

Consensus and Dissent in Wartime Leeds, 1914-1918

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Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Leeds
School of History

November 2022

The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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Acknowledgements

My gratitude to my long-suffering supervisors, Professor Holger Afflerbach and Professor Ingrid Sharp, for their insightful guidance and dedicated support throughout the past seven years cannot be overstated here. I am humbled by their shared wisdom and feel privileged by their enthused interest in my project.

I would like to acknowledge and thank the staff at the West Yorkshire Archive Service, Leeds, for sending me the invaluable soldiers' letters, which enabled me to continue with my research during the Covid pandemic lockdowns. I would also like to acknowledge and thank all staff at Leeds Local Studies Library for their help in facilitating my access to newspapers, especially during the months of the Covid pandemic restrictions; their helpful manner and friendly faces made the visits such a pleasant experience.

My most heartfelt gratitude goes to my family: thank you to my parents for their love and unwavering support of my academic pursuits; to my sister and brother for their much cherished friendship and endless good humour; to my four children for their pride in (and also their patience with) their mother's obsession with all things 'First World War'; and mostly to my husband Paul, for being by my side throughout the many personal challenges during this project, providing a never-ending belief in my abilities, much love, and, of course, copious amounts of red wine!

This thesis is dedicated to my father, who passed away before completion – I hope I've done you proud, Dad - and to my maternal grandmother, who would have been so pleased that her love of history was passing through the generations.

Abstract

This thesis explores the effect of the First World War on the home front in Leeds, using a chronological approach to uncover the influence of internal and external factors created by the conflict as it progressed. Leeds was a very important war industry city, therefore it is surprising that there has never been a major research project focused upon it previously. This thesis therefore fills the gap in the existing scholarship, and breaks new ground in researching a particular locality which was very much changed by the war. An analysis of the influence of the war through the multiple foci of recruitment, grief, class, gender, and, notably, industry, in the city unearths the minutiae of evidence which shows Leeds as a unique and special case. It concentrates on distinctions of war experiences that existed in one place, to build up a clear and revealing picture of war-time conditions and attitudes. In-depth analysis of newspapers, official papers and ego documents, including previously unseen letters home from Leeds soldiers, has introduced a deeper understanding of the war on a major conurbation. Its originality lies not solely in its analysis of the effect of the war on the city but in its fusion of the evidence presented by the main themes researched. It examines to what extent and in what ways the war changed the city, particularly regarding the attitudes of the people of Leeds towards it. Most people wanted to win the war, which was also the national picture, however the presence also of dissent nuances this interpretation, and there is a profusion of evidence to support this. Therefore a bi-polar model between consensus and dissent within the city, a refined picture which provides a balanced assessment of the city's outlook on the war, has been revealed.

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Abbreviations

BEF: British Expeditionary Force

BSP: British Socialist Party

CO: Conscientious Objector

DORA: Defence of the Realm Act

ILP: Independent Labour Party

NCF: No Conscription Fellowship

NUWSS: National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies

PRC: Parliamentary Recruiting Committee

TUC: Trades Union Congress

UDC: Union of Democratic Control

WIL: Women's International League

LC: Liddle Collection

LULSC: Leeds University Library Special Collections

WYAS: West Yorkshire Archive Service

Introduction

David Lloyd George, Prime Minister of Britain for the latter half of the First World War, wrote with the valuable benefit of hindsight in 1938: ‘Of all the problems which Governments had to handle during the Great War, the most delicate and most perilous were those arising on the home front’.¹ This thesis focuses upon the impact of the war on the home front in the city of Leeds. It explores the challenges that the war brought, and how the city responded to these over time. It will highlight the city’s singularity, due notably to the industry associated with the war which shaped the city’s experience of, and outlooks on, the war, through recognition of the nuances which existed. As such, this thesis enhances the understanding of how local factors affect war experience. Attitudes to the war have been the primary investigative aims, principally how these were shaped by the conditions created by the war. It will analyse the evidence in Leeds to discover these attitudes, to challenge the assertion of contemporary Leeds based journalist William Herbert Scott, who recalled in his 1923 history of the war:

With hope and good courage, Leeds followed an even course in all phases of life, and at every turn of the wheel of fate and experience managed to evolve ways and means of coping with the difficulties of the situation, adapting itself to circumstances, and steeling the heart of the community to fresh impulses of derring-do.²

In stark contrast to this view, Cyril Pearce sees Leeds as a locality in which there was palpable uneasiness in feelings towards the conflict: ‘[Leeds] was a city where the tensions

¹ David Lloyd George, *War Memoirs of David Lloyd George: Volume II* (London: Oldhams Press, 1938), p. 1141.

² William Herbert Scott, *Leeds in the Great War, 1914-1918* (Leeds: Jowett and Sowbury Ltd, 1923), p. 15.

around attitudes to the war were tangible'.³ This thesis will study these competing claims, to gain a balanced oversight of Leeds during the war.

This research project has built on existing scholarship and extended it through a regional study to fill the gaps in knowledge that have been identified.⁴ Its aim has been to uncover the specificity of the war experience in Leeds, through thorough scrutiny of the range of sources available. It will show how national and international events and attitudes were reflected in the reaction to the war of the people who lived and worked in the city. It will argue that Leeds is representative of a greater complexity of response to the war than is often given, but also

³ Cyril Pearce, *Communities of Resistance: Conscience and Dissent in Britain During the First World War* (London: Francis Boutle Publishers, 2020), p. 374.

⁴ Notable historians who have numerous publications regarding the British home front during the First World War include: Gail Braybon, *Evidence, History and the Great War* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2008); Gerald DeGroot, *Blighty: British Society in the Era of the Great War* (London: Longman, 1996), Peter Dewey, 'Nutrition and Living Standards in Wartime Britain', in Richard Wall and Jay Winter, eds, *The Upheaval of War: Family, Work and Welfare in Europe, 1914-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 197-220, Niall Ferguson, *The Pity of War* (London: Penguin, 2008), Adrian Gregory, *The Last Great War: British Society and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), Nicoletta Gullace, *'The Blood of Our Sons': Men, Women, and the Renegotiation of British Citizenship During the Great War* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), Karen Hunt, 'The Politics of Food and Women's Neighbourhood Activism in First World War Britain', *International Labour and Working Class History*, 77.1 (2010), 8-26, Arthur Marwick, *The Deluge: British Society and the First World War* (London: Macmillan, 1967), Brock Millman, *Managing Domestic Dissent in First World War Britain, 1914-1918* (London: Frank Cass, 2000), Gary Sheffield, *Forgotten Victory: The First World War, Myths and Realities* (London: Headline, 2001), David Stevenson, *Cataclysm: The First World War as Political Tragedy* (New York: Basic Books, 2004), Hew Strachan, *The First World War* (London: Simon and Schuster, 2014), Alan John Percival (A J P) Taylor, *English History 1914-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), Trevor Wilson, *The Myriad Faces of War: Britain and the Great War, 1914-1918* (Cambridge: Polity, 1986), Jay Winter, *The Great War and the British People* (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1986). Existing local studies relating to Leeds which have been invaluable to this research, and which this thesis builds upon, include: Derek Fraser, ed., *A History of Modern Leeds* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980), James M Hagerty, *Leeds at War, 1914-1918, 1939-1945* (Wakefield: E P Publishing, 1981), Michael Meadowcroft, 'The Years of Political Transition, 1914-1939', in Derek Fraser, ed., *A History of Modern Leeds*, pp. 410-436, Scott, *Leeds*; David Thornton, *Leeds: The Story of a City* (Glasgow: Bell and Baine, 2002), W R Mitchell, *A History of Leeds* (Chichester: Phillimore and Co, 2000), Lucy Moore and Nicola Pullman, *Leeds Remembering 1914-1918* (Gloucestershire: The History Press, 2015).

that Leeds responded in ways that diverge from the national picture due to the specificities identified. This helps the understanding of the national picture during the war, by looking in depth at a major industrial city with strategic importance for the war effort. This aids the comprehension of the range of reactions people had during the war, and how these attitudes changed as the war progressed.

It must be emphasised that this thesis does not approach the city of Leeds as a rigid, homogenous monolith. Instead, it reveals the independent voices to show how attitudes within the city varied. An important war period source is the number of local newspapers that existed, and these have been painstakingly scrutinised, in addition to ego documents and official documents, to discover evidence of the local reaction to the war. This has uncovered a coherent and revealing picture of Leeds during the war. In the in-depth analysis of the local primary sources, I have been mindful of their limitations as well as their strengths. These include the deliberate and unintentional bias which may cloud the evidence being presented, bias which itself will be analysed to uncover its value in showing the nuance in attitudes towards the war. This thesis does not intend to be a comprehensive survey of the city, therefore exhaustive commentary upon certain aspects of the war that have been extensively researched previously by other scholars has therefore been deliberately omitted. These include voluntary work, implications for hospitals and medical advances, and the far-reaching influence of religion on wartime culture (excepting the impact of religion on conscientious objection, which is discussed in detail with reference to Leeds).⁵ This thesis, however,

⁵ For further information on the history of medicine and voluntary work during the war, see Suzannah Biernoff, 'The Rhetoric of Disfigurement in First World War Britain', *Social History of Medicine*, 24.3 (2011), 666-685, Jeffrey S Reznick, 'A Strange and Formidable Weapon: British Responses to World War I Poison Gas', *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, 64.2 (2009), 268-269 and *Healing the Nation: Soldiers and the Culture of Caregiving in Britain During the Great War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), Peter Grant, *Philanthropy and Voluntary Action in the First World War: Mobilizing Charity* (London: Routledge, 2014). For detailed analysis of the influence of religious ideas

concentrates upon a number of interlinked themes that were identified during the extensive research as most useful in illustrating the forces which shaped the war experience of the inhabitants of Leeds. Comparisons will be made with other belligerent nations, particularly those in enemy countries, to contrast their experience on the home front with that in the city.⁶ The main differences will be highlighted, to show that Leeds' experience of war was unique and singular. Notably, this study will illustrate that the employment brought by the war industry in Leeds aided the local economy and will show the extent to which this impacted upon the attitudes to the conflict as Leeds was transformed into a war production city.

Consensus and Dissent

Researching a particular locality for this thesis has allowed the distinctions of war experiences that existed in one place to be identified. Leeds is an ideal city to centre upon for this research, due to the importance of the city to the national war effort regarding the related industry, and its links with national organisations and events. To build a clear picture of the war-time conditions and attitudes, it will outline the extent to which the people of the city

on wartime culture, and many other aspects of the British home front, see Gregory, *Last Great War*.

⁶ Notable historians whose work on life on the home front in the other nations involved in the war which have been crucial to this thesis include: Roger Chickering, *The Great War and Urban Life in Germany: Freiburg, 1914-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), Ute Daniel, *The War from Within: German Working Class Women in the First World War* (Oxford: Berg, 1997), Belinda Joy Davis, *Home Fires Burning: Food, Politics and Everyday Life in World War One Berlin* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), Barbara Alpern Engel, 'Not by Bread Alone: Subsistence Riots in Russia during World War I,' *The Journal of Modern History*, 69.4 (1997), 696-721, Maureen Healy, *Vienna and the Fall of the Habsburg Empire: Total War and Everyday Life in World War One* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), Jürgen Kocka, *Facing Total War: German Society, 1914-1918* (Leamington Spa: Berg, 1984), Jörn Leonhard, *Pandora's Box: A History of the First World War* (London: Belknap Press, 2018), Jay Winter and Jean-Louis Robert, eds, *Capital Cities at War: Paris, London, Berlin, 1914-1919* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996-2007), Benjamin Ziemann, *War Experience in Rural Germany, 1914-1923* (Oxford: Berg, 2007).

were in general concord regarding their support of the war ('consensus'), juxtaposed with the evidence that there was disagreement in opinions relating to the war ('dissent'). It will discuss to what extent the people in Leeds wholeheartedly supported the war, in accord with Scott's view that the people of Leeds on the home front worked unstintingly for the war effort in an endeavour to ensure, as a working class man wrote in 1916, that the country would not be 'ruled by the Bloody Huns'.⁷ The evidence in the city of support for the war included the reaction to it by the Conservative-led City Council, and, pertinently, the contribution of this support to the war work that it provided. It will show to what degree this was taken up willingly by the residents of Leeds in a spirit of patriotism, by questioning the motivations for the ostensible enthusiasm for war work. It will also highlight that there was in the city an accompanying dissent. This included displays of reluctance in the engagement with the war effort, as well as outright opposition to it. In addition to the several political groups which were formed to oppose the war (and evidence of this anti-war action exists in Leeds), the importance of the men who refused to fight, conscientious objectors (COs), from Leeds will be scrutinised in this thesis. It will identify their motivations as well as assess the public and press perception of them.⁸ There were links with the COs and other social and political tendencies at the time who opposed the war. Such as the Independent Labour Party (ILP), and a minority of members in the Liberal Party and the Labour Party, certain strands of the women's suffrage movement, and religious groups, notably the Society of Friends (Quakers). Many noted figures of the time also opposed the war. In Leeds, influential figures such as socialist, trade unionist, and suffragist, Isabella Ford, were vocal of their opposition to the

⁷ Scott, *Leeds*, Bradford, Peace Museum (PM), BRFPM2000.1-82, Letter and papers of Bill Crowther.

⁸ Anti-war groups included the Union of Democratic Control, the No Conscription Fellowship, and the Fellowship of Reconciliation.

war in the local press.⁹ Pearce even claims that, ‘Leeds was part of the West Riding’s much wider anti-war network – both overt and clandestine’.¹⁰

Evidence of dissent notwithstanding, this thesis will show that the majority of Leeds society did support the war, including notable Leeds MP James O’Grady. The only Labour Party MP of the city, O’Grady used the local press to proclaim his vociferous support of the war.¹¹ All other MPs in Leeds were Liberals, despite the Conservative-led politics of the local council, including the Leeds born social reformer and pacifist Quaker Thomas Edmund Harvey. This adds a degree of shading to Scott’s monochrome political perception of the city’s response to the war, ‘oiled by the accord of all classes of the community, parties and creeds’.¹² This thesis will highlight that the history of Leeds during the war was not as uncompromising as Scott asserted. It will show, to borrow Thomas Nipperdey’s theory, that the history of Leeds is not mostly black or white, but grey, ‘grey in all its infinite shades’.¹³ Nipperdey’s balanced view of history, in which he endeavours to show the truth of history, including ‘every-day life and mentalities’, is the one deliberately taken here with regard to Leeds.¹⁴ This thesis will therefore acknowledge the differing experiences of the people on the home front in Leeds, as well as the soldiers from the city, to illustrate that the war did not impact on everyone in the

⁹ For a brief outline of Ford’s pre-war trade union work, see ‘Eminent Trade Unionists: No. 8 Miss Isabella Ford’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 12 June 1914, p. 5. For a detailed biography of Ford, including her anti-war work both locally and nationally, see June Hannam, *Isabella Ford* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989).

¹⁰ Pearce, *Communities of Resistance*, p. 374.

¹¹ James O’Grady MP had a regular column in the *Leeds Weekly Citizen* for the duration of the war.

¹² Scott, *Leeds*, p. 12.

¹³ German historian Thomas Nipperdey, best known for his monumental and exhaustive studies of Germany from 1800 to 1918, including *Deutsche Geschichte 1866-1918: Machtstaat vor der Demokratie* (Munich: Beck, 1992), claimed that history should be all-encompassing. John J Breuilly, ‘Telling it as it was? Thomas Nipperdey’s History of Nineteenth-Century Germany’, *History*, 80.258 (1995), 59-70 (p. 60), see also Richard J Evans, ‘Nipperdey’s Nineteenth Century’, in Richard J Evans, *Rereading German History: From Unification to Reunification, 1800-1996* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 23-43.

¹⁴ Evans, ‘Nipperdey’s Nineteenth Century’, pp. 24-25.

same way. As Janet Watson asserts in her research which challenges the idea of a monolithic society during the war through an analysis of the ways in which war time narratives were transformed into post-war memories, the participants were all ‘fighting different wars.’¹⁵

Themes

There are five interrelated topics of investigation in this thesis, namely: industry, recruitment, grief, class, and gender. These are the main foci of the thesis as it was established early on in this research that they clearly typify Leeds’ varied experience during the war. They allow the study to explore the distinctions of consensus and dissent in the city, and track how these changed over time, responding to the major events of the war as the conflict wore interminably on. The sphere of industry was undeniably the greatest impact the war had upon Leeds. It will show that the accelerated metamorphosis into a war industry city impacted on the attitudes to the war on its inhabitants. The motivations of the involvement of Leeds residents with the necessary industry of war was nuanced: due to national mindedness for some, the fact that there was a living to be made for others, and, significantly, a mixture of the two for many. This thesis will show that the industry the war brought meant that Leeds as a city had better living conditions than other parts of the country, and indeed other belligerent nations. It will also examine the industrial unrest that occurred on the home front during the war, to determine the evidence in Leeds of the widespread strikes that took place nationally during the war years. This will reveal the reasons for this lack of unrest seen elsewhere, such as the specific nature of the city’s industry. The industry brought to the city by the war helped

¹⁵ Janet S K Watson, *Fighting Different Wars: Experience, Memory and the First World War in Britain* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press), p. 61.

to provide a war effort role to men and women left at home, seen to be beneficial to morale on the home front.

This thesis will address the theory that the local industry was intrinsically linked to the comparatively low levels of voluntary recruitment in the city of Leeds, prior to the introduction of conscription in 1916.¹⁶ Decisions that were made in the country during the war regarding recruitment, including the creation, and emotive drive, of the Parliamentary Recruiting Committee (PRC) in an aim to encourage voluntary recruits, and the eventual introduction of mandatory service in 1916, were a reaction of the Government to the increasing needs of the war: a war in which all other belligerent nations already had a system of mandatory military service.¹⁷ Men had varied motivations for signing up to fight, including pecuniary- and masculinity-related reasons, and this will be shown to be the case in Leeds. Investigations into the bearing that separation allowances, which were provided to the wives of the men who had left home to join the armed forces, have shown that these were not always sufficient to aid the women and their families on the home front. In addition to Leeds' response as a city to the national recruitment drives, this thesis will also provide detailed discussion on the city's reaction to the introduction of conscription. This will determine how the COs were viewed by society and the press.

The issue of recruitment is fundamentally linked to the theme of grief, which enveloped the nation during the war.¹⁸ Patricia Jalland cites the communal grief as 'overwhelming' during

¹⁶ For detailed discussion on voluntary recruitment in Leeds for the first two years of the war prior to the introduction of compulsory military service, see Edwards M Spiers, 'Voluntary Recruiting in Yorkshire, 1914-1915', *Northern History*, 52.2 (2015), 295-313.

¹⁷ For detailed research on the work of the PRC, see Roy Douglas, 'Voluntary Enlistment in the First World War and the Work of the Parliamentary Recruiting Committee', *The Journal of Modern History*, 42.4 (1970), 564-585.

¹⁸ For detailed commentary on the responses of the home fronts to the grief perpetuated by the conflict, see David Cannadine, 'War and Death, Grief and Mourning in Modern Britain', in Joachim Whaley, ed., *Mirrors of Mortality: Studies in the Social History of Death*

the war due to the sheer number of dead soldiers and the ‘horrific’ nature of their deaths.¹⁹ It is a crucial theme for this local study, which will discuss how the soldiers’ deaths were both received and perceived on the home front in Leeds. It will consider how the people in Leeds coped with this grief, and, moreover, what part the different strands of the press played in this. Certain sections of the press were responsible for deferring to tropes of sacrifice for these dead men, as can be seen in other belligerent countries, and that they were also guilty of demonizing the enemy in a bid to create a scape-goat for this grief.²⁰ Grief in Leeds will be discussed with reference to the casualty heavy battles of the war that involved local battalions, such as the Battle of the Somme in 1916 and Battle of Passchendaele the following year. In the aim to reveal the nuances of the impact of the war on Leeds, it will show that for some on the home front the deaths were seen as a justified sacrifice for an eventual victory.²¹ The way the soldiers from Leeds coped with the grief of their comrades in arms will also be

(London: Europa, 1981), pp. 187-242, Joy Damousi, *The Labour of Loss: Mourning, Memory and Wartime Bereavement in Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), and ‘Mourning Practices’, in Jay Winter, ed., *The Cambridge History of the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 358-384, and ‘Gender and Mourning’ in Susan Grayzel and Tammy Proctor, eds, *Gender and the Great War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 211-229, Suzanne Evans, *Mothers of Heroes, Mothers of Martyrs: World War I and the Politics of Grief* (Montreal: McGill Queens University Press, 2007), Patricia Jalland, *Death in War and Peace: A History of Loss and Grief in England, 1914-1970* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) and ‘A Culture of Silent Grief? The Transformation of Bereavement Care in the Twentieth Century England’, *Bereavement Care*, 32.1 (2013), 16-22, Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Culture of Defeat: On National Trauma, Mourning, and Recovery* (London: Granta, 2003), Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

¹⁹ Jalland, *Death in War and Peace*, p. 17.

²⁰ For explanation of how the soldiers’ deaths were viewed by the public and press in the city of Freiburg, Germany, during the war, see Chickering, *The Great War*, pp. 329-331. For further discussion on the demonization of the enemy during the war, see several publications of Panikos Panayi, *The Enemy in Our Midst: Germans in Britain During the First World War* (Oxford: Berg, 1991), ‘Germans in Britain During the First World War’, *Historical Research*, 64.153 (1991), 63-76, ‘The Lancashire Anti-German Riots of May 1915’, *Manchester Region History Review*, 2.2 (1988), 7-10.

²¹ See David Stevenson, *1917: War, Peace, and Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 9, for discussion of his ‘war trap’ theory.

investigated. Although for many of the soldiers their reaction to the grief echoed that of their families on the home front in Leeds, this issue was also complicated by the resentment that many soldiers harboured for those left at home. The way grief was processed on the home front in Leeds will also highlight the enlightening class differences which existed.

Class tensions were palpable in Leeds, pre-war, during the war, and following the war. This thesis will explore the ways that class played out in different arenas as the war progressed. This will include illustrating to what extent the challenges of war, such as the rising prices of food as well as food shortages, on the home front, impacted on the different classes in contrasting ways. Primary sources relating to the soldiers, such as their letters home, of the class resentments of those on the home front being shared by the serving men are illuminating on this issue, such as the stark dissimilarity between the living conditions for the lower ranking soldiers and their superiors. The evidence on class divisions within recruitment will also be addressed, notably the singularity of the formation of the 'Pals' battalions, which were specially constituted British Army battalions comprising of local men who were encouraged to enlist together. Evidence scrutinized on the treatment of COs will show that class had a bearing on this issue also.²² The main focus of this thesis, however, is the impact of the war on the home front in Leeds, and it will argue that the ones left coping with the situation at home were, invariably, the women.

As the ones who were already family carers and sustenance providers prior to the war, the caring role of women continued into the war, with the additional role for many women of also being the main worker in the home once their men had gone to fight. They not only took the place of men in the jobs they had left to join the forces, but also engaged in employment

²² For commentary on the perceived exclusivity of the Pals battalions, see Spiers, 'Voluntary Recruiting', p. 299 and Avner Offer, 'Going to War in 1914: A Matter of Honour?', *Politics and Society*, 23.2 (June 1995), 213-241 (p. 233).

in the novel industries introduced to support the war effort, the most significant of which was the munitions work. There was a range of responses to the war work, including women who took it up willingly, as a way to play their own part in the war, as well as it being undertaken as a necessity, to feed their children. However, this thesis will demonstrate that the women in Leeds cannot be taken as a homogenous group, as they had an inconsistent experience of war work. Some were supported in their war work by the authorities, and others were resented for their war work, particularly by the men workers left at home. Commentary will also be made on the theory that this war work changed society's perception of them.²³

Sources

This thesis is indebted to the work of Scott, whose self-styled 'Book of Remembrance' on the war years in Leeds examined the following questions outlined in its Preface:

What did Leeds do in the Great War? Should not future generations be told what their elders and forebears endured and accomplished? [...] At least it was felt that the important part taken by Leeds justified a literary memorial.²⁴

²³ Both Arthur Marwick, *War and Social Change in the Twentieth Century* (London: MacMillan, 1974), and Constance Rover, *Women's Suffrage and Party Politics in Britain, 1866-1914* (London: Routledge, 1967), argue that the war changed women's role in society, which contributed to them being granted the vote in 1918, however many historians disagree with this view, including Paula Bartley, *Votes for Women, 1860-1928* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1998), Braybon, ed., *Evidence*; Gail Braybon and Penny Summerfield, *Women's Experience in Two World Wars* (London: Pandora, 1987), Sandra Stanley Holton, *Feminism and Democracy: Women's Suffrage and Reform Politics in Britain, 1900-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), Deborah Thom, 'Gender and Work', in Grayzel and Proctor, eds, *Gender and the Great War*, pp. 46-65 and *Nice Girls and Rude Girls: Women Workers in World War I* (London: I B Tauris, 1998), Karen Hunt, 'Gender and Everyday Life', in Grayzel and Proctor, eds, *Gender and the Great War*, pp. 149-168; see also Gullace, *Blood of Our Sons* for a convincing interpretation on how the war provided useful conditions to support the arguments of the suffragists.

²⁴ Scott, *Leeds*, p. 3.

Scott wrote his 'literary memorial' shortly after the war as a testament to the local men who died in battle (his book also contains the Leeds Roll of Honour), providing an overview of the history of the city in the war. As such, it is a rich primary source, its value lying in the focus on the minutiae of events particular to Leeds during the war. Incorporating intricate details from municipal council membership and local fund-raising, from the regional munitions' factories to women's war work, the book also includes a brief section on the military tribunals in Leeds.²⁵ This has been an essential and incredibly useful text to understand the history of the city in the war. In conjunction with the local newspapers, it has been used to trace the timeline of events, and, principally, to challenge assumed contentions. Written only five years after the end of the war, Scott went to great lengths to applaud the work of the people of the city during the war, which he claimed they undertook willingly and in a spirit of national mindedness. Although he acknowledged that the 'stress and strain of that long period of war time can never be forgotten'. Indeed, he referred to it as a 'haunting memory' and that the city, as the country, was 'hallowed by tears'. However he also claimed that the city was 'sanctified by sacrifice' and that Leeds played a great part in the eventual victory.²⁶ Scott did not acknowledge any nuance in his war narrative, written as it was in that difficult post-war period, when all belligerent nations were struggling to rebuild their economies as well as still grieving for their war dead. Instead, Scott focused solely on how the Leeds people 'rich and poor' selflessly 'rose to the occasion with splendid generosity'.²⁷ This thesis diverts from Scott's view of the city as a homologous whole. It will instead will explore the range of responses in Leeds during the whole duration of the war and its immediate aftermath, to provide a more equitable interpretation.

²⁵ Scott, *Leeds*, p. 315.

²⁶ Scott, *Leeds*, p. 3.

²⁷ Scott, *Leeds*, p. 246.

Newspapers

Local newspapers are another main primary source which have been scrutinized to investigate the impact of the war on the city of Leeds, and their value cannot be overstated. John Tosh asserts that the ‘most important published primary source for the historian is the press’.²⁸ However newspapers do not always show the full picture of actual experiences despite their narrative claiming to be truth, often showing extreme representations of events with multifarious motivations. The misinformation that the press provided to the public was recognised by some of the people in Leeds, as letters to some of the soldiers illustrated: ‘I am sorry to say I don’t think the Germans are beaten yet, and I am afraid the newspapers do not tell half the goings on’.²⁹ They therefore cannot be seen as totally reliable for an indicator of facts, or, more pertinently, the public mood. In utilizing local newspapers as a valuable source of information on Leeds during the war, the covert evidence has been identified via reading between the lines. This includes the political motivations which influenced the national mindedness of the more conservative press, such as the *Yorkshire Post*, and the anti-war sympathies of the more liberal newspapers, including notably the *Leeds Weekly Citizen*. This thesis will provide an analysis of how their reporting differed, including discussion of the adoption of tactics to adhere to Government censorship, to ensure that public morale was not detrimentally affected. The bias of the various newspapers can be seen as adding to their

²⁸ John Tosh, *The Pursuit of History* (Harlow: Longman, 1999) cited in Adrian Bingham, ‘Ignoring the First Draft of History? Searching for the Popular Press in Studies of Twentieth Century Britain’, *Media History*, 18.3-4 (2012), 311-326 (p. 311), see also Frank Mort, ‘Intellectual Pluralism and the Future of British History’, *History Workshop Journal*, 72.1 (2011), 212-221 (p. 215).

²⁹ Leeds, Leeds University Library Special Collections (LULSC), Liddle Collection (LC), LIDDLE/WW1/GS/1610, Robert Tolson Letters, 1914-1918.

historical value, which this thesis will analyse. Commentary will also be made on how the reporting changed as the war went on.

Out of the huge body of the press in Leeds, this thesis heavily relies on two main local newspapers as the primary sources to research the city during the war, namely the *Leeds Weekly Citizen* and *Yorkshire Post*. These were chosen as they provided contrasting views on the aspects of the war that have been investigated for this research, views which both evinced and influenced some readers. The *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, owned by the Leeds Labour Publishing Society, was published as ‘Labour’s Voice in Leeds’, and as such was highly sympathetic to socialist groups and their motivations.³⁰ It was one of several new local labour newspapers launched in 1912, a list which included the nearby *Bradford Pioneer*, and Deian Hopkin describes both West Yorkshire papers as ‘major undertakings’ for the labour cause.³¹ Along with other northern titles, such as the *Sheffield Guardian* and *Manchester Weekly Citizen*, the *Leeds Weekly Citizen* obtained most of its news from the national Labour news service, and as such ‘reflected national policy’.³² Information regarding local Trades Councils and strike reports were provided in each edition, as well as contributions from both national and local socialist personalities. These included key figures in the city, including Labour MP James O’Grady and anti-war campaigner Isabella Ford. Hopkin observes that the *Leeds Weekly Citizen* served ‘the whole of the Leeds labour movement’ and asserts that it ‘became in time the longest serving labour paper in Britain.’³³ However the low circulation figures meant that the Labour Party message was ‘less easily disseminated’ than those of the national

³⁰ For further detailed information regarding the history of the press in Leeds, see Eric Sigsworth, ‘The Development of the Press’, *Leeds Journal*, 29.1 (1958), 441-444.

³¹ Deian Hopkin, ‘The Labour Party Press’, in Kenneth Douglas Brown, ed, *The First Labour Party, 1906-1914* (London: Croom Helm, 1985), pp. 105-128 (p. 122).

³² Duncan Tanner, *Political Change and the Labour Party, 1900-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 85.

³³ Hopkin, ‘The Labour Party Press’, p. 108.

Liberal or Conservative newspapers.³⁴ Therefore during the war the niche readership of the newspaper meant the circulation figures were significantly less than that of rival local publications. Although it was not overtly anti-war in its stance, the *Leeds Weekly Citizen* was sympathetic to the anti-war cause, and took the initial view that it was a capitalist conflict, as provocative headlines at the beginning of the war illustrated: ‘A European War: A Continent Involved in Murder’, and ‘Militarist Madness: Europe in the Melting Pot’.³⁵ As the war progressed, however, the newspaper revered the soldiers as workers, and, although it never condemned the war as such, it did continue to promote the work of the peace groups.³⁶

To counterbalance the socialist stance of the *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, the broadly conservative *Yorkshire Post* newspaper has also been intensely scrutinized for this study. The *Yorkshire Post* was founded in 1754 as the *Leeds Intelligencer*, which was initially published weekly until it was bought by the Yorkshire Conservative Newspaper Company in 1866 and became the *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer*.³⁷ One of Britain’s first daily papers, the title was shortened to *Yorkshire Post* in 1883, and the first issue of the *Yorkshire Post* on 2 July 1866 proclaimed its political leanings: ‘The political principles of this journal are Conservative [...] It will be at once conservative and progressive, a foe to democracy and revolution’.³⁸ By the time of the outbreak of the war, the *Yorkshire Post* was under the editorship of John Searle Ragland (‘JSR’) Philips, who steered the paper through the chaos of the war, with, ‘consummate skill and balance, delivering a wide range of what we now call “background news” about the tremendous events of the time’.³⁹ In the years preceding the war, Philips was

³⁴ Tanner, *Political Change*, p. 85.

³⁵ ‘A European War: A Continent Involved in Murder’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 7 August 1914, p. 5; ‘Militarist Madness: Europe in the Melting Pot’, 21 August 1914, p. 3.

³⁶ See Pearce, *Communities of Resistance*, p. 375.

³⁷ Sigsworth, ‘The Development of the Press’, p. 441.

³⁸ ‘Yorkshire Conservative Daily Newspaper’, *Yorkshire Post*, 2 July 1866, p. 5.

³⁹ Guy Schofield, *The Men that Carry the News* (London: The Cranford Press, 1974), p. 93.

known for his sympathy towards Germany and endeavoured to promote friendly relations, although there was continual emphasis on the value of the British navy. Philips also warned his readers in editorials of the likelihood of war and was in no doubt that the culpability for its instigation lay with Germany. Some of his commentators justify these views with the claim that he was 'always a realist'.⁴⁰ The *Yorkshire Post* announced the outbreak of the war in August 1914 with the assertion that, 'There are times and conditions in which peace is impossible', and emphasised the nature of Britain's obligations to France.⁴¹ To ensure that the latest news was being reported on the events of the war, the *Yorkshire Post* made arrangements with the foreign correspondents of the *Daily Telegraph*, as well as various agencies, for a service of telegrams to be received updating the paper on news of the war. This had previously been the case in the Boer War, and these dispatches were exclusive to this Leeds based paper.⁴² Although both Leeds newspapers, and others, were significant to the public by the time of the war, the readership of the daily *Yorkshire Post* naturally surpassed that of the *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, not least due to its wider scope of the whole of Yorkshire rather limited to the Leeds area. Their considerable reports have been thoroughly analysed and compared for this thesis, to build up a picture of Leeds as the war progressed and the impact of its major events on the public.

Ego Documents

An abundance of documents in Leeds University's Liddle Collection and West Yorkshire Archive Service (WYAS), Leeds, relating to the city during the war have also been utilized

⁴⁰ Mildred Gill and Frank Beckwith, *The Yorkshire Post: Two Centuries* (Bradford: Yorkshire Conservative Newspaper Company, 1954).

⁴¹ 'Power at War: European Conflict Opened', *Yorkshire Post*, 4 August 1914, p. 9.

⁴² Gill and Beckwith, *The Yorkshire Post*, p. 65.

for this study, including diaries and letters. These have been invaluable in collating evidence of the impact of the war on the city. As with any primary source, the inherent bias within personal papers has been duly considered, although, again similarly to the position taken with newspapers, the implicit lack of impartiality can itself be interpreted as historical evidence. For example, regarding diaries from the war, when consulting these one must ask why they were written, for what purpose, and the answer these questions have been illuminating, not least in their illustration of the class differences that existed. The diary of middle-class Ella Lethem, a young woman living in Leeds during the war, contained the ruminations of a young person on the home front in Leeds with her terrible fears for her fiancé and brother in the armed forces – ‘I am afraid’ – interspersed with complaints regarding the food shortages and comments on her social life unconnected to the conflict.⁴³ This document was written as an outlet for this young woman living through unprecedented times, which are acknowledged within her diary, as are the everyday concerns of life not directly related to the war. This indicates that she, and others in Leeds society, though preoccupied with the conditions of the war, were also getting on with their lives: a theory that this thesis will address.

Soldiers’ Letters

Letters from soldiers from their training bases or fighting fronts back to those at home have been consulted in profusion for this research. They are a rich source of information on the conditions the war created in Leeds and represent ways in which soldiers’ attitudes influenced those of the home front, and vice versa. The soldiers’ letters sent home were cherished and kept safe, therefore much more likely to have survived than the letters from the home front to the soldiers at battle. These have also been used to investigate how the soldiers

⁴³ LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/DF/074, Diary of Ella Lethem, 1917-1918, 6 October 1917.

viewed those left at home. This thesis will discuss the soldiers' concern over their loved ones in Leeds, which was juxtaposed with a resentment towards the people on the home front. This illustrates the multifarious range of emotions which co-existed at the time of the war. The letters of soldiers are particularly interesting to compare, especially those written by obviously educated, professional men and those of less educated blue-collar workers.⁴⁴ One such batch of letters are from the more educated men who had previously been employed by Leeds City Council prior to joining the armed forces.⁴⁵ These letters were instigated by the newly appointed City Council Treasurer, James Mitchell, in 1917, when he wrote regular circular letters to all colleagues from the department with news of the home front and other colleagues in the armed services. This source is therefore the former employees' response to him as soldiers. These letters were sent on a regular basis from beginning of 1917 to the beginning of 1919, therefore cover a significant period of the latter half of the war and post-war period.⁴⁶ The soldiers themselves were certainly pleased and grateful to receive the correspondence from Mr Mitchell, as Sergeant Edwin Redshaw outlined in May 1917:

I am sure that, like all the other absentees from the office, these periodical letters from you, sir, are a very real pleasure. We sometimes feel so out of everything where our own city is concerned [...] [it] does us good when we most require cheering.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ For example, compare the letters of Private Herbert Oates of the Leeds Rifles to his working-class family, namely wife Beatie and four children, during the war: LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/GS/1197, Papers of Private Herbert Oates, 1914-1918, to those of Norman Baxendale, a Leeds City Council office worker on the Western Front in France: Leeds, West Yorkshire Archive Service, LC TR., Leeds City Council Treasurer's Correspondence with Employees Enlisted in the Armed Forces, 1917-1919, Norman Baxendale.

⁴⁵ See WYAS Leeds, CL TR Leeds City Council Treasurer's Correspondence with Employees Enlisted in the Armed Forces, 1917-1919.

⁴⁶ A letter from Gunner Irwin Tate on 26 December 1918 refers to circular letter number 20, which shows the monthly regularity of these letters: WYAS Leeds, LC TR, Leeds City Council Treasurer's Correspondence with Employees Enlisted in the Armed Forces, 1917-1919, Gunner Irwin A Tate, 26 December 1918.

⁴⁷ WYAS Leeds, LC TR, Leeds City Council Treasurer's Correspondence with Employees Enlisted in the Armed Forces, 1917-1919, Sergeant Edwin Redshaw, 17 May 1917.

These letters are a previously unseen and fascinating source of evidence from the war which provide an insight into the thoughts and lives of this particular group of educated, lower middle-class men from Leeds. As they have not been used for academic purposes previously, they add an invaluable originality to this thesis. Significantly, much of their contents support several points about the war that this thesis highlights, including the experience in the armed services for the local soldiers, as well as, more pertinently, life on the Leeds home front. They add much value to conclusions that this thesis will outline, as the soldiers' views in many ways mirrored the views of the people on the home front in Leeds. These include placing the onus of blame for the war and its horrors firmly on the shoulders of Germany, the dire need for victory to crush the enemy at any cost, the wish to fight the war to the bitter end and, importantly, that the many deaths were a sacrifice worth making. They have also shown that the soldiers from Leeds were well aware that the people on the home front were working in their own way for the war effort. These soldiers' letters have also pointed to potential further research, which will be outlined in the Conclusion.

The contrast of these letters from the employees of the City Council to other soldiers' letters analysed for this research from working class men with limited education is striking, and the differences can obviously be seen in the grammar and spelling. The letters of soldiers to their relatives at home do need to be approached with a certain circumspection, however, and therefore the sentiments expressed within them should not only be taken at face value. The soldiers' letters' line of ostensible cheer often belied a darker truth about their circumstances on the battle front. Moreover, the censoring of soldiers' letters meant that any vivid accounts of the soldiers' discomfort would be redacted, and many soldiers showed an awareness of this

in the writing of them.⁴⁸ This thesis will show that many soldiers wrote home in a manner to convince their families that their army life was bearable, which was not the whole truth. In his recollections of the war, Robert Bell of Leeds, Second Lieutenant in the Royal Flying Corps and Royal Air Force, stated: ‘During the war, I kept a written record [...] On re-reading it I am inclined to think it fails to describe adequately the misery we often had to endure on the Western Front’.⁴⁹ This indicates that records kept at the time do not always reflect the true experience, as soldiers were possibly too busy becoming accustomed to their army life to reflect upon it too deeply at the time. Furthermore, the fact that Lieutenant Bell’s post-war narrative differs from his wartime narrative reflects the difference between the lived experience of the war and the memory of it, as Watson’s research concludes: ‘The evolution of the war story has been complex, and is still ongoing, and ideas about experience and memory always reflect their own times.’⁵⁰

Brief Overview of the Historiography

The impact of the war on the home fronts both within and outside Britain has been researched extensively by historians, and the notable studies which focus upon the evidence of the impact of the war on working people have provided a point of departure for this research in

⁴⁸ For acknowledgement of censorship in soldiers’ letters, see for example LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/GS/1197, Papers of Private Herbert Oates, 1914-1918, LIDDLE/WW1/DF/129 Diaries and letters of Private Henry (Harry) Old, 1914-1918, Leeds, WYAS, WYL714, WYL700, WYL707, WYL739, WYL712, WYL740 – War diaries of active service of Lt A G Rigby, 1/8th West Yorkshire Regiment (Leeds Rifles), 17 April 1915, WYAS Leeds, LC TR, Leeds City Council Treasurer’s Correspondence with Employees Enlisted in the Armed Forces, 1917-1919, Driver R S Wilby, 29 April 1917.

⁴⁹ LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/AIR/021, Typescript Recollections of Robert Norman Bell, 1915-1918.

⁵⁰ Watson, *Fighting Different Wars*, p. 311.

Leeds.⁵¹ This thesis therefore contributes to the scholarship as it is rich in the evidence of the impact of the conflict on a specific locality which was greatly influenced by the war. Despite the plethora of scholarship on the conflict internationally, local studies focused upon one place are still comparatively rare. One notable exception is Roger Chickering's study which focuses upon the German city of Freiburg during the war.⁵² This traces the all-encompassing impact of the war on this one city, and illustrates how the war consumed every-day life for ordinary people, not least regarding food and fuel shortages and contentions over wages. He outlines the progression of the war chronologically, and illustrates how the war-weariness steadily increased as the war drew on, with an emphasis on the cost of living. This study will follow a similar path to that of Chickering, to provide an overview of the consequences of the war on the city of Leeds as the years progressed, to highlight the nuances that existed within a local area. Clearly Leeds is not Freiburg, and several factors that affected the Germany city, such as the Allied air attacks, are not applicable to Leeds. Nonetheless the fact that the war wearied ordinary people in Freiburg, to the extent that they were emotionally and physically drained, some even positively opposing it, is an interesting analogy to the experience in Leeds.

⁵¹ For the British home front, see Braybon, *Evidence*; DeGroot, *Blighty*, Richard Wall and Jay M Winter, eds, *The Upheaval of War*, Ferguson, *Pity of War*, Gregory, *Last Great War*, Hunt, 'The Politics of Food', Marwick, *The Deluge*, Millman, *Managing Domestic Dissent*, Sheffield, *Forgotten Victory*, Stevenson, *Cataclysm*, Strachan, *The First World War*, A J P Taylor, *English History*, Winter, *The Great War*. Studies on working class life on the home front in other countries involved in the war include Chickering, *The Great War*, Kocka, *Facing Total War*, Davis, *Home Fires Burning*, Daniel, *War from Within*, Engel, 'Not by Bread Alone'. See also Stephen Broadberry and Mark Harrison, eds, *The Economics of World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), Roger Chickering and Stig Förster, eds, *Great War, Total War: Combat and Mobilization on the Western Front, 1914-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) and Leonhard, *Pandora's Box*, for detailed comparisons of the belligerent nations.

⁵² Chickering, *The Great War*.

Pierre Purseigle also suggests that by looking at the experience of societies as well as armies the history of warfare may be brought into and combined with general history, and Ute Daniel's research on Germany in the war is a prime example of this type of interpretation of history.⁵³ Focusing upon the war in the country from the perspective of working-class women, Daniel recognises that women were at the very centre of the war experience. She illustrates how real people are painted, using the evidence of human life, to provide a clear idea of the living circumstances in the war. This thesis will highlight the experience for working-class women in this northern British city, as well as provide a discourse to compare to the national level, similarly to Daniel's approach. There are further publications which are focused on specific localities in the First World War, again primarily concentrating on the experience of the working-class, however these tend to relate to other belligerent countries rather than Britain, which again highlights the need for this type of study on British cities.⁵⁴

The importance of the home front to the eventual outcome of the war is commented upon by several historians, including Karen Hunt, who highlights it as novel: 'One of the new conflict zones of the first total war was everyday life on the home front'.⁵⁵ David Stevenson discusses the British public's positive response to the 'emergency' of the war, and suggests that, 'However weary many civilians became [...] [they] were committed to fighting until victory was won', an assertion which will be examined in this study in relation to Leeds.⁵⁶ This thesis has been particularly informed and influenced by Adrian Gregory's history of the war in Britain, in which he places the home front experiences as paramount and pivotal as those on

⁵³ Pierre Purseigle, *Warfare and Belligerence: Perspectives in First World War Studies* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2005), p. 3, Daniel, *War from Within*.

⁵⁴ Winter and Robert, eds, *Capital Cities at War*, Healy, *Vienna*, Davis, *Home Fires Burning*, Engel, 'Not by Bread Alone', Judith Smart, 'Feminists, Food and the Fair Price: The Cost of Living Demonstrations in Melbourne, August - September 1917', *Labour History*, 50 (1986), 113-131.

⁵⁵ Hunt, 'Gender and Everyday Life', see also Hunt, 'The Politics of Food'.

⁵⁶ Stevenson, *Cataclysm*, p. 215.

the battlefield for the final outcome of the war, to illustrate how society bore the hardships of the war.⁵⁷ In particular, Gregory's insights on the public's reaction to the war, and the influence of government and press propaganda on this, especially regarding patriotism, anti-German sentiment and the rhetoric of sacrifice, have resonated with the findings of this thesis within Leeds. Niall Ferguson also comments upon the reaction of the nation to the war, including the role of the Government propaganda and the press, and his theory that most men who fought in the war did so freely and with enthusiasm will be discussed in this thesis, with reference to the men of Leeds.⁵⁸ Both Peter Simkins and Gregory highlight the significant bearing the separation allowances had on both recruitment and the lives of the families left at home, and again this thesis will investigate their claim that the inefficiency of its implementation acted as a barrier to men joining up.⁵⁹

Historians generally acquiesce that class was crucial to society's experience of the war and the extent to which this was the case in Leeds will be investigated by this thesis, the assumption being that the working-class suffered the worst.⁶⁰ Arthur Marwick, however, asserts that the effects of the war on the working classes in Britain was not all detrimental, and claims that they had multiple gains due to their engagement with war work and politics.⁶¹ My thesis will challenge this theory with reference to the working-class in Leeds. One major way in which one would assume that working class people suffered more in the war than the middle classes was their need for food, in which issue there was the double-edged sword of shortages as well as rising prices. I will provide detailed commentary on this topic,

⁵⁷ Gregory, *Last Great War*.

⁵⁸ Ferguson, *Pity of War*.

⁵⁹ Peter Simkins, *Kitchener's Army: The Raising of the New Armies 1914-1916* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), p. 106, Gregory, *Last Great War*, p. 32.

⁶⁰ Hunt, 'Gender and Everyday Life', p. 157.

⁶¹ Arthur Marwick, 'The Impact of the First World War on British Society', *Journal of Contemporary British History*, 3.1 (1968), 51-63 (p. 62), see also Marwick, *The Deluge*.

particularly relating to working class women of Leeds, on whom it impacted primarily. As Hunt claims, ‘Despite all the other demands on her time, few questioned that it was a woman’s responsibility to find the food to feed her family’.⁶² Belinda Davis, Barbara Engel and Maureen Healy have also researched this area, although on the wider continent rather than specifically in Britain, which again illustrates the need for similar local studies in British cities.⁶³ In Britain, the food shortages never reached such critical level as in other nations, however it still remained the case in all nations. Chickering argues that the most basic and vital need during the war was food, and highlights that urban areas were particularly challenged in this respect as they were dependent on outside sources for their supplies.⁶⁴ Significantly, Leeds was large enough not to depend on outside sources for food supplies, which was vital to the city’s war experience. In conjunction with the armaments and other war-related goods factories therein playing a crucial role in supplying employment and keeping up morale locally, this thesis will argue that the city’s crucial position as a war industry city dictated this experience.

The justification, therefore, of the focus of Leeds for this thesis is its specificity. The experiences this thesis will uncover challenges some of the existing understanding of the war, which will lead to a greater understanding of the war’s impact on the home front in Britain. Regarding the economics of the war, Stephen Broadberry and Mark Harrison’s nine country study puts forward the theory that the ‘outcome of global war was primarily a matter of the levels of economic development of each side and the scale of resources that they wielded’, and adds, regarding the home front, that ‘The human factor mattered too: how well the people

⁶² Hunt, ‘Gender and Everyday Life’, p. 165. See also Hunt, ‘The Politics of Food’.

⁶³ Davis, *Home Fires Burning*, Engel, ‘Not by Bread Alone’, Healy, *Vienna*. See also Lynne Taylor, ‘Food Riots Revisited’, *Journal of Social History*, 30.2 (1996), 483-496, p. 493.

⁶⁴ See Anthony James Coles, ‘The Moral Economy of the Crowd: Some Twentieth Century Food Riots’, *Journal of British Studies*, 18.1 (1978), 157-176 (p. 159), Chickering, *The Great War*, p. 160.

were motivated.’⁶⁵ The motivation of the people of Leeds in their willingness to be engaged with the necessities of the war will be investigated in this thesis. In addition to comparatively successful food management, the imperative theme of industry was certainly the main way Leeds society engaged with the war effort. Several historians have focused upon war industry, especially relating to women, although these studies are generic rather than focusing upon a fixed locality.⁶⁶ Therefore, despite the rich body of literature relating to the war, there is still a lack of local studies on British cities which were significantly changed by the war. This imperative research has thus sought to bridge this gap in knowledge. It seeks to uncover an unbiased history of Leeds during the war, via an even-handed approach without specific vested interest. It therefore provides a model for further research on other British cities.

Summary

In this thesis I will argue that Leeds as a city was a special case during the war, due to the unique conditions the war introduced with regards to the war industry, and the local politics dictating that the dire need for victory became the city’s official main priority. In focusing upon a local area for this study it has been possible to identify that there were regional reasons for the reactions of the people to the war and the extent of this influence. This thesis therefore focuses upon the impact of the war upon the people of the city, tracing the main

⁶⁵ Broadberry and Harrison, *The Economics of World War I*, p. 1.

⁶⁶ Leeds is cited with reference to Barnbow No. 1 Shell Filling Factory by Angela Woollacott, *On Her Their Lives Depend: Munitions Workers in the Great War* (London: University of California Press, 1994), p. 79. For more information on Barnbow No. 1 Filling Factory, see R H Gummer and William Herbert Scott, *The Story of Barnbow: Embodying a Complete Record of War Work and Service at the No. 1 Filling Factory, Leeds* (Leeds: J D Hunter, 1919) and for more information on women workers in the war, see Gail Braybon, *Women Workers in the First World War: The British Experience* (London: Croom Helm, 1981), Braybon and Summerfield, *Women’s Experience*, Susan Grayzel, *Women and the First World War* (Harlow: Longman, 2002), Arthur Marwick, *Women at War, 1914-1918* (London: Fontana for the Imperial War Museum, 1977), Thom, *Nice Girls and Rude Girls*.

events of the war and their impact upon the public. These include the introduction of conscription and the growing realisation of the horror of war with casualty lists from the front, the food and fuel shortages throughout the war, and news of the Russian revolution and America's entrance into the war in 1917. I will illustrate, however, that the situation was nuanced, and, as was no doubt the case in many British cities during this time, there was a presence of both consensus and dissent in the outlook on the war in Leeds. Through the evidence provided primarily by local newspapers, analysed for the four plus years of the war to map the timeline and their reporting of the main events of the war, this thesis uncovers the increasing discomfort felt by the ordinary people of Leeds throughout the war years. It will emphasise that there were different reasons for this war-weariness, which changed as the war progressed.

To show this change over time, this thesis will examine each year of the war chronologically, to discover how it impacted upon the city of Leeds during the progressing years and will also show to what extent attitudes changed as the war advanced. This thesis consists of the Introduction, followed by five main chapters which take each respective year of the war as their focal point and will discuss how the events of the war are reflected in local newspapers and other archival sources. A sixth smaller chapter will focus upon the post war years, including post-war bitterness in how Leeds commemorated her war dead. The thesis ends with a summarising Conclusion, which will outline the research findings, how life on the home front in Leeds was impacted by events during the war, how this links to the soldiers in the field and the problem of losses, and also point to possible areas of future research. This thesis is therefore valuable as an original piece of research on a war industry city which was dramatically transformed by the conflict, and highlights how the people of Leeds responded to the challenges it brought.

Chapter One: 1914 – ‘But One Duty for All’

Introduction

Lord Harewood, Director-General of the Territorial Force, stated three months after the start of the First World War that, ‘[At the onset of war] there was no unemployment in Leeds, but, on the contrary, almost a boom in trade.’⁶⁷ This chapter will investigate this claim, to provide an analysis of the outbreak of the war and its effect on Leeds. It will incorporate discussion of the reactions of inhabitants of the city to the conflict, thereby adhering to the aim of this thesis to uncover the holistic picture of how the home front was shaped by the challenges of war. It will show that Leeds as a city did indeed see a ‘boom in trade’ in the first few months of the war, as indeed it did the years thereafter, and will examine the consequences of this on other pressing aspects of the war, notably recruitment. The war had an impact on the city of Leeds from the very outset. When war was declared on 4 August 1914, the public began panic buying food, and Leeds City Council immediately held an extraordinary meeting to discuss their response to the news, subsequently agreeing to suspend all municipal elections for the duration of the war. It could be argued that the city was galvanised into action, as described by Scott: ‘The first shock of war almost dazed our people, but by no means to inertness. Leeds was very much on the alert.’⁶⁸ However, Scott’s generalized recollections of the situation are customarily lacking in nuance and bely a more complex reality. Leeds was a thriving industrial centre in 1914, notably for textile manufacture, yet its pre-war social and political structure was rife with inherent tensions between the different classes, divisions which were exacerbated by the war. The history of the formation of the Leeds ‘Pals’, the 15th

⁶⁷ ‘West Riding Territorials: Lord Harewood on Leeds Recruiting’, *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 27 October 1914, p. 7.

⁶⁸ Laurie Milner, *Leeds Pals: A History of the 15th (Service) Battalion (1st Leeds) The Prince of Wales’s Own (West Yorkshire Regiment) 1914-1918* (London: Leo Cooper, 1991), Scott, *Leeds*, pp. 3-15, p. 9.

Battalion, West Yorkshire Regiment, for instance, foregrounded the crucial economic and social differences within the city.⁶⁹ The class divisions that existed at the time were a major cause of antagonism and imperative factor in the societal reactions to the war. There is evidence to show that there was much support for the war within the city, seen in the contributions to Leeds City Council's war funds as well as, notably, the enrolment to the local army in the form of the several battalions formed. As the extensive research of Edward Spiers has shown, recruitment to the city's battalions was steady, with increased recruitment at the end of August and beginning of September 1914.⁷⁰ There are complex motives for this 'war enthusiasm', however, which was not as widespread as it ostensibly appeared. Men signed up to the armed forces for a myriad of reasons, including through a sense of duty, as a reaction to the news from the war, to live up to the masculine ideology and for the economic stability it provided. However, significantly, comparisons with national figures indicate that Leeds had significantly lower recruitment rates than similar sized populations.⁷¹ One crucial reason for this lower recruitment was the industry. The city became a key centre for the manufacturing of army uniforms and blankets, as well as aeroplanes and munitions, during the war. This industry and the increase in employment it brought to the city is pivotal to society in wartime Leeds. Quite simply, the levels of recruitment in Leeds were directly related to the mobilization of the whole of society into the work that the war brought. The stable economy that the war brought to Leeds also meant that the outbreak of the war did not create any significant overt anti-war action in the city. There was employment, for both men and women, therefore there was less to protest at locally than there may have been nationally. However, subtle dissent can be detected in the lower recruitment levels. This, juxtaposed with the willingness of many in society to work in the growing industries that the war helped to

⁶⁹ Milner, *Leeds Pals*.

⁷⁰ Spiers, 'Voluntary Recruiting'.

⁷¹ Spiers, 'Voluntary Recruiting'.

prosper, highlights the underlying framework of both consensus and dissent within the city in 1914.

Pre-war Leeds

David Thornton emphasises that before the war Leeds was a ‘divided’ city, ‘politically, socially, and culturally’.⁷² By the time of the outbreak of the war at the beginning of August 1914, Leeds was the second largest extended urban area within the county of Yorkshire, with a population of over 445,000, just slightly below the South Yorkshire city of Sheffield.⁷³ Comparison to other major English cities show that Leeds was in the ‘top ten’.⁷⁴ Leeds had been growing in size as an industrial centre even since before its official granting of city status in 1893, and by the turn of the twentieth century was recognised as one of the major industrial cities in the country.⁷⁵ The main industries of the city all brought much employment to the area, contributing to the increase in population. These were based in clothing manufacture, dyeing and tanning; and engineering, ironworks, coal mining and transport were important by-products of these prime industries. The fact that the city’s core industries before the war became essential to the war effort meant that industry was crucial to

⁷² Thornton, *Leeds*, p. 173.

⁷³ Spiers, ‘Voluntary Recruiting’, p. 296, Spiers reports that the population of Leeds was 445,568 according to the census of England and Wales 1911, Pearce, *Communities of Resistance*, p. 358, the Census of 1911 recorded 454,632 inhabitants in Sheffield.

⁷⁴ Pearce, *Communities of Resistance*, p. 109, p. 358.

⁷⁵ For further information regarding pre-war Leeds, see Aubrey Price, *Leeds and its Neighbourhood* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909) and Fraser, ed, *A History of Modern Leeds*. Price, Joseph Buckman and Dierdre Busfield all show that the period of growth within the clothing manufacture in the early years of the nineteenth century was largely due to Jewish immigration at this time, as well as the national rise of domestic industry and piecework: Price, *Leeds and its Neighbourhood*, Joseph Buckman, *Immigrants and the Class Struggle: The Jewish Immigrant in Leeds, 1880-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983), Dierdre Busfield, “‘Tailoring the Millions’: The Women Workers of the Leeds Clothing Industry, 1880-1914’, *Textile History*, 16.1 (1985), 69-92 (p. 72).

the impact of the war on Leeds. The city also had a significant agricultural base within its satellite suburbs, although this wider area is beyond the scope of this research.

Despite the specific industries in Leeds prior to the war providing work for many, the class differences in the years before the war were considerable. For some, the first decade or so of the twentieth century were ‘years of affluence and success’, yet for others in the city the major economic slumps which had taken place nationally and locally were clearly felt.⁷⁶

Private Allen of the 3rd/8th Battalion, West Yorkshire Regiment, in his recollections of pre-war Leeds, agreed with this latter point, as he recalled the class differences in pre-war days, ‘The extremes were very great in those days’, and it was ‘quite common in winter to see children on the streets in Leeds without shoes or stockings’, even though:

Seventeen miles away at Harrogate the hotels were full of people who had overeaten and were taking the water [...] When I was fourteen I was apprenticed to an ironmonger in West Street, a very slummy part of Leeds then. The houses were horrible and there was much drunkenness and fighting; women and men.⁷⁷

However, Allen claimed that life ‘wasn’t all drab’, as ‘in the summer the band would play in the park once or twice a week’, there was a ‘good art gallery’ and his family ‘usually had a week’s holiday at the seaside’.⁷⁸ Thornton also asserts that for the ‘first time working and middle classes found themselves more and more undergoing shared experiences in the newly provided art gallery, libraries, parks and sporting venues’.⁷⁹ By the time of the war the city also had a growing education base, as well as theatres and music halls, and it appeared that, notwithstanding the distinct class divisions and poverty that certainly existed, pre-war Leeds was a thriving hub for at least some of its inhabitants. As Allen stated, at this time of the

⁷⁶ Thornton, *Leeds*, p. 173.

⁷⁷ LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/WF/REC/01/A6, H E Allen Manuscript Account, 1914-1918.

⁷⁸ LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/WF/REC/01/A6, H E Allen Manuscript Account, 1914-1918.

⁷⁹ Thornton, *Leeds*.

outbreak of the war, ‘Leeds was a progressive city’.⁸⁰ Leeds’ distinct status as a city in improvement and reform prior to the war, whose inhabitants were inured to hard work in its industries, may well account for the pragmatism with which many of them responded to the war. Although it must be emphasised that this was not the only experience and the nuances need to be acknowledged.

The booming industry in the city prior to the war had brought an increased awareness of the rights of workers to the forefront, which meant the politics of the city was in flux at this time. In his scrutiny of the politics in Leeds in the pre-war years, Michael Meadowcroft asserts that the final months of 1913 saw ‘a big upsurge in Labour’s electoral support – fifty per cent up on the poor results of the previous year’, which indicates that pre-war Leeds was becoming increasingly politicized, and the composition of the City Council before the war illustrated that the Conservatives had the majority of councillors in 1913, with a total of thirty four; the Liberals had eighteen and Labour sixteen.⁸¹ Therefore although Labour were becoming more popular, the Conservatives were still the dominant party in the Council. This would prove to be significant to Leeds in the war years, as their members were unanimously staunchly pro-war, unlike the Liberals and particularly the Labour Party, who both had many members who were anti-war. The politics of early twentieth century Leeds have also been explored by Thornton, who provides a detailed outline of the rise of the Labour Party in Leeds, highlighting that it gained its first councillor in the city in 1903, and states that by 1909 the ‘Leeds labour movement was able to boast 11,232 members made up of trade unionists, socialist clubs, ILP members and women’s groups’.⁸² This included the addition of the *Leeds Weekly Citizen* newspaper to aid the dissemination of its message in 1912. The Conservatives

⁸⁰ LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/WF/REC/01/A6, H E Allen Manuscript Account, 1914-1918.

⁸¹ Meadowcroft, ‘The Years of Political Transition’, p. 410.

⁸² Thornton, *Leeds*, p. 178.

and Liberals formed alliances in certain wards of Leeds to ‘combat the Labour threat’ and Conservative Alderman Charles Wilson, who was leader of the Council by 1914, regularly suggested alliances with the Liberals against the socialist election candidates.⁸³ Although these coalitions did not actually take place, it indicates the strength that the labour movement was gaining in the city at the time, clearly perceived as a threat to the other parties.

The public need for a movement to represent the working class is illustrated by the number of industrial disputes in the country at this time, as workers claimed higher wages. Thornton claims that a ‘strike culture had gripped Britain’, which included three strikes in Leeds in 1913: corporation workers in June and December, carters in October and even some schoolchildren went on strike when they refused to attend school. He also claims that the effect of the strike of three thousand corporation workers on 11 December 1913 ‘paralysed Leeds’, as gas and electric supplies ceased, trams stopped running and uncollected refuse piled up in the city.⁸⁴ Non-union workers were subsequently recruited to ensure that these services could continue, which led to violence as strikers verbally abused the non-union workers and mounted police had to be brought in. The *Yorkshire Post* even reported explosives being thrown at Crown Point power station during this strike of municipal workers.⁸⁵ The *Yorkshire Weekly Post* also reported these explosions during the ‘Leeds strike’ as ‘dastardly outrages’, illustrating therefore that the stance of this particular newspaper was not at all sympathetic to the workers’ cause.⁸⁶ The duration of the strike and onset of violence in January 1914 prompted Wilson to set up a special committee to address this problem and subsequently the beginning of a full-scale strike by Leeds Council’s

⁸³ Thornton, *Leeds*, p. 178.

⁸⁴ Thornton, *Leeds*, p. 178.

⁸⁵ Thornton, *Leeds*, p. 180.

⁸⁶ ‘The Leeds Strike. Dastardly Outrages’, *Yorkshire Weekly Post*, 10 January 1914, p. 16.

workpeople was to end in defeat for the strikers.⁸⁷ The special committee consisted of three Conservatives and two Liberal members of the Council; interestingly, and no doubt intentionally, no Labour members were solicited for help, and this committee consequently resolved the situation.⁸⁸ The omission of Labour members from the committee therefore helped to ensure that the strikers were dealt with harshly, without the sympathetic stance of Labour. The conservative *Yorkshire Post* reported on the end of the strike, which it termed the ‘Leeds strike fiasco’, and called on the striking men to ‘surrender’. It also referred to the strikers as ‘hotheads’ and ‘anarchical’, whereas the workers’ supporting *Leeds Weekly Citizen* condemned the special committee as ‘five intolerant Pharoos [sic]’.⁸⁹ The diverging viewpoints of the press to this issue can be seen as a reflection of the contrasting attitudes of people in Leeds also. Although defeated, the strikes did illustrate the feeling in Leeds of some of the workers in the pre-war months, and it is important to note that these workers were not just men.

By the beginning of 1914, over one third of women in Leeds were workers. They were represented in the trade unions also, notably by the local trade unionist Isabella Ford, who, Thornton claims, ‘pioneered women’s trade unionism in the city’.⁹⁰ For the women in Leeds, the clothing manufacturing industry was by far the most popular occupation, employing over sixty percent of all women workers.⁹¹ Anne Kershen states that the clothing industry ‘was the most important employer of female labour in the late nineteenth and early twentieth

⁸⁷ J E Williams, ‘The Leeds Corporation Strike in 1913’ in Asa Briggs and John Savile, eds, *Essays in Labour History, 1918-1939 Volume II* (London: Croom Helm, 1977), pp. 70-95.

⁸⁸ Williams, ‘The Leeds Corporation Strike’, p. 79.

⁸⁹ ‘Forlorn Hope Surrenders’, *Yorkshire Post*, 14 January 1914, p. 8.

⁹⁰ Thornton, *Leeds*, William Gordon Rimmer, ‘Occupations in Leeds, 1841-1951’, in *The Thoresby Miscellany Volume 14* (Leeds: The Thoresby Society, 1968), pp. 131-158.

⁹¹ Busfield, ‘Tailoring the Millions’, p. 77, taken from the census of England and Wales, 1911.

centuries,' due, in part, to its perception as a 'natural occupation' for women.⁹² It was also due in a larger part to its comparatively high wages. In the Leeds clothing industry, the wages were higher than in other parts of the country, as well as higher than in many other occupations locally.⁹³ The increasing population of employed women within the working classes even before the war, significant for the employment of the city, added to calls for rights from the labour movement.

It would seem that Leeds had indeed 'entered the Great War with its political affairs unresolved'.⁹⁴ By 1914, the Labour Party had increased in popularity sufficiently to compete in elections successfully against both the Liberals and Conservatives, however their climb to power was curtailed by the outbreak of war in August 1914 and the subsequent suspension of contested elections by the Council. Ostensibly to ensure stability for the Council in the national crisis of war, the suspension of contested elections also ensured that the Labour Party would not gain any more elected representatives in the Council, so the Conservatives remained the dominant party for the duration of the war. As soon as the war was announced, both the Conservatives and the Liberals within the Council agreed that they would support the Government in any way they could. This included working collaboratively to raise volunteers for the army in the city, a pledge that the Labour Party initially refused to officially acquiesce to. Even once it did, it was merely as individuals rather than the whole party, a motion which was carried by only a small majority.⁹⁵

The division in the views of the Labour Party in Leeds towards the war mirrored that nationally, where members were split into those who were pro-war or anti-war, although the

⁹² Anne Kershen, *Uniting the Tailors: Trade Unionism Amongst the Tailoring Workers of London and Leeds, 1870-1939* (Ilford: F Cass, 1995), p. 87.

⁹³ Kershen, *Uniting the Tailors*, p. 88.

⁹⁴ Meadowcroft, 'The Years of Political Transition', p. 410.

⁹⁵ Meadowcroft, 'The Years of Political Transition', p. 410.

former outnumbered the latter. As Pearce highlights, although their ‘more radical members may have been ILP war resisters’ the majority of Labour Party members ‘followed official Labour party policy and supported the war.’⁹⁶ In Leeds, James O’Grady, Member of Parliament (MP) for Leeds East, who was the only Labour Party MP of the five divisions of the Leeds constituency, was a vocal supporter of the war from its outset. The Leeds Parliamentary constituency had been split into five divisions in 1885, therefore at the time of the war was comprised of Leeds Central, Leeds East, Leeds North, Leeds South and Leeds West. Excepting O’Grady, all MPs in the city were Liberals.⁹⁷ O’Grady and Harvey are the notable two Leeds MPs during the war, and their views illustrated the diversity of the local politics at this time. O’Grady was a complete advocate for the war, including unwavering support for conscription, and Harvey opposed the war and conscription. As Pearce states, ‘Four of Leeds’ five MPs either acquiesced in the war or supported it. The exception was Thomas Edmund ‘Ted’ Harvey’, and he concurs that, ‘James O’Grady, Labour MP for Leeds (East) was at the opposite end of the political spectrum.’⁹⁸

Harvey was a prominent Quaker whose brother was a CO, and who split with his constituency in 1917 due to his ‘uncompromising Quakerism’, notably his stance against conscription.⁹⁹ Harvey was Liberal MP for West Leeds from 1910 to 1918, and consistently voted against conscription in Parliament.¹⁰⁰ Harvey, who was born in Leeds, was a pacifist

⁹⁶ Pearce, *Communities of Resistance*, p. 379.

⁹⁷ For further information on the elections of the MPs, see F W S Craig, *British Parliamentary Election Results 1885-1918* (Aldershot: Parliamentary Research Service, 1989) and F W S Craig, *British Parliamentary Election Results 1918-1949* (Glasgow: Political Reference Publications, 1969).

⁹⁸ Pearce, *Communities of Resistance*, p. 378

⁹⁹ Meadowcroft, ‘The Years of Political Transition’, p. 411; Report of exemption from military service of Wilfred John Harvey by Leeds Local Tribunal in ‘Military Tribunals: A Quaker’s Example to Conscientious Objectors’, *Yorkshire Post*, 5 July 1916, p. 6.

¹⁰⁰ Harvey invariably voted against conscription, including the third reading of the Military Service (No. 2) Bill, which was passed ‘by a majority of 347’ on 24 January 1916: ‘Passed to the Lords: Commons Meeting for Conscription’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 28 January 1916, p. 2.

(contrary to popular belief, not all Quakers are pacifists).¹⁰¹ As such he worked initially to oppose the instigation of the war, and then contributed to the war effort by working for the War Victims' Relief Committee (WVRC) created by the Quakers. He was also instrumental in the composition of the section of the Military Service Act regarding the conscience clause, in the definition of 'work of national importance'.¹⁰² James O'Grady, who was the Labour MP for Leeds East from 1906 to 1918, and for Leeds South East from 1918 to 1924, was a notable supporter of the war, speaking at recruitment rallies and visiting troops in France in 1915.¹⁰³ O'Grady, born in Bristol as the son of a labourer, became involved in socialism and the trade union movement through his work, and was also a member of the ILP.¹⁰⁴ The *Yorkshire Evening Post* in March 1916 stated of O'Grady that he was 'not often heard in Parliament, but he does a good deal of useful work there', and added that he was 'regarded as one of the most ablest men in the Labour Group'.¹⁰⁵ O'Grady's commitment to the unions can be seen in a report from Parliament before the war, included in the *Leeds Mercury* in 1912, where it recorded that he supported a dockers' strike settlement, and he was chair of the General Federation of Trade Unions management committee from 1912 to 1918.¹⁰⁶ O'Grady outlined his support of the war in his regular columns in the *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, cementing his importance as a mouth-piece to the Leeds community. In addition to publishing O'Grady's regular columns during the war, the newspaper also carried other news relating to his work, such as his involvement with the Labour Party demonstrations in Leeds throughout

¹⁰¹ For further research into the varied Quaker response to the war, specifically in America, see Allan Kohrman, 'Respectable Pacifists: Quaker Response to World War 1', *Quaker History*, 15.1 (1986), 35-53.

¹⁰² 'Obituary of T E Harvey', *The Times*, 4 May 1955, p. 15

¹⁰³ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Volume 41* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 614.

¹⁰⁴ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Volume 41*, p. 613.

¹⁰⁵ 'Leeds MP as London JP', *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 21 March 1916.

¹⁰⁶ 'Strike Riots in London', *Leeds Mercury*, 23 July 1912, p. 5; *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Volume 41* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 613.

the war and his vocal stance in matters which affected the working classes, including concerns on ‘the price of food’.¹⁰⁷ As a vehicle for the promotion of the Labour Party, the *Leeds Weekly Citizen* applauded O’Grady’s contributions to the newspaper and even singled him out as the only worthy MP for the city: ‘There are five members for Leeds, and four of them are in comparative oblivion while Mr O’Grady maintains the closest contact with his constituents and the city generally by these very ably written contributions.’¹⁰⁸ It is to be expected that the Labour supporting newspaper would revere the single Labour MP in the city, and, although it is untrue that Harvey was in comparative oblivion as the paper claimed, the other three Leeds MPs were certainly not as vocal regarding the war and conscription as either Harvey and O’Grady.

Public Opinion at the Outbreak of the War

In the lead up to the war, the local press in Leeds appeared to concur with many of the national papers at the time in believing that there was no reason for Britain to enter this conflict. The *Yorkshire Post* included an editorial at the beginning of August 1914 which stated that it could ‘see no reason why Britain should be drawn in’.¹⁰⁹ This was a view which was also clearly held by some Leeds residents, as the letter included in the newspaper on 3 August 1914 from a local reader illustrated: ‘Now as to England and Germany. There ought not to be any war between us. Our ties of commerce, ideas and religion are too close and too real to allow any such thing’.¹¹⁰ Similarly a letter published in the same paper the next day, on the day that the war between the two nations was declared, stated: ‘War is death and

¹⁰⁷ ‘Labour Demonstrations in Leeds: Mr O’Grady MP and the Price of Food’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 3 May 1915, p. 12.

¹⁰⁸ ‘The Editor’s Chat: Mr O’Grady Articles’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 24 March 1916, p. 1.

¹⁰⁹ ‘Powers at War: European Conflict Opened’, *Yorkshire Post*, 1 August 1914, p. 9.

¹¹⁰ ‘War and Peace Letters’, *Yorkshire Post*, 3 August 1914, p. 12.

destruction [...] War is not a game to be trifled with.’¹¹¹ Most national newspapers also, including the *Manchester Guardian* and the *Daily News*, were unenthusiastic about the prospect of Britain entering the war, with *The Times* alone stating the case for British intervention, which supports Christopher Clark’s statement that ‘it cannot be said that public opinion was pressuring the British government to intervene’.¹¹²

Regarding the people of Leeds, Scott stated that their reaction to the assassination of Franz Ferdinand in June 1914 and the ensuing July Crisis which preceded Britain’s entry into the war, echoed that of other people in the country: ‘Leeds people, like other inhabitants of Great Britain, felt no particular apprehension as to the ability of statesmanship that arose. For several weeks our public and private affairs proceeded as usual.’¹¹³ Whether this lack of concern over world affairs was due to a lack in understanding or appreciation of the situation, or whether the people of Leeds simply continued their lives as they needed to work to survive, is unclear. Once the ultimatum was provided by Britain to Germany, however, it seems the fear for the future was palpable in the city. As Scott related, ‘all had a sense of foreboding’, where, ‘Briggate, Boar Lane, City Square filled with anxious questioners [...] people gathered in groups and discussed the situation. Everywhere there was a sense of impending disaster. It was a black outlook.’¹¹⁴ Scott also recalled the hysteria caused locally by the sudden increase in food prices, which led to panic buying, as people were ‘alarmed by the thought of a possible scarcity’. Although he continued that such ‘forebodings, however, did not persist’ but were ‘speedily dispelled’.¹¹⁵ Scott therefore outlined that Leeds adapted

¹¹¹ ‘Correspondence: Great Britain and the European War’, *Yorkshire Post*, 4 August 1914, p. 4.

¹¹² Christopher Clark, *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914* (London: Penguin, 2013), p. 493.

¹¹³ Scott, *Leeds*, p. 4.

¹¹⁴ Scott, *Leeds*, p. 6.

¹¹⁵ Scott, *Leeds*, p. 10.

accordingly to the pressing needs of the war. He used the example of the different political parties' reaction to the war as setting aside their differences as proof of this, 'party politics were silenced', when all municipal elections were suspended, and emphasised that the war meant that there was 'but one duty for all'.¹¹⁶ As has been discussed, this 'sense of duty' to suspend elections benefited the two leading parties in the Council, who were left to rule uncontested by a burgeoning Labour Party, therefore the motives certainly cannot be seen as solely patriotic.

On the day the war was announced, Leeds City Council's General Purposes Committee met to prepare the city for war, and a special meeting of the City Council was convened. The influential Lord Mayor of the city, Edward Brotherton, stated at this meeting that, 'one half of my capital is at the disposal of my country, and one half, nay, all my income will be given up if required'.¹¹⁷ This illustrated the strength of patriotism felt by this influential and notable Leeds individual as soon as the war began. The City Council certainly responded immediately to the situation, with even the question of relief allowances to men on service being discussed, and the preliminary arrangements made for this by the City Council in liaison with the Chamber of Commerce.¹¹⁸ Scott asserted that with 'no light heart, and yet with some sense of relief', Leeds followed the calling of the nation's needs, and claimed that 'all parties were at one in the determination to stand firm for King and Country'. He did however admit that some people did not welcome the war and react positively to its outbreak: 'a few there were whose intense hatred of war of any sort blinded them to the issues'.¹¹⁹ This indicated that there were some in society who did not respond in a nationalistic manner, and also illustrated the disdain with which these 'few' were viewed in some quarters.

¹¹⁶ Scott, *Leeds*, p. 12.

¹¹⁷ Scott, *Leeds*, p. 10.

¹¹⁸ Scott, *Leeds*, p. 11.

¹¹⁹ Scott, *Leeds*, p. 10.

Unsurprisingly, the left-wing *Leeds Weekly Citizen* was more responsive to the anti-war brigade, and disseminated the initial view that the war was a capitalist conflict, with the assertion that ‘Workers’ Lives to be Sacrificed to Rulers’ Ambitions’.¹²⁰ As the war progressed the newspaper reported on the war primarily in terms of its impact on the workers.¹²¹ Contrastingly, the *Yorkshire Post* announced the outbreak of the war on 4 August 1914 with the stark headline: ‘Powers at War: European Conflict Opened’, and included the statement that ‘there are times and conditions in which peace is impossible’, emphasising the nature of Britain’s obligations to Belgium and France.¹²² The majority of the popular national newspapers also reflected the stance of the *Yorkshire Post* in welcoming the war once it had begun, as had been the case during the South African war twelve years previously. As Bingham emphasises in his discussion on the wartime press, the accounts in the majority of British newspapers served to ‘highlight the imperialism of the press around the Boer War and its jingoism before, during and after the First World War’.¹²³

‘War Enthusiasm’

The idea that society in general welcomed the war, as Scott implied was the case in Leeds, is however a matter for further discussion.¹²⁴ This concept of ‘war enthusiasm’ has been greatly debated by historians in the field of the First World War. In Ferguson’s persuasive and provocative analysis of the war, his chapter on this subject unequivocally entitled ‘The

¹²⁰ ‘A European War: A Continent Involved in Murder’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 7 August 1914, p. 5.

¹²¹ Thornton, *Leeds*, p. 182.

¹²² ‘Powers at War: European Conflict Opened’, *Yorkshire Post*, 4 August 1914, p. 1.

¹²³ Bingham, ‘Ignoring the First Draft of History?’, p. 313.

¹²⁴ For detailed analysis on public reaction to the outbreak of war, see Catriona Pennell, *A Kingdom United: Popular Responses to the Outbreak of the First World War in Britain and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

August Days: The Myth of War Enthusiasm' examines 'how far the popular support for the war often cited by historians (for its initial phase at least) was a creation of the mass media'.¹²⁵ He states that it was 'once an axiom of historiography that the people of Europe greeted the outbreak of war with fervent patriotic enthusiasm', although he admits that there 'was, of course, some enthusiasm.'¹²⁶ David Lloyd George, Chancellor of the Exchequer at the outbreak of the war and future Prime Minister, noted in his memoirs that the reaction to the war was 'enthusiasm unprecedented in recent times' and even the fervent anti-war campaigner Bertrand Russell reported the 'cheering crowds [...] in the neighbourhood of Trafalgar Square', where he, 'discovered to my horror that average men and women were delighted at the prospect of war'.¹²⁷ Ferguson, however, refutes the idea that the whole of the country were nationally minded in their greeting of the war. He states that while there may have been crowds, 'to describe their mood as simply one of "enthusiasm" or "euphoria" is misleading'. He adds that 'under the circumstances, feelings of anxiety, panic and even millenarian religiosity were equally popular responses to the outbreak of war'.¹²⁸ In Catriona Pennell's in-depth research into the popular reaction to the outbreak of the war, she also challenges the interpretation of the public reaction as 'war enthusiasm' as oversimplified, and claims that, on the contrary, the reactions were more complicated and nuanced than this one-sided view, highlighting the imperative role of the press.¹²⁹ Therefore in reality it will have been with a sense of fear mixed with relief due to the released tension of the build up to the war that people got together in crowds on 4 August 1914. As Gregory shows, the war enthusiasm, 'as far as it existed', was 'a reaction to war'.¹³⁰ Thus it appeared that this reaction

¹²⁵ Ferguson, *Pity of War*, pp. 174-211.

¹²⁶ Ferguson, *Pity of War*, pp. 174-175.

¹²⁷ David Lloyd George, *War Memoirs: Volume I* (London: Oldhams Press, 1938), p. 41, James Joll, *The Origins of the First World War* (London: Longman, 1992), p. 184.

¹²⁸ Ferguson, *Pity of War*, p. 177.

¹²⁹ Pennell, *A Kingdom United*.

¹³⁰ Gregory, *Last Great War*, pp. 71-72.

may not have been particularly positive or enthused as much as a mixture of relief, fear and uncertainty.

Opposition to the War

In addition, the cheering crowds did not reflect the response of all the people in the country. Opposition to the war could be seen nationally with the anti-war stance of the ILP, albeit with modest support both nationally and in Leeds itself. Also, as early as July 1914 two groups were founded to oppose Britain's intervention into the war, the British Neutrality League and the British Neutrality Committee, and these were closely followed by the Stop the War Committee and the No-Conscription Fellowship (NCF) later in the year.¹³¹ This indicates that there was some opposition to the war, even if it was a minority of the population, and thus society as a whole did not fully embrace this new turn of events. Leeds based Isabella Ford and fellow suffragists Helena Swanwick and Rosika Schwimmer helped to organise a peace rally in London on 4 August 1914, which was supported by the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS), the Women's Labour League and the International Women's Suffrage Alliance and it was during this meeting the news was heard that Britain had declared war on Germany. As Ford's biographer June Hannam explains, these representatives 'from a wide variety of women's groups' attended the meeting in Kingsway Hall to hear NUWSS founder and leader Millicent Fawcett 'condemn this "insensate devilry" in which women had played no part'.¹³² Women's peace groups and other organisations, including notably the NCF and the Union of Democratic Control (UDC), were to prove significant to the anti-war

¹³¹ Ferguson, *Pity of War*, p. 179.

¹³² Hannam, *Isabella Ford*, p. 163.

campaign, especially with the introduction of the conscription in 1916.¹³³ However there is no evidence of significant anti-war campaigning in Leeds at the outbreak of the war. This indicated that most of its inhabitants either did not feel the need to protest its onset at this time, or felt unable to, given the association of patriotism with displays of support. People were also aware of the Defence of the Realm Act, introduced on 8 August 1914 to provide the Government with the power to prosecute anyone whose actions were deemed to jeopardise the success of the war.¹³⁴

Recruitment: Means and Motives

In Leeds, as elsewhere in the country, a prime factor cited as further evidence of war enthusiasm was the rush to recruitment by many men. The day after the outbreak of the war, Field-Marshal Lord Kitchener, national hero of the Sudan war, accepted the post of Secretary of State for War and decided to raise, by traditional voluntary means, a series of 'New Armies' to add to Britain's existing army, the British Expeditionary Force (BEF). Lord Kitchener's first 'Call to Arms', which was an appeal for volunteers, was issued on 7 August 1914. This requested ten thousand men between the ages of nineteen and thirty years to enlist for a period of three years or the duration of the war, and was featured in the *Yorkshire*

¹³³ For further information on the work of the NCF and UDC, see Thomas Kennedy, *The Hound of Conscience: A History of the No-Conscription Fellowship, 1914-19* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1981) and Marvin Swartz, *The Union of Democratic Control* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971).

¹³⁴ The Defence of the Realm Act (DORA) 1914 was designed to help prevent invasion as well as keep morale high on the home front, as such it gave the government powers such as to create criminal offences or requisition building for the war effort, and also introduced social control measures which deterred anti-war activity. For further research into DORA, see Charles Townshend, *Making the Peace: Public Order and Public Security in Modern Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 60-63, and Brock Millman, 'HMG and the War Against Dissent', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 40.3 (2005), 413-440.

Post.¹³⁵ This indicated that Kitchener, from the very beginning, ‘envisaged a long and costly war’.¹³⁶ Scott recalled how ‘crowds of young men flocked to the recruiting offices in Hanover Square, and offered themselves for service at home and abroad’, and that there ‘was no question about the splendid spirit of those early days. Nor was there any slackening of effort as time went on’.¹³⁷ Another public call was repeated on 28 August 1914, this time for 100,000 men.¹³⁸ In Kitchener’s succession of appeals for his New Armies, William Reader claims that he ‘galvanized wartime recruiting’.¹³⁹

In Leeds, the reaction to the appeals was similar to the pattern nationwide, namely that recruiting built up gradually. This contradicts the common myth that there was an immediate surge in recruiting. In Britain, only 51,647 men enlisted before mid-August, and the largest surge in recruitment occurred between 30 August and 5 September, when 174,901 men joined up.¹⁴⁰ This was partly due to reaction to the losses suffered by the British forces at the Battle of Mons, the first major action between the British and German forces on the Western Front on 23 August 1914, where the BEF were outnumbered by the German army and subsequently suffered what Pennell refers to as ‘severe losses’. She describes the battle the ‘first big test of the war’, resulting as it did in ‘Germany’s first great victory and thousands of casualties’.¹⁴¹ The sense of the reality of the war that the Battle of Mons offered to men may certainly have encouraged recruitment at this time, emphasising as it did the stark actuality of the conflict. As Gregory states, far from ‘signing up in a burst of enthusiasm at the outbreak of the war, the largest single component of volunteers enlisted at exactly the moment when

¹³⁵ ‘Your King and Country Need You: A Call to Arms’, *Yorkshire Post*, 7 August 1914, p. 3.

¹³⁶ Spiers, ‘Voluntary Recruiting’, p. 297.

¹³⁷ Scott, *Leeds*, p. 11.

¹³⁸ Milner, *Leeds Pals*.

¹³⁹ William Joseph Reader, *At Duty’s Call: A Study in Obsolete Patriotism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), p. 105.

¹⁴⁰ Gregory, *Last Great War*, p. 32.

¹⁴¹ Pennell, ‘Believing the Unbelievable’, p. 69.

the war grew serious'. He continues this thread highlighting the men's increasing dread of the war as a motive for enlistment, and claims that the fear 'of defeat and invasion' was 'a vital spur to recruitment at the peak of enlistment between 25 August and 5 September 1914'.¹⁴² Pennell also notes that these early weeks of the war were 'characterised by fear and anxiety' on the home front, which contrasts sharply with Scott's recollections that 'whole masses of the population faced the crisis with calmness'.¹⁴³ Pennell's view is supported by the letter of the then civilian John Riddey to his mother at the onset of the conflict in Europe: 'The position abroad is looking very serious now, isn't it? I hope I shan't have to go and fight'.¹⁴⁴ This indicates again that this issue was more nuanced than Scott acknowledged. Soon to be Private Riddey was eventually killed in action in April 1917.

The surge in enlistment during the time following the Battle of the Mons was also due to the formation of the Parliamentary Recruiting Committee (PRC) at the end of August 1914. This placed the whole network of local party political organisations at the disposal of the War Office, and between October 1914 and October 1915 it produced in excess of five million posters and fourteen million copies of pamphlets and books.¹⁴⁵ These included direct appeals from both the Prime Minister, Herbert Asquith, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Lloyd George, in September 1914.¹⁴⁶ However, perhaps more significantly for Leeds, was the granting of permission to committees of municipal officials, industrialists and other dignitaries, especially in northern England, to organise locally-raised 'Pals' battalions. Within the Pals battalions, men from the same community or workplace were encouraged to join on

¹⁴² Gregory, *Last Great War*, p. 32.

¹⁴³ Pennell, 'Believing the Unbelievable', p. 75; Scott, *Leeds*, p. 9.

¹⁴⁴ LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/GS/1352, John Riddey letters and documents, 1914-1918, 31 July 1914.

¹⁴⁵ Stevenson, *Cataclysm*, p. 222.

¹⁴⁶ LULSC, LC LIDDLE/WW1/GA/ERT/2, Photocopies of Parliamentary Recruiting Committee Pamphlets, 1914: 'The Prime Minister's Appeal to the Nation,' 4 September 1914; 'An Appeal to the Nation by the Chancellor of the Exchequer,' 19 September 1914.

the understanding that they would train and fight together, and, tragically for some of them and their families and communities, many eventually died together. These community battalions became incredibly significant for local areas, and the Pals battalions became ‘iconic symbols of civic pride’.¹⁴⁷

In Leeds, measures were taken almost immediately to create a Pals battalion. The *Yorkshire Evening Post* declared at the end of August 1914: ‘Something that Leeds may do. Why not a “Friends Battalion”?’¹⁴⁸ This indicates that some of the local papers were supporters of this idea. Accordingly, Lieutenant-Colonel John Walter Stead, a solicitor from Leeds who was also the former Commanding Officer of the 7th Battalion (West Yorkshire Regiment), applied to the West Riding of Yorkshire Territorial Association for permission to raise a battalion of one thousand men from the city of Leeds for Lord Kitchener’s Army, which was duly forwarded to the War Office.¹⁴⁹ At the next monthly meeting of Leeds City Council on 2 September 1914, Lord Mayor Brotherton read out the response he had received to this offer, via a telegram which read: ‘The Army Council wish to thank the City of Leeds for their patriotic offer to raise a new battalion’. Brotherton informed the Council that he wished for the battalion to be ‘twelve hundred strong’, and the battalion to be one which ‘we of the City of Leeds will be proud’. Brotherton even offered to pay for the cost of the battalion himself: ‘I am not here to ask the Council or the people of Leeds to pay anything towards the cost of raising the battalion. Your Lord Mayor desires to bear the cost out of his own pocket,’ which he did, and this included the purchase of both clothes and equipment for the soldiers.¹⁵⁰

Brotherton subsequently became an honorary Colonel of the 15th Battalion, West Yorkshire

¹⁴⁷ Spiers, ‘Voluntary Recruiting’, p. 298.

¹⁴⁸ ‘Something That Leeds May Do. Why Not a “Friends Battalion”?’ , *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 31 August 1914, p. 3.

¹⁴⁹ ‘Proposed Leeds Battalion’, *Yorkshire Post*, 1 September 1914, p. 10.

¹⁵⁰ ‘Leeds and the New Battalion. The Lord Mayor’s Generous Offer’, *Yorkshire Post*, 3 September 1914, p. 3.

Regiment (1st Leeds Pals), which was raised in September 1914 under the command of Colonel Stead. Leeds responded to this appeal within days, with nearly two hundred men enlisting at once, and the press reported that by 31 August the recruiting office in Hanover Square was besieged by a crowd of some three hundred more applicants in an appeal for better recruiting facilities.¹⁵¹ A few days later it was reported that a ‘Busy Scene at Leeds Recruiting Depot’ had led to another over one hundred and fifty men being accepted.¹⁵² It is clear the result of the call for recruits to the Leeds Pals was impressive. As Laurie Milner outlines: ‘[By] nine o’clock on the morning of 3 September [...] some two hundred men had already sent in their names’, which meant that ‘by nine o’clock the first evening over five hundred men had volunteered’, and by 8 September ‘the battalion was declared to be complete’.¹⁵³ The lure of the Pals battalions for local men can be seen in the letter of a former employee of Leeds City Council from his station in the armed forces in April 1917: ‘The Battalion in which I enlisted was formed in Leeds as a citizen unit, and I am proud to say it has nobly upheld the traditions of the city we represent’.¹⁵⁴ Leeds City Council were certainly proactive in their recruitment drive and the recruiting meetings held in Leeds Town Hall and elsewhere were well attended and seemingly effective. Scott outlined how recruitment meetings were held in all of the wards in the city, and that even the ‘Labour leaders, equally with representatives of other political parties, made eloquent and forcible appeals that could not, and did not, fail to arrest attention’, again asserting that the political parties were working together for recruitment in Leeds.¹⁵⁵ These meetings normalised enlistment, illustrating through emotive language and zealous sentiment that it was the duty of the men to join up. As

¹⁵¹ Milner, *Leeds Pals*, p. 17, ‘Handicaps to Recruiting in Leeds’, *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 31 August 1914, p. 3.

¹⁵² ‘Busy Scene at Leeds Recruiting Depot’, *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 4 September 1914, p. 3.

¹⁵³ Milner, *Leeds Pals*, pp. 21-25.

¹⁵⁴ WYAS Leeds, LC TR, Leeds City Council Treasurer’s Correspondence with Employees Enlisted in the Armed Forces, 1917-1919, Edward Beaumont, 17 April 1917.

¹⁵⁵ Scott, *Leeds*, p. 25.

Gregory shows, most places ‘held a series of large recruiting meetings through 1914 and 1915’, which ‘created an atmosphere in which volunteering was seen as the appropriate act’.¹⁵⁶ This recruitment drive in Leeds is recalled by Scott as seemingly ubiquitous: ‘the call for more and yet more recruits resounded at street corners, at organised gatherings in City Square, in the schools, at football matches, in fact wherever young men assembled’, and the formation of the Joint Parliamentary Committee on 11 September 1914 provided help also.¹⁵⁷ In addition to this, the City Council had an illuminated tram car travelling to the heavily populated areas of the city, which Scott stated managed a ‘good deal of itinerant propaganda work’.¹⁵⁸

Figure One: Leeds Pals Recruiting Tram, leeds-live.co.uk.



¹⁵⁶ Gregory, *Last Great War*, p. 75

¹⁵⁷ Scott, *Leeds*, p. 25.

¹⁵⁸ Milner, *Leeds Pals*, p. 19, Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, p. 65; Scott, *Leeds*, p. 25; Leeds Pals Recruiting Car < <https://www.leeds-live.co.uk/news/leeds-news/story-leeds-pals-who-fought-15394955> > [accessed 19 November 2022].

In addition to the Pals battalion in Leeds, men also enlisted in the Northern Signal Corps (Leeds Engineers), and there was the formation of two workers' battalions, the 7th and 8th West Yorkshires (the Leeds Rifles). By September it was reported that approximately nine hundred and fifty men had signed up for the 'two workers' battalions which are to form the reserve of the 7th and 8th Leeds Rifles', and that a 'Jewish contingent' of at least three hundred and fifty will also join, 'bringing the total to date to one thousand three hundred'.¹⁵⁹ By the end of the year permission was also provided for the formation of a Bantams battalion, which allowed the men who had previously been deemed too short to join the army previously to form their own units.

It does appear on the surface that recruitment drives within the city of Leeds worked, as so many men did join up. By the end of September, five thousand recruits had joined Lord Kitchener's army in Leeds, with another twelve hundred joining the Leeds Pals battalion; in addition to this, the reserve battalions of the Leeds Rifles were almost completed.¹⁶⁰

However, it needs to be challenged whether this rush to the colours can be simply explained by nationalistic fervour and a sense of duty. One factor that encouraged enlistment was the news from the war, as has already been seen in the surge in recruitment following the Battle of Mons. This highlighted the need for more troops due to the BEF being outnumbered by the German forces there, and subsequent early battles of the war served to also encourage recruitment. In Leeds, the first batch of wounded soldiers arrived in the city following the Battle of the Marne at the beginning of September.¹⁶¹ These soldiers were taken to Beckett Park Hospital, which was previously the City of Leeds Training College and had been

¹⁵⁹ 'Completing the First Army', *Leeds Mercury*, 17 September 1914, p. 4.

¹⁶⁰ Milner, *Leeds Pals*.

¹⁶¹ The Battle of the Marne was fought from 7 to 12 September 1914; although hailed as a victory for the Allies, it was the battle that founded the stalemate of trench warfare on the Western Front.

transformed to a military hospital. As Scott stated, ‘If anything more were needed to stir public feeling, it was surely the sight of the first batch of wounded’ who arrived at the train station in Leeds ‘direct from the Marne battlefield’.¹⁶² This ‘stirring of public feeling’, Scott assumed, would have encouraged the as yet unrecruited men to join up, as well as helping to persuade the rest of society to also contribute to the cause. However, in Leeds much of the general public was already busy in their work for the war effort, both in the war related industries and financially: by the end of September 1914, forty thousand pounds had been contributed by the city to the Prince of Wales’ National Relief Fund.¹⁶³ Additionally, the University of Leeds tested woollen fabrics and the provision of dyes, and many women were organised in their voluntary work by the Lady Mayoress’s Committee.¹⁶⁴ By the spring of 1915, there were ten thousand women involved in volunteer activity in Leeds.¹⁶⁵ The Lady Mayoress was Dorothy Una Ratcliffe, a literary figure who had married the nephew of Edward Brotherton in 1909, and was a significant figure in the war effort in the city. As her biographer Wilfred Halliday states, during the war Ratcliffe, ‘helped regularly in hospital work’ and ‘assisted Edward Brotherton in his raising and equipping of the Leeds Pals’.¹⁶⁶ However it must be noted that women’s voluntary work during the war in Leeds also highlighted the class differences within the city as the leisurely middle class took over these duties and the working class continued in their paid work, due to necessity.

A sense of duty and wanting to contribute to the cause will certainly have persuaded some of the men of Leeds to enlist in the army, as it may also have encouraged some civilians to work in any way they could for the war effort. It is imperative to acknowledge, however, that there

¹⁶² Scott, *Leeds*, p. 13.

¹⁶³ Scott, *Leeds*, p. 14.

¹⁶⁴ Scott, *Leeds*, p. 13.

¹⁶⁵ Scott, *Leeds*, p. 14.

¹⁶⁶ Wilfrid Joseph Halliday, *D U R (Dorothy Una McGrigor Philips): A Memoir* (Bradford: Lund Humphries, The Country Press, 1969).

were other factors that encouraged men to rush to sign onto the armed forces at this time. The pressure from family, bribery in the form of money offered for services by the City Council or army, or even workplaces, as well as other economic reasons, cannot be overlooked in these recruitment motives. The letters of John, latterly Private, Riddey to his mother outlined that his firm offered economic security as an incentive for their workers to sign up to the army: ‘The firm have issued the following notice recently: “Employees [...] who have been at least twelve months in the service of the Firm [...] hereafter enlist for the War are informed that places as far as possible will be found for them after their discharge”’. Riddey declared that this was ‘very generous of them’, and added that ‘hundreds of firms I believe are paying full wages to all employees’.¹⁶⁷ This indicated that financial support by workplaces was a factor in the encouragement for men to go to war. Although Private Riddey did not admit to financial motives for joining up initially, as prior to his enlistment wrote in a letter to his mother that ‘of course one would not join for L.S.D. [pounds, shillings and pence]’, although he did delay his own voluntary recruitment until it was clear that his workplace ‘would pay half my salary until further notice’.¹⁶⁸ Therefore money was certainly a factor here.

This suggests that the most influential motive for enlistment in the country as a whole was economic. Prior to the war there had been mass unemployment in the country, and, as Gregory highlights, ‘economic distress had always been the British Army’s best recruiting agent’.¹⁶⁹ Indeed the *Leeds Weekly Citizen* directly linked the initial increase in recruitment to unemployment. It even asserted that the workers’ weakness was being exploited to coerce

¹⁶⁷ LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/GS/1352, John Riddey letters and documents, 1914-1918, 3 September 1914.

¹⁶⁸ LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/GS/1352, John Riddey letters and documents, 1914-1918, 8 September 1914.

¹⁶⁹ Gregory, *Last Great War*, p. 75.

them into joining the army, as an article provocatively headlined ‘Recruiting by Starvation’ illustrated, and provided a ‘warning to exploiters’ that they: ‘Deeply regret to have to realise that throughout the country, and in our own city, as much as anywhere else, there is an inspired movement afoot to use starvation as a recruiting weapon’.¹⁷⁰ Male unemployment had been high nationally between July and September 1914, and by mid-August many of the working people in the country were on short-time. Peter Dewey, in his analysis of recruitment during the war, highlights the importance of age in recruitment, which may reinforce the idea of young men signing up for excitement.¹⁷¹ The type or level of employment is also a factor here, as junior roles have fewer responsibilities, are less exciting and more subject to authority from older men, and these are the roles which would have been occupied by many young men who signed up to the army to escape this work. Dewey emphasises that the ‘most important factors affecting recruitment were not only generalized ones such as patriotism, but also more specific ones – economic, demographic, medical and institutional’.¹⁷² Ferguson lists five main reasons or ‘motives’ for high voluntary enlistment rates, including the publicity of the PRC, pressure from women, economic motives and peer group pressure; he asserts of the latter that there is ‘no doubting the importance of the so-called “Pals” Battalions in getting groups of friends, neighbours or colleagues to join up together’.¹⁷³ The final motive Ferguson includes was impulse, the idea, also suggested by Avner Offer, that the men joined up impulsively, giving no thought to the consequences of their actions, as they were ‘swept off their feet by the excitement of the moment’.¹⁷⁴ This latter point is interesting, and altogether highly convincing. That the war would last for over four years and that the

¹⁷⁰ ‘Recruiting by Starvation’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 18 September 1914, p. 2

¹⁷¹ Peter Dewey, ‘Military Recruiting and the British Labour Force During the First World War’, *The Historical Journal*, 27 (1984), 199-223 (p. 206).

¹⁷² Dewey, ‘Military Recruiting’, p. 218.

¹⁷³ Ferguson, *Pity of War*, p. 205.

¹⁷⁴ Ferguson, *Pity of War*, p. 207, Offer, ‘Going to War in 1914’, p. 222.

resulting deaths would be as devastating as they eventually were would not have been present in the consciousness of these early recruits. It was likely therefore that some men joined up spontaneously, on a whim, without a full appreciation of the horrors that they would face. This would have been especially likely for younger men in their late teens and early twenties whose brain were not fully developed, compared to fully adult men who by their mid-twenties would also be more likely to be embedded in their community, with more financial and family obligations to take into consideration. This sense of adventure that the war brought, especially for many men in mundane or lower paid jobs, must be acknowledged. Gregory also notes the importance of bribery or the men feeling compelled by family or external pressures from the recruitment drives to join up, although concludes that: 'Whilst compulsion and bribery played a role, as did economic distress in the first month of the war, the vast majority of volunteers cannot be explained in these terms [...] nor can the quest for excitement be ruled out.' This 'quest for excitement' Gregory applies to, 'clerks in particular', who were 'stuck in dull jobs with poor promotion prospects', which he suggests explained why they were 'particularly drawn' to the Army.¹⁷⁵ Evidence from Leeds supports this theory, including in the letters from soldiers previously employed by the City Council in various clerking roles. Sergeant Pearson, who wrote when stationed at a supply depot in Nottingham in 1917, clearly resented his chance of missing out on the perceived excitement of battle: 'Those of us who are left have frequently offered and would willingly take a more active part in the great adventure'.¹⁷⁶ The same sentiments were expressed by another former Leeds City Council employee, Private Bell, who was stationed at a depot in Blackpool: 'I'm afraid I cannot write you after the manner of most of your correspondents, as very little seems to happen at a Regimental Depot worth recording, and especially when compared with the

¹⁷⁵ Gregory, *Last Great War*, p. 74.

¹⁷⁶ WYAS Leeds, LC TR, Leeds City Council Treasurer's Correspondence with Employees Enlisted in the Armed Forces, 1917-1919, Sergeant Pearson, 17 April 1917.

exciting times that befall the various members of the staff overseas'.¹⁷⁷ Another of the former clerks, Sergeant Flannagan, referred to the war as the 'Great Adventure', and one of his former colleagues, Private Anderson, wrote that the former staff members would have 'thrilling experiences to relate' once they got home. This indicated that the 'thrilling experiences' outweighed the horror for some soldiers and may well have been a factor in encouraging men to sign up. This concept that men would join up in an attempt to escape their existing occupation is confirmed also by the oral history recordings of Private Dalby, who enlisted in the Leeds Pals at the beginning of the war, and recalled that he was 'glad to be away from father and his business'.¹⁷⁸ Simkins also concurs with this view: 'In the case of lower middle-class and working class recruits, the chance of escaping from an arduous or depressing job far outweighed patriotism as a motive for enlistment'.¹⁷⁹

The concept that men may have been encouraged to recruit due to pressure from women also seems highly plausible, especially in addition to the peer pressure they received from other men and the emotive PRC propaganda which appealed to them to join up to protect their womenfolk at home (for an example, see image below).¹⁸⁰ Although it is important to differentiate between the women as constructed by the recruiters as pictured in the famous poster and the actual women encountered by men.

¹⁷⁷ WYAS Leeds, LC TR, Leeds City Council Treasurer's Correspondence with Employees Enlisted in the Armed Forces, 1917-1919, Private W Bell, 27 November 1917.

¹⁷⁸ LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/TR/02/1, F A Dalby, Tape 949 A-B/Summary, 1970-1999.

¹⁷⁹ Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, pp. 173-74.

¹⁸⁰ 'Women of Britain say "Go!"', Imperial War Museum <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/14591>> [accessed 19 November 2022].

Figure Two: Women of Britain say ‘Go!’, 1915, Imperial War Museum.



Such posters were designed by the PRC in 1915, a time when the recruitment drive was imperative prior to the introduction of conscription the following year, and were appealing to gendered concepts. These appealed at an abstract level to men and boys' sense of their masculine identities. Both Jessica Meyer and Lois Bibbings have produced important

scholarly works focusing upon the comprehension of the ways that society creates gender-specific expectations and how this can be applied to the First World War. This direct appeal to masculinity is a prime example of this.¹⁸¹ Bibbings' convincing arguments outline the ways in which the portrayal of COs in the public sphere created an accepted and popular notion of these men, which was of cowards, shirkers and most significantly, non-masculine 'unmen'.¹⁸² Nicoletta Gullace also discusses the gendered images of propaganda, with a heavy emphasis on the evidence of the right wing press during the war. She shows that both men and women came to be seen as citizens with regard to their input into the war effort, and that the women who served the war – both within the war industry, or as the mothers and wives of the killed soldiers - were perceived as more patriotic and true citizens of the country than the men who did not fight.¹⁸³ Bibbings' and Gullace's ideas will be further explored in Chapter Three, however it is worth noting here that at this point in the war it would appear that the inherent gender stereotypes at the time may have made some men assume that it was their duty to join up and defend their country, which included their womenfolk and children. Men who were not in the armed forces left at home were therefore deliberately encouraged to feel emasculated by their non-army stance. This sentiment was clear in letters from Private Riddey to his mother regarding the fighting of the Western Front in early August 1914: 'I should like to go very much, it seems so rotten sitting doing nothing'.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸¹ Jessica Meyer, *Men of War: Masculinity and the First World War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), Lois Bibbings, 'Images of Manliness: The Portrayal of Soldiers and Conscientious Objectors in the Great War', *Social and Legal Studies*, 12.3 (2003), 291-310; and *Telling Tales about Men: Conceptions of Conscientious Objectors to Military Service During the First World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009). See also Laura Ugolini, *Civvies: Middle-Class Men on the English Home Front, 1914-18* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013).

¹⁸² Bibbings, *Telling Tales About Men*, 'Chapter 2 Of cowards, shirkers and "unmen"', pp. 50-110.

¹⁸³ Gullace, *Blood of Our Sons*.

¹⁸⁴ LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/GS/1352, John Riddey letters and documents, 1914-1918, 9 August 1914.

There were also some men, however, whose motives in joining up were altogether more considered, and who did not enlist until they were confident that their families were looked after financially. The separation allowances, which were first paid by the army from 1 October 1914, were funds for the families of those in the armed forces. They ranged initially from twelve shillings and six pence for a childless wife to twenty two shillings for a soldier's wife with four children.¹⁸⁵ These allowances were increased as the war progressed, and were differentiated by rank, with privates and corporals receiving the lowest amount. As the amount increased with seniority, the highest ranks received substantially greater amounts than the lower ranks. This inequality in pay again highlighted the sharp class divisions at this time, and the separation allowances may well have perpetuated these divisions. Dewey states that even with the introduction of the separation allowances paid to the men's family, 'the resulting family income was only slightly above that of the ordinary English agricultural labourer, who on the eve of the war was one of the worst-paid of all manual workers'.¹⁸⁶ Evidence that the separation allowances were insufficient was shown in the letters home to wife Beatie in Leeds from Private Herbert Oates of the Leeds Rifles B Company, who was a father of four children and eventually killed in the war in 1917.¹⁸⁷ In these he expressed concern for his family at home, especially regarding the increased cost of living brought by the war conditions. These letters made it clear that they did not have sufficient funds to live on, as they indicated that Beatie has requested that he sends her money from his army pay: 'You did not say how mutch [sic] you got when you whent [sic] for your money and can you manage on it as when I get a few sigs [sic] out of mine it is all gone'.¹⁸⁸ It is safe to assume

¹⁸⁵ Rates of changing separation allowances can be found in Dewey, 'Nutrition and Living Standards', p. 212.

¹⁸⁶ Dewey, 'Military Recruiting', p. 206.

¹⁸⁷ LULSC, LC LIDDLE/WW1/GS/1197, Papers of Private Herbert Oates, 1914-1918, letter undated, c1916.

¹⁸⁸ LULSC, LC LIDDLE/WW1/GS/1197, Papers of Private Herbert Oates, 1914-1918, letter undated, c July 1916.

that this family of six, with a poorly literate father, were one of the poorest struggling families. In a later letter Private Oates thanked his wife for having sent him some tobacco and insisted that she sends him less the next time as, 'I do not think you can spare it out of your allowance'.¹⁸⁹ Thus this allowance, confirmed by Private Oates as being twenty five shillings per week in 1916, did not suffice for this particular family.¹⁹⁰ The letters home of former Leeds City Council employee Driver Wilby also referred to his wife's inadequate 'separation deduction'.¹⁹¹ In addition, the 'muddle' over ineffective distribution of these separation allowances certainly discouraged potential recruits from the married men in the country, including in Leeds, as Simkins asserts, the 'major factor in holding men back from the army, particularly those who were married, was the inefficiency of the machinery for paying separation allowances to the wives and dependents of soldiers.'¹⁹² The introduction of the disparate levels of the separation allowances would have certainly fuelled class antagonism in this country also. As Chickering shows in his study on impact of the war on Freiburg, class difference was palpable at this time. He claims that the war served to restore and highlight the social differences that had existed before the war and was divisive in its effect on the social classes as it, 'revived old social resentments, encouraged new tensions' which meant that 'social class again became a polarising issue.'¹⁹³ However, confirmation of this allowance at the beginning of September 1914 may have played a part in the rise in voluntary enlistment at this time, once the men could be assured that their families would not be financially destitute on their absence. Gregory agrees that the confirmation of the separation allowances was a

¹⁸⁹ LULSC, LC LIDDLE/WW1/GS/1197, Papers of Private Herbert Oates, 1914-18, letters undated, c1916-1917.

¹⁹⁰ LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/GS/1197, Papers of Private Herbert Oates, 1914-1918, letter undated, 1916.

¹⁹¹ WYAS Leeds, LC TR, Leeds City Council Treasurer's Correspondence with Employees Enlisted in the Armed Forces, 1917-1919, Driver R S Wilby, 29 April 1917.

¹⁹² Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, pp. 106-107.

¹⁹³ Chickering, *The Great War*, p. 439.

factor in recruitment, and states that it is ‘important to note that many men were unwilling to join until they were assured of their family’s well-being’, therefore they were not ‘swept away by enthusiasm, but were more calculating in their decision’.¹⁹⁴

In Leeds, the motives for joining up were doubtless a mixture of the above, as they would have been nationwide. It does need to be strongly emphasised, however, that the recruitment rates within Leeds compared particularly unfavourably with other parts of the country. The reasons for this, again, are mainly economic, due to the war work available in the city. The actual figures for Leeds for August and September 1914 were a total of 3,946 recruits, and this does not compare well with the corresponding figures for Sheffield with 9,938 recruits, Manchester with 21,383, and Glasgow with 22,787.¹⁹⁵ Although there were a greater number of inhabitants in each of these cities than in Leeds (both Glasgow and Manchester had populations of well over half a million people by this time) these figures were by no means three times more, as the recruitment figures would indicate.¹⁹⁶ To put these figures into perspective, by mid September 1914 Birmingham had produced more recruits in one week than Leeds had in six, even though the population was less than twice the size. The *Yorkshire Evening News* referred to the figures being a ‘Slur on Leeds’, and highlighted that the city had sent ‘8,000 men to Birmingham’s 50,000’.¹⁹⁷ The *Leeds Weekly Citizen* included the report of an inclusion in the November issue of the Holy Trinity and St Paul’s Parish Magazine, Leeds, of a ‘pungent clerical outburst’ on the situation, which outlined the thoughts of a vicar of Leeds who claimed that the ‘response of the West Riding of Yorkshire

¹⁹⁴ Gregory, *Last Great War*, p. 32.

¹⁹⁵ Spiers, ‘Voluntary Recruiting’, p. 301.

¹⁹⁶ John Cannon, *The Oxford Companion to British History*, online resource, p. 831 < <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199677832.001.0001/acref-9780199677832>> [accessed 19 November 2022].

¹⁹⁷ ‘Slur on Leeds’, *Yorkshire Evening News*, 25 November 1914, p. 4.

is contemptible'.¹⁹⁸ The *Leeds Mercury* even described local young men who had not joined up as 'laggards' who were displaying 'seeming indifference' towards the nation's crisis.¹⁹⁹ The obvious disdain with which many in Leeds viewed the men who did not enlist is also evident in the following letter to the *Yorkshire Evening Post* from the father of a Leeds Pal:

Sir – I have read in your paper many letters giving reasons why the young men of Leeds are not helping as they should in the defence of our country. Many of these letters I am sure must be very soothing to those who have no desire to do their duty. [...] The true men of other cities who have so nobly responded to the country's call only receive the same pay as recruits from Leeds would have [...] Thank God we still have some true men who value their country and know and feel the true meaning of patriotism.²⁰⁰

Although written by the father of a new recruit and so clearly biased towards the needs of the army, this letter illustrated that many saw it as the 'duty' of young men to join the army in defence of their country and prove themselves as 'true men'. Such emotive language abounded at this time; the *Leeds Mercury* reported the following year of Leeds City Councillor Robert Escritt's statement that, 'the young men of Leeds have not done what they ought to have done, and it was up to them to put on khaki, play the man, and win the fight'.²⁰¹ Scott also referred to recruitment as a chance for the young of Leeds to 'play the man'.²⁰² In addition to this, it was not only the local community, press and prominent figures who were aware of the comparative figures and lambasted the city for it, as the local newspapers of other towns provided their own judgement on Leeds. The *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* stated that Leeds was, 'if not the worst in the country [...] one of the blackest of black spots', and

¹⁹⁸ 'Leeds Vicar's Outburst', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 4 December 1914, p. 2.

¹⁹⁹ 'The Call for Fighting Men: A Slow Response in Leeds', *Leeds Mercury*, 14 October 1914, p. 4.

²⁰⁰ 'Patriotism and Pocket', *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 28 October 1914, p. 3.

²⁰¹ Spiers, 'Voluntary Recruiting', p. 309.

²⁰² Scott, *Leeds*, p. 14.

even added the next week that the ‘real reason why Leeds has not shown up better is probably to be found in its characteristic stolidity. Leeds is not unpatriotic, but it is not easily moved’.²⁰³ Additionally, the *Hull Daily Mail* declared that ‘Leeds has contributed only a miserable number of recruits to Kitchener’s Army’.²⁰⁴

Interestingly, Yorkshire as a county produced some of the lowest recruitment rates, alongside the East Midlands.²⁰⁵ As the detailed research of Spiers highlights, this lack of recruitment appeared to have been particularly relevant to textile and clothing workers.²⁰⁶ This explains why Leeds, and also nearby Bradford, both areas ensconced in the textile industry, were identified as areas with lower enlistment rates. Dewey also explains that there was ‘some evidence to show that all the explanatory variables’, including, ‘economic, demographic, medical, and institutional, were subject to regional differences’.²⁰⁷ If it is accepted that regional differences had an effect upon recruitment, mainly due to the industries which were specific to an area, then the fact that the War Office forwarded the enlistment returns sent to London by each local recruitment station every day to the press to publish, seem particularly unjust.²⁰⁸ This recruitment by comparison, although it may be deemed as unfair, was another recruitment tool, and is incredibly useful to researchers of the First World War as it means that the figures are available for scrutiny. The local press duly printed the recruiting figures for other places also, which meant that the press in Yorkshire ‘and its readers were soon made painfully aware of the bountiful recruiting in Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, Tyneside and Scotland’.²⁰⁹ One Ernest Walters from Newcastle even wrote to a Leeds

²⁰³ Spiers, ‘Voluntary Recruiting’, p. 303.

²⁰⁴ Spiers, ‘Voluntary Recruiting’, p. 302.

²⁰⁵ Spiers, ‘Voluntary Recruiting’, p. 295.

²⁰⁶ Spiers, ‘Voluntary Recruiting’, p. 296.

²⁰⁷ Dewey, ‘Military Recruiting’, p. 208, p. 216.

²⁰⁸ John Osborne, *The Voluntary Recruiting Movement in Britain, 1914-1916* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1982), p. 94.

²⁰⁹ Spiers, ‘Voluntary Recruiting’, p. 301.

newspaper to protest at the comparatively low number of recruits in Leeds, claiming disdain on behalf of his whole city, and furthermore placed the culpability for any future mandatory armed service on the city of Leeds: ‘We are all disgusted up here at the small numbers of men which Leeds is sending to the front. Newcastle, with half your population, has sent more. It is places like Leeds that will bring conscription on the country’.²¹⁰ This illustrated that, at this early stage in the war, only military service was recognised as war service, even though producing uniforms and other necessary wartime goods, which Leeds was heavily involved with, was making a significant contribution.

Industry in Leeds

The reason for Leeds not having recruited as many men as other places was simply that there was employment within the city. From the outset of the war the textile companies in Leeds received Government orders for serge uniforms for new recruits to the British army, clothing contracts and even contracts for boots for the French army, and in addition the local engineering industries prospered as armaments orders also came into the city.²¹¹ Even Scott admitted that by October and November of 1914 the ‘Leeds roll of recruits at this stage still fell short of the numbers recorded at one or two populous centres’, and explained that this was ‘due not so much to apathy as to the greater variety of essential occupations’ within the city.²¹² Military suppliers were able to supply orders of necessary armed force-related goods through a distribution centre based in Leeds, the Northern Area Army Clothing Department.²¹³ The stores for this clothing department increased as the war progressed, with

²¹⁰ ‘Leeds Charged with an Excess of Caution’, *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 28 October 1914, p. 3.

²¹¹ Spiers, ‘Voluntary Recruiting’, p. 301.

²¹² Scott, *Leeds*, p. 24.

²¹³ Simkins, *Kitchener’s Army*, p. 267.

premises within the city being requisitioned to hold the goods.²¹⁴ By May 1915 even the Cattle Market in Gelderd Road was being used to house goods, and Scott recalled how ‘the Army orders soon gave ample employment’, which meant that the ‘early queues of the workless grew smaller and smaller’, and ‘trade prospects all round brightened’.²¹⁵ Therefore the demand for goods brought much employment to the city, which meant that men did not need to enlist for economic reasons.

It is important to note also that some men simply did not wish to go to war. The *Leeds Mercury* reported the comments of Ambrose Smith, the owner of a draper’s shop in Briggate, who stated that the comparatively low recruitment was ‘not altogether a question of money: the men were not willing to go’.²¹⁶ Therefore there were men who were not persuaded by the recruitment drives, who did not wish to be soldiers, no matter what the rest of society appeared to think. As Spiers states, many ‘single and married Yorkshiremen never regarded themselves as soldiers; they remained impervious to all the propaganda, parades, and pressures to enlist’.²¹⁷ Spiers also suggests that the prospect of conscription being introduced may have deterred some men from joining up, which would give the impression that the men were content to wait until they were called up rather than enlisting immediately, further nuancing the picture of war enthusiasm already shown to be illusory.²¹⁸

Leeds Chamber of Commerce tried to defend the city’s low recruitment rate, and asked that ‘due account be taken of its contribution in what became known as “starred industries” meeting orders for khaki cloth, uniforms, boots, small arms, cartridges and other munitions’.²¹⁹ This indicated that the Leeds authorities were aware of their low enlistment

²¹⁴ Scott, *Leeds*, pp. 190-191.

²¹⁵ Scott, *Leeds*, pp. 190-191, p. 12.

²¹⁶ Scott, *Leeds*, p. 21.

²¹⁷ Spiers, ‘Voluntary Recruiting’, p. 312.

²¹⁸ Spiers, ‘Voluntary Recruiting’, p. 310.

²¹⁹ Spiers, ‘Voluntary Recruiting’, p. 303.

rate, and of their need to justify the reasons for it. It is also notable also that, although recruitment within the textile industry was low, in the agricultural community recruitment ‘flourished’, which again implies that employment within the textile industry was the main factor for non-enlistment in the area.²²⁰

Class Differences

Class differences certainly had an impact on recruiting figures in Leeds, for the economic reasons outlined above and also the perceived ‘socially exclusive’ singularity of the recruitment requirements and process for some of the battalions.²²¹ The latter meant that some working class men were either targeted due to their predisposition to be shorter than their middle class counterparts, in the case of the Bantams battalions, or felt discouraged to join up, significantly to the local Pals battalions. In Leeds, the latter battalions were originally designated a ‘Businessman’s’ or ‘Commercial’ Battalion (it was only later ‘rebranded’ as a Pals battalion), where men interested in joining up were formally interviewed.²²² These interviewers at Leeds Town Hall initially excluded both manual workers and skilled workers, which had the effect of a lower recruitment number, as well as creating a division among the classes. Spiers highlights that such exclusivity served to be socially divisive, and Offer agrees that in many towns the Pals battalions were ‘narrowly restricted in terms of occupation, with several battalions across the country erected barriers of exclusivity’.²²³ Simkins explains that the ‘highly selective recruiting policy of many of the raisers of the Pals battalions incurred a fair amount of criticism in the autumn of 1914, both in the national and local press’ and this

²²⁰ Spiers, ‘Voluntary Recruiting’, p. 303.

²²¹ Spiers, ‘Voluntary Recruiting’, p. 299.

²²² Spiers, ‘Voluntary Recruiting’, p. 296.

²²³ Spiers, ‘Voluntary Recruiting’, p. 299, Offer, ‘Going to War in 1914’, p. 233.

can certainly be seen in Leeds.²²⁴ The *Leeds Weekly Citizen* regularly denounced the seemingly unjust and potentially divisive formation of the Leeds Pals. At the beginning of October 1914 it carried a report that recalled the cheering crowds at Leeds train station when the Leeds Pals left for their training at Colsterdale. In this, it compared this to the lack of similar enthusiasm received by other Leeds recruits: ‘Ninety per cent of the recruits in Leeds have gone away to war, or to training in preparation for war, without a cheer and without a song’. Furthermore, it claimed that it was this ‘cheering that killed recruiting in Leeds’, and that there was ‘no public protest, no outspoken contempt, but just silence and a huge drop in the rate of recruiting’.²²⁵ One of the letters from a soldier formerly employed by Leeds City Council prior to signing up back home to his former manager in Leeds provided further evidence of the recruitment process of the Pals battalions rejecting potential soldiers: ‘I refer to Arthur Mason’s end. He was my office chum, my best pal, who when we endeavoured to enlist together in the first days of the formation of our glorious “Pals” Battalion, was sacrificed, and suffered seeing me rejected’.²²⁶ The tension created by the perceived rejection of many men from the formation of Pals battalions certainly highlighted the class divisions that existed in the city at this time and would have deterred men from joining up. As Gregory states, ‘in many cases, far from overcoming the divisions and barriers of civilian life, the processes of volunteering reinforced them’, as some ‘Pals’ battalions were actually less about who you served with, but much more obviously about who you didn’t serve with’.²²⁷ It may

²²⁴ Simkins, *Kitchener’s Army*, p. 93.

²²⁵ ‘Leeds and the War: Why Recruiting Stopped – The Pals Battalions and Others: Snobbery and Recruiting’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 2 October 1914, p. 1.

²²⁶ WYAS Leeds, LC TR, Leeds City Council Treasurer’s Correspondence with Employees Enlisted in the Armed Forces, 1917-1919, Sergeant Edwin Redshaw, 17 May 1917. Private Arthur Mason of the West Yorkshire Regiment (Prince of Wales’ Regiment), formerly an employee of Leeds City Council, was killed in action in Belgium in 1917: C R Mulholland, ‘Roll of Honour’ in Scott, *Leeds*, p. 323, Commonwealth War Graves Commission <https://www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/casualty-details/1634711/arthur-mason/> [accessed 19 November 2022].

²²⁷ Gregory, *Last Great War*, p. 78.

be rather an exaggeration to claim that the crowd that turned out to cheer for the Leeds Pals on their way to training was responsible for lack of recruitment in the city, or that the exclusivity of the Leeds Pals had halted recruitment in the city altogether, however this observation does indicate that there was some tension regarding the formation of the Pals battalions. It may also help to explain why even in the formation of the Pals battalion Leeds appeared to be lacking in recruitment compared to other places. Barnsley in South Yorkshire had managed to create two Pals battalions by May 1915, despite having a smaller population than Leeds, which was struggling to produce more than two battalions by this time.²²⁸

Another aspect of recruitment which incorporated a class element, in Leeds and elsewhere, was the introduction of the Bantams battalions, which Leeds City Council had applied for permission to form by the end of December.²²⁹ The Bantams battalions were introduced to enable the recruitment of men who were below the British Army's minimum regulation height of five feet and three inches, and therefore enabled otherwise healthy young men to enlist. Before the end of the year, Kitchener had approved the request from Leeds, providing the necessary permission to raise this local unit, which became the 17th West Yorkshires (Bantams Battalion). The *Leeds Mercury* applauded the city in which they reported there was 'evidence that there are plenty of men ready to show that they are "every inch a man" even though their inches may number less than sixty three'.²³⁰ The *Yorkshire Post* reported on a Bantams parade before the Lord Mayor in December, and asserted that, 'their lack of height did not give one the impression of a battalion of dwarfs', but 'sturdy, health young fellows, quite as capable as their taller brethren' as being made into a 'unit of which Leeds may well

²²⁸ Spiers, 'Voluntary Recruiting', p. 296; Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, p. 91.

²²⁹ 'Leeds and a "Bobs" Battalion', *Leeds Mercury*, 2 December 1914, p. 4.

²³⁰ 'Leeds and a "Bobs" Battalion', *Leeds Mercury*, 2 December 1914, p. 4.

be proud.²³¹ Ostensible laudatory sentiments notwithstanding, the tone of reporting on this battalion can be seen as patronising to this ‘battalion of dwarfs’, who were much more likely to be working class than middle class men due to their historic inferior diet and lifestyles determining a shorter stature. Again, this provided an exclusivity to the battalion which indicates how class differentiation had an impact on recruitment in Leeds.

Anti-War Sentiment

There were a minority of men in Leeds who did not enlist as they did not agree with the war. Many who were members of religions such as the Quakers had a pacifist stance and Leeds had a strong Quaker community at this time. With regard to the attitude of the Quakers towards the war, it is useful here to quote from a letter written by Ted Harvey in September 1914, in which he explained his absence from the Lord Mayor’s meeting held to encourage recruiting. This letter outlined his opposition to the war, however nevertheless also emphasised that the war was ‘just’, unifying all in ‘sacrifice’ and that an ‘ultimate victory’ was necessary.²³² Again this illustrates the nuanced attitudes towards the conflict. In a reflection possibly shared with many in society at the time, Scott stated that those who refused to fight were doing so for ‘peculiar reasons’, no doubt to his lack of comprehension of the anti-war views.²³³ The *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, however, as a sympathetic supporter of those with an anti-war stance, even attacked local ILP MPs for supporting the war and the recruitment drive, in an article with a subtitle of ‘Condemnation of Jingo. Penalising of Young Men’, at the beginning of September.²³⁴ In the same edition the Labour Party was

²³¹ ‘The Leeds “Bantams”: Parade Before the Lord Mayor’, *Yorkshire Post*, 18 January 1915, p. 9.

²³² Scott, *Leeds*, p. 20.

²³³ Scott, *Leeds*, p. 20.

²³⁴ ‘ILP and Recruiting,’ *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 4 September 1914, p. 4.

attacked for the same reason, in an article which reported the following resolution agreed by the Leeds Women's Labour League branch: 'That this meeting [...] protests against the Labour MPs taking any part in the recruiting of men for active service [...] we regret that they are thus violating the principles of the party'.²³⁵ This was an indication of the presence of opposition to the war locally, albeit in a subtle form. The subtlety was no doubt due to the restrictions against demonstrating under DORA, as well as the consensus that existed in the city, especially among the local politicians, who were generally supportive of the war regardless of their political affiliations.²³⁶ It must be emphasised also that the dissenters were very much in the minority at this time. Brock Millman's extensive research on opposition to the war illustrates that in the country, as in all belligerent countries, the 'few voices as were raised in dissent were overwhelmed by a chorus supportive of the decision to resort to arms' and adds that it 'would have been strange had it been otherwise'.²³⁷ This was due to the perception of anti-war sentiment being unpatriotic. In this work, Millman also convincingly argues that throughout the war the way the authorities addressed the perceived problem of dissent was significant to its eventual outcome. This, he outlines, was due to the efficient way this dissent was confined and controlled in Britain. It is also important to highlight here that at the start of the war there may well have been more 'voices raised in dissent' privately expressed. However, although there were 'prominent men who associated themselves in opposition to the war', Millman states that these people were at this time 'without a coherent body of followers, agreed programme, or effective organization', and this applied on both a local and national level.²³⁸

²³⁵ 'A Protest by Women,' *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 4 September 1914, p. 4.

²³⁶ Scott, *Leeds*, p. 12.

²³⁷ Millman, *Managing Domestic Dissent*, p. 7.

²³⁸ Millman, *Managing Domestic Dissent*, p. 7.

Summary

The outbreak of the First World War clearly had an intense effect upon Leeds. The City Council immediately responded to the news of war, and worked tirelessly to help in the war effort, both in their pro-active recruitment drive and helping to raise funds. This was a significant factor and provides clear evidence of the consensus in wartime Leeds at least among the ruling authorities. As Spiers states, any recruiting revival ‘required the active engagement of the local elites’, who had ‘the resources, connections, and leadership skills to direct the local recruiting efforts’.²³⁹ From the onset of the war until the end of 1914, the leaders of Leeds City Council continued in their action for improved enlistment rates. The *Yorkshire Post* included reports of several recruitment rallies in the city early December, including one in Woodhouse Moor, Leeds, where Councillor Masser stated that there were ‘at least ten thousand men in the city eligible to take up arms’ who could be recruited.²⁴⁰ At the close of 1914, Leeds had provided altogether fifteen thousand recruits in the several local battalions and for the New Armies, a figure which does not include the men who had joined other local regiments or the approximately five thousand men who were already in the forces at the outbreak of the war.²⁴¹ However, again it must be highlighted that this figure was comparatively low compared to other places. The figure also encompasses nine hundred men who had previously worked for the City Council, including tramway men, whose jobs were then filled by women. The end of 1914 certainly saw a change to the city that the war had introduced. As Thornton states, Leeds ‘was swiftly put on a war footing’, as the ‘Leeds clothing industry came into its own, working twenty-four hours a day to produce

²³⁹ Spiers, ‘Voluntary Recruiting’, p. 304.

²⁴⁰ ‘The Pipers’ Band and Leeds Recruiting’, *Yorkshire Post*, 15 December 1914, p. 7.

²⁴¹ Scott, *Leeds*, p. 14.

uniforms'.²⁴² There is also a gender aspect to this, which will be further explored in the next chapter, as women began to replace men in key industries.

Scott's claim that 'the combined energies of Leeds people' were working tirelessly and enthusiastically for the war effort is however misleading, especially for the working class.²⁴³ Some of the people of Leeds had initially responded in the panic buying of food in their anxiety and confusion at the conflict, and, significantly, most men did not immediately enlist into the army. The recruitment figures prove that the rush to colours in the city was low compared to similar sized cities nationwide, and it is crucial to note that this apparent covert dissent was due to the increased employment that the war brought to the manufacturing and engineering industries in the city. The levels of recruitment in Leeds were therefore related to the mobilisation of the whole of society into the work that the war brought. The fact that men did not wish to enlist if they did not need to for financial reasons is revealing and indicates that there was no widespread enthusiasm for men to 'do their duty' by signing up to the armed forces. Indeed, this duty could be expressed in the industrial work that the city offered. As Scott stated, 'many workpeople were led to believe their industrial service was paramount'.²⁴⁴ The voluntary work for the war, organised by figures such as Lady Mayoress Ratcliffe, may have been successful in the city, however it is not the case that the majority of society were involved in this work and class has proved to be a pivotal factor here. Indeed, the class differences the city had prior to the war were compounded by the wartime conditions, with the middle-class women being the ones involved in the voluntary work as they had the time to do so, as the working class continued in their paid employment in the growing industries that the war provided. The existing divisions within classes is also

²⁴² Thornton, *Leeds*, p. 182.

²⁴³ Scott, *Leeds*, p. 12.

²⁴⁴ Scott, *Leeds*, p. 24.

highlighted by the perceived exclusivity of the raising of the Leeds Pals battalion, whose impressive rapid formation still did not compare well to the formation of Pals battalions in other places. To summarise, Leeds adapted to the change inflicted upon society by the outbreak of war, primarily to the call for manufacturing. Pertinently, this wartime industry meant the city was offered greater employment than other places nationally. The rate of unemployment within the city juxtaposed to unemployment nationally revealed that Leeds was transformed into a war production city in 1914.

Chapter Two: 1915 ‘Increased Effort and Sacrifice’

Introduction

Scott claimed that the beginning of 1915 saw the people of Leeds cautious yet unwavering in their acceptance of the wartime situation:

As the year 1914 closed [the] first shock of war had passed [...] so accustomed were we all to the change in our lives that [...] the whole outlook was viewed more with the steadfastness of a silent watchman than the feverishness of an alarmist.²⁴⁵

However, critical scrutiny of the evidence of the impact of the external and regional wartime circumstances on the city from this year has illustrated that society’s reaction to the escalation of war was far more nuanced than Scott would have had his readers believe. This chapter will focus upon how the events of this year impacted upon the people in the city in a multitude of ways. Notably the significance of the wartime industry locally will be discussed, including the country’s increasing need for munitions which the city helped to provide, not least by women workers. The problems associated with the need for munitions was linked to discord within the city, as in the country, and manifested itself in the form of the industrial unrest which began at this time. This was in addition to rising prices and the beginning of the food and fuel shortages. Such challenges highlighted again the existing class differences within the city. They also contributed to the xenophobia in the country this year, which as Panikos Panayi’s research illustrates, ‘almost saturated Britain’.²⁴⁶ The use of poison gas against the Allies at the second Battle of Ypres, the Zeppelin raids on the country, the sinking of the passenger liner *Lusitania* and the sensationalised killing of Nurse Edith Cavell all created an antagonism that stemmed from a fear of defeat. This was inflamed by emotive newspaper reporting, as will be seen in Leeds. Recruitment continued to be a focus, as the year saw the

²⁴⁵ Scott, *Leeds*, pp. 14-15.

²⁴⁶ Panayi, ‘Germans in Britain During the First World War’, p. 76.

introduction of national registration and the Derby Scheme, forerunners to the mandatory recruitment introduced the following year. The calls for conscription in 1915 meant that established and burgeoning anti-war groups were spurred into action by its inevitability, and the protesting figures who campaigned in Leeds provide validation that opposition to the war existed in the city, albeit in a limited capacity. The assessment of this year in Leeds will show that the city continued to respond to the difficulties of the war in a myriad of ways.

Recruiting in Leeds

At the beginning of 1915, recruitment nationally had decreased from the initial enlistment surges of the first couple of months of the war. The Government continued to struggle to recruit appropriate numbers throughout the year, hence the calls for conscription. The reasons for this are manifold, including notably in early 1915 the economic changes caused by the delay with separation allowances and, notably for Leeds, the link to employment and recruitment. Indeed, the major factor affecting the recruitment levels nationally was economic, due to the industry the war brought to the country, especially in manufacturing cities such as Leeds. This meant that the economic motivation to join up was no longer as significant in 1915 as it has been in August and September 1914 as men could earn more staying at home. Leeds as a city followed the recruitment trend of the country nationally in 1915: despite the decline in recruitment figures from those in September and October 1914, by the beginning of 1915 the enlistment levels in Leeds had a brief upsurge. This is possibly due to the time of year and its importance in people's minds as a fresh start. The first Christmas of the war had passed, a turning point for those who envisaged the war would be over by then, and the absence over the Christmas and new year period of loved ones who were already in the armed forces may have encouraged other to join up. Spiers claims that recruiting 'revived' in Leeds after Christmas and the New Year, which period 'was possibly a

psychological turning point for some recruits as it occasioned a minor recruiting boom.²⁴⁷ This fluctuation in numbers is borne out by coverage in the local press, which continued to carry regular headlines and articles which updated its readers on the recruiting situation locally. This was especially the case at the beginning of the year: ‘Now estimated that the number of men Leeds has contributed to the Army, including the Territorials, is 20,000, which probably represents at least one fourth of the eligible men of the city. The boom in recruiting which began after Christmas has steadily continued ever since.’²⁴⁸ On 8 January 1915 the local press helpfully displayed a detailed breakdown of the recruiting returns, which shows the number of local men on active service within each battalion, which added up to a total of 20,365. This figure included 7734 who had signed up in response to the call for Kitchener’s ‘New Armies’; and in addition to these, there were 1100 in the Leeds ‘Pals’ Battalion, 1031 in the 7th Battalion West Yorkshire Regiment and 1033 in the 8th Battalion West Yorkshire Regiment (the Leeds Rifles).²⁴⁹ This ‘steady flow of recruits’, as the *Yorkshire Post* confidently described it, was also due to the consistent and persistent campaigning of the Leeds Joint Parliamentary Committee, as well as the national PRC.²⁵⁰ There were also the continued resolute media enticements. Most newspapers displayed advertisements which urged men to join up, using emotive language and tactics to do so. This included appealing directly to women to encourage their menfolk to enlist, as an advert in the local press in Leeds evidenced: ‘Women of England do your duty! Send your men to-day to join our glorious Army. God Save the King!’²⁵¹ In the summer of 1915, when there was a general lull in recruiting in the country nationwide, again women were encouraged to become

²⁴⁷ Spiers, ‘Voluntary Recruiting’, p. 305.

²⁴⁸ ‘Recruiting Boom Continues’, *Yorkshire Post*, 6 January 1915, pp. 5-6. See also Scott, *Leeds*, p. 21.

²⁴⁹ ‘How Leeds is Responding’, *Yorkshire Post*, 8 January 1915, p. 5.

²⁵⁰ ‘A Steady Flow of Recruits’, *Yorkshire Post*, 12 January 1915, p. 5.

²⁵¹ ‘4 Questions asked to Women of England’, *Yorkshire Post*, 14 January 1915, p. 7.

involved with the recruitment drive. This was a direct appeal to mothers, wives and girlfriends to encourage their young men to do their duty. Scott concurred that the summer brought a renewed energy to the recruitment campaign locally: ‘Recruiting for the Leeds Rifles received an impetus in a July campaign’, which, he explained, was followed in September with the opening of an expansive central recruiting office.²⁵² The sporadic surges in enlistment, however, did not last long. In addition, although recruitment was also generally in decline across the country as a whole in 1915, Leeds as a city still had lower recruitment levels than other analogous regions. Even the *Yorkshire Post* admitted, with reference to the naval recruits, that although of a ‘high-standard’, an ‘enquiry shows that the city has contributed a regular, if not very large number, of young men to the Navy.’²⁵³ Scott detailed the number of men in each different regiment in July 1915, which illustrated the progress made during the first year of the war, and, although the figure for each has increased and even nearly doubled in some cases, they were still low compared to other places in the country.²⁵⁴ This is a strong indication that many of the men preferred to remain in industries at home rather than sign up to fight.

Press Reporting

Most of the local press continued to encourage recruitment, and also kept the city’s public informed on the progress of the Leeds battalions. The reporting on their training and action was regular and invariably positive, despite the comparatively low numbers of recruits locally. The physical condition of the Leeds ‘Pals’ was reported upon approvingly by all newspapers, even the left leaning *Leeds Weekly Citizen* claimed that ‘there is not a fitter unit

²⁵² Scott, *Leeds*, p. 22; ‘Leeds Recruiting Centre’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 13 August 1915, p. 1.

²⁵³ ‘The Call to the Colours. A Compliment to Leeds’, *Yorkshire Post*, 17 February 1915, p. 5.

²⁵⁴ Scott, *Leeds*, p. 21.

in the whole of the British Army of today'.²⁵⁵ The newspapers had avidly reported how the Pals were sent to Colsterdale to train in September 1914. However it was December 1915 before they went on active service, to Egypt to defend the Suez Canal.²⁵⁶ That the recruits were fit at this time is not in dispute, however the fact that they had not yet left the country for active service, and, as some of the personal papers of the recruits to the Leeds Pals recorded, they did feel rather overlooked. Private Mark Wood, who had joined the Leeds Pals in 1914, recorded in his diary at the end of 1915: 'After four months of strenuous training, when all ranks had settled down to the idea that we were forgotten, we were marched off without leave from our muddy camp at Fovant (Wilts) and entrained for Liverpool'.²⁵⁷ Wood served in the Leeds Pals until 1916, and his diary included an outline of the Pals' journey to Egypt, their first trip abroad as a battalion, in enlightening detail, rather different to that of the local newspapers. He highlighted the dreadful conditions that the Pals had to endure on board their ship, the *Empress of India*, how the men were 'anxious and impatient', as well as providing evidence of the different treatment between the men and their superior officers:

15th Yorkshires are first on board, but unfortunate in their allocation of sleeping and dining [...] herded together deep in the bowels of the ship [...] a long, low, dimly lighted chamber, furnished with rough forms and tables [...] We shall be like packed herrings [...] Sumptuous apartments upstairs for the officers. They have had an excellent luncheon this noon.²⁵⁸

He signed off for that day with the unequivocal statement that, 'The accommodation is absolutely execrable.'²⁵⁹ The appalling conditions Wood described aboard the *Empress of India* are echoed by another Leeds Pal, Private Edward Woffenden, who recorded that six thousand men had 'embarked on *Empress of Britain* [with] abominable sleeping

²⁵⁵ 'Leeds Pals move to Ripon,' *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 26 June 1915, p. 5.

²⁵⁶ Scott, *Leeds*, p. 22; Milner, *Leeds Pals*, p. 30.

²⁵⁷ WYAS Leeds, WYL 2072 Mark Wood Diaries, 1915-1916, 5 December 1915.

²⁵⁸ WYAS Leeds, WYL 2072 Mark Wood Diaries, 1915-1916, 5 December 1915.

²⁵⁹ WYAS Leeds, WYL 2072 Mark Wood Diaries, 1915-1916, 5 December 1915.

accommodation'.²⁶⁰ In sharp contrast to Wood, who outlined his animosities freely, Woffenden generally focused his diary entries upon the day to day routine of army life, and commented upon the food and weather, with almost no mention of the wider war, or indication of any frustration with his superior officers. This shows the differing foci of the many soldiers. Wood's comparison of the differing treatment of the men and the officers continued throughout this journey, however, and his simmering resentment for the officers was clear:

What a temptation it must be for some to deny themselves this opportunity of getting rid of their tormentors! During this dose of "discipline" (poorly misused word), we get occasional glimpses through port-holes to the spacious and elegant interior, where officers are breakfasting.²⁶¹

Wood's comments illustrated the clear indignation that some of the soldiers felt towards the officers and their own comparative treatment within the army. This was blatantly missing from the invariably laudatory newspaper reports and again reflected the class differences at this time.

The Leeds Bantams, also a firm favourite of the press, did not leave for France until the end of January 1916, and the Leeds Rifles had been sent to France in April 1915. The local press reported at the end of the year that the Leeds Rifles had 'not been engaged in any big engagement', however it continued that their casualties had been 'by no means slight', and emphatically added, 'Indeed, it would give the folks at home an unpleasant surprise if they knew the total number of men killed and wounded in both battalions.'²⁶² This implies that the people on the home front did not know the true casualty figures, as well providing evidence

²⁶⁰ WYAS Leeds, WYL399/2, Diary of Private Edward Woffenden, 'C' Coy. Leeds Pals (15th West Yorkshire), 1 January 1915- 1916, 6 December 1915.

²⁶¹ WYAS Leeds, WYL 2072 Mark Wood Diaries, 1915-1916, 7 December 1915.

²⁶² 'The Leeds Rifles to Have a Well-Earned Rest. A General's High Praise', *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 23 December 1915, p. 5.

that the press applauded the soldiers for their service. It seems, therefore, that the local press wished for the people of Leeds to read their pages to encourage the idea of brave soldiers, proud of their local roots. In reality, however, the people on the home front gathered information from the front from several sources, including the stories of returning soldiers on leave, and their letters home, although admittedly these were routinely censored.

Censorship of Soldiers' Letters

Many of the letters of the soldiers from Leeds writing home from their various stations acknowledged this censoring of their letters. These included Private Fred Parker, employed by Leeds City Council prior to recruitment, who wrote from Salonika whilst recovering from malaria: 'I can't say much regarding our doings or the censor would have a busy time with his pencil,' and a few months later when he was 'back in the field': 'I am afraid I should not be allowed to give any discriptive [sic] account of the life out here or things in general.'²⁶³ Private Oates of the Leeds Rifles also wrote regarding his letters that the censors, 'Read them before they leave here so we can't put mutch [sic] in'.²⁶⁴ By July 1915, Private Harry Old wrote in his diary that the letters were 'now being heavily censored', and also, ironically as a diary entry, that due to the 'preliminaries before Loos' that 'no letters or diaries to be kept'.²⁶⁵ This indicated the extent to which the authorities wished for the soldiers experience to be kept from people at home. It also evidenced that the soldiers did not always adhere to these rules. The war diaries of Lieutenant Rigby of the Leeds Rifles from this year, whose duties of his rank included the editing of his men's letters, provide more information on this activity:

²⁶³ WYAS Leeds, LC TR, Leeds City Council Treasurer's Correspondence with Employees Enlisted in the Armed Forces, 1917-1919, Private Fred Parker, 13 July 1917, 2 September 1917.

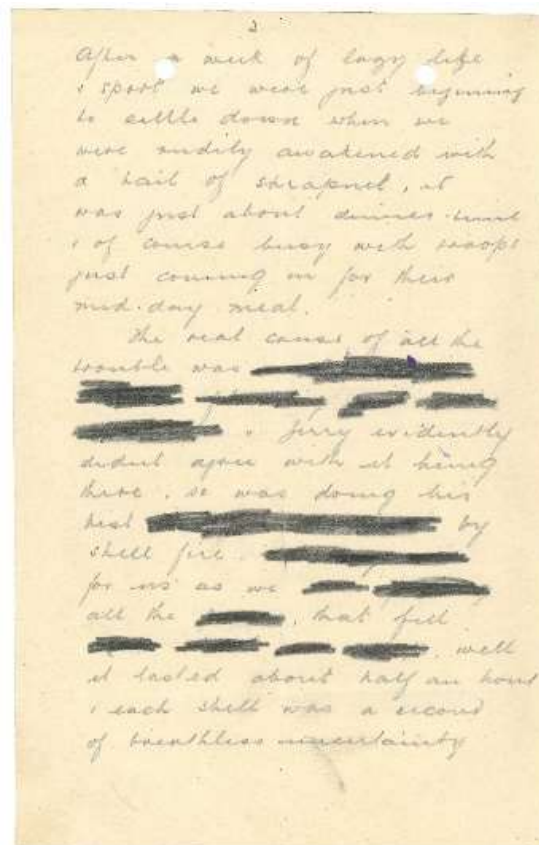
²⁶⁴ LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/GS/1197, Papers of Private Herbert Oates, 1914-1918.

²⁶⁵ LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/GS/1201 Diaries and letters of Private Henry (Harry) Old, 1914-1918.

Censoring now begins like a nuisance [...] Letters and cards are censored by Platoon commanders, letters being franked both front and back. Twenty per cent are left unsealed, and inspected by company commanders who hand on ten per cent to the CO [Commanding Officer].²⁶⁶

The awareness of the recruits to this censorship is shown by a Leeds soldier when he wrote home of an attack by the ‘Jerries’, and hoped that he has ‘kept within censor’s limits’. Clearly not, as can be seen from the redaction below.²⁶⁷

Figure Three: Redacted letter of Norman Baxendale, WYAS Leeds, 29 July 1917.



²⁶⁶ WYAS Leeds, WYL714, WYL700, WYL707, WYL739, WYL712, WYL740, War diaries of active service of Lt A G Rigby, 1/8th West Yorkshire Regiment (Leeds Rifles), 17 April 1915.

²⁶⁷ WYAS Leeds, LC TR, Leeds City Council Treasurer's Correspondence with Employees Enlisted in the Armed Forces, 1917-1919, Norman Baxendale, 29 July 1917.

One way that the armed forces could avoid having to open the men's letters was to provide field service postcards for them to communicate with their loved ones at home, such as the one below from Private John Cookson from Leeds.²⁶⁸ This certainly did not allow for any lack of adherence to censorship, stating that any additional material would be destroyed.

Figure Four: Field Service Postcard from Private John F Cookson, WYAS Leeds, 24 April 1917.

NOTHING is to be written on this side except date and signature of the sender. Sent postage not required may be erased. If anything else is added the post card will be destroyed.

I am quite well.

~~I have been admitted into hospital~~
 { *sick* } ~~and am going on well.~~
 { *wounded* } ~~and hope to be discharged soon.~~

~~I am being sent down to the base.~~

I have received your { letter dated _____
 telegram ,, _____
 parcel ,, _____

Letter follows at first opportunity.

~~I have received no letter from you~~
 { *lately*
 } ~~for a long time.~~

Signature } *J. F. Cookson (Pk)*
 only

Date April 24 1917

[Postage must be prepaid on any letter or post card addressed to the sender of this card.]

W.L. W3497/223. 29245. 000m. 771B. C. & Co., Grange Mills, S.W.

²⁶⁸ WYAS Leeds, LC TR, Leeds City Council Treasurer's Correspondence with Employees Enlisted in the Armed Forces, 1917-1919, Private John F Cookson, 24 April 1917.

Letters were censored to ensure that the soldiers did not pass on confidential information, or facts that would detrimentally impact on morale of those at home, such as the atrocities that the soldiers were witnessing, and the conditions they were enduring. Driver Wilby of Leeds wrote home that: ‘Men who cannot see the humorous side of life have a beastly time here. I cannot go into details at present, but someday, when I am not bound by pen, ink and paper, I shall be able to be more communicative’.²⁶⁹ However, in addition to the verbal reports of the soldiers on leave, and the extreme anti-war rhetoric of the left-wing press, there were also the hard facts of the rising casualty figures, which could not hide the carnage. The letters could even be written in a way to ensure that the correct message was passed back home, as managed by Private Oates, who wrote to his wife from France: ‘You ask me if we get enough to eat sometimes we do and sometimes we don’t but we have to put up with it’, in which line the words ‘we don’t’ were encircled, which thereby emphasised the lack of nutrition. Private Oates continued that he was ‘about full up of this horrible War [sic] and i [sic] wish it was all over’.²⁷⁰ This illustrated that the recruits were not as content as much of the press liked to promote. One letter of Leeds Corporal Stanley Hall mirrored these sentiments: ‘I hope the war doesn’t last, then we will soon be able to return as I’m about tired of this’.²⁷¹ Private Oates’ weariness with the war is expressed in several of his letters, as he also reported on the ill treatment of the soldiers: ‘they put in the papers that they treat the shoulders [sic] out at the Front but it is all a lie they do not care so long as they get you here’, and of the new recruits to the front that, ‘they are smileing [sic] now but when they get here they take all the smile off’.²⁷² Similarly, the letters home to Leeds of Douglas Crockatt, the

²⁶⁹ WYAS Leeds, LC TR, Leeds City Council Treasurer’s Correspondence with Employees Enlisted in the Armed Forces, 1917-1919, Driver R S Wilby, 29 April 1917.

²⁷⁰ LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/GS/1197, Herbert Oates letters, 1914-1918.

²⁷¹ WYAS Leeds, LC TR, Leeds City Council Treasurer’s Correspondence with Employees Enlisted in the Armed Forces, 1917-1919, Corporal F Stanley Hall, 24 August 1917.

²⁷² LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/GS/1197, Herbert Oates letters, 1914-1918.

fiancé of Ella Lethem, outlined his consternation at the front, as her diary outlined: ‘There was a short letter from Duggie, I think the most unhappy letter I’ve ever had from him’, as he was worried about the company being ‘full of new inexperienced officers’. Although she added the ‘poor old boy, how he hates “this rot”!’, she did claim that ‘yet he wouldn’t have missed it’.²⁷³ This also indicates that many of the recruits were willing to endure the discomforts for victory, highlighting the nuance yet again.

Calls for Conscription

The stoicism of many of the serving soldiers notwithstanding, the fact that the recruitment figures in the country in 1915 were not sufficient to provide the necessary manpower for the continuing war meant that the calls for conscription became louder. Those in favour of mandatory military service were aided by the formation of the coalition government in May 1915. Although the Liberals remained the majority in this new cabinet and ‘still held most of the key posts’, it has been claimed that the ‘campaign for compulsion was greatly strengthened by the presence in the Cabinet of a group of influential politicians whose open support for such a policy was not conditioned by loyalty to Asquith or devotion to Liberal principles’.²⁷⁴ Conscription had been foregrounded initially in 1914 with the appeal from all party leaders for households to provide details of men of military age and their willingness to enlist (to ‘attest’). The *Leeds Weekly Citizen* referred to this as being akin to the first tier of an enforced military service: ‘It looks very much like conscription by instalment’.²⁷⁵ In the event, less than half of all households responded to it. This was followed by the introduction of the National Registration Act in 1915, where all men and women between the ages of

²⁷³ LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/DF/074, Diary of Ella Lethem, 1917-1918, 5 October 1917.

²⁷⁴ Simkins, *Kitchener’s Army*, p. 138.

²⁷⁵ ‘A Military Census: Form for Every Household’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 6 November 1914, p. 8, Spiers, ‘Voluntary Recruiting’, p. 310.

fifteen and sixty five who were not members of the armed forces were expected to register. The aim was to obtain the manpower statistics for the country to allow the military to identify who should be called up for military service. This was a necessary step in the road to compulsory service, and it revealed that of all men in the country, over five million men ‘of military age were not in the forces’, and of these, over two million were ‘single men of whom only 690,138 were in “starred” occupations’.²⁷⁶ These figures therefore helped to provide those in favour of conscription with the justification they required. National Registration was closely followed with the introduction of the Derby Scheme in the autumn of 1915. This scheme required all eligible men between the ages of eighteen and forty one not in a ‘starred’ or reserved occupation to either enlist or attest their willingness to do so (introduced by Lord Kitchener’s appointed director of recruitment, Edward Stanley, the Earl of Derby). Its specific purpose was to identify whether the necessary manpower for the armed forces could feasibly be filled by volunteers or whether conscription was necessary, and entailed a ‘door to door canvass across the country.’²⁷⁷ The letters of Lieutenant Carrington of the 9th Battalion Yorkshire Regiment from 1915 provided evidence of the success of the immediate presence of the canvassers at households, in the assertion that some of the Derby Scheme recruiters raised three to five hundred men per day.²⁷⁸ This success can also be explained by the motivations of the men who were encouraged to voluntarily enlist before conscription was inevitably introduced, which Spiers describes as ‘another psychological moment’ for those men who had ‘rushed to volunteer.’²⁷⁹ Indeed it looked far better for men to be voluntary recruits than ones who had been forced to enlist. The attitude of utter contempt felt by some

²⁷⁶ Spiers reported that the register proved that 5,012,146 men of military age were not in the forces in 1915, a figure that included 2,179,231 single men, ‘Voluntary Recruiting’, p. 311.

²⁷⁷ Spiers, ‘Voluntary Recruiting’, p. 311.

²⁷⁸ LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0273, C E Carrington letters, 1914-1918, letter 143, December 1915.

²⁷⁹ Spiers, ‘Voluntary Recruiting’, p. 311.

of the soldiers on the front to those who had not yet enlisted highlighted why voluntary enlistment was preferable to many, as a letter of Second Lieutenant Robert Tolson, who was enlisted with the Leeds Pals, to his brother illustrated: 'I know a bachelor about twenty eight in Becketts, who says before he will go they will have to fetch him.'²⁸⁰ This also highlighted the fact that there were men in Leeds who were determined not to sign up until they were forced to do so. The pressure faced by the men being urged to attest or enlist was also illustrated by the letter that each one was handed, from Lord Derby, which explained the scheme and stressed that they were in a 'country fighting, as ours is, for its very existence.'²⁸¹ The results of this canvass, carried out in November and December of 1915, indicated that over two million men nationwide had neither enlisted nor attested.²⁸² This left the Government falling short in numbers, therefore conscription was subsequently introduced the following January.

In Leeds, Scott recalled that the Derby Scheme proved to be 'triumph of organisation', as under this scheme another thirty thousand Leeds men had joined the forces.²⁸³ He claimed that the scheme was a success locally due to Leeds Parliamentary Recruiting Committee, who were 'a ready instrument of organisation' to facilitate this scheme.²⁸⁴ Spiers claims that the 30,178 men raised by Leeds from this scheme illustrated that the city had 'sustained its recruiting revival'.²⁸⁵ However, this figure still compares unfavourably to those of other places nationwide, such as Sunderland (61,501), Manchester (87,962), Glasgow

²⁸⁰ LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/GS/1610, Robert H Tolson letters, 1914-1918, 11 October 1915.

²⁸¹ 'The Recruiting Canvas. Lord Derby and Employers', *Yorkshire Post*, 22 October 1915, p. 6.

²⁸² Spiers reported that 2,182,178 men were neither attested nor enlisted, 'Voluntary Recruiting', p. 311.

²⁸³ Scott, *Leeds*, p. 30.

²⁸⁴ Scott, *Leeds*, pp. 28-30.

²⁸⁵ Spiers, 'Voluntary Recruiting', p. 312.

(82,009), Sheffield (31,148), or even the smaller Yorkshire towns of Pontefract (38,850) and Halifax (31,746).²⁸⁶ Therefore it cannot be applauded as a successful resurgence for the city or the country: the figures were clearly insufficient to ward off conscription.

Industry

The recruitment figures in the country were undoubtedly linked to industry, and the employment it afforded, as the needs of the war brought greater demand for manufacturing industry. These included the need for soldiers' clothes and boots, as well the necessity for greater production of munitions, thus the employment within these industries increased. In addition to this, in some cases the occupations (notably the munitions industry) were classed as work of national importance, therefore the men employed within them were exempt from military service. This again had a detrimental effect upon the recruiting figures. Dewey agrees that there seemed to be 'no doubt that by the end of 1915 a large number of men of military age were effectively exempt from military service, chiefly those in the munitions industry.'²⁸⁷ This also worked conversely, as the men who could have been working within some of these industries had signed up to the army already and therefore the industries were short of workers. The search for symmetry between recruitment and employment in necessary war-time industries was to be a continuing problem throughout the war, for all the belligerent nations.²⁸⁸

One general consensus among historians is that the various industries in the country had differing experiences due to the impact of recruitment, as industries were often regionalised, such as the cloth manufacturing industry in Leeds.²⁸⁹ It is one of the main findings of this

²⁸⁶ Spiers, 'Voluntary Recruiting', p. 312.

²⁸⁷ Dewey, 'Military Recruiting', p. 214.

²⁸⁸ See Ferguson, *Pity of War*, p. 269.

²⁸⁹ See Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, p. 112.

research that this rise in employment was clearly one of the factors which contributed to the low recruitment levels in the city, as men could earn money away from the trenches to provide for their families. Imperatively, they could also feel that they were fulfilling their patriotic duty in this work. Munitions remained a top priority for the Government throughout 1915 and Leeds was at the forefront of this industry, with shells being filled and armed in factories in the city. The Leeds Forge Company, based in Armley, filled ten thousand shells per week by August 1915, and another factory in Hunslet also contributed to this industry.²⁹⁰ New factories were called for to dramatically increase this production and a special committee was established by the Government to organise the building of a purpose-built factory for the sole production of munitions in Leeds during this year. As was reported in the *Yorkshire Post*:

A new Government plan for tackling the shell problem was unfolded to a meeting of engineers in Leeds yesterday [...] The Leeds Forge Company, having offered the use of one of their sheds, the War Office propose to establish there a national factory, with lathes and other suitable machinery contributed from the engineering shops in the city.²⁹¹

The site for this factory was agreed as Barnbow, near Crossgates in Leeds. This became one of the most productive munitions factories of the war, which began shell filling by the end of the year. Leeds received national acclaim for the munitions work, as the *London Evening Mail* newspaper reported in June:

What is being done in Leeds seems to me of particular interest [...] They are concentrating their energies on a special shell factory [...] This is [...] what is meant by a “national factory”. The centralization of effort in a special establishment is the course best suited to conditions in Leeds [due to the] engineering work.²⁹²

²⁹⁰ Scott, *Leeds*, p. 26.

²⁹¹ ‘The Leeds Munitions Factory’, *Yorkshire Post*, 12 May 1915, p. 5.

²⁹² ‘The Production of Munitions. Organizing Resources. Leeds and Birmingham’, *London Evening Mail*, 11 June 1915, p. 6.

Scott referred to the Armley, Barnbow and Hunslet munition factories as ‘great enterprises’ in which ‘Leeds was a pioneer,’; he also commented upon the ‘good wages’ paid.²⁹³ The attraction of the wages would certainly have been a crucial factor in explaining why so many people wished to work at the munitions factories. This in addition to the need to fulfil a patriotic duty, especially for women who did not have the option of signing up to the armed forces. Indeed, large numbers of women as well as men were employed in these factories, increasingly so as the war progressed. These workers came from lower paid and lesser skilled trades, therefore the allure of the munitions factories can be appreciated.²⁹⁴ The tension caused by the comparatively higher wages of the munitions industry led to industrial disputes, which, as shall be discussed, were much in evidence in 1915.

As well as the munitions industry providing employment in Leeds, the war also brought greater demand for the clothing industry. As the *Yorkshire Post* reported at the beginning of 1915, the ‘new Army Clothing Depot in Swinegate, Leeds, now presents indicators of the important purpose it is designed to fulfil’, which, according to the paper, confirmed the city of Leeds, as ‘the centre of the great cloth manufacturing districts of the West Riding’.²⁹⁵ It reiterated this claim later in the month when it reported that War Office arrangements for the appointment of ‘a special committee to supervise the work of clothing the “New Army” body’, news which it stated would ‘be received with great satisfaction in the clothing centres of the country, of which Leeds is the most important’.²⁹⁶ In May 1915 the Cattle Market buildings in Gelderd Road in the city centre were also requisitioned for storage purposes, and there were also smaller depots in use throughout the city.²⁹⁷ Whether Leeds

²⁹³ Scott, *Leeds*, p. 26.

²⁹⁴ See Bernard Waites, ‘The Effect of the First World War on Class and Status in England, 1910-1920’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 11.1 (1976), 27-48 (p. 36).

²⁹⁵ ‘Leeds Army Clothing Depot’, *Yorkshire Post*, 6 January 1915, p. 4.

²⁹⁶ ‘War Office and the Clothing Trade’, *Yorkshire Post*, 23 January 1915, p. 6.

²⁹⁷ Scott, *Leeds*, p. 27.

was the ‘most important’ of all clothing centres, to rival even that of the national centre in Pimlico, London, was debatable. However, Leeds was, beyond doubt, a significant contributor to the national manufacturing for the war effort, which brought employment to the area.

The need for more people working in the war industries to ensure the country could meet the need for munitions and army equipment, compounded by the fact that many men joined the armed forces leaving those and other jobs free, meant that women all over the country entered employment during the war on an unprecedented scale. Ferguson provides the national increased employment figures for both men and women for the whole of the war: ‘soldiers’ places were taken by 1.7 million new male employees entering the labour force and an increase in the female labour force of 1.6 million’.²⁹⁸ Official reports stated that by the time of July 1916, the ‘number of females who have been drawn into various occupations since the outbreak of war is about 743,000, including young girls undertaking work for the first time.’²⁹⁹ Daniel concisely defines this substitution or dilution of labour as ‘the “stretching” of labour potential through the increased use of unskilled and female labour’.³⁰⁰ The influx of female labour did not happen immediately, however, or even organically. It needed to be facilitated by the Government, and there was certainly not an increase in employment in all industries. An official Government report on the increased employment of women during the war compiled in 1916 outlined the executive action taken by Government departments to address the employment of women workers. It identified that the proactive measures which were taken in the initial few months of the war were ‘concerned with the decrease, rather than the increase, in women’s employment’, as there was ‘a sharp fall in the

²⁹⁸ Ferguson, *Pity of War*, p. 268.

²⁹⁹ WYAS Leeds, WYL101/5/7, Report on the Increased Employment of Women During the War: with statistics relating to July 1916, September 1916, p. 16.

³⁰⁰ Daniel, *War from Within*, p. 102.

average daily placings of women by the Labour Exchanges'.³⁰¹ This led the Home Office and the Board of Trade to direct attentions to industrial reorganisation, with the main aim being to reduce unemployment. However, as trade recovered following the uncertainty of the initial few weeks of the war, women's employment rose again, albeit in different occupations. Therefore the situation altered: in certain industries employers began to experience difficulty in obtaining skilled women to replace men and for work in women's ordinary occupations. It is striking that the traditional women's occupations were being abandoned for the roles previously dominated by men. In addition to the opportunity for women to 'do their bit' for the country this work provided them with more economic and personal dignity that they had hitherto been offered. Marwick argues that this was the case especially for the 'women of the lower classes' who wished to 'escape from the ill-paid life-diminishing drudgery as dressmakers and domestic servants [...] into work which gave both economic status and a confidence in the performance of tasks once the preserve of skilled men'.³⁰² However, Marwick's arguments that women's war work transformed the lives of working class women, and even changed society's perception of them and their role in society, has been shown to be lacking in distinction by more recent research (particularly that of Gail Braybon, which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Five).³⁰³

The industrial vacuum left by the recruits meant that the Government had to act to ensure that women entered into the employment required, and therefore set up a registration system for eligible women in 1915. The Report on increased female employment outlined the purpose of

³⁰¹ WYAS Leeds, WYL101/5/7, Report on the Increased Employment of Women During the War: with statistics relating to July 1916, September 1916.

³⁰² Marwick, *The Deluge*, p. 94.

³⁰³ More recent research into women's war work in the First World War provides a more nuanced view than Marwick's outdated theories, including notably Bartley, *Votes for Women*, Braybon, *Evidence*, Braybon and Summerfield, *Women's Experience*, Gullace, *Blood of Our Sons*, Holton, *Feminism and Democracy*, Thom, 'Gender and Work' and *Nice Girls and Rude Girl*, Grayzel and Proctor, *Gender and the Great War*, Hunt, 'Gender and Everyday Life'.

this register of eligible working women, opened by the Board of Trade in March 1915, as ‘a special Women’s War Service Register’.³⁰⁴ Although, as the Report stated, many of the volunteers may have been untrained or unsuited for the new roles, the large number of women who came forward to register indicates the willingness of the women to undertake the work. However, significantly, not all employers or trade unions were universally inviting to the women workers, a theory which is convincingly supported by the work of Braybon.³⁰⁵ Daniel also comments that the trade unions in Britain were ‘identified by governmental labour authorities as the main source of resistance to extending female employment during the war.’³⁰⁶ Some employers also needed to be convinced that women as skilled workers were the answer to the employment problem: ‘Substitution was hampered, to some extent, on the one hand by the reluctance of employers and workmen to make changes, and on the other by the difficulties in obtaining suitable female labour’.³⁰⁷ Therefore, in addition to replacing the skilled men with skilled women, another motivation of the Government with the creation of this register was to make official the call for women into work to legitimise their new employment status in the country. This was important both for the women themselves and society as a whole to accept these changes.

Within the early months of 1915, the Report stated, the priority for the Government was to obtain ‘a maximum number of recruits with the least injury to the industrial and commercial life of the country’.³⁰⁸ In March, the Home Secretary appointed a committee which had the

³⁰⁴ WYAS Leeds, WYL101/5/7, Report on the Increased Employment of Women During the War: with statistics relating to July 1916, September 1916, p. 4.

³⁰⁵ Gail Braybon has several publications relating to society’s attitude to women’s war work, including Braybon, ‘Winners or Losers’, in Gail Braybon, ed., *Evidence*, pp. 86-112; and *Women Workers*; see also Braybon and Summerfield, *Women’s Experience*.

³⁰⁶ Daniel, *War from Within*, p. 102.

³⁰⁷ WYAS Leeds, WYL101/5/7, Report on the Increased Employment of Women During the War: with statistics relating to July 1916, September 1916, p. 4.

³⁰⁸ WYAS Leeds, WYL101/5/7, Report on the Increased Employment of Women During the War: with statistics relating to July 1916, September 1916, p. 4.

purpose of looking at recruitment from the distributive trades; and in October another committee was appointed to focus upon the commercial and clerical roles. These committees recommended that correspondence was sent to all local government leaders in the country, asking them to make arrangements for this substitution on labour in their area. The Government's actions taken to substitute the recruited men for women employees also involved close liaison between the employers and the workers in certain industries, and as an 'outcome of these conferences, formal agreements between employers and workers' associations sanctioning and regulating the extended employment of women have been arranged in many cases'. It does need to be emphasised, however, that these agreements, as outlined in the Report, were all 'emergency measures' which had conditions attached whereby the ceasing of hostilities would mean that conditions would cease 'as soon as the men become available'.³⁰⁹ Susan Pederson's research into the development of the welfare state in both Britain and France confirms that the British women's war time work was dependent upon these negotiated agreements between the Government and employers, which essentially protected the jobs of the male workers once the war had ended.³¹⁰ This indicates that, although the Government were undoubtedly aware of the need to liaise closely with the employers on this issue of substitution of labour, they did view the female employment arrangements as only temporary for the duration of the war. Local committees also therefore set up to address the problems provincially. By September 1916, these local committees had started work in thirty six towns nationwide, nine of which were in Yorkshire, including Leeds. The official Report stated that 'active steps' were being arranged to 'extend the substitution of women for men in industry have been taken by the Committees at Leeds,

³⁰⁹ WYAS Leeds, WYL101/5/7, Report on the Increased Employment of Women During the War: with statistics relating to July 1916, September 1916, p. 4.

³¹⁰ Susan Pederson, *Family, Dependence, and the Origins of the Welfare State: Britain and France, 1914-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

Leicester, Nottingham, and other places’, and that ‘conferences have been arranged with employers in the leading trades in these towns to discuss the matter’.³¹¹ Again Leeds was highlighted as a significant employer for women.

Scott recalled, by 1915, ‘men everywhere were being released from industry and women were taking their places on the tramways and railways, in offices and workshops.’³¹² The local newspapers carried articles which informed the public of this increase in female labour, and highlighted that, in addition to taking up jobs in factories and trams, the decreasing male population had brought a need for more help in rural areas also. Local newspaper headlines reflected this necessity: ‘Farmers and the War’, ‘Employment of Women and Boys,’ and ‘Agriculturalists and Labour Shortage’.³¹³ As the year went on, the different occupations the women were taking on became ever more diverse, and, as well as the women munitions workers and tram conductors, there are reports of women surgeons, park keepers and letter carriers.³¹⁴ The *Leeds Weekly Citizen* also confirmed that the ‘scope for more women’ was due to the ‘acute shortage of men’.³¹⁵ It should not be assumed, however, that this new-found labour for women was celebrated by all, as many men were wary of losing their own occupations. Even the *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, with its general sympathies towards women’s rights, referred to the ‘invasion by women into clerical duties’.³¹⁶ The emotive, militaristic language highlighted the unease felt by many at this perceived intrusion into what was clearly

³¹¹ WYAS Leeds, WYL101/5/7, Report on the Increased Employment of Women During the War: with statistics relating to July 1916, September 1916, pp. 6-7. In addition to Leeds, other towns and cities in Yorkshire included were Bradford, Batley, Halifax, Huddersfield and Sheffield.

³¹² Scott, *Leeds*, p. 28.

³¹³ ‘Farmers and the war [...] Employment of Women and Boys’, *Yorkshire Post*, 9 February 1915, p. 4, ‘Agriculturalist and Labour Shortage’, *Yorkshire Post*, 15 February 1915, p. 9.

³¹⁴ ‘Women as Surgeons’ and ‘Women as Park Keepers’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 3 September 1915, p. 2 and p. 5, ‘Women Tram Conductors’ *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 10 September 1915, p. 4, ‘Women Letter Carriers’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 17 September 1915, p. 1.

³¹⁵ ‘Scope for More Women’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 19 November 1915, p. 7.

³¹⁶ ‘Invasion by Women into Clerical Duties’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 6 August 1915, p. 6.

seen as men's work. There were also the entrenched patriarchal attitudes of some males to take into account. The letters of Captain Corfield included reference to his wife's several attempts at war work despite his own unhappiness at the situation.³¹⁷ This illustrated that not all men wished for their wives to go out to work, even if they themselves were in the armed forces. It is important to note that the latter serviceman was a middle-class captain, indicating a class element to this issue, as the working-class recruits will have needed their womenfolk to go out to work to keep their families fed.

The Women's War Employment Committee in Leeds, which had Isabella Ford as one of its members, worked to facilitate employment for women in Leeds, as well as to protect their rights. It strongly suggested that, 'each individual firm should be approached with a view to engaging a welfare worker, who would be expected to look after the girls.'³¹⁸ This recommendation for a welfare officer was mirrored by the Ministry of Munitions the same year, which advised the appointment 'urgently' of a 'Welfare Supervisor' for the women workers.³¹⁹ The local Women's War Employment Committee also worked to ensure that the children of the employed women in Leeds continued to be cared for as their mothers went out to work, to address problems related to the children no longer having their primary carer at home to feed them and ensure they attended school. This was seen as a general problem especially since the 'Barnbow and Armley Munitions Factories began. It chiefly prevails in the poorer districts,' as some minutes from one of their meetings reported. Further discussion on this issue led to it being proposed 'by Miss Ford' that a letter should be sent to the 'Welfare Worker at the National Shell Factory', to determine how the children were cared for

³¹⁷ LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0365, F A Corfield letters, 1914-1918, 16 February 1917 and 4 May 1917.

³¹⁸ WYAS Leeds, WYL101/5/12: Minutes of Women's War Employment Committee (Industrial) Leeds, 20 May 1916, 1 June 1916.

³¹⁹ WYL101/5/4: Ministry of Munitions. Health of Muniton Workers Committee. Memorandum No. 4. Employment of Women, 1916, p. 9.

while their mothers worked.³²⁰ The Committee later that month resolved that they ‘strongly recommend’ that ‘Day and Night Nurseries should be established in connection with the National Factories wherever married women with children under school age are employed.’³²¹

In addition to the liberty and self-confidence the men’s traditional work afforded them, for the working-class women in Leeds the pecuniary benefits of this employment in a time of rising prices would also have been an influential factor. Scott recalled of the newly working women that ‘most of them were married and in receipt of Government allowances or disbursements from the War Relief Fund, and they were glad enough to have the chance of supplementing their slender weekly incomes.’³²² It is interesting that Scott referred to their incomes as slender, which indicates again that the war time allowances received were not sufficient as they needed to be augmented. Private Oates’s letters home to his wife during the war confirmed that families were struggling, mostly due to the cost of food and increased cost of living (‘are you getting plenty [sic] to eat and paying your way’), although his lack of understanding of the situation on the home front was also often apparent: ‘well I can’t understand what you mean by getting sick of it week after week are you paying your way or what’.³²³ This comment belies a frustration, as he was not in a position to help, as well as highlighting the lack of awareness the soldiers may have had regarding their loved ones back at home. This evidence also undermines the theory that the soldiers’ wives were enthusiastic or sufficiently satisfied to put up with the hardships, as Private Oates’ wife, Beatie, had clearly written to him bemoaning her struggle. This indicates that these sources are

³²⁰ WYAS Leeds, WYL101/5/12: Minutes of Women’s War Employment Committee (Industrial) Leeds, 19 June 1916.

³²¹ WYAS Leeds, WYL101/5/12: Minutes of Women’s War Employment Committee (Industrial) Leeds, 19 June 1916, 28 June 1916.

³²² Scott, *Leeds*, p. 28.

³²³ LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/GS/1197, Papers of Private Herbert Oates, 1914-1918.

introducing a partial and largely unexamined view of the war on the home front in Leeds. The understanding is also skewed by the fact that it is rare to have a whole correspondence, as there was a greater likelihood of soldiers' letters home surviving than those sent by the wives to husbands.

The 1916 Report on women's employment confirmed that, 'No difficulty is experienced in obtaining women for munition work', and stated it was the higher wages that were attracting them. It also outlined the psychological factors which had impacted: 'There is, for example, a genuinely patriotic desire on the part of women to be engaged on what is directly and obviously "war work", and in some cases a sense of greater dignity and superior status attaching to "men's work".'³²⁴ The problem of the transference from the domestic and textile industries to the munitions industry in Leeds was addressed by the Women's War Employment Committee, who unanimously agreed to contact, 'Barnbow Shell Filling Factory, Messrs Greenwood and Batley and The Corporation Tramways', to request that they should not engage women who were employed in existing industries.³²⁵ This indicates the concerns over this new employment opportunity. It can be surmised, therefore, that working-class women in Leeds were quite content to relinquish their traditional roles, and, rather than being the 'examples of energy and sacrifice' as Scott described, this was surely more due to the sense of opportunity and freedom, as well of course as the pecuniary benefits. Even Scott admitted with regard to the working women, 'Doubtless they were attracted by 'the good wages promised [...] in the new roles' the war created for them'.³²⁶

The beginning of 1915 saw a rise in calls for higher wages from other industries, which contributed to the threats of strikes. This industrial unrest was not on the same scale as was

³²⁴ WYAS Leeds, WYL101/5/7 Report on the Increased Employment of Women During the War: with statistics relating to July 1916, September 1916, p. 13.

³²⁵ WYAS Leeds, WYL101/5/12: Minutes of Women's War Employment Committee (Industrial) Leeds, 20 May 1916.

³²⁶ Scott, *Leeds*, p. 37.

seen later in the war, notably in 1917 when war-weariness had permeated the country. However, its manifestation at this point was indicative of the resentment felt by workers in the country, which was being exacerbated by the wartime conditions. Alongside the goods shortages, that were linked to less national production and later the naval blockades, price levels had more than doubled by the end of the war.³²⁷ This also corresponded to the experience of some German towns, where ‘The official cost of living rose at least a hundred per cent in the city over the course of the war’.³²⁸ In Britain, as in other belligerent nations, these higher prices contributed to the discontent of the workers, hence the threat of strikes nationwide by 1915. Some historians have asserted that even the risk of action by the workers helped them in their aims. As Gregory suggests, the ‘strikes and threat of strikes had got results for industrial workers, in some cases remarkable results’.³²⁹

The industrial unrest and threat of strikes continued throughout this year, both nationally and regionally, as reports from local newspapers testified: ‘London without trams [...] widespread strike’, and ‘Labour troubles [...] Leeds Corporation workers refused increased war bonus.’³³⁰ In his contemporary study of earnings in the war, Arthur Bowley asserted that in February 1915 ‘after a six-month lull in wage movements, hardly a day’ passed ‘without a report of negotiations for higher wages which seemed uniformly successful for the employees.’³³¹ In addition to higher wages, workers also threatened industrial action due to their working conditions, including long working hours and the risks to health associated with their work. The ostensibly well-paid munitions industry, for instance, was the subject of several Ministry of Munitions reports throughout the war regarding the conditions and health

³²⁷ See Ferguson, *Pity of War*, p. 330.

³²⁸ Chickering, *The Great War*, p. 447.

³²⁹ Gregory, *Last Great War*, p. 209.

³³⁰ ‘London Without Trams’, *Yorkshire Post*, 17 May 1915, p. 5, ‘Labour Troubles’, *Yorkshire Post*, 4 May 1915, p. 5.

³³¹ Arthur Bowley, *Prices and Earnings in Time of War* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1921), p. 14.

of munitions workers, including one compiled in 1915 regarding Sunday labour.³³² The working hours of the munitions workers was a source of discontent for employees also, and it was another issue on which the Ministry of Munitions Health of Munitions Workers Committee released regular memoranda to provide advice and recommendations, particularly with regard to women workers.³³³ Although the conditions and wages of the workers appeared to be reasonable motivations for threatening strike action, at the time many workers were accused of being unpatriotic if they even suggested it.³³⁴ Some of the soldiers at the front also had derisive opinions of the strikers. Lieutenant Charles Carrington of the 9th Battalion, Yorkshire Regiment, wrote from back in Britain that ‘all the best men are in France, there’s no doubt of that and people here are inclined to be slackers and shirkers’, which he claimed was ‘part of the reason for these munitions strikes’.³³⁵ Some relatives of Leeds soldiers also expressed similar venom towards strikers, with the father of Lieutenant Maxwell Donald of the Royal Field Artillery writing to his son that the men left at home had all become consumed by radical teachings, which has reduced them to being ‘strikers, pacifists, COs, and skulkers’ and stated that he considered that the ‘draft dodgers’ were to blame for the recent strikes.³³⁶

In Leeds, the local press regularly reported on the demands of the workers, notably with more sympathy by the *Leeds Weekly Citizen*. They provided evidence that tensions were palpable in several different industries, from mining to railwaymen and tramway workers, to those in

³³² WYAS Leeds, WYL101/5/2 Ministry of Munitions: Health of Munitions Workers Committee, Report on Sunday Labour, 1915.

³³³ WYL101/5/4, Ministry of Munitions Health of Muniton Workers Committee. Memorandum No. 4. Employment of Women, 1916, pp. 5-6.

³³⁴ For example, see Gregory, *Last Great War*, p. 192, for details of a potential strike at Woolwich.

³³⁵ LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0273, C E Carrington letters, 1914-1818, letter 143, 28 July 1917.

³³⁶ LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0464, Maxwell Bruce Donald papers, 1915-1919, letters from his father on 15 February 1918 and 30 May 1917.

the clothing industry. Regarding the former, a strike by the fifty thousand members of the Yorkshire Miners' Association looked possible for the first few weeks of 1915. Regular updates were included in the press, with the self-explanatory headlines which plotted the dispute as time went on and cited their cause, such as the: 'Minimum Wage Problem' with the 'Threatened Strike of West Yorkshire Miners', 'The Yorkshire Coal Dispute', 'The Mining Industry. Proposed New Wage Agreement', and 'Yorkshire Miner's Wages: Attitude of West Yorkshire Owners'.³³⁷ The latter dispute ended in an agreement over wages, with the *Yorkshire Post* praising the 'Owners' Generous Concessions'.³³⁸ As the miners' dispute was being resolved in early February, there also came the threat of a strike in the clothing trade. Here the women who worked on the soldiers' uniforms demanded equal pay, at the same rate as men, a dispute which reached what the *Yorkshire Post* reported as a 'a threatened deadlock', as the negotiations were suspended. It informed readers that there were approximately twenty six thousand women clothing operatives in Leeds and that the women members of the Leeds Branch of the Amalgamated Union of Clothing Operatives was 'stated to be between six thousand and seven thousand'. It also confirmed that the 'demand of the women operatives was for a flat rate of pay'.³³⁹ Again the dispute was resolved and a strike avoided, yet the tenacity of the union, and large number of members, was indicative of the well-coordinated clothing unions which emerged later. It also highlighted the growing number of women employed, yet also their lack of unionisation at this time. In Germany, as the research of Jürgen Kocka shows, the strikes and threats of strikes were a symptom of the tension between the classes. He also outlines that these tensions manifested themselves in

³³⁷ 'Minimum Wage Problem', *Yorkshire Post*, 12 January 1915, p. 4, 'The Yorkshire Coal Dispute', 19 January 1915, p. 3, 'The Mining Industry', 20 January 1915, p. 3, 'Yorkshire Miners' Wages', 23 January 1915, p. 9.

³³⁸ 'Yorkshire Miners' Wages', *Yorkshire Post*, 10 February 1915, p. 8.

³³⁹ 'Leeds Clothing Dispute,' *Yorkshire Post*, 6 February 1915, p. 9.

successful union negotiations rather than protest in Britain.³⁴⁰ This was certainly the case in Leeds, where the local press had regular comments upon the ‘growth of trade unionism’ near the end of the year.³⁴¹ The *Leeds Weekly Citizen* unsurprisingly provided regular updates which invariably supported the workers’ claims, and emphasised the ‘need for better wages’, ‘the importance of workers’ and rallied the ‘cry for bonuses.’³⁴² Hardly a week went by in 1915 without the papers reporting on one strike or another, and by a myriad of different industries: ‘Leeds Clothing Strike: Girl cutters’ wages’, ‘Builder’s Labourers Strike’, ‘Miners demand five per cent increase for England’, ‘The Carpenter’s Strike’, ‘Leeds Joiners’ Strike’ and ‘Leeds Girls’ Strike [at Armley Mills].’³⁴³ Other industries who were involved in these ‘Leeds Disputes’ include wheelwrights, smiths, motor body makers, and boots and shoe operatives.³⁴⁴ Evidence of the paper’s clear affinity with the workers was apparent even on the last day of the year, with news of another successful wage rise and the ‘joiners’ victory’, with a ‘penny an hour secured’.³⁴⁵ The overt bias of this newspaper’s reporting placed the culpability firmly on the bosses: ‘Employers exploit women workers [...] employers cause strikes.’³⁴⁶

The paper reported on the outcome of the railway conference in February that an agreement had been arrived at, with an ‘all round advance of wages’.³⁴⁷ This demonstrated that accord was reached once the financial concerns were resolved, again highlighting the pecuniary

³⁴⁰ Kocka, *Facing Total War*, p. 15.

³⁴¹ ‘Growth of Trade Unionism’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 8 October 1915, p. 2.

³⁴² ‘Need for Better Wages’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 19 March 1915, pp. 3-4, ‘The Cry for Bonuses’, 21 May 1915, p. 4.

³⁴³ ‘Leeds Clothing Strike’, 20 August 1915, p. 4, ‘Builders’ Labourers’ Strike’, 27 August 1915, p. 4, ‘Miners Demand Five Percent Increase for England’, 8 October 1915, p. 3, ‘Leeds Joiners’ Strike’, 3 December 1915, p. 4, ‘Carpenter’s Strike’, 3 December 1915, p. 4, ‘Leeds Girls’ Strike’, 19 March 1915, p. 6.

³⁴⁴ ‘Leeds Disputes’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 23 April 1915, pp. 6-7.

³⁴⁵ ‘The Joiner’s Victory’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 31 December 1915, p. 1.

³⁴⁶ ‘Employers Cause Strikes’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 5 November 1915, p. 2.

³⁴⁷ ‘The Railway Conference’, *Yorkshire Post*, 15 February 1915, p. 4.

motives behind the majority of these strikes. The *Leeds Weekly Citizen* again displayed its sympathies for the workers when it claimed that the Leeds railway clerks were not ‘asking for the moon but for something quite reasonable’, as ‘salaries before the war were utterly inadequate and prices had gone up thirty per cent [it was] time they had some help in the drain upon their pocket’.³⁴⁸ Again this supports the view that wartime prices exceeded wage rises. This clearly created a hardship of living for many in the working class, who also had to manage with the corresponding wartime food shortages.

Food Prices and Shortages

According to Gregory, in the first two years of the war food shortages were of relatively short duration and were localised, so it ‘was possible for families to keep pace, even to outstrip inflation’, however he asserts that this involved ‘trade-offs’, ‘Either men had to work savagely long hours or women had to enter the workforce’.³⁴⁹ The food shortages would also have impacted differently on the classes: middle-class Miss Williams, whose father owned a shipping insurance business, recollected that the food shortages were ‘difficult’ but not ‘impossible’, at this time.³⁵⁰ However, for less wealthy families, especially those with several children, it was no doubt more of a struggle. By comparing standards of living among the different classes, Chickering illustrates that in Freiburg ‘family size was the critical variable’.³⁵¹ This was no doubt an important factor in British families during the war also and provided a reflection on class differences at this time. The research of Gerald DeGroot, Marwick and Ian Gazeley and Andrew Newell emphasises the effect that the food shortages and rising prices had upon the country, however short-lived and regional these shortages may

³⁴⁸ ‘Leeds Railway Clerks’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 5 March 1915, p. 8.

³⁴⁹ Gregory, *Last Great War*, p. 196.

³⁵⁰ LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/TR/08/66, Miss L G Williams recollections, 1970-1999.

³⁵¹ Chickering, *The Great War*, p. 451.

have been, with claims that 1915 saw prices twenty per cent higher than six months before.³⁵² Although the overall consensus is that for the former unskilled workers, their diet improved during the war. This is not to assume, however, that the working class had anywhere near the living standards that their middle-class contemporaries had. Chickering claims that the middle classes in Freiburg were ‘shielded from the war’s worst sensory assaults’, which in reality meant they were ‘warmer, better fed and sheltered, healthier, and less discomfited’ by the hardships it brought.³⁵³ However, improved lifestyle and health meant that the large disparity between the classes did narrow during the war, at least for the former non-skilled workers, which was good news for many of the munitions workers in Leeds. For workers not associated with the war industry, however, such as shop assistants or miners, it was a different story. Even before the war was one year old, nearly a third of shop assistants had signed up for the armed forces, for economic reasons.³⁵⁴

Whether the improving diet was noticeable to the workers of Leeds at the time is doubtful. The newspapers and contemporary accounts were preoccupied with the food shortages and price rises, and their regular, dominant coverage reflected the importance of this news to the public.³⁵⁵ The letters of Private Oates also commented upon these rising prices: ‘I hear food stuff is very dear in England [...] i [sic] am sorry to hear how the prices have gone up [...] i hear flower [sic] as gone up again’. He even urged his wife not to go to the ‘trouble to send a [parcel] out hear [sic] has [sic] it is to expencive [sic] what with the prices of food stuff’.³⁵⁶ The rising prices were also commented upon by the members of the middle class, for whom it was at least an inconvenience, as the diary of middle class Londoner, Constance Shuter,

³⁵² DeGroot, *Blighty*, Marwick, ‘The Impact of the First World War’, Ian Gazeley and Andrew Newell, ‘The First World War and the Working Class Food Consumption in Britain’, *European Review of Economic History*, 17.1 (2013), 71-94.

³⁵³ Chickering, *The Great War*, p. 455.

³⁵⁴ See Waites, ‘The Effect of the First World War on Class and Status’, p.37.

³⁵⁵ See, for example, ‘Wheat Prices Again Advance’, *Yorkshire Post*, 26 April 1915, p. 4.

³⁵⁶ LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/GS/1197, Herbert Oates letters, 1914-1918.

asserted: ‘Went to town [...] Everything is so expensive, I spent a lot of money with very little to show for it’.³⁵⁷

The local press in Leeds also carried regular reports of debates on food prices in Parliament, which illustrated its importance within the country at this time.³⁵⁸ There were also reports of increasing price of coal, and both the price of bread and fuel continue to be reported as the year progressed.³⁵⁹ In addition to the necessities, the prices of luxury items also rose, which led the press to provide regular updates on these, including concerns over the ‘price of beer’.³⁶⁰ The Government also became concerned about the consumption of alcohol during the war, as they feared that war production was being inhibited by over indulgence on the part of the workers, especially the munitions workers. In 1915 therefore they introduced several measures that they believed would reduce the consumption of alcohol, including no ‘treating’ (buying drinks for others), an increase in tax on alcohol and the reduction of public house opening times in cities and industrial areas. The restriction of opening hours for public houses, which, although was introduced only as a temporary measure in 1915, lasted until near the end of the century, was also regularly reported on in the press, and was met with disdain by the public and unions.³⁶¹ Alcohol was clearly ‘rooted in local popular tradition’.³⁶² A tradition that the Government, and the war, appeared to be taking away, along with other normalities of ordinary life.

³⁵⁷ LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/DF/121, Constance Shuter diary, 27 October 1916.

³⁵⁸ See for example ‘Higher Food Prices’, *Yorkshire Post*, 17 February 1915, p. 5.

³⁵⁹ ‘Dearer Food and Fuel’, *Yorkshire Post*, 1 February 1915, p. 9.

³⁶⁰ ‘The Price of Beer’, *Yorkshire Post*, 10 February 1915, p. 8.

³⁶¹ ‘The Early Closing of Licensed Premises’, *Yorkshire Post*, 23 January 1915, p. 12, ‘Leeds Trade Unions Protest Against Closing Orders’, *Yorkshire Post*, 28 January 1915, p. 4, ‘Licensed Trade Emergency’, *Yorkshire Post*, 4 May 1915, p. 12. S see also Graham Stewart and Fergus Priest, eds, *The Handbook of Brewing* (Boca Raton: Taylor and Francis, 2006), p. 18.

³⁶² Gregory, *Last Great War*, p. 197.

War Resistance in Leeds

One normality of ordinary life which was envisaged by some to be taken away at this time was the liberty of men, highlighted by the talk of the introduction of mandatory military service. Not everyone agreed with the calls for conscription for the first time in Britain in 1915, however, and anti-war groups organised nationally and locally in opposition to the proposal.³⁶³ The main opposition groups in 1915 were the NCF, the UDC and groups formed by feminists and suffragists, including the Women's International League (WIL). The latter was formed in April 1915 after the International Women's Congress in The Hague in April 1915. In Leeds, evidence of dissent can be seen mainly through the work of prominent anti-war figures such as Isabella Ford.³⁶⁴ In addition to her voluntary work on Leeds Women's War Employment Committee, Ford was an active member of the ILP and WIL, and, along with her sister Bessie Ford, the UDC.³⁶⁵ She also eventually became the main organiser for the Leeds branch of the grass roots anti-war group, the Women's Peace Crusade, in 1917.³⁶⁶ Leeds born Michael Lipman, a pacifist who was arrested as a schoolboy during the war for the distribution of anti-war literature and who also worked for the local NCF branch, recalls the Quaker family, the Fords of Adel, who, 'not only supported Quakers who resisted military service, but every facet of the anti-war pacifist groupings.'³⁶⁷ Letters from Isabella Ford were routinely included in the *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, as well as reports of her socialist and trade union work locally. Although Ford campaigned against the war both nationally and locally, in March 1916 she declined an invitation from notable pacifist, feminist and suffragist Rosika Schwimmer to attend a conference in Stockholm as she was 'so busy with

³⁶³ See Millman, *Managing Domestic Dissent*, p. 18.

³⁶⁴ For further information on the life and work on Isabella O Ford see Hannam, *Isabella Ford*.

³⁶⁵ Hannam, *Isabella Ford*, p. 180.

³⁶⁶ Hannam, *Isabella Ford*, pp.183-84, p. 187.

³⁶⁷ Michael Lipman, *Memoirs of a Socialist Business Man* (London: Lipman Trust, 1980), p. 35.

anti-war work' in Leeds. She explained that she felt that, 'our first duty is to educate our people here and to tell them the truth [...] we have all the newspapers' lies to counteract.'³⁶⁸

This shows Ford's dedication to raising awareness of war resistance in her home city, as well as the implication that the newspapers were not fully truthful in their reports on the war and war resistance, as the press owners will have been mindful of the censorship and legal sanctions of DORA.

When the Government only allowed twenty four of the attendees registered for the international conference in The Hague to have the necessary passports for the trip, Ford was one of them.³⁶⁹ These plans were cancelled, however, as, 'shipping had been suspended, and the congress took place without them'.³⁷⁰ Ford had also been among one of the fourteen executive members of the NUWSS who resigned in April 1915 in opposition to leader Fawcett's supportive views on the war.³⁷¹ Ford's regular contributions to the *Leeds Weekly Citizen* during the war helped to disseminate the anti-war message, often appealing to women as mothers, many of whom would of course have had sons at the front: 'As the mothers and educators of the human race, the bond which unites us is deeper than any bond which at present unites men'.³⁷² Ford was elected onto the executive committee of the WIL, and later in 1915 she helped to form the Leeds branch of the WIL, which 'remained the focus' of Ford's peace work.³⁷³ Ford also continued to be involved in the improvement of working conditions and living standards for the working class, including being instrumental in arranging a Leeds May Day rally in 1915. At this she supported a resolution which requested

³⁶⁸ Hannam, *Isabella Ford*, p. 178.

³⁶⁹ As reported by the *Leeds Weekly Citizen* on 30 April 1915: 'The Women's Congress at The Hague', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 30 April 1915, p. 3.

³⁷⁰ 'The Women's Congress at The Hague', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 30 April 1915, p. 3.

³⁷¹ Hannam, *Isabella Ford*, p. 170.

³⁷² 'The Hague Peace Conference. Miss Isabella's Ford's review', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 28 May 1915, p. 6.

³⁷³ Hannam, *Isabella Ford*, pp. 173-174.

that the Government should take control of the main industries in the country, to help coordinate the supply of food to prevent shortages, again speaking for women: ‘We must insist upon the Government looking after food supplies. They say it is impossible, but my dictionary does not contain that word. It is written by women’.³⁷⁴ Ford relentlessly disseminated the anti-war message locally, despite the nationally minded feeling in Leeds at the time, which shows her tenacity, as it ‘took a great deal of courage to take a stand against the war at a time when patriotic fervour was sweeping the country’.³⁷⁵

In addition to the reporting of the speeches of Ford and others in campaigning against the war, the left leaning press locally actively promoted the work of the anti-war groups, such as the UDC and the NCF. The *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, with its continuing stance as a protector of the workers, claimed in August 1915 that there should be no conscription, as the ‘workers of the country will not be dragooned’, made reference to the ‘perils of forced service’, and asserted that there were only ‘poor reasons for conscription’.³⁷⁶ It also reported on a mass meeting at Leeds amid railway workers unrest in October, at which it was agreed to ‘resist any measure of conscription’.³⁷⁷ The following month the reports mirrored the thought of many socialists who claimed that the mandatory enlistment was undemocratic in its claim that conscription would be an ‘imitation of Germany’.³⁷⁸ This comparison would have been highly unpalatable to some readers with their hatred of the enemy. However, to some in the country conscription seemed foreign to ‘British values’, even to some of those who supported the war.³⁷⁹

³⁷⁴ ‘Leeds Labour Demonstration’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 7 May 1915, p. 1.

³⁷⁵ Hannam, *Isabella Ford*, p. 167.

³⁷⁶ ‘No Conscription’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 27 August 1915, p. 7, ‘Poor Reasons for Conscription’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 24 September 1915, p. 1.

³⁷⁷ ‘Growth of Trade Unionism’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 8 October 1915, p. 6.

³⁷⁸ ‘Democracy and Conscription’, 5 November 1915, p. 3.

³⁷⁹ ‘Democracy and Conscription’, 5 November 1915, p. 3.

Regular reports of the meetings of the UDC were also reported in the *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, including one in December, where it claimed that the speeches at the ‘Leeds meeting’ proved that ‘the people love peace.’³⁸⁰ Further anti-war activity in Leeds was also reported at the end of the year, when two Leeds men were arrested under the DORA for distributing anti-war pamphlets and sentenced to six months’ imprisonment, one of whom ‘adopted hunger strike at Armley gaol’.³⁸¹ However, despite this evidence that anti-war feeling existed within Leeds, especially resentment by some workers towards conscription, the majority of people, and the newspapers, continued to support the war. This indicated that the anti-war messages did not convince them otherwise, if they reached them at all. As Millman states, as ‘1915 gave way to 1916, the groundwork had rather tentatively been laid for an effective dissent and for its suppression,’ however, ‘dissent had not yet found its audience’.³⁸²

Xenophobia

The resentment caused by war time conditions therefore manifested itself in several ways, including unrest among workers and anti-war campaigns, although often, as Kocka asserts, the ‘bitterness and anger’ had a target that was ‘far from uniform and often remained unclear’.³⁸³ For many in society, however, the target was transparent: their outrage was strongly directed towards the enemy. Xenophobia was rife in the country by 1915, especially anti-German and Austrian feeling. As Panayi’s research reveals, during the war ‘all sections of British society became gripped with a passionate hatred of anything connected with Germany’.³⁸⁴ This sentiment was willingly seized upon by the press, who had many events in

³⁸⁰ ‘Towards Democratic Control’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 3 December 1915, p. 1.

³⁸¹ ‘Anti-War Pamphlets’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 17 December 1915, p. 2, ‘Hunger Striker at Leeds’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 17 December 1915, p. 8.

³⁸² Millman, *Managing Domestic Dissent*, p. 65.

³⁸³ Kocka, *Facing Total War*, p. 48.

³⁸⁴ Panayi, ‘Germans in Britain During the First World War’, p. 69.

1915 to sensationally report upon and thereby help unify the country in hatred against the common foe. These included the use of poison gas by the Germans against the Allies, including chlorine gas at the Battle of Ypres, described by one Leeds soldier as a ‘nasty mouthful’, which made him almost ‘cough my inside out’.³⁸⁵ In addition, Zeppelin raids upon the country directly attacked society for the first time, and the widely publicised shooting for treason by a German firing squad of British Nurse Edith Cavell in October.³⁸⁶ There was also the infamous sinking of the *Lusitania*, which killed over one thousand civilians, and was cited as the cause of anti-German riots in the country.³⁸⁷ At the root of the motivations for these riots was the anger towards Germany due to the psychological impact of much of society perception of the enemy’s atrocities in the war. As Gregory states, the sinking of the *Lusitania* ‘evoked memories of the *Titanic*, barely three years earlier’, and he explains that at the time the sinking was seen as the ‘work of the devil [...] the final evidence required to complete the ‘demonising’ of the enemy in the public mind’. He also states that the fact there was ‘exaggeration and invention’ is ‘undeniable’, but concludes that the ‘shock at the time was genuine and great’.³⁸⁸ Notable anti-war suffragist Sylvia Pankhurst played down the significance of the loss of the *Lusitania* to the country in her memoirs from the war. Although she admitted that ‘great cries of wrath went up against the Germans’, she also claimed that the event ‘created little impression in this country’.³⁸⁹ Regarding the riots, Pankhurst blamed these on the ‘meanest elements among the jingoes’, and stated that they were ‘deliberately organised, in no sense a spontaneous popular outburst’.³⁹⁰ She also argued that the rioting

³⁸⁵ Letter from Private Tom Gallon to his parents in Leeds, printed in ‘Correspondence’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 14 January 1916, p. 3.

³⁸⁶ ‘English lady executed in Brussels’, *Yorkshire Post*, 16 October 1915, p. 7.

³⁸⁷ Detailed research of the sinking of the *Lusitania*, including the investigation into this, can be found in Diana Preston, *Wilful Murder: The Sinking of the Lusitania* (London: Doubleday, 2002).

³⁸⁸ Gregory, *Last Great War*, p. 40.

³⁸⁹ Pankhurst, *The Home Front*, pp. 168-170.

³⁹⁰ Pankhurst, *The Home Front*, p. 170.

was in fact motivated more by hunger than anti-German sentiment: ‘The saddest feature of all was that the disturbance [...] was largely a hunger riot; the women and children who snatched bread and meat from aliens, snatched it, not from hatred of Germany, but because they were hungry.’³⁹¹ Gregory also highlights that many food shops were amongst those looted in the riots, although he disagrees with Pankhurst that they were merely hunger riots.³⁹² The causes of violence are discussed in-depth by Panayi, who refers to May 1915 as ‘a period of anti-German hysteria’.³⁹³ Gregory disagrees with some of Panayi’s views on this unrest, as Gregory feels he too easily dismissed the motivations of personal hatred and hunger, seeing these as ideological justifications only.³⁹⁴ The news of the sinking of the *Lusitania* certainly permeated through all the press in the country, and the mass reports of the incident, which included the stories of the survivors for weeks after the event, helped to fuel the anti-German sentiment nationally.³⁹⁵ Pankhurst confirmed that the press ‘teemed with accounts by the survivors’, and claimed that ‘Britain was thrilled’.³⁹⁶ The public’s anger, resentment and greed for news was certainly caused by fear. Panayi states that it was a fear ‘created by the prospect of a possible defeat by Germany’, which meant that ‘Britain was gripped by fear, panic and vindictiveness towards Germany and her residents within Britain.’³⁹⁷

Public meetings took place in London, and other places across the country, following the sinking, with demands that the internment of German nationals should take place. This prompted Prime Minister Asquith to review internment guidelines. In Leeds, the sinking of

³⁹¹ Pankhurst, *The Home Front*, p. 171.

³⁹² Gregory, *Last Great War*, p. 235.

³⁹³ Panayi, ‘Germans in Britain During the First World War’, p. 72, ‘The Lancashire Anti-German riots of May 1915’.

³⁹⁴ Gregory, *Last Great War*, p. 235.

³⁹⁵ Panayi, ‘Germans in Britain During the First World War’, p. 72.

³⁹⁶ Pankhurst, *The Home Front*, p. 170.

³⁹⁷ Panayi, ‘Germans in Britain During the First World War’, p. 76.

the *Lusitania* did not instigate any rioting, although national-minded anti-German sentiment was still evident. The Leeds Corn Exchange passed a resolution which demanded the departure of anyone of German or Austrian extraction, which meant that ‘a small group hastily left watched by six hundred roaring out “Rule Britannia”’.³⁹⁸ Elsewhere in Yorkshire, there had been disturbances in the towns and cities of Conisborough, Denaby, Goldthorpe, Mexborough, Rotherham and Sheffield between 10 May and 15 May. However in the West Yorkshire towns of Leeds and Bradford, which both had significant German populations, no rioting took place. Gregory asserts that most of the rioting in 1915 ‘was associated with working class districts’, and he emphasises that the ‘lack of rioting in such major centres as Glasgow, Cardiff, Bristol, Birmingham, Nottingham, Leeds and Newcastle’ was ‘striking’.³⁹⁹ The coverage in the press in Leeds was as prolific and sensational as in the national press, and even the *Leeds Weekly Citizen* referred to the sinking as a ‘great outrage’ under the headline ‘Aliens Must Go’. This report did, however, carry the stories of the German inhabitants of the city who wished to note their own horror at the incident (‘Leeds Germans protest against inhuman warfare’), which included the news of a letter sent to the Lord Mayor in which Germans in Leeds wished ‘hereby to record our honour and indignation at this outrage’.⁴⁰⁰ It may well have been the large numbers of Germans in the city, as friends, neighbours and acquaintances of those who were Leeds-born, that prevented any violence in the city.

Therefore although Leeds, as the rest of the country, was also caught up in this anti German feeling, the fact that there is no evidence of widespread riots in the city as other places saw indicates that the motivations for this violence were influenced by regional factors not as persistent or present in Leeds as elsewhere. There was, however, evidence of anger towards

³⁹⁸ Preston, *Wilful Murder*, pp. 306-307.

³⁹⁹ Gregory, *Last Great War*, p. 237.

⁴⁰⁰ ‘Aliens Must Go’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 21 May 1915, p. 2.

the authorities for not addressing the problem of ‘enemy aliens’ in the city, as well as towards individual Germans. One notable case was that of Professor Albert Wilhelm Schüddekopf of Leeds University. At the beginning of the war, Schüddekopf had requested to the War Office that his son, who was enlisted in the Leeds Rifles, should not be sent to fight against the Germans but to another front, so he would not be potentially fighting his own relatives.⁴⁰¹ The *Leeds Weekly Citizen* newspaper defended Schüddekopf, and claimed that he owed ‘no allegiance to the German Emperor’.⁴⁰² However the news of this request led to a campaign within Leeds in 1915 for Schüddekopf to be fired. The case was even brought up in Parliament, where the Home Secretary confirmed that Schüddekopf’s son was still in active service with the Leeds Rifles although engaged in home defence rather than on the Western Front.⁴⁰³ Schüddekopf had become a naturalised Briton in 1912, and was incredibly innovative and influential in his role at the university, under the university’s vice-chancellor Michael Sadler. Sadler and the university were supportive of Schüddekopf, and Sadler himself publicly declared that the enemy, the ‘downright barbarians, the brood of ruthless war’ and ‘those human Germans, the lovers of learning and science, whom we have respected and shall continue to respect’ were not the same, and intervened in his colleague’s potential internment.⁴⁰⁴ Schüddekopf eventually agreed to an extended leave of absence, on three quarters of his salary, news that was not well received by much of the public in Leeds. Tensions continued between the university and Leeds City Council through the latter half of 1915 until the summer of 1916, with a campaign headed by the chairman of the Council’s

⁴⁰¹ See Frank Finlay, ‘Casualty of War: The Hounding of German Scholars in the UK’, *The Times Higher Education Online*, 19 March 2015, , <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/features/casualty-of-war-the-hounding-of-german-scholars-in-the-uk/2019074.article>. [accessed 19 November 2022] and Christopher T Husbans, ‘German Academics in British Universities During the First World War: The Case of Karl Wichmann’, *German Life and Letters*, 60:4 (2007), 493-517.

⁴⁰² ‘Questions in Parliament’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 9 July 1915, p. 8.

⁴⁰³ ‘Questions in Parliament’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 9 July 1915, p. 8.

⁴⁰⁴ Finlay, ‘Casualty of War’.

finance committee, Alderman Charles Wilson, which demanded that Schüddekopf be removed from his post completely. Schüddekopf, however, died before his resignation could be sought from the university, and it was claimed that his doctor had said that the war had killed him 'as surely as any bullet has killed the soldiers in the trenches'.⁴⁰⁵ It was also noted that the family soon thereafter changed their name to Shuttleworth, to remove the obvious German connection.

Summary

1915 was an eventful year, and one in which the continuing war had put a strain upon soldiers and those on the home front alike. The war-weariness felt by those in the army was illustrated in the letters of Lieutenant Tolson of the Leeds Pals, who wrote to his family in November 1915 that he had 'I fairly long to be back again with a respectable wound'.⁴⁰⁶ The burgeoning anti-German feeling in the country increased as the year went on, with perceived atrocities such as the sinking of the *Lusitania* and the murder of Edith Cavell used by the press and the Government as propaganda to encourage recruitment as well as to stir up hatred for the enemy, a hatred that was borne of fear of defeat.⁴⁰⁷ As Gregory states, 'What really shocked the British press and public were 'atrocities' closer to home', and that although by the end of the year 'the atrocity stories and coverage begin to fade in prominence' that 'by this time the image of Germany was set'.⁴⁰⁸ Scott's summary of this year claimed that these events, 'greatly stirred' and 'indirectly spurred civilians to increased effort and sacrifice.'⁴⁰⁹ There is certainly evidence of this in Leeds, where even some of the left-leaning members of society believed that victory over the enemy should be the foremost concern, due to the perception of

⁴⁰⁵ Finlay, 'Casualty of War'.

⁴⁰⁶ LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/GS/1610, Robert H Tolson letters, 1914-1918, 16 November 1915.

⁴⁰⁷ 'English Lady Executed in Brussels', *Yorkshire Post*, 16 October 1915, p. 7.

⁴⁰⁸ Gregory, *Last Great War*, p. 47.

⁴⁰⁹ Scott, *Leeds*, pp. 33-4.

Germany as anti-democratic. Mr Mozley, serial letter writer to the *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, summed up these sentiments in a reminder to ‘the working men of the country’, that they needed to ‘remember that, in so far as the war is a war between Great Britain and Germany, Great Britain stands for the democratic ideal, Germany for the aristocratic’. He went on to emphasise that ‘the immediate struggle in which this country is engaged is so serious that this it is that requires our attention’, one would assume as a priority above all others.⁴¹⁰ The war fatigue felt by this time was palpable for the people in Leeds, who reacted in varying degrees of anger, resentment and outrage to the events of the year, which substantially increased anti-German sentiment, and, to a lesser extent, anti-war sentiment. The latter was increased by the inevitability of conscription due to insufficient recruitment figures. Industrial tensions were another factor of this war-weariness, caused in part by class tensions and exacerbated by the poor living and working conditions. In Leeds, an industrial war town, this war work led to a greater call for workers’ rights, including those for the increased number of working women in the city.

⁴¹⁰ ‘Correspondence: Conscription and the Present Situation’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 21 January 1916, p. 3.

Chapter Three: 1916 ‘A Year of Sad Losses’

Introduction

The year 1916 was, as the diary of Reverend Churchill of Suffolk recorded on 31 December 1916, ‘a year of sad losses’.⁴¹¹ No doubt referring to the many British men who had been killed in combat that year, including at the Battles of Jutland and, notably, the Somme, as well as in Mesopotamia and elsewhere, this remark could also be applied to those who perished in munitions accidents (such as at Barnbow Munitions Factory in Leeds), those who lost their lives during the Easter Rising in Ireland in April, the many Germans who were suffering through the adversity of the food shortages caused primarily by the Allied naval blockades, or indeed the French and German soldiers slain at the Battle of Verdun.⁴¹² The year began with the passing of the Military Service Act in Parliament. This introduced mandatory military service to the country for the first time, deemed necessary due to the insufficient enlistment figures being raised by voluntary means only, particularly in lower recruiting cities such as Leeds.⁴¹³ Although this Act was passed by a substantial majority, there were a significant number in society who opposed its introduction, the ripples of discontent discernible via resignations in Parliament, antagonism in council chambers and

⁴¹¹ LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/DF/026, Diaries and sermons of W D Churchill, 1914-1918, 31 December 1916.

⁴¹² For the impact of what became known in Germany as the ‘Hungerblockade’ on women and children especially, see Mary Cox, *Hunger in War and Peace: Women and Children in Germany, 1914-1924* (UK: Oxford University Press, 2019). See also C Paul Vincent, *The Politics of Hunger: The Allied Blockade of Germany, 1915-1919* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1985). Even though there were primarily German and French soldiers engaged in the military action at Verdun, the longest battle of the First World War, it was widely reported in the press in Leeds throughout 1916, where several newspapers denounced the scenes of the ‘horrors of Verdun’ with its ‘scores of demented men’ as a ‘panorama of death’ (‘The Horrors of Verdun’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 24 March 1916, p. 2).

⁴¹³ In Leeds, the number of men who had signed up voluntarily by the end of 1915 had only reduced the city by fifty thousand, far fewer than comparable sized or even smaller localities (‘Leeds Vital Statistics’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 28 January 1916, p. 4).

unrest within workplaces.⁴¹⁴ Anti-conscription groups such as the NCF provided organised resistance to this conscription, and this influential group had a following in Leeds.⁴¹⁵ Religious groups were also significant for their anti-conscription stance.⁴¹⁶ As Millman states, during the first half of 1916, ‘as conscription was implemented [...] dissenting organisations began to demonstrate a new level of activity’ and began to ‘find a popular voice’, however in response to this a ‘harsher attitude’ to this dissent was palpable, was, he explains, was ‘not only due to the change in government, but also to the fact that dissent was becoming more effective.’⁴¹⁷ Therefore, despite the vocal opposition of these groups, the fact that the conscription bill was passed indicated that the crisis of the war was the priority for the politicians. In the event, the administration of the military compulsion caused many problems. The local tribunals who were delegated the task of judging the appeals for exemption from service were understandably perplexed by their novel role, which was complex and meant that they were ‘burdened by systemic anomalies and ambiguities’.⁴¹⁸ This was certainly the case in Leeds as elsewhere, where the specificity of the local council made the conscription controversy a unique experience, due to the unusually balanced political make-up of the tribunals’ membership. The intense newspaper coverage for the first few weeks of the year focused upon the political schism in the Leeds Labour Party, which had

⁴¹⁴ One notable resignation was that of John Simon, Liberal MP and Home Secretary from 1915, who resigned from office in January 1916 over the issue of conscription, which he viewed as a breach of liberal principles: for further information on John Simon see Chapter Three ‘Simon at the Home Office, May - December 1915’, in Millman, *Managing Domestic Dissent*, pp. 49-69; ‘Cabinet and Compulsion: Resignation of Sir John Simon’, *Yorkshire Post*, 5 January 1916, p. 6, ‘Correspondence: The Cabinet and Compulsion’, *Yorkshire Post*, 6 January 1916, p. 4.

⁴¹⁵ For evidence of NCF presence in Leeds see for example: ‘No Conscription Fellowship: A Convention at Leeds’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 17 October 1916, p. 2.

⁴¹⁶ Such as the Quakers, see ‘Conscientious Objection: Attitude of the Society of Friends’, *Yorkshire Post*, 5 January 1916, p. 6.

⁴¹⁷ Millman, *Managing Domestic Dissent*, p. 70.

⁴¹⁸ James McDermott, *British Military Service Tribunals 1916–1918: ‘A Very Much Abused Body of Men’* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), p. 22.

‘rejected conscription in spite of their MP James O’Grady’s support for it’.⁴¹⁹ In the subsequent months of this year the local press highlighted the confusion of the role of the tribunals, especially with regard to the COs. It is noteworthy, however, that the public’s initial interest in the tribunals waned as the year went on. This was evidenced by the level of coverage on this issue within the newspapers decreasing as other ramifications of the war, not least the carnage at the Battle of the Somme, preoccupied people’s minds and filled the newspaper sheets.

The first day of the Battle of the Somme in July certainly impacted upon the home front in the Leeds area, including for the families of the Leeds Pals Battalion, of whom seven out of eight men were either killed or wounded (the mortality rate was one third). It was hailed by Scott as ‘one of the darkest weeks of the whole war, for Leeds’.⁴²⁰ The grief over the losses at the Somme was a factor in the war-weariness experienced in Leeds at the time. As the letter of bereaved father of Robert Tolson, Second Lieutenant in the Leeds Pals who was killed on the first day of the Battle of the Somme, wrote: ‘I feel to have lost much of my interest in the war [...] Robert was sacrificed!’.⁴²¹ This indicates that his prior enthusiasm for the war had declined and his feelings following the death of his son had changed as he felt Robert had been slaughtered on the altar of the war, the underlining of the last word adding emphasis to these feelings. This changing view towards the war also contributed to the growing anti-war movement, including in some places women’s peace groups, although it is important to note that convictions were not as widespread in Leeds as in other nearby places, such as Bradford and Huddersfield.⁴²² This was not surprising in a war industry city with a largely conservative

⁴¹⁹ Pearce, *Comrades in Conscience*, p. 129.

⁴²⁰ Scott, *Leeds*, p. 39.

⁴²¹ LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/GS/1610, Robert H Tolson letters, 1914-1918, 31 July 1916.

⁴²² For further research into the anti-war groups in Huddersfield and Bradford respectively, consult Pearce, *Comrades in Conscience*, and Finola Doogan’s MA thesis, *Chalk Marks in*

outlook whose views towards the war were predominantly supportive, and certainly compliant. There was undoubtedly some resistance to the war present in the city however, and, although those with anti-war views made up only a minority of the population, it indicates that there was a more nuanced outlook to the war than Francis Carsten's view of a nationwide 'hostile sea of jingoism'.⁴²³ Such resistance groups were rare nationally, however, due to the fact that the working class did not have either the capacity nor the opportunity to articulate their resentment of the war in any organised way, as the 'grievances of the poor were massive, but they were difficult to mobilize'.⁴²⁴ That class permeated all aspects of the war can be viewed through the lens of this year, from the perceived bias of the tribunal system, to the contrasting reports of the deaths of soldiers and officers in the armed forces in the press. At the end of the year, and crucially for the rest of the war, the Secretary of State for War, Lloyd George, the former Munitions Minister who was widely viewed in Parliament, and in the Leeds press, as having a clearer focus on the war's needs, took over from Asquith as Prime Minister. This indicates again that the crisis of the war was the national priority for politicians, as it was for the majority of the public in Leeds.⁴²⁵ The societal reaction to the events of this year therefore continued to be subtly varied in the city. However, in the main, the inhabitants of Leeds wished for a victory over the enemy, to resoundingly, as one Leeds resident wrote to the local press in 1916, 'crush Germany and effectually stamp out her villainy'.⁴²⁶

the Rain: A Study of British Women's Opposition to the First World War (University of Bradford, 1993), pp. 69-95.

⁴²³ Francis L Carsten, *War Against War: British and German Radical Movements in the First World War* (London: Batsford Academic and Educational, 1982), p. 73.

⁴²⁴ Chickering, *The Great War*, p. 462.

⁴²⁵ 'Mr Asquith and Mr Lloyd George', *Yorkshire Post*, 6 December 1916, p. 4.

⁴²⁶ 'Correspondence', *Yorkshire Post*, 3 January 1916, p. 8.

The Military Service Act

An indication that the need for victory was firmly embedded in the nation's consciousness was the introduction of the Military Service Acts by Prime Minister Asquith in early 1916. It therefore became compulsory under law for all single able men between the ages of eighteen and forty one, with certain exceptions, to be liable to be called into army service.⁴²⁷ This conscription legislation was amended several times as the war progressed, with the Act extended to married men in May 1916.⁴²⁸ This gradual extension of conscription as the war progressed illustrates the increasing need for more soldiers, in an ever growing war. Although all other belligerent nations had 'known general conscription for many decades', it was the first time that compulsory military service had been introduced in Britain.⁴²⁹ As such, it was breaking new ground politically and socially, with inevitable turmoil and disagreements in the Government and in society, including in Leeds. As shall be seen, the local newspaper reporting from the time illustrated the eclectic views the inhabitants of the city had upon this issue.

The debates upon the reading of the first Military Service Bill within Parliament were widely reported in the local press. Again the *Leeds Weekly Citizen*'s sympathies were with those who opposed conscription and the *Yorkshire Post* took the converse view.⁴³⁰ The reporting of the

⁴²⁷ Exemptions to the Military Service Act are detailed in James McDermott, 'Conscience and Military Service Tribunals in Northamptonshire', *War in History*, 17.1 (2010), 60-85, p. 62.

⁴²⁸ 'Conscription Breaking Down', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 31 March 1916, p. 4. Further detail on the gradual amendments made to the Military Service Act, including conscription for single men in March 1916, married men in June 1916 and up to the ages of 51, and even 56 in some cases, in April 1918 can be found in Scott, *Leeds*, p. 315.

⁴²⁹ Carsten, *War Against War*, p. 73.

⁴³⁰ See, for example, 'Bond or Free: Inner Meaning of Compulsion', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 7 January 1916, p. 5 for sympathetic reports on one of best known leaders of the ILP who was vocal in his views against the war, William Anderson, who accused conscriptionists of 'deliberate trickery'. Anderson was elected Labour MP to Sheffield Attercliffe in 1914, and eventually lost his seat in the 1918 elections due to his anti-war stance.

left leaning press notwithstanding, most of Parliament, and in fact the country as a whole, were by this time in favour of conscription and those who opposed it were in the minority. The diary of Florence Lockwood recalled in May 1916 that conscription was ‘approved and even hailed by most people’.⁴³¹ The letters to Fred Clarence Crowther of Bradford, an imprisoned CO whose brother Eric was a soldier killed in the war, also indicates the views of the much of the public to conscription. This was one of ignorance of the beliefs of those who opposed conscription, as well as confusion that they were not willing to help the country in the present danger facing a foe who was perceived as evil. As his father wrote to him in 1916: ‘The only way I can see for lasting peace is to cut the Claws [sic] of the Monster [sic]’.⁴³² Therefore it seems clear that, despite the dissenting voices of the minority who opposed conscription, in the main it was generally supported, as it was seen as essential to beat the enemy. All the Leeds MPs except Ted Harvey voted for the Bill, which could be seen as a reflection of public opinion on this issue in Leeds.⁴³³ O’Grady’s support for conscription, however, was not viewed favourably by many in the anti-war movement in Leeds, including some in the Leeds Labour Party. Isabella Ford and others certainly did not agree with O’Grady’s strident calls for ‘crushing Prussianism’.⁴³⁴ O’Grady used his column in the *Leeds Weekly Citizen* to justify his support for conscription, where he asserted that his reasons for voting for the Bill were that he wished for it to have a fair hearing, even though he was well aware that he had voted against the wishes of his local party. He then cited several factors which swayed his vote, in stirring diction, including his fear that the effect of the success or

⁴³¹ LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/DF/077, Diary of Florence Lockwood, May 1916.

⁴³² PM, BRFPM2000.1-82, Letter and papers of Bill Crowther.

⁴³³ For further information on the elections of the MPs, see F W S Craig, *British Parliamentary Election Results 1885-1918* (Aldershot: Parliamentary Research Service, 1989) and Frederick W S Craig, *British Parliamentary Election Results 1918-1949* (Glasgow: Political Reference Publications, 1969). See ‘Reports from Imperial Parliament’, *Yorkshire Post*, 20 January 1916, p. 5 for commentary on Harvey’s stance.

⁴³⁴ Hannam, *Isabella Ford*, p. 178.

defeat of the Bill ‘would have on those men, bone of our bone, blood of our blood, away out there in those depressing trenches in the desolate and devastated lands of France and Flanders’, and emphasised that ‘this war must be won whatever the sacrifice to long-cherished convictions’.⁴³⁵ Ironically enough, the same issue of the newspaper carried the advert on the same page for the report on ‘Leeds Labour Party Against Conscription’, the members of which O’Grady acknowledged nearer the end of the month when he admitted that he ‘gave that vote at the risk of breaking personal friendships that are very dear’.⁴³⁶ Again, O’Grady attempted to justify his support for Bill, despite the letters he had received ‘dissenting’ from his support of it.⁴³⁷ The criticisms of his stance were evident in the letters to the newspaper even as late as June of the same year, prompting O’Grady to respond blandly that he had voted for the conscription because ‘the state was in danger’.⁴³⁸ He also justified his support for the Military Service Bill as an extension of his role as defender of the working class, who would be fighting in the war and claimed he saw the passing of the Bill as necessary to its victory, arguing that it was a justifiable war. O’Grady clearly viewed resistance to the Bill in a less sympathetic light than others in the Labour Party, and he also dismissed the suggestion that conscription was in any way an assault upon liberty, which was one of the arguments against it.⁴³⁹ There is evidence in Leeds of the perception that some saw conscription as illiberal, even those who otherwise supported the war, as the following

⁴³⁵ ‘Why I Voted for Conscription’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 14 January 1916, p. 1.

⁴³⁶ ‘Lord Derby’s Report,’ *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 7 January 1916, p. 1, ‘Fighting Shadows: A Watertight Military Service Bill: Conviction Behind the Vote’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 28 January 1916, p. 1.

⁴³⁷ ‘Mr Asquith’s Guarantees: Why this Great Controversy? Shall the Labour Party Split?’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 21 January 1916, p. 1.

⁴³⁸ ‘The Necessity of Compulsion’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 16 June 1916, p. 1.

⁴³⁹ ‘Secret Trials’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 31 March 1916, p. 1.

statement in a letter to the *Leeds Weekly Citizen* indicated: ‘Democracy in this country is on trial’.⁴⁴⁰

Most of the correspondence within the Leeds newspapers at the time reflected the support that many had for conscription, for the reason that ‘the fact of the matter is that the soul of the country is wrapped up in the war’.⁴⁴¹ This view that the nation was fixated on the war corresponded to the recollections of Scott, who claimed that by this year that the war ‘and all it connoted filled people’s minds’.⁴⁴² Adverts in the local press reflected the city’s preoccupation with the war and the city’s soldiers, with Leeds Cooperative Society outfitters’ eye catching and bold reference to ‘Our Boys’, which would have appealed to families with men at the front.⁴⁴³ Adverts for mourning clothes also appeared regularly in the newspapers, which highlighted the public’s need for these items due to the rising death toll.⁴⁴⁴ The residents of Leeds were not universally accepting of mandatory service, however. Letters to the *Leeds Weekly Citizen* at the time indicate that the proposed initial conscription of single men only angered some members of the public in Leeds, who foresaw that it was only the beginning of compulsion: ‘Let any married man who is inclined to support conscription because “it doesn’t affect me” take note’.⁴⁴⁵ The initial conscription of only single young men was also protested against for reasons of their age, and the fact that they not culpable for the war unlike their older male counterparts, as the following letter from ‘A Mother’ of a teenage son, outlined:

⁴⁴⁰ ‘Democracy and 1916’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 7 January 1916, p. 6, ‘Correspondence: Objectors and the Tribunals’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 5 May 1916, p. 6.

⁴⁴¹ ‘Correspondence: The Cabinet and Compulsion’, *Yorkshire Post*, 6 January 1916, p. 4.

⁴⁴² Scott, *Leeds*, p. 38.

⁴⁴³ Regular adverts appeared, for example in *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 12 May 1916, p. 3 and *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 24 March 1916, p. 2.

⁴⁴⁴ Advert for Wards, Leeds, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 30 June 1916, p. 5.

⁴⁴⁵ ‘Correspondence’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 21 January 1916, p. 3.

I deeply regret to read of the proposal [...] to extend the Military Service Act to boys of eighteen years [...] They are little more than children [...] God knows that nineteen is all too early for a boy to go into training for the terrible business of war [...] The lads have had no lot of voice in bringing about or preventing the present situation. They, above all people, are not to blame.⁴⁴⁶

It is interesting that the mother remained unnamed, no doubt to protect herself from criticism from her friends and neighbours who did not share her views. Another viewpoint provided in the letters to this newspaper which also referred to the age restrictions of conscription and how this would not affect older men was from Harold Clay, a local trade unionist, in May. Clay criticised the ‘powers that be’ and claimed that they ‘demand this measure because it doesn’t affect them, but will keep them in comfort by the sacrifice of others they care nothing about’.⁴⁴⁷ This statement that those in power do not care for the ‘others’, with its inference that the older wealthy men would stay at home while younger working men went off to fight, indicates there was also some class resentment that existed at the time regarding conscription. However, the *Yorkshire Post*, in sharp contrast, displayed pro-conscription bias in the disdain felt for the anti-conscriptionists. This illustrates the differing views held on the issue, as well as reflecting the political bias of the conflicting newspapers. The latter reported on the opposition to the Military Service Bill as a ‘poor show’, and asserted that the Bill was ‘absolutely essential for the successful carrying on of the war’.⁴⁴⁸ The justification that conscription was the only solution to the situation, and was good for the country viewed as being in danger by many, was a common one. As another reader wrote: ‘The enemy can only

⁴⁴⁶ ‘Correspondence: Conscription at Eighteen – A Mother’s Protest’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 28 April 1916, p. 3.

⁴⁴⁷ ‘Correspondence: Conscription for All’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 5 May 1916, p. 8.

⁴⁴⁸ ‘Notes and Comments from Our London Correspondent’, *Yorkshire Post*, 8 January 1916, p. 6, emphasis was particularly placed on the rousing speech of former Prime Minister Arthur James Balfour MP near the end of the debate in support of conscription.

be overthrown by force of arms'.⁴⁴⁹ The latter letter was from a major of the army, therefore one would anticipate their views, however the letters of several women readers (who obviously could not join the army) were also published in this newspaper. Again mostly to decry the stance of those who opposed conscription due to the country's greater need: 'Daily we hear of revolting atrocities carried out by our enemies [...] the slaughter of fellow creatures is vile but what alternative have we?'.⁴⁵⁰ This provides a view held by many in Leeds at the time, that compulsory service was necessary to save the country from the 'brutes who could foully treat women and murder innocent little children', the emotive language painting the enemy as inhuman.⁴⁵¹ The local soldiers themselves also expressed similar sentiments, including Private Harry Old, who claimed that the introduction of the Military Service Act was long overdue, and that it had been 'purchased by the blood shed at Loos', the largest British attack of 1915.⁴⁵² A Leeds soldier on the front line wrote to *Leeds Weekly Citizen* in January 1916 to appeal to those who opposed conscription, with a vivid description of the war: 'I have visited some of the places that have been destroyed by the war, scenes that would break the stoutest hearts [...] Ypres [...] a veritable "city of the dead". And yet in England they think the war makes no difference'.⁴⁵³ His letter also indicates that some of the men fighting for the war harboured feelings of resentment for those on the home front.

Within Leeds, therefore, there was evidence in the city of both support for, and opposition to, conscription. Regarding the former, there were many regular adverts in the *Leeds Weekly Citizen* for the local 'No Conscription League' meetings.⁴⁵⁴ There were also anti-war and

⁴⁴⁹ 'Correspondence: Response to Maurice Rowntree', *Yorkshire Post*, 8 January 1916, p. 10.

⁴⁵⁰ 'Correspondence: Response to Maurice Rowntree', *Yorkshire Post*, 8 January 1916, p. 10.

⁴⁵¹ 'Correspondence: Response to Maurice Rowntree', *Yorkshire Post*, 12 January 1916, p. 8.

⁴⁵² LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/DF/129 Diaries and letters of Private Henry (Harry) Old, 1914-1918.

⁴⁵³ 'Letters from Soldiers', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 28 January 1916, p. 7.

⁴⁵⁴ See for example the advert for No Conscription League meeting, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 25 February 1916, p. 4.

anti-conscription demonstrations in Leeds, both before and after the introduction of conscription in March. The *Leeds Weekly Citizen* reported on one held in May that, ‘Thousands of people round the three platforms cheered trenchant remarks which only three months ago would have roused open hostility from the crowd’.⁴⁵⁵ This demonstration attracted anti-war figures such as Sylvia Pankhurst, as well as thousands of members of the public, which indicates that the anti-conscription movement certainly had some basis locally. The presence of local anti-war figures including Isabella Ford and Leeds City Councillor Percy Horner was also noted. Ford declared that ‘while she honoured the men who considered it right to go and fight’, she also ‘honoured those who had appeared before the tribunals and said that they could not go and kill their fellow men’, while Councillor Horner stated that he ‘was fighting the business to a finish’. However, the report also stated of the crowd that ‘some of them may have come to sneer’, which indicates that not all people attended the meeting in support of the demonstration and some in fact resented the anti-conscription campaign.⁴⁵⁶

In Bradford, a group of women set up their own protest group against the war and the introduction of conscription, the Bradford Women’s Humanity League.⁴⁵⁷ Similar to the grass-roots anti-war group the Women’s Peace Crusade, which Bradford Women’s Humanity League eventually joined, the members of the group met on street corners and in market places. Although no official minutes were kept, the local newspapers evidenced their work. The Leeds women did not galvanise their opposition to the war in the same way as the Bradford women in setting up their own specific anti-conscription organisation, however they did work with those which already existed within the city. This may have been due to

⁴⁵⁵ ‘Great Anti-Conscription Day’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 12 May 1916, p. 2.

⁴⁵⁶ ‘Great Anti-Conscription Day’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 12 May 1916, p. 2.

⁴⁵⁷ Doogan, *Chalk Marks in the Rain*.

influence of the conservative minded local council, and certainly there is evidence in the local press that Leeds City Council were severe in their stance on any anti-war activities, such as its ‘refusal to grant to certain organisations the privileges hitherto conceded to bona fide societies to take up collections and sell literature at public meetings in Leeds parks’.⁴⁵⁸ Pearce acknowledges the City Council’s antipathy towards any anti-war activity: ‘Northern Command intelligence officers reported that, “No pacifist dare address any meeting at the corner of the street in Leeds”’, and asserts that in a number of West Yorkshire towns, including ‘Leeds, Brighouse, Dewsbury and Halifax’, the local authorities ‘banned anti-war meetings in public places’.⁴⁵⁹ This regular banning of anti-war meetings may have deterred the war resisters in Leeds from extensive campaigning. However it is more likely that the majority of people in Leeds did not take part in anti-war activities due to the city’s general stronger pro-war feeling. This was due in no small part to the fact that Leeds was a city whose industry was bolstered by the military needs of the country.

One of the imperative arguments of many of those who did oppose conscription was the effect that compulsory service would have on the country’s industry. The administration of conscription was adapted to address this issue, with men allowed to be exempt for work which was seen as crucial to the country’s war needs, in addition to the clause with which men could appeal for exemption for reasons of conscience. It has been shown that the claims for exemption for non-conscience reasons were viewed with less prejudice than the conscience cases.⁴⁶⁰ Where the application for exemption was for men who were employed in a certain industry deemed ‘expedient in the national interests’ (also known as work of

⁴⁵⁸ ‘Leeds Labour Party Protest to City Council’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 21 July 1916, p. 5.

⁴⁵⁹ Pearce, *Comrades in Conscience*, p. 175, p. 178.

⁴⁶⁰ McDermott outlined that the claims for exemption for non-conscience reasons included former those brought on grounds of ‘personal or domestic hardship, occupation, or ill health - McDermott, ‘Conscience and Military Service Tribunals in Northamptonshire’, p. 82.

national importance or starred industries prior to conscription), again this caused consternation with the military, the public and the industries alike.⁴⁶¹ Local newspapers in Leeds sympathetic to those opposing conscription regularly reported on the issue, highlighting the unease of the Government, as well as publicising the views of concerned local trade unions.⁴⁶² The extension of the exemption system also caused tensions for the military authorities, who were desperately seeking to increase army numbers and were frustrated that too many men were being protected.⁴⁶³ Links can also be made with the exemption system to the varying enlistment rates nationally, including the enlistment rates within differing industries, which had an impact on Leeds due to the war related industry.⁴⁶⁴ In addition to the military viewing the exemption system as detrimental to their role, other industries not included in the exemption list feared for their industries should many numbers of workers be drafted into the army. This served to give them a negative view of conscription, as the following newspaper headline illustrated: ‘Miners and Compulsion: Decision to Oppose Military Service Bill’.⁴⁶⁵ The deficiency of labour in the boot industry due to army recruitment was also commented upon in the Leeds press, where the ‘shortage of labour in the boot trade’ was linked to the ‘good record of enlistments’.⁴⁶⁶ There is also evidence to suggest that soldiers were resentful of the industrial protection, as comments in letters home illustrated: ‘Some firms keep a damned host of shirkers and pay them higher wages to fatten

⁴⁶¹ McDermott, ‘Conscience and Military Service Tribunals in Northamptonshire’, p. 62. For further information on ‘badging’, see Dewey, ‘Military Recruiting’, pp. 214-215. For further research on attitudes towards reserved occupations in the war, see Ugolini, *Civvies*.

⁴⁶² See, for example, ‘Lord Milner on Industrial Problem’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 28 January 1916, p. 3.

⁴⁶³ Dewey, ‘Military Recruiting’, p. 215: as Dewey reported, by end of October 1916, approximately ‘1.4 million men were in possession of badges’.

⁴⁶⁴ Dewey, ‘Military Recruiting’, p. 217.

⁴⁶⁵ ‘Miners and Compulsion’, *Yorkshire Post*, 14 January 1916, p. 8.

⁴⁶⁶ ‘The Shortage of Labour in the Boot Trade’, *Yorkshire Post*, 7 January 1916, p. 5.

their dirty hides on, when decent men with large families are giving up all they care about'.⁴⁶⁷ Therefore the impact that conscription had upon industry in the country affected firms, workers and soldiers in different ways. The fear and resentment this caused was as palpable in Leeds as elsewhere, as evidenced in the reports in the newspapers and soldiers' letters, in addition to records relating to the local military service tribunals. In the latter, it is documented that some local industries in Leeds were alarmed by conscription, with examples of the various manufacturing industries writing to the local tribunal board requesting attention to the protection of their specific business.⁴⁶⁸

The Conscience Clause

Military service tribunals were set up in 1916 in order for those who were claiming exemption from conscription to have their claim assessed, and the legislation which introduced conscription also included the right for men to refuse military service on certain personal grounds, including for familial or employment reasons, or on conscience grounds. This 'conscience clause' had been campaigned for by pacifist members of the NCF, as well as the Society of Friends.⁴⁶⁹ Those who were exempted from the army could be either absolutely exempted, perform alternative civilian service, or serve as a non-combatant in the army, according to the extent to which they could convince a Military Service Tribunal of the quality and sincerity of their objection. Non-combatants were drafted into a section of the army called the Non-Combatant Corps, derisively dubbed by the right wing press as the 'No

⁴⁶⁷ LULSPC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/GS/1610, Robert H Tolson letters, 1914-1918, 11 October 1915.

⁴⁶⁸ Leeds WYAS, LT/TC/Box123, Tribunal papers, 1916-1918.

⁴⁶⁹ Further information on the formation of the NCF can be found in Kennedy, *The Hound of Conscience* and for more detail on the NCF's collaboration with the Society of Friends, see Thomas Kennedy's 'Fighting about Peace: The No Conscription Fellowship and the British Friends Service Committee, 1915-1919', *Quaker History*, 68 (1980), 3-22.

Courage Corps’, which indicates the disdain with which these COs were viewed.⁴⁷⁰ Members of the Leeds branch of the NCF did not subscribe to the idea of non-combatant work as they viewed it as still taking part in the war effort, and in April 1916 they resolved unanimously at a meeting that the ‘recently formed Non-Combatant Corps is for the better prosecution of warfare and is part of the military machine’, and that they wished to ‘put on record our wholehearted objection to it’.⁴⁷¹ Leeds MP Harvey concurred with this view when he said of COs that they would rather ‘give up their own lives than go against their religious principles’, and that ‘No Act of Parliament can over-ride the deepest convictions of a man’s being’; he even asserted that the conscience clause of the Military Service Act was ‘imperfect and unequal in its operation’.⁴⁷²

There were three types of Military Service Tribunals: local tribunals, appeal tribunals and a central tribunal.⁴⁷³ Only a few examples of the records of the actual tribunal proceedings survive, as, ostensibly due to their sensitive nature, in the 1920s the Government instructed the Local Government Boards responsible for facilitating the tribunals to destroy all related

⁴⁷⁰ Pearce, *Comrades in Conscience*, p. 128, Michael Snape, *God and the British Soldier: Religion and the British Army in the First and Second World Wars* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 193. See also John Rae, *Conscience and Politics: The British Government and the Conscientious Objectors to Military Service* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970).

⁴⁷¹ ‘No Conscription Fellowship’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 7 April 1916, p. 5.

⁴⁷² ‘Report from Imperial Parliament: Military Service Bill’, *Yorkshire Post*, 20 January 1916, p. 5, Foreword by Harvey to James Scott Duckers, *Handed Over: The Prison Experiences of Mr J Scott Duckers, Solicitor of Chancery Lane, Under the Military Service Act* (London: C W Daniel, 1917), p. iii, p. iv.

⁴⁷³ The central tribunal was based in London, was appointed for the whole of the country and served men who were dissatisfied with a decision of an appeal tribunal, although they did have to gain the permission to do this from the appeal tribunal, and the central tribunal thus frequently took over cases in which conscientious objection was made by men who had already been called up; for further information on the types of tribunals, see Pearce, *Comrades in Conscience*, John Graham, *Conscription and Conscience: 1916-1919* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1922), and David Boulton, *Objection Overruled: Conscription and Conscience in the First World War* (Kendal: Stramongate Press, 2014).

material, excepting a limited number.⁴⁷⁴ There have since been chance findings of tribunal records in certain areas, such as those found in Northamptonshire, which have been scrutinised by McDermott.⁴⁷⁵ In Leeds, where the City Council facilitated the local tribunals as well as some of the appeal tribunals for the area, the only official records existing are the limited notes from the tribunals, which included only very basic information.⁴⁷⁶ McDermott asserts that the Government's motivations behind the instructions to destroy all tribunal records were a pragmatic measure 'to expunge the legacy of a politically troubled process'.⁴⁷⁷ This seems plausible, as the Government would not have wanted extensive evidence of the contentious issue to stay in existence. However, the lack of official documented evidence from the majority of the tribunals has led to much speculation and suspicion regarding them, thereby sowing historians' discord over the role of, and occurrences at, tribunals. It has also led to a necessary reliance upon newspaper reportage for evidence of the proceedings, as the press and public were allowed to view the tribunal hearings, which meant the 'verbatim reports of tribunal hearings both filled the columns and stimulated the circulation of the local newspapers'.⁴⁷⁸ The press therefore willingly and sensationally reported the most controversial of the appeals to the public who seemed to be eager to hear news of COs tribunals, at least for the first few months of conscription until the novelty of this unconventional process subsided. In the absence of other available sources, therefore, local newspapers offer a valuable record of the local tribunals, as they provide an often-verbatim account of the tribunals which enabled the voice of the appellant to reach the public.

⁴⁷⁴ The Middlesex, Surrey, Lothian and Peebles appeal records and a sample of those from the central tribunal were not destroyed. See Pearce, *Comrades in Conscience*.

⁴⁷⁵ McDermott, *British Military Service Tribunals*, p. 1, McDermott, 'Conscience and Military Service Tribunals in Northamptonshire'.

⁴⁷⁶ WYAS Leeds, LT/TC/Box123, Tribunal papers, 1916-1918. The only information included are the names of the tribunal members present, the number of attested and unattested men seen on that day, and any decisions made.

⁴⁷⁷ McDermott, *British Military Service Tribunals*, p. 1.

⁴⁷⁸ Rae, *Conscience and Politics*, p. 99.

However, in reality this coverage was skewed, as the focus was upon COs, who only made up a minority of the cases.

The local tribunals were facilitated by the local authorities to deal with voluntary servicemen as well as conscripted applications. A military representative was also entitled to attend any hearing and to question applicants, and tribunals had the power to grant exemptions.⁴⁷⁹ The composition of local tribunals, which were overwhelmingly made up from prominent, and often right wing and pro-war, council representatives, have been viewed by several commentators as having provided a biased and therefore unfair hearing to the COs in particular, although others have defended their work.⁴⁸⁰ Many academics provide commentary upon this issue, however some of the key literature is written by authors who have personal connections with peace activism, which goes some way to account for the polarised views.⁴⁸¹ The inclusion of a military representative was another factor in their controversy, as these men were invariably ‘a retired soldier [...] who attended sittings on behalf of the local recruiting officer’, whose purpose therefore was to see as many men enter into the armed forces as possible.⁴⁸² In Leeds, there was evidence of the influence of the

⁴⁷⁹ Exemptions granted by tribunals could be permanent, conditional or temporary, and were also revocable; voluntary servicemen were described as ‘attested’ and conscripted men as ‘non-attested’.

⁴⁸⁰ Notably, the research of both Boulton, *Objection Overruled*, and Graham, *Conscription and Conscience*, comprised an attack on the work of the tribunals, whereas Rae, *Conscience and Politics*, defended their novel position.

⁴⁸¹ Several principal historians whose works place the subject of conscientious objectors into context are Adrian Gregory, Niall Ferguson and Martin Ceadel; each has provided a clear and concise introduction to war resistance and are a useful starting point for the concept: Gregory, *Last Great War*, Ferguson, *Pity of War*, Martin Ceadel, ‘Pacifism’, in *The Cambridge History of the First World War, Vol. II*, ed., by Jay Winter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 576-605. Other notable commentators with close ties with peace groups include Graham, *Conscription and Conscience*, who was a devout Quaker and Chairman of the Friends Peace Committee, and Boulton, *Objection Overruled*, journalist and Quaker, who was commissioned by the former members of the NCF to write his commentary on COs for the fiftieth anniversary of the First World War.

⁴⁸² McDermott, *British Military Service Tribunals*, p. 19.

Military Representatives within the tribunal hearings both from the local newspapers' reports of proceedings and from the only existing notes from the tribunal hearings. For instance in April 1916 when the appeal tribunal sat at Leeds Town Hall to hear forty three appeals in total, including two brothers who claimed total exemption on conscience grounds. The elder 'admitted that he was employed by a firm which had manufactured cloth for the French Army', whereupon the Military Representative asked him, 'Then why your conscientious objection?', to which the appellant replied, 'I have to live, and I have sacrificed a lot'.⁴⁸³ However the intervention of the Military Representative mean that, 'Both brothers were referred to non-combatant service'.⁴⁸⁴ Within the sparse Leeds tribunal papers there are several references where claims were 'objected to' by the Military Representative and exemptions subsequently withdrawn, which shows the influence these representatives had upon the tribunals.⁴⁸⁵

Apart from the one Military Representative, local tribunals were generally composed of notable Council members and were often, but not always, as shall be seen in Leeds, staunchly pro-war. Boulton asserts that the tribunals consisted 'for the most part of elderly worthies – the butchers, bakers and candlestick makers of the local community', who would not look sympathetically upon anyone appealing their call up to the armed forces, least of all a CO.⁴⁸⁶ The *Leeds Weekly Citizen* reported on several occasions that the local tribunal was overly patriotic, including a report from March 1916, which stated that in Leeds, 'Quite a number of members' were 'obsessed with an undue sentiment of the needs of the Army'.⁴⁸⁷ Gregory has

⁴⁸³ 'Another Hundred Objectors: Leeds Tribunal and Conscience Cases Special Reports', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 21 April 1916, p. 2.

⁴⁸⁴ 'Another Hundred Objectors: Leeds Tribunal and Conscience Cases Special Reports', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 21 April 1916, p. 2.

⁴⁸⁵ WYAS Leeds, LT/TC/Box123, Tribunal papers, 1916-1918.

⁴⁸⁶ Boulton, *Objection Overruled*, p. 123.

⁴⁸⁷ 'Local Experience', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 3 March 1916, p. 1.

a more equitable stance on this issue: although he admits that there may be ‘some truth in this charge’ of tribunals’ unfair treatment of COs, he also emphasises that this was only the case with a ‘tiny minority’ of COs and states that the tribunals could also be ‘much more generous than is often realised’.⁴⁸⁸ John Rae states that the relationship between the British Government and the COs was ‘confusing’, especially in the formation of the tribunals and treatment of COs, however he does not subscribe to the war resisters’ groups’ suggestion that the culpability for this lay with the Government. Rae instead argues that they had had a difficult task to undertake: ‘While the tribunals may not have earned glowing testimonial, neither did they deserve the harsh criticism that was directed against them both by the military and by the conscientious objectors’.⁴⁸⁹ It is significant that Rae acknowledges that the military had also criticised the tribunals, whose reproof centred on the argument that the tribunals were too lenient on applicants. McDermott concurs with Rae on this issue, and asserts that criticism was received from all sides for the tribunals: ‘Castigated either for being too sensitive to local concerns [...] or for acting as the unfeeling servants of a voracious war-machine [...] tribunals were unloved during their lifetimes and unmourned following their demise.’⁴⁹⁰ Keith Robbins also defends the tribunals from criticism, claiming that the difficulty in implementing the novel CO legislation was ‘to be expected in all the circumstances’, and that the criticism of the tribunals, ‘ignores the difficulty which conscientious objection posed for those tribunal members who were trying, conscientiously, to accommodate and understand its basis’.⁴⁹¹ McDermott challenges equally the accusations that have been aimed at the tribunal members, and asserts that the tribunals were collectives of ‘unequal parts’, their ‘ambiguities’ being the ‘symptom’ of a ‘flawed system’, thereby

⁴⁸⁸ Gregory, *Last Great War*, p. 105.

⁴⁸⁹ Rae, *Conscience and Politics*, p. 113.

⁴⁹⁰ McDermott, *British Military Service Tribunals*, p. 1.

⁴⁹¹ Robbins, ‘British Experience of COs’, p. 695.

placing the culpability for their mistakes upon the system itself rather than with the tribunal members.⁴⁹² Thomas Kennedy concurs: ‘Despite the fact that the tribunals were inadequately prepared for their task, they probably do not deserve the opprobrium historically attached to their treatment of conscientious objectors’.⁴⁹³ However, authors such as John Graham, David Boulton and Pearce argue that no matter how impromptu or ill-considered the tribunals were, it did not justify their frequent abandonment of all sense of judicial impartiality that existed in so many tribunals when faced with the genuine claims of COs or, indeed, of others. Pearce claims that the tribunals were, ‘Muddled, inconsistent, prejudiced and unjust’.⁴⁹⁴ Graham even accuses the government of ‘evil deeds’ against COs.⁴⁹⁵ The reality probably lies somewhere in between the extreme views of historians: that some tribunals were unfair and interpreted the Act incorrectly and some worked hard to adhere legitimately to its constitution. Either way, the implementation of the Act, and the experience of the men who applied for exemption, was certainly not uniform or indeed ideal. It is also significant that the authorities’ shortcomings in this regard were not repeated in the Second World War, which was an acknowledgement that mistakes were made in the dealings with COs during the First World War.⁴⁹⁶ Even O’Grady admitted once the Act had been implemented in March 1916 that in hindsight it was wrong to compose the tribunals as being ‘manned by civilians’ and suggested ‘whether after all it would not have been better for the courts to have been a one-man arrangement’.⁴⁹⁷ This indicates that the tribunal system was seen as flawed even by some of those who supported conscription.

⁴⁹² McDermott, *British Military Service Tribunals*, p. 221-222.

⁴⁹³ Thomas Kennedy, ‘Public Opinion and the Conscientious Objector, 1915-1919’, *Journal of British Studies*, 12 (1973), pp. 105-119.

⁴⁹⁴ Pearce, *Comrades in Conscience*, p. 158.

⁴⁹⁵ Graham, *Conscription and Conscience*, p. 343.

⁴⁹⁶ McDermott, *British Military Service Tribunals*, p.1.

⁴⁹⁷ ‘The Tribunal Conflict’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 31 March 1916, p. 1.

In Leeds, as elsewhere in the country, there were hundreds of tribunals reported.⁴⁹⁸ Scott recalled that the membership of the tribunal ‘was increased from time to time in order to cope with the situation caused by the demands under the Military Service Acts’, which implies that increasing numbers of men applied for exemption.⁴⁹⁹ The local newspapers also reported regularly on the increasing tribunal numbers.⁵⁰⁰ Scott outlined that there were many reasons for, as he termed them, the ‘excuses’ put forward for exemption:

Now it was the plea of a mother for her only son, or a father for the sole help-meet in his business, or some worker who deemed his work essential, or some pacifist who urged conscientious scruples against the taking of life. Leeds probably had no larger proportion of these than other towns of its size, but there were enough applications to keep the judicial body busy every week for three years.⁵⁰¹

Whether the claims for exemption were made under the conscience clause or not, so many men wishing to be exempted from conscription can be seen as a covert form of resistance. As such the significant number of applicants are evidence of challenges to consensus in Leeds. Although some men may not have a conscientious objection to the war, they certainly did not want to fight in it. The *Leeds Weekly Citizen* asserted in April 1916 that in Leeds there was a ‘tribunal of average severity,’ however other evidence in the local press illustrated that the Leeds tribunal was particularly unsympathetic. This included the report from an appeal

⁴⁹⁸ Gregory outlined that in Leeds there were 55,101 hearings involving 27,000 men, and of these, 13,897 cases were ‘dismissed outright’ and 41,204 claims were ‘either withdrawn, or exemption, usually temporary, was granted’, Gregory, *Last Great War*, p. 101 (some of the statistics are taken from Scott, *Leeds*, p. 316).

⁴⁹⁹ Scott, *Leeds*, p. 315.

⁵⁰⁰ ‘Editor’s Chat: Tribunals’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 28 July 1916, p. 4.

⁵⁰¹ Scott, *Leeds*, p. 46.

refused in March 1916 from a mother on behalf of her son who had epilepsy, to be told by the Chairman that ‘fresh air does a lot of good’.⁵⁰²

In Leeds, as was customary, the local tribunals were made up mostly from members of the Council. As the composition of the Council went unchanged in Leeds throughout the war, due to the suspension of all municipal elections, the Conservatives remained the dominant party in the Council.⁵⁰³ If one assumes that politics at a local level was representative of the class base, with similar values, of people in Leeds at this time, then most of society in the city would have had a conservative outlook on the war and conscription. After all, even some of the Labour Party members were in favour of the war and conscription and they took their place on tribunal panels accordingly. However, some of the tribunal members joined the panels to ensure justice for those who claimed exemption, and, although these men were much fewer than those in favour of the war, their influence was felt. As such it is important that they are acknowledged as part of the holistic picture of the history of the city in the war. There is a rare consensus among historians that there was ‘little uniformity in the practice of tribunals’, due to the differing political composition of them as well as the differing interpretations of the Military Service Act, especially regarding exemption and the conscience clause.⁵⁰⁴ One way in which Leeds tribunal differed from most other places is that, although tribunal membership generally mirrored the political composition of the local council, in Leeds ‘the council decided that each of the three parties should have equal representation on the tribunal’.⁵⁰⁵ This provided the tribunals with a political balance it would

⁵⁰² ‘Local Experience’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 2 March 1916, p. 1; ‘Uproar of Leeds Tribunal’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 31 March 1916, p. 2.

⁵⁰³ Meadowcroft, ‘The Years of Political Transition’, p. 410.

⁵⁰⁴ Graham, *Conscription and Conscience*, p. 69; see also Rae, *Conscience and Politics*, p. 36.

⁵⁰⁵ Rae, *Conscience and Politics*, p. 36.

not otherwise have had.⁵⁰⁶ The names of the first members of the Leeds local tribunal were included within the resolution of the Council meeting in February, which confirmed that, as in most other panels elsewhere in the country, the full panel was wholly male.⁵⁰⁷ Boulton comments upon this lack of women on tribunals, and although he admits that they were ‘occasionally included’, he claims that when they were they ‘generally surpassed the men in ferocity’ against the appellants, which implied that pro-war women were chosen.⁵⁰⁸ The *Leeds Weekly Citizen* commented upon this gender disparity of the local tribunals in March 1916: ‘Why was not the Derby tribunal enlarged, and qualified by the addition of women, and of men with a larger outlook?’⁵⁰⁹ It is important to highlight that the tenor of this reporting in the *Leeds Weekly Citizen* is not evidenced in the more right wing press, which again indicated the influence upon the former of the Labour Party, largely sympathetic to COs and women’s equality. The inclusion of women on the tribunal was a possibility suggested by the Labour councillor members in February, however, this amendment was defeated, with the Council commenting that the ‘ladies have done extremely valuable work but this was not suitable for them’.⁵¹⁰ This indicates the prevailing views towards women at this time: they were not seen as appropriate inclusions for this important work. This exclusion of women was discussed at a meeting of the East and North-East Women’s Labour League meeting held the same week, at which a resolution was carried, to be forwarded to Leeds City Council, of their desire, ‘To express our regret to the Leeds City Council at their decision to exclude women from the tribunal [which is] unrepresentative, excluding as it does any

⁵⁰⁶ Both Scott and local newspaper reports outline the tribunal members’ names and affiliations: Scott, *Leeds*, pp. 314-318, ‘Leeds Recruiting Tribunal Business at First Meeting’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 7 January 1916, p. 7.

⁵⁰⁷ Leeds WYAS, LT/TC/Box123, Tribunal papers, 1916-1918.

⁵⁰⁸ Boulton, *Objection Overruled*, p. 124.

⁵⁰⁹ ‘Mr Foster’s Resignation from Leeds Military Tribunal’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 31 March 1916, p. 3.

⁵¹⁰ ‘Leeds City Corporation, Yesterday’s Special Meetings: Conscription Tribunal Appointed’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 11 February 1916, p. 5.

representation of women, whose sacrifice during the war is as great as that of the men's'.⁵¹¹

In April, when the tribunal was being expanded with the addition of an extra six members, again the Labour Party members suggested names of one woman and one religious representative, as agreed at a recent Labour Party meeting. However, although six additional new members were agreed, there were 'still no women', due to the fact that the 'other parties' were 'adamant against either a parson or a lady taking the place up'.⁵¹² Despite several additions over the course of the war, no women were ever voted onto Leeds local tribunal. This highlighted that the majority role of the Conservatives on Leeds City Council ensured there was greater influence of the conservative outlook on the decisions regarding tribunal membership in Leeds.⁵¹³

In Leeds, each change to the tribunals when enacted was reported in the local press, and there were also replacements as members resigned from the local tribunal.⁵¹⁴ One notable resignation was David Blythe Foster in April 1916.⁵¹⁵ The *Leeds Weekly Citizen* printed his resignation letter, which stated that he had done so to specifically 'call public attention to the need for a fuller appreciation of the wisdom and value of the provision made in the Military Service Act 1916 for the exemption of conscientious objectors'.⁵¹⁶ There is evidence in Leeds

⁵¹¹ 'The Exclusion of Women', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 25 February 1916, p. 4.

⁵¹² 'Leeds City Council: Enlarged Tribunal', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 7 April 1916, p. 5.

⁵¹³ For further details on the changing tribunal members and numbers throughout the war, see Scott, *Leeds*, pp. 314-318, 'Editor's Chat: Tribunals', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 28 July 1916, p. 4, 'Leeds Local Tribunal Enlarged', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 11 August 1916, p. 4, Leeds WYAS, LT/TC/Box123, Tribunal papers, 1916-1918.

⁵¹⁴ Scott, *Leeds*, p. 315. Changing tribunal numbers detailed in 'Editor's Chat: Tribunals', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 28 July 1916, p. 4, 'Leeds Local Tribunal Enlarged', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 11 August 1916, p. 4, Leeds WYAS, LT/TC/Box123, Tribunal papers, 1916-1918.

⁵¹⁵ Leeds WYAS, LT/TC/Box123, Tribunal papers, 1916-1918: it is reported in the tribunal record as being a resolution of a council meeting held on 5 April 1916 that Councillor Escritt 'is hereby appointed a member of the local tribunal under the Military Service Act, 1916, in the place of Mr D B Foster resigned'.

⁵¹⁶ 'Mr D B Foster resigns from Leeds Military Tribunal', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 24 March 1916, p. 5.

where the provisions of the conscience clause were overlooked by tribunals. As the local press reported from the Leeds local tribunal in April 1916, several COs were refused the right to expound their grounds for appeal, as the Chairman ordered: ‘We are not going to have speeches here’.⁵¹⁷ The following month the press reported on a ‘batch’ of COs’ refusal to sit down’ at Leeds military tribunal, and each one of them was subsequently ‘refused a hearing’.⁵¹⁸ The defiance of the COs in this instance was in protest to the way that fellow COs had been treated by what they viewed as a harsh tribunal, and to gain publicity for this mixed experience. The differing responses of tribunals in distinct areas was highlighted by the press in May 1916, which reported that the representatives of five COs asserted that their position was ‘very anomalous just now’, and asserted, ‘if the defendants had lived in nearby Batley, for instance, the probability was that he would have been exempted’.⁵¹⁹ This indicates the varied ways in which tribunals in different areas responded to claims. That some perceived the tribunals as being incompetent is also evidenced in the local press. The habitually sympathetic *Leeds Weekly Citizen* even outlined the case of the tribunal hearing of Huddersfield CO Arthur Gardener, a ‘young Socialist’ who was refused prolonged exemption despite the tribunal recognising him as a CO, which was condemned by the paper as an ‘outrage against common sense, an offence against the Act itself’ and a ‘howling exhibition of the incompetence of the tribunal’.⁵²⁰ It continued that ‘what happened to Gardiner is only a mild rendering of what is happening to scores of applicants just as sincere in Leeds’, which

⁵¹⁷ ‘The Badgered Objector’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 28 April 1916, p. 2.

⁵¹⁸ ‘Military Tribunals: Batch of Conscientious Objectors’ Refusal to Sit Down’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 5 May 1916, p. 2.

⁵¹⁹ ‘Arrested as Deserters: Five Objectors on Trial’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 5 May 1916, p. 2.

⁵²⁰ ‘Arthur Gardiner’s Case’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 24 March 1916, p. 1. For further background on Arthur Gardiner, see Pearce, *Comrades in Conscience*, p. 49, pp. 54-55.

implies that there were at least some who held the views that the local tribunal in Leeds was not fit for purpose, in agreement with David Foster.⁵²¹

As well as being a long serving Labour councillor, Foster was the author of a report into the study of poverty in Leeds in the late nineteenth century and lauded by the *Leeds Weekly Citizen* as ‘an advocate of every forward movement’.⁵²² Foster’s resignation was discussed again in this newspaper the week after its occurrence, with pertinent questions asked of the local tribunal, such as: ‘Do the conscientious objectors of Leeds feel confidence in the local tribunal?’ Their conclusion stated that the ‘amount of appeals from the decisions of that body gives abundant evidence that they do not’.⁵²³ The paper continued to report on this story for the next few months.⁵²⁴ Foster’s own article in the newspaper in April 1916 outlined in detail his motivations in resigning from the local tribunal, and, in addition to the perception that they were failing COs, he highlighted the significance of class to this issue:

There is in this country, as in all other European countries, an ever increasing quantity of men of the working class who see very clearly that war is entirely against their interests. Many thousands of the best soldiers in the trenches today belong to this class [...] The tribunals have made the very serious mistake taking these men for shirkers.⁵²⁵

Foster condemned ‘the policy of conscription’, which he claimed, ‘was bound to bring the government up against this great body of working-class opinion’.⁵²⁶ In reality, the evidence in

⁵²¹ ‘Arthur Gardiner’s Case’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 24 March 1916, p. 1.

⁵²² D B Foster, *Leeds Slumdom* (Leeds: C H Halliday, 1897).

⁵²³ ‘Mr Foster’s Resignation from Leeds Military Tribunal’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 31 March 1916, p. 3.

⁵²⁴ An article in May claimed to provide the ‘facts of the case’: ‘Mr Foster Resigns: An Increased Press Campaign’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 12 May 1916, p. 6.

⁵²⁵ ‘Conscription and Conscience, by D B Foster’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 7 April 1916, p. 3.

⁵²⁶ ‘Conscription and Conscience, by D B Foster’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 7 April 1916, p. 3.

Leeds supports the converse view: that most of the working class were in support of conscription. However, it is important to note the dissenters also, whose actions and attitudes nuance the general picture.

Boulton concurs with Foster's view of the Government's policy of mandatory service as unfair to certain members of society, and claims that the tribunals had 'a class-bred, bitter hostility to socialism'.⁵²⁷ This may help explain the harsher treatment of political objectors in Leeds, as the evidence suggests that they were mainly working class men affiliated to the left-wing parties. Various letters to the papers comment upon the differing treatment of the classes in the tribunals; for instance one from December 1916 to the *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, which denounced the recent prison sentences on three Leeds COs as 'iniquitous' and stated that 'these three should certainly have been put in the same class as the wealthy Quakers whose claims were immediately granted by the tribunal as a matter of course'.⁵²⁸ This indicated therefore that Quakers were exempted due to their higher class. The reader also added, 'I trust the working classes will compel the government to treat rich and poor alike in questions of this kind', which again emphasises the inequality between the classes in their treatment at tribunals.⁵²⁹ Further evidence of accusations that the tribunals were inequitable existed in the local press in Leeds, with the report of a 'Leeds protest' against the 'unequal tribunals' by a Leeds City Councillor in October.⁵³⁰ Wider Yorkshire newspaper reporting in 1916 also accused the Thirsk local tribunal as having 'one law for rich, another for poor', and

⁵²⁷ Boulton, *Objection Overruled*, p. 124.

⁵²⁸ 'Correspondence: Sentences on Leeds Conscientious Objectors', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 1 December 1916, p. 4.

⁵²⁹ 'Correspondence: Sentences on Leeds Conscientious Objectors', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 1 December 1916, p. 4.

⁵³⁰ 'Unequal Tribunals', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 6 October 1916, p. 1.

for ‘being too lenient on local residents’ who were wealthy.⁵³¹ Again this provides evidence of the inconsistent treatment of appellants due to their class.

One prime example of the exemption of a wealthy Quaker by the Leeds Local Tribunal related to the case of John Wilfred Harvey, younger brother of Ted Harvey, MP. John Harvey was exempted as a CO by Leeds local tribunal in July 1916, the *Leeds Weekly Citizen* reported, on the ground ‘that he felt himself unable to undertake any service which had for its aim the prosecution of the war by the taking of human life’.⁵³² His case was extensively reported by both the left- and right-wing local press, no doubt due in part to his connection with the local MP.⁵³³ John Harvey had his case considered before the Military Service Tribunal in Leeds in July 1916, where he was granted exemption from combatant service for three months conditional on his working with the Friends War Victims Relief Service (FWVRS). Both newspapers reported Harvey’s case with more sympathy than was usual in the case of COs. The *Leeds Weekly Citizen* applauded his previous work with the Red Cross in France and his continued voluntary work for the War Relief Victorian Committee, and emphasised that his letter to the tribunal had outlined that he did not adhere to the view that conscientious objectors should do no work of national importance. Indeed the paper reported that it ‘was argued that the applicant was not a “slacker” but had engaged in useful international work’.⁵³⁴ Even the *Yorkshire Post* reported on Harvey as a ‘Quaker’s example to conscientious objectors’, and described his as a ‘case of an unusual character’, again highlighting the war relief work.⁵³⁵ It is clear therefore that John Harvey’s case was viewed

⁵³¹ ‘Thirsk Local Tribunal’, *Yorkshire Herald*, 16 September 1916, p. 5.

⁵³² ‘MP’s Brother Exempted’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 7 July 1916, p. 3.

⁵³³ See for example ‘MP’s Brother Exempted’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 7 July 1916, p. 3 and ‘Military Tribunals: A Quaker’s Example to Conscientious Objectors’, *Yorkshire Post*, 5 July 1916, p. 6.

⁵³⁴ ‘MP’s Brother Exempted’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 7 July 1916, p. 3.

⁵³⁵ ‘Military Tribunals: A Quaker’s Example to Conscientious Objectors’, *Yorkshire Post*, 5 July 1916, p. 6.

with more sympathy than many COs who came before Leeds local tribunal, due in part to his connections to his brother the MP, as well as his respected religion. However, most pertinently, it was also due to the fact that he was employed in work that was seen as beneficial to the war effort. This garnered respect and could be used as a sound justification by the tribunal to the public in Leeds.

Another Leeds figure noteworthy for his pro-CO sympathies was Leeds Labour Councillor, Percy Horner, who, as well as his brother Ernest, applied for exemption at the Leeds local tribunal and ended up imprisoned as a CO. The *Leeds Weekly Citizen's* report of Councillor Horner's arrest in June 1916 confirmed that he was a member of the Labour Party, 'who has won some prominence as an advocate of the pacifist and conscientious objector position', and stated that he had been advised in his stance by one Councillor Foster, former tribunal member.⁵³⁶ Councillor Horner wrote regularly to the same newspaper to outline his views and respond to criticism of his stance, including one letter under the headline of 'Cllr [sic] Horner's Denial', in which he defended himself against other Leeds City Council members who had accused him of treachery.⁵³⁷ This again highlights the tensions that existed in Leeds City Council on this issue. The reports from the Leeds local tribunal corroborated Rae's view that the 'crowded public gallery was seldom hostile to the applicant', and that the 'public who took the trouble to attend were usually friends of the applicant'. This was especially the case when the application was on conscientious grounds.⁵³⁸ One example of this is the case of Ernest Horner, whose brother Councillor Percy Horner was in the crowd along with many other advocates of COs at his tribunal hearing in March 1916. When Ernest Horner, and all subsequent cases, were adjourned by the Chairman due to the noise from the crowd, the

⁵³⁶ 'Councillor Horner Arrested', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 9 June 1916, p. 2.

⁵³⁷ 'Correspondence: Cllr Horner's Denial', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 12 May 1916, p. 5.

⁵³⁸ Rae, *Conscience and Politics*, p. 99.

whole gallery started singing the socialist anthem ‘The Red Flag’. The newspaper report from this day also recalls that the Labour councillors on the panel were called ‘treacherous Labour representatives’ and ‘renegades’.⁵³⁹ This illustrates that the Labour party members were perceived by those who supported the COs to have betrayed their cause. Once ousted from the City Hall, the gallery members gathered in nearby Victoria Square, where Ernest Horner provided the full address that the tribunal would not let him make. This was published in the same issue of the newspaper, and included the bold lines, ‘Would Jesus Christ wear khaki?’.⁵⁴⁰ Ernest Horner ended up in prison for his stance, as did his brother Percy. The press reported Percy Horner’s appeal against service in April 1916, and included his motivations in his own words: ‘I do not believe that this is a war with democracy [...] I believe that the militarists in the country are hand in glove with the militarists of Germany’.⁵⁴¹ The motivations of these two men in opposing the war were clearly strongly political as well as religious, as Ernest Horner claimed in his hearing that he was a ‘socialist and anti-militarist’.

Religion was the most popular motivation for COs, with Quakers numbering the largest interned nationally.⁵⁴² The evidence in Leeds also illustrates that the motivations were mostly religious for these men, as the press reports from the tribunal hearings confirmed, and it is

⁵³⁹ ‘Ernest Horner’s Case: Voices from the Gallery’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 31 March 1916, p. 2.

⁵⁴⁰ ‘Mr Ernest Horner’s Striking Address’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 31 March 1916, p. 4.

⁵⁴¹ ‘Another Hundred Objectors: Leeds Tribunal and Conscientious Cases’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 21 April 1916, p. 2.

⁵⁴² Margaret Hobhouse, *I Appeal Unto Caesar: The Case of the Conscientious Objector* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1917), pp. 16-17. The research of Jo Vellacott has since shown that this booklet was largely written by Bertrand Russell and is therefore NCF propaganda, which means the evidence provided was possibly embellished, however it does support the view that most COs’ motivations were religious, although others had political, socialist and moral reasons for refusing to fight; for further information on the authorship of *I Appeal Unto Caesar*, see Jo Vellacott, *Conscientious Objection: Bertrand Russell and the Pacifists in the First World War* (Nottingham: Spokesman, 2015) and ‘Russell as a Ghost-Writer’, *Russell*, 15 (1974), 19-23.

interesting to note that the religious motivations were viewed with more sympathy than those who were political. Letters to the press in Leeds included comments such as, ‘If there be a God of Love and Justice [...] are we quite sure that He can have no other way of attaining justice than by wholesale slaughter’, and ‘scores of young men are being flung into prison because they refuse to disobey the plain and simple teachings of Christ’.⁵⁴³ Although the COs with political motivations were in the minority, it is still important to acknowledge them, as their stance was perceived to illustrate dissent in its extreme form by many. Absolutist COs who refused to do any work involved with the war at all were supported by both the NCF and the ILP, as well as Socialist Sunday Schools. The latter were a group who trained young people, as the local press reported, to ‘make individuals realise the relationship and responsibility of self to society’.⁵⁴⁴ COs from Leeds were often members of the local Socialist Sunday School movement, including Ernest and Percy Horner.

The evidence in the press also largely supported the idea that political motivations were not respected by the public and tribunal members in the same way as religious motivations, as shown in the report from a meeting of Leeds local tribunal held at Leeds Town Hall in April 1916:

A member of the socialist party named Shew appealed for total exemption. He believed in the brotherhood of man and would not assist in war whatever the consequences [...] Chairman: “Are you a member of any religious body?” “No, I am an atheist”. This answer seemed to shock one or two members of the tribunal.⁵⁴⁵

⁵⁴³ ‘Correspondence’, *Yorkshire Post*, 10 January 1916, p. 4; ‘Correspondence: Objectors and the Tribunals’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 5 May 1916, p. 6.

⁵⁴⁴ ‘Socialist Sunday School: Their Programme and Ideals’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 21 April 1916, p. 5.

⁵⁴⁵ ‘Another Hundred Objectors: Leeds Tribunal and Conscientious Cases’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 21 April 1916, p. 2.

Some of the COs with religious motivations also held the political objectors in disdain. This is shown in the report from the tribunal hearing of a pastor of the Christian Association, Leeds, who asked for total exemption on the grounds that he ‘could on no account become part of the killing machine’, however emphatically declared that he did not ‘belong to the Red Flag in any shape or form’, to which a tribunal member replied, ‘I hope you will treat that very generously. I do’.⁵⁴⁶ Therefore the politically motivated COs who came before the tribunals in Leeds were most certainly more harshly treated than those with religious convictions. This signifies that society was generally more devout and therefore more understanding of religious motivations, which they could appreciate and sympathise with. The strong convictions of the socialist COs cannot be denied, however. One CO from Bradford, in respect of his religion stated in his appeal letter: ‘None, unless you accept my religion as socialist’, and his papers of support included evidence of ten years as a Socialist Sunday School teacher.⁵⁴⁷

The experience of Councillor Horner contrasted sharply with that of fellow Labour Councillor James Thomson, who joined the Leeds Pals Battalion in the early days of the war. The *Leeds Weekly Citizen* reported regularly on Thomson’s army experience, both through interviews with him and reports he sent to the paper, including his assertion that trench warfare ‘varies wonderfully in fortune’.⁵⁴⁸ The press reported willingly on the exploits of Thomson, who was ‘nearly the first member of the City Council to enlist voluntarily’ as well and added that he ‘now holds commission as a lieutenant, and is ready for further assaults without any hesitation in his purpose’.⁵⁴⁹ Clearly revered for his soldier status, Councillor

⁵⁴⁶ ‘Another Hundred Objectors: Leeds Tribunal and Conscience Cases’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 21 April 1916, p. 2.

⁵⁴⁷ PM, BRFP2000.1-82, Letter and papers of Bill Crowther.

⁵⁴⁸ ‘Leeds Pal Corporal Thomson Interviewed’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 5 May 1916, p. 1.

⁵⁴⁹ ‘Corporal Thomson’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 28 December 1917, p. 3.

Thomson's war experience differed greatly from that of Councillor Horner, who certainly was not viewed in such a light as a CO.

Rather surprisingly, the debate on the CO issue within the local newspapers was often fairly well balanced. Correspondence within the newspapers would often take the form of readers replying to each other's messages, and the exchange between them, more often than not disagreeable, were printed. This provided valuable equitable evidence of views. It also indicates that newspapers were inclined to publish letters and stories that characterised a controversy, as it led to increased readership. One such exchange took place over the first few months of 1916 in the *Leeds Weekly Citizen* between 'The Rebel', who described himself as a 'Marxian', and several other citizens of Leeds. The former initiated the interchange with a diatribe against the ideal of the CO, whom he accused of being a man who 'puts "conscience" before society'.⁵⁵⁰ This elicited several responses, including from COs themselves who attempted to justify their stance: 'As a conscientious objector, it is Militarist v Anti-Militarist'.⁵⁵¹ The *Yorkshire Post* also included reciprocated correspondence on this issue, including from Maurice Rowntree, notable Quaker and CO who was repeatedly imprisoned during the war. Rowntree declared his view that, 'To right even very grievous evils by killing other human beings is wrong'.⁵⁵² Responses to Rowntree inevitably flooded in, both from those who agreed with him and those who did not. The latter illustrated again the popular view for the need for victory above all else: 'Idle chatter will not overcome the enemy and save our empire [...] too few are sharing the burden of the war'; the writer of the latter even

⁵⁵⁰ 'Correspondence: The Conscientious Objector', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 31 March 1916, p. 7.

⁵⁵¹ 'Correspondence: Reply to Rebel', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 7 April 1916, p. 7, 'Correspondence', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 21 April 1916, p. 3.

⁵⁵² 'Correspondence: Compulsory Services and Conscientious Objectors', *Yorkshire Post*, 1 January 1916, p. 5.

called for a ‘greater sacrifice’.⁵⁵³ The views of those supporting COs were clearly not understood by those who did not, as a letter in response to Rowntree indicated: ‘Mr Rowntree and his friends seem to be unable or unwilling to grasp the one essential fact that this realm is in jeopardy’.⁵⁵⁴ There is even evidence of this lack of sympathy towards COs in Leeds in the *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, in a report on the large numbers of men applying for exemption, where ‘The corridors were simply blocked with men having entered appeals for excusal [...] Nobody left with any improved sentiments towards conscientious objectors’.⁵⁵⁵ Another reader, an opposer of the war, wrote urging ‘the conscientious objector to [...] ask himself if under the present national strain he cannot “sell his soul” to some SMALL degree and serve the nation as the nation wishes for him to serve it, seeing that the nations of Europe are not yet wise enough to put away the folly of war’.⁵⁵⁶

The stance of absolutist COs particularly was not viewed well by most tribunal members and the public alike. As one reader wrote: ‘We are a tolerant people, but we are not prepared to accept this [...] One cannot imagine the founder of Christianity refusing to succour the wounded and dying’.⁵⁵⁷ However some in Leeds viewed them more sympathetically, as letters to the newspapers have evidenced, with the imprisonment of COs and their treatment as criminals often denounced, in defence of the ‘young men’ who ‘are very much cut off from their friends and relatives’, being held ‘in a felon’s cell’, and ‘dealt with rather harshly’.⁵⁵⁸ COs were also compared to ‘martyrs’ for their ‘consistency and sincerity’, to

⁵⁵³ ‘Correspondence: Compulsory Service and Conscientious Objection’, *Yorkshire Post*, 3 January 1916, p. 8, ‘Correspondence: A Call for Greater Sacrifice’, *Yorkshire Post*, 1 January 1916, p. 5.

⁵⁵⁴ ‘Correspondence: Response to Maurice Rowntree’, *Yorkshire Post*, 8 January 1916, p. 10.

⁵⁵⁵ ‘Leeds Military Tribunal Batch of Conscientious Objectors’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 17 March 1916, p. 6.

⁵⁵⁶ ‘Conscription and Conscience’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 7 April 1916, p. 3.

⁵⁵⁷ ‘Correspondence’, *Yorkshire Post*, 12 January 1916, p. 8.

⁵⁵⁸ ‘Letters to Editor’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 7 January 1916, p. 7, ‘Councillor Horner’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 8 September 1916, p. 1.

highlight their courageousness in an attempt to encourage the public to appreciate their stance.⁵⁵⁹ Some who defended COs also compared them to soldiers, which emphasised their specific courage, and again highlights society's enduring view of the enemy as the war monger who needed to be defeated at all costs: 'These men are made of the same kind of stuff as the brave chaps in the trenches, who are giving their lives for the purpose of killing, not so much the German soldier, as German militarism'.⁵⁶⁰ Details of the harsh treatment of COs was indicated in the *Leeds Weekly Citizen* in July 1916 as being used to 'crush a conscience', in which it stated that there was 'no sense' in the COs being 'roughly handled, forced into khaki', being forced to spend 'a day and a night in irons, with only a bread and water diet'. Although the editor did note that, 'it must be added that such treatment is not general and that some of the conscientious objectors from Leeds report the greatest consideration and courtesy'.⁵⁶¹ This indicates again a degree of balance on this issue in the press. Even some who admitted that although they did not share in the views of COs stated that they felt the 'deepest regret that callous methods of persecution are being practised upon them' and asked for 'fair play for conscientious objectors'.⁵⁶² This implies that there was at least some sympathy towards COs locally. However, the fact that the reader also wrote that 'unfortunately, there is a public which supports such treatment' confirms that there were also those who agreed with the 'brutal' treatment, again highlighting the disparity of feeling towards COs in Leeds.⁵⁶³

⁵⁵⁹ 'Letters to Editor', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 7 January 1916, p. 7.

⁵⁶⁰ 'Conscription and Conscience', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 7 April 1916, p. 3. This comparison of the COs to soldiers in the trenches and to Christian martyrs was used in NCF propaganda, see for example Hobhouse, *I Appeal Unto Caesar*.

⁵⁶¹ 'Editor's Chat: To Crush a Conscience', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 7 July 1916, p. 4.

⁵⁶² 'Let's Have Fair Play for Conscientious Objectors: Brutal Cases Reported', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 23 June 1916, p. 5.

⁵⁶³ 'Let's Have Fair Play for Conscientious Objectors: Brutal Cases Reported', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 23 June 1916, p. 5.

The emphasis on masculinity and the need for local men to ‘play the man’ was also documented in the local newspapers in Leeds regarding COs, thereby confirming that the press exacerbated the perception of them as weak.⁵⁶⁴ Letters therein provide ample evidence of this view, especially with regard to the need for victory and call for men to do their ‘duty’: ‘It is quite time all Britons realised [...] what we want at present is not bickering and arguing as to personal feelings, but a whole-hearted, swift response to duty’.⁵⁶⁵ Even those who were on the left of politics expressed this sentiment of a ‘swift response to duty’.⁵⁶⁶ This indicates that many felt that the military needs of the country should come first to obtain the necessary victory. The perception and portrayal of COs by the state, the public and, notably, the press, has been acknowledged by historians, including recent research by Bibbings.⁵⁶⁷ Bibbings explains how COs’ perception as ‘cowards, shirkers and “unmen”’, as one of her chapters is appropriately entitled, was enhanced by government and press propaganda in order to create a generally accepted popular image of ‘weak’ and effeminate COs. She also highlights that COs were also depicted as ‘slackers’ or ‘shirkers’ who were merely benefiting from avoiding the war.⁵⁶⁸ This was the same language used to describe the men who were undertaking work of national importance: even though they were in reserved occupations working for the war, their lack of a soldiers’ uniform was held in contempt. As Laura Ugolini outlines: ‘Terms such as “shirker”, “slacker” and “loafer” were thus used to describe those men who sought – or so it seemed – to avoid doing their patriotic duty.’⁵⁶⁹ Gullace also explores the disdain for COs during the war, as well as others not involved in the war effort. She even argues that the

⁵⁶⁴ Scott, *Leeds*, p. 14.

⁵⁶⁵ ‘Correspondence’, *Yorkshire Post*, 3 January 1916, p. 8.

⁵⁶⁶ ‘Correspondence: Conscription and the Present Situation’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 21 January 1916, p. 3.

⁵⁶⁷ Kennedy, ‘Public Opinion and the Conscientious Objector’, Lois Bibbings, ‘State Reaction to Conscientious Objection’, in *Frontiers of Criminality*, ed. by Ian Loveland (London: Sweet & Maxwell, 1995), pp. 57-81, Bibbings, ‘Images of Manliness’.

⁵⁶⁸ Bibbings, *Telling Tales about Men*.

⁵⁶⁹ Ugolini, *Civvies*, p. 73.

attack on civilian masculinity led directly to women's suffrage due to the war's conditions providing women with roles which meant that the way the "parameters of citizenship" were perceived was changed (this will be discussed further in Chapter Five).⁵⁷⁰ That the terms of derision for COs were certainly much used at the time are shown in the letters from both main Leeds newspapers this research has focused upon illustrated: 'Hear the cry both in public and in the press of "slackers, cowards, pro-Germans and shelterers behind the conscience clause"; 'Round up the "slackers"'.⁵⁷¹

This was the generalisation of COs that the Government and press promoted, to deter appeals on the conscience clause, as well as to dispel sympathy from those who did. COs who came to 'embody a whole range of unmanly qualities [...] frequently cast as shirking, lazy, spineless, un-Christian', and perhaps worst of all at this time of national crisis, 'un-patriotic and un-English/British'.⁵⁷² Evidence from the local tribunal hearings in Leeds in the local newspapers supports this suggestion that COs were seen as unpatriotic, with common comments and questions from the tribunal members which included: 'If all the young men were like you the Germans could do what they liked', and, 'Don't you think your country is worth defending?'.⁵⁷³ Letters to the local press also indicate that COs were viewed by many as lazy and 'shirking': 'Can I, as a reasonable being, expect my neighbours to go out into ships at sea and to trenches in France and Flanders that I may sit over my fireside in dressing gown and slippers?'.⁵⁷⁴ In addition to these qualities assigned to COs, Bibbings identifies that the 'darker conceptions of the CO' which related to deviance, were also disseminated. These

⁵⁷⁰ Gullace, *Blood of Our Sons*, p. 194.

⁵⁷¹ 'Correspondence: Objectors and the Tribunals', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 5 May 1916, p. 6, 'Correspondence: The Government and Compulsion', *Yorkshire Post*, 6 January 1916, p. 4.

⁵⁷² Bibbings, *Telling Tales About Men*, p. 89.

⁵⁷³ 'Leeds Military Tribunal Batch of Conscientious Objectors', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 17 March 1916, p. 6.

⁵⁷⁴ 'Correspondence', *Yorkshire Post*, 3 January 1916, p. 8.

focused upon the ‘degeneracy, decadence and criminality’ that the public were encouraged to identify with COs. She argues that COs came to be seen as ‘multiply deviant’, painted as unlawful and dangerous men, which thus justified their treatment as criminals.⁵⁷⁵ A letter to the Leeds press supported this perception of COs as aberrant, as the aforementioned ‘Rebel’ claimed they were a ‘social anomaly’.⁵⁷⁶ The recollections of John Hubert Brocklesby, an imprisoned CO in the war, provided valuable insight into the experiences of COs, although he reported that he was treated much worse after the war ended: ‘The bitterness of local feeling against COs much worse than it had been in 1916’. He surmised that this was because COs had ‘beaten the military and they hated us for it’.⁵⁷⁷ Therefore, despite some evidence of sympathy for COs in Leeds, the vast majority of the inhabitants of Leeds, and the press, viewed the COs as ‘radical’, which indicates the peculiarity with which people with these views were seen.

By mid-1916, the total numbers of COs in Leeds who had been arrested and handed to the Military Authorities was eight hundred and sixty, of whom two hundred had been court-martialled, and fifty released.⁵⁷⁸ COs in Leeds were therefore a small minority of the male population who requested exemptions, despite the wide newspaper coverage in the local press. Also, the reporting of tribunals very much waned as the year progressed, with only sporadic mentions of COs in the local newspapers.⁵⁷⁹ The editor of the *Leeds Weekly Citizen* explained the reasons for the decrease in ‘public interest’ of the military tribunals in July

⁵⁷⁵ Bibbings, *Telling Tales about Men*, p. 104, p. 111, p. 129.

⁵⁷⁶ ‘Correspondence: The Conscientious Objector’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 7 April 1916, p. 7.

⁵⁷⁷ LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/CO/011, Typescript extracts and papers of John Hubert Brocklesby, 1914-1918.

⁵⁷⁸ ‘Leeds Conscientious Objectors’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 16 June 1916, p. 7. Of the fifty COs who had been released, six had been called up again, thirty-one were released on health grounds and a further thirteen for ‘other or unknown reasons’.

⁵⁷⁹ *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 17 November 1916, p. 1, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 1 December 1916, p. 1 and p. 5, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 29 December 1916, p. 4.

1916, which he claimed had ‘fallen to zero’, because ‘any new point is seldom made’.⁵⁸⁰ By July, therefore, the lure of the unfamiliarity of the tribunal cases had subsided, and thus the interest of most people in Leeds, who had other distractions to occupy them, notably the losses suffered at the Battle of the Somme.

The Battle of the Somme

Of all the terrible battles which had an impact on the home front during the war, the first day of the Battle of the Somme on 1 July 1916 is the one which is particularly etched into the national public psyche even today. The way the grief associated with it and other battles of the war was processed in Leeds is an important investigation of this thesis. Several Leeds battalions were involved in the battle on this day, including the Leeds Rifles and Leeds Pals, the latter attacked as they led the charge. The diary of Private Edward Woffenden of the Leeds Pals recorded: ‘Almost half of Battalion out of action before ‘zero’ (7.30am)’, although it must be emphasised that this figure included the wounded as well as those killed.⁵⁸¹ There were extensive reports in the national and local newspapers initially of the perceived success of the campaign at the Somme, prior to the true narrative becoming known, and the impact of the deaths once known were therefore shocking.⁵⁸² Private Allen of the Leeds Rifles, who was present this first day, recalled: ‘From that day to this I have never bought a *Daily Mail*. They had great headlines, “The glorious 1st of July”; the idiots’. His

⁵⁸⁰ ‘Editor’s Chat: Tribunals’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 28 July 1916, p. 4.

⁵⁸¹ WYAS Leeds, L399/2 Diary of Private Edward Woffenden, 1915- 1916. See also Milner, *Leeds Pals*, p. 163.

⁵⁸² ‘Great British Attack in France’, *Yorkshire Post*, 3 July 1916, p. 5, ‘Gratifying Results of Severe Fighting’, *Yorkshire Post*, 4 July 1916, p. 5, ‘The Greatest Triumph of the British Race’, *Yorkshire Post*, 5 July 1916, p. 4. Cannadine has estimated that the first day of the Battle of the Somme saw nearly 60,000 British casualties, Cannadine, ‘War and Death’, p. 197.

recollections of the return of the surviving soldiers to the scene of the battle on 7 July 1916 provide a bleak picture: 'In front of us lay dead bodies. They looked almost as if they had been cut down with a scythe'.⁵⁸³ The *Yorkshire Evening Post* of 3 July 1916 reported on the 'Great British attack in France', and two days later reported the 'gratifying results' of the 'severe fighting'.⁵⁸⁴ The *Leeds Weekly Citizen* of 7 July 1916 told of the 'Great British Advance' and even referred to the campaign as 'The Greatest Triumph of the British Race'.⁵⁸⁵ However, the casualty lists soon began to emerge and the truth of the bloodshed became known. Even writing after the event, Scott claimed this as a 'glorious victory', although he added, 'but at what a cost!' This was in reference to the Leeds Pals, who he stated were 'foremost in the fight', and 'acquitted themselves like true sons of Britain [who] were nearly all killed facing the enemy'.⁵⁸⁶ Thornton referred to the 1 July 1916 as 'the single most devastating day in the history of the British Army and the city of Leeds', and an editorial from the *Leeds Weekly Citizen* infamously claimed that 'Hardly a street has escaped' the sorrow.⁵⁸⁷

Even a month before the beginning of the Battle of the Somme, the *Leeds Weekly Citizen* reported that with the 'several Leeds battalions at the front [...] local war losses are becoming numerous'.⁵⁸⁸ It also began to carry the regular headline of 'Leeds War Losses', which comprised a weekly 'List of those killed'. For some weeks following 1 July 1916 this covered nearly a full page and included by the end of the month a sub-headline of 'Many Young

⁵⁸³ LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/WF/REC/01/A6, Recollections of H E Allen, 1914-1918.

⁵⁸⁴ 'Great British Attack in France', *Yorkshire Post*, 3 July 1916, p. 5, 'Gratifying Results of Severe Fighting', *Yorkshire Post*, 4 July 1916, p. 5, 'The Greatest Triumph of the British Race', *Yorkshire Post*, 5 July 1916, p. 4.

⁵⁸⁵ 'Activity in France: Great British Advance', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 7 July 1916, p. 7.

⁵⁸⁶ Scott, *Leeds*, p. 39.

⁵⁸⁷ David Thornton, *Great Leeds Stories* (Ayr: Fort Publishing, 2005), p. 83, 'Editor's Chat: Review of Current Events – The Week's Losses', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 14 July 1916, p. 4.

⁵⁸⁸ 'Leeds War Losses', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 2 June 1916, p. 8.

Widows', which illustrates the stark impact the deaths of the young men had in Leeds.⁵⁸⁹ The editor of the *Leeds Weekly Citizen* even included an explanatory note in the newspaper stating that 'Demands of space compel us to hold over other very long lists reaching us of Leeds young men who have suffered in the recent advance' and claimed it was, 'not possible to tabulate, or even give a rough total, of Leeds' war losses'.⁵⁹⁰ This meant that in Leeds the 'Columns of the local press were black with the names of those who had been killed or wounded.'⁵⁹¹

Death Tropes

The tragedy of the Somme, similarly to the Battle of Passchendaele the following year, was due to the high number of deaths, the fact that its outcome would prove 'significantly unsatisfactory, in its human cost and failure to yield significant gains', as well as the continuing of the campaign for months even after the devastating losses of the first day.⁵⁹² Another large part of the tragedy was that the men killed were mainly young, as the diary of Leeds Pal Mark Wood described: 'The cemetery on Serre road holds a sad record of fine young men done to violent death when just on the threshold of vigorous manhood'.⁵⁹³ The reporting on the Battle of the Somme is a prime example of press misinformation which was provided throughout the war, due in part to press censorship for the purposes of public

⁵⁸⁹ 'Leeds War Losses', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 2 June 1916, p. 8, 'Leeds War Losses', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 28 July 1916, p. 7.

⁵⁹⁰ 'The Editor's Chat: The Review of Current Events – The Week's Losses', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 14 July 1916, p. 4.

⁵⁹¹ Milner, *Leeds Pals*, p. 153.

⁵⁹² Trevor Wilson and Robin Prior, 'British Decision-making 1917: Lloyd George, The Generals and Passchendaele', in *Facing Armageddon: The First World War Experience*, ed. by Hugh Cecil and Peter Liddle (London: Leo Cooper, 1996), pp. 93-102 (p. 94).

⁵⁹³ WYAS Leeds, WYL 2072 Copy of war diary of Mark Wood during his service in Egypt and France, 1915-16.

morale, but also due to the lack of factual information from the front line. Once the numbers of the dead became public knowledge, the local press deferred to the tropes related to ‘sacrifice’ for the men who were killed. These were accepted motifs for death at this time, to extoll the dead soldiers as heroes and victims. This eased the pain for those left behind, and is shown by Chickering to also be very much present in Germany.⁵⁹⁴ It must be emphasised, however, that measures to limit the reporting of deaths in Britain were not as draconian as in Germany, where it has been suggested that the war ‘ended the relative freedom of the press that existed in pre-war Germany’, and all military issues were forbidden from being published.⁵⁹⁵ As such, death notices in the German newspapers were strictly regulated, to the extent that they could not mention more than ‘five to eight names’ to ‘avoid any depressing influences on the public’.⁵⁹⁶ In some parts of Germany in August 1914 casualties were initially reported without the names, and in 1915, due to the concern for ‘public morale’, the corps command in Karlsruhe ‘forbade the publication of the lists’, which meant that death notices were eventually omitted from news publications altogether.⁵⁹⁷ Correspondingly, although admittedly not quite as extreme, in Leeds it was shortly after the Battle of the Somme that the *Leeds Weekly Citizen* stopped printing its ‘Weekly Losses’ column. The *Yorkshire Post* continued with their lists of the war dead, however they were not as detailed as previously.⁵⁹⁸ The press would have been mindful of the need to protect the public mood

⁵⁹⁴ Chickering, *The Great War*, pp. 329-331.

⁵⁹⁵ Florian Altenhöner, ‘Press/Journalism (Germany)’, in *1914-1918 Online International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, ed. by Ute Daniel et al (Berlin: Freie Universität Berlin, 2014) < https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/pressjournalism_germany > [accessed 19 November 2022].

⁵⁹⁶ Altenhöner, ‘Press/Journalism (Germany)’.

⁵⁹⁷ Chickering, *The Great War*, p. 320.

⁵⁹⁸ The newspaper reports and notices from the beginning of 1916 which publicised the soldiers’ deaths included much detail as to the cause of their death and a military and personal history of the men, however it is interesting that by the middle of the year details had been whittled down to the bare minimum of information: regiment, occasionally former occupation and family circumstances cited but no extra information regarding their deaths provided.

in view of the rising toll of the dead, and there also simply was not the space in the papers for the detailed histories of the increasingly large lists of the dead.⁵⁹⁹ As the editor of the *Leeds Weekly Citizen* wrote in August 1916 regarding the ‘continual roll of war losses [...] unfortunately we have not space for the very long list of wounded’.⁶⁰⁰

Despite the shockingly high casualty lists from the Somme, the reporting of the experience of the soldiers in this battle was incredibly respectful, the soldiers depicted as willing and courageous heroes whose deaths were seen as a sacrifice in the just war. This is important compared to later interpretations of this tragedy. It was also noted that the losses included all sections of society: ‘All classes have caught it, and officers have died as cheerfully and bravely as the men [...] every district knows its own sorrow’.⁶⁰¹ The reporting also invariably included euphemisms for the deaths of soldiers who ‘fell in the attack’, ‘fallen Leeds soldiers’, ‘they lie sleeping in soldiers’ graves’, and the ‘Leeds young men who have sacrificed their lives in recent events’, no doubt all in an attempt to sanitise the horror.⁶⁰² Soldiers’ letters back home to Leeds illustrated the similar trope: ‘Very sorry to note that another member of the staff has fallen while fighting for his country’, and ‘Sorry to hear of the recent “fallen”’.⁶⁰³ In addition, the courage of the Leeds battalions was applauded in the local press, the ‘toll of Leeds brave’, which hailed the ‘finest young men that Leeds and the

⁵⁹⁹ See for example ‘Leeds War Losses’ in *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 5 May 1916, p. 8.

⁶⁰⁰ ‘Leeds Men Killed: Continual Roll of War Losses’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 18 August 1916, p. 7, ‘Leeds War Losses: Lighter But Still Serious’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 11 August 1916, p. 7.

⁶⁰¹ ‘Editor’s Chat: The Review of Current Events – The Week’s Losses’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 14 July 1916, p. 4.

⁶⁰² ‘Leeds War Losses’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 28 July 1916, p. 4, ‘Roll of Losses’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 7 July 1916, p. 5, ‘Our Honoured Dead’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 6 October 1916, p. 2, ‘Leeds War Losses’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 11 August 1916, p. 7.

⁶⁰³ WYAS Leeds, LC TR, Leeds City Council Treasurer’s Correspondence with Employees Enlisted in the Armed Forces, 1917-1919, Private Fred Parker, 19 September 1917; Private Ellis, 4 July 1918.

West Riding generally could provide'.⁶⁰⁴ This included the Leeds Pals, the Leeds Rifles, and the West Yorkshire Artillery, who were reported to have 'taken their part magnificently, and have paid their toll in precious life', alongside a very large list of the dead.⁶⁰⁵ The perception of gallantry and sacrifice certainly would have been a comfort to some of the grieving families, for whom a hero's death would be easier to endure than a death as a tragic waste, as their loss was thereby given some meaning. The article 'Leeds Pals Gallantry' from the beginning of August 1916 displayed a letter to the Lord Mayor of Leeds from the Brigadier-General commanding the brigade in which the Leeds Pals had served, and outlined how the men all rendered 'a good account of themselves' on 1 July 1916, and how 'right gallantly every officer, NCO and man behaved'.⁶⁰⁶ There was even a film showing of the Battle of the Somme at the Grand Assembly Rooms, Leeds, in August, which was reviewed as 'One of the most wonderful cinema films ever taken, fully illustrating the Battle of the Somme'.⁶⁰⁷ The film was seen as 'serving a useful purpose', which was to provide the public with a specified view of the war, and of course, a depiction of the enemy as the demon.⁶⁰⁸

Chickering comments upon the strategy employed and language used by the press in Germany to address the problem of the rising casualty lists, where, as in Leeds, the dead were portrayed as 'embodied and enjoined an ethic of sacrifice'.⁶⁰⁹ The death notices were 'scripted according to generic conventions of content and language', which meant that obituaries were generally 'muted, formulaic communications'.⁶¹⁰ He also states that some of

⁶⁰⁴ 'What Advancing Costs: Toll of Leeds Brave', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 14 July 1916, p. 2.

⁶⁰⁵ 'What Advancing Costs: Toll of Leeds Brave', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 14 July 1916, p. 2.

⁶⁰⁶ 'Leeds Pals Gallantry', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 4 August 1916, p. 8.

⁶⁰⁷ 'A Wonderful Film: The Somme Battle Photographed', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 18 August 1916, p. 8. The film, taken by the British Topical Committee for War Films by permission of the War Office, was in five parts, and took two hours to screen.

⁶⁰⁸ 'A Wonderful Film: The Somme Battle Photographed', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 18 August 1916, p. 8.

⁶⁰⁹ Chickering, *The Great War*, pp. 323-325.

⁶¹⁰ Chickering, *The Great War*, pp. 325-326.

them 'simply allowed the message from the front to speak'.⁶¹¹ This can also be seen in the Leeds press, where often verbatim reports from the telegram or letter informing the family of the death would be published as the death notice, especially where the soldier had been eulogised by their commanding officer in the said correspondence. One example was that of Rifleman M Cohen, of Leeds, where his commanding officer paid tribute to his 'unfailing brightness and good humour under all conditions'.⁶¹² Chickering also asserts that the press reports created 'an allusion to the quick and painless death', which the Leeds press also implied in the basic information that soldiers had been 'killed in action', in contrast to the greater detail of their deaths which had been provided in the earlier part of the year.⁶¹³

Another point Chickering highlights are the figures of speech used in the bereavement notices by the relatives 'with which to make sense of their grief', and confirms that these obituary notices were 'fashioned out of a number of central tropes'.⁶¹⁴ Chickering shows that in Germany among most common tropes used were 'fatherland', 'heroic death', and 'victim of war'.⁶¹⁵ The use of similar tropes can be seen in the Leeds press regarding the war casualties, including the *Yorkshire Post* headlines of 7 July 1916 which praised the 'Heroic sons of Yorkshire'.⁶¹⁶ Chickering notes that Freiburg's socialist newspaper's death notices 'participated much less frequently in [...] these discourses', and likewise in Leeds the left leaning newspaper tropes were subtly different. There was the regular employment of the word 'sacrifice' in the *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, even before the Battle of the Somme: 'Leeds and the war. Its sacrifice of young men'.⁶¹⁷ This implied that the soldiers gave up their lives

⁶¹¹ Chickering, *The Great War*, p. 326.

⁶¹² 'Leeds War Losses', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 7 January 1916, p. 8.

⁶¹³ Chickering, *The Great War*, pp. 325-326.

⁶¹⁴ Chickering, *The Great War*, p. 328.

⁶¹⁵ Chickering, *The Great War*, p. 328, p. 330.

⁶¹⁶ 'Heroic Sons of Yorkshire', *Yorkshire Post*, 7 July 1916.

⁶¹⁷ Chickering, *The Great War*, p. 329; 'Leeds and the War: Its Sacrifice of Young Men', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 30 June 1916, p. 7.

for the war, therefore should be viewed as a tragedy, as the headline read in June 1916: ‘Young men of Leeds. Silent tragedies of battle’.⁶¹⁸ The word ‘honour’ also appeared regularly in this newspaper, and thereby associated the deaths with prestige and aggrandisement. One such reference was to ‘Our Honoured Dead’, which listed the Leeds Trade Unionists who had ‘given their lives on land or sea for the national cause’, and stated that ‘few people realise how great has been the sacrifice of organised Labour in this world war’.⁶¹⁹ The emphasis on the working-class soldiers in the *Leeds Weekly Citizen* highlights the perception of class at this time, and contrasts sharply with the reports of the dead soldiers within the *Yorkshire Post*’s list of those killed, ‘The Stricken Brave’. This listed only captains and lieutenants, whereas their ‘Army Casualties’, which provided a specific ‘List of Officers’.⁶²⁰

The prestige and adulation with which many viewed the soldiers was stoked in part by reports back to the home front from the surviving soldiers of the battles. These men also needed to view the deaths of their friends and colleagues, and indeed their own possible imminent demise, as worthy of esteem, rather than a worthless waste of life. The image the press portrayed of the ‘British Tommy’ bravely walking to his death is supported by the letter to Leeds Pal Private Tolson’s mother from one of his colleagues after news of his death had reached home. In this, he asked, ‘Didn’t the boys do fine?’ and claimed, ‘I am really proud to be a Leeds Pal, they went over with the cry of ‘Now Leeds’. It was grand.’⁶²¹ The English poet Robert Graves commented upon the communal action required in drills, and claimed that this was how ‘this war [...] will be won’, as ‘regimental pride remained the strongest moral

⁶¹⁸ ‘Young Men of Leeds: Silent Tragedies of Battle’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 23 June 1916, p. 2.

⁶¹⁹ ‘Our Honoured Dead’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 6 October 1916, p. 2.

⁶²⁰ See for example ‘The Stricken Brave’, *Yorkshire Post*, 9 July 1916, p. 7.

⁶²¹ LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/GS/1610, Letters of Robert Tolson, 1914-1918.

force that kept a battalion going as an effective fighting unit.’⁶²² Private Tom Gallon of Leeds wrote to the local press of the experience of the fighting men: ‘the blood runs riot, eyes gleam brightly, and souls leap to the thrill of great adventure’ and that ‘all seem not mere units but one great brotherhood with one single thing in mind.’⁶²³ The diary of Mark Wood of the Leeds Pals also confirmed this view, when he wrote how when marching in France ‘many men were on the verge of collapse’ however ‘we managed to buck up to march’, which he put down to ‘just a dogged sort of pride, and we English worth salt cannot help it.’⁶²⁴ Lieutenant Moore, a former employee of the City Council, who received the Military Cross for his gallantry in the war, expressed similar sentiments in his letters home: ‘One marvels at times how we stand the strain of war especially under the present abnormal conditions but the British spirit, grit and stamina will overcome practically anything’.⁶²⁵ Another former employee of the Council also commented upon the nerves of the men, even claiming that they would help the British win the war: ‘It is certainly a remarkable fact the more horrors one sees [...] all seem to steel one’s nerves [...] If things are depending on nerves, we are easy winners as far as we are concerned out here.’⁶²⁶ The sense of communal pride among the soldiers was certainly significant for their morale and clearly provided them with the strength they needed to carry on at times, a pride which was lauded by the press and used by some of the public and soldiers to help to justify the war’s casualties.

⁶²² Robert Graves, *Goodbye to All That* (London: Penguin, 1967), p. 157.

⁶²³ Letter from Private Tom Gallon to his parents in Leeds, printed in ‘Correspondence’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 14 January 1916, p. 3.

⁶²⁴ WYAS Leeds, WYL 2072 Copy of war diary of Mark Wood during his service in Egypt and France, 1915-16.

⁶²⁵ WYAS Leeds, LC TR, Leeds City Council Treasurer’s Correspondence with Employees Enlisted in the Armed Forces, 1917-1919, Lieutenant WJS Moore, MC, 21 November 1917.

⁶²⁶ WYAS Leeds, LC TR, Leeds City Council Treasurer’s Correspondence with Employees Enlisted in the Armed Forces, 1917-1919, addendum to letter from H L Joel, 30 July 1918.

Grief

Although much of the public in Leeds would have been comforted by the idea that their menfolk died a hero's death, as the emotive newspaper reports reflected, not all the bereaved were. Indeed, some were appalled by the slaughter, including at the Battle of the Somme. In August 1916 the father of Private Tolson described it as 'A murderous situation to charge into "no man's land" [...] It makes me have a sick, sinking feeling to imagine his end', and reiterated the next month that, 'There is no glory in it to me [just] down right wicked murder [...] words fail me to express my horror.'⁶²⁷ Additionally, soldiers' recollections did not invariably defer to the tropes of heroism, including Private Dalby of the Leeds Pals. Although he missed the first day of the Battle of the Somme he described his horror in the collection and burying of the dead on the night of 2 July 1916, and the recollections of Lieutenant Robert Bell, also of the Leeds Pals, described the Battle of the Somme as an 'abortive attack'.⁶²⁸ In the epilogue to the diary of Leeds Pal Mark Wood he outlined in great detail the abhorrence he felt regarding the attack: 'Now I am insane, and my friends also [...] they yet lie where they fell, their graves dug, and then filled in, by high explosive shell. As for myself, I am "one of the lucky ones", back to the sane life with only a partially disabled left arm'.⁶²⁹ This therefore provides evidence that not all soldiers were comforted by the heroic symbolism attributed to those killed; indeed, some viewed the deaths as wasteful and that the soldiers had gone into battle 'without a chance'.⁶³⁰

⁶²⁷ LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/GS/1610, Letters of Robert Tolson, 1914-1918, 2 August 1916 and 12 September 1916. Robert Tolson's body was not found until 11 March 1917, identified by his watch and part of his handkerchief bearing his name tied round his leg.

⁶²⁸ LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/TR/02/1, F A Dalby, 1970-1999; Leeds, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/AIR/021, Diaries and recollection of Robert Norman Bell, 1915-1918.

⁶²⁹ WYAS Leeds, WYL 2072 Copy of war diary of Mark Wood during his service in Egypt and France, 1915-16.

⁶³⁰ WYAS Leeds, WYL 2072 Copy of war diary of Mark Wood during his service in Egypt and France, 1915-16.

However, to add another level of nuance to this issue, many at home who viewed the deaths as gratuitous, rather than to be revered, still blamed the enemy for them. The father of Private Tolson added to his letter cited above: ‘Didn’t we always hate the Germans in times of Peace [sic]?’.⁶³¹ Thus it appears that, for some, the pervasive grief served to strengthen their convictions for war, especially against the enemy, as the letters to newspapers have evidenced: ‘Callous foes [...] devilish work and in keeping with the Hunnish ideas of conduct towards the helpless’; ‘Our foes [...] have shown, from their ruler downwards, that they have no sense of honour.’⁶³² Letters to soldiers also included such sentiments which expressed ‘a hope of punishment for the cruel barbarity of our enemies’.⁶³³ Many soldiers themselves, faced as they were with death on an everyday basis, also placed the culpability of the war firmly at the feet of the Germans, referring to them in letters as ‘the old Bosches [sic]’, ‘the old Hun’ and ‘worse than savages’.⁶³⁴ Some also stated that the killing of them was ‘topping sport’, which ‘gives you a lovely feeling of revenge reading the reports even if you are not taking part in them’.⁶³⁵ Gunner Tate, an employee of Leeds City Council before joining up, wrote home from France that he ‘found when coming up the line that the destruction is far worse than previously imagined [...] Truly we should make the country which has caused it pay for it to the last farthing’.⁶³⁶ Another former employee of the Council wrote the postcard depicted below from where he was based in Salonika in 1918, which illustrates that the

⁶³¹ LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/GS/1610, Letters of Robert Tolson, 1914-1918.

⁶³² ‘Leeds Pals Advance’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 14 July 1916, p. 5, ‘Correspondence’, *Yorkshire Post*, 3 January 1916, p. 8.

⁶³³ LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/GS/1610, Robert H Tolson letters, 1914-1918, 31 July 1916, 2 August 1916.

⁶³⁴ LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/GS/1610, Letters of Robert Tolson, 1914-1918, WYAS Leeds, LC TR, Leeds City Council Treasurer’s Correspondence with Employees Enlisted in the Armed Forces, 1917-1919, Driver R S Wilby, 2 October 1918.

⁶³⁵ LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/GS/1204, Letters of Harry Oldham, 1916-1917, WYAS Leeds, LC TR, Leeds City Council Treasurer’s Correspondence with Employees Enlisted in the Armed Forces, 1917-1919, Norman Baxendale, 3 July 1918.

⁶³⁶ WYAS Leeds, LC TR, Leeds City Council Treasurer’s Correspondence with Employees Enlisted in the Armed Forces, 1917-1919, Gunner Irwin A Tate, 26 December 1918.

soldiers were indeed encouraged to hate whichever enemy nation they were facing ('Finish Johnny!' referring to 'Johnny Turk').⁶³⁷

Figure Five: Postcard sent by A Titterington, WYAS Leeds, 21 December 1918.



However, the underlying meaning of such hyperbole was fear of the situation, as well as concern for those at home, another reaction to the all-encompassing grief. The letters home of Leeds Pal Harry Oldham, with their overemphasis on his being 'fit and happy' and how 'it's ripping to be back' with his battalion underlied his own anxieties, especially regarding

⁶³⁷ WYAS Leeds, LC TR, Leeds City Council Treasurer's Correspondence with Employees Enlisted in the Armed Forces, 1917-1919, A Titterington, 21 December 1918. 'Johnny Turk' was a derisive term for an Ottoman soldier during the First World War.

shielding them from those back at home: ‘Don’t say any of you worry about me please’.⁶³⁸ Many of the soldiers’ letters home expressed a similar sentiment, that, ‘in spite of the adverse circumstances, I can honestly say I am perfectly cheerful’, and, ‘I am pleased to tell you that I am keeping very well indeed in fact I don’t think I ever enjoyed better health than I do now’.⁶³⁹ Michael Roper’s enlightening research into emotions during the war, particularly regarding masculinity, confirms that the young soldiers would have needed to assert their masculinity, as well as safeguard their families from their own insecurities.⁶⁴⁰ As Ella Lethem’s diary confirmed, many at home were aware of this pretence: ‘Long letter from the Boy [sic], much more cheerful this time, but he said in his last he was going to try and deceive himself and me into thinking he was perfectly happy’.⁶⁴¹ Roper claims that the soldiers ‘wanted their mothers’ however ‘they were soldiers and men, and mothers needed to be kept in good cheer’.⁶⁴² This reference to mothers of soldiers is particularly significant. The research of Joy Damousi suggests that the consideration of gender is ‘central’ to the issue of mourning during the war, as ‘men and women mourned the dead in different ways’.⁶⁴³ She illustrates that mourning was seen primarily as a ‘feminine response’, as it involved the ‘open expression of emotion, pain, and anguish’, and ‘in contrast to this, war defined masculinity as heroic, stoic and violent, which meant the suppression of emotion, including exercising restraint when mourning the dead’.⁶⁴⁴ In Leeds there was evidence to support this view in the

⁶³⁸ LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/GS/1204, Letters of Harry Oldham, 1914-1918.

⁶³⁹ WYAS Leeds, LC TR, Leeds City Council Treasurer’s Correspondence with Employees Enlisted in the Armed Forces, 1917-1919, Driver R S Wilby, 23 September 1917, Fred Goldthorp, 10 April 1917.

⁶⁴⁰ Michael Roper, *The Secret Battle: Emotional Survival in the Great War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009).

⁶⁴¹ LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/DF/074, Diary of Ella Lethem, 1917-1918, 6 October 1917.

⁶⁴² Roper, *The Secret Battle*, p. 20.

⁶⁴³ Damousi, ‘Gender and Mourning’, p. 211, see also Jalland, ‘A Culture of Silent Grief?’, p. 17 and Julie-Marie Strange, *Death, Grief and Poverty in Britain, 1870-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

⁶⁴⁴ Damousi, ‘Gender and Mourning’.

diary of Ella Lethem. After her brother was killed in the war, she recorded that her mother suffered an emotional collapse, while her father remained strong and stoical: 'Mother is still ill. Daddy is helping her greatly, but she doesn't seem to have the desire to recover'.⁶⁴⁵ However, the nuances were present yet again regarding this matter of grief. The letters between the relatives of Private Robert Tolson reflected this nuance after his death, with his father writing after his son is reported missing that 'personally my hopes that Robert is a prisoner are faint', although his wife 'seems to require proof that he is killed'. He also stated that his diary 'will one day give proof of my search after Robert' - the desperation of this father in reference to his lost son was quite clear.⁶⁴⁶ The fact that his wife required 'proof' of her son's death also explained the rise in spiritualism at this time, as those grieving sought to make sense of, and be comforted by, the possibility that their menfolk had gone to a higher plane, which the diary of Ella Lethem also confirms.⁶⁴⁷ There is also evidence in Leeds that 'expressions of grief varied according to class, as well as gender'.⁶⁴⁸ Ella Lethem's diary supported the view that the middle classes could just retire to bed to grieve; the working class, who had to earn money to feed their children, did not have this luxury.⁶⁴⁹

Munitions in Leeds

A substantial employer of the working class in Leeds was the munitions industry. There were five national shell factories, known as National Ordnance Factories, producing munitions in the city during the war. These were Armley Road, Hunslet, the Fuse Factory (which was

⁶⁴⁵ LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/DF/074, Diaries of Ella Lethem, 1917-1918.

⁶⁴⁶ LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/GS/1610, Letters of Robert Tolson, 1914-1918.

⁶⁴⁷ Damousi, 'Gender and Mourning', pp. 223-226, LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/DF/074, Diaries of Ella Lethem, 1917-1918.

⁶⁴⁸ Jalland, 'A Culture of Silent Grief?', p. 17. See also Julie-Marie Strange, *Death, Grief and Poverty in Britain, 1870-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

⁶⁴⁹ LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/DF/074, Diaries of Ella Lethem, 1917-1918.

adjacent to the Armley Road Factory), Newlay munitions factory, and the National Filling Factory No. 1 Leeds, Barnbow, between Garforth and Crossgates, in east Leeds.⁶⁵⁰ The significance of Leeds' input to this industry during the war is highlighted by evidence that the local Munitions Committee in the city, one of many local committees which had been set up in response to necessity for further munitions output in the country, was the first to agree the idea of a national factory, so that 'to Leeds belongs the honour of having provided the archetype' of the National Shell Factory.⁶⁵¹ The Armley Road factory was the first to be established as such, with seventeen other similar factories approved nationwide by June 1915.⁶⁵² An engineering firm in the city, the Leeds Forge Company on Armley Road, offered to accommodate this factory in their works and further buildings were added to it by the Ministry of Munitions.⁶⁵³ By February 1917 there were 1471 men and 810 women working in this factory, and by October 1918 the total number of workers was 2318, eighty two per cent of whom were female.⁶⁵⁴ This confirms the increasing numbers of female munitions workers in Leeds during the war.

Barnbow factory was built specifically for the purpose of providing munitions, was the largest of the munitions' factories in Leeds.⁶⁵⁵ Throughout the war, it produced an approximate half a million tons of ammunition, employing over sixteen thousand workers, the large majority of whom (ninety three per cent) were female, as can be seen in the photograph below.⁶⁵⁶

⁶⁵⁰ Ministry of Munitions, *The History of the Ministry of Munitions* (London: HMSO, 1918-1922), volume VIII, pp. 105-108, p. 88.

⁶⁵¹ Ministry of Munitions, *The History of the Ministry of Munitions*, p. 87.

⁶⁵² Ministry of Munitions, *The History of the Ministry of Munitions*, p. 87.

⁶⁵³ Ministry of Munitions, *The History of the Ministry of Munitions*, p. 105.

⁶⁵⁴ Ministry of Munitions, *The History of the Ministry of Munitions*, p. 106.

⁶⁵⁵ For related documents, see LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/DF/GA/MUN, Letters, photographs, recollections related to munitions, 1914-1918.

⁶⁵⁶ Thornton, *Leeds*, p. 183, Thornton, *Great Leeds Stories*, p. 77. For more information on Barnbow No. 1 Filling Factory, see Gummer and Scott, *The Story of Barnbow*; LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/GS/1847, W Flint photographs, 1914-1918.

Figure Six: Barnbow No 1 Shell National Filling Factory, Leeds, 1916, LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/GS/1847, W Flint photographs, 1914-1918.



As Deborah Thom shows, the ‘largest proportion of growth in women’s war time work’ was in these Government run armaments factories.⁶⁵⁷ Leeds City Council’s Women’s War Employment Committee confirmed that there were ‘very large numbers of women employed’ at the No. 1 Shell Filling Factory, Barnbow’, and worked to protest their welfare.⁶⁵⁸ The local press provided updates to the public on the munitions’ workers, including reports which advised that ‘better food’ and ‘fresh air’ was needed, as well as recommendations for a ‘brief period of rest for all munitions workers in certain conditions regarding length of service and

⁶⁵⁷ Thom, *Nice Girls and Rude Girls*, pp. 34-35.

⁶⁵⁸ WYAS Leeds, WYL101/5/8, Letter from Women’s War Employment Committee (Industrial) Leeds, Ina Kitson Clarke, Meanwoodside, Leeds, 6 October 1916.

good timekeeping'.⁶⁵⁹ This indicates that the workers were being well looked after in their new roles. Barnbow even developed a programme for working mothers in April 1918, however, although Leeds was certainly unique in the planning of this scheme, it was also only a short-lived plan which did not come to full fruition.⁶⁶⁰ Construction of the Barnbow factory began in 1915, and the whole factory area was designed to produce the munitions as well as cater for those who worked there.⁶⁶¹ The chosen site for this large factory complex was ideal, due to the accessible geographical position from a railway point of view to effectively transport goods in and out.⁶⁶²

The factory at Barnbow was seen as a success for the war industry due to the large amounts of munitions produced there, meaning that it made 'a vital contribution to the war effort'.⁶⁶³ However it is now synonymous with the loss of life which occurred there during the war due to industrial explosions. Three explosions took place at Barnbow between 1916 and 1918, killing forty people altogether, mainly young women.⁶⁶⁴ The first explosion was the worst for loss of life, as thirty five women died, although the news was suppressed in the press and Parliament due to national censorship surrounding munitions. As Private Oates wrote home to his wife from France: 'I hear they [sic] was an explosion at Barn Bow [sic] the other Week [sic] was it very bad,' which indicated that the soldiers abroad did not know the details of this

⁶⁵⁹ 'Munitions Workers Welfare: Report on Factory Conditions', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 14 January 1916, p. 8, *Yorkshire Post*, 7 August 1916. See also WYAS Leeds, WYL101/5/4: Ministry of Munitions. Health of Munion Workers Committee. Memorandum No. 4. Employment of Women, 1916.

⁶⁶⁰ Thom, *Nice Girls and Rude Girls*, p. 175; IWM MUN Leeds.

⁶⁶¹ Thornton, *Leeds*, p. 183.

⁶⁶² There were also plans made for a munitions' factory site in Otley, near Leeds, with documents from the landowner family's papers showing the plans for the factory on their farm, provisionally named 'Otley Shell Filling Factory', however this site was eventually abandoned as inappropriate, WYAS Leeds, YASDD161/22/5b, Fawkes of Farnley Collection, Munitions papers, Site for munitions factory, rough tracing of Midgley Farm near Otley, 24 December 1915.

⁶⁶³ Thornton, *Great Leeds Stories*, p. 77.

⁶⁶⁴ Gummer and Scott, *The Story of Barnbow*.

explosion.⁶⁶⁵ Local newspaper reports made only fleeting and obscure commentary, with a brief mention of an explosion at an unidentified ‘munitions factory in Yorkshire’ in *Leeds Weekly Citizen*’s report from the House of Commons in February 1917. One MP was recorded as saying that they were ‘sorry to say that workers were often careless, and women were even worse than men in regard to smoking cigarettes’. This thereby placed the culpability for the incident on the workers, specifically women. It also reported that James O’Grady claimed that, ‘one explosion was due to the fact that just on closing time the workers rushed away to catch a train, and that this rush was due to lack of proper railway facilities’.⁶⁶⁶ Again the workers (and the railways) were blamed, rather than the factory or the Ministry for Munitions. The *Yorkshire Post* reported on the incident in a very small, inconspicuous article, hidden away in a corner near end of the newspaper, a couple of days after the explosion, where the numbers of ‘killed and injured’ were erroneously provided as twenty six and thirty respectively. This report also euphemistically referred to the incident as a ‘mishap’, which demonstrated ‘the smoothness of the arrangements formulated’, as though the accident was proof of the safety of the munitions’ works. The report also assured readers that, ‘practically no damage has been done to the adjacent buildings and there will be no important reduction of output’.⁶⁶⁷ This indicates that the concern for the output of munitions was more important than the loss of human life.

Haig paid similar tribute to the Barnbow workers who died in a special Order of the Day to troops issued from British Headquarters in France: ‘The Commander-in-Chief desires to bring notice to the troops the following incident, which is illustrative of the spirit animating British women who are working with us for the common cause’. This thereby praised the

⁶⁶⁵ LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/GS/1197, Papers of Private Herbert Oates, 1914-1918, letter dated 23 December 1917.

⁶⁶⁶ ‘Report from Parliament’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 23 February 1917, p. 5.

⁶⁶⁷ Untitled, *Yorkshire Post*, 7 December 1916, p. 10.

munitions workers for their character and enthusiasm in their work for the war, as well as likening them to soldiers, uniting them in the ‘common cause’ in ‘helping towards victory. Haig’s narrative of the explosion was brief, and vague, with omission of vital details, such as the number of deaths and location of the incident, due to censorship. In a similar vein to the local press, where the continued work of the factory in production of munitions took precedence over the fact that lives had been lost, he also highlighted that ‘in spite of the explosion’, the work carried on ‘without interruption’, even though, ‘several women were killed and others seriously wounded.’ He added that the ‘output of the munitions was not seriously affected,’ which he claimed was ‘a result of their gallant and patriotic conduct’.⁶⁶⁸ This again likened the munitions workers to soldiers. Scott also praised the fact that the ‘work was continued courageously,’ and, similarly to the local press, referred to the incident as a ‘mishap’.⁶⁶⁹ Haig’s deliberate focus upon the patriotism of the workers and that fact that the munitions are still being produced, rather than on the deaths involved, corresponded to the way in which soldiers’ deaths were hailed: for the greater good of the country. The ‘casualties’ of the Barnbow explosions in the war were even provided with their own Roll of Honour, placed in Colton Methodist Church, Leeds, the final inscription reading ‘They Died Serving’.⁶⁷⁰ In the local press reports the brief reference to such accidents, and comments such as ‘full details are not yet to hand’, served to make the reporting vague and understated.⁶⁷¹ Other deaths from the munitions work, for example poisoning from the chemicals used, were also included in the press, although again the censorship meant that the

⁶⁶⁸ Gummer, *How the Shells Were Filled*.

⁶⁶⁹ Scott, *Leeds*, p. 185.

⁶⁷⁰ Roll of Honour for Barnbow deaths in Colton Methodist Church, Leeds <<https://livesofthefirstworldwar.iwm.org.uk/community/3978>> [accessed 19 November 2022].

⁶⁷¹ ‘Munitions Disaster Explosion’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 25 August 1916, p. 6.

information provided was brief, and the places where the accident happened were not initially identified.⁶⁷² Again this was to shield the public from the truth.

Summary

The events of the year 1916, as viewed through the lens of the impact of the war upon the city of Leeds, confirms that there continued to be both consensus and dissent manifested in response to the war. The local press reflected these diverse views, and the evidence highlights that the foci this year continued to be on industry and recruitment. The implementation of conscription impacted on the city, as it did nationwide, with most of Leeds society accepting of this as a necessity for the continuing war. The local tribunals have been shown to be an imperfect process, however the authorities had to deal with ‘an insuperable dilemma’, which had been passed to them by the Government, and the evidence in Leeds is that they were certainly viewed with some contention by some and accepted by others.⁶⁷³ However it must be emphasised that while some areas of the country had an overwhelming presence of COs, Leeds did not and their importance in Leeds was therefore less prominent. Recruitment became intrinsically linked to the theme of grief, on which the press, public and soldiers alike deferred to tropes of sacrifice, as also seen in Germany. This grief, which impacted on the classes and genders in differing ways, was also used as a justification for placing the culpability of the war on the enemy. The local politics in Leeds also reflected the multifarious views held, with some members of the City Council fighting in the war and some imprisoned as COs. The two main local MPs were also on different sides of the issue, although overall the City Council and society in general had a more conservative, compliant view towards the

⁶⁷² ‘Girl Worker’s Death’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 1 September 1916, p. 7: ‘a girl munitions worker who has died [...] from toxic jaundice as a result of inhaling tri-nitro-toluene [...] following her employment in a Yorkshire factory’.

⁶⁷³ McDermott, ‘Conscience and Military Service Tribunals in Northamptonshire’, p. 85.

war, supported as the city was by its industry. It is anticipated that, due to conscription, the theme of recruitment will play a lesser part in the analysis of the following year. However, with the increasing death toll and need for munitions, the themes of industry, grief, class, and gender will be highlighted again in 1917, as further war weariness set in. It will be shown that the people in Leeds continued to work for, and make sense of, the situation, which, once again, will turn their ire towards the enemy.

Chapter Four: 1917 – ‘Day to Day Strain was Taking its Toll’

Introduction

In May 1917, a Leeds soldier on the western front wrote to his father:

We are quite enjoying our now peaceful surroundings after [...] the glorious April 9. If we keep hammering away, the ‘Boche’ will crack up and collapse. I shall soon be too ashamed to come to England, which seems to be full of strikers, conscientious objectors, little Englanders, love-dear-brother-Boche breed, and such vermin. Oh, if we could only have them out here!⁶⁷⁴

This summarised the reaction of a soldier in the trenches to some of the events of the penultimate year of the war, with reference to one of the battles, the Battle of Arras, and derisive reference to both the enemy and the industrial unrest and anti-war activism on the home front.⁶⁷⁵ This chapter will discuss the impact on the city of Leeds of the events of 1917, a crucial point in the war. One focus will be on the external event of the Russian revolutions, which resulted in her eventual exit from the war. This also prompted the organisation of the Leeds Convention in June, although it will show that this was held in Leeds due to the geographical location rather than local public sympathies to the revolutionary cause. Another external factor to be discussed will be America entering the war, with her fresh troops and supplies, a direct result of the unlimited submarine warfare of Germany. The increasing war-weariness felt this year will also be discussed, to assess its impact on the city. This was due in part to the increasing casualty lists of the battles involving local men. In addition to the Battle of Arras in April and May, these included the Battle of Cambrai in November, both with the Leeds Rifles in attendance, and the Third Battle at Ypres, Passchendaele, from July to

⁶⁷⁴ ‘Correspondence: From the Front’, *Yorkshire Post*, 29 May 1917, p. 3.

⁶⁷⁵ The Battle of Arras was part of the wider Nivelle Offensive, conceived by the French General Robert Nivelle, which planned to break the deadlock on the Western Front. For more detailed analysis of the battle on several Allied forces, see Mike Bechtold, ‘Command, Leadership, and Doctrine on the Great War Battlefield: The Australian, British, and Canadian Experience at the Battle of Arras, May 1917’, *War & Society*, 32.2 (2013), 116-137.

November, involving the Leeds Pals. These losses, and their associated grief, continued to contribute to anti-German sentiment in the city. Other factors which contributed to war-weariness will also be discussed, including the shortages and price rises of food and the effect this had upon, notably, women in the city. The opportunities, and tensions, the war industry presented will also be commented upon with reference to Leeds society's attitude to the strikes and industrial accidents. As Trevor Wilson asserts, 'For the civilian population of Britain 1917 was a grim year'.⁶⁷⁶ However this chapter will demonstrate that the evidence of war-weariness notwithstanding, Leeds people in general believed that the war needed to be won, as was emotively expressed at the beginning of the year by James O'Grady: 'Nothing that we can do, apart from seeking to smash the German, or, if you will, Prussian, military machine will rid the world of militarism, the curse of the war.'⁶⁷⁷

Russian Revolutions

The war-weariness in Russia, however, had a different impact, with two revolutions taking place this year. This marked the end of the Romanov dynasty and centuries of Russian Imperial rule, as well as Russia's departure from the war.⁶⁷⁸ The February Revolution began

⁶⁷⁶ Wilson, *Myriad Faces*, p. 507.

⁶⁷⁷ James O'Grady, 'Why Victory is Essential. Pan-Germanism Versus the British Empire', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 23 February 1917, p. 1.

⁶⁷⁸ For more detailed discussions, and varied interpretations, of the Russian Revolutions, by academics and eye witnesses, see Edward Acton, *Rethinking the Russian Revolution* (London: Edward Arnold, 1990), Orlando Figes, *A People's Tragedy: The Russian Revolution, 1891-1924* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1996), Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), John L F Keep, *The Russian Revolution: A Study in Mass Mobilization* (London: Leidenfeld and Nicolson, 1976), W Bruce Lincoln, *Passage Through Armageddon: The Russians in War and Revolution, 1914-1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), Richard Pipes, *A Concise History of the Russian Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996), Christopher Read, *From Tsar to Soviets: The Russian People and Their Revolution, 1917-1921* (London: UCL Press, 1996), Leonard Schapiro, *1917: The Russian Revolutions and the Origins of Present Day Communism* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), Robert Service, *The Russian Revolution*

on 8 March 1917, with demonstrators taking to the streets in the capital city in their clamour for bread: ‘thousands of housewives and women workers enraged by the endless queues for bread poured into the streets of Petrograd, shouting, “Down with high prices” and “Down with hunger.”’⁶⁷⁹ Robert Gerwarth discusses how the primary causes of the revolution in 1917 were economic, as the food prices and shortages in early 1917 had ‘devastated the city’s workers and left them hungry and desperate.’⁶⁸⁰ These demonstrators were supported by crowds of striking industrial workers, and led to the Duma, an assembly with advisory and legislative functions, to form a provisional Government as the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II was forced. One of the most prominent leaders of the Duma was Alexander Kerensky, who as minister for war, continued with the Russian involvement in the war. This was immensely unpopular in the country as it further exacerbated the food shortages, leading to nationwide unrest and food riots.⁶⁸¹ In the second revolution in November, referred to as the October Revolution, Vladimir Lenin called for a ‘Soviet Government’ that would be ruled directly by soviets, which were councils of soldiers, peasants and workers.⁶⁸² Lenin also promised to withdraw from the war, well aware that this was the commonly favoured public wish as Russia could not sustain her army in the present conditions. It also allowed him to prioritise his focus on his enemies within Russia.⁶⁸³ Therefore on 15 December 1917 Lenin’s emissaries signed an armistice with Germany, ending Russia’s involvement with the war and

1900-1927 (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), N N Sukhanov, *The Russian Revolution 1917: A Personal Record* (London: Oxford University Press, 1955).

⁶⁷⁹ Hunt, ‘The Politics of Food’, p. 8. Although the first revolution in Russia began in March 1917, due to Russia’s use of the Julian calendar until February 1918 this date was 23 February in that country, hence being termed the February Revolution.

⁶⁸⁰ Robert Gerwarth, *The Vanquished: Why the First World War Failed to End, 1917-1923* (London: Penguin Random House, 2016), pp. 27-28.

⁶⁸¹ For further details of the Russian food situation in this year, see Engel, ‘Not by Bread Alone’.

⁶⁸² Stevenson, *Cataclysm*, p. 239. Again, the second revolution is referred to as the October Revolution due to the date being 24 and 25 October on the Julian calendar.

⁶⁸³ Gerwarth, *The Vanquished*, p. 27, p. 36.

therefore their collaboration with the Allies. A more detailed analysis of the causes of the revolutions and their implications for the future of Russia are beyond the scope of this study, which is focused on analysing the impact of the war on the city of Leeds. However, to briefly contextualise, it should be emphasised that the war was a significant factor in bringing about societal changes which led to the revolutions, not least the food shortages, as Gerwarth asserts: ‘without the Great War it is unlikely that the social and political unrest or violent acts against state authority would have caused the complete collapse of the tsarist regime’.⁶⁸⁴ It is undeniable that the Russian revolutions had a seismic impact on the dynamics of the war, which influenced the future of Russia as well as the rest of the world.

For the belligerent nations involved in the war, initially the Russian revolution gave many people some hope of an eventual end to the conflict, providing a potential ‘path out of the endless bloodshed’.⁶⁸⁵ In Britain, there was an overall sense that the February Revolution was welcomed, and by many on both sides of the political spectrum. It was believed by the pro-war faction that it would strengthen Russia’s position as an ally of Britain and those on the left-wing, including peace campaigners, embraced its socialist values.⁶⁸⁶ Jo Vellacott explains that the Government welcomed it mainly, ‘because it was politic to praise what was clearly an accomplished fact and was popular in Britain.’⁶⁸⁷ She also comments on how the socialists in Britain welcomed the revolutions, although her claim that it was ‘all to be achieved with minimal violence’ is clearly erroneous.⁶⁸⁸ In addition, the second Revolution in October and Russia’s eventual armistice with the Central Powers quashed the revolutionary hopes of the

⁶⁸⁴ Gerwarth, *The Vanquished*, p. 26; see also Stevenson, *1917*, p. 365.

⁶⁸⁵ Adam Hochschild, *To End All Wars: How the First World War Divided Britain* (London: Macmillan, 2012), p. 273. See also Gerwarth, *The Vanquished*, p. 29.

⁶⁸⁶ See Stephen White, ‘Soviets in Britain: The Leeds Convention of 1917’, *International Review of Social History*, 19.2 (1974), 165-193, p. 166, and Vellacott, *Conscientious Objection*, p. 152.

⁶⁸⁷ Vellacott, *Conscientious Objection*, p. 152.

⁶⁸⁸ Vellacott, ‘Anti-War Suffragists’, p. 423.

left and the hopes of renewed war convictions on the right. Therefore in Britain by late 1917, all ‘hope of dramatic action was dead’.⁶⁸⁹

This changing opinion to the events in Russia is mirrored in Leeds, where the evidence from local newspapers on the revolutions was, predictably, varied. The *Leeds Weekly Citizen* enthusiastically endorsed it, their reports on the first revolution being overly optimistic: ‘What a new day for Russia this involves!’⁶⁹⁰ O’Grady even visited Russia in the April as part of a British Labour Deputation, in an, albeit failed, to persuade the Russian Socialist Party to ‘do all in its power to bring the war to a satisfactory conclusion.’⁶⁹¹ The *Yorkshire Post* also focused mainly upon Russia’s allegiance to the war, with headlines which declared: ‘Russia’s Loyalty to Her Allies. A Renewed and Firm Declaration,’ and ‘Russia’s Pledge to the Allies.’⁶⁹² It also clearly took a more sober stance than the socialist press, printing letters such as one from one reader in June 1917 about the ‘threat of revolution’, which stated that the ‘adulation of the Russian Revolution is so much nauseous twaddle, for the revolution has been carried out not with rose-water but at the cost of much blood and infinite misery’.⁶⁹³ In direct contrast to the peaceful revolution being publicised by the left-wing press, the newspaper reported that there was ‘another side’ to the ‘Russian picture’ with articles which told of ‘General Assassinated’, and that theirs was ‘An army without munitions’.⁶⁹⁴ Therefore the differing stances of the local press can be seen, their own obvious bias both reflecting and forming the differing and changeable opinions of the Leeds people on this issue. The soldiers

⁶⁸⁹ Vellacott, ‘Anti-War Suffragists’, p. 423.

⁶⁹⁰ ‘Correspondence: The Russian Revolution’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 23 March 1917, p. 2: the report declared that ‘Mr James O’Grady MP is now in all probability in Petrograd’.

⁶⁹¹ Lloyd George, *War Memoirs Vol. II*, p. 1118. The British deputation to Russia included O’Grady as well as Chief Labour Whip Arthur Henderson and trade unionist and Labour party politician Will Thorne.

⁶⁹² ‘Russia’s Loyalty to Her Allies. A Renewed and Firm Declaration,’ *Yorkshire Post*, 4 May 1917, p. 5, ‘Russia’s Pledge to the Allies’, *Yorkshire Post*, 5 May 1917, p. 7.

⁶⁹³ ‘Correspondence: The Threat of Revolution’, *Yorkshire Post*, 2 June 1917, p. 5.

⁶⁹⁴ ‘Another Side of the Russian Picture’, *Yorkshire Post*, 2 May 1917, p. 5, ‘Russian Revelations: An Army without Munitions’, *Yorkshire Post*, 2 June 1917, p. 8.

from Leeds also had their own views on the situation in Russia, with some placing the culpability of the situation on the revolutionary nation, as with one former employee of Leeds City Council wrote home in July 1917: ‘The war [...] seems to be moving slowly, raising ones hopes of peace in one moment, and dashing it to the ground the next. Russia has been our stumbling block all along the line’.⁶⁹⁵

Leeds Convention

Despite the evident derision felt by some of the public in Leeds towards the Russian Revolution, Leeds was chosen as the venue for a convention in June 1917 organised by the newly organised body the United Socialist Council. The latter had been set up by the ILP and the British Socialist Party (BSP) in the wake of the February Revolution, and it has been claimed that this body ‘summoned a convention at Leeds to inaugurate the British revolution’.⁶⁹⁶ Janet Douglas and Christian Høgsbjerg assert that there was ‘considerable sympathy’ for the February Russian revolution in Britain, and ‘The Society of Friends of the Russian Freedom’, which had been set up in 1890, had a branch in Leeds.⁶⁹⁷ Isabella Ford was a member of the committee for this Society, and the Leeds branch was noted as ‘particularly active’.⁶⁹⁸ The city was not chosen for this Socialist Convention due to widespread local public sympathies for the Russian cause, however, but due to the geographical travel advantages. As even the *Leeds Weekly Citizen* stated, ‘Leeds has been chosen as the venue because of its central situation from the railway point of view’.⁶⁹⁹ Only

⁶⁹⁵ WYAS Leeds, LC TR, Leeds City Council Treasurer’s Correspondence with Employees Enlisted in the Armed Forces, 1917-1919, Gunner Irwin A Tate, 25 July 1917.

⁶⁹⁶ A J P Taylor, *English History*, p. 89.

⁶⁹⁷ Janet Douglas and Christian Høgsbjerg, eds, *British Labour and the Russian Revolution: The Leeds Convention of 1917* (Nottingham: Spokesman Books, 2017), p. 17.

⁶⁹⁸ Douglas and Høgsbjerg, *British Labour and the Russian Revolution*, p. 112.

⁶⁹⁹ ‘Sunday’s Convention: Historic Gathering in Leeds’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 1 May 1917, p. 4.

two delegates from Leeds actually attended the convention, one of whom was local Labour councillor and anti-war activist David Blythe Foster, and proceedings were outlined in great detail by the local press with differing sympathies.⁷⁰⁰ Many people in the city resented it being associated with the convention, and crowds of people turned out to oppose this meeting in Leeds. Scott also supported the view that the Convention ‘had to reckon with public sentiment; and public sentiment was dead against them.’⁷⁰¹ The *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, however, took an unequivocally encouraging view, and hailed it beforehand as a ‘Historic gathering in Leeds,’ which would be ‘a national conference in every sense of the word’.⁷⁰² In the event, 1151 delegates attended the Leeds Convention, and there were over 3500 in attendance in the audience. The circular which announced it had appeared on 23 May 1917, under the slogan ‘Follow Russia’ - thereby leaving no doubts as to the Convention’s purpose. This was to hail the inspiration of the Russian Revolution, defend civil liberties, call for an end to the war and vote to set up Workers’ and Soldiers’ Councils in Britain in solidarity with the soviets being formed in revolutionary Russia.⁷⁰³ However, it has been noted that the Leeds authorities were ‘very displeased that the city had been chosen for this unpatriotic gathering’. The initial booking of the Albert Hall in the city for the Convention was cancelled by the Council, as well as accommodation for delegates being refused by local hotels, and the police banned the public meeting which had been arranged to

⁷⁰⁰ For further details on the proceedings of the Leeds Convention see Douglas and Høgsbjerg, *British Labour and the Russian Revolution*; see also David Monger, *Patriotism and Propaganda in First World War Britain: The National War Aims Committee and Civilian Morale* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012) for discussion on the resolutions agreed at the Leeds Convention.

⁷⁰¹ Scott, *Leeds*, p. 56.

⁷⁰² ‘Sunday’s Convention: Historic Gathering in Leeds’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 1 May 1917, p. 4.

⁷⁰³ Douglas and Høgsbjerg, *British Labour and the Russian Revolution*, p. 23, Lipman, *Memoirs of a Socialist Business Man*, p. 32.

take place after the Convention in Victoria Square in the city.⁷⁰⁴ Even the war-time Cabinet considered banning it, although ‘eventually decided to allow it to go ahead.’⁷⁰⁵ The Government’s concession to the Socialist Convention was due to the fact that they were aware of, and even instrumental in, the decision that the local authorities would intervene.⁷⁰⁶ *The Times* claimed that the local authorities had ‘yielded to patriotic pressure’, and the local press confirmed that the open-air meeting in Victoria Square, and in fact all outdoor meetings during the day, were ‘prohibited by the Lord Mayor and the Chief Constable’.⁷⁰⁷ The local newspapers also provided further evidence of the reasons for the cancellation of the initial booking of the Albert Hall, where the discussion of meeting of the local Labour Party is reported: ‘Mr D B Foster informed the meeting that “a man from London” had been round visiting every member of the Council, which had the letting of the Albert Hall’. In the same article, the newspaper identified the ‘man from London’ as a member of the British Empire League and confirmed that he ‘visited nearly every member of the Council which had the letting of the Albert Hall, and had persuaded them to hesitate in their action.’⁷⁰⁸

The purpose of the British Empire League, which existed from 1895 to 1955 and had its headquarters in London, was to secure permanent unity for the British Empire. Its work during the war included mobilising troops, as well as sponsoring nationwide rallies calling for ‘concerted action against aliens.’⁷⁰⁹ Its intervention, therefore, in attempting to disrupt the Leeds Convention can be seen as the habitual actions of a right-wing group to deter anti-

⁷⁰⁴ Douglas and Høgsbjerg, *British Labour and the Russian Revolution*, p. 23, Thornton, *Leeds*, p. 186.

⁷⁰⁵ Thornton, *Leeds*, p. 186.

⁷⁰⁶ White, ‘Soviets in Britain’, p. 173.

⁷⁰⁷ White, ‘Soviets in Britain’, p. 173, ‘Socialist “Convention” in Leeds’, *Yorkshire Post*, 4 June 1917, p. 3.

⁷⁰⁸ ‘Leeds Labour Party. Protest Against Misrepresentation. The Albert Hall Action’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 8 June 1917, p. 1.

⁷⁰⁹ DeGroot, *Blighty*, p. 195.

patriotic sentiment, rather than via the direct orders of the Government. One would suspect, however, that the Government had at least endorsed, if not directed, these actions of the British Empire League, whose attempts at sabotaging these plans were similar to the Government's ordering of the local authorities to ban outdoor meetings on this day, as reported by the *Yorkshire Post*.⁷¹⁰ Prior to the Convention there had been a mass wave of unofficial strike action by over 200,000 munitions workers across the country in May, and the Government were therefore determined to quash any revolutionary fervour in the country.⁷¹¹ Alfred Milner, a member of the wartime Cabinet who was disturbed by the news of the Convention, wrote to Lloyd George at the time: 'I think there is still time to instruct the Press [...] not to "boom" the Leeds proceedings too much,' and added that, 'I fear the time is very near at hand, when we shall have to take some strong steps to stop the "rot" in this country, unless we wish to "follow Russia" into impotence and dissolution'.⁷¹² This confirms that members of the Government certainly did view the Convention, and any anti-war demonstration, as a threat.

Far from 'booming the proceedings too much', most of the local newspapers were severely critical towards the Convention, and, despite the sympathetic leanings of the *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 'the wider press coverage became extremely hostile.'⁷¹³ The conservative *Yorkshire Post* family of newspapers had already begun a scathing campaign against the holding of the Convention in the city of Leeds, the public being warned of a 'Sunday invasion of Leeds'. It claimed that the Convention had 'nothing whatsoever to do with organised Labour or trade unionism in Leeds, but is being organised by what is called the "United Socialist Council" in London', thereby appealing to the parochial nature of the Leeds people, in order to encourage

⁷¹⁰ 'Socialist "Convention" in Leeds', *Yorkshire Post*, 4 June 1917, p. 3.

⁷¹¹ Douglas and Høgsbjerg, *British Labour and the Russian Revolution*, p. 81.

⁷¹² Hochschild, *To End All Wars*, pp. 273-274.

⁷¹³ Douglas and Høgsbjerg, *British Labour and the Russian Revolution*, p. 23.

them to repel the onslaught of non-local socialists into the city. It continued with this tactic, with the explanation that ‘even the Leeds Labour Party have not yet decided whether they shall be represented at the “Convention” or not’, and warned the public that, ‘Quite apart from anything of an inflammatory nature which may be said at the conference, the utterance of that kind of thing to groups of men in every corner of Great Britain is capable of causing much unsettlement’. It even claimed that the organisers of the Convention, ‘misunderstand the deep-rooted determination of British democracy to see this war through at any cost.’ The newspaper also deliberately and earnestly appealed to the working class: ‘Any Government which for a moment heeded those agitators and halted in the slightest degree in the quest of victory would have to reckon with the working classes’, and emphasised that it was the working classes, ‘who have borne great sacrifice’ in the war and whom ‘these agitators impudently claim to represent.’⁷¹⁴ The newspaper continued this line of attack on the proposed Convention the following day, in claims that the ‘misgivings felt by many members of the Trades Councils and Labour Council’ regarding the conference, were ‘shared by a good many Leeds citizens who have nothing to do with any of the extreme organisation concerned in the movement’.⁷¹⁵ It also stated after the Convention that it took place, ‘to the great peril of this country,’ and that the ‘mildest thing to be said of these Pacifist Socialists is that they are absolutely blind of the political world; if they are not blind, Germany is the best place for them’.⁷¹⁶ Again this indicates the view of many, that the socialists were unpatriotic and pro-German.

This appeal to the public’s patriotism was also evident in most of the national press, with *The Times* claiming that the Leeds Convention was calling for ‘a peace which would render vain

⁷¹⁴ ‘The Latest Socialist “Convention”. A Sunday Invasion of Leeds’, *Yorkshire Post*, 31 May 1917, p. 7.

⁷¹⁵ ‘Leeds Convention’, *Yorkshire Post*, 1 June 1917, p. 10.

⁷¹⁶ ‘Summary of the News’, *Yorkshire Post*, 4 June 1917, p. 4.

all the sacrifice of ourselves and our Allies’, and the *Daily Express* referred to the ‘bombastic pretensions’ of the ‘peace crank organisations’ of the Convention, outlining that the ‘silly talk at Leeds will certainly not preserve European liberty from the assaults of its insidious enemies.’⁷¹⁷ The *Daily Despatch* referred to the Convention’s ‘pro-Germanism’, and claimed that the delegates were ‘traitors’, and ‘subtle villains’, and also echoed the *Yorkshire Post*’s position in accusing the Convention of being anti-working class, claiming that it was ‘as much against the trade unions and their honest workers as it is against the war [...] the war that has gained Ivan his freedom.’⁷¹⁸ Again the emotive and national minded rhetoric used by these newspapers to deride those with anti-war sentiments, with the connotations of anti-patriotism used to encourage resentment towards them, was evident in both the local and national press, and the actions of the central Government in encouraging this type of reporting to deter the Convention must be acknowledged.

Following a meeting of the Watch Committee of Leeds City Council, it was eventually agreed that the Convention could take place at the Leeds Coliseum Theatre, which was a working cinema at the time, on Sunday 3 June 1917.⁷¹⁹ The reporting of the situation by the *Leeds Weekly Citizen* is again in direct contrast to that of the *Yorkshire Post* and *Yorkshire Evening Post*. The former newspaper even referred to the ‘huge headlines’ of the latter as being responsible for the ‘craven submission of the Albert Hall committee.’ Regarding the decision of the local hotels to cancel bookings or refuse delegates’ accommodation, the newspaper reported that they were displaying ‘a slimy species of jingoism’ by organising and agreeing to this boycott of delegates.⁷²⁰ It outlined how the Leeds city police helped to remove this boycott, and that by ‘nine o’clock the hotel doors were opened, and every large

⁷¹⁷ ‘Summary of the News’, *Yorkshire Post*, 4 June 1917, p. 4.

⁷¹⁸ ‘Summary of the News’, *Yorkshire Post*, 4 June 1917, p. 4.

⁷¹⁹ ‘The Socialist Convention. Letting of the Hall to be Reconsidered’, *Yorkshire Post*, 1 June 1917, p. 10; Thornton, *Leeds*, p. 186.

⁷²⁰ ‘The Hotel Boycott in Leeds’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 8 June 1917, p. 3.

hotel in Leeds had its quota', as well as local socialist sympathisers offering accommodation to the delegates in their homes.⁷²¹ The Convention therefore took place in the Coliseum and voted upon and adopted the four resolutions, including, by its fourth resolution, the setting up of a Council of Workers' and Soldiers' delegates, and appointed as the Central Committee the thirteen convenors of the Convention.⁷²² The *Yorkshire Observer* reported that the 'much-talked of "Hail the Russian Revolution Conference"' had 'attracted much less general attention than is usually manifested when a big political demonstration takes place in the historic building'.⁷²³ This suggested that the Convention was neither overly welcomed nor demonstrated against by the Leeds public. O'Grady accused the organisers of the Convention of being 'preposterous' in their voting tactics, and suggested that they exaggerated its significance.⁷²⁴ Again, this indicated his disdain, and probably that of much of Leeds society, to the conference. The perceived indifference of the public in Leeds is also indicated by the *Yorkshire Post*, which stated that Leeds 'honoured itself [by] taking very little notice of the assembly in its midst of a strange medley of Socialists, Pacifists, Labourites, Democrats, and what not, gathered from all parts of the country', and referred to the 'sinister movement' as the 'Friends of Germany'.⁷²⁵ Yet again the language was used to evoke patriotic feelings in the readers. This is strikingly different from the *Leeds Weekly Citizen's* claim that the Convention was, 'memorable in the history of Leeds', and indeed to the letters it printed from those who had attended the Convention, who wished to 'thank all those kind comrades and friends in Leeds who so magnificently rose to the occasion [...] to make the Socialist and Labour Convention a success'.⁷²⁶ Therefore despite the clear evidence from some areas of the

⁷²¹ 'The Hotel Boycott in Leeds', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 8 June 1917, pp. 3-4.

⁷²² See Douglas and Høgsbjerg, *British Labour and the Russian Revolution*.

⁷²³ 'The Hotel Boycott in Leeds: Press Comments', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 8 June 1917, p. 4.

⁷²⁴ 'The Hotel Boycott in Leeds: Press Comments', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 8 June 1917, p. 4.

⁷²⁵ 'Summary of the News', *Yorkshire Post*, 4 June 1917, p. 3.

⁷²⁶ 'Leeds Labour Party. Protest Against Misrepresentation,' *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 8 June 1917, p. 2, 'Correspondence', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 8 June 1917, p. 1.

press that the general public viewed the conference as an abhorrent anti-patriotic event, there is also evidence of a significant minority in the city who did support the Convention and its attendees, all obstacles to the conference placed by the national and local authorities notwithstanding.

However, despite a clearly enthusiastic crowd being present at the Convention, its resolutions came to little.⁷²⁷ Even the socialist groups, Gerald DeGroot argues, had a ‘decidedly lukewarm’ reaction to it, and he claims that the Convention ‘failed to excite mainstream labour’.⁷²⁸ Social reformer Beatrice Webb noted in her diary on 7 June 1917 that the delegates of the Leeds Convention had been ‘quite incapable of coherent thinking’, as they were ‘were swayed by emotions: an emotion towards peace and an emotion towards workers’ control’, and Douglas and Høgsbjerg conclude that ‘general spirit of unity at the Convention was not destined to last long’.⁷²⁹ It is important to note, however, that the holding of the Leeds Convention clearly concerned the Government, who later in the summer of 1917 set up the National War Aims Committee as a propaganda machine to combat war weariness and increase morale, including on a local level.⁷³⁰ As David Monger highlights, by this point in the war, ‘Russia had experienced the first of two revolutions and Britain had witnessed several strikes over working conditions’, therefore the ‘advocacy, at a socialist “convention” at Leeds, of the creation of workers’ and soldiers’ councils’, made the creation of the National War Aims Committee ‘appear all the more urgent.’⁷³¹

⁷²⁷ See Donny Glockstein, *The Western Soviets: Workers’ Councils Versus Parliament, 1915-1920* (London: Bookmarks, 1985), p. 81.

⁷²⁸ DeGroot, *Blighty*, p. 119, p. 149.

⁷²⁹ Beatrice Webb, *Diaries, 1912-1924* (London: Longmans, 1952), p. 88, Douglas and Høgsbjerg, *British Labour and the Russian Revolution*, p. 79. The same sentiment that ‘the movement at Leeds did not last long’ was expressed by Vellacott, *Conscientious Objection*, p. 166; see also White, ‘Soviets in Britain’, p. 166.

⁷³⁰ For detailed discussion on the activities of the National War Aims Committee, see Monger, *Patriotism and Propaganda*.

⁷³¹ Monger, *Patriotism and Propaganda*, p. 16.

Scott, in his standard zealously patriotic stance, stated that the Leeds Convention ‘failed to get a foothold in Leeds’, and that the ‘vast majority of people came to realise that German militarism had to be defeated by the Allies’.⁷³² This view was also mirrored by a Leeds resident in a letter to the local press, which stated that, ‘Many of the flatterers do not understand, as their proteges do, that Socialism and Imperialism are not merely incompatible but also mutually destructive propositions’.⁷³³ The editor of the *Yorkshire Factory Times* summarised clearly the thoughts of many on the legacy of the Leeds Convention when he stated in December 1917 that the ‘great conference held in Leeds [...] somehow or other it does not seem to have gripped the public’.⁷³⁴ This again both highlights and supports the theory that, despite such demonstrations of peace-seeking, society was generally in agreement that Germany needed to be defeated at all costs. As DeGroot states, ‘As an indication of working class opinion, the Leeds Conference was much less significant than the chronic outbursts of anti-German feeling’.⁷³⁵

Anti-Semitic Riots and Anti-German Feelings in Leeds, June 1917

It appears, therefore, that the working class ‘quest for victory’ against the enemy outweighed all other feelings, manifesting itself in extreme and widespread abhorrence of Germany. As one commentator recorded in his diaries, representing the thoughts of many in the nation, ‘the civilised nations must grind the German military machine to powder’.⁷³⁶ There was certainly anti-German feeling nationwide, including in Leeds, during this year, which was due to the

⁷³² Scott, *Leeds*, pp. 56-57.

⁷³³ ‘Correspondence: The threat of Revolution’, *Yorkshire Post*, 2 June 1917, p. 5.

⁷³⁴ White, ‘Soviets in Britain’, p. 192.

⁷³⁵ DeGroot, *Blighty*, p. 119.

⁷³⁶ LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/DF/026, Wolstan Dixie Churchill, diaries and sermons, 1914-1918.

‘fear created by the prospect of a possible defeat by Germany.’⁷³⁷ The roots of this fear, closely associated with the war-weariness felt by much of the public, can also be found in the anti-Semitism that broke out in the city in the June of this year, on the same date as the Leeds Convention, and into the next day. Millman has claimed that it was antagonism over the socialist Convention that instigated this anti-Semitic riot, an antagonism caused by this fear of defeat as well as, as Monger shows, the perceived threat of pacifists and strikers within British society.⁷³⁸ The violence that occurred against Jews on 3 and 4 June 1917 began as street fighting between youths and included the looting of Jewish businesses, as they were being accused of evading military service.⁷³⁹ The *Leeds Weekly Citizen* referred to those who were set against the Convention as having caused these riots, to stir up ‘strife and, in particular, using an ugly anti-Jewish agitation which is springing up in Leeds, in order to create riotousness’.⁷⁴⁰ Incidents of anti-Semitism were not isolated to Leeds in this year. In September 1917 there were anti-Semitic troubles in London, although, as Jörn Leonhard explains, this was class-based antagonism rather than anti-Jewish, and he defines it as ‘an aggressive nationalism’.⁷⁴¹ Panayi agrees with this theory of ‘aggressive nationalism’, and asserts that anti-German feeling permeated Britain ‘in a way in which anti-Semitism has never done.’⁷⁴² There is evidence in the local newspapers on Leeds City Council decisions which expressed anti-enemy sentiment, such as the unanimously passed resolution of the Leeds Chamber of Commerce at the beginning of the year that: ‘All members of this Chamber of Commerce of enemy origin, who have not been naturalised in the British Empire for at least ten years [...] or have got a son or sons fighting in His Majesty’s Forces, be

⁷³⁷ Panayi, ‘Germans in Britain During the First World War’, p. 76.

⁷³⁸ Millman, *Managing Domestic Dissent*, p. 210; Monger, *Patriotism and Propaganda*, pp. 138-9.

⁷³⁹ Thornton, *Leeds*, pp. 186-187.

⁷⁴⁰ ‘After Leeds Convention’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 29 June 1917, p. 3.

⁷⁴¹ Leonhard, *Pandora’s Box*, p. 654.

⁷⁴² Panayi, ‘Germans in Britain During the First World War’, p. 76.

requested to resign forthwith.⁷⁴³ This anti-German sentiment was therefore rife in Leeds, so great was society's need for victory over the enemy.

America Enters the War

An intervention welcomed by many as it was seen as helping to speed up the victory over Germany, on the side of what the majority of British society clearly saw as the just cause, was the entrance of America into hostilities in April 1917. Widely greeted with enthusiasm by the British public, it was also another external factor that had a profound effect on the war, one that 'expanded the conflict militarily and ideologically'.⁷⁴⁴ America's neutrality in the war until this time was sorely tested by the unrestricted German warfare of 1917, which led to their own ships being attacked and subsequently provided the American President Woodrow Wilson with the justification he needed to enter the conflict.⁷⁴⁵ The European war had already had an impact upon America, and the Leeds local press included reports of the people there experiencing food shortages due to their poor harvests, with eye catching headlines such as one which proclaimed that 'Potatoes are Diamonds', which indicated their value.⁷⁴⁶ Although generally welcomed by the British public, who believed that America joining the war on the side of the Allies would only be beneficial due to their supply of armed forces and weapons into this hostility which was increasingly becoming a war of attrition, the views in Leeds reflected a greater complexity. Prior to America joining the conflict, reports in the local newspapers indicated the frustration of many in the city, including sarcastic

⁷⁴³ 'Resolution of Leeds Chamber of Commerce', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 2 March 1917, p. 5.

⁷⁴⁴ Leonhard, *Pandora's Box*, p. 549.

⁷⁴⁵ 'America Goes to War', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 13 April 1917, p. 4.

⁷⁴⁶ For more information on the comparatively poor American food harvests, see Thomas Hudson Middleton, *Food Production in War* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1923), p. 160, 'Potatoes are Diamonds', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 2 March 1917, p. 4.

reference to ‘American Steadiness’ in February 1917. This commented on America not yet entering the war in spite of many deaths, including children, in the recent submarine attacks:

There seems no excitement, no bad diplomacy, and no surrender to popular feeling [...] in reference to the submarine attack on American passengers [which] made me laugh [...] that the loss of two babies has not caused President Wilson to sacrifice an army corps. Yet the sinking of the children was atrocious enough, and cannot be excused.⁷⁴⁷

Evidence from some of British soldiers at the time also illustrated a resentment towards America for not entering sooner, and also for profiting from the war prior to their taking part in it. The disdain many held for America was clear from the letter of Private John Riddey to his mother from April 1917:

By the way, has America declared war yet. From the papers I’ve seen I can’t make out whether she really has or not. If so I suppose she will come under the category of “our gallant allies” instead of the money-grabbing lot of rascals they’ve been ever since the war broke out.⁷⁴⁸

Another letter from a soldier to one of his friends, also a soldier, Arthur Butler, an army private and grandson of nineteenth century social reformer Josephine Butler, expressed similar sentiments in December 1917: ‘The Americans, damn them, should have entered hostilities at the very beginning or kept themselves and their dollars to themselves’.⁷⁴⁹ The exasperated indignation expressed in these letters by frustrated was also mirrored in Leeds. However, these resentful feelings contrasted starkly with the feelings of others on the home front, who viewed America’s entrance into the war as an action to be applauded. This was due to the fact that it provided them with some hope for the much desired victorious climax to the war, and as such an end to the killing and subsequent grief being widely experienced.

⁷⁴⁷ ‘American Steadiness’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 16 February 1917, p. 1.

⁷⁴⁸ LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/GS/1352, John Riddey letters and documents, 1914-1918, 6 December 1916; 5 March 1917.

⁷⁴⁹ LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0251, Letters of ASG Butler, 1914-1918, 24 May 1917.

Grief

The grief already being felt by the public at home was compounded in this year of the war by the continually increasing casualty lists associated with the battles fought. Stevenson asserts that at this point in the war the belligerent nations in Europe had ‘dug themselves into a war trap’, and claimed that the narrative of the year 1917 is ‘their efforts to escape it’, although this ‘did not mean that either side had lost all hope of victory,’ as both sides still were determined to pursue conquest of the enemy.⁷⁵⁰ This is a comparable view to Scott’s purported ‘firm resolve’ of the masses.⁷⁵¹ Stevenson also claims that both sides were ‘near exhaustion’, and that the ‘domestic consensus right across Europe came under unprecedented strain’.⁷⁵² A significant contributory factor to this strain was undeniably the overwhelming grief, which this research has shown was a gendered issue. In Leeds, analysis of the evidence in the newspapers and personal papers such as family letters has illustrated that the involvement of the local battalions in the battles of this year had a far-reaching impact on the city, notably on the women.

One prime example of this is the Battle of Arras, which was initially hailed as an Allied victory.⁷⁵³ The evidence in letters from soldiers in the field confirms this view of the battle as a success, including those of some of the former employees of Leeds City Council: ‘No doubt

⁷⁵⁰ Stevenson, *1917*, p. 9, David Stevenson, ‘The Failure of Peace by Negotiation in 1917’, *The Historical Journal*, 34.1 (1991), 65-86 (p. 67).

⁷⁵¹ Scott, *Leeds*, p. 55.

⁷⁵² Stevenson, ‘The Failure of Peace by Negotiation in 1917’, p. 67.

⁷⁵³ See A J P Taylor, *English History*, p. 81. This was the Second Battle of Arras, the first one having taken place between France and Germany in September 1914; the Second Battle of Arras took place from 9 April to 16 May 1917, when the British attacked the German defences, which was initially hailed as a victory as the British achieved the longest advance since trench warfare began, however British advance slowed after only a few days, which meant the German defence recovered and the battle eventually became a stalemate situation, costly for both sides.

you will have heard of the great victory [...] I think this is the beginning of the end. It is like a tonic for we have been waiting so long for this [...] final victory'; and 'It really looks as if the end of the War is in sight this time'.⁷⁵⁴ The facts of the casualties do however mean that this view was untenable: in the event, the British casualties were nearly double those of the Germans.⁷⁵⁵ Another letter home from a Leeds soldier confirmed at the beginning of May that he was having a 'fairly busy time dealing with the casualties of our latest offensive'.⁷⁵⁶ It would be beneficial at this point to acknowledge the fact that historians have disagreed on war loss figures, a phenomenon which has been scrutinised by Antoine Prost.⁷⁵⁷ Prost asserts that historians need to appreciate how military statistics are produced in order to revise their statistics of war losses provided by military sources, including acknowledging their limitations. This leads to his conclusion that the estimates provided for military deaths are lower than they should be in reality, and that Britain and her allies, except Russia, had greater casualties, both the dead and wounded, on the battlefield. He also illustrates that Germany and her allies, including Russia, had much higher casualties on the home front. This highlighted the theory that this war was an all-encompassing, total war, 'not only a military matter; it was an ordeal for whole societies'.⁷⁵⁸ Regarding the Battle of Arras, Taylor has claimed that this battle had only 'one success to show' for the Allies, which was 'the taking of Vimy Ridge by the Canadians.'⁷⁵⁹ Private Dalby of the Leeds Pals recalled that Vimy

⁷⁵⁴ WYAS Leeds, LC TR, Leeds City Council Treasurer's Correspondence with Employees Enlisted in the Armed Forces, 1917-1919, Staff Sergeant Major F V Tattersall, 11 April 1917; and Private Fred M Walton, 27 April 1917.

⁷⁵⁵ Although estimates vary, Taylor provided the casualty figures of 142,000 for the Allied forces compared to the enemy's 85,000, A J P Taylor, *English History*, p. 81.

⁷⁵⁶ WYAS Leeds, LC TR, Leeds City Council Treasurer's Correspondence with Employees Enlisted in the Armed Forces, 1917-1919, Sergeant C C Sellars, 6 May 1917.

⁷⁵⁷ Antoine Prost, 'War Losses', *International Encyclopedia of the First World War 1914-18*, ed. by Ute Daniel et al <<https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/home.html>> [accessed 1 March 2022].

⁷⁵⁸ Prost, 'War Losses'.

⁷⁵⁹ A J P Taylor, *English History*, p. 81.

Ridge was his first experience of ‘going over the top’, and stated that he was ‘one of seven men out of twenty seven’ to survive this, thereby reflecting the harsh casualties of this battle for the Leeds Pals, and subsequently the people of Leeds.⁷⁶⁰

The third Battle of Ypres at Passchendaele, launched on 31 July and lasting until to the beginning of November, was another battle this year that impacted on Leeds society. It is viewed now as a disaster on the scale of the Battle of the Somme the previous year, due to the perceived incompetence of Haig and his associates in the instigation and continuance of this campaign despite the wet and muddy weather making conditions impossible for the Allied armies. Wilson, however, provides a more balanced assessment.⁷⁶¹ He does not deny the reality of that ‘In terms of territory captured, it was no telling achievement’, or refrain from acknowledging Haig’s culpability and the extent of the losses:

Here, then, was the outcome of Haig’s great effort in Flanders. His forces had advanced to a position whose partial evacuation was, in a matter of weeks, under consideration. And so meagre an accomplishment had been secured at terrible cost. The toll of casualties, at least for the immediate future, left the British army on the Western Front dangerously short of men [compared to the enemy].⁷⁶²

He also highlights the detrimental impact this campaign had upon the morale of the soldiers.⁷⁶³ However, although Wilson also states that it is ‘astonishing’ that Haig ‘acted as he did’, he also convincingly argues that the ‘responsibility should not be sheeted home to

⁷⁶⁰ Scott, *Leeds*, p. 55; LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/TR/02/1, Tape recordings of Private F A Dalby, 1970-1999.

⁷⁶¹ For a detailed description of the third battle of Ypres at Passchendaele and its cost to the British army, see Wilson, *Myriad Faces*, pp. 478-82, pp. 482-84.

⁷⁶² Wilson, *Myriad Faces*, p. 480, p. 482.

⁷⁶³ Wilson, *Myriad Faces*, p. 482.

Haig alone', as he 'acted in the context of an ill-considered craving for victories among the populace' and he could 'never have proceeded without the endorsement [...] of the Prime Minister whose strategic visions were probably more grandiose, and certainly more insubstantial, than his own.'⁷⁶⁴ Wilson also emphasises that the German army also suffered heavy casualties during this campaign, which meant that 'it was part of the culpable folly of Third Ypres that it caused the British army to pay a greater share of the blood cost to the ultimate victory than either the military circumstances of the moment or the resources of the British people could in any way justify.'⁷⁶⁵

The local soldiers' accounts of Passchendaele supported the now accepted view of the horrors of this battle. Private Allen of the Leeds Rifles recalled that it was a 'terrible affair', where the 'battalion suffered heavily' and the 'wounded were drowned in the mud'.⁷⁶⁶ Harry Oldham of the Leeds Pals concurred that, 'All was mud and desolation, and there the depths of human misery', and stated that the casualties were 'frightful' where 'indeed the dead seemed better off than the living,' and concluded sarcastically 'Oh, what a lovely war!'⁷⁶⁷ Private Stannard of the Lancashire Regiments, latterly an employee of Leeds City Council, also wrote home of the 'trying conditions' endured: 'We went over the top after marching for hours over the worst possible country [...] with shell holes filled with mud and water. I was up to the waist in it on more than one occasion and but for the help of comrades should have stuck there'.⁷⁶⁸ The obvious horror, and casualties, of this battle will undoubtedly have added to the grief being felt at this time on the home front.

⁷⁶⁴ Wilson, *Myriad Faces*, p. 483.

⁷⁶⁵ Wilson, *Myriad Faces*, p. 484.

⁷⁶⁶ LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/WF/REC/01/A6, H E Allen Manuscript Account, 1914-1918.

⁷⁶⁷ LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/GS/1204, Papers of Harry Oldham, 1914-1918.

⁷⁶⁸ WYAS Leeds, LC TR, Leeds City Council Treasurer's Correspondence with Employees Enlisted in the Armed Forces, 1917-1919, Private G Stannard, 23 October 1917.

‘War Trap’

Indeed, at this point in the war grief was a constant factor to be faced by the public. Some historians, including Kocka, Chickering and Stevenson, argue that it profoundly shaped all home fronts, due to its far-reaching impact infiltrating all aspects of society.⁷⁶⁹ As Chickering shows in his study on Freiburg, the war was a pervasive presence, which ‘irrupted into private lives throughout the city, bringing still more personal hardship and dislocation emotional as well as material’, a claim which was also true for Britain.⁷⁷⁰ One of the reasons for this was that, ‘Death was everywhere’.⁷⁷¹ Damousi concurs that, ‘across the continent, and beyond, death and grief were palpable’, and that this grief was ‘all-pervasive and ubiquitous’.⁷⁷² Winter agrees that the war saw ‘communities in mourning’, so widespread was the grief experienced.⁷⁷³ The research of Claudia Siebrecht goes further still, and shows how German cultural artists redefined traditional rites of public mourning during the war, as their art transformed from a place of patriotism to question the notions of heroic death and instead placed grief at the centre of the war experience for women.⁷⁷⁴

The recalled horrors of the battles of the war and the grief they caused through the long lists of the dead notwithstanding, it appears that people in Leeds, and their menfolk in the armed forces, still generally believed that the war needed to continue, to quash the enemy who had taken the men’s lives. For instance, following his son’s death at the Somme, the father of Robert Tolson of the Leeds Pals, wrote: ‘I feel to have lost much of my interest in the war, beyond a hope of punishment for the cruel barbarity of our Enemies’.⁷⁷⁵ This need for society

⁷⁶⁹ Kocka, *Facing Total War*; Chickering, *The Great War*; Stevenson, 1917.

⁷⁷⁰ Chickering, *The Great War*, p. 318.

⁷⁷¹ Chickering, *The Great War*, p. 320.

⁷⁷² Damousi, ‘Mourning Practices’, pp. 358-360.

⁷⁷³ Winter, ‘Communities in Mourning’, *Sites of Memory*, pp. 29-53.

⁷⁷⁴ Claudia Siebrecht, *The Aesthetics of Loss: German’s Women’s Art of the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

⁷⁷⁵ LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/GS/1610, Letters of Robert Tolson, 1914-1918.

to justify the deaths by continuing the fight to victory is what Stevenson is referring to in his concept of a 'war trap', meaning that 'neither side could lightly present their peoples with a compromise when so many families were bereft of husbands and sons', otherwise their deaths would have been in vain.⁷⁷⁶ The evidence in Leeds society confirms this view. As one reader of the local papers noted, the actions of the enemy so far in the war and the number of deaths already felt were the reasons why 'we cannot possibly lay down our arms'.⁷⁷⁷ This is analogous to the evidence in letters home from soldiers on the battlefronts, who felt the need to justify the deaths of their comrades: 'One noticed with deep regret the casualties amongst our colleagues, and this knowledge makes us feel more fully the duty we owe, not only to our country, but to those who have given their lives in this cause'.⁷⁷⁸ The perceived victories of this year of the war, including those outlined above as well as the British victory with tanks at Cambrai in November, which again involved local battalion the Leeds Rifles, compounded this need to fight the war to the end. As the *Yorkshire Post* reported, victory was necessary to protect the 'rights and liberties of this country against German aggression'.⁷⁷⁹ Therefore on the battlefront and home front alike, solace was sought in the faith that the dead men had sacrificed themselves for a worthy cause, a war which they believed would eventually be won. As Edward Madigan explains in his research into British conceptions of the soldiers' courage during the war as viewed by those on the home front, 'Dignified self-sacrifice resonated strongly with civilians who suffered unprecedented levels of bereavement and understood their nation's role in the war as righteous and just'.⁷⁸⁰ Such beliefs were also contrived by the press and propaganda-creating organisations, including the National War

⁷⁷⁶ Stevenson, 1917, p. 9.

⁷⁷⁷ 'Correspondence', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 9 March 1917, p. 3.

⁷⁷⁸ WYAS Leeds, LC TR, Leeds City Council Treasurer's Correspondence with Employees Enlisted in the Armed Forces, 1917-1919, Lieutenant W Marshall, 29 April 1917.

⁷⁷⁹ 'Summary of the News', *Yorkshire Post*, 4 June 1917, p. 4.

⁷⁸⁰ Edward Madigan, "'Sticking to a Hateful Task": Resilience, Humour, and British Understandings of Combatant Courage, 1914-1918', *War in History*, 20.1 (2013), 76-98.

Aims Committee, to perpetuate the narrative of patriotic duty. In placing emphasis on patriotism and necessary sacrifice, the latter organisation disseminated the fundamental message of duty, to encourage both the soldiers fighting the war and the people on the home front to continue their commitment to it. As Monger shows, by focusing on the sacrifices of the soldiers, the propaganda machines created a communal message of duty as well as a link between the soldiers and those on the home front, therefore a common sense of justified sacrifice was felt.⁷⁸¹

The people of Leeds therefore generally bore their grief and adapted their lives to embrace it. As Ella Lethem explained in her diary from the time, ‘I think in these days we rather tend to become fatalists [...] we begin to take things quite calmly that would have very much upset us once upon a time’.⁷⁸² The soldiers abroad expressed similar sentiments which suggested they became inured to the losses: ‘Coming to the toll of the war, we have certainly lost a fair number of our staff and actually our sympathy goes out to those we know are sufferers. Even though we get hardened to such things’.⁷⁸³ A former employee of the City Council, conscripted into the armed forces yet working as an army clerk in Britain, also indicated this acquiescence with necessary deaths, as well as his own sorrow with not having the same opportunity for self-sacrifice: ‘It is a regrettable feature to note the casualty list, but to many it will be a source of consolation in knowing that [...] when the call came, many answered and proved themselves worthy sons of the motherland. To many of us this sacrifice is denied’.⁷⁸⁴

⁷⁸¹ Monger, *Patriotism and Propaganda*, p. 196.

⁷⁸² LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/DF/074, Diaries of Ella Lethem, 1917-1918, entry for 2 March 1918.

⁷⁸³ WYAS Leeds, LC TR, Leeds City Council Treasurer’s Correspondence with Employees Enlisted in the Armed Forces, 1917-1919, H L Joel, 9 April 1917.

⁷⁸⁴ WYAS Leeds, LC TR, Leeds City Council Treasurer’s Correspondence with Employees Enlisted in the Armed Forces, 1917-1919, John Keavey, 19 July 1917.

Food Shortages

In addition to the extraordinary amount of grief which consumed society in 1917, caused by the anomalous levels of combatant deaths, another factor which contributed to the war weariness felt by this point in the war were the increased food prices by this year and the pressure of food shortages. This instigated the necessity of queuing for, and eventual rationing of, food. Even the soldiers abroad made comments upon the ‘shortage of foodstuffs’ on the home front.⁷⁸⁵ Gregory states that in the ‘course of 1917 the strains of the war were creating a widespread sense of gloom’, and that, ‘above all there were the shortages and queues’.⁷⁸⁶ This corresponds in part to the situation in Germany, where the war’s ‘dreary, daily face’ brought ‘an array of shortages that increasingly deprived households of things that were basic to urban life’.⁷⁸⁷ Although it must be emphasised that the situation with food shortages in Germany and other enemy nations were significantly worse than in Britain, due to the prolonged naval blockade conducted by the Allies during the war in a sustained effort to restrict the supply of goods to the Central Powers. Despite the price of food more than doubling in price during the war, people in Britain were far better off than their enemies, who in some cases were starving to death. The research of, among others, Katja Hoyer illustrates the devastating impact of the First World War on Germany, and Mary Cox demonstrates the impact of the lack of food on women and, particularly, children in that nation.⁷⁸⁸ Cox shows how the ‘Hungerblockade’ in Germany in the First World War led to diminished heights, and

⁷⁸⁵ WYAS Leeds, LC TR, Leeds City Council Treasurer’s Correspondence with Employees Enlisted in the Armed Forces, 1917-1919, John Keavey, 24 December 1917

⁷⁸⁶ Gregory, *Last Great War*, p. 213-14.

⁷⁸⁷ Chickering, *The Great War*, p. 318.

⁷⁸⁸ John Burnett, *Plenty and Want: A Social History of Diet in England from 1815 to the Present Day* (Hammondsworth: Penguin, 1968), Katja Hoyer, *Blood and Iron: The Rise and Fall of the German Empire, 1871-1918* (Cheltenham: The History Press, 2021), Cox, *Hunger in War and Peace*.

more significantly, weights, among children.⁷⁸⁹ Cox also illustrates that there was a class element to this issue as working-class children were worse affected by the dire circumstances, ‘Differences in height and weight appear more profound when social class [...] is taken into account’, and emphasises that the difference in the classes were ‘major factors’ in this nutritional deprivation.⁷⁹⁰

Healy’s focus on Vienna during the war evidences that in this city starvation was the direct cause of seven to eleven per cent of deaths during the war, and a contributory cause in a substantial amount more.⁷⁹¹ The research of Davis on Berlin during the war highlights the significant influence of the civilian population, and in particular, poorer women, on domestic policy during the war.⁷⁹² In a similar vein to Daniel’s research into working class women in Germany during the war, Davis’ study is a ‘microhistory of Berlin’, in which she examines ‘a single locality in its complexities’, which provides a wider view of the ‘now standard class interpretation of the war’.⁷⁹³ Davis focuses on how the wartime blockade of goods to the Central Powers impacted upon, and was addressed by, ‘those of lesser means’. She defines the latter as ‘the poorer consumers who waited in food queues and who protested in the streets of Germany’s cities’, notably Berlin, and who were above all the ‘women of lesser means’ or ‘minderbemittelte Frauen’.⁷⁹⁴ She claims that life for ‘those of lesser means’ was ‘survival at best’, and reports that across Germany approximately ‘700,000 civilians died

⁷⁸⁹ Cox, *Hunger in War and Peace*, pp. 194-195.

⁷⁹⁰ Cox, *Hunger in War and Peace*, p. 195, p. 203.

⁷⁹¹ Healy, *Vienna*, p. 41. Other historians who have commented upon this issue include Davis, *Home Fires Burning*, Engel, ‘Not by Bread Alone’, William Beveridge, *British Food Control* (London: H Milford, Oxford University Press, 1928), Avner Offer, *The First World War: An Agrarian Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), Thierry Bonzon and Belinda Davis, ‘Feeding the cities’, in Winter, and Robert, eds, *Capital Cities at War*, pp. 305-341.

⁷⁹² Davis, *Home Fires Burning*.

⁷⁹³ Davis, *Home Fires Burning*, p. 5.

⁷⁹⁴ Davis, *Home Fires Burning*, p. 1.

directly from malnutrition during the war', and that the death rate was highest among young women.⁷⁹⁵

In Britain, although on a much lesser scale than abroad, food shortages were also evident this year. There were also rising food prices, which led to relentless food queues, although rationing was not introduced until late in the year and into early 1918.⁷⁹⁶ Compared to the situation in Germany, Davis states, until 1918 the food shortages in Britain were 'nothing more than a mild inconvenience'.⁷⁹⁷ This statement seems lacking in nuance, however, considering the importance of food not only to survival but in the rites and observances of daily life, with the 'Customs, habits and daily rituals that provide the framework of personal and social relations'.⁷⁹⁸ This means that any change in food habits, voluntary or involuntary, 'goes to the very heart of tradition, expectations and identity'.⁷⁹⁹ There was also the extra pressure to feed the increased labour force in the country, including those women working in the essential munitions factories, which meant that the Government needed to address the 'nationwide problem of food supply and distribution'.⁸⁰⁰ That the people in Leeds were pre-occupied with the food situation is clear from the local newspaper reports during this year, which contained an abundance of evidence of the food shortages in the city. These ranged from references to a 'milk shortage' as early as January 1917 and concerns about the 'consumption of bread'.⁸⁰¹ The foodstuffs impacted were therefore those that were the staple foods of the working classes, and thus they were the ones who suffered most from these shortages. The recollections of Private Dalby referred to these shortages, and what he recalled

⁷⁹⁵ Davis, *Home Fires Burning*, p. 184.

⁷⁹⁶ Woollacott, *On Her Their Lives Depend*, p. 62.

⁷⁹⁷ Davis, *Home Fires Burning*, p. 24.

⁷⁹⁸ Offer, *The First World War*, p. 39.

⁷⁹⁹ Offer, *The First World War*, p. 39.

⁸⁰⁰ Woollacott, *On Her Their Lives Depend*, pp. 61-62.

⁸⁰¹ 'A Milk Shortage', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 5 January 1917, p. 1, 'The Consumption of Bread', *Yorkshire Post*, 3 May 1917, p. 4.

as the ‘grim conditions’ on the home front: ‘It was not unknown for men going on leave to pinch tea and sugar from the cookhouse and fill their water bottles with it to take home’.⁸⁰²

The letters of Private Riddey also expressed his concern when he wrote to his mother during this year, ‘I know sugar is very scarce in England, so don’t send any if you can’t get enough yourself’.⁸⁰³ The evidence therefore casts no doubt on the scarcity of foodstuffs, which, combined with the increasing food prices, was another challenge of the war for the residents of Leeds. Regarding the latter, at the beginning of 1917 a *Leeds Weekly Citizen* editorial outlined the rises since the beginning of the war:

Did you know the expenditure on food in the standard working class budget, which was revealed at 22s 6d in 1904, and as 25s in 1914, had risen to 45s 3d in November of 1916? Talk of percentages is vague to many a housewife, but [...] the increase is 81 per cent on pre-war prices, a startling figure, and we quite expect that figure to continue rising during the spring months.⁸⁰⁴

This was presumably intended to be an informative piece, however it was highly patronising in its address to the women of the city with the implication that they would not understand percentages, which indicates again the attitude to women at the time. This article starkly outlined the actual rises, taken from the Board of Trade statistics, on every-day foodstuffs, including potatoes, the staple of all working class diets, which ‘today [...] reached three times the normal price’.⁸⁰⁵ Ego documents from the time corroborated these rising prices, including letters from Private Oates of the Leeds Rifles, which illustrated his concern for his family back in Leeds due to the food shortages and high cost of food: ‘Well I hear food is very dear in England so do not send any more parcels as what with the price of sending it over hear

⁸⁰² LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/WF/REC/01/A6, Recollections of H E Allen, 1914-1918.

⁸⁰³ LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/GS/1352, John Riddey letters and documents, 1914-1918, 6 December 1916, 5 March 1917.

⁸⁰⁴ ‘Editor’s Chat’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 5 January 1917, p. 1.

⁸⁰⁵ ‘Editor’s Chat’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 5 January 1917, p. 1.

[sic] I do not think you can afforde [sic] it'.⁸⁰⁶ Therefore the price of food became prohibitive for some members of society, and it is clear that the conditions for the working class would have been different to that of the middle and upper classes, who had more disposable income and greater access to the limited supplies. The diary of Ella Lethem again highlighted the different experience of the middle class to the working class, as she recalled that during a visit one of her friends, 'gave us quite a long, interesting history of her queuing! I hope I never have to do it – I'm just afraid I couldn't'.⁸⁰⁷ Ella's use of the word 'interesting' to describe the story of queuing suggested she was amused, rather than appalled or panicked, by it. It is also clear that this middle-class young woman had never queued for food in her life. Therefore again there is evidence of the contrasting experience of the classes, especially the working class women, who had no alternative but to queue for food and were struggling to feed their children due to the increasing price of food. This rising cost simply did not have the same impact on the middle classes, for whom even shopping for themselves was 'a novelty for many'.⁸⁰⁸

The extreme consequence of a forced change in food consumption could lead, as could be seen in Germany and Russia during the war, to riots, and in Russia's case, to revolution.⁸⁰⁹

Although the food shortages in Britain did not reach the crucial levels that they did in other nations, official documents relating to the control of food in the country indicated that there was some unrest among the working classes in Leeds due to the food queues.⁸¹⁰ They also

⁸⁰⁶ LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/GS/1197, Papers of Private Herbert Oates, 1914-18.

⁸⁰⁷ LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/DF/074, Diaries of Ella Lethem, 1917-1918, entry for 21 January 1918.

⁸⁰⁸ For evidence of the working-class struggle to feed their families, see LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/GS/1197, Papers of Private Herbert Oates, 1914-1918, Hunt, 'Gender and Everyday Life', p. 157.

⁸⁰⁹ For further details on the food riots in Germany and Russia during the war, see Coles, 'The Moral Economy of the Crowd', 159, Davis, *Home Fires Burning*; Engel, 'Not by Bread Alone'; Lynne Taylor, *English History*.

⁸¹⁰ WYAS Leeds LC/TC Bin 36/5/1 Ministry of Food Control, correspondence from 31 March 1917 to 31 December 1917.

provided evidence that the authorities were cautious to avoid any dissonance on the home front which may lead to working class instigated riots, even warning that the soldiers in the trenches would also be frustrated and unhappy to learn that their families were struggling. Therefore measures needed to be taken to avoid potential dissension on both the home front and in the trenches.⁸¹¹ William Beveridge stated that the industrial unrest caused by food problems included frustration at the unequal distribution of food, as well as the rising prices.⁸¹² There is evidence in Leeds of the latter, shown by the demonstration organised by the Leeds and District Trades and Labour Council and Labour Party, who protested against these increasing food prices, and in their demand for more equitable dissemination of foodstuffs, in December 1917 in the Leeds Coliseum.⁸¹³ Class differences are also evident here: the frustration felt by the working classes, who were the ones suffering more in this adversity. This would have led to decreased morale, as well as lack of confidence in, and support for, the war, which is exactly what the authorities wished to avoid.

During the first eighteen months of the war food supplies from home and abroad were maintained, therefore there was no necessity for the Government to intervene.⁸¹⁴ The position changed in 1916 due mainly to poor harvests, both at home and in America, and the German submarine campaign, which resulted in ships being sunk in the beginning of 1917.⁸¹⁵ Prior to the introduction of rationing in Britain in the latter year of the war, food shortages were addressed by increased home production and food control measures, the directions for which were the responsibility of the Food Controller. Under their direction, flour mills were taken

⁸¹¹ WYAS Leeds LLD1/4/36/5/2 Papers relating to the Ministry of Food, correspondence from January 1918.

⁸¹² Beveridge, *British Food Control*, p. 2.

⁸¹³ WYAS Leeds, LLD1/4/36/5/2 Papers relating to the Ministry of Food, correspondence from January 1918/

⁸¹⁴ Peter Dewey, 'Food Production and Policy in the United Kingdom, 1914-1918: The Alexander Prize Essay', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 30 (1980), 71-89 (p. 71); see also Dewey, 'Nutrition and Living Standards'.

⁸¹⁵ Middleton, *Food Production in War*, pp. 160-1.

over by the Government in April 1917 in a bid to control flour production and distribution and, more notably for Leeds, a scheme of voluntary rationing was introduced, which was later developed into a food economy campaign.⁸¹⁶ The department of the Board of Agriculture, the Food Production Department, which had been formed in January 1917 to increase home production, used tactics such as public information or propaganda posters created to encourage the public to save food to help the war effort.⁸¹⁷ In Leeds, the voluntary scheme was more successful than in most other places. The local press played their part as they publicised the message to encourage the production of home-grown food, such as the inclusion of awareness notices which advised people how to eat better, including a regular column on 'Food and How to Save it'.⁸¹⁸ This incorporated advice to the public on how to successfully grow their own vegetables, and the public were also encouraged to keep animals such as poultry, pigs and rabbits for personal consumption.⁸¹⁹ The newspapers also included a request by the Food Controller to the Lord Mayor that a local committee should be appointed in case rationing needed to be introduced. Subsequently the Leeds Food Control Committee was established in September 1917, with the city central Art Gallery being turned into a Food Office.⁸²⁰ The local Food Control Committee in Leeds sought to solve food problems caused by the war through varying schemes and eventual compulsory rationing. There was also the creation of local Food Vigilance Committees, which had the aim to support the interests of

⁸¹⁶ Beveridge, *British Food Control*, p. 2.

⁸¹⁷ Dewey, 'Food Production', p. 72.

⁸¹⁸ For example, the *Leeds Weekly Citizen* included a series of advice notices from the Food Controller, for example from 9 February 1917, p. 4, 2 March 1917, p. 4, 9 March 1917, p. 4.

⁸¹⁹ For example, see 'Public Notices: Increase of Food Supply', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 19 January 1917, p. 2.

⁸²⁰ WYAS Leeds, LLD1/4/36/8: Papers relating to Voluntary Food Rationing Campaign and Food Control Campaign, 1917. For further information on the formation of local food committees in separate authorities and the powers conferred upon them, see Middleton, 'Chapter VIII The Harvest of 1917', in *Food Production in War*, pp. 158-206, Thornton, *Leeds*, p. 182, Scott, *Leeds*, p. 44.

the consumer in the midst of food shortages.⁸²¹ In Leeds, the local press had in fact called for more regulation on foodstuffs for months before they were implemented, and Scott confirmed that by this time the need for some form of food control was ‘urgent’.⁸²² This urgency led the War Savings Committee of Leeds City Council make the decision that posters should be placed on trams and exhibitions of public awareness films in the city’s picture houses be displayed, to encourage the Leeds public to voluntarily control their food intake.

Additionally, Leeds Industrial Cooperative Society was instructed to provide the weekly list of the total flour sold, to calculate and monitor how much flour was being consumed.⁸²³ Meat was also regulated, and this is another factor that highlights the difference between the classes at this time. Scott recalled that the call for ‘meatless days’ in households and restaurants was ‘accepted as a settled system’, although acknowledged that it ‘soon gave place to organised rationing’. For the upper and middle classes, limiting their meat intake was a novelty, with, as Scott recalled, vegetarian food becoming ‘fashionable’, and sausages having a ‘decided vogue’.⁸²⁴ Ella Lethem’s diary corroborates this view, in her claim that, ‘it’s really quite useful being a vegetarian in these days’, and her statement that she ‘eats no meat and have no sugar except what is in fruit and vegetables’, which led her to declare: ‘I’m a very patriotic person, I think!’⁸²⁵ This indicates that the campaign to encourage people to eat less meat and other limited foodstuffs for the good of the country in the time of national crisis was successful in some quarters, as it provided people on the home front with the opportunity to show their patriotism. The *Leeds Weekly Citizen* acknowledged this novelty for the richer in society, with the acerbic line concerning meatless menus in Leeds clubs on

⁸²¹ Waites, ‘The Effect of the First World War on Class and Status’, p. 36.

⁸²² Scott, *Leeds*, p. 42.

⁸²³ WYAS Leeds, LLD1/4/36/8: Papers relating to Voluntary Food Rationing Campaign and Food Control Campaign, 1917.

⁸²⁴ Scott, *Leeds*, p. 34.

⁸²⁵ LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/DF/074, Diaries of Ella Lethem, 1917-1918, entries for 4 February 1918 and 10 March 1918.

Fridays: ‘What a sacrifice these portly gentlemen are making!’⁸²⁶ Those less well off in society, in comparison, were provided with ‘horse beef’.⁸²⁷

In July 1917, a letter written by the secretary of the Association of Municipal Corporations to the town clerks of large industrial centres, including Leeds, stated that rationing would need to be considered, although the individual local authorities would be allowed some autonomy or discretion over this.⁸²⁸ Leeds as a city was ultimately rather successful in increasing its agricultural produce and other foodstuffs, and articles in the local press outlined that the higher numbers of back garden poultry led to an ‘increase to egg supply’.⁸²⁹ Scott recalled that men ‘and women too’ from all over the city of Leeds were ‘busying themselves in their leisure hours with the cultivation of potato plots and allotment gardens on land rented from the Corporation, in parks and other suitable spaces’. He also commented that the introduction of British Summer Time, instituted in 1916 to save daylight time, was welcomed by these residents of Leeds, who ‘devoted the evening to tilling and tending these acceptable aids to food production’.⁸³⁰ It is clear that Scott embellished the enthusiasm of the Leeds people here, however it is true that although compulsory rationing was introduced in London in January 1918, in Leeds it was postponed until mid-February. Ella Lethem’s diary confirmed this also when she wrote as late as May 1918 that she went shopping for some tea, which ‘isn’t rationed here yet’.⁸³¹ Official documents also illustrated that other localities did not maximise the use of land for food growth as in Leeds due to landlords being cautious about their land being used for national purposes, concerned that it would not be returned to them

⁸²⁶ ‘Meatless Menus: Sacrifice in Leeds Clubs’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 23 March 1917, p. 2.

⁸²⁷ Scott, *Leeds*, p. 50.

⁸²⁸ WYAS Leeds, LLD1/4/36/6: Correspondence, memos and papers relating to Leeds Food Control Committee.

⁸²⁹ ‘Back Garden Poultry: Increase to Egg Supply’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 9 February 1917, p. 4.

⁸³⁰ Scott, *Leeds*, p. 42.

⁸³¹ LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/DF/074, Diaries of Ella Lethem, 1917-1918, entry for 4 May 1918.

after the crisis.⁸³² Leeds also set up communal kitchens or canteens, which had been introduced by the Ministry of Food to increase food economy by distributing food to the poor, and ‘made it possible for the working women to obtain basic meals for herself and her family easily and affordably’.⁸³³ The first canteens and communal kitchens in Leeds had been set up by the Lady Mayoress’ Committee, and also Scott recalled that some of the ‘schools were utilised as municipal kitchens’.⁸³⁴ A vivid description of the kitchens can be seen in Mrs Peel’s recollections from the time, written in the 1930s, in which she stated that the ‘public or national kitchens filled a need’, although they ‘fortunately never became a necessity’.⁸³⁵ The women of Leeds were also instrumental in the careful saving of foodstuff, making smaller portions last longer, as Scott detailed: ‘the housewife resorted to all kinds of devices to satisfy both normal and abnormal appetites with but slender portions of animal food by way of “stand by”’.⁸³⁶ The surviving recipe book of a local woman from the war years provided evidence of this, including helpful tips on how to maximise the amount of food being cooked.⁸³⁷ This illustrates the ingenuity of the women in how they provided their families with crucial nourishment.

The issue of food shortages, notably the provision of food to working class families, was certainly gendered, as women were invariably the ones who had to purchase and cook the food. Indeed, food was ‘becoming a national obsession’, and obtaining limited supplies was ‘a time-consuming, tiring and demoralising business, a burden which principally fell on

⁸³² WYAS Leeds, LLD1/4/36/5: Papers relating to the Ministry of Food, 1912-1918, Correspondence from 1 January 1918.

⁸³³ Woollacott, *On Her Their Lives Depend*, p. 63.

⁸³⁴ WYAS Leeds, LLD1/4/36/8: Papers relating to Voluntary Food Rationing Campaign and Food Control Campaign, 1917; Scott, *Leeds*, p. 44.

⁸³⁵ C S Peel, *How We Lived Then, 1914-1918: A Sketch of Social and Domestic Life in England During the War* (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1929), pp. 83-85 (p. 83).

⁸³⁶ Scott, *Leeds*, p. 50.

⁸³⁷ WYAS Leeds, WYL1260, Recipe Collections made by a lady associated with Rodley, 1896-1929.

women'.⁸³⁸ Hunt shows that 'violent cost-of-living protests, largely people by poor urban housewives, erupted across the world' during the war years 1917 and 1918.⁸³⁹ Although Britain did not have the sensational experience of other nations in the protests against rising costs of living, for example in Germany or Russia, 'a women's politics of food' can be found in all communities of previously 'unorganized housewives on the wartime home front'.⁸⁴⁰ In addition to this, it could be argued that the hardships and sacrifices that working class women in Britain faced may have encouraged them to become more active in politics, as illustrated by the formation of the Women's Peace Crusade, the grass roots anti-war group made up of mostly working class women formed in Scotland in 1916, which rapidly spread through the north of England in 1917.⁸⁴¹ In Leeds, the main organiser of the local group of the Women's Peace Crusade was Isabella Ford. Ford wrote to *Leeds Weekly Citizen* to publicise that the WIL had joined forces with the Women's Peace Crusade in a bid for peace, extolling the local work of the latter and their 'successful campaign in Leeds during August and September' which was 'still carrying on its work'.⁸⁴² The Women's Peace Crusade worked with other existing groups with a wider scope, including the ILP, the Women's Labour League, and the WIL. In Leeds, although the WIL organised the Women's Peace Crusade campaign there through August and September 1917, and again in 1918, it was a short-lived interaction and the numbers of women who may have been involved are, unfortunately,

⁸³⁸ Gregory, *Last Great War*, pp. 214-215.

⁸³⁹ Hunt, 'The Politics of Food', p. 8.

⁸⁴⁰ Hunt, 'The Politics of Food', p. 8.

⁸⁴¹ Historiography on the Women's Peace Crusade includes Doogan, *Chalk Marks in the Rain*, Hannam, *Isabella Ford*, Jill Liddington, 'The Women's Peace Crusade: The History of a Forgotten Campaign', in *Over Our Dead Bodies*, ed. by Dorothy Thompson (London: Virago, 1983) pp. 180-198, Alison Ronan, *A Small Vital Flame: Anti-war Women in North West England, 1914-1918* (Manchester: Scholars Press, 2014), and 'The Women's Peace Crusade in Manchester: June-September 1917', *North West Labour History Journal*, 28 (2003), 56-60.

⁸⁴² 'Letter from I O Ford', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 2 November 1917, p. 2.

unknown.⁸⁴³ However the fact that there was involvement in this campaign among some of women in Leeds demonstrated that dissent did exist in the city in some form, although it must be emphasised that the majority of women did not take part in any anti-war activities. On the contrary, they committed themselves to the cause of the war in the industry it created.

Industrial Tensions

In Leeds, as in other places in Britain and the other belligerent nations, this increased work related to the war also brought increased tensions. These included between employers and employees, as the latter found it increasingly hard to make ends meet due to the rising prices. Gregory claims that by this year of the war ‘day to day strain was taking its toll’, which meant that ‘industrial relations would develop into a complex game of brinkmanship’ and he emphasises that, ‘underlying everything was the rising cost of living.’⁸⁴⁴ There is no doubt that many in British society were by this stage of the war facing financial difficulties, due to the situation with the increasing food and fuel prices compounded by the lack of corresponding wage rises, as ‘prices had clearly outstripped increased earnings for the vast majority of the regularly employed pre-war working class’.⁸⁴⁵ There is some contention among historians regarding the living standards of the working class during the war. Bernard Waites argues that the new industries introduced by the war ‘led to remarkably high earnings for many munitions workers and in itself forced other employers to raise wages in order to retain labour’.⁸⁴⁶ Although Gregory acknowledges that research into the British population during the war does support the theory of some ‘wartime prosperity’, he also however remains cautious regarding the assumption that this proved that there was an improvement in

⁸⁴³ Hannam, *Isabella Ford*, p. 184.

⁸⁴⁴ Gregory, *Last Great War*, p. 192.

⁸⁴⁵ Gregory, *Last Great War*, p. 193.

⁸⁴⁶ Waites, ‘The Effect of the First World War on Class and Status’, p. 36.

living standards for the working class.⁸⁴⁷ While he accepts that there were indeed some ‘spectacular improvements,’ he also maintains that this is not as unequivocal as Waites claimed, as the work brought its own complications, including the ‘no-strike agreements’ holding wages down ‘more effectively than is sometimes acknowledged’.⁸⁴⁸

The no-strike agreements that Gregory refers to were necessary by this year of the war as industrial unrest was rife in some areas, another factor which supported the theory that the workers were not satisfied with their wages. There is evidence in Leeds that the newly working women were catered for via their own unions, such as the National Federation of Women Workers Trade Union and Approved Society, advertisements for which were included in many editions the *Leeds Weekly Citizen* throughout 1916 and 1917. These specifically targeted ‘women engaged on munitions’ who were urged that they ‘should at once join’.⁸⁴⁹ In Britain there was widespread industrial unrest nationally, that ‘increased sharply in the spring of 1917 and continued to significantly disrupt production until the end of the year’, with more than half a million working days lost due to strike action by November 1917, before the ‘strike activity declined early in 1918’.⁸⁵⁰ The national picture of industrial unrest also took place in Germany by this point in the war, where the ‘street protest over government failures was matched by disruption on the shop floor’, and the workers ‘struck over wages, food supplies, and the general “food calamity”’.⁸⁵¹ Davis shows that the women munitions workers especially were calling for equal distribution of rations, and even

⁸⁴⁷ Gregory, *Last Great War*, p. 193.

⁸⁴⁸ Gregory, *Last Great War*, pp. 194-195.

⁸⁴⁹ See for example ‘Advert for the National Federation of Women Workers Trade Union and Approved Society’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 31 March 1916, p. 8.

⁸⁵⁰ Gazeley and Newell, ‘The First World War and the Working Class Food Consumption’, p. 71, Bernard Waites, *A Class Society at War: England, 1914-1918* (Leamington Spa: Berg, 1987), p. 232.

⁸⁵¹ Davis, *Home Fires Burning*, p. 195.

suggests that the strikes in Germany in 1917 could be seen as the ‘the first sign of serious political unrest in Germany’.⁸⁵²

In Leeds, although there is evidence that the workers were discontented, such as headlines that ‘Leeds Painters to Strike’ in the local press, the strikes in the city were short-lived, or even halted before they began.⁸⁵³ There was much press coverage of industrial tensions in the city this year, with reports of unrest among the engineers in the city in May, including in those in the Armley Road and Hunslet munitions works.⁸⁵⁴ However the female workers did not take such a large part in the strikes as in Germany, as although in May 1917 the ‘men were out on the streets [...] the cartridge girls went on working’, and even for the men the strike was brief, as following a meeting a resolution was passed to go back to work the following day.⁸⁵⁵ A notice from employers stated that work would continue at night shift, ‘in view of the importance of output of munitions’, proof that the workers were willing to continue their employment for the war effort, as well as possibly to make the potential strikers feel guilty for their part in delaying the output of much-needed munitions to deter them from walking out again.⁸⁵⁶ The reports from the ‘Unrest Among Engineers’ in May 1917 outlined ‘the difference in Leeds’, one explanation for why Leeds did not have the same strains as other places: ‘The Leeds men are not so affected by private work, for they are almost entirely on direct munitions of war, and will not be so subject to transference and dilution.’⁸⁵⁷ Therefore it was the specific industry for the war in Leeds, munitions, which was

⁸⁵² Davis, *Home Fires Burning*, p. 238, p. 218.

⁸⁵³ ‘Leeds Painters to Strike’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 26 October 1917, p. 2.

⁸⁵⁴ ‘Unrest Among Engineers’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 18 May 1917, p. 3, ‘Leeds Engineers Come Out’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 25 May 1917, p. 3.

⁸⁵⁵ ‘Leeds Engineers Come Out’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 25 May 1917, p. 3, See Thom, *Nice Girls and Rude Girls*, p. xiii, for reference to the strike.

⁸⁵⁶ ‘Leeds Engineers Come Out’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 25 May 1917, p. 3.

⁸⁵⁷ ‘Unrest Among Engineers: The Difference in Leeds’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 18 May 1917, p. 3.

a main factor in ensuring that strikes were not widespread in the city. The views of the soldiers themselves to the strikers was, in the main, derisive. This was due to a lack of understanding of the view of those protesting against industrial problems from their perceived life of luxury at home when they faced injury and death on the battle front, as a letter from a soldier abroad to the local press in Leeds exclaimed:

I wish the men at home would try to realise what war means. This war is no picnic [...] The trials and troubles of the munitions' workers are gravely discussed out here, especially the part of the programme where they go home and go to bed, and enjoy all the discomforts of home-life [...] Let them see what I have seen.⁸⁵⁸

Summary

It is clear that the First World War had multiple impact on the city in 1917. The war-weariness notwithstanding, however, the living conditions were clearly better in Leeds than in many other parts of the country, and certainly than in the other belligerent nations. This was due to the employment brought by the war industry and the measures taken to ensure food shortages were not as acute as elsewhere. As Chickering argues, the most basic and vital need during the war was food, with urban areas particularly challenged in this respect as they were dependent on outside sources for their supplies.⁸⁵⁹ However the measures taken in Leeds meant that it was not as dependent upon external sources for food supplies, which aided the food problem enormously, hence the later introduction of rationing there. Although the grief being felt by this time was all encompassing in Leeds, it also gave people a reason to continue working for the war, as Stevenson shows in his 'war trap' theory: the war was 'prolonged in 1917 for the same reasons as it had begun: both sides had political objectives that they considered too important to abandon, and both supposed there was a chance of

⁸⁵⁸ 'Letters from Soldiers', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 28 January 1916, p. 7.

⁸⁵⁹ Chickering, *The Great War*, p. 160.

victory if they carried on'.⁸⁶⁰ Crucially, society also needed to give some meaning to the losses already sustained. This was certainly the case in Leeds where the challenges of grief and the food shortages, the relentless war infiltrating every aspect of life, caused many in society to turn their anger to the easiest target: the enemy. As a Leeds citizen wrote to the local press at the end of the year, 'The year which has finished its course has been terrible; and if we may not, as a nation, boast of perfect blamelessness, at least we have not dishonoured ourselves', the inference being, of course, that the enemy had.⁸⁶¹ The desire for victory was also all encompassing, as another inhabitant of Leeds wrote: 'peace and concord are the goals to which all our endeavours point. But this does not mean that we ought to leave off fighting'.⁸⁶² The letters home of soldiers on the front mirrored this conviction that the fight to victory was crucial: 'From the few papers we see, it now appears that the pinch is beginning to be felt at home, but if we pull together both at home and out here, I trust and hope we shall win through before very long'; and 'let us hope and trust that ere long this mighty conflict will draw to a mighty victory for the Allies.'⁸⁶³ One would anticipate increasingly similar sentiments in the evidence in letters and newspapers in 1918, as the war draws to a close.

This overwhelming desire for a victorious end to the war meant that Britain's anti-war presence did not impact on most people in Leeds, despite the challenges of the war. Even the holding of the Leeds Convention in the city failed to rouse those on the home front to protest against the war which was killing their menfolk and making life arduous, due to employment the war brought to the city. As Pearce states of the Leeds Convention, it 'appears to have

⁸⁶⁰ Stevenson, 'The Failure of Peace', p. 85.

⁸⁶¹ 'Correspondence', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 4 January 1918, p. 3.

⁸⁶² 'Correspondence', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 9 March 1917, p. 3.

⁸⁶³ WYAS Leeds, LC TR, Leeds City Council Treasurer's Correspondence with Employees Enlisted in the Armed Forces, 1917-1919, Norman Baxendale, 25 May 1917, Sergeant Arthur Smith, 14 September 1917.

been in Leeds but not of Leeds'.⁸⁶⁴ The war-related employment, in addition to the financial benefit, also meant that many in Leeds society felt they were playing a crucial role in the fight for victory, vital for morale on the home front, despite the food shortages and other hardships of the war. Even the soldiers abroad knew the work that was being undertaken on the home front contributing to the war effort, with one having reflected that 'no stone was being left unturned to make ultimate victory certain'.⁸⁶⁵ It seems clear, therefore, that the majority of the population in Leeds continued to view the war with consensus, as Lucy Moore and Nicola Pullman state, 'Despite differences in opinion, on the whole Leeds and its residents devoted themselves tirelessly to the war effort, often at high personal cost', the high personal cost referring to the blanket of grief that enveloped the city.⁸⁶⁶ In spite of, and also due to, this grief, the people in Leeds as a whole carried on working for the war effort. This work became their own fight for victory; as a soldier on the battle front wrote home in April 1917, the war would only be over 'when we have taught our enemies a lesson'.⁸⁶⁷

⁸⁶⁴ Pearce, *Communities of Resistance*, p. 386.

⁸⁶⁵ WYAS Leeds, LC TR, Leeds City Council Treasurer's Correspondence with Employees Enlisted in the Armed Forces, 1917-1919, Lieutenant W Marshall, 11 June 1917.

⁸⁶⁶ Moore and Pullman, *Leeds Remembering*, p. 121.

⁸⁶⁷ WYAS Leeds, LC TR, Leeds City Council Treasurer's Correspondence with Employees Enlisted in the Armed Forces, 1917-1919, Norman Baxendale, 19 April 1917, Driver R S Wilby, 6 April 1918,

Chapter Five: 1918 – ‘The Darkest Hour Before Dawn’

Introduction

Frank Gott, the Lord Mayor of Leeds by this point in the war, stated on 4 August 1918, the fourth anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War, that its aim was: ‘To achieve the ideals for which our great sacrifice has been made. In unshaken faith that our cause is just and right, we ask to-day that we may be given the spirit and strength that alone can ensure victory.’⁸⁶⁸ The inherent implication in this statement is that the Allies’ stance in the war was honourable and righteous, and that the deaths of the many men lay at the sacrificial altar of the war. That the war was seen as morally justifiable, which needed to be fought to the end no matter the cost, was a shared sentiment for many on the home front and the Leeds soldiers abroad alike: ‘We have now entered into the fifth year of the war and it is to be hoped for the sake of the gallant men who are risking their lives in a noble cause that it may be the last’.⁸⁶⁹ This chapter will focus upon the impact of events of the final year of the war on the people of Leeds, thereby investigating Scott’s assertion that, ‘During the fourth phase of the war, from 1917 to the signing of the Armistice, Leeds never lost heart. Trying as were the local experiences of the numerous restrictions, the resolve to “carry on” was manifest’.⁸⁷⁰ This supposed tenaciously fierce, national-minded attitude of Leeds society shall be scrutinized, with reference to their reaction to the significant external events of the year. These include analysis of the motives behind the outlining of the ‘war aims’ of the Allied leaders at this stage, notably Lloyd George’s justification of his war aims early in the year, as well as

⁸⁶⁸ Scott, *Leeds*, p. 55.

⁸⁶⁹ WYAS Leeds, LC TR, Leeds City Council Treasurer’s Correspondence with Employees Enlisted in the Armed Forces, 1917-1919, John Keavey, 8 August 1918.

⁸⁷⁰ Scott, *Leeds*, pp. 60-61.

American President Woodrow Wilson's 'Fourteen Points'.⁸⁷¹ The former was designed to placate the increasing war-weariness and associated dissent to the war which was being experienced, as well as to appease the growing tensions with the trade unions. Lloyd George knew that victory 'depended on the staying power of the nations', and the country's own focus upon maintaining and increasing industry and providing foodstuffs to the people on the home front had an impact locally in Leeds, as a prominent war industry city.⁸⁷² The consequences of the war industry for women at this time will be a particular focus again, including evaluation of the passing of the Representation of the People Act this year and consideration of how the Act affected the Leeds political landscape. Women voted for the first time at the General Election in December 1918, however, although this Act enfranchised working class men over the age of twenty one, only limited numbers of women over the age of thirty were given the same rights therefore it excluded many of the women munitions workers. Therefore, although many commentators assert that the Act was passed to reward the females for their war work, others hold the view that its strict voting criteria 'deliberately kept women as a minority in the electorate'.⁸⁷³ The war continued to dominate all aspects of life, which can be seen in local events of the year. There was a definite change in tone in the Leeds newspapers as the year went on, in anticipation of the end of the war. Throughout the year there was also focus upon the need for housing, both nationwide and locally, an example

⁸⁷¹ 'The Fourteen Points' were a statement of principles for peace, to be used for peace negotiations in order to end the war, which were outlined in a speech on January 8, 1918, by President Woodrow Wilson to the United States Congress.

⁸⁷² Lloyd George, *War Memoirs Vol II*, p. 1490.

⁸⁷³ Stevenson, *With Our Backs to the Wall*, p. 440. For further discussion on the passing of the Representation of the People Bill and reference to women workers, see Bartley, *Votes for Women*, Braybon and Summerfield, *Women's Experience*, Braybon, *Women Workers*, and *Evidence*, Barbara Caine, *English Feminism, 1780-1980* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), Grayzel and Proctor, eds, *Gender and the Great War*, Gullace, *Blood of Our Sons*, Holton, *Feminism and Democracy*, Marwick, *The Deluge*, and *Women at War*, Rover, *Women's Suffrage*, Thom, 'Gender and Work', Jo Vellacott, 'Feminist Consciousness and the First World War,' *History Workshop*, 23 (1987), 81-101, Woollacott, *On Her Their Lives Depend*.

of how the concerns focused upon the future and thus saw beyond the war: 'Housing in Leeds. A Call for Action.'⁸⁷⁴

The external events and their effect upon the city will also be addressed, such as the 'Michael Offensive', the first phase of the Spring Offensive in March 1918, after which the Allies counterattacked strongly, also known as the Ludendorff Offensive or Kaiserschlacht (Kaiser's Battle). These series of German attacks along the Western Front from March to July 1918 were referred to by a local newspaper as a 'ghastly battle', however as has been seen in preceding years, the immolation of the soldiers was generally accepted for the good of the war, as the press stated: 'The hearts of all English men and women go out to the Army at this time of enormous sacrifice'.⁸⁷⁵ The men from Leeds who were the soldiers in the field also expressed a wish for the end of the war by this year: 'We follow with much interest the progress of the great offensive in the "West" and look forward to the time, which is sure to come, when our counter offensive begins. This may be the beginning of the end but as to this year seeing the finish, well, it remains to be seen', their hopes pinned on the American intervention: 'I hope and trust we now have a straight united fight to a finish, with the help of "Uncle Sam" 1918 should terminate a war that will live long in the world's history.'⁸⁷⁶

Another notable campaign of the war to have resonance within Leeds this year was the Second Battle of Marne, beginning of 15 July 1918, in which Leeds Pal Private Dalby was gassed, 'which affected his eyes and rendered him unconscious', but which also signalled the beginning of the collapse of the German army.⁸⁷⁷ The year progressed with the successful

⁸⁷⁴ 'Housing in Leeds', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 25 January 1918, p. 4. Similar reports appeared throughout the year, for example 'Correspondence: Land for Houses', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 18 October 1918, p. 3.

⁸⁷⁵ 'The News of Battle', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 29 March 1918, p. 2.

⁸⁷⁶ WYAS Leeds, LC TR, Leeds City Council Treasurer's Correspondence with Employees Enlisted in the Armed Forces, 1917-1919, Private Fred Parker, Private T R Parker, 10 May 1918, 13 January 1918.

⁸⁷⁷ LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/TR/02/1, Tape recordings of Private F A Dalby, 1970-1999.

advance of the Allies in August, and the Turkish forces being defeated at Megiddo in September. These events contributed to the peace-making overtures of the nations from October onwards, the call for Armistice by Germany leading to the mutiny of the German navy in this month, and the subsequent abdication of Kaiser Wilhelm II was announced on 9 November. It was a year which ended with the signing of the Armistice between Britain and Germany on 11 November 1918, the Allies being the victors due largely to the fact that the victory ‘depended on endurance and the victors endured longer’.⁸⁷⁸ Gary Sheffield argues that the British citizen army became a highly effective combative force, which by the end of the war in 1918 had won the greatest series of victories in British military history.⁸⁷⁹ This contrasts with the views of other historians, such as Ferguson, who claims that the war, which he unequivocally, and controversially, describes as ‘nothing less than the greatest error in human history’, was mismanaged by the British, which meant that America’s entrance into it in 1917 was essential for victory.⁸⁸⁰ It will be discussed how other factors which influenced the outcome of the war were reflected in the newspapers and public opinion in Leeds, and it will be shown that this was not a clear cut military victory for the British. It will be highlighted especially how this was reported, with usual diversity, in the Leeds newspapers.

War Aims

Scott recalled that the ‘situation was critical; the outlook depressing [...] throughout the early months of 1918’.⁸⁸¹ This view concurred with that of Lloyd George, who claimed that this latter year was the ‘most critical stage of the War’.⁸⁸² Certainly by this final year of the

⁸⁷⁸ Stevenson, *With Our Backs to the Wall*, Preface, p. xvi.

⁸⁷⁹ Sheffield, *Forgotten Victory*.

⁸⁸⁰ Ferguson, *Pity of War*, p. 462.

⁸⁸¹ Scott, *Leeds*, p. 60.

⁸⁸² Lloyd George, *War Memoirs Vol II*, p. 1490.

conflict the effects of war-weariness were palpable in all belligerent nations. In Germany, the revolutionary fervour increased as the year went on, both on the home front and in the armed forces, as people grew increasingly weary of food shortages and military defeats. Even at the beginning of the year tensions were evident, and the *Leeds Weekly Citizen* reported gleefully on 'German Arrests', where the 'new policy of suppression adopted' by the German Government caused the arrest of 'Independent Socialist executives in fifty towns', which it claimed was 'one of the last desperate resorts of a tottering militarism'. This newspaper, with its transparent sympathies towards socialism, also attacked the German Government, and accused it of having a 'morally reprehensible foreign policy'. The negative connotations used by the press with reference to Germany, as utilised throughout the war, encouraged the public to view the enemy nation with disdain. The newspaper also defended the workers of the enemy country: 'More and more in recent months it has become clear that the people of Germany were in one great camp and the militarists in another and ever dwindling group'; it even claimed that the German people have 'endured much in the name of patriotism and they have been tricked and deceived by the basest of means'.⁸⁸³ This attack on the Government of Germany clearly indicates the contempt with which most of British society viewed the rulers of the enemy country, as well as illustrates the existing tensions within that nation by this time.

The sympathetic stance of the socialist *Leeds Weekly Citizen* to the workers of Germany also indicated that class solidarity was essential to socialist thinking. This was a concept which had been key to the forming of the 'Second International' in 1889, an organisation which aimed to unite socialist and labour parties across the world, and continued the work of the First International, which had also been focused upon the working class and the class

⁸⁸³ 'German Arrests', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 4 January 1918, p. 2.

struggle.⁸⁸⁴ However it must be emphasised at this point that the socialists in different nations did not cooperate internationally to oppose to challenge the war. Although the Second International failed to unite all labour parties from different countries during the war, sections of the Second International in Britain, which were usually smaller parties in Trade Union movement and Labour Party, were overly anti-war. Their views on the war were evident in the reports of a conference of the BSP held in Leeds in April of this year, in an article entitled, 'Against All Wars'. It reported that this conference 'placed on record its conviction that it is in the best interests of Socialism and the working class movement to oppose all wars'.⁸⁸⁵ The Leeds press also reported further calls for the International to work harder for peace this year, with 'A Call for Action' from the ILP in August, which asked, 'Why has no International Conference at all been held?'.⁸⁸⁶ The affinity that these members and other British socialists had with the workers of enemy nations is also unmistakable from the BSP conference in April, where it declared that: 'This conference of the BSP, in the fourth year of world carnage, reaffirms its unshaking fidelity to the cause of international working class solidarity'.⁸⁸⁷ This therefore belies the assumed enmity of all the public in Britain towards the enemy. Despite the fact that the anti-war groups of the differing countries did not unite in their efforts to oppose the war, this provides evidence that some had a class-based sympathy towards the working class of the other nations. This indicates that there was a more nuanced interpretation of the perception of the enemy at this time, including in Leeds. It also illustrates that some in society, albeit a minority, aligned with the socialist views of the

⁸⁸⁴ For further detail on the history of the International, see Julius Braunthal, *History of the International* (London: Nelson, 1966).

⁸⁸⁵ 'Against All Wars', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 5 April 1918, p. 3.

⁸⁸⁶ 'The International and Peace', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 23 August 1918, p. 1.

⁸⁸⁷ 'War, Peace and Russia', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 5 April 1918, p. 3.

Second International, evident especially where the reporting was on the working class in Germany.

By this point of the war, Lloyd George's war aims were expressed in a much milder message than they had been previously. This indicates that the anti-war message was gaining ground, with greater sympathy from among the public, therefore the Prime Minister needed to gently convince the public that the war needed to continue. As the local press in Leeds reported on an anti-war event held in May of this year, where the resolution was moved which declared that 'Mr Lloyd George was condemned for having, in conjunction with Italy and France, turned down the Austrian offers to negotiate peace last year without consulting either his colleagues or the other three of our Allies', in reference to the Prime Minister's rebuff of peace overtures the previous year.⁸⁸⁸ The *Manchester Guardian* commented also on the Austrian overtures of peace in 1917, and spoke for some in the country in its sentiments that, 'It is important to know whether peace could have been made a year ago since men are dying now by the million because peace was not made'.⁸⁸⁹ The socialist press in Leeds asked, 'What about the present German endeavour for peace?' and added that, 'Just as we are so is Germany fighting for her life [...] the only alternative left to Germany is to fight on [...] to obtain a military victory'.⁸⁹⁰ This implies again that the left leaning press had some sympathy for the people of the enemy nation, as compared to the press on the right, which mirrored the nuanced feelings in the country at the time. By the beginning of 1918, tensions on the home front in Britain were heading to a crescendo. The continuing pressure on the army to gain soldiers also inevitably led to more deaths and grief, the continuing pressure on the industrial element to provide the materials of the war with a decreasing male work-force looked

⁸⁸⁸ 'Women and Peace', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 10 May 1918, p. 2.

⁸⁸⁹ Reports from the *Manchester Guardian* included in the local press, 'The Peace Offensive. Austrian Efforts of 1917', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 10 May 1918, p. 4.

⁸⁹⁰ 'The Peace Offensive', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 10 May 1918, p. 4.

unsustainable, and the ongoing and worsening food shortages causing queues and rationing, all leading some to wish for a negotiated end to the war.

Lloyd George claimed that he was more than aware of this war-weariness, and one of his primary foci was the war industry. This was vital for the continued fight for victory, as well the provision of necessary foodstuffs and a perceived need to quash the increasing pacifism being felt in the country. As he recalled, there was ‘a great deal of pacifist propaganda at home which, operating on a natural weariness, might develop into a dangerous anti-war sentiment that would undermine the morale of the nation.’⁸⁹¹ The figures relating to the membership of the UDC also support this theory of an increasing antipathy to the war.⁸⁹² At the beginning of 1918, the UDC had over three hundred affiliated organisations, with a membership in excess of 750,000, and by ‘1917-18 it resembled the Continental minority socialists in its suspicion that the authorities had a hidden agenda and they must disclose their war aims to facilitate a negotiated peace.’⁸⁹³ The shifting tide of the public mood can also be seen in their softening attitude to these anti-war groups, viewed since the beginning of the war as treacherous and seditious.⁸⁹⁴

Lloyd George confirmed that the ‘desire for peace was spreading’, and even ‘amongst men and women who [...] were convinced of the righteousness of the War’, but felt by this stage of the war that ‘the time had come for putting an end to its horrors in the name of humanity, if it could be done on any terms that were honourable and safe’.⁸⁹⁵ The Prime Minister was therefore only too aware that public mood was changing towards the war. The close example

⁸⁹¹ Lloyd George, *War Memoirs Vol II*, p. 1490.

⁸⁹² For further information on the UDC, see Swartz, *The Union of Democratic Control*, and Harry Hanak, ‘The Union of Democratic Control During the First World War’, *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 36 (1963), 168-180.

⁸⁹³ Stevenson, *With Our Backs to the Wall*, p. 453.

⁸⁹⁴ See Marwick, *The Deluge*, p. 216.

⁸⁹⁵ Lloyd George, *War Memoirs Vol II*, p. 1491.

of the actions of former Foreign Secretary Lord Lansdowne highlighted this, when he had the previous November ‘demonstratively broken ranks’ by publishing a letter in the *Daily Telegraph* which gave his public support to ‘more moderate goals,’ causing a political storm.⁸⁹⁶ In this letter, which the newspaper claimed would prove ‘rather provocative’, Lord Lansdowne provided an outline of his idea of the war aims of the Allies, calling for negotiable peace terms with Germany.⁸⁹⁷ Lloyd George feared that Lord Lansdowne ‘presented a powerful and growing section of the people’, and ‘not only in social, but also industrial circles’, and asserted that the ‘suffering was not confined to one class’, but ‘all classes alike shared the tortures of sorrow for the fallen, and the anxieties of incessant apprehension for those who were in the zone for death’.⁸⁹⁸ This indicates that the consternation and grief felt for the soldiers fighting abroad, and therefore the increasing anti-war feeling, was also class-wide. It was, however, for Lloyd George, with his Prime Minister’s eye on the needs of the war, the working class who were toiling for the war materials, ‘to ensure maximum industrial output of munitions and army equipment’, that concerned him foremost.⁸⁹⁹ As he explained: ‘Amongst the workmen there was an unrest that was disturbing and might at any moment become dangerous’. This is why he ‘attached great importance to retaining [the Trade Unions’] continued support in the prosecution of the War’, which, he argued, was ‘essential to convince the nation that we were not continuing the War merely to gain a vindictive or looting triumph, but that we had definite peace aims and that these were both just and attainable.’⁹⁰⁰ Again, the emphasis on the justness of the war can be seen here. This highlights the belief felt by most of British society that the Allies were

⁸⁹⁶ Lloyd George, *War Memoirs Vol II*, pp. 1140-1193, Stevenson, *With Our Backs to the Wall*, p. 451.

⁸⁹⁷ ‘Letter from Lord Lansdowne: Co-ordination of Allies’ War Aims’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 29 November 1917, pp. 5-6.

⁸⁹⁸ Lloyd George, *War Memoirs Vol II*, p. 1491.

⁸⁹⁹ Lloyd George, *War Memoirs Vol II*, p. 1490.

⁹⁰⁰ Lloyd George, *War Memoirs Vol II*, p. 1490.

morally superior in their cause, which provided a vindication of the deaths of many. However, Lloyd George was mindful of the shifting mood in the country moving away from the default view of the war from a perspective of national minded virtue, and knew he needed to counteract this. He attacked the national media for their criticism of the Government's war aims, in his claim that the 'mischievous statements in the Press' purported that the Government's war aims were 'of an "imperialistic" and predatory character, and that we were only continuing the cruelties and sufferings of war in order to secure these nefarious objects'.⁹⁰¹ Therefore, there were several reasons for Lloyd George to provide public and official advocacy for the war by the beginning of 1918. As he explained, this was why a 're-statement of our war aims was necessary at this juncture'.⁹⁰²

In order to speak directly to the trade unions on this issue, Lloyd George chose to provide his war aims speech to a meeting of the Trade Unions Congress (TUC) at Caxton Hall in Westminster on 5 January 1918, a time when Parliament was in recess. The TUC had one month previously agreed a joint war aims programme between themselves and the Labour Party, thus, in addition to pressure also from diplomats abroad, this issue certainly became more urgent for the Prime Minister. The Labour Party were indeed a thorn in the Prime Minister's side, as they had agreed their own war aims at their own conference prior to his own address to the TUC at Caxton Hall, war aims that they sent to the Prime Minister to inform his own. The local press in Leeds reported on these 'War Aims of Labour', which were 'laid before the Premier' setting out the 'Labour Peace Policy'.⁹⁰³ Their terms included a call for a 'Settlement as speedily as possible on principles of democracy and security', 'Territorial adjustment only in the interest of progressive civilisation and world peace', and

⁹⁰¹ Lloyd George, *War Memoirs Vol II*, pp. 1490-1491.

⁹⁰² Lloyd George, *War Memoirs Vol II*, p. 1490.

⁹⁰³ 'Confirmed by Conference. The War Aims of Labour', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 4 January 1918, p. 4.

‘After war trade not to be founded on the oppression or isolation of Germany’.⁹⁰⁴ These war aims were undeniably at odds with the Government’s own. In his response to the Labour Party, Lloyd George highlighted the justness of the war and the liberty it was aiming for:

The Prime Minister [said in his letter that] “The ideals for which we were fighting today [...] were the same as those for which we entered the war.” He was convinced that the Allied purposes, in continuing the war, were not materialistic or vindictive, but that their achievement was essential to the future freedom and peace of mankind.⁹⁰⁵

Again Lloyd George’s emphasis here is on Britain’s lack of malevolence in her war aims. He highlighted that the war was just, thus reminding the people of Britain, who may have been wavering in their support of it, that Britain’s involvement was a necessity for the world’s posterity. Stevenson claims that Lloyd George gave his Caxton Hall address to the TUC as he ‘wanted trade union agreement to release men from protected domestic occupations for the army’, although he clearly also wished to quell the public mood of growing dissent and convince the British people of the honourable necessity of the war.⁹⁰⁶ In the event, the conference with the TUC was described by Lloyd George as being ‘a crowded gathering of delegates and thoroughly representative’, although the lack of women in the audience seriously challenges the latter claim. Lloyd George asserted that the war aims, or ‘terms of peace’, which were outlined were not only representative of the ‘view of Ministers and their supporters, but of Labour, the Independent Liberals and the Dominions’, and were also subsequently ‘embodied in the Treaty of Versailles’. He even claimed that ‘the statement I

⁹⁰⁴ ‘Confirmed by Conference. The War Aims of Labour’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 4 January 1918, p. 4.

⁹⁰⁵ ‘Confirmed by Conference. The War Aims of Labour’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 4 January 1918, p. 4.

⁹⁰⁶ Stevenson, *With Our Backs to the Wall*, p. 451.

made to the Trade Unions is an essential part of my narrative of the War.’⁹⁰⁷ It must be highlighted once more that Lloyd George’s comments were written after the event, therefore should be approached with some caution as his own ‘narrative’ of the conflict. Lloyd George’s war aims were followed closely by the war aims of American President Woodrow Wilson, contained within his Fourteen Points. This was a statement of principles for peace, to be used for negotiations in order to end the war, outlined in a speech on 8 January, 1918, to the United States Congress.⁹⁰⁸ These Fourteen Points were followed by Wilson’s ‘Four Principles’ on 11 February 1918 and ‘Five Particulars’ later in the year in September. Stevenson asserts that, ‘Collectively, Wilson’s speeches became the basis on which the Central Powers would request an armistice’.⁹⁰⁹ Hew Strachan claims that Wilson’s address to the Congress was ‘couched in similar terms’ to that of Lloyd George four days previously.⁹¹⁰ Wilson’s motives, however, in his proclamation of war aims were not viewed as calls for peace at this time; similarly to Lloyd George, he was attempting to justify his nation’s stance in the war to the public and to the wider world. This indicates how public mood towards the war was changing in this year, in all nations.

There is no doubt that there was evidence of both Lloyd George’s and Wilson’s war aims advocations having resonance within British, including Leeds, society, as they continued to be reported and commented upon in the press throughout the month, and year, albeit with differing sympathies. The *Yorkshire Post* was unfalteringly more conservative in its outlook, whereas the contrasting reporting of the *Leeds Weekly Citizen* illustrated their more socialist

⁹⁰⁷ Lloyd George, *War Memoirs Vol II*, p. 1492.

⁹⁰⁸ Strachan, *The First World War*, p. 295.

⁹⁰⁹ Stevenson, *With Our Backs to the Wall*, p. 451. Texts of the speeches of 5 and 8 January 1918 in James Brown Scott, ed., *Official Statements of War Aims and Peace Proposals, December 1916-November 1918* (Washington: The Endowment, 1921), pp. 225-233, pp. 246-254.

⁹¹⁰ Strachan, *The First World War*, p. 295.

perspective on this issue. The latter included letters from readers which expressed a desire to pursue peace, rather than justify the war.⁹¹¹ The more right-wing local newspapers were unequivocal in their pro-war stance, therefore did not appreciate the calls for a negotiated peace, or the need for an organisation such as the League of Nations as suggested by Wilson. That the ‘conservative press’ were part of the propaganda machine of the Allies is demonstrated by the appointment of Lord Northcliffe, the British newspaper and publishing magnate, to the role of director of propaganda in enemy countries in February of this year.⁹¹²

Industry

As Lloyd George was acutely aware, many of the calls for a negotiated peace were coming from the people upon whom the war was resting, the working class, and he acknowledged that the impact of the war on the working people caused much concern.⁹¹³ As a city bolstered by the manufacturing associated with the war, in Leeds there was ample evidence in the local media of the abundance of this industry, as well as the tensions that also existed. The local press continued to make regular reference to potential strikes, including among the engineering, munitions and mining industries, in their demands for better pay and conditions.⁹¹⁴ An informative report in June outlined the call for a reduced working week in Leeds, where a ‘unanimous demand of Leeds engineers’, within the Leeds Engineering and Allied Trades, which represented over thirty thousand workers, demanded the institution of a

⁹¹¹ ‘Correspondence’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 18 January 1918, p. 4. See also ‘British War Aims’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 11 January 1918, p. 2.

⁹¹² Ferguson, *Pity of War*, p. 214.

⁹¹³ Lloyd George, *War Memoirs Vol II*, p. 1441.

⁹¹⁴ See for example ‘45 Hours’ Week’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 7 June 1918, p. 3, ‘The Engineers’ Crisis’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 2 August 1918, p. 3, ‘Correspondence: The Munitions Strike’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 9 August 1918, p. 3, ‘Miners’ One Day Strike’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 30 August 1918.

forty five hour week in the Leeds area. This implies that the usual working week was in excess of this. The article also reported that in other nearby towns and cities, such as Huddersfield and Bradford, employees were working fifty hour weeks, which illustrates the varied hours worked in different places.⁹¹⁵ Despite the evidence of the strains of the war industry, it does appear in Leeds that strikes were more than often halted following negotiations with the employers, as was seen in the previous year. A potential strike was called off following an ‘engineers’ crisis’ in August, after a ‘mass meeting at Leeds’.⁹¹⁶ Another example from earlier in the year was the industrial action of engineers in the munitions factories in Leeds, where ‘thousands of employees’ who were ‘engaged on the production of shells and other munitions’ went back to work following industrial action. This ensured that work was ‘resumed at full pressure’ following the ‘final meeting of the men on strike’ who ‘decided by a great majority to return to work and to work all the Easter holiday on the gun section to make up for lost time’.⁹¹⁷ Therefore the workers were willing not only to return to work but to also work extra, and during an important national holiday, to accommodate the munitions industry. This implies again that the production of materials for the war took priority over all other aspects of life, although the extra money would also certainly have been a factor here.

The use of industrial action at this point in the war was not viewed favourably by many in society, who believed that the war was of the greatest importance and should take precedence over everything else. One letter to the local press in Leeds which referred to the potential strike in the engineering trade in August stated that the workers ‘chose the weapon’ of the strike, thereby placed the blame firmly upon the workers.⁹¹⁸ This comment also indicates the

⁹¹⁵ ‘45 Hours’ Week’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 7 June 1918, p. 3.

⁹¹⁶ ‘The Engineers Crisis’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 2 August 1918, p. 3.

⁹¹⁷ ‘The Engineers. Leeds Strike Ended’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 29 March 1918, p. 2.

⁹¹⁸ ‘Correspondence. The Munitions Strike’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 9 August 1918, p. 3.

extent to which the war infiltrated society, with the connotative word ‘weapon’ being used to discredit the workers. The views of many of the soldiers engaged in fighting on the war fronts towards the striking workers back in Britain also continued to be one of disdain. Comments from Leeds soldiers abroad confirmed that they were aware of the potential striking, and praised the resolve of the people at home when it did not happen: ‘I am glad to read the people at home are more than ever united in their determination to see this lot through in spite of the recent abortive attempt to strike.’⁹¹⁹ The letters also indicated the frustration of the soldiers, whose focus was on defeating the enemy: ‘Could some of those at home who seem ever ready to create strikes witness some of the terrible, never to be forgotten sights of modern warfare, they would [...] settle down to the work of defeating the Hun.’⁹²⁰ The conditions being ensured by the soldiers abroad meant that they could not comprehend the reasons for the striking at home: ‘I see from today’s papers the expected strike of engineers looks like fizzling out. We out here cannot understand any man at home and living in comparative comfort wanting to strike on any pretext.’⁹²¹ The latter soldier’s view was therefore that the working conditions on the home front were incomparable to the terrible conditions being experienced on the fighting fronts. Another letter to the local press from another soldier later in the year supported this view, in which he claimed that, ‘from the beginning of the war the workers at home have adopted a narrow and selfish policy in combating the increased cost of living’, and explained that ‘out here we have to suffer the privations and exposure without the chance of redress, while at home the workers have every power, even the power to turn out and elect any Government’. Furthermore, he asserted that

⁹¹⁹ WYAS Leeds, LC TR, Leeds City Council Treasurer’s Correspondence with Employees Enlisted in the Armed Forces, 1917-1919, addendum to letter from H L Joel, 30 July 1918.

⁹²⁰ WYAS Leeds, LC TR, Leeds City Council Treasurer’s Correspondence with Employees Enlisted in the Armed Forces, 1917-1919, I G Taylor, 22 April 1918.

⁹²¹ WYAS Leeds, LC TR, Leeds City Council Treasurer’s Correspondence with Employees Enlisted in the Armed Forces, 1917-1919, addendum to letter from H L Joel, 30 July 1918.

the industrial action was at threat of ‘dislocating industries so essential to the lives and protection of our soldiers and sailors’. This soldier therefore decried the striking as being destructive to the industries which were of vital support to the fighting men. His frustration is clear, as he continued that the ‘most amazing feature of these strikes is that these men are nearly all “Pacifists”, who have done more to prolong the war with their views than the most aggressive of our militarists’, and added that the ‘trade unions today need the spirit of self-sacrifice of the soldiers and sailors, and when the war is over the latter will return to infuse into their organisation that courage and determination that they have shown in the field of battle.’⁹²² Again, the ‘spirit of self-sacrifice’ of the armed forces is highlighted and applauded here, and compared to the ‘Pacifists’, who were clearly viewed with contempt. The editor of the newspaper did add a note to the end of this letter, in which he explained that ‘It was the engineers of the country who in 1917 abandoned a wage increase campaign in favour of a reduction in prices and better distribution of food’, and in addition, ‘if the engineers and railwaymen were not restless sometimes, there would be little freedom left for discharged men to enjoy’.⁹²³ The differing attitudes of the warring soldier and the socialist who defended the trade unions on the home front therefore provides evidence of the dichotomy which existed at the time.

The threat of strikes notwithstanding, it is evident that there continued to be ample employment in Britain at this time. The diminishing male workforce failed to accommodate it, as indicated in the public notice which appeared regularly in the local press, the Government’s call for experienced workers.⁹²⁴ The key word is ‘experienced’, as although

⁹²² ‘Correspondence: Soldiers and Trade Unions’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 4 October 1918, p. 3.

⁹²³ ‘Editor’s Note on Correspondence: Soldiers and Trade Unions’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 4 October 1918, p. 3.

⁹²⁴ Adverts for government work, publicised in the *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 3 May 1918, p. 4; 10 May 1918, p. 4.

there was a willing population of females to fill the employment vacuum left by the men recruited into the armed forces, skilful and qualified men were still seen as a preferred choice. There is certainly evidence of this in Leeds, where, despite the increasing need for arms and the depleted number of male workers, within the munitions industry thousands of women workers were laid off in March 1918. The local socialist press provided much coverage of this under headlines such as, 'Two Thousand Girls Out'.⁹²⁵ The fact that these women workers were discharged or 'demobilised', as the press, in adherence to the military terminology which infiltrated newspaper reports at this time, dubbed it, highlighted an issue which would need to be faced once the war had ended and women workers had to return to their former roles. These women munitions workers did not have any automatic right to demobilisation benefits, and, as the General Secretary of the National Alliance of Employers and the Unemployed based in London stated in a letter to the Leeds press, the situation was a foreshadowing of problems to come following the end of the war: 'Leeds is only one of several parts of the country in which a foretaste of the difficulties which the demobilisation of munitions workers will bring'.⁹²⁶ Therefore the anticipation of the end of the war was evident here, as well as the fact that similar situations had occurred elsewhere. It is also enlightening that much of society did not have much empathy for the female workers who had been laid off, as the latter official stated: 'A feeling exists in many industrial centres that public opinion, easily aroused for the soldier, will not trouble itself much about the fate of the munitioner'. He referred to this as a 'grave injustice' and continued to call for 'as strong a line on the demobilisation of munitions workers', as 'on the demobilisation of soldiers and sailors', and insisted that there 'must be the same consideration, the same month's furlough

⁹²⁵ 'Two Thousand Girls Out', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 1 March 1918, p. 2.

⁹²⁶ 'Correspondence', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 22 March 1918, p. 3, from A H Paterson, General Secretary, National Alliance of Employers and Employed, London.

on full pay'.⁹²⁷ The *Leeds Weekly Citizen* shared this view in the following report: 'While the 2000 or more discharged munitions girls in Leeds are not likely to evoke much public enthusiasm in their claim for adequate unemployment pay, the principle is one of importance, and sooner or later it will have to be adopted'. It included the response of the Ministry of Munitions to the calls for action for these munitions workers in Leeds, as a telegram read out at a meeting in Leeds Trades Hall held to discuss their plight outlined: 'Every effort will be made by the Ministry of Labour to find work for women discharged', however 'the Government and ministry of Munitions cannot express any opinion as to the possibility of granting demands for special benefits to the discharged women workers'. It also stated that, 'discharged women workers, whose homes are at a distance from places of discharge, shall receive free railways warrants to their homes', although this was obviously little help to those who lived in Leeds itself.⁹²⁸

The contribution of women's labour was invaluable, both in their 'role in sustaining morale and patriotism' and as they 'directly supported the armed forces.'⁹²⁹ This was also a view expressed at the time by Winston Churchill, then Minister for Munitions, who in an address to Parliament on 25 April 1918 regarding the replacement of men with women workers in the munitions industry, claimed that their 'contribution was beyond all praise [...] a reserve in labour-power without which we could not carry on.'⁹³⁰ Compared to other nations, the Allies did have more success in the facilitation of the war industry manufacturing. Therefore, although there were crucial increases in women's work in all nations, with the women taking over the roles traditionally held by the men who were being drafted into the armed forces, in

⁹²⁷ 'Correspondence', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 22 March 1918, p. 3, from A H Paterson, General Secretary, National Alliance of Employers and Employed, London.

⁹²⁸ 'Discharged Munitions Workers', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 1 March 1918, p. 2.

⁹²⁹ Stevenson, *With Our Backs to the Wall*, pp. 439-440.

⁹³⁰ Stevenson, *With Our Backs to the Wall*, p. 447.

the Central Powers the numbers were not as great as in the Allied nations. This was especially the case in Britain and France, where ‘the overall experience was most positive.’⁹³¹ This was significant, as these two nations were the producers of the arms for the Allies, and the greater the workforce, the greater the munitions produced to continue the fight for victory.

The Representation of the People Act

Women’s contribution to the war effort in the striving for this victory is often assumed to be the primary reason for their granting of the vote in 1918, by both future commentators and contemporaries.⁹³² As the diary of Florence Lockwood recorded in February 1918 on ‘the final debate in the House of Commons [...] eventually [...] the Bill was passed into law,’ and exclaimed that, ‘Out of war came this great reform.’⁹³³ However the historiography on the area of female employment in the war is incredibly varied and often conflicting. Marwick and Constance Rover both argue, with some distinction in their focus, that the work the war brought for women helped to emancipate them from their former roles and eventually led to them being granted the vote in 1918.⁹³⁴ Rover asserts that the war brought change to women’s lives and roles which meant that public opinion of them became favourable;

⁹³¹ Stevenson, *With Our Backs to the Wall*, p. 444.

⁹³² For further research on women’s war work and its impact on the granting of the vote to women in Britain, see Bartley, *Votes for Women*, Braybon and Summerfield, *Women’s Experience*, Braybon, *Women Workers and Evidence*, Caine, *English Feminism*, Roger Fulford, *Votes for Women* (London: Faber and Faber, 1958), Gullace, *Blood of Our Sons*, Hannam and Hunt, *Socialist Women*, Holton, *Feminism and Democracy*, Marwick, *The Deluge*, Marwick, *War and Social Change* and *Women at War*, Martin Pugh, ‘Politicians and the Women’s Vote, 1914-1918’, *History*, 59.197 (1974), 358-374 and *Women and the Women’s Movement in Britain, 1914-1959* (Basingstoke: McMillan, 1992), June Purvis and June Hannam, *The British Women’s Suffrage Campaign: National and International Perspectives* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2021), Rover, *Women’s Suffrage*, Thom, ‘Gender and Work’, Vellacott, ‘Feminist Consciousness and the First World War,’ Woollacott, *On Her Their Lives Depend*.

⁹³³ LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/DF/077, Diary of Florence Lockwood, 7 February 1918.

⁹³⁴ Marwick, *War and Social Change*, Rover, *Women’s Suffrage*.

Marwick agrees with this, and also emphasises that the war work meant all arguments regarding women's natural domestic role were effectively destroyed and that the work also served to provide the women with greater confidence, social freedom and economic independence.⁹³⁵ However these two publications are now quite old sources and have since been largely discredited, not least Marwick's interpretation of changes to women's lives in the war, including by the more recent research of female historians such as Braybon, Gullace, Paula Bartley and Sandra Holton.⁹³⁶

Braybon provides the most nuanced interpretation of the issue. She emphasises that, contrary to the mythology of the war, which portrays women as popular workers rewarded with the vote for their 'splendid' work, most employers were reluctant to take on women workers, and remained cynical about their performance.⁹³⁷ This viewpoint is supported by an article in the local press in Leeds after the end of the war, which celebrates the discharge of women workers in the city:

Without appearing ungallant I may be permitted to put on record my unfeigned pleasure on hearing today that by October 3rd nearly all women 'bus conductors, underground [workers] etc. in the employ of the Traffic Combine will have departed from the service. Their record of duty is seriously blemished by their habitual and aggressive incivility, and a callous disregard for the welfare of passengers. Their shrewish behaviour will remain one of the unpleasant memories of the war's vicissitudes.⁹³⁸

It is interesting that this attitude was expressed once the need for women workers was over, the change in the tone of the press being stark. Holton's work recognises the importance of

⁹³⁵ Rover, *Women's Suffrage*, Marwick, *War and Social Change*.

⁹³⁶ See especially Braybon's chapter 'Winners or Losers', Bartley, *Votes for Women*, Gullace, *Blood of Our Sons*, and Holton, *Feminism and Democracy*.

⁹³⁷ Braybon, *Women Workers*.

⁹³⁸ 'Women Workers Departing', *Leeds Mercury*, 23 April 1919, p. 4.

the women's war work in changing the minds of some in society regarding their value and therefore right to the vote, however she places a greater emphasis on the significant political alliances and work of the democratic suffragists (as opposed to the undemocratic suffragettes) in ensuring that women were eventually included on the Representation of the People Bill in 1918.⁹³⁹ Bartley asserts that it is too simple to view the granting of the vote to women as a reward for their war work, and highlights that the vote was only granted to women over the age of thirty, thereby omitting to enfranchise young munitions workers. She also emphasises that many the new women workers were very much resented by the men.⁹⁴⁰ Thom also highlights that the 'assumption of the male breadwinner and female homemaker remained unchallenged despite the lived experience of war', which seems feasible, as nine out of ten soldiers returned from the war, to take up their old jobs again as the women also reverted to their old roles.⁹⁴¹ Pederson also acknowledges that the opportunities for women in greater skilled and higher paid war work were only short term for the duration of the war. She also highlights that the separation allowances that they began to receive during the war were completely dependent on their status as soldiers' wives rather than as struggling mothers, again the men being the main focus for the authorities.⁹⁴²

Roger Fulford takes a differing view on the granting of the vote to women: he argues that the war did not create any changes or reforms but that it accelerated societal changes which were inevitable, changes in the 'nature of women' that had begun 'in the years before the war began'.⁹⁴³ Martin Pugh also suggests that the Government were politically motivated to pass

⁹³⁹ Holton, *Feminism and Democracy*.

⁹⁴⁰ Bartley, *Votes for Women*.

⁹⁴¹ Thom, 'Gender and Work', p. 46.

⁹⁴² For further discussion on the First World War's influence on the history of the welfare state in Britain, see Chapter Two, 'The Impact of the Great War', in Pederson, *Family*, pp. 79-134.

⁹⁴³ Fulford, *Votes for Women*, p. 265.

this bill, in part to appease the women suffragists, yet primarily to provide the vote to the soldiers, therefore he claims that it was not a 'women's measure' and also highlights the fact that women had to be over thirty to vote, therefore it was in fact a 'limited' measure.⁹⁴⁴

Vellacott agrees to some extent with Fulford, in her assertion that the effect of the war on the woman's suffrage issue was 'very slight', however similarly to Holton, she acknowledges the work of the non-militant suffragists as those responsible for the successful campaign for the vote.⁹⁴⁵ Gullace's interpretation of this issue provides further distinctions, and illustrates that women's input into the war effort, both via the war work and the sacrifice of their sons, provided them with the opportunity to 'claim a stake in the war'.⁹⁴⁶ This, she argues, justified the suffragists' enfranchisement claim, as it challenged the perceived notions of female conduct and thus the granting of the vote to women 'predicated full citizenship on something other than male gender'.⁹⁴⁷ Although she does acknowledge that the granting of the vote to only those women over thirty served to disenfranchise the majority of females who worked for the war, notably munitions workers, Gullace provides a credible argument that the vote was won through the promotion of the patriotic service of women, in addition to the call for voting rights for the soldiers.

In Leeds, there was evidence in the press of the local women calling for women's suffrage throughout the war. These included reports from Leeds Women's Suffrage Society's annual meeting in 1917 on the disdain with which the proposals to only grant the vote to women over the age of either thirty or thirty five was received, notably by Isabella Ford, in direct contrast to the views of Millicent Fawcett of the NUWSS, who had previously accepted this proposal as welcome:

⁹⁴⁴ Pugh, 'Politicians and the Women's Vote', p. 358.

⁹⁴⁵ Vellacott, 'Anti-War Suffragists', p. 425.

⁹⁴⁶ Gullace, *Blood of Our Sons*, p. 56.

⁹⁴⁷ Gullace, *Blood of Our Sons*, p. 198.

Miss I O Ford [...] referred to a statement made some years ago by Mrs Fawcett to the effect that she would accept the placing on one red-haired woman on the register as a step to fuller success. “To give the vote to women without red hair [...] would be less insulting than the present proposal regarding women of 35 [...]” She thought it was a very wonderful thing that it has required 4,000,000 women to go into factories to make Mr Lloyd George and the rest of the crew realise that women were human beings. However, they must take what they could get, and then work hard to obtain more.⁹⁴⁸

After the passing of the suffrage bill in at the beginning of 1918, however, the Leeds Women’s Suffrage Society sent a resolution to Fawcett in what it termed ‘the hour of triumph’ expressing ‘congratulations and affection’.⁹⁴⁹ For the rest of the year until the general election in December following the end of the war in November, local newspapers focused upon the numbers this would add to the electorate in Leeds. The *Leeds Weekly Citizen* had a regular column entitled ‘Eyes on the Register’, which provided updates on these numbers, to ensure that Leeds would ‘Secure Every Possible Vote’.⁹⁵⁰ The Act itself granted the vote to women over the age of thirty who met a property qualification, and to all men over the age of twenty one, therefore numbers were anticipated to be far in excess of the previous figure, although the criteria for women meant that many were not enfranchised. There was certainly consternation in Leeds regarding this perceived disenfranchisement of many women, due to the property qualification and age prerequisite, as an article in the left wing newspaper in July illustrated: ‘[The] total number of women electors is not quite so high as some people had anticipated [with a] good many soldiers’ wives’ [being] disenfranchised by war conditions.’ It explained that the house qualification meant that many

⁹⁴⁸ ‘Women’s Suffrage: Leeds Society’s Meeting’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 9 February 1917, p. 3.

⁹⁴⁹ ‘Leeds Women’s Suffrage Society’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 18 January 1918, p. 4.

⁹⁵⁰ ‘Eyes on the Register’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 21 June 1918, p. 3, ‘All Eyes on the Register 2: Those Entitled to Vote’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 28 June 1918, p. 2.

were ‘debarred’ even ‘although they are over thirty years of age’ due to them either not being householders or occupying rooms that they had themselves furnished as they were in living accommodation as a result of the war and that this ‘discredited “property” franchise’ affected ‘a huge number of working women in Leeds’. The figure this article provided is a ‘Leeds register of 226,382 persons’, which was ‘more than double the old one’.⁹⁵¹ However new lists were published four months later, with the increased figure of ‘232,909 Leeds Voters.’⁹⁵² It was clear that the number of male voters was considerably higher than the female voters, which was not well received by some sections in society, especially regarding the fact that younger women were not given the vote. At a women’s conference held in Leeds in October, the women under the age of thirty who were not included in the electorate are referred to as, ‘Voteless Young Women’, and the article claimed that they had, ‘lost, by the war, not only the bodies of our young men, but also the ideals and aspirations of our young men, and that alone made it more necessary that the younger women should be enfranchised.’⁹⁵³ Therefore the argument was that younger values and principles would be missing from future elections, again the emotive language of the press channelling the language of the war to gain attention and sympathy for these women. In addition, even the women who were granted the right to vote were patronised by the press. For example the editor of the *Leeds Weekly Citizen* who claimed: ‘Working women need seriously instructing as to their part in the political field. It is alongside their husbands and brothers, and not with Primrose League dames’.⁹⁵⁴ The latter phrase referred to the organisation for disseminating Conservative principles, which signified the class differences in politics at this time, as well as the condescending attitude towards

⁹⁵¹ ‘All Eyes on the Register. 4. Leeds Lists Now Published’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 5 July 1918, p. 3.

⁹⁵² ‘232,909 Leeds Voters. Publication of New Lists’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 4 October 1918, p. 2.

⁹⁵³ ‘The Women’s Conference’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 25 October 1918, p. 2.

⁹⁵⁴ ‘Women Voters’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 15 February 1918, p. 2.

women, from even the left-leaning press. The intent of this newspaper was clearly to encourage the female electorate for vote for a Labour government. Indeed, calls for an election from the Labour Party continued through the year, even when the war was ongoing. Referred to as a so-called 'Khaki Election', which would be heavily influenced by wartime sentiment, the local Labour supporting press in Leeds admitted it would, 'be a difficult thing to fight', as it would be 'a corrupt election'. However it also emphasised that, 'still a new Parliament is necessary'.⁹⁵⁵

War Resisters

That the votes of the newly enfranchised women in Britain were sought after was evident in the press in Leeds throughout the year. Both the WIL and the Women's Peace Crusade organised joint local events to provide instruction to women, as well as continuing the calls for peace. In June, the two organisations joined together to hold meetings, 'held in Victoria Square on Sunday evening [...] and in Armley Park on Monday,' presided over by Ford. With Esther Sandiforth of the nearby anti-war group the Bradford Women's Humanity League as speaker, this meeting was held to encourage women in their voting intentions. As the local press reported, 'The endowment of six millions of women with the franchise has opened up a wide new field of propaganda to direct that vote aright.' At this meeting, the press reported, the 'closely packed audience [...] listened attentively to Mrs Sandiforth of Shipley, who spoke on the horror of war and women's responsibility for its continuance', the inference being that women who were working for the war effort had a culpability for it. It continued that Sandiforth 'urged the women to realise that on them rested a grave responsibility', especially those who were newly enfranchised, and she appealed to them to

⁹⁵⁵ 'A Khaki Election?', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 19 July 1918, p. 3.

make ‘every possible effort to bring pressure to bear on the Government to end the terrible conflict by negotiation, rather than the long drawn out agony of a fight to the finish.’⁹⁵⁶ The Women’s Peace Crusade and WIL held a few of these joint events in the summer months of 1918, at which they continued the call for peace. At one ‘very successful effort [...] held on Woodhouse Moor,’ in May there was reportedly a ‘very large circle of hearers’, which indicated that, although in a minority, the anti-war women in Leeds were certainly a presence and their events appeared to be well organised and well attended.⁹⁵⁷ As early as February of this year an article in the *Leeds Weekly Citizen* advertised the ‘Week-end Visitors’ to a demonstration in Leeds, which included Sylvia Pankhurst, indicating again that there was still an anti-war presence in the city, and that notable figures could be attracted to the city to campaign against the war.⁹⁵⁸

Regarding the men in Leeds who refused to fight, right up to the end of the war men were still being recruited into the armed forces, and the claims for exemption also continued. As Scott declared, by the war’s end ‘still men were being called up, and the Military Tribunals were busy’.⁹⁵⁹ This indicates that men still displayed resistance to the war, both overt resistance in the claim for exemption under the conscience clause, and passive resistance in claims for work of national importance and other reasons.⁹⁶⁰ There is also evidence that men would go to extreme lengths to avoid being called up. For example the tragic report of the death of Ernest Craven, an engineer’s labourer from Holbeck, Leeds, in June, ‘found dead on Saturday evening, hanging by the neck from a tree at Seacroft’, who was reported to have

⁹⁵⁶ ‘Women Speakers in Leeds’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 7 June 1918, p. 3

⁹⁵⁷ ‘Women and Peace’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 10 May 1918, p. 2.

⁹⁵⁸ ‘Leeds Women’s Suffrage Society’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 18 January 1918, p. 4; ‘Week-end Visitors’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 1 February 1918, p. 4.

⁹⁵⁹ Scott, *Leeds*, p. 64.

⁹⁶⁰ Scott, *Leeds*, p. 64.

‘received his notice to join up on the previous day’.⁹⁶¹ The Military Service Act, amended several times over the course of the two years of the war following its introduction in 1916, was changed again in the last months of the war in 1918 to include men up to the age of 51. The local press in Leeds reported that ‘the Tribunal procedure is also being expedited as from today, as “it is important that there should be no break in the flow of men”’, this was due to, it explained, ‘the need for men’ being ‘greater than ever’, and consequently the ‘[Tribunal] standard will be stricter than ever’.⁹⁶² Those who did apply for exemption from the armed forces under the conscience clause were still considered to be cowards and shirkers, and their treatment under the authorities continued to be questionable. Although most of the press continued to take a disdainful view of COs, the *Leeds Weekly Citizen* was more sympathetic. The latter newspaper included reports of the harsh treatment of COs, such as one from the BSP Annual Conference in Leeds in March of this year, where a resolution was moved by a former imprisoned CO Mr Maclean for, ‘greeting and encouragement to the comrades now languishing in prison,’ where he directly compared the COs to soldiers: ‘He knew the bravery of the men at the Front; but the bravest of deeds was in the moral courage of the men who had made the great refusal’ and that ‘a protest be sent to the Government against the treatment of the men in prison’.⁹⁶³ Mr Maclean also reported that he knew ‘from personal experience’ due to his own time in prison, that ‘the Government was drugging the food of the men’, and that he ‘only saved myself [...] by washing my bread, and starving myself, and coming out with nothing but skin and bone upon me.’⁹⁶⁴ The cruel treatment of the COs in prison and the contempt with which they were clearly viewed did not cease once they were

⁹⁶¹ ‘Holbeck Man’s Suicide’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 28 June 1918, p. 3.

⁹⁶² ‘The New Comb Out’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 3 May 1918, p. 2.

⁹⁶³ ‘British Socialist Party Conference at Leeds: Prison Treatment of COs’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 5 April 1918, p. 3.

⁹⁶⁴ ‘British Socialist Party Conference at Leeds: Prison Treatment of COs’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 5 April 1918, p. 3.

released. Leeds Councillor Percy Horner, who, as well as his brother Ernest, ended up imprisoned as a CO in 1916, was released midway through the year in 1918, ‘thanks to the intervention of James O’Grady, MP, on his behalf’, according to the local press.⁹⁶⁵ However, following Horner’s release, he was compelled to resign his position from the City Council, due to his reputation which was then seen as tarnished by the CO experience. A letter to the local press the previous month regarding pacifist prospective parliamentary candidates for Leeds also illustrated that war resisters were not seen as worthy of public office, as ‘not one word of protest has been expressed by any one of them at any time during the war regarding the guilt of Germany and the atrocities committed on land and sea by order of the German rulers’.⁹⁶⁶ This illustrates again the attitude of blame towards the enemy. Even the editor of the *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, the most benevolent of all the local press, expressed such views: ‘Germany did great wrong [...] I could not conscientiously object to national service of any sort [...] When our soldiers go forth to war they go with fine ideals and calm spirit to endure the fires for us.’⁹⁶⁷ This indicates once more the high esteem with which soldiers were viewed by many in Leeds, in direct contrast to general derision displayed towards COs.

The Final Fight for Victory in Leeds

Therefore, despite the clear anti-war campaigning of some of Leeds society, including women, it is among the key findings of this research concerning Leeds that victory was seen as a priority, and that the city was seen very much as instrumental in the fight for this victory. The anti-war protestors therefore were in a minority in their calls for peace. Most people still wished for the Allies to be the victors, and the war continued to overshadow their lives. Even

⁹⁶⁵ ‘The Editor’s Chat: Mr Horner’s Release’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 5 July 1918, p. 2.

⁹⁶⁶ ‘Labour and Pacifist Candidates’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 24 May 1918, p. 2.

⁹⁶⁷ ‘Have I Become a Pacifist?’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 14 June 1918, p. 2.

the regular Labour Party May Day event in Leeds this year was reported as the ‘quietest on record’, as it was ‘no time for brass bands and bright banners’, due to everything being ‘subdued by the increasing tragedy of the war’.⁹⁶⁸ It was a similar situation in the enemy nations. In Germany, by this point in the war, although many women were ‘writing “letters of lament” (as the Germans called them) to their spouses, and thousands protested for higher wages, better food, and peace’, still ‘larger numbers did not’.⁹⁶⁹ Although it must be noted that by late January 1918 there were hundreds of thousands of Germans protesting at the dire conditions caused by the war, again the number with anti-war sentiments were in the minority. However, their protest is significant and must be noted.

In Leeds, society at large continued to place the culpability for the war firmly at the feet of the Germans. New reports of the army casualties in March in a local newspaper included comments that there is felt ‘slight satisfaction’ in the fact that ‘it was the enemy’ which had ‘planned and forced this tremendous and fruitless slaughter of men’.⁹⁷⁰ The blame once again was placed solely on the enemy rather than the encouragement of calls for peace: ‘The great campaign of the Kaiser seems to have been marked by a complete disregard of human life, and its only fruit death and sorrow’, and again the British soldiers were praised as ‘gallant men’.⁹⁷¹ The Leeds men who were fighting abroad also provided evidence of their resentment of the opposing nation, a sentiment that no doubt spurred them on in their tasks. They were encouraged to view ‘the Boche as the Arch Enemy’, who they reported even treated their prisoners harshly: ‘hundreds had died from ill-treatment and starvation in the cages of the

⁹⁶⁸ ‘Leeds May Day,’ *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 10 May 1918, p. 2.

⁹⁶⁹ Stevenson, *With Our Backs to the Wall*, p. 441. For further information on German women in the war, see Daniel, *War from Within*, p. 111, Daniel, ‘Women’s Work in Industry and Family’, p. 267; Grayzel, *Women and the First World War*, p. 28, p. 32.

⁹⁷⁰ ‘The News of Battle’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 29 March 1918, p. 2.

⁹⁷¹ ‘The News of Battle’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 29 March 1918, p. 2.

village [...] occupied by the Hun'.⁹⁷² Similarly, the soldiers letters continued to emphasise the honour of the dead, again justifying the dreadful waste of life, as one wrote: 'Nothing but great admiration could be felt for the brave boys who held the Hun hordes [...] it was done honourably and against overwhelming odds.'⁹⁷³

As has been shown, the anti-German feeling widespread in Britain during the war was due primarily to a fear of defeat.⁹⁷⁴ This indicates that, for most people, news from the conflict served to strengthen their resentment for the enemy, rather than encourage calls for peace. The need for victory was seen therefore as the priority in society at this time, despite the endless grief, queuing and food shortages. A regular column in the *Leeds Weekly Citizen* at the beginning of the year entitled, 'The Great Food Problem', focused upon the latter. 'The Great Food Problem I', was subtitled, 'Urgent Necessity of Production', and, although it outlined that 'food scarcity is a very real menace', notably, in this publication which spoke for the rights of the working classes, to 'working class women', it also stated that, 'we require food production above everything else, except the conduct of the war'.⁹⁷⁵ Again this provided evidence that the war took precedence over even the bare necessities of life, and the way Leeds as a city responded to the events and challenges of the war regarding the production of food can be seen as a way of society showing patriotism. There was much evidence in the press in Leeds of the rationing that took place during this year, as well as the continued shortages and food economies that were introduced. Lloyd George explained that this 'crucial

⁹⁷² WYAS Leeds, LC TR, Leeds City Council Treasurer's Correspondence with Employees Enlisted in the Armed Forces, 1917-1919, Lieutenant Fred Goldthorp, 26 October 1918.

⁹⁷³ WYAS Leeds, LC TR, Leeds City Council Treasurer's Correspondence with Employees Enlisted in the Armed Forces, 1917-1919, Lieutenant Fred Goldthorp, 18 May 1918.

⁹⁷⁴ Panayi, 'Germans in Britain During the First World War', p. 71.

⁹⁷⁵ 'The Great Food Problem I: Urgent Necessity of Production', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 8 February 1918, p. 2, 'Great Food Problem II: Waste Land Cultivation for Animal Feeding Stuffs', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 1 March 1918, p. 2, 'Great Food Problem III: Domestic Pig, Poultry and Goat Keeping', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 8 March 1918, p. 1.

last stage of the war' was one of the reasons why he 'attracted so much importance to the question of maintaining our food supplies'.⁹⁷⁶ This was due to them being essential to the home front; as the local press stated, 'Our food power is as important as our man power: the latter depends upon the former, and upon both depend the final victory.'⁹⁷⁷ Rationing was introduced in Leeds later than most other places in the country, when at the end of January 1918, the Leeds Food Control Committee decided to 'put into operation a local rationing scheme'.⁹⁷⁸

The letters home from the soldiers from Leeds stationed in various locations across the war fronts provided evidence that they were aware of the need for rationing back in their home city, and applauded its introduction: 'I notice, according to your food notes, that Leeds has been rationed. I should say the people of Leeds [...] I believe Leeds has done the proper thing and hope it proves a success'.⁹⁷⁹ Those soldiers who were at home on leave or in hospital, due to injuries sustained due to the war, experienced this rationing first hand: 'I note the members of the staff have been busy with the ration cards'.⁹⁸⁰ Again the evidence is clear that they viewed it as a positive measure, 'I think it will be the means of a better mode of distribution and also the abolishment of the queue system which must be a waste of time and a source of annoyance to many'.⁹⁸¹ Concern for those at home also continued to be at the forefront of these soldiers' thoughts:

⁹⁷⁶ Lloyd George, *War Memoirs Vol II*, p. 1491.

⁹⁷⁷ 'Great Food Problem III: Domestic Pig, Poultry and Goat Keeping', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 8 March 1918, p. 1.

⁹⁷⁸ 'Rationing in Leeds,' *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 25 January 1918, p. 2.

⁹⁷⁹ WYAS Leeds, LC TR, Leeds City Council Treasurer's Correspondence with Employees Enlisted in the Armed Forces, 1917-1919, Private Fred Parker, 12 March 1918.

⁹⁸⁰ WYAS Leeds, LC TR, Leeds City Council Treasurer's Correspondence with Employees Enlisted in the Armed Forces, 1917-1919, John Keavey, 13 February 1918.

⁹⁸¹ WYAS Leeds, LC TR, Leeds City Council Treasurer's Correspondence with Employees Enlisted in the Armed Forces, 1917-1919, John Keavey, 13 February 1918.

I came back from home with a very uncomfortable mind after seeing the long food queues and the difficulty you were having in getting food at home, so you would guess what glad news it would be to all Leeds soldiers when they read in your last letter of the ration system.⁹⁸²

That the soldiers abroad appreciated that rationing was a part of the home front being pivotal to the war effort was also shown in their letters home, 'It is only when one sees these various "controls" at work that one realises how very much depends in this war on the work of those remaining at home.'⁹⁸³ By March, the regular column on the 'food problem' had its title changed to 'Nation's Food Supply'.⁹⁸⁴ This indicates that this issue was no longer seen as, or the press did not wish for it be perceived as, a 'problem'. In addition to the shortage and rationing of food, fuel was also a concern. The local press reported in March that, 'Coal and gas will probably be rationed all over the country next winter (unless the war collapses in the meantime) as a result of the depletion of miners'.⁹⁸⁵ Leeds residents were encouraged to use less fuel by the press, where the use of less coal was applauded as 'The Reward of British Sacrifice', a 'Key to Victory', and a 'Victory Grate'.⁹⁸⁶ Again the military inference in the language was used to encourage people to place the war above all else, and to show their patriotism through such controls, as with rationing. Scott recalled that with the 'settled uniform treatment afforded by Food Control and Fuel Control', complaints in Leeds 'died down', and claimed that these, 'and other tests of endurance were cheerfully accepted', as

⁹⁸² WYAS Leeds, LC TR, Leeds City Council Treasurer's Correspondence with Employees Enlisted in the Armed Forces, 1917-1919, Norman Baxendale, February 1918.

⁹⁸³ WYAS Leeds, LC TR, Leeds City Council Treasurer's Correspondence with Employees Enlisted in the Armed Forces, 1917-1919, Sergeant C C Sellars, 24 July 1918.

⁹⁸⁴ See for example: 'Nation's Food Supply V: The nationalisation of sea fishing', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 22 March 1918, p. 3, 'The National Food Supply. VI State Stud Establishments', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 29 March 1918, p. 3.

⁹⁸⁵ 'The Great Food Problem', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 29 March 1918, p. 2.

⁹⁸⁶ 'Use Less Coal' advert, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 20 September 1918, p. 3, 'The Victory Grate' advert, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 11 October 1918, p. 3, 'Coal is the Key to Victory' advert, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 25 October 1918, p. 3.

there was the ‘ever-present reminder of what our men were enduring at the Front’.⁹⁸⁷ This indicates again that the ordeals of the soldiers ‘checked any tendency to murmur at our home circumstances.’⁹⁸⁸ Although Scott’s invariable recollection of the stoicism of the people of Leeds must be viewed with some caution, it does seem believable that the general view was that the soldiers’ ‘lessons of fortitude under suffering [...] quite eclipsed the experience of home-stayers’.⁹⁸⁹

Armistice

The general view of soldiers from the home front in Leeds was therefore one of admiration. Scott even recalled that men who ‘never got to the Front’ due to the Armistice in November of this year were disappointed as they ‘were itching to bear a part in the great conflict’.⁹⁹⁰ The endurance of the soldiers finally came to an end on 11 November 1918, with the much anticipated signing of the armistice, however this was not the assured victory for the Allies as is often assumed.⁹⁹¹ An in-depth analysis of the German domestic situation in 1918 is out of the scope of this study, however it must be emphasised that the situation on the home front in Germany was desperate. The British blockade of the German ports had ceased the import of food and the Government’s reallocation of agricultural labour to industry impacted upon domestic production, leading to a starving population. In addition, America’s entry into the war undoubtedly bolstered the Allied troops and supplies. This was commented upon by Leeds soldiers in the field, ‘I have come into contact with quite a number of American troops and physically they are a fine crowd and will require some stopping when they get on the

⁹⁸⁷ Scott, *Leeds*, pp. 61-62.

⁹⁸⁸ Scott, *Leeds*, p. 62.

⁹⁸⁹ Scott, *Leeds*, p. 63.

⁹⁹⁰ Scott, *Leeds*, pp. 64-65.

⁹⁹¹ For an in-depth analysis of the situation in Germany by 1918, see for example Schivelbusch, *The Culture of Defeat*.

move'.⁹⁹² Both of which contributed to some of Germany's allies surrendering, as a soldier from Leeds wrote back home in October of this year: 'Everyone out here is very optimistic, and things certainly seem to be going very well for us. Now that Bulgaria and Turkey have surrendered I expect that Austria will find things very unpleasant and probably will soon collapse'.⁹⁹³ The German army led unsuccessful attacks this year, which resulted in low morale and eventual revolution in the armed forces. As Wolfgang Schivelbusch states: 'In the end [...] what transpired was one of the most unheroic capitulations in military history [...] The German navy did not set sail for one last battle but mutinied, thereby hastening the national collapse it was meant to prevent'.⁹⁹⁴ That the revolt of the German navy was inevitable by this stage is highlighted by Arthur Rosenberg, who suggests that the, 'democratic revolution that followed in October could equally well have taken place in August'.⁹⁹⁵ However this does seem highly unlikely, as in August it was not yet public knowledge in Germany how bad their military situation was, and when the news became known it surprised many in the country.⁹⁹⁶ Even the reality of the failure of the German Spring Offensive in this year was not entirely known to those at home.

The architect of the Spring Offensive, which began in March 1918, was General Erich Ludendorff, who saw this 'Kaiserschlacht', or Kaiser's Battle, as Germany's last chance of victory on the Western front. This offensive eventually failed, however, as the Allied joint resources defeated the advancing Germans, due in no small part to the latter's lack of supply. The evidence in the letters home from the Leeds soldiers involved in the Spring Offensive

⁹⁹² WYAS Leeds, LC TR, Leeds City Council Treasurer's Correspondence with Employees Enlisted in the Armed Forces, 1917-1919, addendum to letter from H L Joel, 30 July 1918.

⁹⁹³ WYAS Leeds, LC TR, Leeds City Council Treasurer's Correspondence with Employees Enlisted in the Armed Forces, 1917-1919, H Gledhill, 5 October 1918.

⁹⁹⁴ Schivelbusch, *The Culture of Defeat*, p. 202.

⁹⁹⁵ Arthur Rosenberg, *The Birth of the German Republic, 1871-1918* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1962), p. 239.

⁹⁹⁶ Rosenberg, *The Birth of the German Republic*, p. 239.

illustrates how arduous these battles were, although ultimately they gave the soldiers more reason to anticipate an Allied victory: ‘It won’t be long before the German chokes. The past fortnight has been one of the most trying and hard times of my army life [...] every man has done his best, and caused “Fritz” to loose [sic] a lot of men for what he managed to get’; ‘Have been working almost night and day since Fritz’s big stink commenced [...] Although Fritz had some success at first [...] I think he will gain nothing more than a big casualty roll; and ‘I have full confidence in the ultimate end and I am quite prepared for some big surprises that will be a bigger surprise for Jerry [...] should watch him more carefully and make more certain of the knock out blow’.⁹⁹⁷

The Spanish flu pandemic also had an impact at this point in the war.⁹⁹⁸ This will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, however suffice to state here that the first half of this year saw the first wave of the pandemic which influenced military operations as it weakened the soldiers.⁹⁹⁹ The entry into the war of America also had an impact on this offensive, as a Leeds soldier highlighted in one of his letters home: ‘The ever increasing army of Americans is bound to have an effect sooner or later, let us hope sooner [...] no doubt before long “Fritz” will wish he had never trod on the tail of Uncle Sam’s coat.’¹⁰⁰⁰ In Britain, the end of the war was referred to in the press throughout the year, with increasing regularity from August onwards.¹⁰⁰¹ In September, the coming victory was hailed as ‘the reward of the British Sacrifice’, again the deaths of the British soldiers seen as a worthy

⁹⁹⁷ WYAS Leeds, LC TR, Leeds City Council Treasurer’s Correspondence with Employees Enlisted in the Armed Forces, 1917-1919, Corporal F Stanley Hall, 8 April 1918.; I G Taylor, 22 April 1918; Norman Baxendale, 1 June 1918.

⁹⁹⁸ For further research on the Spanish flu pandemic, see Laura Spinney, *Pale Rider: The Spanish Flu of 1918 and How It Changed the World* (London: Vintage, 2017).

⁹⁹⁹ For example, Spinney has shown that the Spanish flu caused 900,000 German soldiers to become out of action: Spinney, *Pale Rider*, pp. 38-39.

¹⁰⁰⁰ WYAS Leeds, LC TR, Leeds City Council Treasurer’s Correspondence with Employees Enlisted in the Armed Forces, 1917-1919, Private Ellis, 4 July 1918.

¹⁰⁰¹ ‘Austria’s Peace Note’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 20 September 1918, p. 3.

offering to the inevitable victory in the war.¹⁰⁰² By mid October the situation was being declared a ‘period of hope’, as the Germans were by this time clearly losing control of the war on the battlefield and the home front.¹⁰⁰³ Ramsay MacDonald was reported as claiming that, ‘I believe that a democratic peace is now possible.’¹⁰⁰⁴ Indeed many in the Labour party and other left leaning individuals sympathisers called for a democratic peace. A National Peace Conference was even held in Leeds in October, where it ‘asked for attention to be concentrated not so much on military victory, or avenging recent wrongs, as upon building a new world, and the establishment of goodwill among peoples’, and also supported the creation of a League of Nations.¹⁰⁰⁵ It is interesting that this conference, which included representatives from the WIL, UDC, NCF and the Fellowship of Reconciliation, met in Leeds, which was the first time was held out of London. However, as with the Leeds Convention of the previous year, this was due to the geographical location for ease of railway travel rather than any local public sympathies to the calls for a fair peace. Even at the conference itself hope was expressed for the ‘abandonment of the nefarious aims of German militarism’.¹⁰⁰⁶ Again the onus for the ‘tragedy’ of the war was placed firmly at the feet of Germany.

Scott, who described the months of 1918 prior to the end of the war as the ‘darkest hour before dawn’, reported the ending of the war thus: ‘Early in November Germany yielded to her fate and on the eleventh day of that eleventh month, at eleven o’clock in the forenoon, her

¹⁰⁰² ‘The Reward of British Sacrifice’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 20 September 1918, p. 3.

¹⁰⁰³ ‘A Period of Hope’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 18 October 1918, p. 2.

¹⁰⁰⁴ ‘Mr MacDonald on Peace Terms’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 25 October 1918, p. 1.

¹⁰⁰⁵ ‘National Peace Conference: Leeds Conference Decisions’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 11 October 1918, p. 1.

¹⁰⁰⁶ ‘Closing the Tragedy’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 11 October 1918, p. 2.

fate was sealed'.¹⁰⁰⁷ He also recalled the celebrations of the workers at Barnbow munitions factory on this day:

The workers, for once, inclined to lay down their tools; and there was none to say them nay. The rejoicing was general. Filling operations ceased immediately; many left the factory of their own accord, and swelled the crowds that made festivity in the streets of Leeds.¹⁰⁰⁸

The large majority of the local newspapers in Leeds reported on these celebrations, which consisted of crowds gathering in the city centre. The *Yorkshire Observer* declared that there were 'fireworks and bonfires', and that:

As soon as the news was received in Leeds [...] a general holiday was declared and the city quickly donned festive garb. Munitions workers, men and women, deserted [their positions] Housewives left their homes [...] and streams of people made their way from all points to the centre of the city [...] It was a festival of flags.¹⁰⁰⁹

The *Leeds Mercury* also reported on the end of the war, with an emphasis on the submission of the Germans in the headline 'Germany Capitulates to Allies'. In this report, it outlined how the Lord Mayor of Leeds by this stage, Joseph Henry, had announced to the people in Leeds that 'the armistice has been signed and fighting has been stopped', and added that he hoped 'in the hour of rejoicing a sense of sympathy will go out to the fallen heroes and their families', who could feel that the 'sacrifices made were not in vain'.¹⁰¹⁰ Again the loss of the lives of the ten thousand soldiers from Leeds were seen as necessary tokens or sacrifices for the war's victory. Henry also paid tribute to the female munitions workers: 'To the women workers who have so nobly responded to the call of their country she would offer her sincere

¹⁰⁰⁷ Scott, *Leeds*, p. 60.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Gummer and Scott, *The Story of Barnbow*, p. 55.

¹⁰⁰⁹ 'Leeds Celebrations', *Yorkshire Observer*, 12 November 1918, p. 6.

¹⁰¹⁰ 'The End of the War', *Leeds Mercury*, 12 November 1918, p. 1.

thanks'.¹⁰¹¹ The munitions workers were therefore referred to in a similar way to the soldiers, as having honourably answered the call. The reports of the armistice celebrations carried on for days in most of the local press. As the *Leeds Mercury* continued to report two days later, it was the women workers 'who led the Armistice Day celebrations', no doubt buoyant with relief that the fighting was finally over.¹⁰¹² Despite the obvious gaiety that the end of the war produced in Leeds, there were also poignant scenes. The *Yorkshire Evening Post* reported on 'a moment of silent reflection at the Corn Exchange' in Leeds, where '300 farmers and traders had gathered'; and the City Council met on the afternoon of 11 November to discuss the future, including a 'permanent war memorial for those who had fought'.¹⁰¹³ This thereby supports the theory of Leeds soldier, Driver R S Wilby, who declared when he wrote home from Italy in October 1918 that there was 'too much misery in the world', and predicted that when 'peace is declared there will be more gratitude than enthusiasm'.¹⁰¹⁴ Another soldier from the city provided evidence that many soldiers viewed Armistice Day with some poignancy due to the large number of deaths incurred in a letter home in December 1918:

I understand there was great rejoicing in Leeds, on the eleventh of last month, and no doubt you would think that we in France were doing the same, so don't be surprised when I say that I never heard a cheer or saw any signs of rejoicing on that day [...] I am extremely sorry to see so many of my colleagues names on the "Roll of Honour".¹⁰¹⁵

¹⁰¹¹ 'The End of the War', *Leeds Mercury*, 12 November 1918, p. 3.

¹⁰¹² 'Armistice Day Celebrations', *Leeds Mercury*, 14 November 1918, p. 8.

¹⁰¹³ 'Temple of Fame as a Leeds Memorial', *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 11 November 1918, p. 3.

¹⁰¹⁴ WYAS Leeds, LC TR, Leeds City Council Treasurer's Correspondence with Employees Enlisted in the Armed Forces, 1917-1919, Driver R S Wilby, 2 October 1918.

¹⁰¹⁵ WYAS Leeds, LC TR, Leeds City Council Treasurer's Correspondence with Employees Enlisted in the Armed Forces, 1917-1919, Corporal F Stanley Hall, 6 December 1918.

Other Leeds soldiers also commented on the lack of celebrations among the troops, and continued to place the blame for the war deaths firmly on the enemy: '[News of the armistice] was received very quietly indeed but nevertheless with all thankfulness [...] we shall all be glad of the day when we can say goodbye to France and all the memories it will always recall [of suffering under] the German tyrannies'.¹⁰¹⁶ In direct contrast, however, was the evidence provided in correspondence of other Leeds soldiers on their entry into Germany following the end of the war by the German people: '[The] German civilian population [have] done everything possible for our comfort and show no evidence of personal hostility whatsoever'.¹⁰¹⁷ Therefore the nuanced attitude of the soldiers at this time is evident. Even the invariable view of the victorious end included a lament for a permanent peace, as the following letter indicated: 'It is grand to know that after all our struggle such a magnificent victory has been achieved and it is to be hoped that this will [be] the final end to all militarism'.¹⁰¹⁸

Another indication of the distinctions that existed towards the end of the war was the reaction of *Leeds Weekly Citizen* which, in direct contrast to rest of the press in the city, did not include celebratory reports. The headline in the first edition after 11 November simply stated, 'The War Ended', with a subtitle 'Socialist Control of Germany'.¹⁰¹⁹ This shows that this socialist newspaper was focused upon the effect of the end of the war on the workers, both in Britain and abroad. The only concession to a celebratory tone was the report that, 'To see the Town Hall clock illuminated, after four years' obscurity, was a delightful novelty this

¹⁰¹⁶ WYAS Leeds, LC TR, Leeds City Council Treasurer's Correspondence with Employees Enlisted in the Armed Forces, 1917-1919, Norman Baxendale, 13 December 1918.

¹⁰¹⁷ WYAS Leeds, LC TR, Leeds City Council Treasurer's Correspondence with Employees Enlisted in the Armed Forces, 1917-1919, Percy Lee (RAMC), 2 January 1919.

¹⁰¹⁸ WYAS Leeds, LC TR, Leeds City Council Treasurer's Correspondence with Employees Enlisted in the Armed Forces, 1917-1919, Allan Cornforth, 7 December 1918.

¹⁰¹⁹ 'The War Ended', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 15 November 1918, p. 2.

week'.¹⁰²⁰ Other reports in the newspaper expressed concern for the enemy nation, in its statement that the 'terms of the armistice are sharp, and impose obligations that Germany will possibly find it hard to yield'.¹⁰²¹ Such concern was certainly not expressed by the other local newspapers. The *Leeds Weekly Citizen* also focused attention on the Leeds munitions workers, in a statement that the, 'dispersal of the Leeds army of shell-workers has already proceeded apace,' and '[in Leeds] eleven thousand workers are said to have been displaced. In the next few weeks many thousands more will be discharged, and soon industry will be in a state of chaos'.¹⁰²² Notably, and unsurprisingly in this Labour party supporting publication, most of the reports for the next few weeks following the armistice were overwhelmingly associated with the need for a Labour government at the upcoming election: 'Democracy Will Not Abdicate', and 'Labour must become the official opposition'.¹⁰²³ It also included information on the Leeds election candidates. Interestingly, all six candidates were Labour apart from one, and the number included the current MP James O'Grady, who was returned unopposed due to his perceived patriotism during the war.¹⁰²⁴

Summary

The last year of the war saw Leeds as a war industry city which continued to be focused upon the conflict. There is evidence that there were other concerns which proved that people were looking forward, past the war, and could anticipate the end of the war by this year. These included the call of 'Land for Houses', however even these calls were mainly on behalf of the

¹⁰²⁰ 'Editor's Chat', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 15 November 1918, p. 3.

¹⁰²¹ 'The Armistice', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 15 November 1918, p. 2.

¹⁰²² 'Munitions Workers', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 29 November 1918, p. 2.

¹⁰²³ 'The Position in Leeds', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 15 November 1918, p. 2, 'Democracy Will Not Abdicate', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 22 November 1918, p. 2.

¹⁰²⁴ 'South East Leeds: Captain O'Grady's Return,' *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 20 December 1918, p. 3. , p. 3.

soldiers, who were seen as heroes, fighting for a war that was just and right.¹⁰²⁵ As a message from Queen Mary to the troops in May stated, on behalf of women of the country, ‘Our pride in you is immeasurable [...] you are fighting in the cause of Righteousness and Freedom, fighting to defend the women and children of our land from the horrors.’¹⁰²⁶ Even the letters from the soldiers themselves provide ample proof that they agreed with this sentiment both, during the conflict (‘we fight for England because we believe our cause to be right’) and after the war had ended: ‘Now that, happily, hostilities have ceased [...] It has been a long and bitter struggle, but we can rejoice that “might” in the end has been defeated by “right” and “might”’.¹⁰²⁷ In the event, however, the Allies were victorious for several reasons, not least due to the fact that their conditions on the home front were not as dire as those in the enemy nations, which this research into Leeds has highlighted. Despite Germany being the stronger side militarily at the beginning of the war, the Allies did have the advantage of greater populations and territories, and became superior to Germany in all respects as the war progressed. In addition to the soldiers in the field, those left on the home front were also instrumental in the eventual victory, including in Leeds. The people of city were acknowledged by the soldiers abroad during the war, who wrote in praise: ‘Those who are left at home, I know, are doing great work, and spending many hours [working] for the country, and so are doing their share’.¹⁰²⁸ The use of female labour in Britain, thousands of whom worked in the war industry in Leeds, also contributed to the path to victory for the Allies.¹⁰²⁹ The management of food production and control in the major cities in Britain, as

¹⁰²⁵ ‘Correspondence: Land for Houses’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 18 October 1918, p. 3.

¹⁰²⁶ ‘The Queen’s Message’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 3 May 1918, p. 2.

¹⁰²⁷ ‘Correspondence’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 21 June 1918, p. 2; WYAS Leeds, LC TR, Leeds City Council Treasurer’s Correspondence with Employees Enlisted in the Armed Forces, 1917-1919, Percy Lee (RAMC), 11 November 1918.

¹⁰²⁸ WYAS Leeds, LC TR, Leeds City Council Treasurer’s Correspondence with Employees Enlisted in the Armed Forces, 1917-1919, Corporal F Stanley Hall, 8 April 1918.

¹⁰²⁹ See Stevenson, *With Our Backs to the Wall*, p. 508.

has been seen in Leeds, also brought advantages to the nation, which ‘Played a significant role in the ultimate outcome of the war’.¹⁰³⁰ Compared to the revolutionary tide taken in Germany, this gave Britain a distinct advantage militarily. Even those who resisted the war were primarily concerned with it, its pervasive presence shadowing all else. As O’Grady was reported as stating midway through 1918, in an address to meetings of his constituencies: ‘[O’Grady] found it impossible, he said, to talk about anything but the war’ as it was ‘paramount in the mind of everyone, both here and abroad’. With some foresight, in a prediction which rang true, he also envisaged that the war would end that year. As the report stated:

He based that conclusion upon what he knew of the terrible condition of things in Germany today. For the first time the German army were receiving insufficient supplies of food. The German people were beginning to realise that the military machine was halting.¹⁰³¹

¹⁰³⁰ Bonzon and Davis, ‘Feeding the Cities’, in Winter, and Robert, eds, *Capital Cities at War*, pp. 305-341 (p. 305); see also Davis, *Home Fires Burning*.

¹⁰³¹ ‘Mr James O’Grady, MP, in Leeds’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 31 May 1918, p. 3.

Chapter Six: 1919-1923 ‘Has Leeds Forgotten?’

Introduction

Over the course of the war, over eighty thousand men from Leeds entered the armed forces, resulting in thousands of soldier deaths.¹⁰³² Of those who returned, many were disabled, traumatised, or disillusioned. Moore and Pullman describe their experience thus: ‘While away men comforted themselves with thoughts of home and loved ones. On their return some were not prepared for the level of changes that had gone on in their absence, and had perhaps also failed to recognise how they themselves had altered.’¹⁰³³ The fact that the men from Leeds were consoled by news from the home front is evident in their letters, as has been discussed, as was the sentiment that they longed for a return to ‘normality’: ‘at least we seem to have something definite to look forward to, and our hopes of one day returning to the pre-war era, have a good foundation’; ‘I fully believe that I am voicing the opinion of my old chums when I say that after four years of war we are all anxious to wield the pen and return to civilian life again.’¹⁰³⁴ As Scott recollected, in the city, as in the whole continent, there were competing visions of the post-war society.¹⁰³⁵ This supports the assertion by Moore and Pullman that: ‘too many had fondly hoped that, as the fruits of victory, there would come a Heaven upon earth, or, at least, a new and better world. The price of victory had to be paid in money no less than in the sacrifice of life and limb’.¹⁰³⁶ For many of the soldiers, the post-war stresses began before they even returned home. The letters of the former employees of Leeds City Council evidence this, with many references to demobilisation, including how

¹⁰³² Scott, *Leeds*, p. 324.

¹⁰³³ Moore and Pullman, *Leeds Remembering*, p. 138.

¹⁰³⁴ WYAS Leeds, LC TR, Leeds City Council Treasurer’s Correspondence with Employees Enlisted in the Armed Forces, 1917-1919, Corporal W Bell, no date, c. 1918; Corporal L Wrighton, 24 January 1919.

¹⁰³⁵ Scott, *Leeds*, p. 66.

¹⁰³⁶ Moore and Pullman, *Leeds Remembering*, p. 132.

frustrated the men were while waiting to come home, and the clear resentment of the system, where some men were allowed home earlier than others for employment reasons.¹⁰³⁷ As Sergeant Hague wrote home in December 1918: ‘When one sees men who have been but two or three months in France being demobilised already on account of their trades, one is apt to become discontented. To most of us, demobilisation does not seem to be progressing as expeditiously as it might.’¹⁰³⁸ This indicates the dire need of the men to not only return home to their loved ones, but to return home to paid employment. This chapter will analyse the aftermath of the war on the city of Leeds, with particular focus on the impact of the Spanish flu, and how the after-effects of the war impacted on ideas of memorialisation. It will therefore be shown that ‘post-war Leeds was a city in which many tensions existed’.¹⁰³⁹

Spanish Flu

Not least of these tensions was the concern associated with the tragic impact on the soldiers and public at home of the global pandemic which became known as the ‘Spanish flu’.

Although detailed analysis of this pandemic is beyond the scope of this research, brief mention of its impact needs to be highlighted as another aspect of this time which caused consternation and grief. The influenza pandemic lasted from 1918 to 1920, and, although it is impossible to provide correct figures, is thought to have caused between fifty and one hundred million deaths worldwide, far in excess of all the casualties of the four plus years of

¹⁰³⁷ Commentary on demobilisation was made in many of the Leeds soldiers’ letters home, even as early as 1917, see for example: WYAS Leeds, LC TR, Leeds City Council Treasurer’s Correspondence with Employees Enlisted in the Armed Forces, 1917-1919, Norman Baxendale, 29 November 1917, Sergeant J C Pearson, 21 December 1918, T H Anderson, 18 December 1918, Sergeant Arthur Hague, 22 December 1918 and 30 December 1918.

¹⁰³⁸ WYAS Leeds, LC TR, Leeds City Council Treasurer’s Correspondence with Employees Enlisted in the Armed Forces, 1917-1919, Sergeant Arthur Hague, 22 December 1918.

¹⁰³⁹ Moore and Pullman, *Leeds Remembering*, p. 132.

the First World War.¹⁰⁴⁰ It also affected many more. As Laura Spinney asserts, it infected ‘one in three people on earth’.¹⁰⁴¹ Niall Johnson concurs that the narrative of the influenza pandemic is ‘a story of as many as one billion ill and one hundred million dead’.¹⁰⁴² It also impacted upon those who may not have been infected but whose loved ones were. Andrea Hetherington discusses the effects of the pandemic in Leeds, where the newspapers in the city reported the first cases of the flu in June 1918 and by the October of that year schools were being closed ‘in an attempt to halt the spread of the epidemic’.¹⁰⁴³ The disease rapidly spread through the city, as it did in many of the industrial towns in northern England with high urban populations, where conditions were ripe for the spreading of such a contagion. The local press publicised the symptoms of the disease, as ‘An attack of aches and pains all over the body, along with dizziness. Then follow headache, pains in the back, and occasionally sickness’, which affected victims emotionally as well as physically, with ‘a feeling of absolute helplessness’.¹⁰⁴⁴ The recollections of Mrs Peel confirmed that the ‘difficulties and discomforts’ of the wartime circumstances were ‘added to by the prevalence’ of the ‘terrible influenza which attacked us’, and outlined that the wartime circumstances meant that it was ‘difficult to obtain nurses or drugs or sufficient nourishing food for invalids’.¹⁰⁴⁵ The ‘second and the worst wave of the pandemic struck’ in the autumn of 1918, which meant that ‘most

¹⁰⁴⁰ For further information on the Spanish flu, see Howard Phillips and David Killingray, eds, *The Spanish Influenza Pandemic of 1918-19: New Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2003), Spinney, *Pale Rider*, pp. 38-39, Peter Spreeunwenberg and others, ‘Reassessing the Global Mortality Burden of the 1918 Influenza Pandemic’, *American Journal of Epidemiology*, 187.12 (2018), 2561-2567 and specifically for Britain, see Mark Honigsbaum, *Living with Enza: The Forgotten Story of Britain and the Great Flu Epidemic of 1918* (London: MacMillan, 2009) and Niall Johnson, *Britain and the 1918-1919 Influenza Pandemic: A Dark Epilogue* (London: Routledge, 2006).

¹⁰⁴¹ Spinney, *Pale Rider*, p. 4.

¹⁰⁴² Johnson, *Britain and the 1918-1919 Influenza Pandemic*, p. 37.

¹⁰⁴³ Andrea Hetherington, ‘Lawnswood Cemetery in Leeds in the First World War’, in Peter Liddle, ed, *Britain Goes to War: How the First World War Began to Reshape the Nation* (London: Pen and Sword Books, 2015), pp. 291-300 (p. 299).

¹⁰⁴⁴ ‘Influenza Plague Still Active’, *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 3 July 1918, p. 3.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Peel, *How We Lived Then*, pp. 99-102.

of the death occurred in the thirteen weeks between mid-September and mid-December 1918'.¹⁰⁴⁶ Mrs Peel confirmed this, and recalled of this time that:

As the dreary summer of 1918 drew to a close and autumn set in [...] it was now that the second wave of that gruesome trio war, pestilence and famine came upon us. A specially severe type of influenza raged, and the newspapers added to long war casualty lists, lists of names of those who had died at home.¹⁰⁴⁷

In Leeds, the press reported that one hundred people had perished from the flu in the last week of October 1918, a figure which had doubled in size 'less than a week later'.¹⁰⁴⁸

Although this figure had decreased to around twenty per week by the beginning of the next year, it soon increased again to over eighty in late February 1919 due to the large number of soldiers arriving home from the war.¹⁰⁴⁹

Although nominally linked to Spain, the origin of this pandemic has been 'inextricably linked with the men who occupied the military camps and trenches during the First World War'.¹⁰⁵⁰

When it arrived in Spain in May 1918, the disease had already been in America for a few months, and in France for several weeks.¹⁰⁵¹ However it became known as the Spanish flu due to conditions associated with the conflict, as Spain's neutral stance during the war meant that the national newspapers there reported without censorship, including on the effects of the influenza, especially concerning the illness of their king, Alfonso XIII, in May 1918.¹⁰⁵² The censoring of the news in the press in the belligerent countries meant that reports of the

¹⁰⁴⁶ Spinney, *Pale Rider*, pp. 4-5.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Peel, *How We Lived Then*, pp. 172-3.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Hetherington, 'Lawnswood Cemetery in Leeds in the First World War', p. 299.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Hetherington, 'Lawnswood Cemetery in Leeds in the First World War', p. 299.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Wever, 'Death from 1918 Pandemic Influenza', p. 538; see also John Oxford and others, 'Who's that Lady?', *Nature Medicine*, 5.2 (1999), 1351-1352, and John Oxford and others, 'World War I may have allowed the emergence of "Spanish" influenza', *The Lancet: Infectious Diseases*, 2.2 (2002), 111-114.

¹⁰⁵¹ Spinney, *Pale Rider*, p. 63.

¹⁰⁵² Spinney, *Pale Rider*, p. 38.

fatalities were minimalised, and therefore its origin became erroneously linked to Spain.¹⁰⁵³ Spinney even suggests that the French, British and Americans began to refer to the disease as the ‘Spanish flu’ with ‘a little nudging from their governments’, who did not want to be associated with its rapid global spread.¹⁰⁵⁴ She explains the situation thus: ‘The world was at war in 1918, and many governments had incentive [...] to shift the blame for a devastating disease to other countries. Under such circumstances, that disease is likely to attract a kaleidoscope of different names, which is exactly what happened.’¹⁰⁵⁵ Indeed, the pandemic was not even referred to in the British Parliament until the end of October 1918, despite being prevalent in the country for several months.¹⁰⁵⁶ Therefore the victors of the war, who became the ‘most powerful nations on earth’, controlled which adopted name continued, and therefore the ‘pandemic became known as the Spanish flu [...] and a historical wrong became set in stone’.¹⁰⁵⁷ In fact, the close proximity of living quarters of the armed troops and their movement across the world would have spread the disease globally. As Peter Wever asserts, ‘The disease had a profound impact [...] It struck all the armies and might have claimed toward 100,000 fatalities among soldiers overall during the conflict while rendering millions ineffective’.¹⁰⁵⁸ Although the pandemic was ‘of little significance militarily’, it was a

¹⁰⁵³ John M Barry, ‘The Site of Origin of the 1918 Influenza Pandemic and its Public Health Implications’, *Journal of Translational Medicine*, 2.1 (2004), 1-4 (p. 3).

¹⁰⁵⁴ Spinney, *Pale Rider*, p. 63.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Spinney, *Pale Rider*, pp. 62-63.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Johnson, *Britain and the 1918-1919 Influenza Pandemic*, p. 119.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Spinney, *Pale Rider*, p. 65.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Peter C Wever, ‘Death from 1918 Pandemic Influenza During the First World War: A Perspective from Personal and Anecdotal Evidence’, *Influenza and Other Respiratory Viruses*, 8.5 (2014), 538-46 (p. 538). Wever has estimated that the pandemic impacted on all the armies, however the highest death rate was American troops, of whom twenty six per cent, or over one million men, became infected; the corresponding figure for the German Army was over seven hundred thousand cases and for the British over three hundred thousand cases in 1918.

‘disaster of enormous magnitude from a purely human point of view’, not least for the people on the home front.¹⁰⁵⁹

Over two hundred thousand people died at home in Britain due to the epidemic, and many more were infected and survived, including Prime Minister Lloyd George.¹⁰⁶⁰ In Leeds, the Leeds General Cemetery Burial Registers provided evidence of the impact of the pandemic on the city: a spike in numbers can be seen corresponding to the epidemic years, with 1401 deaths registered due to the flu in 1918 alone and 623 deaths in 1919.¹⁰⁶¹ Letters from soldiers on the Western Front to relatives back at home indicated that the pandemic was a lot worse at this time at home than on the fighting fronts (‘No, influenza has not been prevalent in France this time’), and references are made to it which illustrated its presence on the home front, despite the lack of coverage in the national press: ‘So many have died at home that we were beginning to think it was a plague you had there’, ‘Trusting that [...] the “flue” [sic] has dealt kindly with all in Leeds’, ‘My wife and baby have just recovered from attacks of influenza’.¹⁰⁶² There is certainly scope for further research on this topic, especially surrounding the casualties of this pandemic in Leeds. One would assume, for example, that there were more deaths among the poorer in society, due to lack of nourishment and crowded housing. This would indicate again the class differences. For the people at this time to endure more death and grief after the many casualties of the war is unthinkable, and may have

¹⁰⁵⁹ Wever, ‘Death from 1918 Pandemic Influenza’, p. 546.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Honigsbaum, *Living with Enza*.

¹⁰⁶¹ LULSC, Leeds General Cemetery Burial Registers Index <<https://explore.library.leeds.ac.uk/special-collections-explore/Leeds%20General%20Cemetery%20Burial%20Registers%20Index>> [accessed 19 November 2022].

¹⁰⁶² LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/GS/0252 Papers of Sergeant Alfred Jesse Butler, 1914-1918, WYAS Leeds, LC TR, Leeds City Council Treasurer’s Correspondence with Employees Enlisted in the Armed Forces, 1917-1919, Lieutenant W Marshall, 1 November 1918, Edwin Redshaw, 5 January 1919. Reference is also made to Spanish flu in the diary of Constance Shuter, LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/DF/121 Diary of Constance Shuter, 1916-1918, 13 October 1918.

contributed to the need nationwide for memorials to the dead soldiers, although, again, this issue in Leeds is nuanced.

Memorialisation of War

Damoussi asserts that the First World War ‘created a generation of mourners across the globe in staggering numbers’.¹⁰⁶³ Over ten thousand men from Leeds lost their lives as a result of the war, either killed in action or dying from wounds sustained due to the combat.¹⁰⁶⁴ This research has revealed that during the war the increasing death toll of the soldiers was perceived by the majority of the population in Leeds to be a justified sacrifice for the defeat of the enemy, and that the tropes used by the press galvanised these attitudes. Once the war ended there remained the question of how the ‘sacrifice of life and limb’ of the many war dead would be suitably commemorated.¹⁰⁶⁵ As a soldier from Leeds wrote home from France at the end of November 1918: ‘I note the number of the boys from the office whose well-known faces we shall never see again [...] I only hope that the country will never forget the sacrifice that has been made.’¹⁰⁶⁶ In the years following the war, all over Europe memorials were erected to the casualties, notably in the 1920s and 1930s, which were novel occurrences. These can be seen as part of the significant cultural changes in how countries commemorated war, and, as Alex King shows, the narrative of the memorials included all society. He claims that they illustrated ‘the variety of ways in which people interpreted commemorative symbols’, which highlighted that the ‘remembrance of the dead’ was ‘a collective creative

¹⁰⁶³ Damoussi, ‘Gender and Mourning’, p. 226.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Scott, *Leeds*, p. 324: Scott noted that 9,460 names of men from the city who died in the war were recorded on the Leeds Roll of Honour, although the number was a little over 10,000 eventually, as reported in the local press: ‘War Losses of Leeds. Memorial Roll Reveals Over 10,000 Names’, *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 18 January 1922, p. 7.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Scott, *Leeds*, p. 66.

¹⁰⁶⁶ WYAS Leeds, LC TR, Leeds City Council Treasurer’s Correspondence with Employees Enlisted in the Armed Forces, 1917-1919, Gunner Irwin A Tate, 27 November 1918.

activity'.¹⁰⁶⁷ Susan Grayzel emphasises the importance of women to this phenomenon, and asserts that after the war, 'women across Europe engaged in acts of recovery, restoration, and remembrance', and that 'given the extent of the war's losses, mourning and the marking of grief became public expressions as much as private ones'.¹⁰⁶⁸ These memorials therefore provided some women, and others in society, in Britain, with a public expression of this grief: 'these monuments [...] these public spaces must have provided not just acknowledgements of their political or symbolic importance but also places where they could grieve for Britain's fallen sons'.¹⁰⁶⁹ For some, as King highlights, the memorials also provided a 'warning' that 'war will only be avoided in future if its horror and suffering is not forgotten'.¹⁰⁷⁰ However, it should not be assumed that the memorials were by any means standard, or their commissions were wholly welcomed by all in society. The memorials were eclectic in design, although most had underlying symbolism which highlighted the great sacrifice the men had made, to appropriately honour the dead soldiers as well as provide some comfort to those left at home. Additionally, much of the symbolism of the memorials had an underlying, or even overt, political tone. This indicates that political feelings were high at the time, and therefore illustrates the tensions which existed regarding the war after the armistice. As Gregory shows, in Britain, despite the accepted simple picture of a grieving nation longing to remember their dead, the reality was more complex.¹⁰⁷¹ Commemoration measures and procedures instead helped to create a fiction of a society united in grief.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Alex King, *Memorials of the Great War in Britain: The Symbolism and Politics and Remembrance* (Oxford: Berg, 1988), p. 5, p. 128.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Susan Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War: Gender, Motherhood, and Politics in Britain and France during the First World War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), p. 226.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War*, p. 236.

¹⁰⁷⁰ King, *Memorials of the Great War*, p. 9.

¹⁰⁷¹ See Gregory, *Last Great War*, and Adrian Gregory, *The Silence of Memory: Armistice Day 1919-1946* (Oxford: Berg, 1994).

This can certainly be seen in Leeds. Although, as Scott recalled, ‘the dead were not forgotten’, and ‘one after another, in every part of the city, war memorials assumed tangible form and were dedicated to the undying memory of local heroes’, the plans for the central memorial in the city centre, and indeed the controversial memorial eventually commissioned by the University of Leeds (‘Christ Driving the Moneychangers from the Temple’, image below), told a different story.¹⁰⁷²

Figure Seven: Eric Gill, ‘Christ Driving the Moneychangers from the Temple’, 1923, Leeds University Special Collection.



Sculptor Eric Gill was commissioned to create this memorial by the University’s Vice-Chancellor, Michael Sadler.¹⁰⁷³ The design had been initially created for, and was rejected by, London County Council to commemorate their war dead. It was a free-standing bronze relief of Jesus and the moneychangers, which Gill changed to a stone frieze for Leeds. In Gill’s design, the moneychangers were clothed in contemporary clothing, the connotation

¹⁰⁷² Scott, *Leeds*, p. 71; ‘Christ Driving the Moneychangers from the Temple’, Leeds University Special Collections <https://explore.library.leeds.ac.uk/special-collections-explore/247/christ_driving_the_moneychangers_from_the_temple> [accessed 19 November 2022].

¹⁰⁷³ The monument was later moved to the inside foyer of the Michael Sadler Building at the University of Leeds due to becoming weather-worn.

being that some Leeds merchants had profited from the war. The bas-relief was dedicated by the Bishop of Ripon in June 1923, and displayed in a prominent place on the wall beneath the University's Great Hall. The memorial's design was immediately controversial, in its lack of reference to, and thus perceived lack of reverence for, the dead soldiers, as well as the accusation of war profiteering in Leeds. Gill was no stranger to controversy: he was accused of revelling in it and using it to publicise his work. He was later accused of sexual abuse of his daughters and sisters, although the latter accusations came to light after his death and so were not a contributory factor to the disdain with which many viewed his memorial.¹⁰⁷⁴

Critics of the memorial saw it as inappropriate as it was not suitably venerable to those who had lost their lives in the war. Leeds businessmen responded with derision in a similar vein, with local pawnbrokers protesting over its perceived attack on the local economy as a 'tasteless, tactless parody'.¹⁰⁷⁵ Michael Sadler himself defended the sculpture, and explained that its significance to commemorate the 'members of the University who fell for their country in the war' was also an attack on those who made money from the war dishonestly: 'Our Lord's driving out money-changers and the sellers of doves out of the temple does not condemn honest traffic, but teaches us that sacred things must be kept free from thoughts of money gain'. Sadler's explanation also attempted to justify the memorial as appropriate, by reverting to the generally accepted view of the war being necessary and the fault of the enemy: 'Britain [...] took up arms because, in breach of treaty, a nation had been wrongfully attacked'. He added that 'those who fell in the defence of the rights thus challenged gave their lives in a sacred cause'.¹⁰⁷⁶ The reference also to the sacrifice of the men in a 'sacred

¹⁰⁷⁴ For more information on Eric Gill, including regarding the allegations of sexual abuse, see Fiona McCarthy, *Eric Gill* (London: Faber, 1989).

¹⁰⁷⁵ 'Tasteless, Tactless Parody. Pawnbrokers' Protest. Indictment of Leeds University Memorial', *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 26 May 1923, p. 7.

¹⁰⁷⁶ Michael Sadler, 'Leeds Memorial Sculpture: What It Signifies by Sir Michael Sadler', *Yorkshire Weekly Post*, 26 May 1923, p. 4.

cause' channels the connotations of other war memorials at the time, which emphasised the deaths as righteous sacrifice. However, the fact that the University chose this particular memorial, which made no reference to the deaths, is an indication of the rejection of some of the commissioners of the commemorations to war to choose to highlight the soldiers' deaths as a duty. It is revealing that they chose instead to highlight the perceived wrongs of the war. This illustrates the mixed sentiments felt about the war only a few years after its end.

Watson's research into the construction of war related memories provides an interesting viewpoint on this issue. She asserts that the 'disillusionment' related to the war occurred post-war, and highlights that this issue was nuanced, as those who had participated in the war out of a sense of duty to aid the war effort were more inclined to be disillusioned than those who joined in the war effort as they needed work. She even states that at the time, the war was 'overwhelmingly popular, and the nation came together to a remarkable degree despite critical differences that reflected the nature of divisions in English society.'¹⁰⁷⁷

Researching the procedures of the installation of the war memorial planned for the city centre in Leeds in the years following the end of the war has certainly revealed the ambivalent feelings held in the city towards the war at this time. This indicates how attitudes towards the war had changed in those preceding years. Although Scott recorded that the city's memorial was 'a result of much thought and discussion', the reality is somewhat more enlightening. The original plan for Leeds city centre, proposed when the armistice was signed, for an ostentatious 'Temple of Fame', was abandoned. The next proposal, which Scott referred to as a 'grandiose scheme', was again rejected as 'being not only impracticable, and too costly, but too utilitarian to be useful'. This meant that eventually, as Scott detailed: 'The beautiful cenotaph designed by Mr H C Fehr came into being on its island site in City Square.

Towering above a pedestal and pyramid of white marble, with their contrasted figures of War

¹⁰⁷⁷ Watson, *Fighting Different Wars*, p. 2.

and Peace, the bronze-winged figure of Victory'.¹⁰⁷⁸ However, Scott's invariably laudatory narrative masked the reality of the situation. Scrutiny of the local newspapers has revealed that the people of Leeds did not want to pay for a more expensive and ostentatious memorial, hence the necessary change of plans.

Leeds City Council, similarly to other cities, had set up a War Memorial Committee to agree a permanent commemorative monument to the city's war dead in 1920.¹⁰⁷⁹ Described by one reader of a local newspaper as a committee 'consisting of influential and public-spirited men', who therefore proposed the original plans for an elaborate war memorial which was to be erected 'on a vacant site in Cookridge Street, Leeds'.¹⁰⁸⁰ This original memorial, described by a letter to the local press as a 'surpassing fine monument', which would have been a memorial 'second to none', although 'somewhat costly'. At an estimate of over fifty thousand pounds, this was to be paid for through public subscription. The design was subsequently approved by the War Memorial Committee and an appeal for the cost launched to the public. However, this was not enthusiastically subscribed to by the local residents, despite the pleas of the Lord Mayor of Leeds, Albert Braithwaite, who 'frequently sought the assistance of the local newspapers for his appeals', as the letter to the *Yorkshire Evening News* reported; even then 'the response, meagre enough at the beginning, gradually dwindled to small and infrequent donations', and ceased at less than seven thousand pounds.¹⁰⁸¹ This meant that this 'ambitious scheme' was 'abandoned by the Committee' in November 1920, as the local press reported, and 'relegated to the limbo of memories, and a more modest one was substituted'.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Scott, *Leeds*, p. 71.

¹⁰⁷⁹ For detailed discussion on the mobilization of support for, and production of, war memorials in Britain, see King, *Memorials of the Great War*.

¹⁰⁸⁰ 'Has Leeds Forgotten? The Vicissitudes of the War Memorial Schemes', *Yorkshire Evening News*, 2 December 1921, p. 6 (from a correspondent); 'Leeds War Memorial New Scheme', *Yorkshire Post*, 27 January 1921, p. 4.

¹⁰⁸¹ 'Has Leeds Forgotten? The Vicissitudes of the War Memorial Schemes', *Yorkshire Evening News*, 2 December 1921, p. 6 (from a correspondent).

This ‘more modest’ monument was submitted to the Leeds War Memorial Executives on 26 January 1921, and, as the local press reported the following day, the committee: ‘Yesterday approved in general terms a new scheme for honouring the local fallen [...] and is estimated to cost about £5,000 [...] a sum which is thought, should be easily raised in Leeds’.¹⁰⁸² Again the Lord Mayor launched a public appeal, and requested twenty thousand pounds from the people of Leeds, to ensure that there would be sufficient money for the above memorial as well as for ‘the preparation of a permanent record of the brave deeds of our men, with a full list of the names of Leeds sailors and soldiers, who made the supreme sacrifice’.¹⁰⁸³ In the event, this permanent record became a memorial roll of the war dead from Leeds, which was compiled by Mr Mulholland, Secretary of the Leeds War Pensions Committee and formerly a member of Leeds City Council for the Labour Party. It revealed over ten thousand names, which was ‘above the number predicted’.¹⁰⁸⁴ However, despite the emotive language of the Lord Mayor’s appeal, which referred to the ‘supreme sacrifice’ of the ‘fallen’ men, even this amount was not raised by the people of Leeds. Several months later, in August 1921, the Lord Mayor wrote in the local press that although accusations had been made that the ‘Leeds War Memorial Committee “is now at a loss to know what to do”, and that there is little prospect of an early start being made to carry the proposals’ due to the lack of subscriptions, he reported that the memorial would be erected the next year. He also confirmed that the fund for the memorial amounted to £5,383, which ‘had been contributed by less than 300 persons, the subscribers being very largely those generous firms and persons whose names usually appear on the subscription list for all philanthropic and charitable objects’.¹⁰⁸⁵ It is

¹⁰⁸² ‘Leeds War Memorial New Scheme’, *Yorkshire Post*, 27 January 1921, p. 4.

¹⁰⁸³ ‘Leeds War Memorial: Lord Mayor’s Explanation of the Position’, *Yorkshire Post*, 11 August 1921, p. 8.

¹⁰⁸⁴ ‘War Losses of Leeds. Memorial Roll Reveals Over 10,000 Names’, *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 18 January 1922, p. 7, Scott, *Leeds*, p. 324.

¹⁰⁸⁵ ‘Leeds War Memorial: Lord Mayor’s Explanation of the Position’, *Yorkshire Post*, 11 August 1921, p.8.

enlightening that so few Leeds people subscribed to this fund, out of a population of over 450,000, and that those who had were clearly the wealthy and influential firms and individuals of the city who were the same ones who always donated to charitable funds. The working class clearly did not wish to contribute to this endeavour, and perhaps could not afford to, which highlighted the existing class distinctions. The Lord Mayor, however, denied that there should be any pecuniary reasons to prevent people from contributing, stating in no uncertain terms, again using emotive language, that the men who had worked at home during the war should at least do their bit to contribute to this monument to those from the city who lost their lives during it: ‘Those men received good wages and [should] fairly be expected to respond to an appeal to perpetuate the memory of those who paid the supreme sacrifice in order to preserve the existence of the British race as an independent nation’. He added that ‘the cause speaks for itself, and I shall make no further appeal’.¹⁰⁸⁶ The list of subscribers was permanently closed the following month. Others in the city also viewed the lack of subscriptions negatively, as a reader of the *Yorkshire Evening News* wrote in December 1921, asking, ‘Has Leeds forgotten?’. In this letter they denounced the fact that ‘many weary months have dragged on since the second appeal was issued, and yet the total subscriptions now stand at only £6,087’. This reader also expressed concern that Leeds was being seen as unpatriotic by visitors from other places due to the lack of a war memorial in the city centre:

It is not by any means an uncommon thing for people visiting Leeds to ask, ‘Where is your war memorial?’ For answer they get a shrug of the shoulders and, ‘We are still waiting!’ There are few places indeed, especially the size of Leeds, where some symbol of the sacrifice made by the brave is not in faithful evidence.¹⁰⁸⁷

¹⁰⁸⁶ ‘Leeds War Memorial: Lord Mayor’s Explanation of the Position’, *Yorkshire Post*, 11 August 1921, p. 8.

¹⁰⁸⁷ ‘Has Leeds Forgotten? The Vicissitudes of the War Memorial Schemes’, *Yorkshire Evening News*, 2 December 1921, p. 6 (from a correspondent).

Another newspaper report earlier this year had also declared that, ‘Leeds is being reproached these days for the small amount of her contributions to the war memorial’.¹⁰⁸⁸ Again, this suggested that Leeds was unusual in its lack of enthusiasm for a memorial to the war dead. This is interesting, and highlights the need for further research into this topic in other places, to determine whether there were positive or negative reactions to similar calls for public funds.

Leeds City War Memorial, the ‘Winged Victory’, was eventually erected in City Square near the Town Hall on 14 October 1922. It was topped by a bronze winged figure of peace in female form, and also incorporated owls symbolising the city of Leeds on the four corners of the base of the obelisk, with a wreath on another face of the base symbolising the war dead (image of the unveiling below).¹⁰⁸⁹

Figure Eight: Unveiling of Leeds War Memorial, October 1922 <http://www.roll-of-honour.com/Yorkshire/Leeds.html>.



¹⁰⁸⁸ ‘A War Memorial That Leeds Can Boast’, *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 3 September 1921, p. 5.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Unveiling of Leeds War Memorial, October 1922, picture taken from a contemporary postcard < <http://www.roll-of-honour.com/Yorkshire/Leeds.html> > [accessed 19 November 2022].

The design of the memorial, significantly the use of the central and prominent female image, is a prime example of how women were symbolically used in war memorials to represent mother figures, as a representation of ‘collective grief’ and ‘symbols of mourning’.¹⁰⁹⁰ Therefore Leeds’ ‘Winged Victory’ memorial to the dead of the First World War was similar to those in other places in design, as a ‘memorial to the city’s gallant dead’, as the local press described it.¹⁰⁹¹ However the story behind its inception, notably the lack of public contribution towards it, masks a discomfort around this attitude to death. It also indicates that the people in Leeds did not wish to spend any more time or money on this issue when so much had been spent already, specifically the blood of their menfolk. Leeds was, however, noted for its innovative services to the soldiers who returned from the war. These included the setting up of workshops for ex-servicemen to train them in new skills. The local press reported in 1921 that they were ‘result of a co-operative effort [...] designed to give opportunity for those still able to work to be of use to the community’.¹⁰⁹² Leeds businesses were also involved in the retraining of soldiers, which again illustrates that the support for these men in the city was important. Leeds’ society’s enthusiasm in their advocacy for the former soldiers compared to their lack of ardour for the city’s main war memorial indicated that no matter how the war years may have impacted upon the people of Leeds, they were thereafter focused upon the living rather than the dead.¹⁰⁹³

¹⁰⁹⁰ Grayzel, ‘Mourning Practices’, p. 371, Damousi, ‘Gender and Mourning’, p. 226.

¹⁰⁹¹ ‘Leeds War Memorial Site: How Midland Buildings Mar the View’, *Yorkshire Evening News*, 3 March 1922, p. 7.

¹⁰⁹² ‘A War Memorial That Leeds Can Boast’, *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 3 September 1921, p. 5; Moore and Pullman, *Leeds Remembering*, p. 128.

¹⁰⁹³ Moore and Pullman, *Leeds Remembering*, p. 128.

Conclusion

Findings on Leeds in the First World War

This thesis has revealed the singularity of Leeds in the First World War, through painstakingly analysis of the many different sources relating to the war locally. It has shown that Leeds was representative of a greater response to the war than is often given, and that the city responded in many ways that diverged from the national picture, due to the specificities identified. This research has been led by the evidence, the main value of which has been to highlight the importance of the five interrelated themes which have been scrutinized to uncover the experience of the people of Leeds in the war. Notably, the fact that Leeds changed into a war industry city from the outset, which subsequently impacted on local recruitment and the classes and genders in differing ways, has been a major finding of this thesis. The industry the war brought to the city meant that, inherent tensions notwithstanding, the increased employment led to better living conditions than other places during the war. This had an impact on the attitudes to the war, as it meant that the extreme war-weariness felt in other places, both in Britain and abroad, did not manifest itself in the same way in the city. This is evidenced by the resolving of potential strikes locally, which were prevalent nationally. The war work also provided men and women on the home front with an opportunity to feel they were also working for the war in their own way, and this research has revealed that, in addition to the war related industry, prevalent issues such as food shortages also became a way for many civilians on the home front in Leeds to show patriotism. It has highlighted how this was actively encouraged by both the national and local government propaganda, as well as by the majority of the national and local press, which became more didactic as the war progressed. Rather than a shared experience of unconditional support for the war, however, the evidence suggests that the compliance of the Leeds people to the wartime time conditions was not simply due to patriotic fervour but to necessity: people

needed to work to live, and the war offered work. As Gregory shows in his study on the British home front, society kept going, in spite of the increasing bitterness at the perceived inequality of the soldier deaths and civilian industries.¹⁰⁹⁴

A reader of the *Leeds Weekly Citizen* expressed the sentiments of many in Leeds society when he wrote to the newspaper in the middle of the First World War:

I am not writing as one who hates the Germans; I am very averse to punishing them or dishonouring them in any way, but I do think it very important for the future of mankind that we should win this war against them. It is they who have been the main cause of it, and they deserve to lose it.¹⁰⁹⁵

This study has shown that, although much of the evidence in Leeds supports this view of an overwhelming desire for nation to fight the war to an end, which meant defeating the enemy who was seen as the aggressor, the impact on, and attitudes to, the war in Leeds were more nuanced than this one viewpoint. Therefore this thesis has not aimed to ‘review the magnificent part taken by the good city of Leeds in helping to hasten the day of victory’, as Scott offered in his hagiographical history of the city during the war, but has revealed instead the distinctions which existed.¹⁰⁹⁶ The political composition of Leeds has been shown to be one such distinction, with its antithetical figures whose contrasting stances on the war reflected the varied views which existed in the city at the time. It has highlighted the views of peace seeking Liberal MP Thomas Edmund Harvey, firmly on the dissent side of the spectrum before the hostilities broke out, and who became warily accepting of it once it was underway. These were apposed with the views of the city’s one Labour MP, the influential,

¹⁰⁹⁴ Gregory, *Last Great War*.

¹⁰⁹⁵ ‘Correspondence: Conscription and the Present Situation’, *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 21 January 1916, p. 3.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Scott, *Leeds*, p. 3.

and, most significantly, prominently pro-war James O'Grady. O'Grady used his prominent and noteworthy role in society to influence the public, mostly through his regular columns in the left-leaning *Leeds Weekly Citizen*. This newspaper's raison d'être was to uphold the rights of the working class, and its contrast with the more conservative newspapers in Leeds has been another important discovery in this research. The press reflected as well as influenced the public mood, and the conflicting newspaper reports provide an interesting analogy to the contradictory attitudes of Leeds society. The other sources used for this thesis have been equally enlightening, and have all revealed that, although living conditions may have been comparatively better in Leeds than other places, the war still had multiple impacts, as evidenced by the themes which emerged during the research.

Themes

The several interlinked themes which were identified during this research have provided a focus for the study and revealed the complexities of Leeds in the war years. The identification of the themes, industry, recruitment, grief, class, and gender, is a major and positive finding of the thesis. Their scrutiny has revealed an informed and insightful picture of the city during the war, and has also highlighted the need for further research in these areas from a localised perspective. Crucially, this study has shown that the local industry in Leeds was exactly why Leeds was generally so conservative in views towards the war, despite the notable left-wing politicians, and the political composition of the Conservative run City Council meant that the Council saw it as imperative to work to prioritise this industry. After 1916 especially, when the Government became an armaments producer, the munitions industry brought much employment, including notably to the women of the city. This thesis has revealed the City Council's protection of the female workers in munitions and other roles, demonstrated by the

setting up of special committees for the purpose, was juxtaposed with the suppression by them, as well as the Government and the press, to the munitions accidents and related deaths which occurred.¹⁰⁹⁷ The Government's first National Ordnance Factory, Barnbow, in Leeds, had a particularly good reputation for caring for its female employees, which again sets Leeds apart from other places, however welfare plans such as those to cater to working mothers were short-lived. As Thom asserts, the 'support for working mothers in wartime has been exaggerated', and that in practice nursery facilities 'were unevenly distributed [...] in general they existed because an area was used to working women, as in Leeds'.¹⁰⁹⁸ Whether other suggested safeguarding measures regarding improving the conditions of the workers' lives were actually introduced is another potential research study. However, this research has highlighted that with munitions work, as with other aspects of the war, people's experiences were not consistent or uniform in the city. This study has also shown that the minimalising of the information provided to the public on munitions-related accidents and deaths mirrored that of the reporting of the casualties of the armed forces.

This research has highlighted that the low recruitment in Leeds was related to the war related employment in the city, and has also shown that the motivations for local men signing up to the armed forces nationally included a sense of duty, and to assert masculinity, however most notable were pecuniary. Many men in Leeds who were unemployed at the time of the outbreak of the war signed up as it was seen as gainful employment, and once the war was in full progression, many stayed at home as there was valuable employment to undertake on the home front. For many married men, it was the economic concern for their family which was a

¹⁰⁹⁷ See, for example, WYAS Leeds, WYL101/5/12, Minutes of Women's War Employment Committee (Industrial) Leeds, 20 May 1916, 1 June 1916; 'Munitions Workers Welfare: Report on Factory Conditions', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 14 January 1916, p. 8, WYAS Leeds, WYL101/5/4: Ministry of Munitions. Health of Muniton Workers Committee. Memorandum No. 4. Employment of Women, 1916.

¹⁰⁹⁸ Thom, *Nice Girls and Rude Girls*, p. 175.

major factor in their decision to join the armed forces, and the introduction of the separation allowances, in October 1914, was therefore a significant move.¹⁰⁹⁹ However, administrative problems with this allowance, as well as the fact that it was varied and inconsistent nationally, also impacted upon recruitment and this study has ascertained that even with the contribution of the separation allowances working class families struggled.¹¹⁰⁰ The affirmation of this research that the men from Leeds who stayed at home in employment associated with the war meant that they could still feel that they were doing their patriotic duty even if they had not joined up, also highlights the significance of manliness and masculinity to recruitment. The evidence in local newspapers in Leeds, especially regarding COs, confirmed that the press exacerbated this perception of the COs as weak.¹¹⁰¹ Leeds did not have a large presence of COs, although they did attract much press attention, as a newsworthy oddity. However, press reporting on them soon declined once the unfamiliarity had worn off. This is significant, as it indicates that most of society were not emotionally invested in the plight of the COs once the initial novelty of their stance had dissipated. The evidence in Leeds also supports the view that the press invariably has a tendency to court controversy and peculiarity, which the CO cases were seen as by the majority of society. The main reason for this diminishing public and press interest in the COs, the subsiding novelty notwithstanding, was the rapidly rising army fatalities during the year of conscription.

The way in which grief associated with the war deaths was processed in Leeds is another key finding of this thesis. The local press deferred to the tropes related with 'sacrifice' for the

¹⁰⁹⁹ Rates of changing separation allowances can be found in Dewey, 'Nutrition and Living Standards', p. 212.

¹¹⁰⁰ For further discussion on problems with the separation allowances, see Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, p. 106, and Gregory, *Last Great War*, p. 32. For evidence of families struggling to survive on the separation allowances, see for example Leeds, LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/GS/1197, Papers of Private Herbert Oates, 1914-1918.

¹¹⁰¹ Bibbings, 'State Reaction to Conscientious Objection', Bibbings, 'Images of Manliness' and Bibbings, *Telling Tales about Men*.

men who were killed, which were accepted motifs for death at this time to extoll the dead soldiers as heroes and victims to ease the pain for those left behind, mirroring the experience also in Germany.¹¹⁰² This research has revealed that the reporting of the deaths in the press changed as the war wore on, to provide a lack of emphasis on death for reasons of morale and to adhere to wartime censorship. It has also shown that the local press manipulated society's grief through the demonisation of the enemy, putting them firmly at the forefront of the blame for the many deaths. In Leeds, there is ample evidence of the anti-German rhetoric both in the press and private documents, with the accepted casting of the enemy as hated 'selfish bullying blackguards', as one Leeds man opined.¹¹⁰³ However, again the situation was nuanced, and the underlying meaning of such hyperbole was fear of the situation, as the antagonism towards the enemy stemmed from a fear of defeat in a society which was infiltrated by grief. This was also the case with soldiers, whose letters provided evidence of concern for those at home, another reaction to the all-encompassing grief.

This research has shown that there was clearly a difference between the accepted mourning of the different genders and classes.¹¹⁰⁴ Indeed, the myriad of class differences nationwide during the war years were overt in all belligerent nations. These differences were perpetuated by the war, and this research has revealed that this was the case in Leeds also, notably through examination of the evidence on the shortages and rising prices of food, which impacted upon the working class far more than the middle classes.¹¹⁰⁵ This study has also exposed the class tensions which existed regarding recruitment, including the treatment of

¹¹⁰² Chickering, *The Great War*, pp. 329-331.

¹¹⁰³ LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/GS/1610, Robert H Tolson letters, 1914-1918, 2 August 1916.

¹¹⁰⁴ LULSC, LC, LIDDLE/WW1/DF/074, Diaries of Ella Lethem, 1917-1918, 6 December 1917 and 5 January 1918.

¹¹⁰⁵ Chickering, *The Great War*; Kocka, *Facing Total War*; see also Daniel, *War from Within* and Davis, *Home Fires Burning*, p. 1, for the impact of the war specifically on the German 'women of lesser means' (*minderbemittelte Frauen*).

COs, with the highlighting of evidence which shows the tribunals' unequal treatment of the appellants locally, and also within the Pals battalions.¹¹⁰⁶ Despite the class differences highlighted, however, this research has shown that all classes in society had their lives profoundly changed by the war, not least the women.

Women were central to Leeds in the war, where the pre-war key role of women as home-makers continued, however they also became workers in the mass industry created by the needs of the war. They were also the ones impacted most by food shortages, as they were the ones faced with the task of feeding their families in the challenging wartime circumstances, as elsewhere in all belligerent countries. This research has shown that Leeds was particularly successful at food management. This does not mean, however, that the women in Leeds were more patriotic than women in other places; Leeds simply had the necessary circumstances to employ many women in the war work, and was large enough that it was not dependent on external supplies. That Leeds City Council formed a Women's War Employment Committee to deal with issues which related to the female labour, including their health, reflected the gravity with which they viewed the situation of female employment in the city. However, this research has challenged the assertions of Scott that the female labour was welcomed in Leeds, and has shown again there was in fact a nuanced situation with female employment in the city, where there was also much resentment towards these women.¹¹⁰⁷ The women also largely returned to their former roles following the war, many of whom who had worked for the war still disenfranchised following the criteria of the Representation of the People Act. Braybon reasonably claims that women were both winners and losers in the war, the impact of the war being more nuanced on their lives than a simple improvement or disadvantage,

¹¹⁰⁶ See, for example, 'Unequal Tribunals', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 6 October 1916, p. 1; For comment on the class inequality within the Pals battalions, see Spiers, 'Voluntary Recruiting', p. 299; Offer, 'Going to War in 1914', p. 233.

¹¹⁰⁷ Scott, *Leeds*, p. 177.

which this research has shown to be the case in Leeds.¹¹⁰⁸ The war provided many women with new opportunities to work, although they then lost these new roles when the war ended. There were also prominent women anti-war campaigners in the city during the war, Isabella Ford of Adel being one such example. However this study has proved that the numbers of those with anti-war sentiments were far outnumbered by those in the city who were supporting, or at least complying with, the war in their endeavours.

Significance of the Findings and Future Research

This research has shown that Leeds during the First World War rapidly became a war industry city, the need for munitions and uniforms bolstering the existing trade and providing much employment and a successful war economy locally. From the outset, the City Council were fully supportive and pro-active, and the evidence in Leeds supports the theory that the majority of people of the home front in Leeds wished for victory over the enemy, present both in the soldiers' letters and documents relating to the home front. This research has also highlighted that the soldiers abroad were fully aware that home front was working for this victory in their own way: 'Truly, this war depends equally on the civilians as upon the soldiers, and when victory is secured it will be on the combined efforts of all'.¹¹⁰⁹ The industry created by the war time necessities therefore impacted upon all aspects in Leeds, influencing the comparatively low recruitment rates and the lives of the people on the home front. It has shown that the working-class women in the city were particularly impacted by the war, as, in addition to the struggle to feed their families, they needed to contend with the grief associated with their loss of the many war dead of the city. This research has uncovered

¹¹⁰⁸ Braybon, 'Winners or Losers'.

¹¹⁰⁹ WYAS Leeds, LC TR, Leeds City Council Treasurer's Correspondence with Employees Enlisted in the Armed Forces, 1917-1919, Sergeant C C Sellars, 24 July 1918.

evidence in Leeds that grief profoundly changed the city, its far-reaching impact infiltrating all aspects of society, as can be seen in other places.¹¹¹⁰

This research therefore makes a valuable contribution to the field of First World War studies, as an enlightening and in-depth investigation into the impact of the war on the home front of a major British city. It has revealed that the differing views of the press both reflected and directed the contrasting views of Leeds society. More local studies are needed, using the scrutiny of local press as a rich source in conjunction with ego documents, to unveil the multi-layered reality of life on the home front in other places in the war. This would reveal whether other major cities were as determined in the aim to fight the war through to the end, and whether other places would also display this nuanced picture of both consensus and dissent. Future research on cities or other medium sized towns in Germany, France or Italy would be especially illuminating. Another aspect of the war which this study has shown needs further research is the permeability between those on the home front and the soldiers at war, how the two groups mirrored each other in the often expressed desire to crush the enemy. It has also highlighted particularly the resentful yet also fiercely protective attitude of the soldiers on the battle fronts towards the people left at home, and how this may have impacted on life after the war. It also needs to be investigated whether Scott's recollections of the returning soldiers, who, he claimed, 'preferred the pre-war feminine atmosphere', were correct.¹¹¹¹ Much research could also be carried out to determine the post war lives of the soldiers who formerly worked for Leeds City Council who returned home after the war. This study has changed and nuanced both the picture of Leeds in the war, not least in the challenge it provides to contemporary recollections of Scott, and also the understanding of

¹¹¹⁰ Kocka, *Facing Total War*, Chickering, *The Great War*, Stevenson, *1917*, Damousi, 'Gender and Mourning', pp. 223-226.

¹¹¹¹ Scott, *Leeds*, p. 70.

the 'home front' as a monolithic, homogeneous space distinct from the 'war front'.¹¹¹² Via the many sources scrutinized, this research has shown that the realities of life in Leeds during the First World War were multi-layered and complex, affected by local as well as national factors, and also changed over time. In this thesis, this evidence has been brought together to provide a more balanced assessment on the experience of war on the people of the city, to show that Leeds was a special case due to the unique conditions the war introduced.

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