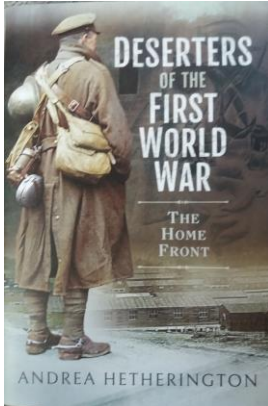


**BOOK REVIEW**  
**DESERTERS OF THE FORST WORLD WAR**  
**The Home Front**

**Andrea Hetherington**  
*Pen & Sword Military 2021*  
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Andrea has written a thoughtful and well researched work which informs both the Great War specialist and the general readers of this until now quite neglected topic of absence and desertion on the Home Front. This volume provides a much-needed corrective. Whilst the “Conchie”, the conscientious objector and ‘Shot at Dawn’ have been discussed in detail elsewhere, little has been written on those who as the author succinctly puts it “slipped away either temporarily or permanently because “soldiering” did not suit them”.

Although desertion and absence without leave has always been a problem of varying degree in any armed force, the transformation of a small (in comparison with continental armies) regular British Army into an enormous ‘citizen’ army where subservience to military discipline was not necessarily a given exacerbated and existing problem. Pre-war regular army courts-martial for desertion and absence along with other offences totalled five thousand in 1913 rising to over 82000 courts-martial for desertion and absence between 1914 and 1920 on the Home Front alone! It is noticeable despite the so called ‘rush to the colours’ on the outbreak of war a significant proportion of the general male population failed to respond to their call-up under the Military Service Act(s).

This is a very well researched and highly readable work dealing as it does with a neglected topic in the historiography of the Great War and that in it’s way illuminates aspects of the relationship between the military and society.

***Martin Willoughby***