**CLIVE EMSLEY. *Solder, Sailor, Beggarman, Thief: Crime and the British Armed Services since 1914*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. Pp. 216. $110.00.**

In *Soldier, Sailor, Beggarman, Thief: Crime in the British Armed Services Since 1914*, Clive Emsley sets out to explore the historic reality behind some of the myths surrounding crime and the British military in the twentieth century. Chief among these is the belief that the outbreak of the two world wars saw reductions in crime as young men who would otherwise have become criminals were drawn into military service. He also unpicks the related belief that demobilized men, brutalized by war, caused a surge in post-war criminal activity. More than simply debunking myths, however, Emsley makes an important contribution to discussions of the significance of the ‘citizen soldier’ in the history of the British military in the twentieth century through his clear demonstration of the impact of mass mobilization on both definitions of criminal behaviour and the administration of military justice. From locating 20th-century mutinies in the long social history industrial unrest to drawing parallels between the roles and actions of the civilian and military courts, as well as describing the modernisation of the military court system in the period discussed in line with civilian judicial reforms, the book clearly demonstrates how the definition and treatment of criminal behaviour among service personnel was influenced by Britain’s engagement in total war for most of the first half of the century.

Emsley draws upon sources ranging from government records of both the military and civilian court systems through newspaper archives, local and national, to a variety of personal testimonies, producing a fascinating, thorough and wide-ranging discussion of topics including property crime, crimes against the person, domestic violence and the ‘shell shock defence’, as well as the administration of military justice in peace and war. There are, of course, challenges inherent in any such study. The illicit nature of crime makes the assertion of concrete knowledge difficult, particularly in relation to statistical evidence. Emsley is honest about the limits the available material imposes upon him, particularly in relation to the reported numbers of crimes in postwar societies and crimes whose main source of evidence is anecdotal, such as the shooting of unpopular officers by their own men. He is particularly good in his treatment of highly emotive topics such as the execution of soldiers for cowardice during the First World War. Locating his discussion clearly in the available data, while acknowledging the extent to which the data can never tell the full story, Emsley is able to address such topics with clarity and balance that can only help to shed light on the debate.

Although rooted in the social history of crime, with significant statistical evidence deployed to support his argument, what makes the book so engaging is the huge number of individual stories used to illustrate the discussion. Some examples are, upon occasion, given in too much detail, overwhelming the point being made, but in general it is these personal stories, dramatic and often moving, which drive the narrative and both enliven and enlighten the topic. And, while there is occasionally a slight imbalance in relation to the conflict from which evidence is drawn, with the Second World War providing far more examples than the First, the continuities identified across both conflicts and the 20th century as a whole serve to knit together the clearly defined, thematically organised topics.

This location of the discussion in the social history of crime rather than warfare highlights the only significant weakness of the book. In his introduction, Emsley notes the tendency of military and social historians to work in segregated fields, a divide he sets out to cross. Yet, while the book tackles many questions pertinent to historians of warfare, such as military discipline and its effect on morale, and the logistics of administering justice in war zone, there is a lack of familiarity with the military historiography which leave several more dangling. What, for instance, were the effects of the Defence of the Realm Act and conscription, which both criminalised certain accepted peacetime behaviours? How did periods of military uncertainty, such as mobilization, demobilization or even the launching of a new offensive, effect opportunities for and incidences of criminal behaviour? These may not be the question the book sets out to answer, but the fact that they are suggested indicates the extent to which there is more work to be done in this rich field to integrate the approaches of the two sub-disciplines.

In the meantime, this volume is undoubtedly essential reading for any historian interested in the social history of the two world wars. Indeed, its engaging style and readability, as well as the final chapters which explore the question of criminal behaviour and military justice in the British armed services after 1945, make it recommended reading for anyone interested in 20th-century British history, to which it makes an original and important contribution.

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