

My doctoral thesis is entitled 'Civil-Military Relations and Popular Protest in England, 1790-1805'. It addresses issues such as the recruitment of the armed forces, the experiences of ordinary soldiers in the army and militia, and the use of the military by the state to suppress instances of popular protest during the Revolutionary French Wars.

In particular, I am interested in the way in which the recruitment of the armed forces became an area of political controversy. English radicals denounced the conflict with Revolutionary France but they were also critical of the methods used by government to raise the necessary manpower. The state was accused of 'starving' men into the army and of employing middle-men recruiters, known as 'crimps', to kidnap would-be soldiers. While on the other side of the debate, loyalist groups supported the war effort by raising subscriptions to fund the recruitment of local independent regiments. In cities such as London, Sheffield and Norwich, where radical reform societies had a strong presence, recruitment could become a locus of violent conflict.

Indeed, an important aspect of civil-military relations in this period was the role played by the armed and auxiliary forces in the suppression of such popular protests. In addition to anti-recruitment riots, my thesis examines the way in which labour disputes, food riots, and mass political meetings were 'policed' by the military. I argue that, in the late eighteenth century, we can see an evolution of the military's role with the state making recourse to the armed forces much more frequently and more readily than in earlier periods.

Thanks to the generosity of the SSLH I was able to spend seven full days at four different archival centres in order to research these issues. At the Sheffield Archives, Sheffield Central Library and the Norfolk Records Office I examined magistrates' correspondence, recruitment records and local newspaper sources relating to issues of recruitment and radical resistance thereto. While at Nottingham University I was able to consult the extremely valuable Portland Papers (Home Secretary, 1794-1801) which gave me novel insights into the London Crimp Riots as well as information pertaining to the military's role in various food riots and labour disputes. In addition to taking notes from many sources I took over 400 digital photographs. The SSLH bursary has therefore been invaluable in allowing me to compare material I had already collected at the National Archives with sources from provincial archives and thus to be more assertive of my findings.

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