, there are no English national memorials on a comparative scale, with those memorials situated in London – the Cenotaph and Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, in particular – representing the British, rather than English, contribution to the war. The driving force behind the creation of a specifically Scottish memorial was John Stewart-Murray, the 8th Duke of Atholl. A distinguished former soldier, Atholl believed that ‘the people of Scotland have taken no mean part in this war’ and, in terms of commemoration, Scotland should be treated ‘as a nation and not as a conglomerate of provincial towns’. The creation of a separate national memorial in Edinburgh supported the idea that Scotland made a distinctive contribution to the war effort, albeit one set firmly within a wider British and Imperial context. That contribution involved two main linked themes: first, that Scotland suffered a disproportionate number of casualties compared to the rest of the United Kingdom; and, second, that the Scottish manpower contribution was, in some way, unique.

The aim of this article is to determine what conclusions the available sources allow us to make about the nature of Scottish service and sacrifice in the Great War. It has three main findings. First, it finds that contemporary sources do not lend themselves well to statistical analysis of Scotland’s manpower contribution in the Great War. Second, the lack of an agreed definition of who counted as a Scot makes establishing an exact number of Scottish war dead impossible. Third, it finds that in trying to quantify the Scottish manpower contribution historians have relied too heavily on statistics produced in the 1970s by Jay Winter, which, while broadly accurate, mask the nuances of armed forces recruitment in Scotland.

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6 Atholl, quoted in Macmillan, Scotland’s Shrine, p. 21.

As T. M. Devine noted, any attempt to quantify the Scottish contribution to the Great War ‘leads the scholar into a methodological and statistical minefield’. Indeed, a report produced by the General Register Office for Scotland opined that as of 2014 ‘a definitive total of the Scottish war dead has yet to be calculated’. A central problem has been the absence of a reliable total of British war dead. For the most part, historians have used two main sources to calculate this number: census returns and registrar general’s reports; and reports produced by the armed forces themselves, both of which contain ‘substantial inaccuracies’. In 1921, the ‘official’ number of British war dead was published by parliament; in total, it was asserted that 744,702 men had died while serving with the British forces during the war. This was at odds with the rough estimates provided by the census data, which claimed that approximately 772,000 men from Britain and Ireland had been killed. In a later study, Jay Winter proposed an alternative methodology, gathering data from the War Office, Admiralty and Ministry of Air, to deduce ‘the aggregate war losses of each of the three armed forces’. He found that a total of 722,785 fatalities was a ‘reasonably accurate estimate’ of the number of deaths of British service personnel during the war. A further complicating factor is that the Commonwealth War Graves Commission records the deaths of 831,825 members of the British armed forces in the period from 1914 to 1919.

A crucial theme here is the question of who should be counted as war dead. Early War Office publications adopted a narrow definition; the General Annual Report for the British Army, 1913–1919 only recorded the deaths of British servicemen who died prior to 1 October 1919, and the comprehensive publication Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire recorded men who died up to 31 December 1920. The latter publication defined war dead as those men ‘killed in action; died of wounds; died as prisoners of war; and missing

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8 Scotland on Sunday, 10 Aug. 2014.
12 Winter, Great War and the British People, p. 67.
13 Ibid., p. 70.
14 Ibid., p. 70.
15 Commonwealth War Graves Commission online, www.cwgc.org (accessed 9 March 2018). The total number of British Imperial deaths recorded by the commission stands at 1,074,688 individuals.

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officers and other ranks whose deaths have been accepted for official purposes’.\textsuperscript{17} It is arbitrary to count a man who died of his war wounds in December 1920 and not another who died in January 1921; however, available sources do not allow the easy identification of all former soldiers who died prematurely as a result of their military service. Despite the shortcomings of the available sources, it is the official figure of 744,702 which has been generally accepted and used as the basis of statistical analysis.\textsuperscript{18}

In the Scottish context, the \textit{Preliminary Report of the 1921 Census for Scotland} noted that ‘an additional adjustment of 74,000 was made in respect of war deaths among Scottish soldiers, sailors and airmen [who died] outwith Scotland’\textsuperscript{19}. The total was arrived at by the unscientific method of dividing the perceived number of British war dead (c.740,000) by the approximate percentage of the population of Scotland when compared to the rest of the United Kingdom (10 per cent). This methodology was, according to Richard Finlay, like ‘applying to the carnage something like the Barnett formula used to calculate Scotland’s share of UK public expenditure’.\textsuperscript{20} The \textit{Preliminary Report} recorded that there was a loss of 310,664 people in Scotland between the 1911 and 1921 censuses which could be attributed to emigration or death in military service.\textsuperscript{21} The most recent research, undertaken by Michael Anderson, demonstrated that of this total, approximately 225,000 individuals were men who were aged between eleven and forty in 1911—the broad age range for voluntary or compulsory military service in the Great War.\textsuperscript{22} Anderson used statistics provided by the General Register Office for Scotland (GROS) and the Board of Trade to calculate that in the period from 1911 to 1921 approximately 80,000 male emigrants from Scotland had been in the age range from eleven to forty years old in 1911.\textsuperscript{23} Of the remaining 145,000 men, Anderson calculated that between 35,000 and 45,000 men died of natural causes, leaving an approximate total of between 100,000 and 110,000 ‘actual war deaths’.\textsuperscript{24}

The GROS holds a separate set of official statistics which list ‘Scottish’ casualties from the period from 1914 to 1919, based on place of residence. The total number recorded on the GROS lists is 98,702 men.\textsuperscript{25} Within this dataset are

\textsuperscript{17} War Office, \textit{Statistics of the Military Effort}, p. 237.
\textsuperscript{18} Winter, \textit{Great War and the British People}, p. 70.
\textsuperscript{19} General Register Office for Scotland [afterwards GROS], \textit{1921 Census for Scotland: Preliminary Report} (Edinburgh, 1921), p. v.
\textsuperscript{22} M. Anderson, \textit{Scotland’s Populations from the 1850s to Today} (Oxford, 2018), p. 188.
\textsuperscript{24} \textit{Ibid}, pp. 188–9.
three categories of record. First, are lists, organised by regiment or corps of the army, which give the names of those men who were born in Scotland and who died abroad while serving with those units during the war. Curiously, men born in Scotland who served in English, Welsh or Irish regiments are missing from these lists, as are those men of any regiment or corps who died while serving in the United Kingdom. The second category contained in the dataset is a list of all officers who died while serving with Scottish regiments, regardless of place of birth, in the form of scanned images of the official publication Officers Died in the Great War. This section does not include officers born in Scotland who served in other parts of the British Army and does include officers born elsewhere among the total. The third section is comprised of scanned images of the pages of Soldiers Died in the Great War which relate to the deaths of men born in Scotland who died while serving with some Scottish regiments. These entries are duplicates of those held in the first category. This is a particularly difficult dataset to use for statistical analysis; searches can only be undertaken using the name of individual soldiers rather than the regiments in which they served.

The records held by the GROS highlight a further, crucial problem: exactly who could be classed as a Scot? It is a question which has been central to this debate for a century. The shifting notions of Scottishness are best demonstrated through examination of the changes made to the rolls of honour of the Scottish National War Memorial. In January 1919, the duke of Atholl, by then chairman of the war memorial committee, wrote to Sir Robert Munro, the Secretary for Scotland, to assert that the number of Scottish war dead ‘will probably number nearly 100,000’ men. In July that year, Atholl revised his estimate and suggested that ‘the number of Scotsmen who have fallen may number over 100,000’. The question of who should be commemorated on the memorial was the responsibility of the records subcommittee. In the first place, the committee decided to commemorate all those soldiers who died while serving in Scottish regiments and in units with Scottish titles. Lists of fatalities were maintained by each of the Scottish regiments and, when these were published in 1921, they


26 National Library of Scotland [hereafter NLS], Papers of the Scottish National War Memorial, Acc.4714/1(i), Atholl to Munro, 19 January 1919. My italics.

27 Parliamentary Papers, 1919, XXI, Report on the Committee appointed by the Secretary for Scotland to consider and report upon the Utilisation of Edinburgh Castle for the purposes of a Scottish National War Memorial [Cmd 279], (Edinburgh, 1919), p. 4. My italics.

28 Macmillan, Scotland’s Shrine, p. 55. The Scottish regiments were the Royal Scots, Royal Scots Fusiliers, King’s Own Scottish Borderers, Cameronians (Scottish Rifles), Black Watch, Highland Light Infantry, Seaforth Highlanders, Queen’s Own Cameron Highlanders, Gordon Highlanders, and the Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders. Examples of the units with Scottish titles not included in the regimental list are the Scots Guards, Royal Scots Greys, Lovat Scouts, Scottish Horse, Lothian and Borders Yeomanry, and the Highland Ammunition Column of the Royal Horse Artillery, among others.
revealed that 81,756 men had died with those regiments during the war, out of a British Army total of 702,410 men. The number of fatalities from Scottish regiments represented 11.64 per cent of the British Army total. As there are 85,548 names on the Scottish regimental memorial scrolls held at the Scottish National War Memorial, fatalities from other ‘units with Scottish titles’ (excluding those from the Dominions) can be shown to be 3,792 men. The precise nature of which units this constituted is unclear; Atholl himself certainly thought that the Highland Division Cyclist Company was not a ‘Scottish unit’ in the way that we intend. The total of 85,548 men represented 12.18 per cent of the total British Army deaths in the Great War. In July 1914, the estimated population of Scotland was 4,849,500 people, or 10.47 per cent of the population of the United Kingdom. From this we can ascertain that Scottish infantry regiments within the British Army did suffer a marginally disproportionate number of fatalities given the Scottish share of the British population.

It is important to state that not all soldiers who died while serving with Scottish units would have identified themselves as being Scottish. For example, out of the 267 fatalities sustained by the 4th Cameron Highlanders – a Territorial Force battalion which recruited in Inverness-shire and Nairnshire – in the period from August 1914 until March 1916, fifty-three were born and recruited outside of Scotland, representing some 19.85 per cent of the total. Overall, 245 men enlisted into the 4th Cameron Highlanders in London in September 1914. Their original destination had been the 2/14th London Regiment (the London Scottish), a prestigious unit which had seen an influx of volunteers in the opening weeks of the war. Of these recruits to the 4th Camerons, only nine men had been born in Scotland and eight had a parent who was born north of the border. Similarly, in the pre-war period, the regular battalions of some Lowland Scottish regiments recruited heavily in England; analysis of the 1st battalions of the Highland Light Infantry, Royal Scots and King’s Own Scottish Borderers in the 1911 census reveals that an average of 35.58 per cent of their number were

29 War Office, Officers died in the Great War (London, 1921) and War Office, Soldiers died in the Great War (London, 1921). The total for British Army fatalities over the course of the war comes from: War Office, Statistics of the Military Effort, pp. 237.
30 This figure of 85,548 men is used by E. A. Cameron, Impaled upon a Thistle: Scotland since 1880 (Edinburgh, 2010), p. 121; by E. W. McFarland, ‘A Coronach in Stone’, in C. M. M. Macdonald and E. W. McFarland (eds), Scotland and the Great War (East Linton, 1999), pp. 1; and by T. Royle, Flowers of the Forest: Scotland and the First World War (Edinburgh, 2006), p. 35.
31 NLS, Papers of the Scottish National War Memorial, Acc.4714/16, Atholl to Captain Colledge, 8 May 1932.
33 P. Watt, Steel & Tartan: the 4th Cameron Highlanders in the Great War (Stroud, 2012), Appendix 2.
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born outside Scotland.\textsuperscript{35} For traditionally Highland regiments, 13.66 per cent of their total strength in 1911 were born in England, Wales, Ireland or abroad.\textsuperscript{36} Furthermore, towards the end of the war high casualty rates in Scottish units and a reduction in number of recruits in Scotland combined to necessitate the draft of more non-Scots into Scottish regiments.\textsuperscript{37} Many recruits may have had little real or perceived connection to Scotland, yet the inclusive definition of Scottishness employed by the records subcommittee of the Scottish National War Memorial meant that they were commemorated on Scotland’s shrine as part of the national war dead.

A subsequent task for the records subcommittee was to identify men who served in other parts of the British Army, the Royal Navy, the Mercantile Marine, the Royal Flying Corps and Royal Air Force, and in the Dominion forces who were born in Scotland or for whom their families could claim Scottish nationality.\textsuperscript{38} The total number of fatalities currently recorded on the Scottish National War Memorial for the period from 1914 to 1919 is 147,278.\textsuperscript{39} When the number of service personnel who died with Scottish regiments is deducted from this total, it can be said that 61,730 men and women who died in the Great War were added as they were of Scottish birth or descent but did not serve in a Scottish infantry battalion. In 1920, a subcommittee report further defined the criteria for inclusion on the memorial:

To be entitled to appear on the Rolls of Honour of the Scottish National War Memorial, a man or woman must have died between the specified dates or as a result of sickness or wounds acquired on service between these dates; must have belonged to a distinctively Scottish Unit, or must have been of Scottish origin, as follows; Scottish parents on both sides; Scottish parentage on his or her father’s side; continued residence in Scotland.\textsuperscript{40}

This was an interesting definition. Having a Scottish father was enough to merit commemoration on the national memorial; having a Scottish mother was not. At a meeting of the subcommittee on 2 December 1926 this situation was rectified and having a Scottish mother was also added to the criteria for inclusion, thus raising the total number who could be considered. The process to identify men


\textsuperscript{36} GROS, \textit{1911 Census for Scotland}, online, www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk (accessed 15–20 May 2014); \textit{1911 Census for England and Wales}, online, www.ancestry.co.uk (accessed 15–20 May 2014). These calculations are based on analysis of the 1st and 2nd Seaforth Highlanders, the 1st and 2nd Cameron Highlanders, the 1st Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders, the 2nd Gordon Highlanders, and the 2nd Black Watch.


\textsuperscript{38} Quoted in Macmillan, \textit{Scotland's Shrine}, p. 55.

\textsuperscript{39} Scottish National War Memorial online, www.snwm.org (accessed 2 March 2018).

\textsuperscript{40} Quoted in Macmillan, \textit{Scotland's Shrine}, p. 55.
and women for commemoration was continuous and the criteria for inclusion was often altered; the records subcommittee examined 562,372 names in 1934 and 1935, eventually adding another 11,793 names to the memorial. By 1950, the total stood at 127,705 people commemorated; ten years later it had risen by a further 20,000 men and women. The number continues to increase. In summary, the current figure of 147,278 Scottish war dead appears to be the aggregate of people either born in Scotland, who had one Scottish parent, who served in a Scottish regiment, or who had lived in Scotland for a prolonged period of time, who had died in the Great War.

The figure provided by the Scottish National War Memorial is, however, not accurate. The records subcommittee recognised early on in their investigations that as men often moved between units there may be an element of double-counting in their figures. Indeed, they actively recommended that duplication occurred to ensure as many personnel as possible were commemorated, reasoning that it was better to be included on the memorial twice than not at all. Examination of the online rolls of honour reveals the scale of duplication. They record that seven men named Andrew Watt died during the Great War, however on closer inspection, two of these entries are duplicates. One of these men is commemorated in both the Cameronians and Royal Engineers sections of the memorial; another is commemorated in both the King’s Own Scottish Borderers section and that of the Lanarkshire Yeomanry. A broader survey of those commemorated on the memorial shows that of the 1,130 men with the surnames Watt, Grant, Bruce and Hepburn, eighty-five of these are duplicate entries, representing some 7.52 per cent of the total. If this percentage is applied to all entries in the rolls of honour, then it follows that there may be upwards of 11,000 duplicate entries on the memorial.

It is clear that the available sources render statistical analysis of war deaths problematic. These problems can be split into four main categories. The first problem is the scale of the information contained in the datasets; each set consists of many tens of thousands of entries, making detailed investigations overwhelmingly time-consuming and forcing the reliance on samples of data. Second, even if all entries could be systematically analysed, the datasets all contain different types and standards of information, making comparative analysis difficult.
The third problem is accessibility; while the increase in online records is incredibly useful, many datasets are not searchable with the analysis of bulk data in mind, rather they are geared towards researchers seeking to find individual soldiers. Finally, even if these problems can be overcome, the lack of a clear, agreed definition of who can be classed as a Scot for the purpose of commemoration means that a settled total of Scottish dead from the Great War may remain elusive.

II

Despite the issues outlined above, there have been many attempts to use casualty figures to quantify the ‘Scottish’ contribution to the Great War. As a result, the misinterpretation and misuse of sources has become commonplace in the historiography. So too is there a political dimension here; an inflated number of Scottish war deaths can be linked to both unionist and nationalist narratives of Scottish history both in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War and more recently in the run-up to the 2014 referendum on Scottish independence. Far from being a point of historical contention, the debate on Scottish fatalities in the Great War has a continuing relevance in twenty-first century Scotland. The following section examines how historians have interpreted different sources and highlights the complex nature of the debate.

Shortly after the Second World War, Duncan Duff, a prominent Scottish nationalist, suggested that the number of Scottish dead from the conflict stood at 110,000 men, substantially higher than the ‘official’ numbers given in the census data but below the total then commemorated on the Scottish National War Memorial.47 Using data drawn from the rolls of honour at the war memorial, Duff presented the view that 85,548 men died while serving in Scottish regiments, and 33,140 men born in Scotland died serving in the Royal and Merchant Navies, Royal Air Force and Royal Flying Corps, and other branches of the British Army.48 He then rounded down his total of 118,688 fatalities to 110,000, in order to make a ‘generous allowance’ for Englishmen and other nationalities who died while serving in Scottish regiments.49 Duff, however, decided not to include among his total, men born in Scotland who had died serving in Dominion or foreign forces, reasoning that by emigrating, ‘those men were already lost to their Motherland’.50 For Duff, the Great War was part of a 200 year period in which Scotland had ‘made a military contribution greatly above her due and fair share’ given her proportion of the population of the United Kingdom.51

47 D. Duff, Scotland’s War Losses (Edinburgh, 1947), p. 44. Duff served as a private soldier in the 1st Scots Rifles in 1916–17 and was commissioned in early 1918 into the Royal Garrison Artillery. Scotland’s War Losses was published by the Scottish Secretariat, a nationalist organisation.

48 Ibid, p. 44.
49 Ibid, p. 44.
50 Ibid, p. 45.
51 Ibid, p. 44.
short, he believed that Scottish soldiers with their supposedly innate militarism were viewed as an efficient but expendable commodity by the ruling classes of the United Kingdom. This idea coincided with the adoption of an anti-war stance by elements of the Scottish National Party, including Douglas Young, the party chairman in the three years until 1945, who went to prison for opposing wartime conscription, and who wrote the foreword to Duff’s book. Within Duff’s political worldview, an inflated number of Scottish fatalities in the Great War served to reinforce his position that the Scots had been used as cannon-fodder, just as they had been for generations. Responses to Duff’s standpoint have been mixed; while T. C. Smout called Duff’s calculations ‘a well-argued estimate’, E. W. McFarland dismissed it as ‘nationalist propaganda’. Scotland’s losses in the Great War had—and continue to have—political consequences.

Little attention was paid to the question of Scottish war dead until the 1980s, when the Great War began to move out of living memory and became a subject for academic study. According to Christopher Harvie, at that point ‘most Scots probably agreed’ that Scotland had made a disproportionate sacrifice to the war effort, including as many as 100,000 fatalities. This number marks the middle ground between the lowest estimates from the census returns of 74,000 men, and the highest figures of 147,000 men commemorated on the Scottish National War Memorial. It has proven to be a popular compromise. Trevor Royle noted in 2006 that a figure of 100,000 Scottish war dead was ‘generally accepted’ and later asserted that ‘the total is probably higher’ than that, and Richard Finlay suggested that ‘a total figure of 100,000 deaths seems not unreasonable’. However in none of these studies are the available sources examined with a view to providing evidence for these claims.

Equally as problematic are works which accept the inclusive definitions of Scottishness promoted by the Scottish National War Memorial. In 1987, Stephen Wood, the then Keeper of the Scottish United Services Museum in Edinburgh Castle, wrote that ‘147,000 soldiers with a claim to be Scots’ were killed during the war. According to the criteria supplied by the war memorial, Wood is correct; however, the way he uses this number corrupts the statistics. Wood reasoned that, as there were approximately 147,000 deaths among the 557,618 men who enlisted into the army over the course of the war, then ‘just over a quarter of Scotland’s males’ who enlisted—some 26.4 per cent—died. This is incorrect, as Wood compared the total number of enlistments into the British

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52 Cameron, *Impaled upon a Thistle*, p. 192.
Army during the war with the highest estimate of casualties from all services. On one hand, this excludes those who served with the naval and air services and those soldiers who served in the pre-war army from the enlistment figures; on the other, it includes those men and others from the Dominions as casualties, not to mention the duplication seen in the war memorial’s records. Despite these inaccuracies, Wood’s calculations have provided the backbone for many later studies. T. M. Devine, Edward Spiers, and Niall Ferguson all based their calculations on Wood’s claims. Ferguson contextualised these statistics with the notion that after the Serbs and the Turks, the Scots suffered the highest death rate of the war. To illustrate this point, Ferguson presented a table based on information found in Jay Winter’s work, The Great War and the British People. There is, however, one major difference between Winter’s and Ferguson’s figures: the inclusion of a separate figure for Scotland’s war dead alongside one for the United Kingdom as a whole, which is not included in Winter’s work. The broad definition of nationality used by Ferguson and others with respect to Scotland’s war dead was ‘not extended to other nations for comparative purposes’.

Despite these shortcomings, the idea that 26.4 per cent of all enlisted Scotsmen died during the Great War has become the orthodox belief in twenty-first century Scotland. Statistics which are not supported by evidence dominate the discussion. Nowhere is this more clearly illustrated than in a Scottish parliamentary debate of 27 June 2013 when a motion was tabled in which the parliament noted that ‘10% of the Scottish population. . . gave their lives’ in the Great War. This claim implied that approximately 485,000 Scots died in the conflict, some 65 per cent of the British total. The debate which followed highlighted the misconceptions and misinterpretations of statistics which have characterised the historiography. Richard Lyle MSP suggested that 557,000 Scots became casualties; Kenneth Gibson MSP posited that Scots suffered an 81 per cent casualty rate; and Hanzala Malik MSP repeated Ferguson’s assertion that only Serbia and Ottoman Turkey suffered higher casualty rates than Scotland. All of these claims are incorrect. This parliamentary debate took place against the backdrop of two culturally significant events: the centenary commemorations of the Great War and the 2014 Scottish independence referendum. The former focused public attention onto the

59 Ferguson, Pity of War, pp. 298–9.
61 Ferguson, Pity of War, p. 299; Winter, Great War and the British People, p. 75.
62 Cameron, Impaled upon a Thistle, p. 122.
conflict, with local, national and international events taking place over four years between 2014 and 2018, inspiring both popular and academic research into the origins, experience and legacy of the conflict. The latter saw both unionist and nationalist commentators use the memory of the Great War to make political statements regarding Scotland’s future. For example, the former Secretary of State for Scotland, Lord Lang of Monkton, drew parallels between the death of Scottish soldiers in the Great War and the potential break-up of the United Kingdom, arguing that Scottish independence would ‘dishonour the sacrifices made in common cause of those who died for the UK’.65 On the other side of the political spectrum, Joan McAlpine, a nationalist MSP, commented that the decision to hold a remembrance service for members of the Commonwealth at Glasgow Cathedral on 4 August 2014 was a ‘cynical attempt to boost Britishness ahead of the referendum’.66 In this, the Scottish contribution to the Great War can be seen as being an integral part of both unionist and nationalist narratives of Scottish history. For unionists, the sacrifices of the war were part of a co-operative endeavour in which all parts of the union and empire played a role; for nationalists the high death rate provided evidence that Scotland’s sons were an expendable commodity.

Is it at all possible to calculate a reasonable approximation of Scotland’s war dead? Perhaps the regimental lists of fatalities held by the GROS give the best indication. A sample of 10,000 of the total 98,702 entries reveals that approximately 26.45 per cent are duplicate entries, leaving approximately 72,500 non-commissioned officers and other ranks normally resident in Scotland who died serving abroad in any unit, except those infantry regiments from other parts of the United Kingdom.67 The total number of men born in Scotland who died on active service abroad in English, Welsh and Irish infantry regiments was never accurately recorded. We can, however, approximate the total. In the Border Regiment, 118 out of 6763 men who died were born in Scotland, representing 1.74 percent of that regiment’s fatalities.68 When this percentage is applied to all English, Irish and Welsh regiments, it can be shown that a reasonable approximation of Scottish fatalities in those units stands at 8,508 individuals.69 A further 3,828 members of the British Army died in Scotland in the period from 1914 to 1919 from causes which originated outside the United Kingdom, out of a British total of approximately 72,000.70 The Scottish total included men born in other parts of the United Kingdom, and, invariably, excluded those men born

66 Daily Record, 5 Nov. 2013.
69 This number was calculated using data taken from Soldiers Died in the Great War, online, www.ancestry.co.uk (accessed 18 Mar. 2018).
70 GROS, Annual Reports of the Registrar General for Scotland, 1914–1919, Table 26. The British total comes from Winter, Great War and the British People, pp. 68–9, Table 3.1.
in Scotland who died in other parts of Britain. In the absence of primary source-based evidence we are forced to use the unscientific method of calculating this sub-total using the percentage of Scots in the population of the United Kingdom in 1914. This gives a figure of approximately 7,500 soldiers of all ranks who were born in Scotland who died in the United Kingdom of their injuries during the war. To this must be added the number of officers born in Scotland who died during the Great War. Initial investigations into this number in the 1920s ran into significant problems; as the War Office informed the duke of Atholl, ‘the records of officers are not arranged in such a way as to enable such a list to be compiled without a very prolonged search [and] in many cases the relevant records are not now available’.71 Using the same methodology as above, we can show that approximately 3,900 of the total of 37,452 army officers who died in the war were born in Scotland.72

When these sub-totals are added together it can be said that a reasonable approximation of soldiers in the British Army who were born in Scotland and who died during the war stands at 91,800 individuals. Figures for the Royal Navy and Merchant Navy can be similarly calculated. The GROS lists show that 9,523 men born in Scotland lost their lives in naval service.73 Regarding the air services, the Scottish National War Memorial recorded the deaths of 642 members of the Royal Flying Corps and 446 members of the Royal Air Force.74 When the totals for the British Army, Royal Navy, and air services are added, it reveals that a reasonable approximation of the total number of men born in Scotland who died during the war while serving with the British armed forces is some 102,500 soldiers, sailors and airmen.

III

Many of the same problems which hinder analysis of the ‘disproportionate’ number of Scottish casualties affect the examination of the supposedly ‘unique’ nature of recruitment into the armed forces. Many sources, created during the war as records of the services of individual soldiers, sailors and airmen, were destroyed during a bombing raid in 1940; others were not kept with future statistical analysis in mind. Similarly, while the digitisation of records and their availability online has been a great leap forward in terms of accessibility, in many cases the sources are not configured in a way to allow straightforward analysis of bulk datasets. So far, the most comprehensive analysis was undertaken by Jay Winter in the 1970s and was published in his work The Great War and the British People. Winter’s calculations

71 NLS, Papers of the Scottish National War Memorial, Acc.4714/16, War Office to Atholl, 1 Dec. 1929.
72 The total figure comes from: War Office, Statistics of the Military Effort, p. 237.
73 GROS online, www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk (accessed 3 March 2018). The naval lists are held under the classification ‘Marine Returns’ and were also searched for the period from 1914 to 1919.
have been used by many historians to quantify Scotland’s manpower contribution to the war.\textsuperscript{75} His conclusions, however, have never been closely scrutinised. The following section examines the available sources with a view of testing Winter’s theories and establishing whether the picture of Scottish recruitment was, indeed, unique.

When war was declared in the summer of 1914 military service in the United Kingdom was undertaken on a voluntary basis. The British Army was divided into several different categories: the ‘regular’ army comprised full-time professional soldiers based in Britain or in garrisons across the empire; the Army Reserve were men who had completed seven years’ service with the regular army and were the first to be called up during a general mobilisation; the Territorial Force were part-time soldiers whose purpose was home defence unless they volunteered for overseas service; and the Special Reserve were men who had enlisted on a part-time basis but were better trained than the Territorial Force and were liable for overseas service to supplement the regular units. Over the course of the war, the contours of military service changed. The overwhelming number of volunteers in late 1914 led to the creation of the ‘new’ armies, which were organised on the same lines as the original British Expeditionary Force and contained infantry, artillery, engineering and supporting units.\textsuperscript{76} As the number of recruits decreased towards the end of 1915, the Military Service Act of 1916 introduced conscription as a means of raising the manpower necessary to continue waging war. The War Office was responsible for the provision of manpower until the formation of the Ministry of National Service in November 1917, at which point voluntary enlistment into the armed forces was stopped.\textsuperscript{77} The Royal Navy was divided in a similar way to the army: the regular navy was a professional force based in the United Kingdom or at naval stations across the empire; the Royal Naval Reserve consisted of men from the merchant navy and fishing industry who were liable to be mobilised in times of war; and the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve recruited men in jobs unconnected to the sea, for part-time training in naval service. Both the army and navy maintained small airborne formations, in the form of the Royal Flying Corps and the Royal Naval Air Service, respectively. These two corps merged to form the Royal Air Force in March 1918.

In calculating the numbers who served in the armed forces in the Great War, Winter drew on three ‘official publications’: the \textit{General Annual Report of the British
Table 1. Distribution of Men who served in British Forces in the First World War, by Country of Recruitment and Branch of Service.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Branch of Service</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>England &amp; Wales</th>
<th>Scotland</th>
<th>Ireland</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regular Army and Territorial Forces</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4,485,039</td>
<td>584,098</td>
<td>146,025</td>
<td>5,215,162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royal Navy and Allied Services</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>550,604</td>
<td>71,707</td>
<td>17,926</td>
<td>640,237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royal Flying Corps and Royal Air Force</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>250,111</td>
<td>32,611</td>
<td>8,153</td>
<td>291,175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Services</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5,286,054</td>
<td>688,416</td>
<td>172,104</td>
<td>6,146,574</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Army, 1913–1919 and two volumes of the British official history of the war which dealt with naval and air operations. His findings are presented in Table 1.

Winter’s statistics show that, in total, 688,416 men from Scotland served in the British armed forces during the war. Using the numbers of men enlisted into the British Army in the United Kingdom in the period from 4 August 1914 to 11 November 1918, Winter asserted that 86 per cent of the total were recruited in England and Wales, leaving 14 per cent from Scotland and Ireland. He further claimed that the ratio of Scots to Irish in the British Army was four to one. Thus, of the 14 per cent recruited in those two countries, 11.2 per cent could be designated as Scots and 2.8 per cent as Irish. Winter then reasoned that 11.2 per cent of the totals who served in the naval and air services were also Scots. A number of points relating to Winter’s calculations need to be clarified here. Winter was acutely aware of the problems inherent in using the available sources for statistical analysis; indeed, that was one of his motivations in finding an alternative means of identifying the total number of British war dead. However, in asserting that the same percentage of each of the British armed forces were Scottish, Winter adopted the same uncritical approach as the statistical assumptions made in the 1921 census. While this approach was entirely fit for the purposes of his analysis into the social demographics of war casualties, it does not lend itself well to a detailed examination of Scotland’s military contribution and


79 Winter, *Great War and the British People*, p. 72. In his 1977 article, ‘Britain’s Lost Generation’, Winter calculated the total as 690,235 men. The reason for this change was Winter’s assertion in the article that 11.28 per cent of the total servicemen were Scots compared to his later rounded down figure of 11.2 per cent: see, Winter, ‘Britain’s Lost Generation’, p. 450. Based on the recruitment figures Winter used for his calculations, the lower figure is correct.

80 Winter, *Great War and the British People*, pp. 28, 72.

81 Ibid, pp. 66–76.
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masks the complexities of recruitment in Scotland in this period. The Scottish contribution was not a central theme of Winter’s argument; as a result, he does not qualify who counted as a ‘Scot’, basing his calculations on place of recruitment rather than birth or ethnicity, but not explicitly stating the criteria used. Finally, as Winter acknowledges, there is a lack of complete data regarding recruitment into the Royal Flying Corps and Royal Air Force, which leads to the use of figures relating to the strength of the Royal Air Force in November 1918 rather than the total number who served in that arm over the course of the war. 82

In terms of the pre-war army, the most reliable source which specifically mentions Scotland as distinct from other parts of the United Kingdom is the General Annual Report for the British Army for the Year ending 30th September 1913. The spread of Scots throughout the British Army is illustrated in Table 2. The 1913 annual report recorded that at that point there were 17,282 non-commissioned officers and men serving in the army who had been born in Scotland, out of a total of 228,421 soldiers, excluding officers. 83 Men born in Scotland made up 7.57 per cent of the total regular soldiers on 1 October 1913 despite Scotland making up 10.47 per cent of the population of the United Kingdom. 84 The infantry was the preferred destination for men born in Scotland; in total 73.04 per cent of all soldiers born in Scotland joined the infantry, compared to 63.95 per cent in Ireland, 56.57 per cent in England, and 53.67 per cent in Wales. 85 This over-representation in the infantry may account for some of the heavy casualties among Scots in the battles of 1914.

Despite Scotland producing 9.64 per cent of the total infantry in October 1913, this was still 0.83 per cent under the figure which could be expected given Scotland’s share of the British population. Within the Scottish infantry regiments, there was not an even spread of Scottish-born men; analysis of the 1911 census shows that Scots were more likely to serve in traditionally Highland regiments than those from the Lowlands. This is evidenced in Table 3. Shortly before the Great War, 80–90 per cent of recruits to Highland infantry regiments were born in Scotland, with men born in England making up the majority of the remainder. For traditionally Lowland regiments, such as the King’s Own Scottish Borderers, Highland Light Infantry, and Royal Scots, the number of soldiers born in Scotland dropped to 63–66 per cent, with men born in England accounting for 29–35 per cent. In all the regiments studied there was a small number of men born in Ireland or elsewhere but in no case was this more than 3.5 per cent of the total. Perhaps the most extreme example of the shortage of Scottish-born men serving in a Scottish regiment was that of the 1st Battalion, Scots Guards, who comprised only 38.04 per cent Scots and 57.07 per cent Englishmen in 1911 and were Scottish

82 Ibid, p. 72.
83 Army Council, General Annual Report for the British Army for the Year ending 30th September 1913, LII, Cd7252 (London, 1914) [afterwards GAR 1913], p. 91.
85 Army Council, GAR 1913, p. 91.
Table 2. Scottish-born men Serving in the Regular British Army, 1 October 1913 (NCOs and men).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Branch of the British Army</th>
<th>Total Number in Service</th>
<th>Number Born in Scotland</th>
<th>Percentage Born in Scotland</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Infantry of the Line</td>
<td>130,949</td>
<td>12,623</td>
<td>9.64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royal Horse and Field Artillery</td>
<td>28,134</td>
<td>1,264</td>
<td>4.49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cavalry of the Line</td>
<td>17,907</td>
<td>1,128</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royal Garrison Artillery</td>
<td>17,237</td>
<td>595</td>
<td>3.45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foot Guards</td>
<td>7,135</td>
<td>538</td>
<td>7.54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royal Engineers</td>
<td>8,836</td>
<td>434</td>
<td>4.91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Army Service Corps</td>
<td>5,839</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>4.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royal Army Medical Corps</td>
<td>3,766</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>5.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Army Ordnance Corps</td>
<td>2,131</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>3.85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household Cavalry</td>
<td>1,221</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royal Flying Corps</td>
<td>661</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>3.18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Army Pay Corps</td>
<td>441</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Army Veterinary Corps</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colonial Corps</td>
<td>3,674</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.0014%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>228,421</td>
<td>17,282</td>
<td>7.57%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Army Council, GAR 1913, pp. 91, ‘Table 1: Nationalities of the Non-Commissioned Officers and Men on the regimental strength of the several arms of the service on the 1st October 1913’.

in name only. Duncan Duff suggested that ‘the number of English in Scottish regiments must have been more than offset by the numbers of our countrymen [Scots] in English regiments’.\(^86\) When the 1911 census is examined with regards to English, Welsh and Irish regiments, this can be shown to be incorrect, at least in the context of the pre-war army. Table 4 shows that far from replicating the 6–12 per cent of English-born men in Highland regiments and 29–35 per cent in Lowland regiments, at no point did Scottish-born men make up more than 4 per cent of the rank and file of regiments from other parts of the United Kingdom. Indeed, in English infantry regiments the number of Scots was consistently under 1 per cent of the total battalion strength.

Analysis of the 1911 census for the elements of the British Army then stationed in India reveals the extent that men born in Scotland served as commissioned officers.\(^87\) The army in India was chosen primarily as it was a representative sample of the wider British Army, including infantry, cavalry, artillery and support units, and secondly, because the members of the Indian garrisons are recorded in the same place in the census, whereas those in the United Kingdom are spread across

\(^{86}\) Duff, *Scotland’s War Losses*, p. 44.
**Table 3.** Place of Birth of Rank and File of Sample Scottish Regiments in the British Army, 1911.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Battalion</th>
<th>Place of Birth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scotland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Seaforth Highlanders</td>
<td>952 (88.97%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Cameron Highlanders</td>
<td>529 (84.64%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Cameron Highlanders</td>
<td>921 (90.12%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Argyll &amp; Sutherland Highlanders</td>
<td>741 (84.40%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Gordon Highlanders</td>
<td>868 (86.63%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Black Watch</td>
<td>915 (89.36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Highland Light Infantry</td>
<td>166 (64.09%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st King's Own Scottish Border's</td>
<td>654 (66.13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Royal Scots</td>
<td>471 (63.05%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Table 4.** Place of Birth of Rank and File of Sample English, Irish and Welsh Battalions in the British Army, 1911.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Battalion</th>
<th>Place of Birth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scotland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st King's Own Yorkshire Light Inf.</td>
<td>6 (0.69%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Devonshire Regiment</td>
<td>3 (0.87%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Worcestershire Regiment</td>
<td>3 (0.29%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Essex Regiment</td>
<td>3 (0.27%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Leinster Regiment</td>
<td>22 (3.41%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Connaught Rangers</td>
<td>17 (1.69%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd South Wales Borderers</td>
<td>5 (0.78%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

the country, rendering thorough analysis problematic. The places of birth of 1752 officers can be ascertained across all branches of the army. One hundred and twenty-three officers were born in Scotland, representing 7.02 per cent of the officers based in India in 1911. When this percentage is applied to the 10,569 officers then serving in the army it can be said that a reasonable approximation of officers born in Scotland stood at around 750 individuals.88

The number of Army Reserve and Special Reserve soldiers in the pre-war army should also be added to the 17,282 Scots-born NCOs and men, and 750 officers in the regular army. On 30 September 1913, 145,090 soldiers of all ranks were on strength of the Army Reserve.89 These men had enlisted into the regular army in the period from 1902 to 1909 when a slightly higher percentage of men born in Scotland had enlisted; the average in the period from 1904 to 1913 stood at 7.88 per cent. When this percentage is applied to the total number in the Army Reserve in 1913 we can deduce that of this number approximately 11,433 men were born in Scotland. There is nothing to suggest that more or fewer men born in Scotland served in the Special Reserve compared to the regular army, so the figure of 7.57 per cent can be used to calculate the total. As 59,208 men served with the Special Reserve in September 1913 it can be deduced that approximately 4,482 were born in Scotland.90 In 1914, Scotland was over-represented in among the units of the Territorial Force. While Scotland’s share of the British population was 10.47 per cent, her share of the Territorial Force was 18.38 per cent; in real terms, this represented some 41,736 men.91 The Territorial Force in Scotland was overwhelmingly comprised of men born in Scotland; analysis of the places of birth of Territorial Force soldiers recorded in Soldiers Died in the Great War who died in the 1915 campaign while serving with Scottish regiments reveals that, overall, 96.03% of the men in the Scottish Territorial Force were born in Scotland.92 When this percentage is applied to the total Territorial Force establishment in Scotland in 1914, it can be demonstrated that 40,079 of these men were likely to have been born in Scotland.

Jay Winter suggested that 584,098 ‘men from Scotland’ served in the British Army over the course of the war.93 The War Office ascertained that 557,618 men were recruited into regular and Territorial Force units in Scotland in the period from 4 August 1914 to 11 November 1918.94 This suggests that the difference—some 27,553 men—served in the army at the outbreak of war. This is an underestimate. The calculations above show that a reasonable approximation of Scotland’s manpower contribution to all sections of the pre-war army, stands at

88 The total number of officers is taken from Army Council, GAR 1913–1919, p. 17.
89 Ibid, p. 93.
93 Winter, Great War and the British People, p. 75.
Patrick Watt

approximately 74,026 men. This is divided into 18,032 officers and men in the regular army, 11,433 all ranks in the Army Reserve, 4,482 in the Special Reserve, and 40,079 all ranks in the Territorial Force. While men born in Scotland were under-represented in the regular army, the popularity of the Territorial Force in Scotland meant that 10.85 per cent of the total combined manpower which could be mobilised at the start of the war came from Scotland, some 0.38 per cent above the share of the United Kingdom population. This demonstrates that the Scottish contribution to the pre-war army was 260 per cent higher than Winter’s estimate.

Recruitment figures for the duration of the war appear, at first glance, to be a comparatively reliable set of statistics. As mentioned above, in 1922, the War Office published a report which recorded that during the war there were 557,618 enlistments ‘from all sources’ into the British Army in Scotland. It must be stressed that this is the number of enlistments in Scotland rather than of Scots; other nationalities enlisted in Scotland, and Scots enlisted in other parts of the United Kingdom. The total can be split into four main classes: the first two relate to volunteers into the regular army and Territorial Force and the final two relate to those men conscripted by the War Office until 1 November 1917, and the Ministry of National Service thereafter. In total, by the end of the voluntary recruiting period, 320,589 men had been enlisted into the army in Scotland, representing 26.9 per cent of the total Scottish male population aged between fifteen and forty-nine. This is only slightly higher than the rate of voluntary enlistment in England and Wales, which stood at 24.2 per cent of the same demographic group. During the conscription phase of the war, Scotland’s manpower contribution to the army fell to 14.6 per cent compared to 22.1 per cent in England and Wales as more men were retained in reserved occupations such as shipbuilding and munitions work. Over the course of the war, Scotland supplied a total of 41.5 per cent of its manpower aged between fifteen and forty-nine to the British Army, compared to 46.3 per cent from England and Wales. If there is a ‘unique’ nature of the Scottish experience of enlistment in the British Army in the Great War, it is that voluntary recruitment represented 57.49 per cent of all enlistments in Scotland during the war, compared to 48.89 per cent of total enlistments in England and Wales.

On closer inspection, the enlistment data relating to Scotland is problematic. The official statistics published after the war recorded that 166,446 men were recruited into ‘Scottish Territorial Force units’. There are three problems with this figure. First, when the monthly totals of recruits into the Territorial

Force are added, the aggregate is 116,446 men—50,000 fewer than the published number. The higher figure appears to be a transcription or printing error. Second, the statistics were compiled by the individual Scottish County Territorial Force Associations and examine the number of recruits into units raised into those counties, rather than counting the number of men born in Scotland who enlisted. While the vast majority of pre-war Territorial Force battalions were comprised of men born in Scotland, a lack of manpower in rural parts of Scotland forced some units to look to England and Ireland for recruits after the outbreak of war. For example, the 51st (Highland) Division was brought up to strength by the recruitment of 1200 men in London in September 1914, and the 4th Cameron Highlanders found over 500 recruits in 1915 with help from Scottish cultural associations in Leeds, Bradford and Sheffield. Third, no accurate set of Territorial Force enlistment statistics exist for the period from 1 July to 15 October 1914. As Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire shows, the surviving figures represent ‘merely the net increase for that period and are considerably below the number of recruits for that period, owing to the number of Territorial Force soldiers who had been weeded out for medical reasons’. As the period for which the records were not kept coincides with the raising of the second line Territorial Force units, the true number who served in some capacity may be substantially higher.

Examinations of the other branches of the British forces are equally difficult. Winter suggested that the Scottish contingent of the Royal Navy stood at 71,707 men according to his methodology whereby 11.2 per cent of all enlistments were classified as ‘Scottish’. When the Royal Navy Register of Seamen’s service is consulted with regards to the place of birth of recruits into the Royal Navy in the period from 1899 to 1919, a different picture of the Scottish naval manpower contribution emerges. Of the sample of 373,448 ratings recorded in the register, only 19,863 self-reported as being born in Scotland, representing 5.32 per cent of the United Kingdom total. While pre-war patterns of naval recruitment may not have been replicated during the war emergency, in the absence of more reliable statistics, the Register of Seaman’s Service represents the best means of quantifying service in the Royal Navy. In total 651,560 men and women served in the combined Royal Navy, Coast Guard, Royal Naval Reserve, Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve, Royal Naval Air Service, Royal Naval Division, the Mercantile Marine, the Marine Reserve, the Coast Watching Service, and the Women’s Royal Naval Service during the war. If the percentage derived

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101 Watt, Steel & Tartan, p. 103.
103 Winter, The Great War and the British People, p. 72.
105 J. Corbett and H. Newbolt, Official History of the Great War—Naval Operations, Vol.5, Appendix J, ‘Number of Officers and Men of All Ranks that Served during the War’, online, www.naval-history.net (accessed 15 September 2014). Winter also used this source but failed to include in his
from the Royal Navy personnel records is applied to the total number of naval personnel who served in the war, it can be suggested that, if the pre-war Scottish recruitment rate continued, then a reasonable approximation of the Scottish naval contribution stands at 34,662 sailors. This is less than half of Winter’s estimate.

With regard to the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) and Royal Air Force (RAF), Winter used the same methodology to demonstrate that 32,611 of the total 291,175 personnel were ‘Scottish’. This statistic differs from those relating to the army and navy as Winter has acknowledged the inaccuracy of the figures. The table he presented purports to show the total number of combined RFC/RAF personnel for the course of the war, however, the footnote associated to the table states that ‘these totals represent the strength of the RAF in November 1918. No comparable figures of the total who served in the RFC/RAF appear to have survived’. The Royal Air Force was created in April 1918 by amalgamating the Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS) and the Royal Flying Corps. The personnel who transferred from the RNAS are included in the enlistment totals for the navy rather than the RAF and thus have already been counted.

Working out the number of Scots who served in the air forces is also hampered by the loss of individual service and pension files, and in a general lack of reliable sources. One source which does illuminate the situation is the Royal Air Force Muster Roll from 1 April 1918. It shows that 181,616 men were transferred to the RAF from the RFC and RNAS on that date. When this number is deducted from the number serving in the RAF in November 1918 (291,175), the remainder of 109,559 represents the closest estimate to the number of enlistments direct into the RAF in the period from April to November 1918. The Scottish National War Memorial recorded that there were 448 deaths of Scottish-born personnel in the RAF in the period from 1 April 1918 to 31 December 1919, representing some 7.53 per cent of the British total. Applying this percentage to the total number of enlistments from April to November 1918, suggests that 8,250 men born in Scotland enlisted into the RAF after its formation. Using the same methodology for the RFC shows that 16.62 per cent of the RFC fatalities (642 men) were born in Scotland. At the end of March 1918, 144,078 men were transferred from the RFC to the RAF. Assuming that, like the percentage of casualties, 16.62 per cent were born in Scotland would suggest that 23,946 of totals the 11,323 men and women of the Coast Watching Service and the Women’s Royal Naval Service.

Winter, The Great War and the British People, p. 72.
Ibid, p. 72.
the members of the RFC on 1 April 1918 were born north of the border. To this number must be added 16.62 per cent of the RFC men killed and wounded prior to the formation of the RAF, which stands at 1,852 men, giving a total number of Scots who served in the RFC as 25,789 airmen. When the totals for RFC and RAF personnel who were born in Scotland – 25,789 from the RFC and 8,250 – are added together, the aggregate, 34,048, is remarkably close to Winter’s approximation of 32,611 airmen.

However, this methodology misunderstands the nature of recruitment into the RFC and RAF over the course of the war. If a soldier or airman served overseas a medal index card was created in his name. This document noted their unique service number on enlistment and subsequent service numbers issued through a transfer to a different branch of the service or regiment of the army. A sample of the medal index cards of 500 recruits to the RFC shows that 250 men transferred from army units and would already have been counted among army enlistment figures. This suggests that exactly half of the 25,789 men born in Scotland who served in the RFC were already counted in the figure of 557,618 enlistments into the army. This gives a revised total of 12,899 men born in Scotland who enlisted direct into the RFC. When this methodology is applied to the RAF after 1 April 1918, only 6.5 per cent were found to be direct enlistments into the RAF and the other 93.5 per cent had transferred from the army. Of the 109,559 RAF recruits between April and November 1918, approximately 7,122 had not been counted elsewhere. According to the casualty figures set out above, men born in Scotland comprised 7.53 per cent of the RAF in 1918, of which only 537 men had not been counted in the totals for the British Army. When the revised totals for men born in Scotland who served in the RFC and RAF are combined, a total figure of 13,436 airmen is reached, some 20,000 less than Winter’s estimate.

As his calculations related to manpower in the British military, Winter did not consider the implications of military services in the armed forces of the Dominions or the United States of America. Our only means of calculating the total number of men born in Scotland who served in the Dominion forces is through the rolls of honour at the Scottish National War Memorial which records men ‘with a claim to be Scots’ rather than men born in Scotland. When this number is compared to the total enlistments into the Dominion forces the percentage of men with a claim to be Scots in the force can be broadly ascertained. Table 5 summarises the casualty and enlistment data for the Dominion forces. While by far the largest number of these men died while serving with the Canadian Expeditionary Force, the percentage of ‘Scottish’ casualties in each of the dominion forces ranged from a low of 4.92 per cent in the New Zealand Expeditionary Force to 12.28 per cent in the South African Expeditionary Force. When these percentages are applied to the total enlistments it can be shown that an estimate of the number of men of Scottish birth or heritage who served in

Table 5. Enlistment and Casualty Figures of ‘Men with a Claim to be Scots’ who served in the Dominion Forces, 1914–1919.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Total Casualties</th>
<th>Total ‘Scottish’ Casualties</th>
<th>Percentage of ‘Scottish’ Casualties</th>
<th>Total Enlistments, 1914–1919</th>
<th>Number of ‘Scottish’ Enlistments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>64,998</td>
<td>7,661</td>
<td>11.79%</td>
<td>640,846</td>
<td>75,555</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>62,124</td>
<td>4,308</td>
<td>6.92%</td>
<td>416,809</td>
<td>28,843</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>9,642</td>
<td>1,179</td>
<td>12.28%</td>
<td>136,070</td>
<td>16,709</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>18,504</td>
<td>888</td>
<td>4.92%</td>
<td>120,099</td>
<td>5,909</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>154,818</td>
<td>14,036</td>
<td>9.07%</td>
<td>1,313,824</td>
<td>127,016</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The forces of the Dominions stands at 127,016 men out of a total of 1,313,824 enlistments.\(^{113}\) To this number should also be added the 20,355 men who were born in Scotland and who were registered for the 1917–1918 American Army Draft Registration Scheme.\(^{114}\)

The inclusion of ‘men with a claim to be Scots’ who served in the Dominion forces involves significant methodological problems, however it does act as a useful guide to the extent of a broadly defined Scottish military contribution in the Great War. As it stands, however, it is best to be wary of using statistics from the dominions prior to the establishment of an agreed definition of who could be classed as a Scot.

**Conclusion**

On 11 November 2018 the names of 134,712 Scotsmen and women who died in the Great War were projected onto the Scottish Parliament as the final event in the commemorative programme to mark the end of the centenary of the conflict. This revised total was the result of a five-year project undertaken by the Scottish National War Memorial which aimed to weed out duplicate entries in their rolls of honour. Yet the same problems which defined earlier attempts at quantifying Scottish losses define this number. As the media coverage in the run up to the 2014 Scottish independence referendum showed, the number of Scots war dead retains a contemporary relevance, both in terms of commemoration of the ‘national’ sacrifice and as a way in which Scotland’s place in the Union has been described and understood. As this article shows it is also easily misinterpreted and manipulated.

This article has sought to present conclusions based on evidence and bring clarity to an area of Scottish history dominated by myth and misunderstanding.


It highlights a number of problems. It is clear that sources created during the Great War were not written with future statistical analysis in mind; rather they were functional documents each of which was created for a different purpose. Furthermore, the lack of an agreed definition of who should be classed as a Scot, clouds the issue even further. The historiographical over-reliance on Winter’s enlistment statistics has unintentionally blurred the contours of military service in Scotland during the Great War. While Winter was broadly correct in ascertaining the total number of ‘men from Scotland’ who served in the war, his methodology in determining the number of Scots in the army, navy and air services was flawed. The differences between Winter’s calculations and the findings of this study are presented in Table 6. As can be seen, Winter underestimated the number of men born in Scotland who enlisted into the British Army and overestimated the number of men who enlisted into the Royal Navy and air services.

Despite these problems, conclusions can still be drawn on the nature of Scottish service in the Great War. We can say with a degree of certainty that around 680,000 men born in Scotland served in the British Armed forces during the war, although this total will rise slightly if further information on Territorial Force recruitment in the period from July-October 1914 is found. Furthermore, we can say with some confidence that around 102,500 of these men died in the period from August 1914 to December 1919. If the totals for the Dominion and foreign forces are included, the totals rise by around 147,000 recruits and 15,000 war dead. This article has, therefore, presented the first total of Scottish war dead which is based on evidence gathered from the complete body of surviving sources.

Was the Scottish contribution to the Great War in some way unique? Scotland supplied proportionately more volunteers in the first two years of the war than the other parts of the United Kingdom although only marginally. When compulsory military service was introduced in 1916, proportionately fewer men born in Scotland were conscripted as a greater proportion were men were employed in reserved occupations. In short, Scots were quicker to enlist in 1914 and 1915 but, by the last two years of the war, fewer Scots than English and Welsh were being conscripted into the armed forces. And were Scottish casualties disproportionate in the Great War? Overall, 91,800 out of the 702,410 fatalities sustained by the British Army were born in Scotland. This is a 13.07 per cent share of the British total, some 2.6 per cent higher than Scotland’s share of the British population. Even using the highest estimate of British army casualties supplied
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by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (759,062 soldiers) gives a 12.09 per cent share of the British total, compared to 10.47 per cent of the British population. The combined total of war dead for all three services – 102,500 soldiers, sailors and airmen – means that 13.78 per cent of the ‘official’ British total from 1921, or 12.32 per cent of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission total were born in Scotland. Therefore, it can be said with certainty that men born in Scotland did suffer disproportionately more deaths during the war than the other nations of the United Kingdom.

The Great War had a profound effect on Scottish communities. Across the country, local war memorials were built to remember the services of the fallen. The names they list were not all born in Scotland, did not all serve in Scottish regiments, and were not all of Scottish heritage. They were added to the memorials because the death of those soldiers, sailors and airmen meant something to that community. Some names appear on multiple memorials, demonstrating that people were often remembered by many different communities, not just their place of birth or residence. Yet while the war dead of some countries were too numerous to count, we should be mindful that ‘Scotland is small enough to know all her sons by heart’.115

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115 Ian Hay, Their Name Liveth: the Book of the Scottish National War Memorial (Edinburgh, 1931), p. 17.