



**HAL**  
open science

# Keeping the Occupiers Occupied: Leisure and Tourism in the British Rhine Army, 1918-1929

Tom Williams

► **To cite this version:**

Tom Williams. Keeping the Occupiers Occupied: Leisure and Tourism in the British Rhine Army, 1918-1929. *British Journal for Military History*, 2023, 9 (3), pp.108-127. 10.25602/GOLD.bjmh.v9i3.1740 . hal-04313207

**HAL Id: hal-04313207**

**<https://univ-angers.hal.science/hal-04313207>**

Submitted on 29 Nov 2023

**HAL** is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.



Distributed under a Creative Commons Attribution - NonCommercial - NoDerivatives 4.0  
International License

# British Journal for Military History

Volume 9, Issue 3, November 2023

---

Keeping the Occupiers Occupied: Leisure and Tourism in the British Rhine Army, 1918-1929

**Tom Williams**

---

**ISSN:** 2057-0422

**Date of Publication:** 29 November 2023

**Citation:** Tom Williams, 'Keeping the Occupiers Occupied: Leisure and Tourism in the British Rhine Army, 1918-1929', *British Journal for Military History*, 9.3 (2023), pp. 108-127.

[www.bjmh.org.uk](http://www.bjmh.org.uk)

---



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License.



The BJMH is produced with the support of **Goldsmiths**  
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

# Keeping the Occupiers Occupied: Leisure and Tourism in the British Rhine Army, 1918-1929

TOM WILLIAMS\*

University of Angers, France

Email: [tom.williams@univ-angers.fr](mailto:tom.williams@univ-angers.fr)

## ABSTRACT

*After the ordeals of the First World War, the military occupation of the Rhineland offered members of the British Army unprecedented opportunities for travel and amusement. Posted to a region popular with British tourists before 1914, the British occupiers were encouraged, particularly by the English-language Cologne Post, to make the most of their time on the 'Romantic Rhine', even though the Army wished to limit their interactions with the German population. This article examines how travel and tourism, and particularly walking excursions, were promoted in the Rhine Army as healthy, educational alternatives to the perceived dangers of fraternisation and especially of city life in Cologne.*

## Introduction

Looking back on eleven years of Allied occupation on the Rhine, Captain J. H. Haygarth wrote in 1929 that, to many British servicemen, life among the defeated Germans had felt like 'a holiday after the struggles of the war'. 'The British soldier', Haygarth declared, 'after his strenuous four years in the trenches, felt that he was entitled to get out of the rigid military environment and enjoy the amenities offered by the beautiful country, and the community, on the banks of Father Rhine'.<sup>1</sup> Haygarth was neither the first nor the last British observer to draw such parallels between the life of the occupying forces and the habits of tourists in peacetime, nor to characterise the years of the Rhineland occupation as a time of travel, leisure and discovery in comparison to the war years. During the very first days of the British occupation of Cologne in December 1918, a correspondent for *The Times* had informed readers that 'as an officer of the conquering Army, one walks the streets of this occupied town

---

\*Tom Williams is senior lecturer in British studies at the University of Angers and a researcher at the *Centre Interdisciplinaire de Recherche sur les Patrimoines en Lettres et Langues* (CIRPaLL, EA 7457).

DOI: [10.25602/GOLD.bjmh.v9i3.1740](https://doi.org/10.25602/GOLD.bjmh.v9i3.1740)

<sup>1</sup>J.H.H[aygarth], 'Eleven Years in Occupation', *Cologne Post & Wiesbaden Times* (henceforth CPWT), 3 November 1929.

## LEISURE AND TOURISM IN THE BRITISH RHINE ARMY, 1918-1929

much like a tourist'.<sup>2</sup> Seven years later, when British troops left the Cologne Zone for a smaller area of occupation around Wiesbaden, the *Western Daily Press* had reported that 'many British soldiers have regarded duty at Cologne as a sort of pleasant and instructive holiday'.<sup>3</sup> When the last members of the British Rhine Army evacuated the Wiesbaden bridgehead in 1929, *The Times* reflected that 'in many ways they had the time of their lives there'.<sup>4</sup> While there was certainly an element of propaganda in such statements, whether to acclaim the fruits of victory or to downplay the discomforts and monotony of military life, they nevertheless contain a kernel of truth. Numerous personal diaries, memoirs and press reports from this period described the occupation years as a time of adventure and cultural discovery, while the pages of the English-language newspaper published for the British occupiers, *The Cologne Post* (later *Cologne Post and Wiesbaden Times*) presented a wide range of cultural and recreational activities for the members of the occupying forces, from sightseeing trips on the Rhine steamers to hiking itineraries in the Taunus mountains. There are therefore many striking parallels and continuities between these touristic activities within the Rhine Army and the practices, preferences and itineraries of pre-war British tourists on the Rhine.<sup>5</sup> Given the importance of the Rhineland as a destination for British tourists in the decades before the First World War, the existence of such travel and leisure activities is not altogether surprising, yet they are only given the briefest of mentions in military, diplomatic and social histories of the Rhineland occupation.<sup>6</sup>

This article seeks not only to shed light on the importance of travel and leisure in the daily life of the British Rhine Army but also to situate these activities within the context of evolving approaches to issues of military discipline and the maintenance morale

---

<sup>2</sup>'The Occupation of Cologne: British Sentries in the City', *The Times*, 10 December 1918, p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> After Seven Years', *Western Daily Press*, 2 February 1926.

<sup>4</sup>'Rhineland Memories', *The Times*, 23 December 1929.

<sup>5</sup>Despite these obvious parallels, the fact that the presence of the British Army on the Rhine was not *primarily* motivated by a desire for recreation would exclude such activities from most scholarly definitions of tourism. Alexandre Panosso Netto, 'What is Tourism: Definitions, Theoretical Phases and Principles', in John Tribe (ed.) *Philosophical Issues in Tourism*, (Bristol: Channel View Publications, 2009), pp. 43-61.

<sup>6</sup>Sports and entertainments are briefly treated in David G. Williamson, *The British in Interwar Germany: The Reluctant Occupiers*, Second Edition, (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), p. 17 and p. 134 and Margaret Pawley, *The Watch on the Rhine: the Military Occupation of the Rhineland* (London: IB Tauris, 2007), p.113. Marius Munz, 'Wiesbaden est Boche, et le restera.' *Die alliierte Besetzung Wiesbadens nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg, 1918-1930* (Norderstedt: Books on Demand, 2014), contains a chapter on the 'amusements' of the British in Wiesbaden after 1926.

within the British Army, which have been explored in detail in the context of the First World War but rarely extended to take into consideration the post-war Rhine Army.<sup>7</sup>

The amusements and distractions that were encouraged within the British Rhine Army were those that kept members of the armed forces entertained while limiting, to the greatest possible degree, any interaction between the occupiers and the local civilian population. As Field-Marshal Sir William Robertson explained in his 1921 memoir

no one in the Rhine Army was allowed to 'fraternise' with the inhabitants, and to meet this unusual condition of military life additional facilities were afforded to officers and men for taking part in games, theatricals, concerts, day-trips on the Rhine, and other forms of recreation and amusement.<sup>8</sup>

While fraternisation was certainly not suppressed entirely, and measures to discourage it became increasingly relaxed during the 1920s, the vast majority of organised leisure activities on offer to the British occupiers encouraged them to keep to themselves and to discover the landscapes and cultural heritage of the Rhineland without coming into too close contact with the civilian population.<sup>9</sup>

An analysis of British soldiers' tourism and leisure activities in the occupied Rhineland reveals an underlying strategy not only to manage soldiers' free time by proposing healthy, respectable and educational activities but also to limit interactions between the occupying forces and the civilian population. This task often involved reviving pre-war tourist practices, such as steam-boat excursions, and appealing to images of the 'romantic Rhine' as a cultural and educational travel destination. It also involved attempts to steer the members of the Rhine Army away from the perceived dangers of alcohol and vice in the city of Cologne, the occupied area's largest urban centre, and towards more wholesome leisure activities such as cultural sightseeing and walking excursions. The *Cologne Post (and Wiesbaden Times)* played an important role in

---

<sup>7</sup>See, among others, David Englander, 'Discipline and morale in the British army, 1917-1918' in John Horne, *State, Society and Mobilization in Europe during the First World War*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) pp. 125-143; and Timothy Bowman, *The Irish Regiments in the Great War: Discipline and Morale*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003). On the rather volatile situation in 1918-1919 see William Butler, "'The British Soldier is no Bolshevik': The British Army, Discipline, and the Demobilisation Strikes of 1919", *Twentieth Century British History* 30, 3 (2019), pp. 321-346.

<sup>8</sup>William Robertson, *From Private to Field-Marshal*, (London: Constable, 1921), p. 362.

<sup>9</sup>On the relaxation of fraternisation rules see Keith Jeffery, "'Hut ab", "promenade with kamerade for shokolade", and the *Flying Dutchman*: British soldiers in the Rhineland, 1918-1929', *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, 16, 3 (2005), pp. 455-473.

promoting day trips and excursions, especially walking tours in the Rhine valley and surrounding countryside, and, in so doing, fostered an idealised image of an active, independent, curious and cultivated British soldier-tourist that could be considered a model for emulation. However, even by the *Cologne Post*'s own admission, such attempts to encourage soldiers to make productive use of their free time only met with limited success.

### **The Occupiers as 'Tourists' on the 'Romantic Rhine'**

Within broader historiographical trends towards the adoption of social and cultural approaches to histories of war and military occupation, several recent studies have drawn attention to the importance of travel experiences and even organised 'tourism' in military contexts.<sup>10</sup> Even during the First World War itself, there were undoubtedly times and places when, despite the conditions and obligations of military life, soldiers were able, however briefly, to discover foreign landscapes and to come into contact with civilian populations with something resembling a tourist's gaze, and possibly the aid of a guidebook or by following a sightseeing itinerary described in a military newspaper.<sup>11</sup> The tourist activities of the civilian and military personnel of the Interallied Rhineland occupation represent the continuation of such wartime activities on a larger scale, and their presence in Germany was an opportunity, after the trials and deprivations of wartime, to experience foreign travel in ways that had previously been accessible only to the wealthy. As the *Amaroc News*, the newspaper of the American Army of Occupation reported, the occupation had made it possible for American soldiers to experience, free of charge, forms of leisure travel 'that

---

<sup>10</sup>These include Gavin Daly, *The British Soldier in the Peninsular War: Encounters with Spain and Portugal, 1808-1814*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Carolyn Anderson, 'Accidental tourists: Yanks in Rome, 1944-1945', *Journal of Tourism History*, 11, 1 (2019), pp. 22-45; Andrew Buchanan, "'I Felt like a Tourist instead of a Soldier": The Occupying Gaze—War and Tourism in Italy, 1943-1945.' *American Quarterly* 68, 3 (2016), pp. 593-615; Bertram M. Gordon, *War Tourism: Second World War France from Defeat and Occupation to the Creation of Heritage*, (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 2018); Julia S. Torrie, *German Soldiers and the Occupation of France, 1940-1944*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

<sup>11</sup>See especially Krista Cowman, 'Touring behind the lines: British soldiers in French towns and cities during the Great War', *Urban History* 41, 1 (2014), pp. 105-123; Richard White, 'The soldier as tourist: the Australian experience of the Great War.' *War & Society*, 5, 1 (1987), pp. 63-77. Beach excursions behind the Western Front are discussed in John G. Fuller, *Troop Morale and Popular Culture in the British and Dominion Armies, 1914-1918*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 83. German civilian and military wartime travel is treated in Charlotte Heymel, *Touristen an der Front: das Kriegserlebnis 1914-1918 als Reiseerfahrung in zeitgenössischen Reiseberichten*, (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2007).

heretofore had only been enjoyed by the millionaire class' particularly thanks to the activities of YMCA.<sup>12</sup> The YMCA. organised sightseeing trips, published its own guidebook to *The Rhine and Its Legends*, and even requisitioned seven excursion steamers on the Rhine, conducting tours that included, on the outward journey, lectures on the history and legends of the Rhine, while the return journey was 'given over entirely to merrymaking' and the consumption of ice cream, doughnuts and coffee.<sup>13</sup> In the French-occupied area, a tourist office (*syndicat d'initiative*) ran excursions for French civilians and military personnel, and advertised walking tours, boat excursions and coach trips in the *Echo du Rhin*.<sup>14</sup> In the case of the British occupiers, whose tourist activities will be detailed in this article, the sense that the occupation offered an opportunity for foreign travel could only have been increased by the fact that, as the *Cologne Post and Wiesbaden Times* reminded its readers in 1927, 'before the war thousands of British tourists annually visited the beauty spots of Rhineland'.<sup>15</sup>

If, in the context of issues of discipline and morale within the army, the tourist activities of British military personnel on the Rhine represented a continuation and expansion of the limited wartime offerings of concert parties, organised sports and occasional sightseeing opportunities, post-war British leisure and travel on the Rhine also revived long-standing tourist practices in that region. Although British tourists had regularly travelled along the river in the age of the eighteenth-century Grand Tour, the 'Romantic Rhine' had become a popular tourist destination in its own right by the 1830s. By 1865 the entrepreneur Thomas Cook was organising ten-day guided tours of the region, by railway and steamboat, for the price of £5. Drawn to the region's 'fairy-tale' landscapes and castles, and the legends associated with them, British travellers continued to hold the region in high regard until the outbreak of the First World War.<sup>16</sup> Even though the Rhine had become a symbolic focus of German nationalism in the nineteenth century, British accounts tended to distinguish, both before and after the First World War, between 'two Germanies': the civilised Germany of the simple, jovial Rhinelander and the aggressive, authoritarian Germany

---

<sup>12</sup>Hortense McDonald, "'Y'" Great Record', *Amaroc News*, 22 May 1919.

<sup>13</sup>Alfred J. Pearson, *The Rhine and its Legends: A Souvenir of the Days of the American Army of Occupation in Germany*, (Coblenz: Y.M.C.A., 1919). Young Men's Christian Association, *Summary of World War Work of the American YMCA*, (unknown place: International Committee of Young Men's Christian Associations, 1920) p. 44.

<sup>14</sup>See for example 'Le tourisme en Rhénanie', *Echo du Rhin*, 24 July 1921 and 'Le tourisme en Rhénanie', *Echo du Rhin*, 14 September 1921.

<sup>15</sup>'Bummelling in the Eifel', *CPWT*, 3 June 1927.

<sup>16</sup>Hagen Schulz-Forberg, 'The Sorcerer's Apprentice: English Travellers and the Rhine in the Long 19th Century', *Journeys: The International Journal of Travel and Travel Writing*, 3, 2 (2002), pp. 86-110.

## LEISURE AND TOURISM IN THE BRITISH RHINE ARMY, 1918-1929

of the Prussian military and aristocracy.<sup>17</sup> The nineteenth-century image of the romantic Rhine also remained very much intact during the occupation years, and was regularly praised in the pages of the *Cologne Post*, which reminded the British occupiers to make the most of their time beside the celebrated river which,

with its glorious scenery, its vine clad hills, its castle and ruins, [...] its varied history and legends, appeals to the visitor with an irresistible force, and brings back to mind from far-away times when knights were bold.<sup>18</sup>

A series of similar articles in the *Cologne Post* on the history and legends of the 'romantic Rhine' *Post* were republished as the guidebook *Old Rhineland: Through an Englishman's Eyeglass* in 1929.<sup>19</sup> While some in the occupied Rhineland (mostly officers) may have been able to compare their experiences of life in the Occupied Area with their personal recollections of travel in the region in peacetime, the majority had never had the opportunity for foreign travel before. As an article in *The Manchester Guardian* put it in 1924, the city of Cologne had come to hold, during the post-war occupation period, 'a place of affection in the hearts of thousands of Britishers who have never heard of Baedeker, nor dreamt of spending a holiday on the continent of Europe'.<sup>20</sup> In this respect, military service in the British Rhine Army gave thousands of working-class men (and some women) the opportunity to discover places and revive practices that had long been popular among the British bourgeoisie. Reporting from Cologne in 1919, *The Nottingham Evening Post* described British soldiers 'in khaki "doing" the cathedral as conscientiously as the most serious seeker after culture', a scene reminiscent of the pre-war days when the British visitor 'was a tourist and it was the Germans who wore the uniforms'.<sup>21</sup>

Alongside the revival of the romantic images of the Rhine that had been popular before 1914, the early years of the occupation also saw the revival of something resembling the pre-1914 tourist industry in the region. In 1919 Thomas Cook & Son re-opened its Cologne branch 'for the convenience of officers, N.C.O.s and men of the army of

---

<sup>17</sup>See, among others, Seabury H. Ashmead-Bartlett, *From the Somme to the Rhine*, (London: John Lane, 1921), p. 185; Charles à Court Repington, *After the War*, (London: Constable and Company, 1922), p. 220. This question is discussed further in Tom Williams, 'Meeting the Enemy: British-German Encounters in the Occupied Rhineland after the First World War', *Angles: New Perspectives on the Anglophone World*, 10 (2020), p. 9.

<sup>18</sup>F.A. Berres, 'Virgo Mosella', *CPWT*, 10 July 1927.

<sup>19</sup>E.E. Gawthorn, *Old Rhineland: Through an Englishman's Eyeglass* (London: Hutchinson, 1929).

<sup>20</sup>'Cologne Cathedral', *The Manchester Guardian*, 25 April 1924.

<sup>21</sup>'How Tommy Spends his Time', *Nottingham Evening Post*, 11 January 1919.



occupation'.<sup>22</sup> Boat excursions on the Rhine, meanwhile, were organised to cater for the military and civilian members of the British occupation, following itineraries identical to those of pre-war excursionists 'through the romantic Schloss and vineyard country lying between Bonn and Boppard'.<sup>23</sup> In August 1919, the *Aberdeen Weekly Journal* described one such example of 'the joys of the Army of the Rhine' describing a boat trip organised for about 300 servicemen, mostly from the RAF, alongside a smaller group of female members of the WRAF. This trip on a Rhine steamer from Cologne passed through Bonn and Bad Godesberg to Remagen, where the day trippers were given the opportunity to climb up a hill to admire (and photograph),

one of the finest views of the Rhine Valley that it is possible to have'. The weather, according to this report, was 'all that could be desired, the scenery superb, the company happy, the grub plentiful [...] and everyone returned tired, but cheerful, voting their day on the Rhine one of the pleasantest they had ever spent'.<sup>24</sup>

A similar Rhine trip was described in the *Cologne Post*, catering for Warrant Officers and Sergeants, accompanied by their wives and children: a total of 600 people. Taking in the Rhineland scenery 'as each bend in the river revealed fresh beauties', the excursion party travelled as far as Andernach, then returned to Rolandseck for a host of family-friendly activities including egg-and-spoon races, a cake guessing competition, and a hat-trimming contest.<sup>25</sup> In this instance the itineraries of nineteenth-century bourgeois travel on the Rhine were combined with some of the organised jollity of the English village fête or seaside resort.

This revived tourist industry did not cater only for members of the occupying forces. In May 1922 an article in *The Times* looked forward to the Rhine being 'opened up again to the holiday-maker on something like the pre-war scale' while *The Scotsman*, later that summer, presented the region as already 'crowded with travellers'.<sup>26</sup> The British Rhine Army may even have represented a reassuring presence, encouraging

---

<sup>22</sup>Advertisement, *Cologne Post* (henceforth CP), 24 June 1919.

<sup>23</sup>Eric Gordon [Gedy], 'Our Recreation on the Rhine', *The Graphic*, 18 September 1922.

<sup>24</sup>I.J.V.B., 'An Army Trip on the Rhine', *Aberdeen Weekly Journal*, 1 August 1919.

<sup>25</sup>'All Aboard', CP, 10 August 1920. Similar outings were regularly reported on, for example: 'Sunday on the Rhine', CP, 20 July 1921; 'A Merry Rhine Trip', CPWT, 31 July 1927; 'Bank Holiday Outings', CPWT, 10 July 1927; 'Families' Rhine Trip', CPWT, 5 July 1928.

<sup>26</sup>'Holidays Abroad – Unprecedented Rush to the Continent', *The Times*, 22 May 1922; 'Through Southern Germany: Impressions and Experiences', *The Scotsman*, 7 August 1922.

## LEISURE AND TOURISM IN THE BRITISH RHINE ARMY, 1918-1929

the return of civilian tourism to what had previously been enemy territory, much as the presence of the British Army of occupation in 1815-1818 had given cross-Channel tourists a feeling of security in post-Napoleonic France.<sup>27</sup> Regular articles recounting life on the Rhine in the British press or personal recommendations by members of the Rhine Army may also have played a role in encouraging British post-war tourists to visit the region, not least because the Cologne Zone was presented an island of tranquillity compared to the neighbouring French and Belgian occupied areas, especially following the occupation of the Ruhr in January 1923.<sup>28</sup> Two civilian travellers, who visited the occupied Rhineland owing to personal ties to members of the occupying forces, published highly praiseworthy accounts of their travel experiences. The writer and social reformer Violet Markham, whose husband Lieutenant-Colonel James Carruthers was Chief Demobilisation Officer of the British Army of the Rhine, remarked on how civil the German population was as she 'went about Cologne, on arrival, Baedeker in hand, as any pre-war tourist might have done'.<sup>29</sup> The Anglo-Irish writer Katherine Tynan, whose son had been among the first soldiers to enter the Rhineland in December 1918, published both a memoir of her travels on the Rhine and an article in *The Sphere*, in August 1923, encouraging readers to take a 'holiday in the Occupied Area'.<sup>30</sup> In the latter article she referred to Cologne as 'incessant delight', praised the 'exquisitely clean villages with the most delicious inns' in the Eifel, reassured potential tourists that the inhabitants of the region were 'honest as the day' and declared, in sum, that 'The British Occupied Area can give the traveller most of the sensations a traveller desires'.<sup>31</sup> The presence of civilian tourists on the streets of Cologne and on the Rhine steamers could only have added to the 'holiday' atmosphere of the occupation. This remained the case after 1926, when the British occupying forces left the Cologne Zone for a smaller area of occupation around Wiesbaden, a spa town favoured by pre-war British travellers. An article in *the Sphere* summed up the atmosphere at Wiesbaden,

---

<sup>27</sup>Luke Reynolds, 'There John Bull Might be Seen in all his Glory: Cross-Channel Tourism and the British Army of Occupation in France, 1815-1818', *Journal of Tourism History* 12, 2 (2020), pp. 139-155.

<sup>28</sup>On this view of Cologne see Robert Dell, 'Cologne under the British', *The Manchester Guardian*, 15 March 1923. On the influence of military experiences on post-war tourist destinations see 'Holidays Abroad – Unprecedented Rush to the Continent', *The Times*, 22 May 1922.

<sup>29</sup>Violet R. Markham, *Watching on the Rhine*, (New York: George H. Doran, 1921), p. 25.

<sup>30</sup>Katherine Tynan, *Life in the Occupied Area*, (London: Hutchinson, 1925). Markham and Tynan's travels are addressed in Colin Storer, 'Weimar Germany as Seen by an Englishwoman: British Women Writers and the Weimar Republic', *German Studies Review*, 32, 1 (2009), pp. 129-147.

<sup>31</sup>Katherine Tynan, 'A Holiday in the Occupied Area', *The Sphere*, 4 August 1923.

Occupying [...] one of the most attractive points on the Rhine, is not an unpleasant task. The large number of English visitors at this fashionable resort, in addition to His Majesty's troops, lend a certain English air to the town. British officers take tea on the Neroberg and dance at the Vierjahreszeiten [sic].<sup>32</sup>

Given the large number of tourist visitors to the region, the British occupiers were even encouraged to escape the 'usual Rhineland Sunday crowds' of day trippers and 'idiots' posing for photographs and to head 'off the beaten track' into the mountains of the Taunus and the Eifel or to the Moselle valley.<sup>33</sup> While the numerous examples above attest to the importance of the British Occupied Area as a place of military and civilian tourism, British occupiers and visitors were nevertheless encouraged to venture beyond the frontiers of their own zone to explore regions under French and Belgian occupation or even to take excursions into unoccupied Germany to such popular tourist destinations as Heidelberg, Baden-Baden, Freiburg and the Black Forest.<sup>34</sup>

There were therefore numerous opportunities for the members of the Rhine Army to enjoy their time in Germany as if it were some kind of holiday. This is certainly the impression one would gain from reading the *Cologne Post*, which contained regular articles describing itineraries for day trips and excursions, some of which were republished as a guidebook, *Rambles in Rhineland*, and in a handbook to accompany steamboat excursions in 1920.<sup>35</sup> In the summer months, the readers' letters column of the *Cologne Post* included regular enquiries and complaints relating to tourism and

---

<sup>32</sup>Harold Callender, 'Ten Years in the Rhineland', *The Sphere*, 25 August 1928.

<sup>33</sup>See for example 'Bummelling in the Eifel', *CPWT*, 3 June 1927; 'Gemund to Heimbach', *CP*, 26 April 1925; 'Who goes Bummeling?', *CP*, 4 June 1921; 'The Valley of the Lahn', *CP*, 17 July 1921; and F.A. Berres, "'Virgo Mosella'", *CPWT*, 10 July 1927. This kind of anti-tourist attitude, which had been a common, if paradoxical, feature of European leisure travel since the eighteenth century, is analysed in James Buzard, *The Beaten Track: European Tourism, Literature, and the Ways to 'Culture' 1800-1918*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 1.

<sup>34</sup>See for example, 'A Bummeler Abroad', *CP*, 3, 6 and 18 August 1920; 'A visit to Coblenz', *CPWT*, 14 August 1927; 'The Beauties of Bonn', *CPWT*, 21 August 1927; 'Historical Heidelberg', *CPWT*, 5 June 1927; 'Frankfurt on Main', *CPWT*, 22 May 1927. Meanwhile, despite the presence of British forces from the Rhine Army in 1920-1922, the region of Upper Silesia, politically and economically unstable and unfamiliar to pre-war British tourists, was not presented in such a touristic light.

<sup>35</sup>A.G. Clarke, *Rambles in Rhineland*, (Cologne: The Cologne Post, 1920); A.G. Clarke, *Bonn to Boppard: A Handy and Compact Guide to the Rhine Trips on the R.S. Blücher by G.H.Q.*, (Cologne: The Cologne Post, 1920).

## LEISURE AND TOURISM IN THE BRITISH RHINE ARMY, 1918-1929

leisure activities, including a request for recommendations regarding 'a quiet spot' for 'holiday-making' in the occupied area, a query regarding overnight accommodation for 'weekenders' in Bonn, and a complaint about the fact that bottles of beer on Rhine steamers were being reserved for sergeants.<sup>36</sup> However, recognising the existence of such tourist activity, and its regular discussion in both the British domestic press and *The Cologne Post*, by no means implies that, for each individual British occupier on the Rhine, day-to-day life frequently (or even occasionally) matched this image. Indeed, there are suggestions that members of the occupation army felt that those at home in Britain tended to imagine their life on the Rhine as more glamorous than it really was. An account published in *The Bystander* of a conversation on the Boulogne-Cologne express train between a British lady and a British soldier returning from leave parodied this gap between expectation and reality. The soldier is told by the lady that he must be having 'a perfectly priceless time [...] dancing every night with beautiful Rhine maidens', and enjoying 'all the splendid theatres, hotels and cafés of Cologne'. Preferring not to disenchant her, the soldier chooses not to mention the 'monk-like celibacy' of Army life or the fact that his job, like those of most of his fellow soldiers, 'lay in a dreary little village' and that he had only been able to sample the 'gaities of Cologne life twice since his arrival'.<sup>37</sup>

Although fictionalised, this anecdote serves as a useful reminder not only that these moments of travel and 'tourism' remained relatively exceptional for most members of the Rhine Army, but also that the idea of what constituted a 'perfectly priceless time' involved not only boat excursions and romantic landscapes but also the attractions of a modern German city.

### **Soldiers in the City: Cologne and its Attractions**

During the early years of the occupation, several articles in the British press expressed concern regarding the potential dangers and distractions confronting the members of the British occupying forces in Cologne. As a correspondent for the *Times* put it in December 1919, the young men of the Rhine Army would undoubtedly face 'long spells of unoccupied time on their hands, which might easily lead them into mischief'. Fortunately, this article continued, their free time was filled with healthy, cultured and respectable activities: 'theatres and the opera, boxing competitions and regimental football matches, dances, lending libraries, gymnasiums, and many other games and amusements'.<sup>38</sup> The provision of leisure activities in Cologne was therefore viewed as a means of guiding the members of the Rhine Army away from the perceived dangers of the modern city and of keeping contact with the German population to a minimum.

---

<sup>36</sup>Readers' letters column in *Cologne Post* of 22 August 1919, 1 August 1920 and 23 August 1919 respectively.

<sup>37</sup>E.G. [G.E.R. Gedye], 'The bystander in Occupation', *The Bystander*, 21 May 1919.

<sup>38</sup>'Life at Cologne: Distractions of a Young Army', *The Times*, 19 December 1919.

Noting the wide range of activities available to the British soldier in Cologne, 'from Shakespeare to "ping pong"', the *Times* reported approvingly that such activities turned the British inward on themselves, describing the Rhine Army as having 'the advantage of being entirely self-centred, preserving a fine detachment towards the life of the city'.<sup>39</sup> For this reason, the Empire Leave Club, which opened in Cologne in 1919, was described approvingly as 'a British oasis in the German desert'.<sup>40</sup> The sense that the city of Cologne presented a danger for the British soldier was also expressed by the officers of the Army of the Rhine. Looking back in 1929, Major E.E. Gawthorn reported that, in response to 'an acute problem of how to occupy the troops ... every conceivable agency was pressed into service to amuse and provide instructional or recreational facilities'. Though conceding that 'exuberance of spirits gained ascendancy over good sense in a few instances' Gawthorn nevertheless insisted that, thanks to such organized leisure activities, good discipline and morale were maintained: 'the success achieved in a cosmopolitan city, which commenced to attract the worst elements of the scum of Europe, is largely due to the untiring efforts of members of those military, religious and social organizations who did work of national importance'.<sup>41</sup>

The creation of the *Cologne Post* newspaper followed a similar logic. When it was first published on 31 March 1919, the editors declared that its aim was not only to make the British 'feel more at home' in the Rhineland by providing a connection with news from Britain and the Empire, but also to act as a guide to life on the Rhine covering 'sports, amusements, acquisition of knowledge, what to see, where and when to see it and what it will cost you'.<sup>42</sup> When the newspaper published its last edition during the final days of the Wiesbaden occupation in 1929, its editor A.G. Clarke looked back with satisfaction for having successfully provided the British soldier with 'a healthy English mental environment for spending the most impressionable years of adolescence among the subtle temptations of an unwholesome German town. The risks and dangers of Cologne, Clarke noted, had been considered a threat to the morals of young British soldiers with time on their hands: 'Thousands of young soldiers had been taken from the Homeland, where they were surrounded by all the traditional inhibitions and prohibitions, and set down in a Continental town where temptations, in a most subtle way, lured lads who had a degree of leisure unknown before'.<sup>43</sup> As such, the newspaper was seen as a means to guide the occupying forces towards

---

<sup>39</sup>'British in Cologne: The Army's Work and Play', *The Times*, 18 March 1922.

<sup>40</sup>'Rhine Army's Recreations', *The Times*, 28 May 1919.

<sup>41</sup>Major E.E. Gawthorn, 'The British Army of the Rhine: A Retrospect', *Journal of the United Royal Service Institution*, 74 (1 Feb. 1929), p. 760.

<sup>42</sup>'Your Paper', *CP*, 1 April 1919.

<sup>43</sup>A.G. Clarke, 'Closing Down', *Cologne Post & Wiesbaden Times*, 3 November 1929

## LEISURE AND TOURISM IN THE BRITISH RHINE ARMY, 1918-1929

wholesome, productive uses of their free time, including cultural tourism in (and especially beyond) the city.<sup>44</sup>

The numerous YMCA establishments in the Rhineland were intended to fulfil a similar function, catering to as many as 10,000 men a day in the early months of the occupation.<sup>45</sup> When the YMCA in Cologne was criticised in *The Times* in 1921 by the Reverend W.T. Hindley for its lack of explicit religiosity (and for providing cinemas, whist drives and dances on Sundays) the organisation's Deputy President, Sir Arthur Yapp insisted that such offerings were necessary because 'the temptations of a great city like Cologne were very great' and that 'the British public ought to be very glad that places were provided by the YMCA where men could be away from drink and vice.' Yapp added that he hoped to recruit more 'women with high ideals' to work in the YMCA establishments in order that 'men who came to their entertainments, instead of going to the beer gardens, met women of their own country'.<sup>46</sup> Keeping British soldiers 'out of the streets and the beer gardens' was presented as one of the great achievements of the YMCA on the Rhine, according to a later *Times* article which also noted the importance of the presence of soldiers' wives, together with, 'helpers and women from the English colonies along the Rhine', which meant that YMCA dances 'avoided the complications that might have followed visits to German dance halls'.<sup>47</sup> An appeal to the British public for funds in 1925 underlined the same point by including the testimony of a Lance Corporal in the Army Service Corps, who declared that 'lots of fellows in the Army have a wayward streak in them, and it is so easy here in Cologne for it to get the upper hand. The YMCA, with its attractions is a jolly good antidote for this waywardness'.<sup>48</sup> After the army left Cologne for Wiesbaden, Sir Arthur Yapp insisted that further financial support was needed in order to ensure that 'these young men are exposed to no less fierce temptation in Wiesbaden than in Cologne'.<sup>49</sup> As Field-Marshal Sir William Robertson later recalled, the YMCA, together

---

<sup>44</sup>'Father Rhine', *CPWT*, 24 July 1927.

<sup>45</sup>'From Cologne to Wiesbaden: Work of the Y.M.C.A.', *The Times*, 8 December 1925. On the post-war activities of the YMCA, particularly in the neighbouring American Zone, see Larry A. Grant, 'The YMCA and the U.S. Army in Post-World War I France and Germany', in Jeffrey C. Copeland and Yan Xu (eds), *The YMCA at War: Collaboration and Conflict during the World Wars*, (Lanham MD: Lexington Books, 2018), pp. 73-100.

<sup>46</sup>'Sunday in Cologne: Y.M.C.A. reply to criticism', *The Times*, 9 March 1921. Feeling his remarks had been misunderstood, Hindley wrote to insist that his criticism was only directed at the 'almost complete secularization' of the Y.M.C.A.'s work in Cologne: 'On the Rhine', *The Times*, 12 March 1921.

<sup>47</sup>'The Y.M.C.A. on the Rhine', *The Times*, 16 November 1929.

<sup>48</sup>'From Cologne to Wiesbaden: Work of the Y.M.C.A.', *The Times*, 8 December 1925.

<sup>49</sup>A.K. Yapp, 'British Troops on the Rhine: The Y.M.C.A.'s Activities', *The Times*, 1 February 1927.

with similar institutions such as the Church Army or the Men's Leave Club gave 'invaluable help' to the military authorities in limiting the degree of fraternisation between the members of the Army of the Rhine and the civilian population.<sup>50</sup> Similar initiatives such as the opening of three English-language cinemas and the mass booking of seats in the Opera House for members of the occupying forces were presented as wholesome, civilised diversions for men who might otherwise find that there was 'practically nowhere for them to go but to the third rate German *cabarets* and German cinema houses'.<sup>51</sup>

Yet, as the above references to the risks of 'waywardness', the temptations of 'drink and vice' and dangers of 'third-rate German *cabarets*' might be taken to imply, members of the Army of the Rhine did not always limit themselves to such English-language establishments reserved for their use. As Lieutenant-Colonel Stewart Roddie wrote in *Peace Patrol*, his published account of the occupation years, 'opera, cabarets, café concerts, vaudeville performances, and, tucked away in darker corners, other forms of entertainment, offered a variety of distraction to the British Tommy and his officers'.<sup>52</sup> For example, in an account of his military service written in 1966, Ernest Lycette, who was stationed in Bergisch-Gladbach, recalled that soldiers were 'allowed night passes and short leave [...] to visit the towns and places of interest and that 'of course the city of Cologne was a great attraction'. Though Lycette noted that Cologne had 'a fine Officers' Club' where soldiers on weekend leave could 'arrange rooms and meals at very reasonable rates', he nevertheless found it 'more interesting to go to the German cafés and beer gardens'. During his regular visits to Cologne, Lycette recalled, 'of course we met Frauleins [sic] at dance halls and enjoyed their company.'<sup>53</sup> Many other autobiographical accounts mention regular visit to German eating and drinking establishments, many of them far from 'third rate'. As Lieutenant P. Creek recalled, 'Life in Cologne, during this period, was jam for the British soldier' as 'the strict fraternising rules had been eased' and, thanks to the weakness of the German Reichsmark, 'an English shilling would enable one to have a meal at one of the better restaurants.' A particular favourite of Creek's was the Café Germania, near the cathedral, where he 'spent several very pleasant evenings' and after dinner 'listened to a violinist playing the beautiful songs of Schubert, Strauss and Brahms'.<sup>54</sup> Similarly,

---

<sup>50</sup>William Robertson, *From Private to Field-Marshal*, (London: Constable, 1921), p. 362.

<sup>51</sup>'Cologne Diversions: Providing for the Rhine Army', *The Times*, 2 April 1919.

<sup>52</sup>Lt-Col Stewart Roddie, *Peace Patrol*, (London: Christophers, 1932). On prostitution in occupied Cologne see Richard van Emden, 'Die Briten am Rhein: Panorama einer vergessenen Besatzung', *Geschichte in Köln*, 40, 1 (1996), pp. 47-49.

<sup>53</sup>Imperial War Museum (IWM) Documents 16020. Papers of Captain E. Lycette (box no 08/43/1), pp. 159-161.

<sup>54</sup>IWM Documents 1467. Papers of Lieutenant P. Creek, p. 66. J. Garton has suggested that Cologne became a less attractive place for the British soldier once the mark began

## LEISURE AND TOURISM IN THE BRITISH RHINE ARMY, 1918-1929

Lieutenant I.R.S. Harrison, who was stationed in Mechernich in 1919, around 35 miles outside Cologne, recalled making several trips into that ‘magnificent city’, where one could enjoy good meals of ‘chicken, geese, etc’ at the Dom Hotel, accompanied by ‘plenty of excellent wine at a price’ before spending the evening at the opera.<sup>55</sup> At least during such brief periods of weekend leave, the members of the Army of the Rhine were certainly able to have a good time in Cologne, making the most of the city’s cultural offerings and nightlife as a peacetime tourist might have before 1914.

### **An Appetite for ‘Bummeling’: Rambles, Excursions and the Image of the Soldier-Tourist**

While many British occupiers were attracted to the amusements and diversions of modern Cologne, and others rarely strayed far from their barracks or from the YMCA canteens, the *Cologne Post* went to great lengths to encourage members of the occupying forces to make the most of their time in Germany by taking day trips beyond the main urban centres to discover the landscapes and historical monuments of the Rhineland. Looking back on eleven years of occupation, A.G. Clarke explained in 1929 that the *Cologne Post* had sought to encourage young soldiers to take advantage of every opportunity for active and educational travel during their time on the Rhine:

To live in Rhineland – with its glamour of legendary lore, its array of historic pageantry, its wealth of natural beauty, its modern social and commercial enterprise, was, we held, a “liberal education”; hence we published a long and comprehensive series of “Bummeling” articles to show the young soldier how to make use of such unprecedented opportunities for true education along these lines.<sup>56</sup>

In the *Cologne Post*, the word ‘bummeling’ (occasionally spelled ‘bummelling’) came to refer to precisely this kind of educational and pleasurable travel. Adopted from the German word *Bummel*, meaning a stroll, trip or ramble, it entered the day-to-day vocabulary of the British occupiers (no doubt because it sounds mildly amusing to English ears) as the term used to describe any leisurely or educational outing, adding to an increasingly rich German-influenced slang that marked out a distinctive identity for members of the occupying forces.<sup>57</sup> The term regularly featured in the titles of

---

to recover after 1924. J. Garston, ‘Armies of Occupation II: The British in Germany, 1918-1929’, *History Today*, 11, 7 (July 1961), p. 486.

<sup>55</sup>IWM Documents 11035 Papers of Lieutenant I.R.S. Harrison (box no. P 323), p. 87.

<sup>56</sup>A.G. Clarke, ‘Closing Down’, *Cologne Post & Wiesbaden Times*, 3 November 1929.

<sup>57</sup>This comic-sounding term had already been adopted by Jerome K. Jerome in the title of his humorous novel (the sequel to *Three Men in a Boat*), *Three Men on the Bummel*, (London: Arrowsmith, 1900). Keith Jeffery, “Hut ab”, “promenade with kamerade for shokolade”, and the *Flying Dutchman*: British soldiers in the Rhineland, 1918-1929’, 121



articles in the *Cologne Post*, which included, to name just a few: 'Bummels in the Famous Ahr valley', 'Bummelling in the Eifel', 'Enjoyable Bummelling', 'A Bummeler abroad' and 'Who goes Bummelling?'<sup>58</sup> In the pages of the *Cologne Post*, the 'bummeler' figure came to represent the ideal figure of a British soldier-tourist that readers should emulate: cultured, physically fit, and eager to make productive use of any free time. The ideal soldier-tourist was also meant to learn about the places he visited: reading the travel column in the *Cologne Post*, it was claimed, could help even the most 'seasoned bummeller extract the most he can out of a bummel'.<sup>59</sup>

The idealised image of the 'bummeling' soldier-tourist drew heavily on earlier patterns and trends in British Rhine tourism, including the notion of a travel as an educational experience (a defining feature of the eighteenth-century Grand Tour), the celebration of a romantic image of the Rhine as a literary and cultural landscape dotted castles and steeped in legends, and the pursuit of physical health and wellbeing through pedestrian tourism or in one of the region's many spa towns.<sup>60</sup> The image put forward in the *Cologne Post's* numerous 'bummeler' articles was of an active, curious and cultivated British occupier, who was drawn towards the picturesque scenery and historical monuments of the region rather than towards the modern, industrial cities. The town of Trier, for example, was presented as one of great interest to 'bummelers, to whom the pomp and pageant of the past appeals' thanks to its being 'strikingly picturesque in situation and having 'facilities for charming rambles'.<sup>61</sup> Similarly, the walled town of Nideggen in the Eifel, where 'the visitor seems to be plunged suddenly into the medieval period' was considered an ideal destination for a 'bummel' thanks to both its historical interest and its 'romance'.<sup>62</sup> In contrast, readers were told that there was 'nothing to detain the bummeler' in the industrial city of Mannheim.<sup>63</sup> The 'bummeler' figure was presented as someone fascinated by the medieval castles and legends of the

---

*Diplomacy and Statecraft*, 16, 3 (2005), pp. 455-473 notes various slang terms used by the occupying forces without mentioning this example. On military slang during the First World War, including the bastardisation of French words, see Tim Cook, 'Fighting Words: Canadian Soldiers' Slang and Swearing in the Great War', *War in History* 20, 3, 2013, pp. 323-344 and Julian Walker, *Tommy French: How British First World War Soldiers Turned French into Slang*. (Barnsley: Pen and Sword, 2021).

<sup>58</sup>'Bummels in the Famous Ahr Valley', *CPWT*, 19 June 1927; 'Bummelling in the Eifel', *CPWT*, 3 June 1927; 'Enjoyable Bummelling', *CPWT*, 10 July 1927; 'A Bummeler Abroad', *CP*, 3, 6 and 18 August 1920.

<sup>59</sup>'Who goes Bummelling?', *CPWT*, 15 May 1927.

<sup>60</sup>See Richard Scully, *British Images of Germany: Admiration, Antagonism and Ambivalence, 1860-1914*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 49-67.

<sup>61</sup>'Where Caesars once bore sway', *CPWT*, 8 May 1927.

<sup>62</sup>'What to see in Rhineland VII: Nideggen', *CP*, 21 August 1919.

<sup>63</sup>'A Bummeler Abroad', *CP*, 3, 6 and 18 August 1920.

## LEISURE AND TOURISM IN THE BRITISH RHINE ARMY, 1918-1929

'romantic Rhine' but relatively uninterested in recent developments in German history: monuments such as the Bismarck memorial in Bad Ems, the vast equestrian statue of Kaiser Wilhelm I at the *Deutsches Eck* in Coblenz or the Niederwald monument in Rüdeshheim, built to commemorate German unification in 1871, are mentioned briefly and without any further comment on their significance for the history of modern German nationalism.<sup>64</sup> Thus, sites and landscapes are valued for their picturesque, 'timeless' character rather than for their contemporary significance, while political and economic questions of the present rarely trouble the mind of the 'bummeler'. Thus, the 'bummel' could be considered as a form of escapism, not only from the confines of the barracks and the routine of army life but also from political tensions and economic conditions of the occupation years. This vision of Rhineland tourism as an escape from the mundane present is relatively typical of its time. E.E. Gawthorn's guidebook *Old Rhineland*, as its title implies, had next to nothing to say about the region's recent history, while Malcolm Letts's travel account of 1930, *A Wayfarer on the Rhine* dismissed the present day entirely: 'Of recent events this is no place to speak. International commissions and foreign occupations are the business of treaty-makers and politicians, and most fortunately have nothing to do with wayfaring.'<sup>65</sup> Thus, despite A.G. Clarke's aforementioned reference to 'modern social and commercial enterprise', the education to be gained from travel was above considered to be associated with the region's more distant past.

Despite the presence of female auxiliaries in the Rhine Army, and the presence of many officers' wives and families, the 'bummeler' was almost always portrayed in the *Cologne Post* as a lone, male figure, driven by *Wanderlust* and undeterred by early mornings, long distances or steep climbs. An article in the *Cologne Post* in August 1919 set out this image of the traveller while simultaneously admonishing its readers for not living up to the ideal:

We have priceless opportunities in the Rhineland for enriching our imagination and knowledge and at the same time keeping ourselves physically fit. Our pleasures are close at hand, but do we really make the most of them? Have we heard the call of the road, that intense longing to explore the unknown pathways, and at the close of the day to feel the joy of achievements and renewed health?<sup>66</sup>

---

<sup>64</sup>'Who goes Bummelling?', *CPWT*, 15 May 1927; 'A visit to Coblenz', *CPWT*, 14 August 1927; 'Beautiful Bad Ems', *CPWT*, 12 June 1927.

<sup>65</sup>Malcolm Letts, *A Wayfarer on the Rhine*, (London: Methuen, 1930), p. xix. Letts's book was criticised, in fact, for being 'too much concerned with the past to the neglect of the present'. 'A Wayfarer on the Rhine', *Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, 19 April 1930, p. 498.

<sup>66</sup>'What to see in Rhineland VIII: A Ramble to Altenberg', *CP*, 22 August 1919.

This sense that the British occupiers were not making the most of their time on the Rhine was a regular reproach in the travel columns of the *Cologne Post*. An article in July 1927, for example, praised those readers who had already ‘enjoyed the delights of the wonderful scenery of Father Rhine’, while simultaneously criticising those who ‘failed to take advantage of the opportunities offered them’. Although the Rhineland attracted tourists from all over the world, the author lamented that ‘the number of present and past members of the Rhine Army who have but the haziest idea of the grandeur of the river and its surroundings must run into many thousands’.<sup>67</sup> Even many of those who did seize the opportunity to make outings and excursions were criticised, in a later article, for not reading up on the region’s history beforehand: ‘We English take much for granted and the pleasure and educative value of our excursions would be greatly enhanced if we informed ourselves of the romantic story of the places we visit’.<sup>68</sup> According to such logic, the ideal ‘bummeler’ was someone who had acquired a knowledge of regional history either by consulting the books recommended by the *Cologne Post* or simply by reading the newspaper itself. A similar article, while noting that it had been a privilege, after the strains of war, ‘to enjoy a comparatively restful time by the Rhine amid fine scenery and in historic towns’ considered it unfortunate that the British on the Rhine had not lived up to their nation’s ‘reputation of being the greatest travellers’ as they had not ‘gathered as much knowledge’ as they should have done.<sup>69</sup>

In a further echo of the discourses and practices that had marked British Rhine tourism since the age of the Grand Tour, the *Cologne Post* underlined the pleasures and educational benefits of tourism as well as its positive influence on the physical and mental well-being of military personnel in order to encourage its readers to get out of their billets or barracks (or out of the beer-gardens of Cologne) and discover the sights of the region. An article in July 1924, for example, presented a fictionalised sketch of a soldier who wakes up early to take the train into the Eifel mountains, while his roommate spends the day lazing around their shared billet. He visits the ruined castle of Nideggen, discovering that ‘the views to be seen from the castle windows alone are well worth the journey’ and returns to his billet in the evening tired but, unlike his roommate, ‘with the feeling that [his] day had not been wasted’.<sup>70</sup> Similarly, an article the following month encouraged readers to hike from the town of Hilgen to a nearby lake, which is described as ‘a real beauty spot’ and ‘off the beaten track’ (even though the author admits that ‘thousands of civilians from Cologne seek its charms’) and the physical and psychological benefits of the trip are made clear to the reader:

---

<sup>67</sup>‘Father Rhine’, *CPWT*, 24 July 1927.

<sup>68</sup>‘The Wonders of Rhineland’, *CPWT*, 1 July 1928.

<sup>69</sup>‘Going Home’, *CP*, 17 August 1919.

<sup>70</sup>E.J., ‘A Rhineland Ramble’, *CP*, 24 July 1919.

## LEISURE AND TOURISM IN THE BRITISH RHINE ARMY, 1918-1929

'we return to the plains at the close of day with the hot blood coursing through our veins and full of health, strength and vigour to labour for another season with a mind stored with precious memories.'<sup>71</sup> While not all articles were quite so explicit about the supposed benefits of travel, they nevertheless regularly claimed that the benefits of 'bummeling' far outweighed the costs in terms of time, effort or inconvenience. For example, even though it was a long walk from the train station, Schloss Burg near Wermelskirchen was presented as 'easy of access', and 'well worth a visit', and readers were reassured that 'the scenery will amply repay the trouble'.<sup>72</sup> The convent of Arenberg near Coblenz was praised in almost identical terms: 'this place is so well worth a visit that the effort to catch the early train to Coblenz is amply repaid'.<sup>73</sup> Similarly a trip from Wiesbaden to Frankfurt am Main, which presented additional complications since visitors were required to be in possession of a passport endorsed for a visit to unoccupied territory and to be dressed in civilian clothes, was described as 'well worth a little trouble in the matter of preliminaries'.<sup>74</sup> In such instances it is clear that the *Cologne Post's* travel writers were trying to anticipate, and neutralise, any possible reluctance towards active 'bummeling' on the part of the members of the Rhine Army. Whether such attempts to promote tourism were effective is difficult to judge, although the insistence of the *Cologne Post* that the British forces were not doing enough to discover the sights of the Rhineland might be interpreted as an admission that its success in this task was limited.<sup>75</sup>

### Conclusion

The lack of certainty regarding the effectiveness of attempts to promote wholesome, educational forms of 'tourism' within the British Rhine Army is a symptom of the fact that such activities lay at the fringes of military control. Members of the Rhine Army were certainly *encouraged* to avoid the perceived dangers of the city, by making use of the army and YMCA facilities or by heading away from the urban centres on invigorating 'bummels', but evidence of quite how they used their free time inevitably remains anecdotal. Nevertheless, there is ample evidence in autobiographical recollections, in the British press, and in the pages of the *Cologne Post and Wiesbaden*

---

<sup>71</sup>G.K., 'What to see in Rhineland VI: Hilgen Lake', *CP* 19 August 1919.

<sup>72</sup>'What to see in Rhineland V: Schloss Burg', *CP*, 17 August 1919.

<sup>73</sup>'What to see in Rhineland IX: Arenberg', *CP*, 24 August 1919.

<sup>74</sup>'Frankfurt on Main', *CPWT*, 22 May 1927.

<sup>75</sup>Several contemporary sources note that members of the regular army, which remained in the Rhineland after the majority of wartime volunteers and conscripts had gone home, were relatively sedentary in their habits, living within the confines of their barracks as they might have done in India or in Aldershot. Peter Deane, 'The End of the Rhine Army', *The Contemporary Review*, 136 (1 July 1929), p. 750; E.G. [G.E.R. Gedye], 'The Regulars' in Rhineland', *The Bystander*, 14 July 1920.

Times regarding the priorities of the military authorities, namely, to keep the occupiers occupied by providing leisure facilities and opportunities for travel and sightseeing.

Three clear trends are discernible within this context. Firstly, it was suggested that the Rhineland occupation, particularly after the sacrifices and discomforts of the war years, should be considered an opportunity for British servicemen to enjoy a pleasant and educational 'holiday' in a region popular with pre-war British holidaymakers. Secondly, this 'discovery' of Germany was supposed to involve as little contact as possible with the civilian population in general and the perceived dangers of the modern city of Cologne in particular. Finally, through the promotion of healthy, educational 'bummels', the image of an ideal soldier-tourist was put forward. Active and energetic, curious and well read, this ideal British 'bummeler' was supposed to make the most of every opportunity to discover the picturesque scenery and rich cultural heritage of occupied Rhineland, but he remained largely apolitical and drawn towards the past rather than the present.

While there was clearly a military logic behind this desire to limit fraternisation and promote wholesome leisure pursuits, these trends also reflect wider cultural developments in civilian tourism in interwar Britain and Germany. When the British military authorities recommended the healthy outdoor life as an antidote to the pernicious influence of the cities they were also drawing on a long Romantic tradition which had taken on new meanings in the wake of the First World War and which led, in both countries, to renewed interest in pastoral landscapes and to the rise of outdoor and hiking movements.<sup>76</sup> The idea that the British and Germans supposedly shared a love of the countryside and an attachment to folklore and cultural heritage was even presented in the context of the Rhineland occupation as a sound basis for post-war reconciliation and mutual understanding.<sup>77</sup> However, in the German context, the rediscovery of the lore and legends of the Rhine, the critique of industrialisation, and the popularity of hiking movements such as the *Wandervögel* were all inextricably linked to wider trends in German nationalism which, though already present during the period of the Rhineland occupation, would become particularly potent during the 1930s.

In retrospect, the figure of the apolitical British 'bummeler' on the Rhine, engaged in rather similar cultural activities though seemingly untroubled by their political connotations, appears to have been rather naïve about the profound symbolic

---

<sup>76</sup>See Frank Trentman, 'Civilization and Its Discontents: English Neo-Romanticism and the Transformation of Anti-Modernism in Twentieth-Century Western Culture', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 29,4 (1994), pp. 583-625.

<sup>77</sup>Peter Deane, 'The End of the Rhine Army', *The Contemporary Review*, 136 (1 July 1929), p. 752.

## LEISURE AND TOURISM IN THE BRITISH RHINE ARMY, 1918-1929

importance of the Rhine landscape for revanchist German nationalists during the years of Interallied occupation.<sup>78</sup>

---

<sup>78</sup>See Peter Schöttler, *The Rhine as an Object of Historical Controversy in the Inter-War Years*, *History Workshop Journal* 39 (1995), pp. 1-21.