

Laura Ugolini, University of Wolverhampton

Middle-class fathers, sons and military service in England, 1914-1918

Abstract:

The figure of the hyper-patriotic middle-class father, happy to sacrifice his sons to the war, while remaining snug at home, was a recurrent feature of post-First World War literature. This article places this view of wartime fatherhood under scrutiny, suggesting that middle-class fathers with sons of military age rarely behaved as straightforward enforcers of the state's call to arms. Alongside expressions of vocal pride in sons who conformed to the manly ideal by volunteering, there were resistance, silence and fear, while support for sons who sought to avoid enlistment was a good deal more evident than any determination that their sons should do their 'bit' at all costs.

Keywords:

First World War; middle class; masculinity; military service; fatherhood

Introduction

In March 1916 Frederick Perry, the owner of a drapery and household furnishings store in Redditch, Worcestershire, wrote to the Middlesex Appeal Tribunal in support of his son's claim for exemption from military service. He testified to Thomas's 'genuine conscientious objection' and pointed out that the twenty-six-year-old was 'now training in my line of business and will be indispensable to me in the near future as my wife is in a very bad state of health'. Out of their six sons, three were serving in the military, while two had recently died in an epileptic asylum, 'so he is the only one left. If you are unable to exempt him entirely I hope you will grant him a postponement or home service or noncombatant service'.¹

Perry's appeal to the Tribunal on his son's behalf does not accord well with the conventional image of middle-aged and elderly Englishmen's behaviour during the First World War. While older women and mothers were strongly associated with grief and

loss, as 'the archetypal bereaved' in post-war 'public rhetoric',² the 'old men' have fared less well in the conflict's literature; even bereaved fathers were not always shown in a wholly sympathetic light or as above reproach.³ Beginning with some of the most famous and influential war poetry and continuing in later memoirs, fiction and drama, men over military age have been portrayed as blood-thirsty and complacent, happy to send their sons to the firing line while safe in the knowledge that they would not themselves be called up. As Robert Whol points out, one of the most powerful myths to emerge in England (and indeed Britain) after the war was the notion that a whole generation of exceptionally talented young men had died, mostly on the battlefields of the Western Front. Also embedded within this myth was the idea that cold-hearted 'old men' had sent the young men to their death and had reasserted their hold on power once the war was over, with disastrous consequences both for the country and for the empire.⁴ As Henry Williamson put it during a quarrel with his father, described in the opening chapter of his semi-fictional memoir, European youth 'had been betrayed ... by old and hateful men in power'.⁵

War poetry provides some of the most striking images of this supposedly hard-hearted older generation, who had benefited from the suffering of the young. In 'The blood of the young men', Richard Aldington portrayed the 'bitter indifference of the old men', who grew 'stronger and healthier / with broad red cheeks and clear hard eyes - / is not your meat and drink the choicest? / Blood of the young, dear flesh of the young men?'⁶ It was an easy shift for the cruel 'old men' to become the cruel 'fathers': Wilfred Owen's poem 'The parable of the old man and the young' used the biblical story of Abraham, showing the father tying his son 'with belts and straps' and preparing to kill him. In a significant departure from the biblical story, 'Abram' ignored the angel's call to desist and 'slew his son / and half the seed of Europe, one by one'.⁷

It is not difficult to find similar beliefs outside the ranks of the war poets, both during and after the war. In his wartime diary Reginald Gibbs, a science teacher in his thirties living in Aldershot, was scathing about 'the vicarious courage of the non-combatants'.⁸ He greeted the announcement of conscription for all adult men in April 1916 by observing that 'the very loudest shouters for Death or Glory have been those who were never likely to get as much as a crumb of the latter, except so much as might be gathered from sons, nephews and cousins'.⁹ Combatants were frequently bitter in their depiction of the older generation. While on his way to France 'Ex-Private X'

congratulated himself on having 'got away from those devastatingly patriotic old men who had "given" their sons'.¹⁰ Such contempt, however, was not exclusive to servicemen: in 1920 the war correspondent Philip Gibbs lashed out against the 'old men' who spent the war 'breathing out fire and fury against the Hun, and vowing by all their gods that they would see their last son die in the last ditch rather than agree to any peace, except that of destruction'.¹¹ Indeed, it was the novelist and wartime propagandist Rudyard Kipling, who famously ensured that his son John could enlist in the Irish Guards despite his defective eye-sight, who wrote what is perhaps the best-known expression of the culpability of the older generation, in a poem published in 1919: 'If any question why they died, tell them, because our fathers lied'.¹²

Although this was not stated explicitly, most of these negative representations of wartime fatherhood had specific class connotations: 'The Fathers' in Siegfried Sassoon's 1918 poem, who sat 'Snug at the club ... Cross, goggle-eyed, and full of chat', discussing their sons' war service, including Arthur 'getting all the fun / At Arras with his nine-inch gun', were clearly comfortably-off, middle-class men.¹³ The hyper-patriotic middle-aged father, 'secure in civilian ignorance, brain-washed by official propaganda and filled with Hun-hating hysteria',¹⁴ has rarely, if ever, been represented as a working-class man. Rather, the image of wartime 'old men' was – and remains – inextricably linked to middle-class fatherhood.¹⁵

The aim of this article is thus to place English middle-class 'old men' under scrutiny and explore the reality behind the negative representations: were middle-class fathers really so keen to send their sons to face danger and possible death in battle? The impact of war on fathers' relationship with their children has recently received welcome attention, although most has focused on fathers *as* servicemen: we know far less about the fathers *of* servicemen or indeed of civilians of military age.¹⁶ Focusing especially on the moment during the war when young men had to decide whether to enlist or, after the introduction of conscription, whether to appeal against the call-up, this article questions whether the role of middle-class fathers was truly that of unofficial recruiting sergeants, doing their best to ensure that their sons did their patriotic duty. Wartime correspondence and writings, as well as later memoirs and fiction, are especially useful in shedding light into middle-class fathers' behaviour between the outbreak of war and the introduction of conscription in 1916, a period during which a barrage of propaganda appeals sought to convince young men to volunteer. In addition,

a sample of two hundred appeals against military service submitted to the Middlesex Appeal Tribunal between 1916 and 1918 provide further insights into fathers' attitudes once conscription had been introduced.¹⁷ The two hundred appeals represent a random sample of one hundred appellants whose occupation was that of 'manager' and one hundred 'clerks', two occupations selected because likely to be of middle-class status, while covering the whole social and economic spectrum from poorly-paid clerks working for small, precarious businesses, to managers of large concerns.¹⁸

The article begins by considering wartime expectations about the appropriate behaviour of middle-class fathers with sons of military age, exploring the reasons why so many adopted a seemingly conventional patriotic stance and applauded sons' enlistment. It then focuses on instances where sons themselves were keen to enlist, considering further the complex reality underlying many fathers' public expression of approval of sons' entry into the armed forces and paying attention to passivity and silence, as well as to loud expressions of pride. The final section concludes the article by examining fathers' role when sons did not wish to volunteer and sought to resist conscription, exploring their responses when sons did not conform to the wartime manly ideal and sought to retain their civilian status instead.

Colonel Bla-Bla

Given their prominence in post-war narratives, it is perhaps surprising to find that middle-aged men in general and fathers in particular appeared very little in English recruiting propaganda imagery: there was no equivalent of the 1915 Parliamentary Recruiting Committee poster, which featured an older woman with an arm around a young man, telling him to 'Go! It's your duty lad. Join to-day'.¹⁹ Men over military age were certainly active in recruiting efforts before the introduction of conscription: among other activities, they arranged meetings, gave speeches and circulated propaganda material.²⁰ However, while there was a general expectation that fathers should be 'complicit in the son's decision' to enlist and should 'applaud his response to the call of duty', this did not lead to an official demand that all fathers should march sons of military age to the nearest recruiting station.²¹

It is in the illustrated press and in fiction that one can find middle-aged and older men furiously berating young 'shirkers' for not doing their duty.²² (Figure 1) In Anthony

Bertram's novel *The Sword Falls* the protagonist, Albert Robinson, a middle-aged clerk and affectionate family man, is stopped one evening by a neighbour, 'Colonel Bla-Bla'. The Colonel – an 'ex-club-steward' whose own military career, we are made to understand, had been less than glorious – asks Albert: 'Now if I'm not mistaken, Robinson, that great son of yours is eighteen today. Why isn't he in khaki?' He interrupts Albert's hesitating reply that: 'I expect he'll have to go. I can't exactly suggest it somehow ... But I'm afraid he'll go', by exhorting him not to 'talk of being afraid, man. You ought to be proud if he's joined up. Proud'. At least in Colonel Bla-Bla's eyes, the proper role of a patriotic father was to 'pack that young shirker off in double-quick time'.²³

[Figure 1 here]

But did Colonel Bla-Blas really exist outside the confines of cartoons or fiction? Some men did approximate the stereotype. In his 1936 autobiography, Warwick Deeping emphasised the pressures he had experienced as a thirty-five year old married country doctor with no wish to enlist. Among the people who thought it their 'duty to be offensive to me' was Rob Guthrie, 'an histrionic person who wears large hats and a flamboyant manner ... He is aged about fifty'. He had volunteered to drive an ambulance in France, emphasising 'that if the young men don't go, others who are older, but have more guts, will have to fill the ranks'. Deeping reflected that for all his bluster, 'Guthrie is so safe. Neither in age nor in physique is he fit for anything but to strut about and hector the young'.²⁴ He was not alone in being bullied by men who were too old to fight. John Gibbons was thirty-two when war broke out. Being married 'and looking married, I never had the luck to get a [white] feather' from a young woman, but on the train to work and elsewhere he had 'to face the men of fifty or so'. They had been 'as eager recruiting agents as any importunate virgins. Now, said the seniors, if only *they* had had the luck to be in the early thirties!'²⁵ Rory Macleod, a retired civil servant living in Cambridge and an active anti-pacifist, may well have been one such 'senior': in December 1915 he wrote in his diary with great satisfaction that he had 'routed out two slackers, who promised to go to recruiting office today'.²⁶

There was a difference, of course, between speaking harshly to acquaintances or strangers and forcing one's own son to enlist: the reality of middle-class fathers'

behaviour was a good deal more complex than the Colonel Bla-Bla caricature. Their actions should be understood in the context of understandings of what it meant to be a good middle-class father: as recent research on nineteenth- and early twentieth-century fatherhood has shown, fathers were supposed to protect and provide for their families, while many also took on a caring and nurturing role, especially in smaller households that did not have a large domestic staff.²⁷ It is certainly difficult to imagine men such as Reginald Gibbs, who took over much of the care of his children in his wife's (unexplained) absence, or Harold Cossins, a company secretary living in St Albans, who carefully recorded the landmarks in his little boy's life, from the loss of his first tooth to his first day at school, later turning into military martinets, happy to see their sons risking their lives on the battlefield.²⁸

At the same time, as John Tosh points out, fathers' status was affected by their adult sons' successful achievement of a manly identity.²⁹ The actions of a son who shirked his duty and refused to join up or sought to avoid conscription could reflect badly on the father: it was with this in mind that Colonel Bla-Bla chose to berate Albert Robinson, rather than his son. Fathers who used their influence to enable their sons to avoid military service came in for especial condemnation. According to Andrew Clark, the vicar of a rural parish in Essex, in June 1918 'much feeling has been expressed in ... Malden ... that their MP ... had got his son ... exempt from military service by getting him a financial post in the Canadian Government service'. It was thought that unless the young man joined up, his father would lose his seat at the next election.³⁰

It is unsurprising, then, that plenty of fathers should express their satisfaction when sons conformed to the wartime manly ideal by enlisting. Holcombe Ingleby, the Conservative MP for King's Lynn, Norfolk, frequently expressed conventional patriotic sentiments in his letters to his son Clement, a Lieutenant in the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve. In June 1916, for example, he told Clement, then serving in France: 'whatever your fate, see that your men acquit themselves like the other heroes who have done their best for the old country'.³¹ When his son Ron joined up in September 1914 Robert Saunders, a Sussex schoolmaster, tried to console his wife, who refused to accept the appropriateness of their boy's actions: she 'doesn't understand what a sacrifice it is on his part and doesn't feel proud to have all her sons doing something for their country'.³²

Fathers, the expectation was, would be proud to see their sons in khaki. As Laura King observes, pride was seen overwhelmingly as a paternal prerogative, the 'proud

father' quite distinct from the 'loving mother'.³³ Stephen Bowen, the vicar of a Shropshire village, enlisted early in 1915. Since the outbreak of war he had worried a great deal about what he should do. He had asked himself: 'What did my father "Indian army (retired)", expect of me? ... Being a "sahib" was rather his fetish, and he didn't exactly figure it as "turning the other cheek" '. Soon after he had enlisted, but before he had a chance to tell his parents, Bowen received the news that his younger brother had died at Gallipoli. Travelling to see them, he wondered what his father's reaction would be. Would he 'still be keen on ... hoary tradition', despite his recent bereavement? As it turned out, his response did not deviate from the conventional pattern:

the old man ... blew his nose violently, poured out and gulped a stiff whisky, and then, with eyes glaring through moisture, put his hand on my shoulder and said, 'Good boy, good boy! I knew you would, right from the beginning'.³⁴

Other fathers seemingly went further in ensuring that their sons did their duty. Gerald Brenan's father, also an ex-army officer, attempted to obtain a commission himself at the outbreak of war, but was rejected because of his deafness. However – in Gerald's absence – he was offered one for his son, the adjutant telling him that they still had vacancies 'for young fellows who have been at good public schools'. Less than 'half an hour later my father was driving back with a commission for me in his pocket'.³⁵

Fathers, sons and voluntary enlistment

Writing almost twenty years after the Armistice, Arthur Ashton, an east Suffolk vicar, recalled that at the outbreak of war 'to join up was the one absorbing thought that possessed the minds of the youth of the country'. Parents 'looked sad', but as they held the 'patriotic feeling of English men and women', they 'willingly gave up their boys'.³⁶ Nevertheless, there were underlying complexities to this apparent willingness to sacrifice 'their boys'. Basil Peacock, the son of a small provision merchant in Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, was only sixteen when the war broke out, but a year later lied about his age, left his position as a pupil teacher and enlisted, following in the footsteps of two older brothers who had already joined up. Back at home for a few days before joining his regiment, he overheard his father talking with a customer. She was bemoaning 'the fact

that her sons would be called up. My father, answering sharply and proudly, told her, “Madam, all my sons have enlisted and all are volunteers”’.³⁷ Public support for sons’ patriotic behaviour, however, was not always the same as private opinion. Peacock’s parents had tried hard to dissuade him from enlisting, urging him to concentrate on his teaching career: when he told them what he had done, their reaction had been one of pained resignation rather than pride. His father ‘remarked severely, “You have been moody and difficult for a long time. Now you have made your own bed, you must lie on it”’.³⁸

As Ashton implied in his 1936 autobiography, sons were by no means passive pawns, easily manipulated by their fathers: their own determination to join up should not be underestimated. To return for a moment to Brennan’s father, arriving home with a commission for his son; he had presumably been aware of Gerald’s own flamboyant but unsuccessful attempts to enlist: he had offered his services to the Montenegrin consul and had enquired at the French consulate about joining the Foreign Legion, but had received no replies.³⁹ Furthermore, there were plenty of young men like Peacock, who enlisted either without their parents’ knowledge or against their wishes. Given the weight of opinion suggesting that young men were thus doing their duty, it is not surprising that most fathers then accepted the *fait accompli*, even when it was in their power to end an under-age son’s military career. John Gowland enlisted in October 1914, when he was only sixteen. His parents were shocked when they found out and ‘wanted to stop me on account of my age’, but were not able to withstand him:

I was thoughtless in those days as are most boys of my age ... To me war was a most exciting adventure. Of course people got killed ... but it never entered my head ... that I might be one of them ... I was fired with patriotism and was very pigheaded. Anyway I won, and I never knew until later the suffering I had caused my mum and dad.⁴⁰

The ‘social approbation’⁴¹ of voluntary enlistment and sense that sons were doing the right thing helps explain why men such as the novelist Joseph Conrad did not do more to stop even underage sons from joining up.⁴² Rather, many fathers’ attitude seems to have been one of passivity and silence in the face of sons’ decision to volunteer. Carrol Carstairs, the son of an American art dealer, obtained a commission in December 1914.

Looking back from the vantage point of 1930, he noted that his father might have warned him that he was risking his life when he had not yet 'begun to live', but had said nothing.⁴³

Some young men interpreted their father's silence as masking the hope that they would conform to expectations by enlisting. Soon after leaving school in 1915, H. E. L. Mellersh's father arranged an interview for his son at the insurance society where he worked as a senior manager. Shortly after the interview Mellersh 'confessed' to his parents that his intention had all along been to join up. Their quiet reaction surprised him: 'they had obviously been more than half expecting me to do just that; my father may even have been hoping so, though if so he had been concealing that fact pretty successfully'.⁴⁴ Silence, however, could be complex, hiding not the pleasure and pride that fathers were *supposed* to feel, but fear and only reluctant acceptance. Carstairs was moved, the morning after his father had met the news of his enlistment without speaking, to find him 'unusually restrained' and to see evidence that he had been crying.⁴⁵

Although middle-class men's authority over young sons, especially those who had not yet achieved financial independence, should not be underestimated, many seem to have played little part in young men's decision to volunteer: one of the recurring images in ex-combatants' autobiographies is that of the son returning home to announce the *fait accompli*.⁴⁶ Bryan Latham had joined a Territorial battalion in 1913 and was mobilised at the outbreak of war. When he was asked to volunteer for overseas service, his parents came to see him at his army camp. They 'were a united family ... My father was managing director of the family business, which both my brother and myself had joined on leaving school; we felt he ought to be consulted', although as it turned out 'there was no difficulty in reaching agreement that [both he and his brother] must volunteer'.⁴⁷

However, this family council and the belief that the father should have a say in the sons' decision seem to have been the exception, rather than the rule. In any case, the Latham brothers must have been fairly confident that their father would not oppose their wishes. It was generally when sons had difficulty enlisting, or enlisting in a desired regiment, and especially when they had trouble obtaining a commission, that fathers were most likely to become active on their behalf. This is not surprising, given the expectation that middle-class fathers should provide assistance when their sons

reached young adulthood, including by using their networks to ensure a youngster's entry into a particular business or profession.⁴⁸ Far from being frowned upon, nepotism was an expected feature of middle-class fatherhood. In 1904 the sixteen-year-old Francis Baily was given his first job by the managing director of a publishing firm 'partly because my father knew him'. Twelve years later, it was again his father who helped him obtain a commission: 'he spoke to an acquaintance of his who happened to be a well-known general, A.D.C. to the King, and Colonel-in-Chief of a celebrated corps'.⁴⁹ It may have been partly this expectation that led men like Kipling to make such efforts to ensure that their sons could enlist: it was after the sixteen-year-old John ('Jack') Kipling had been rejected because of his poor eye-sight that his father began to use his personal contacts to obtain a commission for him.⁵⁰

Fathers, sons and resistance to enlistment

Fathers who wished to stop a determined son from enlisting, especially if he was over-age, were faced with a difficult task. Nevertheless, plenty made the attempt, using a variety of arguments to try and dissuade youngsters from leaving civilian life. In August 1914 Robert Saunders 'reasoned ... quietly' with Ron 'about the need of one boy being left to help in case of necessity at home'.⁵¹ In his case, as in many others, the pull of enlistment proved stronger than that of family, even when the relationship between father and son was as loving as in the Saunders family. When Percy Crony announced his intention of joining up at the end of 1914, it was his employer who tried to make him change his mind, reminding him that 'you have a duty to your mother and father who have made sacrifices for you'.⁵² This pressure, however, was not sufficient to counter his perception of war as opening 'the gates of adventure'.⁵³

At the same time, when a son did not wish to volunteer, or sought to avoid or postpone conscription, there is much more evidence of support from fathers than of attempts to make them change their mind. The men who resisted the pull of the military did not represent a small, atypical residue. A little under fifty-four per cent of men and boys aged between fifteen and forty-nine in England and Wales did *not* serve in the armed forces during the war, while of the approximately four million English men who were mobilised, roughly half volunteered and half were conscripted.⁵⁴ Among the latter was Frank Lockwood, a young lithographic artist living with his parents in Linthwaite,

Yorkshire. In April 1916 he obtained a temporary exemption of two months to enable him to complete his apprenticeship.⁵⁵ He was not called up until April 1917, when he noted in his diary that 'the wishes of our good friends have been gratified for I received my papers this morning'. As he had to report for duty with little delay, 'I shall not be able to take part in the general rejoicing'.⁵⁶ The 'good friends' who had been expressing their disapproval of Lockwood's continued civilian status did not include his father, whose support and companionship remained constant. Especially after his best friend joined up in November 1915, it was his father who accompanied him on long walks or to see 'shows'. When he travelled to Leeds with a view to enlisting with the Ordnance Survey Department, his father went with him.⁵⁷

Frederick Robinson, a businessman living in Cobham, Surrey, was also among those who endorsed their sons' continued civilian status, arguing that he was most useful to the war effort by remaining in post as a civil servant at the Board of Trade. He was infuriated by the taunts directed at his son and other men in a similar position. In January 1917, for example, following press demands for a 'comb-out' of the Civil Service, he complained that young men like his son, whose exemption was perfectly legitimate, were nevertheless being 'treated as "skulkers" and are to have their merits and qualifications debated before an antagonistic tribunal'.⁵⁸

Antagonistic or not, the records of military tribunals such as the Middlesex Appeal Tribunal are certainly useful in shedding further light on fathers' attitudes and behaviour, particularly the majority who did not leave behind such rich personal sources as Robinson's and Lockwood's diaries. Of course, those who participated in appeals against conscription, either at local or at appeal level, may have been atypical of the majority – perhaps the fathers who did *not* feature in appeals were angry and upset that their sons were not doing 'their bit'. However, there is no indication from the records that this was the case. As Adrian Gregory suggests, an appeal for at least temporary exemption seems to have been the almost universal response to receiving the call-up.⁵⁹ As one might expect, then, fathers who supported sons' appeals, like the Frederick Perry mentioned at the start of this article, do not seem to have aroused surprise or disapproval in the tribunals, and while their arguments were by no means always accepted, there is no indication that they were perceived as reprehensible or unusual.⁶⁰ Indeed, the discussions that took place during the appeal process often mirrored those that fathers had with their sons at home when they tried to dissuade

them from joining up. In fact, they seem to have followed a similar pattern through to the final years and months of war, centring on young men's physical fitness and conscientious objections to war as well as – a good deal more frequently – on their involvement in a complex web of family and work responsibilities.

There is little evidence, either in tribunal records or in other sources, of fathers pushing physically weak or psychologically frail sons into enlisting in the belief that this would prove the making of them.⁶¹ Frederick Noakes finally managed to join the army in 1917, having previously been rejected as medically unfit. Writing over thirty years later, he emphasised that he had been driven by patriotism and by the need 'to prove – to myself no less than to others – that I was not the ineffectual weakling that I seemed'. He had undertaken a regime of physical exercises to improve his health, including among his 'amateurish measures ... long country walks and cycle rides' as well as 'exercises with a "chest expander" ' and 'improvised "physical jerks" '. Significantly, he did this 'as unobtrusively as possible, for fearing of worrying my parents', who far from encouraging his efforts, 'thought I should "let well alone" in the matter of military service'.⁶²

Fathers appealed on their sons' behalf in two of the twenty-two cases in the Middlesex Appeal Tribunal sample where health was a significant issue.⁶³ In both instances the appellants' youth may explain why it was someone else who took on the responsibility of demonstrating the youngsters' unfitness: the role of advocate seems to have fallen to fathers rather than to mothers or other family members.⁶⁴ In 1917 Morris Dembovitch explained that his son Philip (who had only just turned eighteen) suffered from a 'nose and ear discharge' that caused him 'great pain' and made him unfit 'for anything but light work'. He argued that calling him up would be a waste of time, as he would soon have to be discharged because of his poor health.⁶⁵ George Smith applied on his nineteen-year-old son's behalf. He pointed out that the Hornsey Tribunal had not appeared to notice that his son suffered from 'heart disease and neurasthenia and is quite unable to take even a moderate amount of exercise'. He had been advised by his doctor 'not to hurry to the railway station or to play any outdoor games, or ride a bicycle', adding that even if his son was enlisted in the army as a clerk, he would still have to 'drill, march and perform various arduous duties', with probable 'serious results to himself'.⁶⁶

In two further appeals fathers remained in the background, clearly supportive of their sons' claims for exemption on the basis of health, also demonstrating the importance of paternal support when – particularly very young men – suffered from poor mental or physical health. Edward Turner's father solicited and obtained letters from his son's schoolmasters to testify that the eighteen-year-old's only remaining eye was extremely defective, requiring constant care and treatment. Military service, they stressed, would most likely lead to the young man's complete blindness. At the time of the appeal in 1918, having recently left school, Turner was working as an articled clerk in his father's office, receiving oral instruction in order to qualify as a solicitor.⁶⁷ As in Turner's case, Charles Riches's appeal showed a father providing support to a son in poor health both before and – it can surely be assumed – during the appeal process. After a mental break-down, Riches had obtained employment as a clerk with Carltona Ltd, 'manufacturers and packers of food products'. It was this firm which appealed on Riches's behalf, stressing that his 'neurasthenia' would not permit him to work among strangers. It had only been 'by the extension to him of a very considerable leniency (this by reason of the fact that his Father also has been in our employ for many years)' that they had been able to keep him in their employment for so long, 'his health conditions being curious and very indifferent'.⁶⁸

Long-standing paternal and family support are evident in five of the twenty-four cases in the sample that included a 'conscientious objection to the undertaking of combatant service', confirming Lois Bibbings's findings about the importance of pre-existing networks of support for opponents to war, including among Nonconformist religious communities.⁶⁹ Lester Smith's appeal was thus supported by a letter from his mother, who pointed out that Smith's 'father and many previous ancestors were Quakers'. This, she suggested, helped to explain his strong religious objection to war.⁷⁰ James Vincent's religious principles had been 'cultivated in him from childhood',⁷¹ while Joseph Hobley was a member of the Community of the Son of God, based in Battersea, London. He explained that his parents also held the same pacifist and religious views, 'and I was brought up in them'.⁷²

Family background and support were also important for conscientious objectors who were not motivated by religious beliefs. In February 1918 Arthur Holmes's father wrote to the Tottenham Tribunal in support of his son's appeal. William Holmes, a prominent Labour Party activist and organiser, stressed that 'the whole' of his son's

'home life has been passed in an atmosphere entirely opposed to militarism'. For many years, Holmes Senior explained, he had been an active proponent of pacifism and internationalism: 'Both my wife and myself are opposed to war as a method of settling international quarrels and it seems quite natural to us that our son should adopt the attitude he does'.⁷³ Such a clearly articulated political objection to military service was unusual, but the common thread with many other appeals where fathers became involved was the appellant's youth: Arthur Holmes had only recently had his eighteenth birthday. Fathers were thus perhaps most likely to intervene personally when the appellant was a combination of very young, physically or mentally ill – although it should not be assumed that these were the *only* ones who supported their sons' appeals. Indeed, the cases heard by the Middlesex Tribunal show not only the importance of paternal support when young men were physically or mentally ill or held non-conformist views of the war, but also the extent to which young middle-class men of military age were enmeshed in complex webs of family and business obligations that included not only themselves and their fathers, but also wider family networks.⁷⁴

Twenty-eight year old clerk and bookkeeper Alec Grant's appeal was heard in May 1916. Echoing in some ways Ron Saunders's circumstances, he pointed out that he was the only one of five brothers left to look after the family home and especially his sisters, as his parents had been forced to move to the countryside following some sort of business failure on their father's part. He explained that 'My parents ... have given five sons to the country and they consider it only just that one should be left behind to look after the home of two brothers and two sisters, which falls on me'.⁷⁵ The need for sons to remain at home to look after the family business was central to five of the cases in the sample.⁷⁶ Joseph Rawlins's father applied for exemption for his son on the grounds that for the past six years he had been responsible for managing his father's large portfolio of over one hundred properties. More recently, he had also taken on his siblings' properties. Joseph Rawlins Senior stressed that he himself was 'now sixty-five years of age and quite incapable to manage the business'.⁷⁷

Fathers' advanced age and poor health, which made it difficult for them to run their business, were recurrent themes in these cases. Walter Kruse managed a large public house on behalf of his father, who was 'an old man',⁷⁸ while William Brock needed his son's help to run his laundry. He had broken a leg the previous year and his other men having enlisted in 1915, he depended on his son to undertake the heavy

work of looking after the boiler and driving the van to collect and deliver the laundry, work 'which no woman can possibly do'.⁷⁹ James Plumpton's case was rather different, as at the time of his appeal in 1916 it was his mother's business – three dress agencies and outfitters' shops – that he had been looking after for a number of years, while her 'rheumatism of the brain' made it difficult for her to attend to them personally. At the same time, his father's mental illness meant that 'he is unable to earn a penny and is entirely dependent upon mother and self'. Furthermore, in a dangerous reversal of fathers' supposedly protective role within the family, 'there are times when he is unmanageable and a positive danger to mother and sisters for whose safety it is essential there should be a man to protect them'.⁸⁰

Appellants were aware that Tribunals had to weigh the needs of families and businesses with the demands of the armed forces. Making the case for his son William's exemption, George Hill tried to steer a careful line between stressing the family's need for their son's continued presence, while not appearing unconcerned with the country's military needs. William managed the family's off-licence. His father had tried and failed to find a manager to replace him, adding that 'I am no scholar (having started work at the age of eight) I suffer from ill health and my age is sixty-four', while his wife was 'an invalid'. Tellingly, he stressed that:

if he goes ... I am left helpless. I realise the urgent need of men and would like to release my son at once if it did not mean such serious consequences ... My wife and I are not young enough you will admit, to seek our livelihood in a new sphere of life.⁸¹

The expectation was that young middle-class men, especially when first embarking on a career or continuing their studies beyond school, would remain at least partly financially dependent on their fathers. This did not necessarily change once sons had enlisted: a *Punch* cartoon in 1918 showed a middle-aged woman asking her husband when their soldier son had last written. The reply was: 'Oh – Er – I'll look up the counterfoil in my cheque-book'.⁸² (Figure 2) There is plenty evidence of such continued dependence in autobiographical and other personal writings. In 1915, for example, Ingleby was still paying his son an allowance. At the time Clement was in receipt of navy pay, had married and the couple were expecting their first child.⁸³

[Figure 2 here]

This, however, was far from the universal experience among middle-class families. Especially (but by no means exclusively) in the case of older fathers and sons, the situation could easily be reversed and elderly or sick fathers become dependent on their sons: thirteen of the cases in the sample centred on appellants' role in supporting their father, as well as other family members.⁸⁴ A thread running through these appeals was an emphasis on the father's advanced age and poor health, as well as his inability to work. In such cases, it was a son's responsibility to take over the paterfamilias' role and responsibilities, while mothers, wives and female siblings were presented as dependents in need of support and protection.⁸⁵ John Davis Marks, the manager of a fur and skin merchant business, stressed his family's financial reliance on him, including a father who 'suffers from neuritis and is physically incapable of earning his own living'. He explained that he did 'not make this claim because I am desirous of evading the duty of an able-bodied man', but because of his 'obligations to my parents and sisters'.⁸⁶

Alfred Mills, an unmarried clerk in his early thirties, was responsible for supporting his elderly parents, his siblings being married and having families of their own to look after. His father had been unable to work 'for long periods at a time since I was twenty, then it never lasted long'. He himself had remained single and expected that he would continue to be responsible for his parents 'to the end of their lives unless the Militarism now rampant takes me and thus forces them into the workhouse', the military allowance not being sufficient to allow them to survive otherwise.⁸⁷ Thomas Pope's appeal showed that fathers' dependence could be more than financial. He stressed that since his father had suffered a stroke, his own presence at home had become essential. Not only did he bathe and help his sisters look after him, but since his illness his father's mind had become 'a blank, and at times gives vent to very great rage'; on these occasions, he was the only one who was able to pacify him. Pope's solicitor made clear the reversal of father-son roles that had taken place in the Pope household: in his words, Pope Senior 'has a brain like a child'.⁸⁸

It is likely, then, that a more significant factor in young men's decision whether to enlist than the pressure of supposedly hyper-patriotic fathers was the presence of physically and mentally fit, financially solvent fathers who could still shoulder their

responsibilities as paterfamilias and even take on some of their sons' duties. Despite being seventy-two years old and in poor health, in 1916 Garner Senior was looking after his son's solicitors firm while Garner Junior was on active service, an informal arrangement that seems to have become commonplace, but which depended on the presence of a father who was willing and able to take over his son's business responsibilities.⁸⁹ The fact that twenty-seven of the appeals in the sample centred on sons' role as the sole support of a widowed mother, while a further twelve mentioned this as part of a wider array of arguments, further suggests that rather than powerful, influential fathers acting as a push towards enlistment, it was their absence that made it harder for men of military age to join up.⁹⁰

Conclusion

In 1935 Stanley Casson noted in his autobiography that it had 'become commonplace to blame the Victorian Age for the war, to say that the old men made a holocaust of their sons by their own stupidity and ... pride'. He rejected this view: 'I did not believe that then and I do not believe it now ... [old men] did not make the war any more than do men deliberately make a Black Death'.⁹¹ Casson and others, however, remained in a minority: blood-thirsty old men, happy to push sons to their deaths while confident that they would not themselves be called up, remained key figures in understandings and memories of the war.

There existed individuals, no doubt, who approximated the Colonel Bla-Bla stereotype, always on the look-out for young shirkers to harass, but this was not typical of older middle-class men's attitudes, especially as far as fathers with sons of military age were concerned. In any case, with the maximum age of enlistment extended to fifty in 1918, it is clear that the image of middle-age men as complacent civilians is a misleading one: not all fathers with sons of military age were too old for army service, while it is not difficult to find examples of over-age men who managed to inveigle a place in the armed forces.⁹² (Figure 3)

[Figure 3 here]

When it came to sons' enlistment, there certainly were plenty of fathers who took real pride in seeing their offspring demonstrating their manliness – and implicitly bolstering their own paternal status – by joining up. Private feelings, however, could be different from public expressions of approval, with dread and fear often being uppermost. Fathers, after all, were supposed to protect their children, while the image of 'the purple major at the base and the bloodthirsty father in his club',⁹³ took no account of paternal love. As the artist and ex-serviceman Bruce Bairnsfather observed in 1939: 'the ideal person to be in a war is an unpopular orphan, or an unwanted child ... one of the worst parts of war is the ceaseless agony of mind it brings to those at home who are fond of you'.⁹⁴ Whatever their private feelings, it was difficult for fathers to stop their sons from adopting a course that was seen as so self-evidently the right one for any manly, patriotic young man. It is telling that so many nevertheless tried.

By the same token, there is little evidence of fathers pushing unwilling sons into enlisting. They played a significant role in protecting sons who were physically or mentally ill, while family networks were also important in supporting conscientious objectors. Often, it was fathers' ability to shoulder all their responsibilities as paterfamilias that dictated whether sons could enlist: when fathers were elderly, sick or otherwise unable to work, it was on their sons that these responsibilities would often fall. For many, the call-up meant abandoning families already made vulnerable by the paterfamilias' weaknesses: a more significant influence on sons' wartime behaviour than bullying and blustering fathers, then, were powerless, dependant and indeed absent ones.

Word count: 10,961 (including abstract, captions, etc.)

Captions:

Figure 1: 'How is it you're not serving, young man?', *Punch*, 21 April 1915, p. 310.

Figure 2: 'I'll look up the counterfoil in my cheque-book', *Punch*, 24 July 1918, p. 61.

Figure 3: 'The fighter of lucky eighteen and the soldier of fifty', *Punch*, 17 April 1918, p. 249.

¹ Thomas Henry Perry, Case Number M347, MH 47/10/9, Central Military Service Tribunal and Middlesex Appeal Tribunal: Minutes and Papers (hereafter Conscription Appeals), The National Archives, London (hereafter TNA). Perry's appeal was heard by the Middlesex Appeal Tribunal on 3 April 1916 and dismissed.

² Adrian Gregory, *The Last Great War: British Society and the First World War* (Cambridge, 2008), p. 255. See also Michael Roper, *The Secret Battle: Emotional Survival in the Great War* (Manchester, 2010, first published 2009), pp. 221–32 and Adrian Gregory, *The Silence of Memory: Armistice Day 1919–1946* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 10, 41.

³ See for example the complex portraits of grieving fathers in C. R. W. Nevinson, 'He Gained a Fortune but Lost a Son', 1918, oil on canvas, 40 x 50.6 cm, The University of Hull Art Collection, available from: BBC, Your Paintings, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings/paintings/he-gained-a-fortune-but-he-gave-a-son-82864> [accessed 12 November 2015] or Katherine Mansfield, 'The fly', in J. Miller (ed), *Katherine Mansfield: Twelve Stories* (London, 1978), pp. 260–8. With thanks to the referee who pointed me towards this short story.

⁴ Robert Whol, *The Generation of 1914* (London, 1980), chapter 3. See also Samuel Hynes, *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture* (London, 1992, first published 1990), chapter 19. Michael Roper has recently shed light on the less well-known post-war ambivalence about mothers. Roper, *The Secret Battle*, pp. 295–302.

⁵ Henry Williamson, *The Sun in the Sands* (London, not dated, c. 1945), p. 10.

⁶ Richard Aldington, 'The blood of the young men', c. 1918, available from: Wikisource, http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Blood_of_the_Young_Men [accessed 1 June 2015].

⁷ Wilfred Owen, 'The parable of the old man and the young', 1918, quoted in Whol, *The Generation of 1914*, p. 105.

⁸ Diary of R. W. M. Gibbs, 1914–1920, 31 January 1915, Ms Eng. misc. c.163, Special Collections, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 23 April 1916, Ms Eng. misc. c.176.

¹⁰ Ex-Private X, *War is War* (London, 1930), p. 9.

¹¹ Philip Gibbs, *Realities of War* (London, 1929, first published 1920), p. 338.

¹² Rudyard Kipling, 'Epitaphs of the war – Common form', 1919, quoted in Andrew Lycett, *Rudyard Kipling* (London, 2000, first published 1999), pp. 638–9. See also Gregory, *The Last Great War*, pp. 249–50. There are different interpretations of the

nature of the culpability of fathers in Kipling's poem, including the idea that they had not prepared properly for war: thank you to the referee who pointed this out.

¹³ Siegfried Sassoon, 'The fathers', in *Counter-Attack and Other Poems* (London, 1918), p. 24. Sassoon's attitude towards the older generation was highly ambivalent, combining condemnation with an appreciation of their suffering. See, for example, the shifting tone in Siegfried Sassoon, *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer* (London, 1965, first published 1930), pp. 93, 142–3, 172, 218, 221.

¹⁴ Bernard Bergonzi, *Heroes' Twilight: A Study of the Literature of the Great War* (London, 1980, first published 1965), p. 123.

¹⁵ As Samuel Hynes points out, 'Wartime and post-war explosions of wrath against the Old Men were not directed at Old Farmers, or Old Postmen, after all'. Hynes, *A War Imagined*, p. 248.

¹⁶ See, for example, Laura King, *Family Men: Fatherhood and Masculinity in Britain, 1914–1960* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2015), especially pp. 44, 66, 110–11, 164; Rosie Kennedy, *The Children's War: Britain, 1914–1918* (Basingstoke, 2014), chapter 2; Richard Van Emden, *The Quick and the Dead: Fallen Soldiers and their Families in the Great War* (London, 2012, first published 2011); Timothy James Fisher, 'Fatherhood and the Experience of Working-Class Fathers in Britain, 1900–1939' (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Edinburgh University, 2004), chapter 4.

¹⁷ Conscription Appeals, MH47, TNA. After the introduction of conscription in 1916, local tribunals were established to hear applications for exemption (most of these records were destroyed in the 1920s), while appeals could be referred to county-level tribunals: the papers of 11,307 cases heard by the Middlesex Appeal Tribunal have been preserved and now digitised by TNA, providing a unique insight into the motives of appellants, military, civilian and medical authorities, as well as other individuals, such as family members or employers, who were involved in the process. See The National Archives, 'Middlesex military service appeal tribunal 1916–1918', available at: <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/records/middlesex-military-service-appeal-tribunal.htm> [Accessed: 9 June 2015] See also James McDermott, *British Military Service Tribunals, 1916–1918: A Much Abused Body of Men* (Manchester, 2011), a study based on the records of the Northamptonshire Military Service Tribunals, and the discussion of local tribunals in Gregory, *The Last Great War*, pp. 101–8.

¹⁸ The combined records of the Middlesex and of the Central Appeal Tribunal include the case papers of 855 clerks and 1285 managers.

¹⁹ 'Go! It's Your Duty Lad', 1915, IWM PST 5162, Imperial War Museum: Posters of Conflict - The Visual Culture of Public Information and Counter Information (Posters of Conflict), VADS, available at: <http://www.vads.ac.uk/large.php?uid=26908&sos=5> [Accessed: 9 June 2015]. 'Patriotic motherhood' is explored in Nicoletta Gullace, *'The Blood of our Sons': Men, Women and the Renegotiation of British Citizenship during the First World War* (Basingstoke, 2002), chapter 3. Middle-aged and older men featured much more heavily in war loan and financial appeals. See, for example, E. V. Kealy, 'Back them up', 1915, IWM PST 7934, Posters of Conflict, VADS, available at: <http://www.vads.ac.uk/large.php?uid=28178&sos=7> [Accessed: 9 June 2015].

²⁰ Gregory, *The Last Great War*, pp. 88–9; Laura Ugolini, *Civvies: Middle-Class Men on the English Home Front, 1914–18* (Manchester, 2013), pp. 128–9.

²¹ Corinna Peniston-Bird, 'The Grieving Male in Memorialization: Monuments of Discretion', *Journal Of War & Culture Studies*, 8 (1) (February 2015), p. 51.

²² See also, for example, 'Under one flag', *Punch*, 28 October 1914, p. 353.

²³ Anthony Bertram, *The Sword Falls* (London, 1929), pp. 149–50.

²⁴ Warwick Deeping, *No Hero. This* (London, 1936), p. 6. His eventual decision to enlist in the RAMC was, according to Deeping, the result of 'social coercion'. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

²⁵ John Gibbons, *Roll on Next War! The Common Guide to Army Life* (London, 1935), p. 8. Gibbons enlisted in December 1914.

²⁶ Macleod had four adult children, including two sons in the armed forces. R. H. MacLeod Diary (extracts), 1914–1918, 10 December 1915, DF087, Liddle Collection (1914–18), Special Collections, Brotherton Library, Leeds University.

²⁷ King, *Family Men*, especially chapter 2; Trev Lynn Broughton and Helen Rogers, 'Introduction: the Empire of the Father', in T. L. Broughton and H. Rogers (eds), *Gender and Fatherhood in the Nineteenth Century* (Basingstoke, 2007), pp. 1–28; John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (London, 1999), especially chapter 4.

²⁸ Ugolini, *Civvies*, pp. 278–9.

²⁹ Tosh, *A Man's Place*, pp. 3–4; 79–101. See also King, *Family Men*, pp. 167–9.

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- ³⁰ Andrew Clark War Diary, 'Echoes of the 1914 War in an Essex Village', Great Leighs, 30 June 1918, Ms Eng. Hist. e. 164, Special Collections, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.
- ³¹ Holcombe Ingleby to Clement Ingleby, 3 June 1916, Private Papers of H. Ingleby MP, Documents 12249, Imperial War Museums (IWM), London. Clement transferred to the Royal Flying Corps in October 1916.
- ³² Robert Saunders to son, 7 September 1914, Private Papers of R. Saunders, Documents 6570, IWM.
- ³³ King, *Family Men*, p. 114.
- ³⁴ Stephen Bowen, *Forsaken: Confessions of a Priest Who Returned* (London, 1931), pp. 24, 29, 30, 31. When his son was mobilised, for example, Harry Lauder's 'heart was sore within me, but I was proud and happy that it was such a son I had to give my country'. Quoted in Van Emden, *The Quick and the Dead*, p. 17.
- ³⁵ Gerald Brenan, *A Life of One's Own: Childhood and Youth* (London, 1962), p. 184.
- ³⁶ Arthur Ashton (Rev.), *Fifty Years' Work in a Suffolk Parish* (Lowestoft, 1936), p. 200.
- ³⁷ Basil Peacock, *Tinker's Mufti: Memoirs of a Part-Time Soldier* (London, 1974), p. 25.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 26.
- ³⁹ Brenan, *A Life of One's Own*, p. 183.
- ⁴⁰ John S. Gowland, *War is Like That* (London, not dated, c.1933), pp. 21–2. See also, for example, Charles Carrington, *Soldiers from the War Returning* (Aldershot, 1991, first published 1965), p. 51.
- ⁴¹ Gregory, *The Last Great War*, p. 90.
- ⁴² Borys Conrad, *My Father Joseph Conrad* (London, 2009, first published 1970), p. 68. Borys Conrad joined up aged seventeen. See also Sidney Dark, *Not such a Bad Life* (London, 1941), p. 133.
- ⁴³ Carroll Carstairs, *A Generation Missing* (London, 1930), p. 10.
- ⁴⁴ H. E. L. Mellersh, *Schoolboy into War* (London, 1978), p. 31.
- ⁴⁵ Carstairs, *A Generation Missing*, p. 11. See also, for example, William James Dawson, *The Father of a Soldier* (London, 1918), pp. 78, 93.
- ⁴⁶ A number of historians have noted a decline in the power of paternal authority in the later nineteenth century, although relations within the family remained far from equal.

See, for example, Tosh, *A Man's Place*, pp. 159–160; C. Nelson, *Invisible Men: Fatherhood in Victorian Periodicals, 1850–1910* (London, 1995), especially pp. 61–72.

⁴⁷ Bryan Latham, *A Territorial Soldier's War* (Aldershot, 1967), p. 6.

⁴⁸ King, *Family Men*, p. 41; John M. Quail, 'From personal patronage to public school privilege: social closure in the recruitment of managers in the United Kingdom from the late nineteenth century to 1930', in A. Kidd and D. Nicholls (eds), *The Making of the British Middle Class? Studies of Regional and Cultural Diversity since the Eighteenth Century* (Stroud, 1998), pp. 169–85.

⁴⁹ F. E. Baily, *Twenty-Nine Years' Hard Labour* (London, not dated, c. 1935), pp. 7, 44. Most middle-class fathers were of course not so well connected, especially with individuals in the armed forces. See Ugolini, *Civvies*, p. 288.

⁵⁰ John Kipling, who died in 1915 while only just eighteen, remains a rather shadowy figure, no doubt partly because of his youth. However, there is evidence to suggest that he had wished to enlist. See Lycett, *Rudyard Kipling*, especially p. 605; Tonie and Valmai Holt, *'My Boy Jack?': The Search for Kipling's Only Son* (Barnsley, 1998), especially p. 59.

⁵¹ Robert Saunders to son, 15 August 1914, Private Papers of R. Saunders, Documents 6570, IWM.

⁵² Percy Croney, *Soldier's Luck: Memoirs of a Soldier of the Great War* (Ilfracombe, 1965), p. 10.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁵⁴ Ian F. W. Beckett, 'The nation in arms, 1914–18', in Ian F. W. Beckett and K. Simpson (eds), *A Nation in Arms: A Social History of the British Army in the First World War* (Manchester, 1985), p. 11; Jay Winter, *The Great War and the British People* (Basingstoke, 2003, first published 1985), p. 28.

⁵⁵ Frank Lockwood, 'Notes written by F.T. Lockwood', 15 March 1916, 3 April 1916, Private Papers of F. Lockwood, Documents 5744, IWM. His application was turned down by the Linthwaite Tribunal, but a fortnight later he was granted a temporary exemption by the East-Central Yorkshire Appeal Tribunal.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 23 April 1917.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 15 November 1915, 19 February 1916, 1–2 June 1916, 18 June 1916, 13 August 1916, 18 December 1916, 10 March 1917, 23 April 1917. See also Ugolini, *Civvies*, p. 283.

⁵⁸ Frederick Arthur Robinson, *Diary of the Great War*, 29 January 1917, Private Papers of F. A. Robinson, Documents 11335, IWM. See also *ibid.*, 10 November 1914, 26 October 1915, 9 December 1915, 29 December 1915, 2 March 1916, 20 September 1916, 23 April 1917.

⁵⁹ Gregory, *The Last Great War*, p. 102.

⁶⁰ Although see, for example, the suspicion that Northamptonshire farmers were applying for exemption for sons who had no involvement in agriculture, purely to allow them to escape conscription, or that Preston businessmen were doing the same with their sons. McDermott, *British Military Service Tribunals*, p. 99; Gregory, *The Last Great War*, pp. 105–8, 121–2.

⁶¹ Peter Barham, *Forgotten Lunatics of the First World War* (New Haven, 2004), pp. 15, 178–80.

⁶² Frederick Elias Noakes, *The Distant Drum: The Personal History of a Guardsman in the Great War* (Tunbridge Wells, not dated c. 1953), pp. 1, 3. See also Arthur Burges's experiences, discussed in Richard Van Emden and Stephen Humphries, *All Quiet on the Home Front: An Oral History of Life in Britain during the First World War* (London, 2004, first published 2003), pp. 24–5.

⁶³ Of the twenty-two appeals five were among managers and seventeen clerks. These numbers exclude eighteen appeals for medical re-examination: fourteen managers and four clerks.

⁶⁴ In no case where health was a significant issue did mothers apply on their son's behalf. Tribunal cases such as the ones examined here suggest that where young men suffered from serious health problems, it was fathers' support that was central to their prospects.

⁶⁵ Philip Dembovitch, Case Number M4553, MH 47/44/2, Conscription Appeals, TNA. The appeal was to have been heard on 7 November 1917 but was withdrawn instead, as Dembovitch had in the meantime been medically re-examined and rejected as unfit for military service. In his application, Morris Dembovitch had also stressed his own poor health (he suffered from tuberculosis) and the extent to which the family was financially dependent on Philip's earnings as a grocer's manager.

⁶⁶ William George Smith, Case Number V4097, MH 47/106/25, Conscription Appeals, TNA. The appeal was heard on 31 July 1917 and exemption granted.

⁶⁷ Edward Stanley Greaves Turner, Case Number RM1/45, MH 47/114/37, Conscription Appeals, TNA. This was an appeal for medical re-examination, which was allowed on 25 January 1918. The outcome of the re-examination is not given in these papers.

⁶⁸ Charles Herbert Oscar Riches, Case Number M2485, MH 47/54/12, Conscription Appeals, TNA. The appeal was heard on 17 January 1917. Riches was granted exemption on condition that he undertook work of national importance with the firm of Grosvenor Carriage Co. The managing director of Carltona Ltd sought the tribunal's permission for Riches to remain with his firm, but this does not seem to have been granted.

⁶⁹ Of the five, one of these appeals was by a manager, four by clerks. Of the twenty-four appeals on the basis of conscientious objection, twenty-one were by clerks, three by managers. See also Lois Bibbings, *Telling Tales about Men: Conceptions of Conscientious Objectors to Military Service during the First World War* (Manchester, 2009), chapter 5, especially p. 170.

⁷⁰ Lester Davis Smith, Case Number M1999, MH 47/23/5, Conscription Appeals, TNA. Smith, the manager of a glass works, applied for absolute exemption. He himself does not seem to have been a member of the Society of Friends, although he was an active pacifist and member of the No conscription Fellowship. The case was heard by the appeal tribunal on 24 October 1916 and dismissed.

⁷¹ James Vincent, Case Number M639, MH 47/66/73, Conscription Appeals, TNA. Vincent worked as an accountant's clerk. His appeal was heard on 15 May 1916 and he was granted exemption from combatant service.

⁷² Joseph Alfred Hopley, Case Number M1590, MH 47/19/36, Conscription Appeals, TNA. Hopley, who was employed as a clerk in a telegraph office, appealed against the decision of the Willesden Tribunal to grant him exemption from combatant service only. The appeal was heard on 19 September 1916 and dismissed. See also Thomas Henry Perry, Case Number M347, MH 47/10/9, Conscription Appeals, TNA.

⁷³ Arthur James Holmes, Case Number M5111, MH 47/48/14, Conscription Appeals, TNA. The military representative appealed against the decision of the Tottenham Tribunal's decision to grant Holmes exemption subject to his finding work of national importance. The Middlesex Tribunal heard the case on 9 May 1918 and upheld the military representative's appeal. Holmes's exemption certificate was withdrawn, but it is not clear from the files what happened next.

⁷⁴ There are telling parallels between Tribunal cases and the post-war exchanges between disabled ex-servicemen (or their representatives, including fathers) and the Ministry of Pensions, discussed in Jessica Meyer, *Men of War: Masculinity and the First World War in Britain* (Basingstoke, 2009), pp. 97–127.

⁷⁵ Alec [Alex in catalogue] Grant, Case Number V2433, MH 47/87/2, Conscription Appeals, TNA. The Tribunal granted six months' exemption, conditional on Grant's joining the Volunteer Training Corps. In November the same year the Military Representative successfully appealed against this decision and the exemption was withdrawn.

⁷⁶ Four were managers and one a clerk. As discussed further below, sons' centrality to the family's economic survival was a common theme in appeals.

⁷⁷ Joseph Daniel Rawlins, Case Number V1052, MH 47/77/58, Conscription Appeals, TNA. The appeal was heard on 21 June 1916. He was granted one month's exemption.

⁷⁸ Walter Benjamin Kruse, Case Number V36, MH 47/72/26, Conscription Appeals, TNA. The appeal was heard on 16 March 1916 and dismissed.

⁷⁹ William Albert Brock, Case Number V82, MH 47/72/64, Conscription Appeals, TNA. The appeal was heard on 19 April 1916 and dismissed.

⁸⁰ James Cunningham Plumpton, Case Number V371, MH 47/73/139, Conscription Appeals, TNA. The appeal was heard on 12 April 1916 and he was granted three months' exemption.

⁸¹ William Hill, Case Number V61, MH 47/72/44, Conscription Appeals, TNA. The appeal was heard on 18 April 1916 and dismissed. See also the fictional representation of a tribunal's dismissive attitude towards a working-class man's claim that he was needed at home to support his aged parents in Douglas Goldring, *The Fortune: A Romance of Friendship* (Dublin and London, 1917), p. 294.

⁸² *Punch*, 24 July 1918, p. 61.

⁸³ Holcombe Ingleby to Clement Ingleby, 5 December 1915, Private Papers of H. Ingleby MP, Documents 12249, IWM. Servicemen's ambiguous financial position is considered in Meyer, *Men of War*, pp. 38–9.

⁸⁴ The thirteen cases included five managers and eight clerks. In a further case, Henry Tuson, a grocer's manager in his early forties, supported both his own mother and his wife's father, who was 'a bed liar [sic] and quite incapable of doing anything'. His appeal

was heard on 12 September 1918 and he was granted exemption. Henry Tuson, Case Number M5555, MH 47/62/19, Conscription Appeals, TNA.

⁸⁵ In some cases, for example when they suffered from poor health, the dependent status of male siblings was also stressed. See, for example, John Davis Marks, Case Number V115, MH 47/72/89, Conscription Appeals, TNA. Tellingly, for example, William Dean described his parents and sister as 'my dependents'. William Arthur Dean, Case Number V231, MH 47/73/33, Conscription Appeals, TNA.

⁸⁶ John Davis Marks, Case Number V115, MH 47/72/89, Conscription Appeals, TNA. Marks's age was not stated in the files. His appeal was heard in May 1916 and dismissed.

⁸⁷ Alfred Charles Mills, Case Number M106, MH 47/8/68, Conscription Appeals, TNA. Mills's appeal was partly based on conscientious objection – individuals were allowed to appeal on more than one ground. He was very critical of the Tottenham Tribunal, alleging that they had wanted to get rid of him so they could get to the refreshments being laid out during his hearing and had behaved in a 'sneering way' towards him. His appeal was heard on 4 April 1916 and dismissed.

⁸⁸ Benjamin Thomas Pope, Case Number V1756, MH 47/82/28, Conscription Appeals, TNA. The appeal was heard on 14 September 1916. He was granted one month's exemption 'to make arrangements for care of father'.

⁸⁹ Frederick Thomas Chambers, Case Number M937, MH 47/14/5, Conscription Appeals, TNA. Chambers was a confidential clerk, whose services were essential to Garner.

⁹⁰ Of the twenty-seven, eight were managers and nineteen clerks, while of the twelve, nine were managers and three were clerks. It was widely known that the Prime Minister Herbert Asquith had promised exemption for a category of single men that was generally thought to include the only sons of widows. See Charles Street, Case Number V139, MH 47/72/106, Conscription Appeals, TNA. Different interpretations of Asquith's words can be found in James Cunningham Plumpton, Case Number V371, MH 47/73/139 and Alfred Charles Mills, Case Number M106, MH 47/8/68, Conscription Appeals, TNA. As he introduced the Military Service Bill in Parliament in January 1916 Asquith had said: 'There is the case of the man, though a single man, who is really the support and stay of, it may be, father, mother, sisters, who are dependent upon him. I

have had brought to my notice most moving cases of mothers who have sent three or even four sons to the War. They have been either wounded, killed, or, at any rate, disabled on active service. Where there is a single unmarried son left behind, it would, of course, be a monstrous thing if the State were to call for military service from a man in that position'. See Military Service (no. 2) Bill, House of Commons Debates, 5 January 1916, vol. 77, col. 956. Available from: <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1916/jan/05/military-service-no-2-bill> (accessed: 21 July 2015). It is worth noting that Tribunals did not always accept widowed mothers' dependant status. In 1916 the Brentford Tribunal, for example, pointed out that Charles Martin's mother made a living as a nurse. Charles Martin, Case Number V381, MH 47/73/143, Conscription Appeals, TNA.

⁹¹ Stanley Casson, *Steady Drummer* (London, 1935), pp. 27–8. See also Lord [Godfrey] Elton, *Among Others* (London, 1938), pp. 79–80, 229–30.

⁹² See, for example, F. D. Ommanney, *The House in the Park* (London, 1944), pp. 88–93.

⁹³ Elton, *Among Others*, pp. 229–30.

⁹⁴ Bruce Bairnsfather, *Wide Canvas: An Autobiography* (London, 1939), p. 118.