The considerable numbers of soldiers from the British Isles who served in Continental European armies in the early to mid-seventeenth century have in recent years finally started to attract sustained historical scholarship. Irish and Scottish soldiers in foreign service always attracted the attention of historians; their significance in Irish national mythology and their palpable demographic and economic significance in Scottish history were reflected in the respective national historiographies. However, many studies of Scottish and Irish soldiers of fortune were overly antiquarian, genealogical, or apologetic (whether on nationalist or religious grounds); furthermore, regardless of the author’s approach or purpose, most studies until very recently (and even some very recent studies!) were based overwhelmingly on published sources—on memoirs, chronicles and contemporary histories, literary sources, and on an often limited range of printed calendars or editions of official records.\(^1\) While sometimes affording valuable

insights, this scholarship could only provide a partial picture; indeed, some of those who contributed to it were aware of its limitations and did pioneering work to open up continental archives to future researchers. Since the early 1990s, new methodologies have been applied, new evidence uncovered and utilised, and numerous new studies of soldiers from the British Isles serving in foreign armies published. Studies of these soldiers have increasingly been based on research in both central and local archives of countries from across Europe (if perhaps particularly from Scandinavia); much of the recent scholarship is informed by the scholarship of the so-called ‘new military history’ and reflects its interest in ‘war and society’, or is the product of the ‘linguistic turn’ in late-twentieth-century historiography; certainly there is much more concern than in the earlier scholarship for the wider socio-cultural context from which soldiers came, and in which they operated temporarily or settled long term. The new scholarship has at the least provided a more thoroughly contextualised and nuanced knowledge, and some significant new perspectives; arguably it has come close to transforming our understanding of the experience of soldiers both from Ireland.

