2020

Boy Meets War: A Critical and Creative Analysis of Civilian Masculinities in Britain During the Second World War

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by

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Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements of Senior Independent Study

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Spring 2020

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ABSTRACT

During the Second World War, the hegemonic masculinity, that is, the dominant masculinity, resided with the Royal Air Force (RAF). Pilots epitomized what it meant to be a man in war due to their heroics in the Battle of Britain. Civilian masculinities therefore had to negotiate their identities to fit their new roles in society. The two types of civilian men that I mainly look at are men in the reserved occupations and conscientious objectors. I examine this question: how did cultural representations portrayed by the government affect the civilian men on the homefront? Furthermore, I explore how these men viewed the government's policies. Finally, I investigate post-war depictions of civilian masculinity. To answer these inquires, I analyzed propaganda posters, films, interviews, and tv shows. In my research, I found that the government policies forced men to accept their subordinate masculine identity during the war. Civilian men, even in their support roles, still found ways to create a sense of normalcy, and built positive relationships with one another on the homefront. Post-war representations also have a better understanding of civilian men during the Second World War.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like to thank Dr. Roche for advising my Senior Independent Study. While I may not have always shown an enthusiastic sentiment for this project, I still appreciated your advice, guidance, and your utter infatuation with using Google for research.

I would like to thank the organizers of the Copeland Fund for making my trip to England and the Imperial War Museum possible. Without the Copeland Fund, my project would not have the depth that it does now. To the Imperial War Museum, thank you for letting me loan out 70+ boxes worth of Bevin Boy material. The parts that I did read were crucial to my project as were the audio tapes and CO paperwork.

Thank you to my mom for being the backbone for this project. This journey would not have happened without your loving support. Your excitement for my Independent Study sometimes was the only thing that motivated me to keep going, because I know you'll be proud of the work I've done. Thank you for listening to my ideas while having absolutely no clue as to what I am talking about. You know when to be my shoulder to cry on, or when I need tough love. I would not be the strong, opinionated woman or writer I am today without you.

Thank you to my best friend, Kayla Pelham, for being the person I called when I needed to vent, cry, or yell in frustration. I do not know what I would do without your support… or behavioral analysis. You may not have known my topic or what I was talking about, but you still helped me find a solution to whatever problems I was having that day. You also knew just what to say that would cheer me up and rebuild my confidence. That's what Aries friends do.

Thank you to my old roommate Kaylin, for putting lavender in the diffuser and watching movies with me so I could relax. Thank you, also, for coming with me to the coffee shop on weekends and working through my novella with me. Your comments and suggestions did not go unnoticed, and I hope you like the final product!

I would like to thank the "Girl Gang," Arianna, Christina, Oriana, Emma G, Emma W, and Sangita for supporting me this school year even though you all graduated. I'd like to give a huge shout out to Arianna for coming up with my title "Boy Meets War." Who doesn't love a 90s pun for a thesis title? Thank you, Allie Joyner, for having venting and roasting sessions at our carrels and in the library. To my brother, Danny, who thinks I'm the smartest person in the world - I'm not but you can still read my thesis. To my dad, for peaking my interest in masculinity.

Savanna Hitlan

INTRODUCTION

The setting was Great Britain, specifically, the Second World War. Tony Parker stepped in the bath to rinse off after a long day in the coal mines. Parker was a conscientious objector and a pacifist which allowed him to join the industrial labor force. The government would only consider Parker a "conchie," if he undertook work essential to the war effort. Tony Parker agreed and gained conditional exemption. This meant that Parker did not have to fight in the war due to his contrasting moral values. The government transferred him to the Bradford Colliery in Lancashire, where Parker served between 1942-1943 as a coal miner. On this day, Parker's beliefs came into question. As he was rinsing off, another miner came to speak with him. With one look at Parker, he sneered "you're a fucking conchie, aren't you?" to which Tony replied "yes that's right." The young miner hit Tony in response, and this is the only hostility that Tony Parker remembers from the Second World War.[1]

The Imperial War Museum conducted several interviews with men similar to Tony Parker. The interviews included Bevin Boys', men in the reserved occupation and conscientious objectors. These men all had one characteristic that bonded them: they held the status of "civilian" during the Second World War. Within their interviews, the men gave insight into what it was like to be a civilian man on the homefront. They detailed their experiences in air raids, in the work force, their romantic lives, their attitudes towards the war and the Nazis, the military... the list goes on. Some noted how they came upon their pacifist views while others describe their

[1] Tony Parker, interview by Lyn. E Smith, *Imperial War Museums,* Imperial War Museum, Feb. 27, 1986.

trials and tribulations as shipyard builders and coal miners. They were there. They played an important part in the Second World War, and I found them to be completely fascinating.

I have always loved listening to stories. My grandma used to tell me about the trouble her and her brothers and sisters would make during their childhood. I look at my great aunts and uncles and I ask myself: how did all of you form a family? Some of my grandma's siblings have opposite personalities. My Great Uncle George was a Colonel for the U.S. Military whereas my Great Uncle Tony worked for Jimmy Hoffa. My grandma and my Great Aunt Carla pursued degrees and became an engineer and businesswoman respectively; however my Great Aunt Sam is a free spirited hippie. Their differing personalities made for some intriguing stories when I visited my grandma. Somehow they managed to accept each other's different identities, and that idea connected me to the men in the Second World War.

I had no idea what my Independent Study would be about when I stepped on the College of Wooster campus as a freshman. I coasted through my first two years of college without the worry of creating a thesis. Then my junior year came and I frantically tried to find a topic I loved. I realized, as I was studying abroad in Scotland, that all of my research papers had a particular theme. They all involved gender in some capacity. For instance, my sophomore year I wrote a research paper on the women in the French Bohemian movement and how their gender affected their work. While in Scotland, I took a course called "Gender Identities in Britain during the Two World Wars," where I found the numerous Imperial War Museum interviews of men on the homefront. Therefore, I linked my interest in gender relations and my love for listening to stories, and created a thesis revolving around different masculine identities during the Second World War.

My Independent Study examines civilian masculinities on the British homefront during the Second World War. In my research, I mainly analyze two types of civilian men: the reserved men and conscientious objectors. One saw hardship in factory work or coal mines. The other fought for his moral beliefs. Though their trials during the war were different, they all are similar in one way. Each man had to negotiate his identity to fit the hegemonic masculinity of the time. During the Second World War, the Royal Air Force (RAF) pilot projected the characteristics of the hegemonic masculinity. The civilian men, therefore, had to find other methods to display the hegemonic traits or risk public humiliation.

On September 3, 1939, Britain declared war with Germany. The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) transmitted a speech from King George VI. The King stated that "for the second time in the lives of most of us, we are at war." King George VI asked his people to protect humanity from the threat that Hitler posed: "It is to this high purpose that I call my people at home, and my people across the sea, who will make this cause their own. I ask them to stand calm and firm and unite in this time of trial." The King's speech ignited total war mobilization for Britain.[2]

Mobilization for total war included a mass build up of the armed forces. The military branches crucial for the war effort consisted of the Royal Air Force (RAF), Royal Navy (RN), and British Army. Immediately after the declaration of war, Britain began compulsory service, or conscription.[3] By the end of 1939, over 1.5 million men were conscripted into the British

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[2] Ben Johnson, "The King's Speech Transcript for King George VI," Historic UK, Accessed May 02, 2019. https://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofBritain/The-Kings-Speech/.
[3] "Mobilisation," Mobilisation - WWII Heritage, Accessed May 01, 2019, http://www.worldwar2heritage.com/en/peace-disturbed/mobilisation.

military force, 1.1 million of which entered into the army, and the others were divided between the RN and RAF.[4]

The British Army, and especially the British Expeditionary Forces, were the most important unit in the war. The British Expeditionary Forces (BEF) were sent to protect France from invasion after Germany succeeded in conquering Poland. On May 10, 1940, following seven months of a stalemate known as the "Phoney War," Germany swiftly invaded France.[5] Sixteen days after their initial attack, Germany pushed the British, French, and Belgian troops back to Dunkirk, where the RN evacuated most allied military forces from the port. The RN rescued 338,000 soldiers with 800 ships plus civilian boats, while leaving behind all army munitions and belongings. Germany began their occupation of France, leaving Britain the only major ally, then, to defend Europe.[6]

After the army evacuated from France, the RAF fighter pilots became the most important unit in Britain during the Second World War. At the height of mobilization, the RAF consisted of 170,000 flyers.[7] The Battle of Britain began in July 1940 when Germany bombed airfields, planes, and command centers in preparation for invasion. The RAF fighter pilots were the only men who could stop German Luftwaffe in battle. Hitler initially believed that Britain would fall within two or three weeks, but the British flyers proved a resilient force.[8] Night after night the

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[4] "History - British History in Depth: Conscription Introduced," BBC, Accessed May 01, 2019, http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/britain_wwtwo/ff1_conscription.shtml.
[5] "Britain's 'Phoney' Start To The Second World War," Imperial War Museums, Accessed May 01, 2019, https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/britains-phoney-start-to-the-second-world-war. See also, Imperial War Museum, "Phoney War."
[6] "What You Need to Know about the Dunkirk Evacuations," Imperial War Museums, February 2, 2018, Accessed May 01, 2019.
[7] Martin Francis, *The Flyer: British Culture and the Royal Air Force 1939-1945*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 7.
[8] Garry Campion, *The Good Fight: Battle of Britain Propaganda and the Few*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 141.

British shot down several German aircrafts, and prevented a total German invasion. By October, Hitler postponed an invasion of Britain, and turned his sights to Russia.[9]

Propaganda posters, speeches, and newspaper articles idealized the RAF role in the Battle of Britain, thus solidifying their role at the top of the masculine hegemony. Several posters depicted the British flyers protecting cities like London from the German Luftwaffe. Prime Minister Winston Churchill commended the fight of the British flyers in one speech, and said "never has so much been owed to so few."[10] The RAF, who fought in the Second World War, are forever immortalized as "The Few," who saved Britain from invasion. Furthermore, newspapers mythologized the RAF, and compared them to David (RAF) and Goliath (Germans), Elizabethans (RAF) and the Spanish Armada (Germans).[11] The British public saw the RAF as the heroes of the nation, "the few" who defended Britain in her darkest hour.

Before the declaration of war, homefront mobilization of the reserved occupations preceded compulsory service and military organization.[12] Due to new technological advancements in warfare, Britain needed to build up a workforce that could support both the military and economy during a total war scenario.[13] Reserved occupations were jobs that were necessary and essential to maintaining the war effort.[14] For instance, they made munitions for the military and also food for the people on the homefront. Some of the reserved occupations

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[9] Ibid., 2.
[10] "Churchill's speech to the Few celebrates the Battle of Britain," *London Evening Standard* [London, England], August 20, 2010, 7, General OneFile (accessed April 30, 2019).
[11] Campion, "The Good Fight," 6-7.
[12] Juliette Pattinson, "Shirkers, Scrimjacks, and Scrimshanks? British Civilian Masculinity and Reserved Occupations 1914-1945," Gender and History 28, no.3 (November, 2016): 715.
[13] Linsey Robb, *Men at Work: The Working Man in British Culture 1939-1945*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 41.
[14] Pattinson,"Shirkers," 717.

included coal mining, shipbuilding, and farming. The British government commenced mobilization of the homefront as early as 1938.

Parliament compiled a list called the "Schedule of Reserved Occupations," that presented to the public which occupations were vital for the war. The schedule detailed several jobs in Britain, and covered over five million men. Next to every job was a number that represented the age at which a man became "reserved."[15] The lower the age next to an occupation, the more important that job was for the war effort. For example, a coal miner might be reserved at eighteen, whereas a teacher might be reserved at thirty-five.

The Schedule of Reserved Occupations imposed several rules upon the men working in essential industries. They remained in a static during the Second World War. For example, men in the reserved occupations could not fluctuate between jobs. The Schedule made it difficult for them to find other jobs because each man had his place and shoes to fill. Along with that, most men found they could not join military service. During the Battle of Britain, the government made an exception and enlisted several men as pilots.[16] Otherwise, the government restricted the movement of the men in the reserved occupations because of their importance for the war effort.

The British government used propaganda such as posters and films to demonstrate the importance of the reserved occupations, but they fell short from conflict over the idea of homefront mobilization. They recognized that the reserved men detested the rules that dictated their lives. Men in the reserved occupation metaphorically lived in a static position. They remained in their pre-war jobs with little to no movement in occupation or status, and they could not fight in the armed forces. The government, in turn, started to equate these men to the military

[15] Ibid., 716.
[16] Ibid., 717.

to persuade them to stay in their line of work.[17] The problem is, the posters only displayed these men as a support group.Though the government tried to commend these men for their effort, conflict within parliament suggested that these men were less than their military counterparts. Some Members of Parliament questioned the idea of the reserved occupations, calling them "absurd."[18] Others questioned the need for men in the occupations when women entered the workforce.

In that light, men in the reserved occupations had to negotiate different identities. The government had a hard time grasping the idea of men on the homefront and not in battle. Most men in the reserved occupations wanted to be on the battlefront. Yet, they remained civilians. The reserved man remained in a steady spot on the masculine spectrum. This civilian masculine identity helped these men form new relationships with other civilian men, like conscientious objectors and Bevin Boys.

Unlike the military and the men in the reserved occupations, conscientious objectors challenged the government and the war by refusing to participate. Starting in the First World War and flowing into the Second, the government allowed men to object to conscription on the basis of conscience. The government felt that forcing someone to disregard their moral obligations could be detrimental to their conscience.[19] During the Second World War there were 60,000 pacifists who declared they could not fight because it went against their moral values. Many conscientious objectors did not fight due to their religion. Others included socialists, who saw the Second World War as an imperialistic adventure in which they did not want to contribute.

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[17] "Wartime Reserved Occupations," *The Times* (London, England), Jan. 19, 1939.
[18] Pattinson, "Shirkers," 719.
[19] Robert Mackay, "'No Place in the Corporation's Service': The BBC and Conscientious Objectors in the Second World War," *Media History*, (April 2006): 37.

Finally, others fought against the idea of state compulsion. Most of the conscientious objectors, however, were pacifists.[20]

In both the First and the Second World War, a conscientious objector experienced a long process before they could officially claim "conscientious objection." For example, they had to fill out an application. Then they had to present themselves in front of a tribunal to defend their moral beliefs and right of conscience.[21] If the tribunal ruled that their convictions were true, then the man could be offered one of three different types of exemption. First there was partial exemption, where the government placed the conscientious objector in a non-combatant corps of the military. If a man received conditional exemption then the government placed him in the reserved occupations and essential war industries. Finally, if a man received absolute exemption, then he did not have to participate in any part of the war effort. Most men did not gain absolute exemption.[22]

There is a notable shift in British public perception of conscientious objectors from the First World War to the Second. In the First World War, the British saw conscientious objectors as the antithesis of the soldier. People believed their conscience was corrupt and they tried to shirk their way out of their duty to their country. Newspapers dubbed them criminals, deviants, and degenerates. The government also imprisoned them, subjected them to hard labor, and or sent them to France to be tortured or killed.[23] The Second World War, however, showed a significant

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[20] Tobias Kelly, "Citizenship, Cowardice, and Freedom and Conscience: British Pacifists in the Second World War," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 57, no.3 (2015): 694-700
[21] Ibid., 704-707.
[22] Lois Bibbing, "Images of Manliness: The Portrayal of Soldiers and Conscientious Objectors in the Great War," *Social and Legal Studies* 12, no.3 (2003): 340.
[23] Ibid., 341-346.

change and a more tolerant view of conscientious objectors. People saw these men as brave for standing up for their beliefs, and equated them to moral soldiers.[24]

The British adjustments towards conscientious objectors allowed these men to form a new identity and to create their own masculinity during the Second World War. Unlike the military and the reserved occupations, the conscientious objector has no real place in the wartime myth. Their place in the world did not diminish nor support the war effort. Their status due to tolerance allowed the men to form relations with others without being scrutinized by the public like in the First World War. Conscientious objectors could more forward on the masculine spectrum and create a new identity outside of the idea of "coward" or "shirker."

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There is a general consensus among gender historians that the topic of Second World War masculinity has been largely neglected; however, historians are taking steps to increase scholarly literature on the subject. [25] Historians tend to focus on the development of masculinity in the First World War, or focus on the efforts and effect of women and femininity in the Second.[26] Though there is a lack of academic work, some efforts have been taken to expand the work on masculinity during the Second World War. In the past fifteen years, historians have begun to address this gap by studying military and civilian masculinities.

Gender historians such as Corinna Peniston-Bird, Arthur McIvor, Linsey Robb, and Juliette Pattinson have tried to unearth the mystery of the reserved occupations. In *Men, Masculinity, and Male Culture in the Second World War*, Bird acknowledges that reserved men

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[24] "Social Pressure on Conscientious Objectors," Mass Observation File Report 312, June 1940, Accessed in Gender Identities Seminar, University of Edinburgh, December 10, 2018.
[25] Francis, "The Flyer," 1.
[26] Jessica Meyers, *Men of War: Masculinity and the First World War in Britain*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 8-10.

are neither commended nor commemorated in post-war memorials. She suggests that propaganda failed at accurately depicting these men during the war. Robb elaborates on propaganda representations.[27] She explores the biases of the poster campaigns such as "The Attack Begins in the Factory," and "Back Them Up." They may have tried to link production and front lines, but the posters were discussed in military terms, and only really displayed battle scenes.[28] Pattinson looks at propaganda through a different lens and examines how propaganda guilted men into joining the RAF.[29] McIvor, like Bird, stated that the men in the reserved occupation were invisible; however, he believes that the lack of uniform was the reason no one noticed them. Everyone was engrossed with the pilot in their war regalia. No one sought to look at the reserved man.[30]

Conscientious objectors are the least studied group of men in terms of men in the Second World War.[31] Notable historians are Lois Bibbings, Tobias Kelly, and Linsey Robb. Bibbings explores the shift between animosity in the First World War to tolerance in the Second. Most of her argument focuses on the dichotomy between the conscientious objector the the hegemonic man at any given time. Kelly surveys the psychology of conscientious objectors in the Second World War, and the effect of tolerance. Both historians claim that conscientious objectors become less visible in the public eye because of tolerance during the Second World War.[32] Finally, Robb

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[27] Bird, "Commemorating," 195.
[28] Robb, *Men at Work*, 43.
[29] Pattinson, "Shirkers," 717.
[30] Arthur McIvor, "Rebuilding 'Real Men': Work and Working Class Civilian Bodies in Wartime," *Men, Masculinities, and Male Culture* ed. Linsey Robb and Juliette Pattinson, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 121.
[31] Linsey Robb, "The 'Conchie Corps': Conflict, Compromise, and Conscientious Objection in the British Army, 1940-1945," *Twentieth Century British History* 29, no.3 (2018): 411. Nevertheless, there have been a few studies of COs. Most prominently, see the work of Linsey Robb, Tobias Kelly, Lois Bibbings, and Julie Gardiner.
[32] Bibbings, "Images," 337.

demonstrates the hostile treatment the conscientious objector received as part of the "conchie corps," a non-combatant military corps for partially exempt COs.

Historians of Second World War gender constructions hint, but largely neglected, the effect of government wartime policy and narratives on civilian men and their masculine identities. Most of the literature regarding the Second World War examines one category of men, such as reserved occupations, and details their sole experiences during the war. Furthermore, the other articles compare civilian men and their masculinity to the hegemonic masculinity of the military. They specify that the military overshadows the civilian man, thus making him invisible to the public eye. Some historians, like Corinna Penston-Bird, explore post-war commemorations of civilian men, but do not highlight the complete experiences of the Second World War in their work. Finally, other historians, such as Linsey Robb and Juliette Pattinson, note the invisibility of these men in wartime propaganda and film. What is lost in the research is why the men remained invisible in these media outlets in the first place.

I will add to the discussion of masculinity in the Second World War by revealing the relationships these civilian men had with one another on the homefront, while also uncovering the reason these men remained invisible in history for so long. The Imperial War Museum interviews notably provide insight on the relations each type of men had with one another, as well as their sentiments towards their status, their experiences on the homefront, and post-war commemoration. While my research is not entirely new, it expands upon previously written literature, and gives an added depth to the historiography.

Additional primary sources demonstrate different perspectives on civilian men as well as their masculine status during the war. Propaganda, like RAF and reserved occupation posters

represent the government policy towards both the military and civilian men during the Second World War. Wartime films like *Behind The Guns* and *Millions Like Us* explore gender relations and masculine identity from a factory worker perspective. Finally, government documents such as the Schedule of Reserved Occupations, and studies like Mass Observation reports, give historical background and data regarding civilian men.

Cultural representations such as propaganda posters and films give insight into how gender is constructed in society. In this thesis, I argue that due to the gender construction from cultural sources, civilian men had to formulate new identities, and accept their subordinate position in society. In this era, the government portrayed men in different capacities such as the armed forces or the reserved occupations. The idea behind this was to demonstrate what kind of man is essential in time of war: the military man, and the factory man. However, the execution of these depictions of both the military and reserved man create an unequal hegemony. The military is epitomized as the ideal male, while society considers reserved men and conscientious objectors mere support groups. This project examines how and why these men negotiated new masculine identities in times of war.

In Chapter One, I examine the cultural representation of the reserved occupations and conscientious objectors through which the government policy unveils itself. I look specifically at wartime depictions of civilian men to establish a sense of public perception, and how that affected the masculinity on the homefront. Propaganda posters and films tried to promote the importance of the men in the reserved occupation, but fall short by displaying certain features that could never be considered for an ideal man. In this way, the reserved men have to negotiate their masculinity to fit the public narrative. In terms of conscientious objectors, the government

never had an official policy regarding their experience. In the second part of the chapter I describe the conscientious objector's journey of experience from hostility in the First World War to tolerance in the Second. Conscientious objectors, therefore have more leniency with their masculine identity as they do not have to constrain themselves to fit a public image.

Chapter Two explores the government policy of normalcy on the homefront, and how it affected civilian men. British Parliament did try to institute ordinary pre-war activities like cinema, sports, and music halls. In this chapter I look at how reserved men and conscientious objectors built relationships under these circumstances. The research breaks down the idea of the "People's War" narrative, and shows that it is far more complicated than it seems. While everyone did work together, and many men commented on their positive relationships with one another, they still faced incidents of animosity from the public. Finally, I study the post-war cultural depictions of the civilian men. I argue that these series from the 1960s and 1970s, like *Dad's Army* and *A Family At War*, accurately display the negotiations civilian men made in terms of their masculinity.

In addition to two research chapters, I have written a novella based on the information I found. The novella narrates the lives of the civilian men on the homefront. The main character, Jack Francis, is being interviewed for a scholarly research project. Francis was a Bevin Boy during the Second World War, and worked amongst reserved coal miners and conditional conscientious objectors. Throughout his interview, Francis remembers all of his experiences as a Bevin Boy, which includes: building a community with coal miners, receiving a white feather (a symbol of cowardice), and trying to become a man with no sense of identity. The novella

incorporates the internal turmoil civilian men had that could not be effectively presented in the research chapters.

CHAPTER ONE:

CIVILIAN MEN IN BRITISH CULTURE DURING THE WAR

"There were no men," Janet Miller, a woman worker during the Second World War, said of the British homefront.[1] In actuality, more than half of the British male population remained on the homefront working for the essential war industries or claiming conscientious objection. It is estimated that around 3,500,000 men stayed in civilian occupations during the Second World War and 7,250,000 other men could be recruited by the military.[2] Around sixty-thousand men also claimed conscientious objection, and therefore did not fight in the Second World War. What Janet Miller tried to say was that no *real* men stayed on the homefront because they fought on the battlefield. The military consisted of the real men, including soldiers, seamen, and pilots. Many people in the British population believed that men left on the homefront were effeminate, degenerate, and un-men because they did not join the military. This chapter explores the cultural perceptions formed by the British public and how they affected the civilian men during the Second World War.

Reserved Men: A State of Limbo

Propaganda became a serious priority for the British government during the Second World War. The British Parliament used propaganda as a device for two ideas. One, they sought to boost public morale, especially after German began their air raids in 1940.[3] Two, the government needed to persuade the public to accept state's policy towards fighting the war. Most

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[1] Juliette Pattinson, "Shirkers, Scrimjacks, and Scrimshanks? British Civilian Masculinity and Reserved Occupations 1914-1945," *Gender and History* 28, no.3 (November, 2016): 710.
[2] "The Reserved Occupations," *The Times* (London, England), Apr. 28, 1939.
[3] Garry Campion, *The Good Fight: Battle of Britain Propaganda and the Few*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 10.

of the British population considered the war against the Nazi Regime to be just;[4] however, the way in which the British government decided to fight the war needed more support. Parliament enacted a total war policy, and with that they needed everyone in Britain to participate in certain roles for the war effort.[5]

The military played the specific part of protecting Britain from German invasion after the catastrophe at Dunkirk. The government demonstrated how the military successfully did their bit for the war effort through newspapers and propaganda. Newspapers and broadcasting media spoke of the air fights between the RAF and the German Luftwaffe in sports terms. The papers displayed "scores," from previous nights, meaning they showed the number of planes the RAF shot down.[6] Posters highlighted certain battle scenes from the Navy, RAF, and the Army.[7] Many believed that Britain would fall within two to three weeks; however, Britain's "fighter boys" proved to be a resilient force.[8]

Newspaper, media, and propaganda posters displayed the prominence of the RAF to boost morale and the government policy towards the war effort. In July 1940 Germany started raiding Britain in preparation for invasion, also known as the Battle of Britain, and the RAF became the main defenders of the little island. Newspapers expounded on their roles in the war by publicizing fighter aces in articles.[9] The media mythologized the pilots by comparing them to

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[4] James Hatfield, *Unpatriotic History of the Second World War*, (Winchester: John Hunt Publishing, 2012), 447.
[5] Stephen Broadberry and Peter Howlett. "Blood, Sweat, and Tears: British Mobilization for World War II," *A World at Total War: Global Conflict and the Politics of Destruction, 1937-1945,* Edited by Roger Chickering, 157-176. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 157.
[6] Campion, *The Good Fight*, 7.
[7] Roy Anthony Nockolds, "The Attack Begins in the Factory," Propaganda Poster, 1943, Imperial War Museum, London, https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/20395. See also Gilbert Rumbold, "The Attack Begins in the Factory," Propaganda Poster, 1943, Imperial War Museum, London. See also Leslie Oliphant, "The Attack Begins in the Factory," Propaganda poster, 1943, Imperial War Museum, London.
[8] Campion, *The Good Fight*, 141.
[9] Martin Francis, "The Allure of the Flyer," *The Flyer: British Culture and the Royal Air Force 1939-45*, (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2008), 21.

David (RAF) and Goliath (Germans), the Elizabethan fleet (RAF) and the Spanish Armada (Germans),[10] and finally called them the "knights of the air."[11] The BBC also allowed these men to speak to the public about their experiences in battle.[12] Newspaper comparisons displayed the RAF as heroes that saved Britain from invasion; however, posters glorified the pilots to a new status.

The posters represented the RAF as strapping young men who saved Britain from invasion, thus securing their position as the ideal man in the Second World War. When the posters displayed the men themselves, they are most likely in one of two uniforms. There is the bomber jacket, the goggles, and the head gear. Or, the men are in their soft blue gray formal uniform with a hat and their flyer wings above their pocket. A noticeable feature of all of the pilots is that they are young. Their faces are those of boys just turning into men. They are also handsome. They have defined cheekbones, a full head of hair, and most of the time they are grinning from ear to ear.[13] The British saw these men as the epitome of manliness. This became the new hegemonic masculinity.[14]

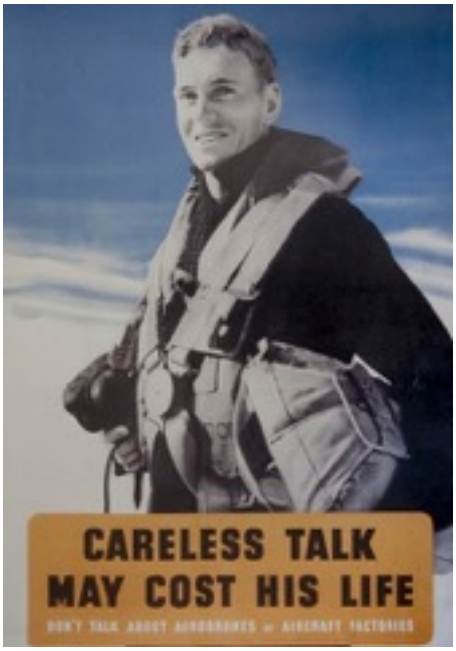

Figure 1.1 "Ian Blair: Squadron Leader Who Became An RAF Poster Boy," *The Times* (London, England), Oct. 8, 2016.

[10] Campion, *The Good Fight*, 7.
[11] Frances Houghton, "Becoming 'a Man' During the Battle of Britain: Combat, Masculinity and Rites of Passage in the Memoirs of 'the Few,'" Men, Masculinities, and Male Culture in the Second World War, Edited by Linsey Robb and Juliette Pattinson, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 102. See also, Martin Francis, "The Allure of the Flyer," *The Flyer: British Culture and the Royal Air Force 1939-1945*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 18.
[12] Francis, *The Flyer*, 21.
[13] "Ian Blair: Squadron Leader Who Became An RAF Poster Boy," *The Times* (London, England), Oct. 8, 2016.
[14] Juliette Pattinson, Linsey Robb, and Arthur McIvor, "Making a Contribution to the War Effort": Reactions to Reserved Status, Masculinity, and The Military," *Men in Reserve: British Civilian Masculinities in the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), 97.

The government tried to persuade people to support their policies towards the men in the reserved occupations. For example, in 1939, *The Times* included a comment from a House of Commons debate:

> It is to be understood that both those who join the defense services and those who are covered by the Schedule of Reserved Occupations and therefore stick to those occupations are engaged in what is truly national service… the government are anxious to prevent any feelings that one is more honorable than the other; both classes will be serving the country's interest in the way best filled to their abilities.[15]

Parliament also printed posters to show the importance of the men in the reserved occupations. One poster represents a factory worker in translucent light while a battle takes place in transparency. The title says "Remember, They're Relying on You!" which the public can interpret the "you" as the men in the reserves, or they themselves supporting the reserves. The man in the background is clearly helping the war effort by making the tools that the RAF will use to shoot down Nazis. The interesting prospect of the poster is that the creator chose to militarize the man in the background. The man holds his tool like he is preparing for battle. In

Figure 1.2 "Remember - They're Relying On You," National Archives.

[15] "Wartime Reserved Occupations," *The Times* (London, England), Jan. 19, 1939.

fact, the poster positions the tool just so that it looks like the reserved man is shooting out RAF planes. His hat resembles the likes of a First World War helmet. Physically speaking, the man's forearms are huge implying his strength.[16]

The government used propaganda films, too, to acknowledge the men in the reserved occupations as an "army without uniform."[17] For example, the Ministry of Information produced a film in 1940 titled *Behind the Guns* (directed by Montgomery Tully). The narrator guides the viewers through the reserved man's daily routine at a munitions factory. Within the film, the narrator often makes comparisons between the military and the men in the reserved occupations. He stated in one scene where a man is measuring the size of a bullet, "Their eyes trained to look down gun barrels and reject them for the slightest flaw, are as keen as the eyes of the soldier's who will later look along the sights."[18] The narrator declares that these workers are soldiers, and many of the scenes portray the reserved men as battling the steel. For example, the music in the background is highly dramatized when the workers melt the steel. Then the narrator uses militaristic vocabulary, such as "beaten and hammered under the blows of the forge…..every blow is nicely calculated" to describe how the steel is shaped.[19]

One reason why the posters and films displayed a militarized version of the reserved man, is that many men in these occupations wanted to fight. They did not want to stay in their positions as coal miners, shipyard builders, or munitions workers. They wanted to use the tools they made on a daily basis. Raymond Padget, a shipyard worker during the war, recalled that he

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[16] "Remember - They're Relying On You," National Archives, Accessed April 30, 2019, http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/theartofwar/prop/production_salvage/INF3_0123.htm
[17] Linsey Robb, *Men at Work: The Working Man in British Culture 1939-1945*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 47-49.
[18] *Behind the Guns,* directed by Cecil Musk and Montgomery Tully (1940; Britain: Sponsored by Ministry of Information), https://film.iwmcollections.org.uk/record/785/media_id/1357.
[19] Ibid.

tried to volunteer for the RAF a numerous amount of times. He simply did not want to stay in the shipyard. Instead, he wanted to be part of the fighter pilots who protected Britain. Eventually he was told that if he tried to volunteer one more time he would be in trouble (probably jail time).[20] This was not an unusual occurrence as many men stated in interviews after the war that they tried to enlist while still in the reserves.[21]

The government militarized the reserved man in posters and in films to acknowledge the importance of their work and to equate it to the military; however, their ideas backfired by displaying that the men were still just a support group. Compared to the RAF posters, the men in the reserved occupations do not live up to the expectations of the "ideal man." In the "Remember, They're Relying on You!" poster, the man depicted in the image is old. He has serious age lines all across his face. He is also wearing a helmet that resembles a First World War helmet, implying that he has already fought for his country. Likewise, most of the men in *Behind The Guns* are a bit aged and likely in their forties. The poster, compared to the RAF, insinuates that men in the reserved occupations were old, had seen battle, and were helpers to the military. In actuality, the men in reserves were quite young, especially in industries such as coal where the reserved age was eighteen.[22]

Some Members of Parliament (MPs) questioned the validity of the reserved occupations. The number of reserved men became a point of contention as well as some of the occupations. Conservative MP John Profumo, the youngest MP elected to the House of Commons at the time, stated:

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[20] Raymond Padget, interview by Conrad Wood, *Imperial War Museum*, Imperial War Museum, Sept. 4, 2000.
[21] Ibid.
[22] "Remember - They're Relying On You," National Archives, Accessed April 30, 2019, http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/theartofwar/prop/production_salvage/INF3_0123.htm

> But has the House thought that there are still in this country great numbers of men who ought to join up— young men like myself, capable, fit, with the muscle but without the will, men who are hiding behind the coal of what are called reserved occupations? I could lay my hands on such many such men, although I would prefer to lay my feet on them. I could give an example such as the man who calls himself a specialised ladies' corset citter. Is it more important for us to lace up our female sex than to lace the enemy? Up and down the country there are men who should be joining the Colours before we make all our women into soldiers, sailors, and airmen. Let us rout out these people and put them in the Forces.[23]

In his comment, Profumo suggests that there are many men who are capable of fighting but do not have the will to join the forces. Later, Profumo also suggests that some of the occupations are not important, like a woman's corset cutter, and should not be reserved. Others followed his lead by calling them the "absurd occupations," and telling Parliament that the men would be better serving on the front line.[24] MPs further questioned the reserved occupations when women entered the public sphere.

While the government needed support for their policy regarding the men in the reserved occupations, they also needed the public to accept the entrance of women in the workforce. In 1941, Parliament allowed the first wave of women to work for the war effort. This included 204,000 women in agriculture, 770,000 in engineering and vehicle operation, and 320,000 in Civil Service.[25] To boost the image of the woman worker, the Ministry of Information produced a film in 1942 called *Night Shift* (dir. J.D. Chambers). The documentary short depicted the 2,000 women working the night shift in a munitions factory.[26] It included a new woman learning her

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[23] Pattinson, "Shirkers," 719.
[24] Ibid., 719.
[25] Arthur Marwick, *The Homefront: The British and the Second World War*, (London: Thames and Hudson Publishing, 1976), 134-138.
[26] *Night Shift*, directed by J.D. Chambers (1942; Britain: Paul Rotha Productions), film. https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/1060006285

machine, a break in which all women danced/sang, and finally the end product of their labors, the tank gun.[27]

Like the narrator in *Behind The Guns* compares reserved men to the soldier, the *Night Shift* narrator compares women workers to their male counterparts. In one scene, a woman is working on creating a part for the gun when the narrator (a woman) describes the worker "as good as any man at her job." In another instances, a one of the few men depicted in this film inquires over a woman's work. The woman stated that she does not need a man's help with her job. Another curious point in the film is the lack of male presence. Over 2,000 women work at this factory, and they largely dominate the male workforce. To put this in perspective, in one scene there is a break session where workers go and eat. While there, one female worker starts playing the piano, and another starts singing. This causes many of the other women to start dancing around a stage. In this scene, there are so few men at work that women start dancing with one another as partners.[28]

The scenes in *Night Shift* emphasize Janet Miller's point that "there were no men," on the homefront. The film itself questions the validity of the men in the reserved occupations because women can do the men's jobs. They are "as good as any man at [their] job."[29] The men are replaceable, and therefore can go fight in the armed forces; however, the government did not allow them to fight in the military. Finally, the comparison between the reserved man and the military becomes null once women are compared to men because femininity cannot, in anyway, equate the hegemonic masculinity.[30] The 52.3% of the male population working on the

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[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Adam Jones, "Straight as a Rule: Heteronormativity, Gendercide, and the Non-Combatant Male," *Men and Masculinities* 8, no.4 (2006): 294-298.

homefront then have to negotiate their masculinity again because they cannot join the armed forces, and they have to work with women.[31]

"Conscientious Pretenders?:" The Conscientious Experience

Unlike the Second World War, Parliament depended on volunteerism for the military in the First World War. The government, however, had little control over the amount of men volunteering in the forces. Some 2,500,0000 men volunteered for the forces in the First World War. The recruitment based on volunteerism created Britain's first mass citizen based army.[32] Many of them left essential jobs which would become the reserved occupations in the Second World War. For that reason conscription of soldiers was introduced 1916.[33]

Figure 1.3 "Step Into Your Place." Propaganda Poster, Printed by David Allen and Sons Ltd. Imperial War Museum, London.

Like in the Second World War, the government used propaganda to increase acceptance of their policy towards the First World War. Before 1916, a plethora of posters amplified the idea of volunteerism. For example, one poster called "Step Into Your Place" depicts a variety of different men lining up for the recruiting office. They come from all walks of life, like coal miners, members of parliament, and the wealthy. Towards the top of the image and further down the line, the men start to turn into soldiers. Another noticeable feature is that looks like there are hundreds of men in this line for

[31] Pattinson, "Shirkers," 710.
[32] Peter Simkins, "Voluntary Recruiting in Britain, 1914-1915," British Library, Jan. 29, 2014, https://www.bl.uk/world-war-one/articles/voluntary-recruiting#.
[33] Robert Mackay, "'No Place in the Corporation's Service': The BBC and Conscientious Objectors in the Second World War," *Media History*, (April 2006): 37.

the recruiting office. The title itself "Step Into Your Place," insinuates that this is where a man needs to be during war.[34]

The government policy of volunteerism and the way in which they dispersed their policy gave way to the volunteer soldier hero image. While propaganda helped recruiting, the government also bolstered the idea of the military man with state sponsored parades, military theatricals, and through a means of popular media such as songs like "Every Girl Loves a Sailor." These modes in which the government proclaimed their war efforts characterized these men as adventurous and chivalric. Men volunteering to serve demonstrated patriotism, a desire to fight on the battlefield, and sacrifice himself for his country. By stepping into his place, so to speak, the man at the recruiting office is actively representing his commitment to Britain and the war. The soldiers, through this entrance into the cultural scene, took the role as the ideal man in the First World War.[35]

In 1916, when the Military Service Act introduced conscription, another concept was attached to it; the conscience clause.[36] Conscientious objection appeared at this time because the government felt that forcing someone to disregard their moral obligations to themselves could be detrimental to a person and their conscience. That being said, the content of conscience was neither defined by law nor a stable idea and this created tension within the British homefront.[37]

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[34] "Step Into Your Place." Propaganda Poster, Printed by David Allen and Sons Ltd, Imperial War Museum, London, https://www.iwm.org.uk/learning/resources/first-world-war-recruitment-posters.
[35] Billie Melman, "Men and Soldiers: British Conscripts of Masculinity and the Great War," *Gender Identities in War and Peace* (1998): 76-78.
[36] Tobias Kelly, "Citizenship, Cowardice, and Freedom and Conscience: British Pacifists in the Second World War," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 57, no.3 (2015): 695.
[37] Ibid., 695-698.

While 2.5 million men went to fight in the war, around 16,000 stayed home as conscientious objectors.[38] These men included pacifists and socialists.[39]

The government and their policy did not advocate for conscientious objectors like they did the volunteer soldier hero in the First World War. While the conscience clause did exist and protected the men from fighting in the war, conscientious objectors had to go through a difficult tribunal process before the government acknowledged them as COs. The need for military men was so great at the time that many of those asking for exemption from the war did not receive the status as an absolute conscientious objector.[40] They would receive either partial (worked in non-combatant military corps) or conditional (worked in essential war industries) exemptions.[41] If they refused on behalf of their absolutist stance, the conscience clause then did not exempt them from being placed in prison where they endured months of hard labor and potential death.[42]

Parliament issued propaganda posters that newspaper articles openly chastised conscientious objectors. The government allowed the creators of the propaganda to characterize conscientious objectors as shirkers, deviants, and cowards through words and text.[43] For example, in a newspaper called *Illustrated London News*, there is a dichotomy of the soldier hero and the conscientious objector. The pictures are titled "The Man Who Answered the Call, and the Man Who Has Not." The CO is slouching, unconfident, fears the war, and is disgusted by women. The soldier hero, however, stands upright and self assured, is loved by all who come

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[38] Holly Wallis, "WWI: The Conscientious Objectors Who Refused to Fight," *BBC News*, (United Kingdom), May 15, 2014.
[39] Martin Ceadel, *Pacifism in Britain 1914-1945: The Defining of a Faith*, (Oxford: Claredon Press, 1980), 32-33.
[40] Holly Wallis, "WWI: The Conscientious Objectors."
[41] Lois Bibbing, "Images of Manliness: The Portrayal of Soldiers and Conscientious Objectors in the Great War," Social and Legal Studies 12, no.3 (2003): 340.
[42] Ibid., 341.
[43] Ibid., 337-346.

near him, and is honored by his country.[44]

The military, like the government, did not support conscientious objectors either. One Admiral of the Navy tried to put a stop to conscientious objection and conscription delay.

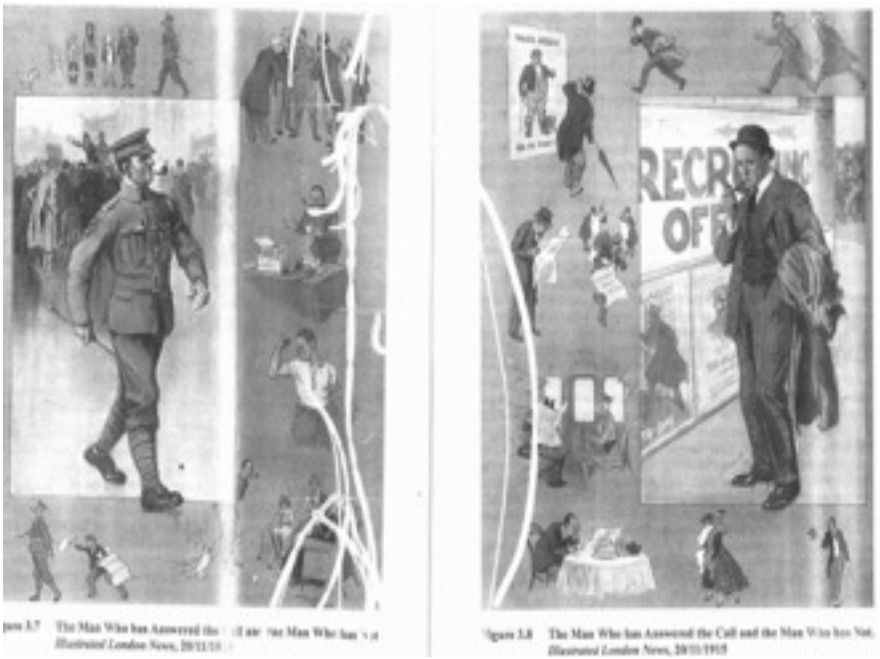

Figure 1.4 "The Man Who Answered the Call and the Man Who Has Not," *London Illustrated News*, Nov. 20, 2915.

He went to a group of young women in a town, and asked them to hand out white feathers to any man that wore civilian clothing. Most men in the military wore their uniform on the homefront, so it was assumed that if a man wore civilian clothing then he was a conscientious objector or a man waiting for conscription. Women began to give white feathers out in droves on the homefront. The white feather symbolized cowardice, and women used it as a tool to humiliate men into fighting in the war.[45]

The conscientious objector, though lawfully considered a category of men on the homefront, did not fit into the government policy regarding the war. The British needed several million men to win the First World War because of the new innovative military technologies that

[44] "The Man Who Answered the Call and the Man Who Has Not," *London Illustrated News*, Nov. 20, 2915. http://www.show.me.uk/collection/2105-the-man-who-has-answered-the-call-and-the-man-who-has-not.
[45] "The White Feather Campaign in the Second World War," History of Feminism, April 27, 2014. Accessed May 01, 2019, http://historyoffeminism.com/white-feather-campaign-second-world-war/.

could devastate human civilization.[46] As time will tell, the First World War was a catastrophe for human life. Parliament's policy thus praised the volunteer soldier for sacrificing his life for Britain. The conscientious objector, then, is the antithesis of the soldier hero. These are men who did not give up their morals and or beliefs for their country.

Despite their experiences in the First World War, conscientious objectors did spark the Pacifist Movement that grew during the interwar years. Its seeds lay in the First World War with the founding of two different leading CO groups: the pacifists and the socialists. Though the pacifists and socialists were initially one organization, several differences regarding goals and demographics caused a schism. After their division, pacifists developed a sound purpose which propelled the movement forward. With a foundation set, the pacifist movement skyrocketed in popularity throughout the interwar period. An English priest and Christian pacifist named Dick Shepard became the face of the organization in 1934.[47] Through his leadership, the pacifist movement took the name of the Peace Pledge Union (PPU).

The PPU was founded on the principles that wars are crimes against humanity, and therefore the organization objected to all of them, including the Second World War.[48] To give an idea about how popular this movement became, in 1934 Dick Shepard had published in numerous newspapers to write to the PPU and pledge their allegiance to the idea of no more war. One hundred thirty-six thousand men responded (women at the time could not be part of the organization to dispel the myth that only women were war protesters). Those men, from all of the British Isles, became members of the PPU in 1934. In 1936, the PPU opened their membership

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[46] Matthew Ford, "Science And Technology (Great Britain and Ireland)," *International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, Apr. 18, 2018, https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/science_and_technology_great_britain_and_ireland.
[47] Ceadel, *Pacifism*, 33-34.
[48] Ibid., 177.

to women, which boosted the numbers, too.[49] It is possible that the growth in the PPU came from the resentment the British felt towards the First World War. They may have acknowledged that the Great War was a human catastrophe, and like many others, did not want to repeat the same incident again. After Britain declared war, people still flocked to the PPU. In 1940, the pacifist movement reached its peak membership with 136,000 people.[50] Around 60,000 men opposed the war on grounds of conscientious objection.[51]

The popularity of the PPU spread across the British Isles, and transformed the theme of the conscientious objectors experience in the Second World War to one of tolerance. Perhaps the growth of the PPU in the interwar period and the reflections of the First World War allowed the British to comprehend and understand the position of the conscientious objector. A sociology study called the Mass Observation Report did an analysis of the public's views towards conscientious objectors. Unlike the First World War, in the Second World War people considered conscientious objectors to be "very brave fellows, they stand up for themselves."[52] Another person stated that "I think they're far more brave than a soldier."[53]

The public displayed an overall more tolerant attitude, but conscientious objectors still faced hostility in the Second World War. Unlike the First World War, during this time the government did not have a specific policy for conscientious objectors. Propaganda posters did not depict these men as cowards; however, newspapers represented a more hostile sentiment towards COs. *The Times* constantly published comparison charts between conscientious

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[49] Ibid., 212-223.
[50] Martin Ceadel, *Semi-Detached Idealists: The British Peace Movement and International Relations, 1854-1945*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 400.
[51] Kelly,"Pacifists," 694.
[52] "Social Pressure on Conscientious Objectors," Mass Observation File Report 312, June 1940.
[53] Ibid.

objectors and volunteer soldiers. The newspaper titled the columns "Lowest Percentage of Objectors," since the beginnings of the war.[54] Furthermore, other men sent in opinion pieces to show their feelings towards COs. One man in an opinion piece stated that conscientious objectors have problems with the word "conscription." The word implied that the government forced men into the military, when COs were the only one's not proud to serve.[55] Another article describes a man's interaction with a Duke. The Duke had stated that conscientious objectors sometimes went to prison. The man who wrote the piece articulated that the Duke only brought attention to COs in prison because the Duke himself was denied conscientious status by a *competent* tribunal. The man ended his opinion piece by equating conscientious objectors to "conscientious pretenders."[56]

[54] "Lowest Percentage of Objectors," *The Times* (London, England), July 8, 1940. See also, "Lowest Percentage of Objectors," *The Times* (London, England), July 22, 1940.
[55] "National Service," *The Times* (London, England), Apr. 3, 1940.
[56] "Conscientious Objectors," *The Times* (London, England), Mar. 5, 1943.

CHAPTER TWO: CIVILIAN MEN IN MEMORY

The "People's War," is a myth that people on the homefront during the Second World War worked as one, or a singular people fighting for the same cause.[1] Certain figures in British history, such as J.B. Priestley and Winston Churchill, helped create this myth during the time of the war. For example, Priestley's broadcast of the Dunkirk evacuation demonstrated the civilian efforts that saved the troops from annihilation. Through his words, the homefront did not see Dunkirk as a complete loss. Instead, Priestley represented praised the civilian efforts, and through his words, projected the "People's War" narrative onto the event.[2] The myth not only brought people together, it also boosted morale. Parliament tried to elevate civilian morale by also incorporating a sense of normalcy on the homefront. Though the war impinged on the lives of everyone in Britain, the civilian population could still participate in activities such as sports, dancing at dance and music halls, and pub crawls.[3] The normal day to day routines of the British population and the persistent narrative of the "People's War," perpetuated an image of "togetherness" in a tough time. This chapter explores how men on the homefront had to negotiate their masculine identities to fit the "People's War" narrative during and after the war.

The Imperial War Museum interviewed men several years after the war. These interviews included three groups; conscientious objectors, reserved men, and Bevin Boys. During the war, there was approximately 60,000 conscientious objectors[4], 3,500,000 reserved men[5], and 48,000

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[1] Sonya Rose, *Which People's War?: National Identity and Citizenship in Wartime Britain 1939-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 20-21.
[2] Ibid., 3.
[3] Juliette Pattinson, Arthur McIvor and Linsey Robb, *Men in the Reserve: British Civilian Masculinity in the Second World War,* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), 258.
[4] Tobias Kelly, "Citizenship, Cowardice, and Freedom and Conscience: British Pacifists in the Second World War," *Comparative Studies in Society and History 57*, no.3 (2015): 694.
[5] "The Reserved Occupations," *The Times* (London, England), Apr. 28, 1939.

Bevin Boys.[6] The first group, conscientious objectors, refers to men who objected to fighting the war based on their moral conscience. The second is reserved men, who remained in essential war industries during the war. The last group consisted of Bevin Boys. The government gave these men a conscription notice, but because of the last two digits of their conscription number, they had to work in the coal mines instead of the military.[7] The questions the interviewers asked all circled around one theme: what was life like on the homefront?

The British Isles are not very large, and so the likelihood that these men ran into different types of civilians are high. Men in the reserved occupations, conscientious objectors, and Bevin Boys all comment on men outside of their group. Some of the men acknowledge the "People's War" narrative and this idea of togetherness. Others highlight certain incidents in their past of hostility between civilian men and the general British public. Perhaps the "People's War" narrative is more complicated than its definition portrays.

Keeping Morale Up

The overarching threat and fear of invasion, as well as the constant air raids that obliterated sections of cities, airfields, and industries, was perhaps the most common experience of the war.[8] George Raymond Morton, a Bevin Boy, reported how he had a constant worry about "butterfly bombs," around where he lived.[9] Germans Luftwaffe (air force) used butterfly bombs as a fragmentation weapon, which when dropped from a certain height, could open and scatter the bombs around a designated area.[10] During the Blitz, the German Luftwaffe bombed England

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[6] "Remembering the Bevin Boys in the Second World War," Museum Wales, Jan, 3, 2008, https://museum.wales/articles/2008-01-03/Remembering-the-Bevin-Boys-in-the-Second-World-War/
[7] Ibid.
[8] Pattinson, McIvor, and Robb, *Men in Reserve*, 258.
[9] George Raymond Morton, interview by Conrad Wood, *Imperial War Museums*, Imperial War Museum, Oct. 9, 2000.
[10] "Weapons and Ammunition: Bomb, Aerial, Fragmentation, German, SD2 (Butterfly Bomb)," Imperial War Museum, accessed Mar. 21, 2020, https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/30020459.

for 57 consecutive nights and hit populated working class areas like Liverpool, Coventry, and Birmingham. German bombers dropped approximately 711 tons of explosives onto London alone during the Blitz.[11] From 1941-1945, German bomber planes hit major British cities on a nightly basis, thus bringing the reality of war to the homefront.

Bombing had a powerful impact both physically and psychologically on the people of Britain. Psychologically speaking, morale tended to decrease in areas often hit during nightly air raids.[12] Prime Minister Winston Churchill boosted civilian morale with his insightful and riveting war speeches. The British felt that he emulated true leadership skills, and demonstrated defiance, grit, and resistance to capitulate to the Germans.[13] Morton remembers listening to a couple of Churchill's speeches and noted "They had a good effect on people, there was more to rally the population around and I think he did that. He had a good voice for that sort of thing."[14] Roy Deeley, another Bevin Boy, described his ideas of the Churchill speeches:

> The great voice was Churchill. You know, when Churchill spoke and he gave his speeches, he was just fantastic. The morale that he built. He was a great man. [I listened to them]very often, I always remember Churchill, and he especially had one for the Bevin Boys, and he said, 'Some will say I was in the Army. Some will say I was in the Navy, but you can say with equal pride, 'I cut the coal.''[15]

To increase morale and a sense of normalcy, the government maintained pre-war activities such as cinemas, dance and music halls, and sports. Cinemas became a popular wartime leisure activity because it allowed the British to take their mind off the war effort for a

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[11] Amanda Mason, "The Blitz Around Britain," Imperial War Museum, Jan. 8, 2018, https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/the-blitz-around-britain
[12] Arthur Marwick, *The Homefront: The British and the Second World War*, (London: Thames and Hudson Publishing, 1976)
[13] "Keeping Morale Up: The Importance of Winston Churchill As A War Leader," BBC- Bitesize, accessed Mar. 21, 2020, https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zwscng8/revision/5.
[14] George Raymond Morton, interview by Conrad Wood, *Imperial War Museums*, Imperial War Museum, Oct. 9, 2000.
[15] Roy Deeley, interview by Conrad Wood, *Imperial War Museums*, Imperial War Museum, Jan, 26, 2000.

few hours.[16] Some of the films the British saw were *Gone With the Wind* and *Mrs. Miniver.*[17] The Ministry of Information also used the cinema as a means for propaganda, and displayed films such as *In Which We Serve* (Navy), *The First of the Few* (RAF), and *Millions Like Us* (women in war industry) to depict positive wartime images.[18] Dancing was also popular during the Second World War. One BBC broadcaster, Tom Harrisson, described he scene:

> In a number of our big cities the biggest dance halls are packed completely to capacity, and the other evening in Glasgow I simply couldn't get in when I arrived at ten o'clock hoping to see the local finals of a Jitterbug competition. Hundreds were being turned away from the doors.[19]

The British were also fond of sports during the Second World War, especially football (soccer). Civilian men and women could watch or take part on the pitch (football field), and many spectators saw matches, regional leagues, and cup competitions.[20] A woman's football league was also created. Even though men in the reserved occupations worked long hours during the war, they could still find time to have fun off the clock. For example, Willie Dewers, a railway worker, spoke about how people played badminton, "and you never thought there were boys out fighting for you outside and across the continent or different places."[21] Sports, however, still had stipulations. No more than 8,000 people could attend a match in evacuated areas for fear of being a bombing target. In other areas, no more than 15,000 people could attend a match. Men

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[16] Arthur Marwick, *The Homefront,* 101.
[17] Pattinson, McIvor, and Robb, *Men in Reserve*, 254.
[18] Michael Brooke, "British Films in the 1940s," BFI Screenonline, accessed Mar. 21, 2020, http://www.screenonline.org.uk/film/id/1357301/index.html.
[19] James Nott, "The Dancing Front: Dancing, Morale, and the War Effort in Britain during World War II," *Journal of Social History* 51, no.2 (2017): 388.
[20] Amanda Mason, "10 Facts About Football In the Second World War," Imperial War Museum, Jan, 10, 2018, https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/10-facts-about-football-in-the-second-world-war.
[21] Pattinson, McIvor, and Robb, *Men in Reserve*, 255.

and women could also only join or watch the leagues if it did not disrupt national service and industry.[22]

Keeping Normalcy

The civilian men took to keeping normalcy in a variety of ways. One of which was continuing romance. Cyril Beavor, an industry worker, remembered going on a date to see *Gone With The Wind*. After taking his date home, Cyril walked into his house after curfew, and found his dad waiting for him. After telling his dad where he had been, Cyril went to leave the room but his father noticed something wrong. "'and you will brush your tunic down before you hang it up won't you?' Because it was covered in grass. So we had a good evening! And I won't say more than that!"[23] With the war still raging overhead, men in the reserved occupations still found a way to lead a semi-normal lifestyle.

Conscientious objectors also found romance and normalcy, even under odd conditions. Dennis Allen, a conscientious objector who was sent to prison for not appearing before a tribunal to gain CO status, also maintained some semblance of romance. His girlfriend at the time would write letters and occasionally visit him in prison. Allen stated that his twenty-first birthday was the most memorable:

> My then girlfriend, who I was planning to marry and subsequently did, had had to move from London. She had worked for the BBC and had to evacuate to Bristol and she'd asked her boss for time off to come and see me on my twenty-first and the boss refused. So she said 'Right, well you can keep your job, I'm leaving,' and walked out and came and worked as a waitress at Lion's Corner House for the rest of the time I was in prison. And she brought me, um, a manuscript book that she had written with all her favorite prose and poetry and so on. And it had taken her

[22] Amanda Mason, "10 Facts About Football In the Second World War," Imperial War Museum, Jan, 10, 2018, https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/10-facts-about-football-in-the-second-world-war.
[23] Pattinson, McIvor, and Robb, *Men in Reserve*, 276.

six months to write this and it's still a treasured possession…it goes around the family.[24]

Bevin Boys created a sense of normalcy and routine in settings like their hostels. Many of the Bevin Boys had to move to coal mining towns in order to work. They lived in hostels for the duration of their time in the mines.[25] Raymond Padget, another Bevin Boy, remembered that his particular hostel served three meals a day and he had an overall comfortable experience. When asked about what he did for entertainment while at the hostel, Padget replied "Well like I said, I was on the afternoon regular, and at times, you could go to the pitches in the morning. There was a place in Mexborough… for people on shifts. So I'd go to pitches once a week." The pitches Padget spoke of refer to football or rugby.[26] Although they worked long hours, the men could still find leisure time with sports.[27]

Civilian Men and their Relations

Civilian men crossed paths in the Second World War, and some of them created positive relations with others. For instance, Bevin Boys worked alongside reserved coal miners beginning in 1944. Many of these Bevin Boys discuss their relationships with the other coal miners. Roy Deeley stated that older miners tended to look after the Bevin Boys. In his words, they "saved them from stupidity."[28] George Morton had a similar experience, and remarked on how many of the miners supported the Bevin Boys for their efforts in the war.[29]

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[24] Dennis Allen, interview by Lyn. E Smith, *Imperial War Museums,* Imperial War Museum, Aug. 10, 1990.
[25] George Raymond Morton, interview by Conrad Wood, *Imperial War Museums*, Imperial War Museum, Oct. 9, 2000.
[26] Raymond Padget, interview by Conrad Wood, *Imperial War Museums*, Imperial War Museum, Sept. 4, 2000.
[27] Pattinson, McIvor, and Robb, "Men in Reserve," 248.
[28] Roy Deeley, interview by Conrad Wood, *Imperial War Museums*, Imperial War Museum, Jan, 26, 2000.
[29] George Raymond Morton, interview by Conrad Wood, *Imperial War Museums*, Imperial War Museum, Oct. 9, 2000.

Conscientious objectors and reserved man formed compatible connections during the war. Tony Parker, a conscientious objector with a conditional exemption to work in the coal mines, said that everybody in Britain built a sense of community. Parker raved about his "extraordinary discussions" he had with other coal miners while they worked. Many of their conversations revolved around poetry and music, perhaps anything to get their mind off their work and the war. Of the men in the reserved occupations, Parker stated that they and their families treated him with kindness and hospitality. To Parker, his time as a CO in the coal mines was a humane experience.[30]

There was a possibility that Bevin Boys would work with conscientious objectors in the coal mines. George Morton recalled that while he had never worked with a conscientious objector, he still had an opinion about them. "I never knew a conscientious objector, not that I had anything against them. Every man has a right to his beliefs, cause you didn't have many rights in those days." Like many in the Second World War, Morton portrayed a view of tolerance. He did not know any conscientious objectors, and perhaps he did not agree with them, but he still believed that they had a right to their own beliefs.[31]

Several civilian men undoubtedly had positive relations with other people on the homefront; however, a few of the Bevin Boys and conscientious objectors recall feeling unquestionable hostility from the public or different civilian men. Many of the civilian men remember the white feather campaign. Bevin Boy, Arthur Frederick Rose, had his own white feather experiences.

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[30] Tony Parker, interview by Lyn. E Smith, *Imperial War Museums,* Imperial War Museum, Feb. 27, 1986.
[31] George Raymond Morton, interview by Conrad Wood, *Imperial War Museums*, Imperial War Museum, Oct. 9, 2000.

> We were not recognized. There was no means of saying that you were conscripted. They was no difference between a conscripted man, a volunteer, or a conscientious objector. No difference at all. I had three white feathers thrown at me while I was in the area. And I got into many, many, many fights… the local people [threw the white feathers.] Their men were fighting, we were with their girls. In a sense, [living] a life of luxury, while their men were abroad.[32]

Robert Todd, another Bevin Boy, stated that he had been given a white feather on at least three occasions. Those who gave Todd the white feather said that he should have been in the military, as if he had a choice. These incidents sometimes ended in brawls with other men.Todd later discussed how these instances occurred because the public had no way of recognizing a Bevin Boy or a reserved man who did essential war work.[33]

Conscientious objectors, like Tony Parker, remembered animosity from the community and at work. Parker had a young man come up to him while he was in the baths, in which case the man sneered at Parker "you're a fucking conchie aren't you?" Parker replied "yes, that's right," and the young man proceeded to punch Parker. This is the only incident of hostility that Tony Parker experienced. Another CO, Francis Bertrand Breakspear, remembered an incident while helping bombing victims. Breakspear was part of the Pacifist Cyclist Unit, an organization that sought to help people after air raids. One night, he and his CO counterpart had a driver take them back after an air raid. Once the driver found out the two were COs, he kicked them out of the vehicle. Breakspear also described the irony of how many people told conscientious objectors that they should see the damage of air raids, then it would put them in their place.[34]

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[32] Arthur Frederick Rose, interview by Conrad Wood, *Imperial War Museums*, Imperial War Museum
[33] Robert Todd, interview by Conrad Wood, *Imperial War Museums*, Imperial War Museum, Jan. 24, 2000.
[34] Francis Bertrand Breakspear, interview by Lyn. E Smith, *Imperial War Museums,* Imperial War Museum, July, 18, 2000.

Conscientious objectors faced enmity from the public and at work, but they also had to persuade their families to understand their position during the war. When Tony Parker told his father and sister that he needed to be a conscientious objector, his father told him that he should join the armed forces. His sister warned that he would go to jail for his beliefs. Parker also faced prejudice from his girlfriend's father, whom said that if Parker went through with his decision, then he could not date her anymore. Parker mentioned that if not for the woman's father, he would have married her.[35] Dennis Allen recalled how his family excommunicated him, but he found support from his friendships.[36] Stanley Iveson went to jail for his objections, and his wife was sent derogatory letters regarding her and her husband.[37]

While many of the civilian men received hostility, others were culprits of that same sentiment. Tension between the men in the reserved occupations and Bevin Boys often led to the two butting heads over a Bevin Boy's place in the war. The coal mining community, too, instigated hatred towards the men conscripted into the mines. One man explained the situation this way: men in the coal mining reserved occupation came from generations of coal miners. To them, there was this idea that a person was born a coal miner, others could not become one just because they were told to go into the pit. Morton understood their perspective, but in his mind, he believed that Bevin Boys could adopt the profession as their own over time.[38]

Raymond Padget, a Bevin Boy during the war, described rocky relations with reserved men. The coal miners had a habit of playing practical jokes on newly conscripted Bevin Boys. In one circumstance, Padget and the other new Bevin Boys had been herded into the coal mining

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[35] Tony Parker, interview by Lyn. E Smith, *Imperial War Museums,* Imperial War Museum, Feb. 27, 1986.
[36] Dennis Allen, interview by Lyn. E Smith, *Imperial War Museums,* Imperial War Museum, Aug. 10, 1990.
[37] Stanley Iveson, interview by Stanley Iveson, *Jonathan Croall*, Imperial War Museums, 1985.
[38] George Raymond Morton, interview by Conrad Wood, *Imperial War Museums*, Imperial War Museum, Oct. 9, 2000.

lift that would take them down to the pit. The older coal miners remained on the outside of the cage, and once the door shut, the old coal miners actually dropped the lift. The Bevin Boys hurled towards the bottom at top speed, but just before they hit the ground the cage halted. Gadget then explained that the older coal miners played these jokes to scare Bevin Boys.[39]

Other coal miners did not like Bevin Boys because they were supposed to be in the army. This is a common theme that stretches across several stories. Arthur Frederick Rose, while speaking of the white feathers he received, also acknowledged that coal miners gave him white feathers in the pits as well. Fights would break out in the pit between coal miners and Bevin Boys. Rose believed that the reason so many people, especially coal miners, gave him white feathers was because no one knew that the government conscripted Bevin Boys into the mines. Contrary to what the coal miners might have believed, many of the Bevin Boys like Rose wanted to go into the armed forces.[40]

In terms of the coal mining community, a couple of Bevin Boys remarried on how they were treated perfectly normal, but others also garnered the same tensions they felt in the pits amongst other coal miners. Roy Deeley commented on how, while his relations with the coal miners were fine, the coal mining community had a habit of prejudice. For instance, Deeley explained that he wanted to date a girl from the community. When Deeley went to pick her up her father answered the door, and stated that his daughter could not date a Bevin Boy.[41]

The experiences of the men above depict a complicated story about the lives of people in the homefront during the Second World War. Though civilian men had good relations to talk

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[39] Raymond Padget interview by Conrad Wood, *Imperial War Museums*, Imperial War Museum, Sept. 4, 2000.
[40] Arthur Frederick Rose, interview by Conrad Wood, *Imperial War Museums*, Imperial War Museum, Apr. 19, 2000.
[41] Roy Deeley, interview by Conrad Wood, *Imperial War Museums*, Imperial War Museum, Jan, 26, 2000.

about, they also had incidents of hostility. These incidents cut into the heart of what masculinity means during wartime. For example, many of the reserved occupations and conscientious objectors could not date certain women because the girls' fathers told them no, and specified it was because of their civilian status. They were either not fighting the war, or they were not part of the right community of men to be good enough for the man's daughter. There are also incidents of questioned masculinity, like when Bevin Boys are told by numerous people including miners that they should be in the army, not the pit. Finally their masculinity is questioned when people give them white feathers, which indicates that they are cowards who did not fight in the war. They are in some sense, less than a man because they do not fit into the image of masculinity that fits the "People's War" narrative.

Post-War Representation

Through time, the cultural narrative of the Second World War has shifted, changed, and has been re-narrated again and again to the British public. The patriotic comradeship and togetherness portrayed in the war as the people's war had been reworked into a national, social, and political narrative in the post-war years. Stories, diaries, films, televisions shows and other forms of memory began to demonstrate the people's war more clearly to the younger generations. However, once Thatcher took office, a dismantlement of the myth began, and a re-narration occurred that would allow Thatcher to triumph in the political arena.[42] What can be said of the people's war myth is this; it can be reworked, rewritten, and re-narrated by in cultural representations for political, social, cultural, or personal reasons. It is a real possibility that the

[42] Geoff Eley, "Finding the People's War: Film, British Collective Memory, and World War II," *The American Historical Review* 106, no. 3 (2001): 818-38.

men in the interviews have been exposed and influenced by these secondary narrations, and have similarities to them.

The "People's War" narrative is also complicated in Post-War cultural representation of the Second World War. Filmmakers, politicians, government officials, and people who experienced the war first hand rewrote the wartime narrative in the Post-war world, and their stories are often divergent from each other. Television shows, especially in the late 60s and early 70s, took a closer look at the civilian male in the Second World War. While some of the men face hostility for their beliefs or their civilian status, others are commended and praised for helping the war effort. These representations, in hit sitcoms like *Dad's Army*, *A Family At War*, and *Land Girls*, demonstrate a popular image of the civilian men in British culture.

Dad's Army, a TV sitcom running from 1968-1973, is a comedy that follows the lives of the members of a Home Guard unit in the Second World War. The Home Guard in Britain consisted of volunteers who, in the event of a German invasion, would be the first line of defense. Their priority was to protect their community, but other tasks they did was spotting aircrafts and guarding bomb-sites.[43] The men in the Home Guard were men who had jobs, some part of the reserved occupations, on the homefront. Conscientious objectors also made up a good portion of the Home Guard. One of the co-writers who created *Dad's Army*, Jimmy Perry, was a Home Guard member himself.[44]

The main characters of *Dad's Army* are: George Mainwaring, Captain of the Home Guard unit; Sergeant Arthur Wilson, Lance Corporal Jones, Private Frazer, Private Godfrey, Private

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[43] Markwick, *The Homefront*, 39.
[44] Mark Braxton, "Jimmy Perry on his Dad's Army Heroes, a Life in Showbiz, and the One that Got Away," RadioTimes, 2014, https://www.radiotimes.com/news/2016-10-24/jimmy-perry-on-his-dads-army-heroes-a-life-in-showbiz-and-the-one-that-got-away/.

Walker, and Private Pike. Of the seven main characters, one is a conscientious objector and the oldest of the group (Godfrey), four are military veterans from either the Great War or the Boer War (Mainwaring, Wilson, Jones, and Frazer), and the younger two (Walker and Pike) were exempt from the army.[45] The five former men are all too old for military service, while Walker displays no motivation to join the military, and Pike wants to join the RAF but is unable to because of he has a rare blood type.

In one episode of *Dad's Army*, the men parallel the experiences of conscientious objectors in the Second World War. In the episode titled "Branded," Godfrey writes to Captain Mainwaring, and tells him he can no longer take part in the Home Guard because he (Godfrey) cannot kill a mouse let alone a person. Mainwaring then asks what Godfrey did during the First World War if he had such a hard time with the enemy, and finds out that Godfrey was a conscientious objector. Captain Mainwaring abruptly asks Godfrey to leave. Sergeant Wilson suggests that Mainwaring was too harsh with Godfrey, to which the Captain replied "Harsh, Wilson? We've been harboring a damn conchie in our midst…. Where would the country be if we all felt like that ay?…. Can you imagine a man not wanting to fight?"[46]

The men of the Home Guard find out Godfrey's stance in the First World War, and they act in a similar manner to Captain Mainwaring. Private Frazer states that Godfrey is "soft as a cream puff," while Private Pike's mother said that "Men ought to be men." When Godfrey enters the scene, Private Frazer says behind his back "suddenly there is an awfully queer smell," while sniffing Godfrey. Dejected and humilated, Godfrey left the building in tears. Godfrey comes

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[45] "Dad's Army," British Comedy Guide, accessed Mar. 21, 2020, https://www.comedy.co.uk/tv/dads_army/characters/.
[46] *Dad's Army*, season 3, episode 11, "Branded," written by Jimmy Perry and David Croft, directed by Harold Snoad, aired Nov, 20, 1969, https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x52x6ny.

back for military training, specifically on how to handle smoke in a small area. Mainwaring, wanting to challenge his men, pumps the room full of smoke. Most of the men get out coughing and wobbly, and before Godfrey goes in, Mainwaring says "none of your damn conchie tricks," and "you're not going to get out of this one." Godfrey does get out, however, Mainwaring, due to too much smoke, collapses. Godfrey upon noticing Mainwaring's delay, goes back and saves him to the detriment of his own health.

The hostile sentiment is resolved after Captain Mainwaring visits a bed-ridden Godfrey to say thank you. Captain Mainwaring is about to begrudgingly say thank you when he notices above Godfrey's bed a Military Medal of Honor. Godfrey earned the medal for his bravery at the Battle of the Somme, for going into No Man's Land as a medical orderly, and saving many lives. Mainwaring's attitude shifts completely into awe as he begins to recognize Godfrey as a hero, and allows him to come back to the Home Guard as a medical man.[47]

This episode of *Dad's Army* demonstrates prejudice that some of the British felt towards conscientious objectors. Before Godfrey told the Captain of his status in the First World War, he was treated with respect and kindness; however, afterwards the men began to question his civilian status and masculinity. They consider Godfrey as "soft," meaning he cannot handle a man's duty. They also believe he is a coward and a shirker for not doing his patriotic duty for his country. The only way the Home Guard was going to accept Godfrey back was to see his Medal of Honor, which displayed the hegemonic characteristic of bravery. Godfrey redeems his manliness because of the courage and sacrifice he showed during a battle, that resulted in saving the lives of several men.

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[47]*Dad's Army*, season 3, episode 11, "Branded," written by Jimmy Perry and David Croft, directed by Harold Snoad, aired Nov, 20, 1969, https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x52x6ny.

Another television show that demonstrated the civilian male, specifically coal miners, is *A Family At War,* a British television drama series that ran from 1970-1972. It was dedicated to representing the lives of one family, The Ashton's, a lower-class family from Liverpool between 1938 and the end of the Second World War.[48] There are 52 episodes in all, and within its three series, *A Family At War* became a huge hit at home in Britain and on an international scale. The show significantly displays some civilian men on the homefront, including a coal miner and a conscientious objector, while also portraying other characters in branches of the military such as the RAF.

There are many important characters within the series as the show focuses on familial ties. Edwin Ashton, the son of a mineworker, elevated his status to the middle class by marrying Jean Briggs. Jean is the sister to Sefton Briggs, the owner of a printing company. Edwin and Jean have five children. The sons, Philip, David, and Robert are taking part in a militaristic role.[49] The daughters, Margaret and Freda, live on the homefront and do their bit for the war effort in roles such as teaching. Other characters include: Tony Briggs, a reserved printmaker; Michael Armstrong, a conscientious objector; and Gwynn, a friend of Philip's who's family worked in the coal mines.[50]

A Family At War lifts the image of the coal miners their community. In one episode, titled "Lines of Battle," Philip, David, and Gwynn are talking at a diner when they overhear an Oxford student make a snide remark about coal miners. The man had been talking about another person at Oxford and said "you're not qualified to be a college scout, I doubt you'd be qualified to earn

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[48] "A Family at War (1970-1972)," Imdb, accessed Mar. 21, 2020, https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0159164/.
[49] Linsey Robb, "The Cushy Number': Civilian Men in British Post-War Representations of the Second World War" *Men, Masculinity, and Male Culture in Britain,* edited by Linsey Robb and Juliette Pattinson, (London: Palgrave Macmillan Publishing, 2018), 172-177.
[50] Ibid., 172-177.

you're living in a coal mine." Gwynn is the son of a coal miner, and once he hears this he starts to defend coal miners. The man responds by telling Philip that his friend (Gwynn) needs a lesson in etiquette.

Later on, the group of men from the diner barge into Philip and Gwynn's study room, beat up and kidnap Gwynn, and hold Philip down so he cannot rescue his friend. Philip is able to escape, and finds the group of men as they throw Gwynn into a lake. The group runs off when Philip clammers down the hill and saves Gwynn. Unbeknownst to the group of men, Gwynn has asthma and nearly dies. Philip fortunately is able to find his inhaler in the lake.

Gwynn is portrayed as an underdog. He comes from a coal mining family, but receives a scholarship to attend Oxford. Even though he has elevated his own status, his father and his "people" still receive hostile treatment from others in the higher classes. The group of men snub their noses at coal miners, and insinuate that it is the lowest place in society. The men try to teach Gwynn a lesson in etiquette by beating him and throwing him into a lake because he stood up for coal miners.[51]

Land Girls was a show that ran from 2008-2011, and depicted the live of the Women's Land Army. Agriculture became one of the largest industries for men in reserved occupations, but it needed the extended help of women in their forces. *Land Girls*, in the first season, follows the lives of four women, Nancy, Joyce, Bea, and Annie at a place called Hoxley Estate. Each came for different reasons, whether it be conscription (Nancy), nationalism (Joyce), or familial problems (Bea and Annie), but they all end up doing their bit towards the war effort.[52]

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[51] *A Family At War*, season 1, episode 3, "Lines of Battle," written by Stan Barstow and John Finch, directed by Richard Doubleday, featuring Colin Douglas, Shelagh Fraser, and Colin Campbell, aired Apr. 28, 1970, https://www.amazon.com/A-Family-at-War/dp/B07Y2BHVHD.

[52] Patrick McLennan, "Summer Strallen Lands Role In BBC Drama," What'sOnTV, June 4, 2008, https://www.whatsontv.co.uk/hollyoaks-home/hollyoaks-news/summer-strallen-lands-role-in-bbc-drama-192309/.

In the first episode, *Land Girls* displays a dichotomy between soldiers and reserved men. Bea, the youngest of the bunch, has an unspoken romance with one of the farm boys at Hoxley Estate. Billy, the farm boy, is shy, meek, awkward and has a hard time relaying his emotions to Bea. In this episode, Bea meets an American soldier when she goes into town to petition the end of American segregation of troops and allow them to attend the dance at Hoxley Estate. Bea instantly forgets about Billy and is entranced by the new GI named Cal. He is handsome, confident, and outspoken: everything Billy is not. Cal, however, does not have the same emotional commitment to Bea. Cal gets wind of Bea's segregation petition and tells his commanding officers that African American officers will try to attend the dance. The soldiers are turned away from the party, but Bea has no idea that Cal was the reason for their dismissal. Cal also leaves Bea once he finds out she is pregnant with his child. When Billy finds out Bea is pregnant, he goes to confront Cal. Billy fights with Cal after Cal insinuates that Bea is a whore.[53]

Land Girls portrayal of a civilian man flips the ideas of masculinity and is similar to the characteristics of Godfrey in *Dad's Army.* Billy is soft and meek, and cannot compare to a man in the army. Billy, though, is also true to Bea and does not try to harm her. He defends her honor when Cal defiles her name. Cal, on the other hand, is confident in his demeanor, but his motives are questionable when he decides to leave Bea and their unborn child. Cal is also not a defender of morals as he is the reason African Americans did not get a chance to attend the dance. *Land Girls* depicts the reserved man and the soldier with their regularly assumed outward traits, but

[53] *Land Girls,* season 1, episode 1, "Childhood's End," written by Roland Moore, directed by Steve Hughes, featuring Summer Strallen, Becci Gemmell, and Christine Bottomley, aired Sept. 7 2009, https://www.netflix.com/watch/70218297?trackId=200257859.

their inner morals differ. People normally associate the soldier as virtuous and defender of faith, but the show casts their traits onto Billy instead.

The television shows parallel the stories the men told in their interviews. Godfrey faced hostility like other conscientious objectors, but once the men realized that he could portray masculine traits, they accepted him back into the Home Guard. Even though Gwynn rises in class, he never forgets where he came from, and fiercely defends the reserved coal miners for their work in the war effort. Finally, Billy possesses masculine traits by remaining virtuous and protective of Bea. The post-war cultural representations allow these men to display their masculinities differently from how people saw them in the Second World War.

Boy Meets War: A Novella

Based on the True Stories of Civilian Men

By

Savanna Hitlan

Dedicated to the men in the reserved occupations, conscientious objectors, and Bevin Boys'. You are not forgotten.

CHAPTER ONE

1996 London

"Jack Francis, reel one, session number 33550" the recorder stated promptly as he pushed the start button on the cassette recorder.

"And whereabouts are you from? What's your background like?" The older lady began. She sat there, across from him in a pale pink poof like chair. The matching pillow rested under her arm as she propped her right hand up on a writing pad, frozen in time as she waited for his answer.

"My grandpa's from London, just like me!" Jeremy piped in. The lady beamed at the little tyke who wandered in through the kitchen doors.

"Now Jeremy, I said you could sit in and listen as long as you're quiet. Otherwise you need to go back with your ma and wait in the sun room." Jack finally formed words out of his cotton mouth. Nerves weren't new to him in situations like these, the one's where Jack gave his whole life story in hopes that people wouldn't judge him for his actions in conflict. The nights before interviews Jack's stomach would rumble into the wee hours of the morning, never ceasing to piss off his wife from his restlessness. The one thing that motivated Jack to move forward, even through all of the distress, was his desire to tell people his side of the story. It was an added bonus that his grandson, Jeremy, was particularly interested in his grandfather's past experiences. Jeremy had never been invited to listen, had never heard Jack's stories from his grandfather himself. Like any eleven year old boy, he was practically jumping out of his chair with excitement to hear Jack's war stories.

“I’m sorry Ms. Hartfield, but what was the question again?”

“Can you sum up your background? You’re from London I take it?” She said with a chuckle and a patient glance at Jeremy.

“Yes, I grew up in London’s west end with my brother and mother. My father died when I was about twelve, so my brother really became a role model to me in my younger years. He was about eight years older than me. My father worked as a broker before he became and RAF pilot in the early 1930s, and my mother was a high demand seamstress. We lived in relative ease before the war. I remember not really liking grammar school all that much, but that’s probably because my parents expected me to be like Sylvester, my brother, but of course that couldn’t happen. I didn’t have the mind for learning fundamental English. I was however, uncannily good at math and numbers. Those always came easy to me.” He stared as she scrambled to write the last few words in her notes. Even though the cassette tape was rolling, Jack knew she was looking for potential questions to ask off script.

“Do you remember when they announced the declaration of war? Like where you were and what you felt?” Jack scanned the room for a moment, trying to recall his memories.

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3 September, 1939

“In this grave hour…” Jack tensed in his chair as he listened intently to the sleek RGD 625 radio placed a top the mantel of his home fireplace. He spied his mother in the chair opposite him, noticing her slight breathing as she fathomed the words spilling into the room. His brother, Sylvester, stood in the lit doorway behind her in full RAF regalia. The ash blue coat glistened while the mood in the room grew sorrowful. The King’s speech continued to echo through the

room, never once acknowledging the despair it caused his mother as she fidgeted uncomfortably at the end of each sentence.

"For the second time in the lives of most of us, we are at war." Jack's grip hardened on the arms of his chair, and his mother placed her head in her hands. Jack was sure he could see one single tear draw down her cheek, though she tried to force herself to remain calm. Sylvester remained stoic in his expression except for a hint of excitement that gleamed in his eye. *No doubt he's imagining his part in the war*, Jack thought to himself. What rotten luck Jack had, to only be thirteen during such an epic time. Not even close to volunteering age, Jack would have to remain in school and miss out on all of the action of combat. He could picture soldiers slicing and dicing Germans, Naval men ripping U-Boats to shreds with torpedoes, RAF pilots like his Pa and brother, battling it out in a brawl in the night sky with the notorious Luftwaffe.

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1996 London

"I never told my mother this, but I was almost giddy when they declared the war. It was like something possessed me to want to go out and shoot down Germans. I wasn't around for the First World War like my mother and father. I had no idea the devastation that war could bring, and I think I really just wanted to be the hero, you know? Like the men in the comics that all schoolboys had, the ones that depicted Albert Ball, the First World War ace pilot." Jack could feel himself relaxing in his seat, almost as if he was having a normal conversation with Ms. Hartfield.

" That's interesting that you bring up Albert Ball and the pilots, Mr. Francis, because you mentioned that your father and brother were also RAF pilots. Did they factor into your decision

regarding the RAF?" Ms. Hartfield had a smile toying on her lips as if she wanted to discover some unknown secret in this ordinary man's life. Jack replayed the question in his head for a second, it wasn't something he had been asked before. Of course he knew, all boys who had fathers in the First World War or armed services had identical answers.

"I idolized my father as any other boy in Britain growing up in the interwar period. There was this air of mystery about my father, Reggie Francis. You could never quite figure out what was going on in his mind. He was distant for a split second, and then, he'd come back to Earth with this telltale smile that told any onlooker that everything was going to be alright. I remember that back when he was training, my father would let us on the base on the weekends, and we would get to climb up into the cockpit of his plane and pretend we were flying. I'd always be the navigator, I have sixth sense for that sort of thing, and Sly was the pilot. My father would stand on the side and point to which gadgets we would need to use to shoot, steer, check the air pressure etc… That was when my father became the most loving I think, was when he was teaching us about his job.

My mother used to surprise him on the air base some days during the weeks in the summer. Sly and I would haul ourselves up early in the morning, and I mean like four or five, because that's when Pa did his training stints, and we would find a place on a hill that overlooked the base and just watch the planes fly overhead as the sun rose behind the tiny model of London city. We'd pick out our father right quickly too, he was known for doing fantastic spins and twirls in the air. Now, I think he did that because he knew we were there and tried to show us how amazing it was to be pilot. He could outmatch any of his opponents in the sky. To him, I realize, it might have been freeing, to just get away from the world and be in your own space. A

space where only a select few could cross the boundaries. Although he never really talked about his time in the First World War. my father was a true hero to me and my brother, Sly. I think for that reason, I wanted to join the RAF. I wanted to be like my Pa, just cascading across through the open air.

My brother on the other hand was a little different. I remember when my brother got his conscription notice. He was extremely ecstatic to join the RAF, he was like me and wanted to be like Pa. I was so jealous when my mom took me to see him fly his first plane. Sly was based in the same place my father was, so my mother and I again went up to that hill, but it was different. I wasn't looking up to see my Pa do spirals and ducks through the sky, I saw my brother instead, taking my father's place as the man of the house, and I was crushed. Sly and I continued to have a somewhat rocky relationship throughout the war. Do you want me to go into that, or do you want me to wait until we get to the work part?" Jack realized he had been monologuing about his tumultuous childhood years for a near five minutes.

"I think the work part will do, it will give deeper explanation into your, um, unusual circumstances."

"Grandpa? Did you get to be a pilot like your dad?" Jeremy asked in such an innocent, quiet voice, it was too hard to get angry at him for interrupting. His light blue eyes looked at Jack in such awe and admiration, and his intrigue practically oozed by the way Jeremy's hands lifted his chin just slightly up so he could assess all of his grandpa's features while they discussed the war. Jack couldn't have imagined letting his grandson down so, when Jeremy realizes that Jack was denied from the RAF. Ms. Hartfield, catching on to the awkward moment, took the time to delve into a complementary question.

“Mr. Francis, do you recall the day your conscription notice came?”

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1944 London

Jack blankly stared back at the little half sheet of paper he held in his left hand on a bright and warm Tuesday morning. *How could this be possible?* Considering the night before and the havoc that wrecked good ole jolly London, today should not have been so peaceful and serene. Outside the townhouses, normally beige bricked, reflected the color of the sunrise in a hazy pink and purple fog that enveloped the rest of the street. The air was crisp and cool, like it had rained water instead of bombs six hours prior. Not a peep from anyone this earlier, they probably all went back to sleep after the alarms turned off. Sunlight flooded into the parlor, onto the one soul remained awake, a war raging within himself.

Jack reread the words over and over, hoping that at least the numbers at the end of his notice would magically change from 99 to 02. He could feel the heat rising in his face the more he thought about his predicament. The paper in his hand visibly shook from distress, the other hand ran repetitively through his raven black hair. *This can’t be. Not for someone like me, I have too much to offer to the world,* He thought to himself. *I shouldn’t have made the deal with Ma. I should have gone as soon as I got the chance. To hell with her feelings.* Jack pounded his fist into the hard oak table.

“James Anthony Francis, what on earth do you think you’re doing trying to dent my fine piece of furniture the way you did!?” Jack looked up as his mother stormed in from the kitchen, placed herself sternly at his side, and put her hands on her hips. “Well?” She demanded.

“Ma look at this! This is why I didn’t want to wait!” He threw the paper at her, shoved his chair back into the wall, and flew up the stairs to his bedroom.

Sometime later, Jack could her the dainty footsteps of his mother climbing the stairs to check on him. He lay there, with his hands behind his head and his body stretched out on his conforming bed. Jack stared up at the Albert Ball Fighter Pilot poster right above his bed on the ceiling. Surrounding it were different models of airplanes, the newest being the Hurricane and Spitfire editions. Silver wings, like the ones on the RAF jackets, had been poorly taped onto the headboard of the bed (they were slightly crooked on either side). On the headboard itself, lay several pieces of flyer paraphernalia that Jack collected over the years. A helmet, goggles, and pendants adorned the shelf as if it belonged in a military museum. All around his room Jack displayed his envy of the Royal Air Force. Pictures, equipment, medals of flyer progress, newspaper clippings of the Battle of Britain, all rested on his desk, bookshelves, and night stands. Even his room had been painted the faint, ashy blue gray tint of an RAF coat.

Finally, on his nightstand, next to the side of the bed in which he slept most nights, was a picture of two boys in a fighter plane. The older of the two sat in the pilot seat, with his toothy grin reaching from cheek to cheek. He had goggles on, and held onto the steering gage, ready for take off. The younger boy sat behind him played navigator, and he got to read maps and compasses. Next to the spectacular vehicle, stood a man, watching his sons with love and affection. He held the hand of the younger boy to teach him how to properly read a compass. Though the picture was black and white, Jack recalled the memory with vivid and colorful distinction. His father wore the blue coat. His brother, Sylvester, now wears a blue coat. But he…

“Jack?” His mother’s concern echoed in the whisper. “Baby, it’s not so bad. You’re still *doing* something.”

He sat up abruptly, giving her a cold stare. “Doing something? *Doing* something? What on earth would *I* be doing for the war? Flying airplanes with Sly? Protecting England from German invasion? Bombing Berlin? Nope can’t do that. Sail aboard a naval vessel to shoot down enemy submarines? Nope, that’s off the agenda. March into enemy territory and fight *real* men?” He huffed out in frustration. Just thinking about it brought those feelings of shame and disappointment. “ No, Ma.” Jack looked her in the eyes as she sat down on the bed next to him, tears developing in his own as he watched her face contort to utter sympathy. “I’ll be in the mines, digging up coal with old lowly farts.” A trickle down his cheek. “I’m a Bevin Boy.” Jack collapsed into his mothers shoulder with terrible sobs racking his body. All she could do was hold him tight and tell him everything was going to be alright.

***

1996 London

Ms. Hartfield eyes never left Jack’s as he described what, then, was the worst day in his young life. He gave a brief pause while describing being coddled by his mother. Jack could feel his face heating to a blushing rouge tint. Ms. Hartfield noticed and gave an encouraging smile, and no judgement showed in her soft features. Jack hadn’t realized it before, but as soon as he ended the story his body notably sighed in relief.

“So your brother and your father were RAF pilots, after your conscription notice, did you ever try to enlist?”

"Oh yes, I tried to enlist many times. Actually I had become so desperate to leave the mines, in the beginning of my work, that I spoke with my friend in the RAF, Luke, for advice on how to get out of the mines. He realized right away, at the time, that I wasn't fit for the mines. In fact the first thing he said to me was…."

***

1944 London

"You look defeated dear boy! Coal mines wrecked you already?" Jack heard Luke before he could manage to figure out from which direction the voice came. Looking around the street with its bouncing and bubbly cafés, Jack finally saw a tall, lanky being with greased back silver blond hair just across the bustling road.

"The only thing looking wrecked these days is your ego Luke. Not shooting many Germans down now are you?" Jack said with a smile plastered to his face as he walked the short twenty feet to his old boarding school roommate. Luke lounged comfortably in a steel made chair, with his feet outstretched underneath his little coffee table, and his arms crossed over his blue gray coat. The flyer pendants on the left breast pocket lay lazily above four other air force acknowledgements. The sun just barely shined atop his head, making the brylcreem seem like an extra bad choice for today's explorations.

Jack had simply been walking back to his mother's house from the train station. This was his only visit home before he entered the real coal mining workforce. The last few weeks, to his surprise, had only been training. For days Jack had been slugging about his muscles were so sore. Pounding coal all day, delivering it to tubs, moving horses… it all called for extra hard labor. He seriously questioned how anyone could live such a life, all day, every day. Jack could

barely raise his shoulders above his neck when he walked, his arms slung limply at his side, and he moved his legs like molasses. It was all he could do not to fall straight on the ground. Every time he moved, even an inch, his body reacted with a heat wave followed by searing pain that spread all over. It was no wonder Luke made the comment he did.

"At least I'm *in* the RAF." Luke retorted followed by a booming laugh. He stood at the moment, clapped Jack on his back which started the tingling sensation followed by flames coursing through his body, and said "How's my old pal doing anyway? The miners treating you alright?"

"Well, they haven't killed me yet, though I think the actual coal is doing the job for them." Jack said as he took a seat across from his *friend*.

"When I heard about your predicament, I thought 'at least I'm not him,' I don't think I could live with myself if I couldn't join the war." Luke feigned concern as well as he flew his airplane: with a raw narcissism that would one day be the end of him.

"That really warms the cockles of my heart Luke. Truly." Sarcasm dripped from Jack's lips.

"Now, Jack, you haven't heard the rest of what I have to say." He grinned slightly before he continued, "I found a way to help you out."

Jack tried not to act too amazed, but he knew his reaction gave him away instantly. He bolted up in his seat, his eyes grew wide, and his mouth opened in awe. "What do you mean?" Jack said breathlessly.

"I'm not sure I should tell you know. You've been a right ass to me since you saw me." Luke positively reeked of arrogance that Jack wished he could flush down a toilet; however,

pride could not come over this situation. If he had a chance at joining the RAF, he had to take it, even if it meant begging forgiveness from a dick of a guy.

"Listen, Luke, I'm angry about being drafted into the mines, it has nothing to do with you and I shouldn't have questioned you ability as an RAF pilot." He could barely choke out the apology, but he took a deep breath as he finished and gave a sincere expression.

Luke thought on it for a moment, giving rise to Jack's anticipation, before smiling approvingly.

"Alright, you know I could never stay mad at you. And I'm genuinely a genius for this plan. Now, about getting into the RAF," Jack leaned in to get a good listen, "all you have to do is miss work." He sounded so proud of his solution, but Jack remained dumbstruck.

"Let me get this straight. All I have to do, according to you, is *miss work*?" He simply couldn't believe it. "And how will that get me into the RAF?"

"Don't you see, if you miss work you'll go to jail!" Jack could see actual excitement, about him going to jail, rise in his friends appearance. Luke looked absolutely elated, at prison.

"You want me to go to jail? What. The. Fuck. Luke?"

"God you're dumb. Don't you get it? You are no good to the war effort if you're in jail. Hell, you're not even producing for it in there. The government can't afford to lose men to lousy prison sentences. They'll instantly take you on in the RAF, everyone knows we need the manpower. And, if that wasn't enough, I've heard success stories of this from men in the navy, army, and even in the RAF! It's a golden opportunity."

For the first time since hearing Luke's stupid voice, since entering the mines and pissing himself, since getting his damned conscription notice, Jack began to see a light at the end of the tunnel.

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1996 London

"That must have been hard, seeing your friend from school go off into the RAF while you were in the mines."

"It was even harder when I saw someone like Luke given the opportunity." Jack chuckled to himself, thinking about Luke as a student in school. Luke had the absolute worst grades, didn't give a crap about school, hell, he didn't even want to go into the air force until he saw all of the attention they got in pubs. And yet he, instead of Jack, someone who excelled in science and math, knew how to fly a plane, and absolutely loved the idea of being in the military, was picked to join the slick haired boys at the aerodrome. Jack fought that feeling of jealousy even now.

"Mr. Francis, I'd like to now ask a few questions about your days as a coal miner, if that's alright." Jack knew this was the real reason Ms. Hartfield was here. To assess his situation as a Bevin Boy, to learn all about his experiences in the coal mines, and how absolutely dreadful it must have been, to be forced to work in such an environment.

"Yes, well, it's all very bland to be certain." He suggested.

"I wonder, if you could tell me what your first day was like, being in the pit?"

"Of course. It actually, contrary to my other experiences, is quite humorous. I met my best friend in the mines on the first day. Let's see," Jack closed his eyes, and pictured South Wales, the coal mining town, he zoomed in on the colliery. Jack's mind navigated the old wash

rooms, where he put his clean clothes his designated locker, number 18. Then he put on his now coal mining clothes. He remembered being told by his instructor to wear his least favorite clothing, something he wouldn't mind getting a little dirty. Jack chose a paprika stained (from the one time he tried to cook) white shirt, and gray trousers. Mining boots were given to him. Jack remembered Bert, an older coal miner, someone brought up in the industry, telling him "Why'd you go and bring city slicker clothes like that? Them's good clothes you got there." That's when Jack knew he was going to lead a completely different way of life than he was used to, and he didn't know, at the time, how it would pan out.

"Grandpa?" Jack heard the little voice again, coming from the couch. Jack felt himself phasing back to reality and gazed at his grandson. Jeremy's eyes were still huge blue orbs, showing tiny hints of amazement as he spoke, something he got from his grandmother no doubt. "Are you going to talk about how you met Uncle Leo now?" Jack looked at Jeremy now, sitting forward with his head held by his hands. His feet barely reached the floor, and he swung them back and forth. Jack noticed the genuine intrigue exuded from his grandson. *This is the first time* Jack thought *that I'm going to tell him about coal mining*. Jack's stomach began to flutter, much like a child going just too high on a swing, or spinning in a teacup rollercoaster at an amusement park.

"Do you mind, Ms. Hartfield, if I tell Jeremy, directly, about my first day in the mines? I think he'd really appreciate it." Jeremy practically beamed at his grandpa, overcome with such enjoyment his little stature could only bounce up and down and repeat "please, please, please, please, PLEASE Ms. Hartfield." The hilarity of the situation, Jack guessed, is the reason Ms.

Hartfield said yes. As soon as the words came out of her mouth, Jeremy ran to his grandpa and crawled into his lap, ready for what he believed was story time.

"Alright, Grandpa, how did you meet Uncle Leo?" Jeremy said, perked, ready for his first wartime story.

"Well Jeremy," Jack said with a smile, "we met my first day working in the mines. That was probably one of the worst days of my life if I'm being honest. As I told Miss Hartfield, I was what was known as a Bevin Boy. We were men who instead of going into the military, like my brother Sylvester, were sent to the coal mines. Britain was really hard on keeping workers there, especially with all of the accidents that occurred. You see, the coal miners, they didn't really take a liking to us Bevin Boys, they believed we belonged in the army, not the pit. The pit is what we called the coal face, or the place we mined the coal underground.

A lot of the coal miners came from the working class, while the Bevin Boys came from everywhere. I was middle class, meaning my family had some money and we could afford a comfortable lifestyle with just my father working. The working class isn't like that. It's normal for everyone in the family to work to pay off the house or bus fees. I won't lie, I had my own prejudices…. judgments of the working class, and I was deeply mistaken with them. Anyhow, the original coal miners, those there before the war, played a lot of pranks on us, which sometimes were harmless. Other times, they made me fighting mad. Anyway, on my first day in the mines, the new recruits, all the Bevin Boys and some conchies, gathered into the cage that took you underground."

"Grandpa, what are conchies?" Jeremy looked perturbed at the new word he'd just heard.

“Conchies, well, I guess that’s not the best term for it. They’re better known as conscientious objectors. These are people who don’t want to kill others, and so they stayed home while the other boys went off to war.”

“But isn’t that a bad thing? Shouldn’t you want to fight for your country?”

“Not necessarily. See, you can still be proud of your country, and not want to fight in the war. Conscientious objectors are mainly Pacifists. That means they believe that no creature of God’s should be killed, under any circumstances. That doesn’t mean they don’t want to help their country. Many of them went into non-combatant, that means non-fighting corps, or they helped in the coal mines and shipyards.” Jack looked down at Jeremy expecting him to say something of how that’s not the manly thing to do, and how the manly thing is to go to war like the rest of the men.

“I guess that’s alright then.” Jeremy shrugged. Jack felt his heart skip a beat, as if he couldn’t quite hear his grandson correctly. Flabbergasted, he thought back to what he was trying to tell in the first place.

“Where was I? Oh, right. The mines. The coal miners were playing pranks and all of the new miners went into the cage. I thought it was odd that the older coal miners, those that had been working there for years, didn’t get into the cage with the rest of us. God knows we had enough room. Anyway, we filed in and they closed the gate. Now *normally* the cage got down at a good pace, a little fast but one where you can still catch your bearings. However, the older coal miners decided that they’d let the wire go, and so we dropped as fast as lightning into the depths of hell.”

“You mean like a rollercoaster?!” Jeremy exclaimed.

“Ha, it was more, uh, scarier than that. We thought we were toast. They pulled the wire at the last second, right before we hit rock bottom. You could hear them laughing from all the way up top.”

“But that doesn’t answer my question, how did you meet Leo?” He pressed.

“Well, um, during that free fall, well, I didn’t know if I was going to live or die, and I tried to grab on to the nearest thing. My heart was racing so bad I didn’t realize what, or rather, who I had clung on to until we came to an abrupt halt.”

“It was Leo?!”

“Yeah, I grabbed on to Leo, holding on for dear life.” Jack hesitated to say the next part. He decided that it would be better if Jeremy knew everything from that dreadful day. “What I didn’t think would happen was Leo, big mouth that he has, would tell the whole world what I did on the way down.”

“What did you do?”

“I pissed myself.” Jack said with a laugh.

“You didn’t.” Jeremy joked.

“ I sure did, my trousers were soaked to the skin. All the way down to my boots.” Jack, remembering the incident and how Leo had reacted, started to chuckle louder. Jeremy joined in, and the more the memory came back to him the more Jack started to hoot and holler. Even Miss Hartfield started to tear up from all of the laughter.

“Leo, who was used to the prank and was sent down with the Bevin Boys so as to tell the rest of the older coal miners about their wild experience and reactions, did not expect me to grab

hold of him. He also did not imagine that I would pee on *him*." Jack spoke as he began to calm down.

"'Lord I hope that wasn't a number two. Was all Leo said to me when we climbed out of the cage. However, after that, I think that Leo pitied me when everyone made fun of me for my humiliating experience. The next few days were sheer terror will everyone calling me pee wee brain or other not so nice names that I won't repeat in front of a seven year old. One day, Leo took me on as a sort of apprentice in the mines. He was a collier, and that was one of the more respectable positions in the coal mines, so to be his apprentice was a great honor. The people around me, once they heard about my job, became less hostile? For lack of a better term. Pretty soon, with Leo by my side, no one ever said a word about the incident again."

"Fascinating, truly fascinating," Miss Hartfield began as she wiped a stray tear from her eye.

"I will say, the first day may have been the worst in terms of the coal mining experience, but the second day, that was the worst in terms of being a Bevin Boy." Jack continued.

"In what ways, what are the differences between being a coal miner and a Bevin Boy?" Surprised now etched itself on Miss Hartfield's face. This certainly was not part of the interview.

"Well, you know, coal mining, it's a community effort. When you're down there, you work together on whatever it is you're doing. Like for me, Leo and I always worked on the coal face, he dug holes and I shoveled the coal. You always had somebody by you, whether to talk to or to just be in their presence. You never got that feeling that you were alone; however, when the shift was over, coal miners, actual coal miners, went home to their families or they went out with their coal mining friends. Being a Bevin Boy, I didn't really have anyone in the first few weeks.

My family was in London, and my brother was in the air force. Leo and I weren't quite friends yet, we were just starting to get to know one another. So that second day, I really realized that, again at the time, I didn't want to be in the mines because I couldn't relate to anybody."

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1944 Wales

It's been one rotten month in the pit. Jack thought to himself as he entered the cage. Back into the concrete box, a place where men look up the dark tunnel to the only natural light, give a short prayer, and then walk towards the wall of darkness. *This is the exact opposite of where I want to be. I should be up in the night sky. Instead, I am working in the underground, completely devoid of purpose other than collecting chunks of coal. This cannot be my life.*

Listening to London last night… that's why I want to be in the air. It's unbearable, being able to see the smoke, hearing the buildings tearing a part and completely toppling in on itself or even feeling the vibrations from the bombs dropping down. I can smell the tinged scent of fire ravaging everything in its path. It's like the city is crying out for men to save it, and I, Jack Francis, am stuck in the coal mines.

What's worse is listening to the fighter planes scorching across the night sky, and in those instances there aren't any stars to be seen. What I wouldn't give to be up there right now, seeing the full extent of the damage on my home town, and feeling like somehow, I could help. Papa would feel the same way. He would never rest until he knew all of us were safe in our beds, sound asleep and out of harms way. Papa always took the night missions because that was when he was needed the most. Sylvester does the same, knowing that papa would be proud of the way he was fighting for his country. I miss him. Would Papa understand? Would he say "it's alright son,

you're needed more in the pits." That's what mama said, but mama doesn't know this feeling. The stuckness of it all.

Neither does Sylvester. "You're fine where you are Jack, you'll be alright." Is what he said. Just like the big brother he is,"You don't need to be in the air, it's a whole different arena up there. I'd much rather have you down here with Mama." Of course he would, he'll never see me as anything other than his little brother. He'd never let me join the RAF, just like Mama told me to wait until I received my conscription notice. Then, I could go into the war. She said she didn't want her baby to grow up through the horrors of war. Mama would respond"You don't know Jack, what war is like," anytime I considered joining the fight. Sly would say "Baby brother, you want to be a man too fast, your time will come," But you're already a fighter pilot Sly. You're already doing something worthy.

One day I'll get out. One day I'll prove to Papa that I can do it, just like him and Sly. No more coal, no more picks, no more helmets with lights, no more staring into nothingness and hoping there is an end, and no more dirt. Oh the dirt. "Clean dirt," they call it, but it's all just the same filth that stains my clothes. It's the same substance that tells everyone on the outside world that I am nothing but a mere coal miner. What an identity to have, if it can be called an identity at all. It's more of an insult at this point, to think that this work is something of serious importance.

The cage came to an abrupt stop, shaking Jack out of his thoughts and back into reality. He looked around, at the two walls, nearly pristine white contrasting eerily with the gigantic black hole that stared right at him, like it meant to swallow his existence. Jack rolled his

shoulders back and walked with his head held high into the abyss, trying not to think about the fighter engines roaring above, saving Britain from absolute destruction.

***

1944 Wales

"So what brought you into the mines?" Leo asked as he began to hack at the coal face. He looked at what could be considered an utter mess of a man. Jack hunched over his shovel, his eyes barely awake at this strange hour. Leo felt sincerely sorry for this fellow. Normally new recruits were at least somewhat aware of what mining entailed: long hours, physical labor, minimal pay… But Jack was a whole different kind of ignorant. Leo had learned just last night that Jack had no idea what coal actually did for the nation.

"What's the point of mining?" Jack had said in such disdain Leo thought he'd meant to cut the coal face with only words.

"What do you mean what's the point? Coal is used for nearly everything. Electricity, cooking, heating, running certain engines. Coal is quite literally what gives you life. Your hostel wouldn't be warm without coal, your food would be simply deli sandwiches. Not to mention it brings in a load of money from other nations who need it. And we need the money, lord knows we won't win the war without it." Leo had responded a little incredulously. Coal was everything to him for the last three years, and to hear somebody ask, "well what's the point?" sent fervent shivers down his spine. His aggressive spiel, Leo thought, had taken Jack aback, and a heavy silence fell over the next eight hours.

Leo was determined not to let that happen again. Silence in the mines was almost as detrimental as leaning between hundred ton coal tubs to connect them. One could die doing that.

Just like silence could lead to sleep could lead to an accident on the coal face. Dynamite could be placed the wrong way and cause a catastrophe. Silence would not be the theme of the night if Leo had anything to say about it.

"I said, what brought you to the coal mines, Jack Francis?" Leo said with more pronouncement. From the corner of his eyes, just as he was about to pick another chunk, Leo saw a shock rack Jack's body as it came back to life.

"I'm sorry, what did you say? I think I was drifting off."

"Coal mines, why are you here?" Leo took a slender piece of dynamite and shoved it in the hole he created with his pick.

"I had a conscription notice that said to come here." Jack's cheeks went bright red as he began to shovel the left over coal into the tub.

"You're a Bevin Boy? Geez, we haven't had one of you guys here since, well. You don't want to know what happened to the last guy." Leo chuckled as he picked another hole.

"What do you mean? What happened to the last guy?" Jack panicked.

"I don't know if I should tell you. It might be too delicate for your ears. You'll run off if you knew." Another stick of dynamite in, another load shoveled into the tub.

"I've heard worse from military commanders, I assure you."

"Military commanders eh? What's a youngin' like you doing with military commanders?"

"I'm not so young, I'm eighteen. And my father was a Wing Commander in the RAF." Leo noticed as he went to pick up another stick of dynamite the defensive stance Jack had taken. He was no longer shoveling coal. In fact, Jack looked angry enough to hit Leo upside the head with it. Leo laughed.

“If you’re going to be down here you need thick skin. I’m not disrespectin’ you or your father. I’m just wondering how someone like you got down here in the mines. It’s hard, Jack, to assimilate in this place, but it’s easier if you’ve got someone who knows and can help you. Before we do that though, I need you to help me put this slab across these holes. And make sure you don’t cover the string.” Leo noticed the quizzical glance Jack gave him, that moment of hesitation, just before Jack relaxed his shoulders, got the bucket, and started to spread the mold across the coal face.

Silence again, Leo thought as he began his part of putting the slab on.

“I don’t really want to be down here, you know.” Jack paused, and Leo saw, for just a second, a similarity.

“I didn’t either, when I first came here.”

“Really? Why’d you stay?”

“It’s not a choice, Wing Commander, when you’re a conchie.”

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CHAPTER TWO

1996 London

"And what was it like to be a collier's assistant?" Miss Hartfield abruptly pulled Jack away from his one of his fondest memories of Leo. His best friend had always been proud when he talked about how his family took his being a conscientious objector. "My father doesn't like it, but he supports it. That's good enough for me." Leo would say, and it would draw Jack back to his own father. During the war, Jack was so obsessed with how his father would see him if he were still alive. Would he be enough? Would his father *love* him? He'd had no idea. Jack knew, now, that the meaning of Leo's story, the one where he talked about his father's acceptance, wasn't about his father at all. It was about what his father said that Leo wanted to communicate to Jack. And, of course, Jack being Jack, he didn't realize the significance of the story until it was almost too late.

"It was boring really. Leo and I talked a lot as he put dynamite in the coal face and I shoveled up the remnants." Jack looked on, the image of Leo lingering.

"And what did you talk about?"

"Anything that would get you through the day." Jack chuckled. "The first few days Leo really emphasized the importance of being safe in the mines. We always had to do things by the book, so to speak. 'Never second guess what the elders tell you," Leo'd say. The elders were the oldest coal miners who held most of the cotter positions, and when they told you to do something you did it. They earned that respect, you see. They'd been in the hell hole the longest, they obviously knew what they were doing if they were still alive.

After Leo got the safety regulations drilled into my head, which didn't stick at all, but we will get to that later, he would then talk to me about how the coal mine works on a social level."

"A social level?"

"Yeah. We talked about, for instance, about who should I talk to, who should I not talk to, what are the values of certain coal miners so I can respect them. That sort of thing. For the most part we gelled together while we worked. It was a well oiled machine. But as soon as we had a lunch break or we left for the day, it was as if all hell broke loose. I wasn't really part of the fighting because I was the only one of my kind, and I had Leo to protect me, but the mine had some characters in it. Polish and Irish miners didn't get along with the Welsh. Conscientious objectors, other than Leo, didn't get along with the reserved men. Reserved coal miners play pranks on each other, but then it would get out of hand and they'd start brawls in the shower.

I remember one day, I was taking a shower, and this young coal miner, no more'n sixteen, comes up and he starts assessing Leo. Keep in mind, Leo is a big brawny guy, and this kid snarls 'You're *the* fucking conchie,' punched Leo in the face and sprinted from the room. Leo, dumbfounded, shook off the blow and yelled out to the kid 'you could have at least let me answer you first.' And he went back to drying off. Jack chuckled at the memory of a scrawny kid punching a 6'4" man with arms that bulged the size of a normal head and blue scars that had spattered themselves across his body.

"Grandpa, did anyone try to punch you for being a coal miner?" Jeremy had relaxed now, laying in the crook of Jack's arm while he listened. He had been playing with his fingers, holding them up one, two, three, then entwining them with his other fingers to make a mosh pit with his

hands. When Jeremy realized his grandpa was slow to answer, he notched his head up to look at Jack's confused expression.

"Mr. Francis, did you ever face any hostility from others during the war?" Miss Hartfield said, invading his thoughts.

"I did. Once or twice I think." He sat there perplexed for the first time in the interview. Those memories, to Jack, were foggier, something similar to a high wall with impenetrable bricks was blocking him from fully seeing what had happened that night outside the pub. He had remembered being docked, that's for sure. His jaw throbbed the whole next day, and he couldn't talk because Jack had bitten his tongue and it swelled so much he began to slur his words like a drunken sailor. He remembered something white, a little object placed in his left breast pocket over his heart by a woman he'd never met before. Jack especially remembered that at the moment when he was given the little "trinket" he had vowed that no matter what, he'd get out of the coal mines.

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1944 Wales

This wasn't the first time they'd been to a pub after work. In fact, it was more common to get a few pints than people let on. Every time Jack went out, he would notice something new about the community around him. Jack first realized that the vast majority of the people surrounding him were coal miners he worked with on a daily basis. Generations of families had jobs in the colliery industry, and when work let out they all went to the local pub just outside the factory gates. It was called "The Gold Mine." The second thing Jack noticed was that older coal miners always got served first at the counter, no doubt coming from that whole "earning respect"

ordeal. Something really nifty that Jack observed, however, was that it wasn't just coal miners.

This was a rundown part of town, where soot blotched out the what would have been pristine white bricks of the houses. Jack walked in and saw singers and dancers, working women, mothers, famous Rugby players, and military personnel all intermingling in an impossibly small pub. It was startling to Jack, that men in the RAF would be in such a rundown place such as this. Yet, here they were, drinking pint after pint given to them as they relaxed their arms around the girls closest to them.

Jack had been at the end of the bar with Leo chatting along about the latest film to come out in the cinema. *This Happy Breed,* Jack thought, *how ironic of a title in this time. It's hard to be happy when you're working in the pits sixty hours a week.* Nevertheless, he and Leo found it to be an extraordinary movie meant to bring everyone together. As they spoke, they ordered another couple of drinks and two RAF pilots sat next to them. Jack had been learning through Leo what it meant to be a coal miner, but that didn't mean that he was so sure he was one, let alone wanted to be one just yet. Leo would rave about the community around him, how everyone helped everyone else. How no one cared or resented your for your beliefs because it didn't make a difference when you hit the coal face. You just *were* when you were in the pits. Society couldn't say anything against you, and they definitely wouldn't say anything to you in their community outside. Not if you took pride in being a coal miner.

Leo had said that it was hard, at first, for him to accept being a miner because he didn't feel like he could live up to being the breadwinner of sorts. All of the men down in the pits were manly men, physically strapping, daunting in size, and they never smiled. Leo on the other hand, came in as one of the scrawniest people (he built muscle over time), and smiled all of the time

because nothing could bring him down. His intimidation got the best of him until one of the older coal miners said “just be you, Leo, stop trying to be *us*. Then you’ll realize that you are.” From then on Leo knew he belonged in the mines for the war.

While Jack believed that with Leo by his side as a sort of guardian, he could make it in the coal mines, there was still a piece of him that wanted to be in the RAF. It was hard, this choosing between destinies. On the one hand, Jack had come to find Leo as his best friend. They started to do everything together, like pub crawling, playing football on the pitch on Saturday’s, and going to cinema’s on double dates. Jack normally brought some woman from the pub, and Leo normally brought his partner, Gabe. It took Jack a while before he got used to the idea of Leo being homosexual. Most of all, Jack genuinely loved talking to Leo in the mines. They had the most exhilarating conversations that someone could only have if they were miles beneath the surface of the Earth, with only one other person by their side. They discussed topics like, classism, racism, the Empire and the World, Poetry, music was a big theme, their personalities, what they wanted to do when they got out of the mines, their past selves and influences, the meaning of life… Anything and everything to pass the time.

Leo had made Jack rethink the whole concept of joining the military. “At what cost do you have to pay to keep yourself? If you join the army, Jack, you’ll have to give up your identity as person, and become what their system wants you to be.” That thought rang through Jack like the bells of Notre Dame on a Sunday. He couldn’t shake this feeling that he’d be giving something up, if he joined the RAF. Yet, he still felt compelled to do it. So, when the RAF pilots sat next to him, Jack had no idea what he was going to identify himself as to them. A child of an RAF pilot and someone seeking to be the same as his father, or the coal miner who just got off a

twelve hour shift and needed a pick me up. Unfortunately for Jack, he had no choice but to be the latter. He could hide the fact from these two men in their ashy blue uniform with a pair of silver wings. Jack was still wearing the pants he wore down in the pit because his others had ripped on his locker door earlier.

The cool thing though, was that the RAF that Jack spoke with didn't care that he was a coal miner.

"Ya know, we really do appreciate what you do mate." The Australian pilot had said when Jack returned a "hello."

"Yeah, we might not say it much, but you guys do a lot for us, so thank you." The English one added.

"Cheers." They both hauled their pints into the air towards Jack and Leo, and as any RAF, scarfed the whole thing in one minute.

Jack had left the tavern with his head held high and chest buffed out, like he had just been named the King of the United Kingdom, he felt so complete with what they said.

"It's about time a Bevin Boy was proud to be a miner." Leo had practically yelled to the stars. That's when shit hit the fan.

Leo's words carried themselves one by one over to the other side of the tavern where Leo and Jack were headed, and flowed their way into the ears of a naval officer and his date for the evening.

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1996 London

I remember now. Leo and I walked across the street towards the park. It was the easiest way to get back to the hostel. Once we crossed the road, a couple came up to us. The man was dressed in a regal white uniform, and the woman had on an obnoxiously short skirt. It barely covered her knees. I remember Leo asking what they wanted. "Are you the Bevin Boy?" The man asked. "That would be me." I said with my head still high. I must have missed the tension. I remember that once I said it, I regretted it. I remember the woman pulling out her purse, ever so carefully. She opened it, and in the inner front pocket, she removed from it a white feather. The symbol of cowards. I remember she put it in my chest pocket, and she sneered "Only cowards hide in play pits."

"I was given a white feather on one occasion." Jack said, fighting the chill racking his body. "A woman came up and put it in my pocket, and then the man with her punched me in the face. Leo told me to just keep walking, to not make a scene. To, in his words, 'not let him egg me on further,' but it was impossible. I got into a brawl with him and it caused a lot of confusion amongst the community. We threw a lot of jabs at each other. Leo and two other coal miners tried to pull me off of the guy. The woman went into the pub and told everyone what was going on. I don't remember exactly how the fight turned out other than my having a black eye, broken nose, and busted lip. The next day, I showed up to work and I felt like an outsider again. No one would talk to me. If they looked my direction it was normally a glare. One guy called me a "twit," who couldn't keep his head on straight.

“The community, and Leo especially, were disappointed in my actions. I shouldn’t have let someone get to me so badly for just being a Bevin Boy. It made a bad showing for the coal mining community. I also realized, then, that I didn’t want to be humiliated like that again, so I tried even harder to get into the RAF.” Jack noticed his face had flushed, his hands were clammy, and he held on tighter to Jeremy, who was still laying relaxed in his lap. Jack promptly lifted Jeremy up by his armpits and sat him back down on his knee face him. Jeremy’s legs, dangling, barely touched the floor. Jack gave his grandson a compassionate gaze, looking into the light blue eyes that reminded him so much of Jeremy’s grandmother.

“Jeremy, I want you to know that no matter what, don’t let anyone question who you are. I did, and I lost a lot for it. If you just let people like you for you, and not for who they want you to be, then you’ll be better off. Okay?” Jeremy stared at his grandpa, bug eyed and stunned by the sudden movements and the force of Jack’s tone. Then he let out a toothy grin and hugged Jack around the neck.

“I understand, Grandpa.” Jeremy whispered while Jack, in the meantime, sat stunned that his grandson was so willing to accept him. He paused before smothering Jeremy in a great bear hug.

“I think now would be a great time for a break, don’t you?” Miss Hartfield sat smiling at the duo as she went to pause the recorder.

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1944 Wales

Jack walked home from work, this time alone. Leo had decided that he wanted to stay and chat with Rob for a little longer. They had planned a football match between their coal mine

and the one twenty miles north, and were making last minute modifications to the team. No doubt, they realized that no one wanted Jack on their team anymore. Not after his reaction to the white feather incident a few nights ago.

I just don't understand how to get into the RAF. If I practice absenteeism then I let the whole of the coal mining community down. I really can't afford any more hate from them. You'd think they'd be proud, that I'd stood up to that military officer. The man smeared the coal mining name for Godsake's and yet it's my fault for showing I'm not a coward. I would have joined the RAF. I would have been up in those planes fighting the Germans, but no. My conscription told me to come here. To the middle of no where. Most people don't even know that Bevin Boys are conscripted! How ridiculous is that! I was ***forced*** *to come to a lowly job that pays near to nothing and has atrocious hours of grueling work. I was* ***forced*** *to endure the constant jokes from the older coal miners when Leo wasn't by my side.* ***I was forced to fight back against that officer.*** *No sane person would let another man question his moral compass.*

Coal miners especially! Yet they won't fight back. They said "it gives coal mining a bad reputation, something we all are trying to clear." They had said it was because of the strikes. The older coal miners had told Jack and Leo that a few years ago, they had all gone on strike for less hours and a better wage. What they got instead was extreme hatred from the outside world. Those in the military and upper classes (like me), spit on coal miners, threw things at them in the streets, and yelled atrocious names like "Hun Lover."

For all they do, they are treated like the "clean dirt," that cakes their shirts and pants every day. But they won't fight, and I don't get it. One man calls me a coward and I could take down have of Germany with my rage. Thousands of people call them traitors, and they turn the

other cheek and continue to work. Leo led this religious act too! "They can call us all they want, but only we know how essential we are, how ***important*** *we are, just as we are. Without us, there is no war. Now deep down people know that, Jack. Why were they so furious when we stopped working do you think? We don't need to prove ourselves to them because they already have that realization."*

But I want to prove myself. I want to show people that I can be someone. A hero. A savior. Someone doing something righteous for our country. The coal mining industry does that. They are all men who couldn't give a shit what others think, that's for sure. They are just as patriotic as the military, But the RAF… everyone wants to be them. They are the "Knights of the Air," the chivalric protectors. They are those men in the newspapers with their scores of the night in the their own section. They are the ones in the cool blue uniform, a mystery to the rest of society. They do their work humbly, modestly, and never ask for anything in return. They don't need to prove themselves because everyone already knows, they are the real men in this war.

I'll find a way to join them. I'll use one of my days off. I'll take a train to London. I'll find my father's best friend from the RAF. Wing Commander Bestier, and I'll prove to him that I, Jack Francis, son of ace pilot Reginald Francis, should be in the RAF, because I have the heart of a hero.

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1944 Wales

"I'll be a minute so don't wait for up for me Wing Commander. I have to go over some, um, logistics with Barry for the football match." Leo had told Jack as they left the shower area. It had been a mess for Leo, trying to save Jack from humiliation since the night of the incident.

The coal miners had been furious that Jack retaliated to something as simple as a white feather. Hell, Leo had been called worse because he was a conscientious objector. Coward, to the British public, was his middle name.

I have never seen a boy so adamant to show he's a man Leo thought. *Jack was doing fine in the mines.* It was absolutely noticeable to Leo, that even if Jack didn't enjoy what he was doing, he still found pleasure in the conversations that arose around him. They consisted of several different topics, from Hitler's Germany, to what kind of pub drinks would be on the happy hour menu tonight, poetry from the Great War, for some reason stars came up often for Jack. Leo saw that Jack loved to just listen to the coal miners talk, like it was a completely different world for him to be in.

Jack had recently confided in Leo, and told him why he wanted to be in the air force so badly. "Because my father was, and he's my hero." That one, minor sentence, made every sense in the world to Leo. All boys growing up in Britain, especially the one's Jack's age, wanted to be like their fathers. Most of the men were war heroes anyway, and many placed that same pressure on their sons for this war. They had to live up to the family expectation. Jack had told Leo that it was hard, not understanding how his father would react to his situation in the mines. What's worse is the added pressure that Jack placed on himself because his brother *was* in the RAF. Leo didn't know how he would do it, but he was determined to ingrain in Jack's mind that he doesn't have to be something to someone just because of supposed expectations.

It would take time, *but how much time do I really have? How am I going to go about doing this? How would a father do this? What would my own father say? Well, that's easy. "Don't be like me," that's what he would say. "You have to be you're own person, but you also*

have to know yourself." Does Jack know himself? I don't think he does. He is centered on being in the air force and being like his Pa, does he even know what he likes and dislikes? That would be a good place to start. Getting Jack to understand Jack.

Leo set out to make Jack understand Jack every day after that. They would enter the mines together, and each morning as they split the coal face, Leo would ask Jack easy questions like "what are your hobbies?" "What kind of drinks do you like?" "What's your longest relationship been?" It was fascinating to Leo that Jack had a hard time answering some of them. Jack had to think for a while on what his hobbies were, in which case flying was one. He had never been in a long standing relationship, just little dalliances here and there. Jack figured it was because he was too young to be in the war, but he came to realize he always ended the relationship first. Leo meant to ask him about that later, when Jack could answer why without saying it's because he wasn't in the army.

After a month of just learning the basics of Jack, Leo began to ask harder questions. "Where do you see yourself after the war?" "Do you want a family?" "Are you going live in London?" It was difficult to get Jack to respond. It was clear by his hunched shoulders, averted eyes, and solemn mood that Jack had no idea what his life would be like outside of the war. *He basically grew up in it*, Leo had to tell himself. He planted the seeds, however, in Jack's mind of what life could be like on the other side.

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1944 Wales

"Leo, I'm not a homosexual." Jack finally had to tell him. Ever since the white feather incident, Leo had made it some sort of objective to get to know everything about Jack. At first,

Jack thought that it might just be a gesture to try talking to him again after he was ostracized from the mining community. It seemed like a small act of inclusion, and Jack had noticed that since Leo starting talking to him, the other miners let go of their grudges and invited him out every now and again. Not to "The Gold Mine," of course, but to rugby and football matches, dance halls, other pubs outside of town etc…He felt slightly better about himself. However, even after the men starting to include Jack in more activities, and let go of their grudges, Leo still pressed on trying to get to know Jack. It became deeply personal when he asked Jack if he wanted a family or not, or why he couldn't maintain a long-lasting relationship. Leo's most recent question had been "What would you tell your Pa if he could come back to life for one day?" It was too personal to ask a friend. *The only explanation* Jack concluded *is he thinks I'm homosexual.*

"Jack, anyone within one-hundred miles could tell that you're not homosexual." Leo chuckled as he drilled another hole in the coal face.

"Then why are you hellbent on getting to know me?" Jack's stood upright with his shovel stuck under the coal bits. His eyebrows drew together as he analyzed Leo placing the dynamite stick in the hole.

"I don't know if you want to hear the truth, Jack, but here it is. If you're going to work in the coal mines, if you're going to catch a girl's attention, if you're going to make it in this world, you need to know yourself and judging by your answers I don't think you do." It was said so nonchalantly while Leo picked up another stick, that it took the words sometime before they struck Jack one by one in the gut.

"What do you mean 'I don't know myself?'" Jack mocked defiantly.

“What is your life outside of wanting to be in the RAF Jack?” Leo yelled as he finally squared to meet Jack’s harsh gaze.

“It doesn’t have to be anything outside of the RAF, that’s what I want to be!” Jack yelled.

“Because of your father? Because you don’t want to disappoint him?” Leo calmly took steps towards Jack.

“Well isn’t that a good enough reason?”

“Not at all. Jack, you have to want to do it for yourself. You don’t have to do it just because you think your father would love you less if you didn’t.” Leo patted Jack on the shoulder as he realized the tears forming in those big blue eyes.

“You don’t get it, Leo.” Jack mumbled before he stormed away from the coal face.

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1996 London

“Jack Francis, reel two, session number 33550,” the recorder announced as he pressed play again. Jeremy lounged back in his grandpa’s lap again, this time with a chocolate chip cookie crumbling in his hands.

“Mr. Francis, do you think that your civilian status had any impact on your romantic life?” Miss Hartfield eyed Jack with a certain calculation that told him she already thought she knew the answer.

“Not really.” Jack meant to shock her, and it worked. Miss Hartfield’s eyes popped from her head and she began to fidget in her chair. Jack knew what the normal answer was, *yes, my status deeply unsettled my love life. It was hard to find women who wanted men out of uniform.*

To a point it was true. The men in uniform, especially those in their spiffy powder blue ones with the silver wings, always had a girl on their arm. “All the nice girls love a sailor,” they would sing in the pubs all night long. What most people didn’t know now a days is that, women had more encounters with civilian men than they did the military. Women worked in the factories with men on twelve hour shifts. That’s half their day that they were with men like Jack. That’s half the day the men in the factories flirted with the women.

“I’d had a pretty normal experience when it came to women. I met my wife shortly after I started working in the mines. I will say, however, that before I met Vera, the Americans had made it slightly more difficult to attract women. They waltzed in with their accents and fresh new hope for the war effort, it was no wonder women ran to them.”

“And how did you meet your wife, if I may ask?” Miss Hartfield had returned to her usual poise and intrigue. It bothered Jack slightly, that he couldn’t get an official read on her. She was a great conversationalist, but behind her genuine exterior, Jack thought he saw a bit of superficiality. Something that said *she only wants you to clarify what she already knows. Which is that men like you had a difficult war experience.*

“I actually met her at the pub where I received the white feather.”

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July 1944 Wales

Jack didn’t know exactly what he was getting into when he met Vera, and she likewise.

It was mid-1944, around the same time the a cool breeze in the sunshine turned into furious clouds ripping wind gusts through the air. To anybody who knew Great Britain, the winds could get so bad that when a person tried to walk, the wind would trip that person up by pulling

their leg higher than it should go, and pushing them flat on their back. It was that same wind that propelled Vera, an opportune journalist, into "The Gold Mine," a pub on the outskirts of God knows where in the middle of Wales.

Vera Wesley had been the only woman to ever score a worthwhile writing job for *The London Times* newspaper at the beginning of the war. It took weeks for the men in the building to look at her with an ounce of seriousness let alone get a real interview with the editor. Like every woman in Britain before 1941, there was a stigma that they either had to be at home watching children, or helping in the farm fields. Vera had neither a husband at the ripe age of 17, nor did she live near a farm. The men in the office thought she was a simpleton for believing she could land a job with one of the most prestigious newspapers in the world. So, they would catcall whenever she walked into the building, saying things like "What would a beautiful woman like you need with a brain?" Looking back on it, Vera realized she wouldn't be who she was if she hadn't been met with adversity at the newspaper.

For Vera, she believed that with her education at a woman's private school, that prided itself on creating women the way Jane Austen described the perfect woman in her book *Pride and Prejudice* with a thorough knowledge of music, writing, reading, drawing, five languages, and an air of confidence, then she could be unstoppable in a male dominated workforce. She knew that most men never thought that a woman could be a reporter. The editor believed the same, and in 1939 started Vera out with "Ask Mrs. Henry," an advice and propaganda column for aimed towards women living in total war conditions. For Vera, it consisted of staying up late writing on how women can safely avoid air raids while at the same time getting grease stains out of their husband's shirt with limited material.

This went on until in 1941, women gained the right to enter factory work. Vera had fought tooth and nail to see this story of women's new found position in society take flight. She had heated discussions with other journalists, her editor, even members of parliament to persuade them to see the essential power women had if only their voices were heard. Vera's persistence won them over in 1942, and ever since she has been writing the story of women workers. To get their side of the story and report it back to the government for propaganda purposes. That was the reason Vera was sent down to Wales in 1944, to cover the women in the mining industry.

That's where Vera met Jack. He had just come from work, a twelve hour shift all day in the pits, and was with Leo, his best friend. Leo had suggested that they sit at the bar for two reasons: one, drinks came faster when a customer was up close and personal with the bartender, and two, in Jack's case, it was the easiest place to survey the tavern for single women. Leo had told Jack that single women stand out in a crowd. They are normally surrounded by other female friends, or they decide to sit at the bar alone until a young man walks up and asks them to dance. Jack realized immediately, that tonight would not be the night to pick up a woman. All of the women he saw in the pub were arm in arm with men in the military. A cute blonde wrapped up with an RAF pilot, a curvy woman with short brown curls wooing a Royal Navy officer…. Jack didn't have a chance against these guys.

Jack had suddenly felt a chill go up his spine. Someone who wasn't familiar with the pub wouldn't have known that the door, if not held just correctly with the knob turned at 45º outwards, would blast open and introduce the cold wind that everyone came inside to get away from. The slam of said door caused a ruckus in the entrance, which compelled Jack to turn his head, and set eyes on the most beautiful, and obviously single, woman he had ever seen.

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1996

"She was a Godsend really. Vera happened to sit right next to me to get herself a beer. I remember her hair was disheveled after she practically fell in the door way. I remember exactly what she was wearing, a white blouse, a navy blue pencil skirt, and a little hat to match. I think she sat next to me because it was in the very corner of the tavern, where no one would think to look at her after the fiasco with the door. What Vera didn't know was it happened to everyone who wasn't from around there.

Anyway, she came over blushing, frustrated, and embarrassed. When she got up to the bar she asked for a shot of whiskey, and I thought 'wow, this isn't one to mess with.' But of course I still did. She bit my head off when I tried to talk to her the first time. I'd asked her if I could buy her a drink, and I remember distinctly, she whipped around, glared at me and said 'why don't you bugger off.' That's when I knew, she was the one. It's stupid really, for that to be the instant. I thought to myself, well this one surely knows how to handle herself. Vera told me later that she was trying to interview women in the mining community, but she was angry that no one in this specific place knew of any women working in the mines. That's why she sneered at me. " Jack reminisced.

"And how did you commence a relationship?" Miss Hartfield asked.

"I knew that Vera wasn't in the mood to joke around, but I really couldn't help myself. She sat there all posh and rigid, and I wanted her to loosen up. So, I started teasing her. I joked about her drink and about her entrance into the pub. I said something along the lines of 'Should women like you being drinking whiskey in a place like this.' I guess I sort of gave her a way to

let her frustration out, even if it happened to be on me. Once Vera realized that I wasn't going to stop talking to her she let go and we ended up having a really nice conversation about the war, and what she was doing there, and how women were essential. Vera is as staunch a feminist as the rest of them, and I love it. She was, still is, extremely passionate about women's rights, especially in the workplace. I listened and took it all in and I think she appreciated someone, specifically a man, actually trying to understand her values. We stayed there the whole night just talking and laughing.

So at the end when the pub was about to close I asked her out to the movies the next weekend. She said 'we'll see.' and she left the pub by bus. I didn't know what to do with that answer, until in about a weeks time I opened my locker door, and found a note with her name, address, and telephone number. I rang her up as soon as I got off work, and we've kind of been inseparable ever since." Jack smiled to himself thinking about the jitters he'd had when he saw the note.

Vera Wesley, Hudson Hostel, Room 118,— pick me up at 8pm Saturday, don't be late.

"Did your wife have any opinions about your work in the mines?"

"If she did she has yet to speak them." Jack chuckled to himself. "My wife is a very opinionated lady, which isn't a bad thing, but I think if she didn't want me working in the mines she would of flat out told me so the night we met. Vera commented, maybe once about my job, and it had nothing to do about my civilian status. She had said 'you mean to tell me that you lug wheel barrels filled with coal around all day, but you can't seem to lug your plate to the sink?' And that was it. I can't speculate, you'll have to ask her about it after the interview, but I don't

think she really cared that I worked in the mines. All she cared about what that I was safe, and of course not talking to other women."

"Mr. Francis, I wonder if we could change the subject now? Your story is unique, and we will get to that part soon, but can you give background as to how you came upon your situation? What steps did you take that allowed you to join the RAF?" Miss Hartfield asked.

Jeremy's shifted to look at his grandfather. "You we're in the RAF?"

"Not exactly. Oh where to begin with that one." Jack began to stumble through his memory. He knew that Jeremy was a little disappointed by the way he slouched back into Jack's arms. It had been fifty years since Jack had made his decision, and he stood by it. That is, until he realized that Jeremy might think less of him if he knew the truth. *This story is going to be absolutely unbearable if Jeremy can't understand the implications of my decision*, Jack thought to himself.

"Um, well I guess it started after the white feather incident and my meeting my wife. Even though Vera took me as I was, I still felt like I could be better for her. I had this idea that I had to prove myself to her and everyone else. Being the person that I was then, I thought it had to do with my civilian status. That feeling I had when I received the white feather never really went away, you know. It was sort of like guilt, like I could be doing more, but I felt trapped. I wanted to be someone that she and my family could be proud of, and at the time I didn't think coal mining could do that for me. So, I asked to see my employer about enlisting in the RAF."

CHAPTER THREE

December 1944 Wales

Jack half expected his employer's office to be enshrined in gold with how much coal the miners dug up each day. Instead, it was a plain light blue hue across the walls with a few "Employer of the Year" awards scattered here and there. A cabinet sat behind the desk and housed several pictures of what Jack assumed to be his employer's family. Jack suspected the photos went chronologically. It started with two little boys playing on a football pitch with their dad. The next shows a baby girl with a footprint by her photo. Then the two boys and the girl a bit older at church. Finally, his boys in Air Force and Navy uniforms, and the woman now wearing a WAAF uniform.

The desk remained covered in files with names on the tabs. Probably the names of Bevin Boys soon to come to this coal mine. Jack's file lay on top. *The employer must want to see my credentials, whether I'm fighting fit for the air force or not. Maybe he wants to tell me that I need to work harder in the mines. Those might be the files of how much coal I scrape out a day. Lord knows it hasn't been as much as I did in the beginning. What's the point?* Jack noticed the window to his side, which showed a glimpse of sunlight. He'd had to do an early morning meeting, just before his shift so he could go back to the coal mines afterwards. *He knows why I'm here, so why would he entertain a meeting if he knew I wasn't going to the RAF?*

Mr. Berrymore entered the room in a confident fashion. His hair was slicked back with brylcreem and his burley stature made the office feel like a small cubicle for detention at school. Mr. Berrymore, though round in the stomach, glided gracefully over to his chair on the opposite

side of the desk. He looked Jack up and down a couple times to gage who exactly wanted to speak to him at a time like this.

"So, Jack Francis, you want to join the RAF hmmm?" He eyed Jack quizzically.

"Yes, sir." Jack felt his body tremor a little at the thought of not receiving a by to be a pilot. *You have to get in*.

"Why?"

"Well, you see sir, my father was a Wing Commander, and my brother is now. I want to do my bit for my family and my country."

"And you think coal mining isn't doing your "'bit?""

Not like the RAF.

"Sir, I think that coal mining is extraordinarily important." Jack began emphatically. "I think, however, that my skills as a pilot are needed more in the air force than in the coal mine. I had never coal mined before last year, and to be honest I don't know that I'm the greatest at the job. I think, however, that my piloting skills are impeccable."

"Well Mr Francis, I'm sure your flying is fabulous, but according to your file so is your coal mining." Mr. Berrymore opened the first file sitting on top the desk. Jack could see his face next to all of the background information and numbers he couldn't quite make out.

"You and your partner have dug up more coal than two other groups of miners' combined. You and Leo Caldwell are the epitome of what coal miners should look like nowadays. You come to work, you do your job for eight, sometimes ten hours, and you don't get distracted." *We are only ever just distracted. We never solely focus on our job.*

"What I mean to say, Mr. Francis, is that we cannot afford to lose you at this time."

“But Sir if you could just see me fly…”

“Listen, Jack, You’re one of our best workers. Now we have a recruited class coming in, but that’s not for another two months. Our company is already scrounging for more miners to offset production levels. I cannot, in good conscience, break up a team of men who out produce two other mining groups. It just wouldn’t be good business or good for the war effort.”

“Sir.”

“What I can give you is this. In two months, when the new recruits come in, I can reassess your situation. I don’t know that it will change, but I can look into it. In the meantime, keep production up. You’re doing your bit for your country down there. I know no one realizes it right now, but you and the men are the reason Britain is staying afloat. You have to believe me on that one.”

“It’s hard, when you can’t see any changes in the war because you’re always down in the pit.” Jack shakily stood and abruptly and flew from the room.

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1996 London

“Mr. Francis, after this experience with your employer, did you find yourself practicing absenteeism?” Miss Hartfield asked.

“Grandpa, what is, ab-sen-tee-ism?” Jeremy oozed curiosity.

“Absenteeism is when workers don’t show up to their jobs because they don’t like the conditions, the pay, or in my case, my employer. To answer your question Miss Hartfield, I only practiced it once.” Jack gazed between the two, ready to tell his real story.

“Can you describe what made you want to practice absenteeism?”

"Of course. I wouldn't say I "practiced" absenteeism though. I didn't show up to work one day because I had scheduled another meeting. This time with a military officer that my friend Luke had suggested. Somehow he had persuaded my case to a commander. I'll never forget that. Anyway, by that time, about a month after my meeting with Mr. Berrymore, I had been switched to second shift with Leo to help those production levels. I decided one day they could miss me for an hour or two and I could make it up on the night shift later. So, I went and met with the military commander some twenty miles away in Cardiff." Jack remembered that taxi ride. The anxiety had wracked him all through the countryside and even during the meeting.

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1944 Wales January

Jack hardly noticed the countryside cascading past his window. The sunlight glimpsed between stormy grey clouds as thoughts streamed through his head. *Why did I do this? I shouldn't have left. I should have at the very least told someone. Leo? He might not like the idea, but he'd know not to worry about me. He'd say "you don't have to prove yourself like that, you know? You're doing just fine in the pit. Even Mr. Berrymore said so." It really isn't that bad, working down there. Mother said she's proud of me, and that father would be proud. Sylvester would rather be in the mines, figure that. "You don't know what you have as a coal miner?" He said. "A community that's willing to look after you. The military doesn't always do that for each other. You don't know how many times the Navy has friendly fired on us, or we've had to fight off army fellows in pubs. You all are more than that, and frankly Jack I envy that and you." Why do I want to be a pilot again?*

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1996 London

"And how did that meeting go?"

"Um, well. In terms of what I had wanted, it went great. The military officer loved my tenacity, and said 'we could use chaps like you in the sky.' He knew my father and my brother, and had heard that I was just as good as they were at piloting. By that time, though, he really just needed men. It took all of ten minutes before he gave me an offer into the RAF. I honestly thought I'd be more ecstatic about the offer, but I was still plagued by missing work. I was letting Leo and the other men down. I had just been fully accepted back into the fold. Coal miners hold grudges no doubt about that, but once you make up for it, in my case I picked up a lot of slack in production, they let go and forgave you. I don't know why I went to that meeting. Looking back, what I did was selfish and the act of a child. I shouldn't have let that white feather get to me like that. I wanted to be a man so badly that I forgot what it meant to be one. I told the military officer that I needed one day to think about joining the RAF, and he said that I could attend training in a week in Edinburgh. Leo was furious with me when I told him where I had been. I think I really let him down. He had tried so hard to open my eyes to what I was doing.I didn't understand until a little later, when I had my accident." Jack could have kept going about everything he had learned within those two days if not for Jeremy poking Jack out of his revelations. He glanced down at his grandson nuzzled between his arms.

"You just wanted to be a pilot, Grandpa, what's wrong with that?" Jeremy asked.

"There's nothing wrong with being a pilot. What was wrong was how I went about doing it. I let my men down in the mines. I didn't show up to work, I didn't do what I was supposed to

do. You see, Jeremy. I was better for the war in my place as a coal miner. I didn't want to be one because I thought people looked down on them. They didn't believe that coal miners were doing their duty for their country. Even I didn't believe they were doing their duty for their country. But we were. We kept everything afloat on the homefront. I couldn't see it until I was taken out of the coal mining industry."

"Did that happen with the coal slide, Mr. Francis?" Miss Hartfield politely swayed the conversation back to the interview. Jack turned his gaze back to her clipboard.

"No, the coal slide happened while I was at the meeting. Fortunately no one was injured. That's another reason I regret not telling Leo I had left. He thought I was down there, where the coal slide happened, and they dug for an hour trying to find my body. All the while I was at that stupid meeting. Leo said he was beside himself at the time, and the other coal miners said they had never seen a man so wrought with despair when management told the men they had to go back to the top for a roll call. It took him a long time to forgive me after that incident, and to be honest I'm not sure he fully did. I can't imagine trying to find my best friend under a heap of coal and then realizing he was never there." Jack couldn't keep his gaze on the clipboard anymore. Sympathy, probably for Leo, oozed from Miss Hartfield's demeanor. Jack turned his eyes downward to the floor.

"When Leo saw me walking up to the gates….that was one of the worst experiences for both of us. He ran up to me, and I'll never forget the tears he had in his eyes right before he punched me in the face. Then he walked away, and I stayed on the ground." Jack remembered his first thought when he his the floor, *I deserved that*.

"And so, it's to my understand Mr. Francis that the next day you had an accident in the mines?"

"Yes that's right. I went to the mines that day, and I was told that I would be locking the tubs together instead of helping Leo. Apparently Leo never wanted to speak to me again, rightly so, and said I needed to 'grow up,' before I could do a 'man's job.'"

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1944 Wales

I deserve this, kept going through Jack's mind as he began to connect the tubs. *Was it even worth it? Why did I want to be a pilot again? To prove myself? It's like Leo said "if people don't think coal mining is tough work then they've never met a miner." All this coal…. it powers England, Wales, Scotland… We are the reason that England doesn't have to "lie in the dark and listen." They can see, they can live, they can create a sense of normalcy during a time of inhumanity. What am I doing now that I couldn't do as a pilot?*

Jack mindless stuck himself between the mountains of coal, found the latch and pinned the two tubs together. Bend down, latch, pin, stand up. Shuffle to the next tub, bend down, latch, pin, stand up. *This is mind numbing.* The row never seemed to end in the dark tunnel. Jack had to use his helmet with a lamp to see the pins. Every once in a while when he shuffled to a new tub, another would fly down the tracks and bump them all down further. Jack noticed that the tubs could come down three different shoots. He reckoned Leo and the new collier assistant would come from the left. Not much coal came from that one yet. *It would be different if I was working up there*. The other two forked right, and had one or two barrels flying down every half hour.

Jack watched as another one finally came from the left and jolted all of the other carts forward ten feet. It would be another half hour before another one came.

Jack got to work rigging the one's that rolled down. Bend down, latch. *Why do I hear something? And why is it getting closer? Shit.*

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1996 London

"When you latch tubs, you're supposed to bend down, hold your head back out of the way, and then pin them together. I had stepped in between the tubs. Luckily I heard them before I felt it, and I managed to lift my head up. The next thing I remembered was lying on the floor in sheer agony. My body felt like it had been hit by a car. My skin was on fire. I could feel something drizzling down my stomach and pooling around the ground. I remember not being able to see all to well, but I could hear everything. The coal falling out, the clinking of the unhitched tub, my saving grace was the footsteps coming from the other side of the shoots. There was a stairwell that let people get to that part. I heard the door open a ways down, a slight crack at first. Someone yelled 'Jack?' I remember someone shrieking in pain. It was the shrillest voice and pierced my ears so bad I thought they would start bleeding. Leo later said it was me. I made that noise. He rescued me that day. Once I knew he was by me, and I knew he was by me because he was screaming all sorts of orders to other miners trying to get me a gurney and something to patch up my stomach, I knew everything would be okay.

"Next thing I know, I'm waking up in a hospital bed. The pain was excruciating. I learned that I had been in between the tubs when one came racing down. I was crushed between two tons of coal. My ribs broke, I had a cut from the edge of the bin that went up my hip to my armpit,

and my leg was fractured from the knee down. I opened my eyes and I saw Leo and my girlfriend Vera sitting next to my bed. My mother had gone to get lunch for everyone. Leo looked wrecked. He was sleeping in his chair but even then his whole body was tense. The skin under his eyes was a dark gray color, and he was still wearing his coal mining suit from that day."

"And this was when you declined the RAF?" Miss Hartfield pressed.

"You declined the RAF?!" Jeremy shouted in disbelief.

Jack smiled down at his grandson. "Do you see any pictures of me in a snazzy blue uniform?"

"But why would you do that?" Jeremy's face contorted in confusion.

"I was needed elsewhere. My place was never supposed to be in the air. It took me long enough to figure that out. I think I just wanted so much to be like my father and brother. I wanted to join the military and fight for my country. That what people thought a man's duty was back during the war. I didn't realize that a man could have more than one duty to his country. Mine was wracking up coal all day. It seemed like a dull job, but I had no idea how important it was for keeping the nation afloat."

"And would you say your accident helped you come to this conclusion?" Miss Hartfield inquired.

"Ha, maybe. It might've rattled my brain enough for me to see clearly again. I suppose that the real impressive moment was working by myself. I never had to do that before in the mines. I was always with Leo. Being alone just gave me time to think and realize the true nature of my job. More so, it gave me time to establish my sense of identity. I sort of disconnected

myself from the concept that I should follow in my father's footsteps. I asked myself: why not be my own man?

"I told all of this to Leo while I was in the hospital. The first time I woke up, I thought he would be angry with me. Shockingly, Leo was really choked up about the whole thing. He was just happy I was alive. Vera told me later that it was a really close call. I had some major internal bleeding that needed to be stopped immediately. I was hit or miss for a while. It took me a long time before I regained all of my strength.

"In the meantime, Leo and I made up; quicker than I anticipated. A couple hours after I woke up, the military commander came to see how I was doing. He said that I could rejoin the RAF whenever I was at full capacity. He said he needed men like me, who 'look at death and say not today.' Rather weird isn't it? Anyway, all that time in the mines by myself really showed me that I didn't have to do it. I didn't have to be something I wasn't. I was needed in the mines. I was a Bevin Boy. That was who I was going to be for the rest of the war. And I told him that. He was more upset over losing a body that losing me as a person, I think. Leo told me it took guts to turn down what I wanted most in the world. He said it was a responsible *manly* decision.

"After that, I didn't know what I wanted to do. Leo was so adamant in helping me find myself. So we talked about who I wanted to be when I 'grew up.' And this time it couldn't be a pilot. I had to make a separate identity from my father and brother. I thought about what I was good at, which was science. Decent at math. We created a list of occupations. I told him I would be most comfortable in my own skin if I could be an engineer. I could build that aircrafts that went off to fight the war. I could build anything that would be productive in the world. So I made

a plan to start school for engineering after the war. I'm proud to say that that's been my job for the last several years since 1945."

"We are coming to the end of our interview Mr. Francis. Just one more question: what was your life like after the war?" Miss Hartfield proposed.

"Fun. That's how I would put it. After the war I immediately started school. I married Vera in 1946. We have three children and nine grandchildren, including this little tyke." Jack pointed to Jeremy. "I talk to Leo everyday. He actually lives just down the street from us with his partner Gabe. We lead very mellow lives since the war ended. Just going through our day to day routines of work and home life. I'm still an engineer, and I love the work I do. It gives me a sense of self. I won't forget my time in the mines though. That taught me everything I needed to know to succeed in life. Honestly it was a blessing and a wake up call. Without being a Bevin Boy, I don't know if I ever would have truly found myself."

"Well, I thank you for the time Mr. Francis. It has been a pleasure to hear your story." Miss Hartfield stood and pressed stop on the tape recorder.

"Would you like to stay for tea? I know Vera always makes a pot around this time." Jack stretched up from his chair and placed Jeremy on the ground.

"Thank you, but I am in a hurry to get to my next appointment. I believe it's with your friend Leo Caldwell." She stated with a smile as she walked to the door.

"No kidding." Jack chuckled.

"Well, until we meet again, I bid you adieu."

Jack shook his head smiling as he shut the front door after her. "Oh, what a time."

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EPILOGUE

Jack sat in the sun room staring out at his garden. Beams of light shone through the dark grey clouds. Blooming yellow daffodils filed around Vera's little greenhouse. Along the side, rows of vegetables sprouted to life. The tomatoes were almost ready for harvest. Several green, yellow, and plump red ones clung to the vines. Their dog, a big brown labrador, would most likely try to eat them if she ever ran outside without her leash. Luckily she lay across from Jack on the floor. The smell of roses and lavender circulated around the soft white room. Jack relaxed on the settee and let the heat from the sun surround him.

"Grandpa?" Jeremy poked his head through the door.

"Yes Jeremy?"

"Grandma's going to take me home now."

"Is that so. Well you better come give me a hug good-bye." Jack opened his arms as Jeremy jumped on the couch.

"I think you're pretty cool, Grandpa." Jeremy whispered in Jack's ear.

"Yeah? I think so too. Maybe I'll keep telling you these stories whenever you come around, eh?"

Jeremy beamed, "I would like that very much."

CONCLUSION

This project explores the cultural impact of policies, propaganda, films, newspapers, and post-war television depictions on civilian men during the Second World War. It gives insight into how the government responded to the position of reserved men and conscientious objectors. Newspaper articles described the House of Commons debates allow historians to understand how Members of the Parliament viewed people like men in the reserved occupations and conscientious objectors. Furthermore, the newspapers portrayed their sentiment, either of praise or hostility, to the public. Nonetheless, Parliament tried to instill normalcy for every civilian during the war. Within those boundaries of normalcy, civilian men could create positive, or negative relationships with one another and or the British public. The civilian men discussed in their own words what it was like to a man on the British homefront, and the experiences that followed. Their stories demonstrate the negotiations they had to make including: giving up joining the armed forces, acknowledging their part in the war, building other relationships and communities based on similar identities, and turning the other cheek when someone called them cowards or handed them white feathers. Finally, this project shows the development of the experiences of civilian men in post-war cultural depictions. The television series like *Dad's Army*, *A Family At War*, and *Land Girls*, begin to understand the circumstances of which the government placed civilian men, and how that shaped their masculine identity and experience on the homefront.

Their story is not new. Men, whether in war or in peace, have to negotiate their identities to fit the hegemonic masculinities at any given time. The hegemonic masculinity differs from

country to country, society to society, and culture to culture. In any case, there is a hegemonic masculinity that dominates the images of men in society. If a man does not fit that image, then he must negotiate his identity to fit the hegemony, or form new relationships in which his identity is not called into question.

Learning about civilian men during war displays a solid example that gender construction is real, and can be both positive and negative. The men in the reserved occupation and conscientious objectors created new relationships on the homefront with other civilian men. They led normal lives despite the war raging on overhead and across the channel. However, they endured negative experiences as well. People questioned their status as civilians and as men because they were not fighting in the war. Several women and men handed the civilians white feathers to humiliate them to join the armed forced. Likewise, government policy for propaganda inaccurately depicted the reserved men as old veterans when many of them were quite young. In this way, the story of civilian men can be universalized and connected to other societies.

My research heavily centers on reserved occupations in the heavy industries such as coal mining and shipbuilding. Further research could explore the relations between those heavy industry workers and men in less needed occupations. The men in the heavy industries, though not part of the hegemony, did display a macho hard man's masculinity.[1] They considered themselves the breadwinners of the family. Men in reserved occupations like teachers or chemist's may not have displayed those same traits. It would be interesting to see how they viewed each other as civilian men on the homefront.

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[1] Arthur McIvor and Ronnie Johnston, "Dangerous Work, Hard Men and Broken Bodies: Masculinity in the Clydeside Heavy Industries c.1930-1970,." *Labor History Review* 69, no.2 (August 2004): 136.

Another missing piece to the gender puzzle, is the lack of scholarship on the intersectionality between class and gender in the Second World War. Many of the men in the reserved occupation came from the working class; however, the government conscripted Bevin Boys' from all different backgrounds and places in society. Bevin Boys' and their experiences remain largely absent in Second World War historiography. What could follow is a fuller research on the relationships between reserved coal miners, their community, and the insertion of Bevin Boys'. The work could focus on how class intertwines itself with gender conceptions during war and conflict on the homefront.

This project focuses on civilian men on Britain during the Second World War, but there is far more work to be done in regards to gender and war. For this historiography specifically, there is little to no research on the impact that women have on men and masculinity during the Second World War. Thousands of women joined the workforce between 1942-1945 and they worked side by side with men in factories and on farms. While there is significant research on women workers, there is little connection between masculine and feminine identities in the workplace.

This project deeply ingrains itself in British society, but there is potential to compare the gender experiences of Britain with other countries during the Second World War. The hegemonic masculinity in Britain at the time was epitomized in the RAF pilot. They protected the nation from German invasion. The newspapers and propaganda posters idealized their status, and mythologized them in Second World War history. The British idolized the pilot; however, each society possesses a different hegemonic masculinity. Who did the United States citizens epitomize and why? The question to follow is, how did the U.S. construct gender in cultural representations, and how did it differ from the British? Britain does not necessarily have to be

compared to the United States. How did the German's construct gender during Nazism? Does it pose similarities to the British?

Understanding the experiences of civilian men in the Second World War allows historians to grasp the formation of gender constructions in society. The government plays a key role in boosting the image of what men and women should be like during certain times, like war. Furthermore, newspapers disseminate those same ideas as well as opinions from the population. Films produce certain images of masculine and feminine identity that are ideal in culture. All of these cultural depictions shape and impact how men and women view their masculinity and femininity. Post-war representations displayed years after conflict acknowledge the trials of those who do not fit into the hegemony; however, by looking at how society constructs gender in the past, historians can find similarities in the present. They can answer the "why" question. Why does a society project a certain hegemony, and how can they counter the negative effects it has on the subordinate population?

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Behind the Guns. Directed by Cecil Musk and Montgomery Tully. 1940; Britain: Sponsored by Ministry of Information), 1940. Film. https://film.iwmcollections.org.uk/record/785/media_id/1357.

The British government made *Behind the Guns* as a propaganda film in 1940. It focuses on the daily routine of men in heavy industries. The film displays the importance of the men in the reserved occupations by suggesting every so often that the military would not succeed without these men. I used this film to demonstrate the government's policy towards men in the reserved occupation. The government needed these men to accept their roles in society, even if they wanted to join the armed forces. Through this movie, the government suggests that the reserved occupations and the military are the same. They may not endure the same labors, but they are equally important.

National Archives. "Research and Learning: Exhibitions: The Art of War: Propaganda: Production - Salvage." The National Archives. The National Archives, May 6, 2005. http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/theartofwar/prop/production_salvage/INF3_0123.htm.

The British National Archives have a propaganda poster that is crucial to understanding the predicament that men in the reserved occupations faced during the Second World War. It is a poster called "Remember, they're relying on you," which is directed specifically at the importance of the war industry to the victories in battle. The scene of the poster is significant because it displays in a transparent light, a battle taking place in which a German aircraft is shot down by British flyers. It is the center and focus, while in the background, a man in the reserved occupation is in an offensive position holding his tool like a military weapon. He, unlike the battle scene, is translucent, and is overlooking the battle. This piece of propaganda is essential to my project because the poster has depictions of masculinity that are fascinating considering that other propaganda completely omits the reserves position in the war. This one tries to equate their masculinity with the armed forces, or, hegemonic masculinity. It demonstrates that in some sense, the government was aware that the war relied heavily on the civilian male's participation in war industry.

Night Shift. Directed by J.D. Chambers. 1942; Britain: Paul Rotha Productions, 1942. Film.

https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/1060006285

Night Shift was a propaganda film made by the government in 1942. The film centers around women working in the factory. The argument the film makes is that women, during the Second World War, can and should work in the factories. It does not disrupt the work of the men around them. The women are also quick and efficient at their job. I used this film to see how men and women work in the factory. Along with that, I looked at the film to see how the government portrayed masculinity and femininity in a single area of life.

"Social Pressure on Conscientious Objectors." Mass Observation File Report 312. June 1940.

Accessed in Gender Identities Seminar, University of Edinburgh, December 10, 2018.

This primary source demonstrates the perception of COs in the public conscience. While in the First World War they were despised and considered criminals, in the Second World War the public tolerated and even commended them for their bravery to stand up for what they believe in. This primary source helps my project in that it shows what the public actually thought of COs and what some of the comments were towards them. These included the public showing a certain amount of tolerance towards COs when people stated that they commended their bravery to stick to their beliefs. It also showed undercurrents of hostility coming from the First World War, with other people saying that they were shirkers and degenerates. Knowing the public perception during the time can help understand why COs had to form new communities, or lack thereof, because of their treatment by society.

"Sound Archive." Imperial War Museum. Accessed May 01, 2019. https://www.iwm.org.uk/

collections/

The Imperial War Museum sound archives have 33,000 different wartime stories from all sorts of people including pilots, reserves, and COs. The interviews are the primary sources of my thesis, and play a crucial role in the development of the wartime narrative that I wish to display throughout my work. The interviews display similarities as well as contradictions to the collective war narrative that is prevalent in British society today. For the most part, there is this idea of the People's War, where everyone worked together to face a common enemy in Germany. Differences did not exist among the people, and if they did the public set it aside for a more important cause. The sound archives pokes holes into this myth with the men's stories of wartime hostilities or invisibilities.

What I plan to do with these interviews is find the commonalities and differences, and essentially write a novella displaying a historiographical narrative that is not looked at due to the influence of the People's War myth. I have also noticed that most of the cultural depictions of the war focus on the armed forces and women's experiences. I specifically want to look at the men who's voices were not heard during or after the war, and to give them a presence in the historiography of the British Second World War. These interviews will give me a sense of the overall wartime experience for the civilian man, and so I will be able to accurately write their stories in a fictitious work.

"Poster Collections." *Imperial War Museum*. Accessed May 01, 2019. https://www.iwm.org.uk/

collections/search?query=Posters%20&pageSize=15&style=list&filters

%5BwebCategory%5D%5BPosters%5D=on&filters%5BperiodString%5D%5BSecond

%20World%20War%5D=on&page=1

The Imperial War Museum has an extensive collection of propaganda posters used to compel men to the armed forces in the Second World War. Some of them also try to elevate and commend reserved occupation careers, but fail. These posters will help my project by showing the cultural representation of the armed forces and reserves in wartime propaganda. They aid the idea that public perception goes hand in hand with propaganda projects, and in the Second World War it was geared towards congratulating the armed forces while hardly recognizing the civilian effort. By displaying the men in the military above the men in the reserved occupations, propaganda posters demonstrates how hegemonic masculinity impinges on all parts of society.

Great Britain. Ministry of Labour. *Schedule of Reserved Occupations*: (provisional). London:

H.M. Stationery Office, 1939.

The Schedule of Reserved Occupations is a government document that shows all of the jobs in Great Britain. It is alphabetical and an age is placed next to it. The age indicated at which time the job becomes "reserved," meaning that men above this age are placed in the armed reserves and must work that job until the war is over. The younger the age the more important the job is to the war effort. This will help my project by showing which jobs were more important, what the stats are about that job (approximately how many were reserved), and at what age they were reserved. It will help me create a more realistic picture of the Second World War in the novella by having all of the facts correct.

The Times. London: 1938-1945. Accessed November 13, 2019.

I used *The Times* of London to demonstrate parliamentary rhetoric that illuminated the position of the men in reserved occupations in British culture. There is a notable difference between how members of parliament, especially conservatives, discussed the reserves in the beginning of the war and the end. In the beginning, members of parliament continued to equate the reserved occupations to the armed forces so as to garner support and gumption for the industry on the homefront. However, a shift occurred in 1941 with the newspapers coverage of the reserved occupations as well as the government's opinion of the men within them. In 1941, women were granted to right to work in the factories alongside men. By allowing them to work, the government then could send more men for the reserves out into battle. The reserved occupations afterwards had little to no coverage at all in *The Times*. From 1938-1941 there is a spike in their appearances, with 196 pieces or references about the reserved occupations. After 1941 there is a drastic decrease in their references, to 5 in 1944. The rhetoric of the MPs also changed, to that of disputing whether or not the reserved occupations should exist because they are abled bodied men who can fight in the war. In an essence, so MPs believed that men were wasted in the factory. In that light, *The Times* gives specific dates and people that argued for and against the reserved occupations. Along those same lines, the newspaper also directly displays the function of hegemonic masculinity and how other people in Britain perceived the reserved occupations on the gender identities hierarchical scale.

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Bibbings, Lois. "Images of Manliness: the Portrayal of Soldiers and Conscientious Objectors in the Great War." *Social and Legal Studies* 12, no.3 (2003): 335-358.

Lois Bibbings is a professor at the School of Law, University of Bristol. Her article analyzes the cultural representations and constructions of masculinity in Britain during the First World War. Bibbings focuses on conscientious objectors, and how even though by law they were legal, the British public and government came to despise them because they were the antithesis of the ideal man at the time, the soldier hero. Bibbings argues that even though they were scorned by most, some constructions of CO masculinity, starting right from the offset of the First World War, see them as more heroic and brave than military men. Through her work Bibbings shows the two strands of CO masculinity and how they were reflected in the wider public. Her work is crucial because it displays the tensions that played out between COs and the British people in the First World War, and then I can see how and why those dynamics shifted during the Second World War.

Calder, Angus. "Only Two Englands: Agriculture, Coal, and Aircraft Manufacture." in *The People's War*. London: The Trinity Press, 1969.

Angus Calder, a British political historian, a groundbreaking book called *The People's War* which, in essence, perpetuates the myth of the People's War in Britain while also hinting at times in which this myth was not true during the Second World War. I particularly analyzed his chapter demonstrating the work of coal miners. In this chapter, Calder recognizes that the British government believed that coal miners were shirkers due to their high rates of absenteeism, and did not warrant respect as a reserved occupation. Absenteeism, to parliament, looked like the men simply did not want to participate in the war industry and aide their country. In actuality, the men were required to stay home if they were sick in fear that they would infect the rest of the workers, or become the reason for a coal mining accident. Calder's work frames the animosity the government felt, which relayed on to the British public, towards coal miners, and potentially other men in the reserved occupations.

Ceadel, Martin. *Pacifism in Britain 1914-1945: The Defining of a Faith.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980.

Martin Ceadel, a professor of politics at the University of Oxford, explores the Pacifist Movement in Britain in the era of the two world wars. His secondary goal of the book was to

develop a way in which to analyze other pacifist movements around the world based on his observations in Britain. He uses a plethora of primary sources including newspapers and speeches to portray the turbulent history of the pacifist movement during the two world wars and interwar period. The main reason I am using this source is to understand the shift of opinion regarding conscientious objectors from the First World War to the Second. Many other historians like Tobias Kelly and Lois Bibbings, as well as conscientious objectors from the Second World War, detail the hostilities the COs faced in the First World War. They also discuss *how* it was different in the Second, but what I have found is the concept of *why* there is a shift is an underdeveloped topic. I endeavored to find an answer in this source, and I did. The support that the pacifist movement gained in light of the First World War allowed for the public to tolerate, and in some aspects, sympathize with conscientious objectors in the Second World War.

Dawson, Graham. "The Blond Bedouin: Lawrence of Arabia, Imperial Adventure and the Imagining of English- British Masculinity." in *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain since 1800*, ed. Michael Roper and John Tosh. London: Rutledge Publishing, 1991.

Graham Dawson, a professor of Cultural History at the University of Brighton, wrote a piece displaying the masculine interpretations of Lawrence of Arabia. His main question explores "the representations of English-British masculinity produced by the Lawrence legend, paying particular attention to the element of fantasy…" What Dawson found was that cultural representations of certain men often portray masculine traits that are desirable by men, and what they tend to strive for in society. He also argues that masculine identities may be played out in person, but they are created in imagination first. I specifically use his article to acknowledge the dichotomy and relation between soldier heroes (the masculine hegemone) and conscientious objectors in the First World War. I wanted to figure out why COs were considered the anti-thesis of the armed forces and why they garnered such hatred for their lack of participation in the war. This article shed light onto the act of "othering," and how by simply stepping out of line, in relation to the hegemonic masculinity, could alter someone's perception of that person. Dawson's article describes certain features that soldier heroe,s like T.E. Lawrence assumed, that drastically contradict the characteristics of COs found in newspapers and propaganda posters.

Kelly, Tobias. "Citizenship, Cowardice, and Freedom of Conscience: British Pacifists in the Second World War." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 57, no.3 (2015): 694-722.

Tobias Kelly, a professor at the University of Edinburgh, argues that the protection of conscience narrow and unstable because it was not clearly defined by law. With that he also

believes that the most persuasive cases that achieved exemption did so because people associated the objection to "detached conviction." To form his argument Kelly looks at debates on conscientious objection in the Second World War. Lacking a definition for conscientious objection, Kelly believes, fuels democracy's anxieties and mistrust of others. Kelly's work is beneficial for my I.S. in that it does try to give a definition for conscience, and it details why people objected and the process they went through to gain exemption from the war effort.

Luckhurst, Tim. "'The Vapouring of Empty Young Men?' Legacies of Hostility Between 1916 and 1918 in British Newspaper Treatment of Conscientious Objectors During the German Blitzkrieg and Invasion Scare of 1940." *Journalism Studies* 17, no.4 (2016): 475-489.

Tim Luckhurst, a professor of journalism at South College Durham University, wrote an article detailing the undercurrent of hostility conscientious objectors faced in the Second World War, an after effect of the First World War. Luckhurst used regional newspapers including *The Times, Daily Express, Manchester Guardian, The Daily Mirror,* and *The Yorkshire Post* to display the similarities in hostile rhetoric during both wars. He concludes that although hostility is present in most of the newspapers during the Second World War, there is a mode of tolerance from both sides of parliament compared to the First. I use his newspapers to further my thesis in the first chapter, which describes that conscientious objectors were still victims of public animosity, and this had an effect on their masculinity during the Second World War.

Pattinson, Juliette. "'Shirkers', 'Scrimjacks' and 'Scrimshanks'?: British Civilian Masculinity and Reserved Occupations 1914-45." *Gender History* 28, no.3, 2016:709-727.

Pattinson is a history professor from the University of Kent and her research focuses on cultural memory as well as gender in warfare, and oral history methodology. In this article she reigns in on the topic of cultural memory with oral histories, written testimonies, Mass Observation reports, parliamentary debates, and cartoons and discusses how the public perceived noncombatant men in Britain during the two world wars. She argues that although they were crucial to the war effort, men in the reserves as well as conscientious objectors are largely forgotten in the historiography of the world wars because during this time the public saw these men as shirkers of their duty to their country. Unlike Bird, who looks at post-war representations of reserves and how they are not commemorated now for they war effort, Pattinson shows that even during the war these men were forgotten. Pattinson specifically looks at the two world wars to demonstrate how public perceptions adapted through time. Her work is crucial to understanding how and why reserved men and COs are largely ignored in Second World War historiography and what historians can do to revise it.

Pattinson, Juliette, Arthur McIvor and Linsey Robb. *Men in Reserve: British Civilian Masculinities in the Second World War*. Manchester. UK. Manchester University Press. 2017.

By using autobiographical stories, interviews, oral histories, and visual sources, Pattinson, McIvor, and Robb consider reserved mens roles and masculinities during the Second World War. They argue that the reserves were held in lower esteem to that of the pilot and soldier, but still had a hierarchy of masculinity in their work environment. They could create and reinforce their own masculine identities by doing male-oriented activities such as competing for higher wages. This article elaborates on McIvor's previous literature of rebuilding the civilian male in the Second World War. There he states that they could reconfigure their masculinity to synchronize with the breadwinner masculinity. Here, with Pattinson and Robb, McIvor discusses the masculine hegemony and how the reserves fit into it, as well as how they established new masculine identities. They also consider how women's wartime roles and new freedoms shaped the men's identity. This work will help me understand how the reserve fit and developed throughout the Second World War narrative, and how women affected their masculinity by entering the workforce. These men were feminized, but could regain some sort of masculine hegemony by doing what were considered masculinized jobs.

Peniston-Bird, Corinna. "Commemorating Invisible Men and Reserved Occupations in Bronze and Stone." *Men, Masculinities, and Male Culture in the Second World War*, Edited by Linsey Robb and Juliette Pattinson, 189-214. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.

Corinna Peniston-Bird is a senior lecturer of gender and cultural history at Lancaster University. In her article, Bird talks about men in the Reserved Occupations during the Second World War. Particularly, she focuses on memorials as a primary source, and analyzes them to show how people remember and commemorate the work of the reserved occupations. Bird found that men in the reserves are often invisible when it comes to commemorating them for their participation in the war effort because the home front was considered a female domain. As stated above, this goes with Pattinson's argument that these men were invisible during the war and considered shirkers. This may be the reason that they are not commemorated for their war effort. This article lets historians comprehend why men in the reserves were rendered invisible and also why the reserved occupations in the Second World War is an underrepresented topic.

Robb, Linsey. "'Fighting in Their Ways'? The Civilian Man in British Culture 1939-45." *Homefronts: Britain and the Empire at War 1939-45*. London: Boydell Press, 2017.

In this article, Linsey Robb, a professor at Northumbria University, analyzes the cultural depictions of men in the reserved occupations during the Second World War. She argues that they are largely neglected in media outlets such as propaganda, literature, and war films and thus, are excluded in popular memory. She notes that these men are nearly invisible/absent in propaganda, literature rarely talks about them, and war films focus on women's war work rather than the men, which in turn feminizes their status on the homefront. Like other authors who demonstrate the invisibility of the reserved occupations, Robb discusses them in a cultural sense and her work will be the foundation of which I build on my own argument: the effect of this cultural representation on the mens' masculine identity.

Robb, Linsey. *Men at Work: The Working Man in British Culture 1939-1945*. Basingstoke:

Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

A professor at Northumbria University, Linsey Robb in this book examines the reserved occupations. She uses popular wartime media such as radio broadcasts and wartime movies that depict four different kinds of men in the reserves. They are agricultural workers, wartime industry workers (for example, coal miners and shipbuilders), firefighters, and merchant mariners. She argues that during this time, even amongst the reserved occupations, there is a hierarchy of masculinity. Her article enhances her earlier work with Pattinson and McIvor because while they say there is a hierarchy, she elaborates and adds in depth detail to how it functions. This will further my own understanding of masculine hierarchy and so I can begin to see where everyone falls in line.

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Chapter One

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Figure 1.4 “The Man Who Answered the Call and the Man Who Has Not,” *London Illustrated News*, Nov. 20, 2915. http://www.show.me.uk/collection/2105-the-man-who-has-answered-the-call-and-the-man-who-has-not.