The Wolverhampton Express and Star and the depiction of the volunteer soldier in the First World War, 1914-1916

THE WOLVERHAMPTON *EXPRESS AND STAR* AND THE DEPICTION OF THE VOLUNTEER SOLDIER IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR, 1914-1916

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Abstract

This thesis examines Britain's provincial evening press during the era of voluntarism in the First World War. It uses as its example, the *Express and Star*, the evening newspaper in the Black Country industrial town of Wolverhampton. The newspaper harnessed the home front's fascination with the volunteer soldier for its own commercial purposes. The study demonstrates that the commercial nature of the press was a central element in shaping the newspaper's depiction of the volunteer soldier between the outbreak of war in August 1914 and the introduction of conscription in January 1916. Using both advertising and journalistic techniques, the *Express and Star* adopted the figure of the volunteer soldier as a commercial mascot in order to attract readership and generate favourable publicity to satisfy advertisers. The newspaper was fortunate in that the volunteer also fitted its Liberal tenets of self-determination and freedom of the individual.

The study explains the significance of the wartime provincial evening press as being the daily newspaper reading of people in a working-class town like Wolverhampton. It sets the patriotic figure of the volunteer in the context of the commercial press, the development of human-interest journalism and the Liberal views held by the owners and Editor of the *Express and Star*. The evidence shows how the patriotic figure of the volunteer soldier was absorbed into, and then shaped by, the increasingly sophisticated business model of the provincial evening press. This required constant effort to maintain and increase readership to attract advertising. The volunteer soldier became a central figure in this sales drive.

Acknowledgements.

I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Stephen Badsey. Without his interest, knowledge and enthusiasm this thesis would not have been researched, written and completed. I thank him for allowing me, in retirement, to fulfil what has been an abiding ambition over many years.

I should also thank the owners of the Wolverhampton *Express and Star*. Since retiring as Editor, they have given me unlimited access to the only set of original bound volumes of the newspaper which are housed at the newspaper's head office in Queen Street, Wolverhampton.

Table of Contents

Appendices

Note on Units of Money and Measurement

This study uses the British systems of money and measurement in use during the First World War. A pound Sterling was represented by the '£' sign. This was divided into 20 shillings – a shilling being represented by the letter 's'. Each shilling was divided into 12 pennies, each penny represented by the letter 'd'. Hence, a sum of five pounds, six shillings and eight pennies was written as £5 6s 8d. A guinea was a pound and one shilling.

Lengths were measured in feet and inches with 12 inches in a foot. The depth of a broadsheet page in the wartime *Express and Star* was 24 column inches. Therefore, an advertisement or story running down a single column would be described as 12 column inches deep. If the advertisement or article were more than one column wide, it would be described as being 12 column inches deep across two columns.

It should be noted that during the First World War, because of the limitations of the *Express and Star's* printing presses, the newspaper could only print four, six or eight-page editions.[1] Hence, with eight columns to a page, a four-page newspaper had a total of 32 columns, a six-page newspaper had 48 columns and an eight-page newspaper contained 64 columns.

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[1] Peter Rhodes, *The Loaded Hour: A History of the Express and Star* (Hanley Swan: S.P.A, 1991), pp. 58-59.

Introduction

In April 1921, a civic ceremony took place in the Council Chamber at Wolverhampton's Town Hall to mark the long and distinguished service provided to the borough by the Editor of the town's evening newspaper - the *Express and Star.* Andrew Meikle, who had been Editor since 1885, took pride of place sitting to the right of the town's Chief Magistrate while his wife, Emma, sat to the left.[1] The civic elite of Wolverhampton lined up to pay tribute to the veteran Editor before the Mayor, Councillor James Thompson, presented him with a scrolled address from the Town Council. Students from the Wolverhampton School of Art had designed the vellum. The elaborate artwork showed a recording angel beaming the Light of Truth from its forehead. The address expressed the town's thanks for Meikle's efforts over 36 years as Editor. The scroll declared that the civic fathers were particularly grateful for the 'invaluable service rendered by you during the Great War in inaugurating and furthering schemes essential to victory, and by wisdom and insight as to policy, sounding the right note during those difficult days.'[2] This thesis examines that 'invaluable service' during the wartime era of voluntary recruitment between August 1914 and January 1916. It focuses on how Meikle and his Liberal-leaning newspaper made use of what the historian Jay Winter has described as 'the prestige of the soldier and the weight of his experience' for the *Express and Star's* own commercial purposes. [3]

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[1] *Express and Star,* 19 April 1921, p. 3.
[2] *Express and Star,* 19 April 1921, p. 3.
[3] Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014 edition), p. 67.

The military historian Richard Holmes has placed the figure of the volunteer in1914 in the context of provincial localism in industrial Britain. He described the call to arms as tapping directly into '…the bowler-hatted dignity of mock-Gothic town halls, the tight loyalties of back-to-back houses and corner shops, and the burgeoning self-confidence of workplaces at last beginning to flex their muscles'.[4] This study is concerned with the editorial and business operation of Britain's provincial evening press between 1914 and 1916 and its use of the volunteer soldier to help maintain readership and advertising to ensure profitability. The complex and nuanced relationship between local newspapers and their readerships has been described as a 'relatively under-researched area'.[5] This thesis takes as its example the *Express and Star* in the Midlands industrial town of Wolverhampton. It considers specifically the newspaper's relationship with the figure of the volunteer soldier, described as the home front's obsession and a 'determinant touchstone' of the war.[6] He was a significant figure - 9,489 men had joined the Regular Army in Wolverhampton between August 1914 and May 1915 and 4,307 had joined the Territorials.[7] Between 4 August and 8 November 1914, 4.346 men had joined the Regular Army.[8] It connects the volunteer with the business operations of provincial newspapers, that by 1914, were considered 'powerful cultural touchstones that

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[4] Richard Holmes, *Soldiers: Army Lives and Loyalties from Redcoats to Dusty Warriors* (London: Harper Press, 2012 Paperback Edition), p. 313.
[5] Agnes Gulyas and David Baines, 'Demarcating the Field of Local Media and Journalism' in Agnes Gulyas and David Baines (eds.) *The Routledge Companion to Local Media and Journalism* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020), pp. 1-21.
[6] Adrian Gregory, *The Last Great War: British Society and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 294.
[7] Andrew Thornton, 'The Territorial Force in Staffordshire, 1908-1915',(Unpublished M.Phil Thesis, University of Birmingham, 2004), p. 91.
[8] TNA, CAB 37/122/164. Recruits for the Regular Army, August 4 – November 8, 1914. Recruiting District Number 6.

helped define the communities they served'.[9] This thesis places the volunteer soldier in the context of the popular press, which, by 1914, had at its core the need to sell mass readership to advertisers.[10] The central contention is that the newspaper used the volunteer soldier as a commercial figure of public fascination in order to help promote the *Express and Star* and generate the mass readership that advertisers demanded. In addition, the volunteer had the added advantage of reflecting the newspaper's Liberal tradition and its desire to demonstrate Liberal patriotism, fortitude and civic duty.[11] The study highlights the dual perceptions of the press as both a commercial business and a public service.[12] According to one study, provincial newspapers have always been conflicted by allegiance to two masters – the communities they inform and the revenue streams that sustain them. In most local newspapers, the second master is most dominant. The owners of newspapers had a sharp eye for business but were never adverse to the cachet public service might bring them.[13] The *Express and Star* provides an example of what has been described as 'practical patriotism' – the central tenet of which was that it was quite reasonable to combine allegiance to country and business.[14] The owners of a business like the *Express and Star* were concerned about their country

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[9] Ian Reeves with Richard Lance Keeble, *The Newspapers Handbook* (Abingdon: Routledge, 5th Edition, 2015), p. 5.
[10] Mark Hampton, 'New Journalism: Nineteenth Century' in Wolfgang Donsbach (ed.), *International Encyclopedia of Communication* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008). No page numbers available.
[11] For the centrality of patriotism to Liberal thought, see Paul Readman, 'The Liberal Party and Patriotism in Early Twentieth-Century Britain', *Twentieth-Century British History*, 12 (3) (2001), pp. 269-302.
[12] Alan Lee, 'The Structure, Ownership and Control of the Press 1855-1914' in George Boyce, James Curran and Pauline Wingate (eds.), *Newspaper History: From the 17th Century to the Present Day* (London: Constable, 1978), pp. 117-129.
[13] Lee, 'Structure, Ownership and Control of the Press', p. 118
[14] Leslie Midkiff DeBauche, Reel Patriotism: The Movies and World War 1 (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), p. xvi.

and their community but also concerned about the prosperity of their company in wartime. Owners may have had their own political ideas but their titles were primarily business and their most forceful motivation was the generation of profit.[15]

The Research Question and Thesis Structure

The thesis poses one main research question and two subsidiary questions. The central question is how far did the commercial realities of the newspaper industry shape the presentation of the volunteer soldier in the pages of the *Express and Star* between the outbreak of war in August 1914 and the introduction of conscription in January 1916? Secondly, the study considers what impact the *Express and Star's* Liberal tradition had on the newspaper's Editorial outlook concerning the volunteer and voluntarism. Finally, how far did these factors go in creating the *Express and Star* as an instrument of propaganda between 1914 and 1916?

The original contribution to knowledge lies in this being the first detailed study of a provincial evening newspaper and its commercial imperatives during the First World War. It presents the war from the perspective of the *Express and Star* itself rather than using the newspaper simply as a source of anecdotal evidence to illustrate broader aspects of the war. Its broader significance is that the study illustrates the importance of a newspaper like the *Express and*

[15] Reeves and Keeble, *Newspapers Handbook*, p. 7.

Star as the daily reading of working-class families in an overwhelmingly working-class town like Wolverhampton. The human-interest figure of the volunteer along with his friends and family at home became the means by which the *Express and Star* explained the unfolding story of the war. The year 1914 was characterised by the newspaper's military recruiting campaigns, the reporting of the mobilisation of Wolverhampton's Territorial battalion and the gradual beginnings of Comforts campaigns and fundraising – all featured the volunteer centre stage. Local Regular soldiers serving with the British Expeditionary Force (hereafter BEF) provided the newspaper with their accounts of the battle of Mons and the Great Retreat, mixed with disturbing stories of atrocities.[16] By 1915, the town's Territorials were in France and providing their accounts – through letters and interviews - of life in the trenches and the experience of battle. They represented what has been characterised as the evolution of the pre-war Regular army into a true 'citizens' army'.[17] The *Express and Star's* Comforts campaigns grew in size and complexity to include not just men serving in the fighting line but prisoners of war in Germany as well. In the leader column, an unswerving Liberal belief that voluntarism could provide enough men to fight the war began to give way to the realities of total war and the idea that conscription may become inevitable.

The methodology for this thesis involves a detailed examination of the contents of the newspaper between August 1914 and January 1916. The author's

[16] For an overview of the British Expeditionary Force in 1914, see. Spencer Jones, 'Introduction' in Spencer Jones (ed.), *Stemming the Tide: Officers and Leadership in the British Expeditionary Force, 1914* (Warwick: Helion, 2020 edition), pp. 17-23.
[17] See, Spencer Jones, 'The Forgotten Year' in Spencer Jones (ed.), *Courage Without Glory: The British Army on the Western Front 1915* (Solihull: Helion, 2015), pp. xiv-xxx.

access to the original bound volumes of the newspaper held at the *Express and Star's* offices in Wolverhampton makes this more manageable.[18] Measurement of the volumes of different advertising categories – display, employment, entertainment and military recruitment for example - has been carried out to indicate the changes to advertising volumes and revenues during the period and how the *Express and Star* responded. The newspaper's advertising price-lists for 1907 and 1916 have been used to provide a general value for the categories of advertising. The memoirs and autobiographies of leading figures from the newspaper and advertising trades at the time provide a broader view of First World War journalism and advertising. Scholars have used them to provide insights into the nature of the war and its leading figures. Many, however, provide considerable detail concerning the nature and practice of journalism and advertising before and during the war that has largely been ignored.

This thesis examines the volunteer as a popular, commercial figure, considered to have the ability to help promote and sell cheap, mass-produced goods including the newspaper itself. Specifically, it places the technique of the commercial 'mascot' as a central element in the developing image of the volunteer. The thesis takes much of its inspiration from a series of lectures given by Thomas Russell at the London School of Economics in 1919. Russell had been a former advertising manager of *The Times* before the war and then

[18] The newspaper has the only full set of bound volumes from the first edition through to the present day. The volume from January to March 1915 is missing.

a prominent advertising agent.[19] His lectures roamed over the previous 30 years of advertising. In particular, he stressed the importance of the techniques of using a 'mascot' to increase sales of branded goods. [20] The mascot, a figure or a personality became identified with the product and helped to promote and sell the goods associated with it. According to Russell, the mascot was 'a typical figure, introduced into advertisements to be identified at sight'.[21] He spoke at length about how famous Edwardian brands used mascots. Russell highlighted the examples of 'Mr. Dunlop' the rotund tyre man; the reliable and honest Quaker man on the Quaker Oats packet; Johnnie Walker whisky's purposeful striding man; Brown and Polson's homely checked apron cook and Kodak's knowingly cheeky camera girl. Russell pointed out that the striding man did not carry a bottle of whisky, the Quaker man was not holding a packet of oats and the Kodak girl did not even have a camera. The influence of the brand was all by association with the mascot.[22]

Russell's argument was sophisticated. The regular use of a mascot had a 'cumulative effect' in raising the profile of the brand or product. In his view, the way to use a mascot effectively was to place it in one situation long enough to make it familiar and then, to avoid the potential purchaser becoming jaded, regularly move it into different settings. This worked particularly well when the product was a regularly purchased item that was not glamorous or

[19] 'Obituary: Mr. T. B. Russell', *The Times*, 1 January 1932, p. 12.
[20] Thomas Russell, *Commercial Advertising: Six Lectures at the London School of Economics* (London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1919), pp. 163-165.
[21] Russell, *Commercial Advertising*, pp. 163.
[22] Russell, *Commercial Advertising*, pp. 164.

distinctive.[23] Russell told his audience that the figure of the mascot had to be fresh to maintain its commercial vigour and said it needed to be shown 'in all kinds of attitudes, doing all kinds of things'. [24] The Edwardian advertising and publicity trade had also identified another factor that was critical in the success of a product's 'mascot'. It had to have a very positive and admirable personality to be successful. In the years leading up to 1914, there had been considerable debate in advertising circles in Britain and the United States about the expensive failure involved in the launch of Force breakfast cereal in America.[25] The manufacturers had used the cartoon character of Sunny Jim as their brand mascot. Sunny Jim became famous, but sales of Force cereal were disappointing. The advertising agency that created him concluded that Sunny Jim was a product of 'the silly season' an amusing cartoon but without any real substance or positive attributes with which people could identify.[26] He was considered a 'weakling in stature and intellect' and therefore unable to sell.[27] Thomas Russell explained in one of his lectures that a mascot needed to have 'lived a life', and be strong and admirable so that he 'could carry the name of the goods around with him'.[28]

The premise of this thesis is that the *Express and Star* presented the volunteer as a commercial mascot in various guises between 1914 and 1916. It did this

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[23] Russell, *Commercial Advertising*, pp. 164-165.
[24] Russell, *Commercial Advertising*, p. 164.
[25] Stephen Fox, *The Mirror Makers: A History of American Advertising and its Creators* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), pp. 40-49.
[26] Fox, *Mirror Makers,* p. 48.
[27] Thomas Herbert Russell, *Advertising Methods and Mediums* (Chicago: Washington Institute, 1910), p. 103.
[28] Russell, *Commercial Advertising*, p. 164.

to maintain reader interest and commercial vigour. To this end, the thesis is structured as follows. The Literature Review shows a gap in the historiography between historians of the First World War and historians of the press as far as provincial newspapers are concerned. There has been little scholarly examination of the wartime provincial press. Then, the first two chapters consider the broader context of the two major influences of 'practical patriotism' that shaped the newspaper's view of the volunteer soldier - commerce and Liberalism as perceived by the owners and Editor of the *Express and Star*. Chapter One provides evidence of what made the volunteer commercially and journalistically important to the newspaper. It sets him in the context of the *Express and Star's* circulation area and shows his significance in terms of publicity, advertising and human-interest journalism. Chapter Two considers the volunteer within the Liberal ethos of the *Express and Star* and details the political motivation behind the newspaper's unwavering support for voluntarism in 1914 and the evolution of its acceptance of conscription by early 1916. The volunteer is then examined in four different scenarios used by the newspaper to keep his mascot image fresh, vital and relevant to the reader. Chapter Three views him in his early military career as an enthusiastic volunteer recruited with the aid of the newspaper. Chapter Four shows him presented as the trained and steadfast soldier in the trenches – in need of comforts from home, which the newspaper organised on a commercial scale. Chapter Five examines how the *Express and Star* provided a public platform for the volunteer in the role of a vivid and compelling chronicler of the battlefield and life as a citizen soldier. Finally, Chapter Six considers how the newspaper portrayed the wartime death of the volunteer. The *Express and Star* became

a place for readers to memorialise their loved ones. The dead were granted the rare honour of a small photograph on a news page to accompany their brief obituary. For many families, with no opportunity for a funeral, the newspaper itself became part of the ritual of mourning while the war continued. Chapters Three to Six also show how each incarnation of the volunteer conformed to four central criteria of the provincial press – human-interest journalism, localism, reader involvement and the newspaper itself being a central part of the story. The chapters also indicate how the volunteers' different manifestations fitted the newspaper's evolving view of voluntarism. The thesis demonstrates how the *Express and Star* placed itself at the centre of Wolverhampton's efforts to recruit, sustain and memorialise its volunteers. For the newspaper, the volunteers became commercial commodities used to sell newspapers as much as they were symbols of patriotism and civic pride. This study provides an opportunity to throw light on the rarely-studied wartime provincial newspaper industry, a sector of the wartime press that was treated with a mixture of disdain, contempt and disinterest by commentators and the nation's censorship system at the time.

The Working Class and the Halfpenny Evening Press in 1914.

To understand the reasons for the close relationship between the halfpenny *Express and Star* and the volunteer it is necessary to place the provincial evening press in general within the context of Britain's newspaper industry in the years leading up to the outbreak of war. The *Express and Star* was one of

91 evening newspapers across the country in 1914.[29] Of these, 34 were Liberal-leaning, including the *Express and Star*.[30] The importance of the local evening newspaper lies in the fact that throughout the early part of the twentieth century it was the newspaper reading of the working classes. An analysis of the pre-war occupations of volunteer soldiers whose obituaries appeared in the *Express and Star* in 1915 shows an overwhelming number of manual workers.[31] In 1913, George Binney Dibblee, a former general manager of the *Manchester Guardian* acknowledged the importance of local evening newspapers. He thought they had the ear of the working classes in most areas of provincial Britain.[32] He described the 'enormously circulated evening press' with its 'immense mass of readers' and stated: 'The halfpenny evening paper is the daily paper of the working man and especially so in the provinces, where, in the small towns none but evening newspapers exist.'[33] Dame Florence Bell, in her 1907 study of ironworkers in Middlesbrough, commented that the town's working people chiefly read the local newspapers hawked around the streets. She noted: '…the favourite being a local halfpenny evening paper, which seems to be in the hands of every man and woman and almost every child'.[34] As early as 1886, Edward G. Salmon reflected on the reading habits of the working classes in an article in the journal, *The Nineteenth Century*.[35] He

[29] A. P. Wadsworth 'Newspaper Circulations 1800-1954' *Transactions of the Manchester Statistical Society* (Manchester: Manchester Statistical Society, 1955), p. 22.
[30] Alan J. Lee, *The Origins of the Popular Press: 1855-1914* (London: Croom Helm, 1976), p. 287.
[31] See Appendix IX, p. 274. This analysis is considered in more detail in Chapter Six.
[32] 'Obituary: Mr G. B. Dibblee', *Manchester Guardian,* 28 August 1952, p. 5.
[33] George Binney Dibblee, *The Newspaper* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1913), p. 81.
[34] Dame Florence Bell, *At the Works: A Study of a Manufacturing Town* (London: Edward Arnold, 1907), p. 144.
[35] Edward G. Salmon, 'What the Working-Classes Read', *The Nineteenth Century* 20 (113) (July 1886), pp. 108 – 117.

wrote: 'The great daily papers do not fall much into the hands of the masses.'[36] Instead, they had a host of local newspapers selling for a halfpenny or a penny. The price of either a halfpenny or a penny was significant to the Edwardian newspaper trade. The 'dignity of a penny' signified the serious morning press.[37] A halfpenny cover price indicated the popular national newspapers, including the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Express,* along with the provincial evening press. The business model of the cheap press meant news was provided to the mass market at the price of a halfpenny but the cost of production was subsidised by the advertising that large-scale readership attracted.[38] Newspaper cover prices should also be placed in context. The halfpenny *Express and Star* was priced to be affordable to the working class. A copy of the newspaper for six days a week cost 3d. In 1913, average weekly wages for an engineering turner were 36 shillings, railway engine drivers earned 42 shillings and engineering machinists, 30 shillings.[39] A railway clerk, considered one of the lowest rungs of the Edwardian 'black-coated' lower middle-class clerical workforce, earned approximately £80 per annum.[40] The *Express and Star's* 'Domestic and Agricultural Servants Wanted' columns showed a live-in house parlour maid paid £25 a year and a cook, £28.[41] One

[36] Salmon, 'What the Working Classes Read', p. 112.
[37] Rolfe Scott-James, *The Influence of the Press* (London: S. W. Partridge, 1913), pp. 110-135.
[38] Robert G. Pickard, 'A Business Perspective on the Challenges Facing Journalism' in David A. Levy and Rasmus Klein Neilson (eds.), *The Changing Business of Journalism and its Implications for Democracy* (Oxford: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2010), pp. 17-24.
[39] J. M. Winter, *The Great War and the British People* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009 edition), p. 236.
[40] Peter Scott and James Walker, 'Demonstrating Distinction at the Lowest Edge of the Black Coated Class: The Family Experience of Edwardian Railway Clerks', Discussion Paper (Henley Business School, Centre for International Business History, 2014), p. 25.
[41] *Express and Star*, 24 July 1914, p. 6.

night in holiday accommodation in Blackpool cost two shillings.[42] A small house in Redhill Street in Wolverhampton was 3s 6d a week to rent.[43] The price of the newspaper an individual read reflected their class and status. The American journalist Ralph Blumenfeld, the wartime Editor of the *Daily Express*, had to tread carefully in London society. He noted: 'All the world's snobs turned up their noses because the popular papers cost only a halfpenny and not a penny, and were therefore considered to be a sort of social outcast.'[44]

To the newspaper elites, the local evening press was seen as vulgar and regarded with a mixture of contempt and disdain. J. D. Symon, a former assistant Editor of the *Illustrated London News,* wrote that space did not allow for any consideration of evening provincial newspapers in his book on the history of the press and besides: 'Their influence is chiefly local and their political significance, outside their own district, is insignificant'.[45] George Binney Dibblee, general manager of the *Manchester Guardian*, who had acknowledged the large circulations of workmen's evening newspapers was still quick to dismiss their importance when he stated: '…there are so many of them that it is very difficult to make distinctions'.[46] He seemed to view their readers as feckless and obsessed with sport and betting when he wrote:

> …every conceivable matter of national or personal interest is subordinated to the overwhelming predominance of games, sports and betting. It is no exaggeration to say that five-sixths of the circulation of

[42] *Express and Star,* 11 September 1914, p. 1.
[43] *Express and Star*, 15 August 1914, p. 1.
[44] Ralph Blumenfeld, *The Press in My Time* (London: Rich & Cowan, 1933), p. 195.
[45] J. D. Symon, *The Press and its Story* (London: Seeley, Service & Co, 1914), p. 165.
[46] Dibblee, *The Newspaper*, p. 212.

> all the halfpenny evening papers is built upon amusements and gambling.[47]

The Liberal journalist and politician, C. F. G. Masterman, was scathing of the cheap popular press in his book *The Condition of England* published before the war.[48] Masterman also complained about the emphasis on sport and gambling which he described as mean and tawdry.[49] He considered the popular halfpenny press a litany of lurid melodrama. He wrote:

> The most insistent noise which reverberates through their pages is the clicking of the huge machine of English justice, as couples once married in affection are torn apart, or a long procession of murderers, thieves, absconding solicitors, fraudulent company promoters are swept away into the cold silence of the penal prison. The supply seems never to run short.[50]

Ten years before the outbreak of war, John Garrett Leigh wrote an article in the *Economic Review* posing the question: 'What Do the Masses Read?'[51] His view was that they largely read their local evening newspapers which he described as 'scrappy to an extreme, and it is to be feared that it is in respect to sport that they are most attractive'.[52] He found it surprising that working-class men and women would choose their local evening newspaper in preference to a serious morning title. He observed: 'Will it be believed that not one in a hundred of this vast community read a morning paper, even a halfpenny morning? But it is a fact.'[53]

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[47] Dibblee, *The Newspaper*, p. 81.
[48] C. F. G Masterman, *The Condition of England* (London: Methuen, 1910, 4th edition). Masterman had been Financial Secretary to the Treasury and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and was considered one of the architects of Lloyd George's People's Budget and the National Insurance Bill (See, *The Times,* 18 November, 1927, p. 9). During the war he was in charge of the War Propaganda Bureau at Wellington House (See, M. L. Sanders and Philip M. Taylor, *British Propaganda during the First World War 1914-18* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1982), p. 33.
[49] Masterman, *Condition of England*, pp. 91-94.
[50] Masterman, *Condition of England*, p. 4.
[51] J.G. Leigh, 'What do the Masses Read?' *Economic Review*, 14 (April 1904), pp. 166-177.
[52] Leigh, 'What do the Masses Read?' p. 176.
[53] Leigh, 'What do the Masses Read?' p. 176.

The Official Press Bureau and the Provincial Evening Press.

The wartime censors at Britain's Official Press Bureau took a similarly dismissive view to the metropolitan elites - largely ignoring the provincial evening press during the First World War. Established in August 1914, the Official Press Bureau had two roles – to provide information to newspapers about the war and to supervise censorship of the press.[54] More than a year after the outbreak of war one of Fleet Street's leading figures, George Riddell, owner of the *News of the World,* wrote to the directors of the Official Press Bureau to express his frustration that the censors seemed oblivious to the huge provincial evening newspaper sector with its mass of working-class readers. As vice-chairman of the Newspaper Proprietors Association, Riddell acted as a liaison between the press and the censor during the First World War.[55] He considered journalism a 'commercial business and journalists simply 'traders in news'.[56] Riddell complained that the wartime censorship system appeared to allow the provincial evening press to steal a march over its national counterparts. He wrote that the Official Press Bureau paid no attention to the provincial evenings. 'They can publish just what they like,' he argued.[57] Riddell continued:

> The provincial evening papers exercise a much greater influence than some of the journals upon which the Bureau lavishes such meticulous attention. It seems strange that no one makes a careful examination of

[54] For a detailed account of the formation of the Official Press Bureau, see Stephen Badsey, *The German Corpse Factory: A Study in First World War Propaganda* (Warwick: Helion, 2019), pp. 97-100; Sanders and Taylor, *British Propaganda during the First World War*, pp. 19-32.
[55] See, 'Obituary: Lord Riddell. Newspaper Owner and Diarist'. *The Times,* 6 December 1934, p. 9; Dennis Griffiths, *A History of the NPA 1906-2006* (London: Newspaper Publishers Association, 2006), p. 40.
[56] George Riddell, 'The Psychology of the Journalist', quoted in Michael Bromley and Tom O'Malley (eds.), *A Journalism Reader* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 110-114.
[57] The National Archives [TNA], HO139/10/38. Letter from Sir George Riddell to Sir Frank Swettenham, Co-Director of the Official Press Bureau, 21 October 1915.

> the papers which circulate amongst the working classes to the extent of millions of copies per day.[58]

Riddell argued that the censors had both a class and metropolitan bias - examining limited-circulation elite London publications while having little understanding of the importance of the extensive working-class evening press outside the capital. He wrote:

> The censorship is geographical. A paper with 20,000 circulation among the upper classes which is published in London is gone through most carefully. A paper with 300,000 circulation amongst the working classes published in Glasgow is never looked at and has probably never been heard of.'[59]

The co-director of the Official Press Bureau, Edward Cook, replied with a letter that suggested he had little idea of what the working classes read. He wrote: 'It is true that we do not every day examine all the thousands of papers; to do so, we should require a staff and premises, rivalling the War Office in size.'[60] Cook finished his letter with a request for Riddell to tell him more about the provincial press and 'find time to have a list drawn up for me' of the newspaper titles that circulated among the working class.[61]

The censors could argue that their lack of interest in non-metropolitan newspapers was because London newspapers were available abroad, unlike the provincial press, and therefore considered more likely to be seen by the enemy.[62] Journalistically though, the Official Press Bureau was an elite

[58] TNA HO139/10/38. Letter from Sir Edward Cook to George Riddell, 25 October 1915
[59] Riddell, Letter to Sir Frank Swettenham, 21 October 1915.
[60] TNA HO139/10/38. Letter from Sir Edward Cook to George Riddell, 25 October 1915.
[61] TNA HO139/10/38. Letter from Sir Edward Cook to George Riddell, 25 October 1915.
[62] Badsey, *German Corpse Factory*, p. 72.

organisation. Cook, a graduate of New College, Oxford and a former President of the Oxford Union, had been Editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, the *Westminster Gazette* and the *Daily News* – all considered important metropolitan newspapers which appealed to a political readership.[63] The other co-director, Sir Frank Swettenham, was a former senior colonial administrator who had been Governor of the Straits Settlements and was an authority on the Malay language.[64] Operating with limited staff, the censors considered the national press to be read by influential metropolitan opinion formers and therefore a priority because of their political importance. [65] W. T. Stead, the Editor of the *Review of Reviews,* described the Editors of the London newspapers as representing 'an influential, perhaps the most influential, body of men in the three kingdoms'.[66] Edward Dicey, a former Editor of the *Observer,* looked with disdain on the provincial press when he noted that the ablest provincial journalists 'somehow drift up to London' and added that no town outside London, where the national newspapers arrived by breakfast time, had a decent newspaper.[67] The historiography of the First World War provides little evidence that scholars have made any detailed attempt to challenge this outlook and explore the importance of the evening press in provincial towns in Britain during the war.

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[63] See J. Saxon Mills, *Sir Edward Cook K. B. E.: A Biography* (London: Constable, 1921) for an account of Cook's career before joining the Official Press Bureau.
[64] For an account of Swettenham's colonial life and a brief account of the Official Press Bureau, see his autobiography *Footprints in Malaya* (London: Hutchinson, 1941).
[65] Badsey, *German Corpse Factory*, p. 72.
[66] W. T. Stead, 'His Majesty's Public Councillors', *Review of Reviews*, December 1904, pp. 593-606.
[67] Edward Dicey, 'Journalism Old and New', *Fortnightly Review*, May 1905, pp. 904 – 912. See also 'Obituary: Edward Dicey', *The Times,* 8 July 1911, p. 13.

Literature Review

The wartime provincial evening press hovers vaguely in an unexplored gap between historians of the First World War, historians of the press and historians of propaganda. Historians of the war have recognised the importance of the wartime provincial press. Stephen Badsey has highlighted the neglected local influence and importance of provincial newspapers.[1] Helen McCartney laments the fact that '…authors have not explored the significance of the highly influential local press' which she describes as a vital link between home and fighting fronts.[2] Meanwhile, historians of the press have identified the trends that by 1914, had turned the newspaper industry into commercial 'big business' that depended on readership and advertising revenues to make profits. They see the period as a gradual process of commercialisation and industrialisation whereby 'profits replaced ideas as the motor force of the new industry of journalism'.[3] Scholars examining the development of propaganda acknowledge the communicative value of the press, describing newspapers as 'by far the most important medium of communication' in the early twentieth century.[4] Despite this, there has been no attempt to synthesise these strands and examine how the commercial nature of the provincial press influenced its coverage of the war. The recently-published, Edinburgh University Press three-volume history of the British and Irish press has presented the latest scholarship on the history of newspapers and periodicals but there is no

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[1] Badsey, *The German Corpse Factory*, pp. 72-73.
[2] Helen B. McCartney, *Citizen Soldiers: The Liverpool Territorials in the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 105 and p. 115.
[3] Joel H. Wiener, 'Introduction', in Joel H. Wiener (ed.), *Papers for the Millions*: *The New Journalism in Britain, 1850s to 1914* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1986), p. xii.
[4] Sanders and Taylor, *British Propaganda*, p. 2.

detailed consideration of how newspaper techniques affected reporting in times of war.[5] The promisingly-titled *Routledge Companion to Local Media and Journalism*, published in 2020 takes a global approach and devotes little space to the development of local journalism in Britain.[6] The central argument of this literature review is that in failing to examine the provincial evening press, historians have missed an opportunity to consider it as an important element in working-class perceptions of the First World War. The literature review is divided into four sections. The first considers the views of historians of the war while the second looks at the opinions of historians of the press in Britain. A third examines the historiography of wartime propaganda. Finally, a briefer section examines the limited references to the *Express and Star* itself in scholarly and popular literature.

Historians of the First World War.

First World War scholarship has not entirely ignored the provincial press but has left it as an afterthought with little detailed or nuanced analysis. Gerard DeGroot's 2014 study of the home front dismisses the entire British wartime press as collaborating in a collective effort to pull the wool over the public's eyes, resulting in a 'fictional war' that bore little resemblance to the one fought.[7] Stephen Koss stresses the lowly status of the provincial press in the introduction to his detailed two-volume account of the relationship between the

[5] *The Edinburgh History of the British and Irish Press, Volumes 1-3* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020).
[6] Agnes Gulyas and David Baines (eds.) *The Routledge Companion to Local Media and Journalism* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020).
[7] Gerard DeGroot, *Back in Blighty: The British at Home in World War One* (London: Vintage, 2014), p. 240.

press and politics in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He paints a picture of the close relationships between the highest levels of metropolitan politics and the national press but adds: 'If the provincial press receives short shift in these chapters, it is because it received short shift in reality.'[8] The 'odd scholarly location' of the Edwardian press has been recognised.[9] Historians plunder newspapers for evidence of prevailing views, social practices and ideologies but rarely study the newspapers themselves as social and cultural artefacts in their own right. Catriona Pennell's study of popular responses to the outbreak of war provides an example. Pennell lists more than 70 newspapers, mostly provincial, that she has used for her research.[10] She describes them as an 'irreplaceable historical source' and an 'excellent foundation' for establishing popular reactions.[11] Stephen Badsey is equally supportive of the provincial press. He notes the importance of the local and regional press in understanding British domestic perceptions of the First World War acknowledging the hundreds of provincial newspapers, which wielded considerable local influence.[12] Badsey argues that an average working-class adult, who read a newspaper and went to the cinema as well as having friends or relatives in the Army would have a quite realistic understanding of the scale and nature of the war.[13] As one of the elements of understanding, the press – both national and provincial – is worthy of closer examination. Specifically,

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[8] Stephen Koss, *The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain, Volume Two* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1984), p. 3.
[9] Mark Hampton, 'Rethinking the New Journalism 1850s – 1930s', *Journal of British Studies*, 43 (2) (2004), pp. 278-290.
[10] Catriona Pennell, *A Kingdom United: Popular Responses to the Outbreak of the First World War in Britain and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 283-285.
[11] Pennell, *Kingdom United*, p. 6.
[12] Badsey, *German Corpse Factory*, pp. 72-73
[13] Stephen Badsey, 'A Hundred Years On: Recent and Changing Views on the History of the First World War', in J. Hain, F. Kroll and M. Munke (eds.) *The First World War in British and German Commemorative Culture* (Berlin: Duncker and Humblot, 2017), pp. 13-30.

provincial press campaigns are seen as important in driving voluntary recruiting in 1914 and 1915. Peter Simkins points out that in the era of voluntarism local newspapers provided an effective means of focusing on local affairs. [14] The 'multi-dimensional role' of the provincial press has been described as far-reaching, making local newspapers an essential primary source today.[15] Media historian, Adrian Bingham, wryly mentions the platitude that journalists write the first draft of history but says there has been little evidence in the past of historians studying the press itself in any depth.[16] Instead, the provincial press has become little more than a useful footnote to much of the history of the First World War - trawled through to provide non-metropolitan, colourful, anecdotal evidence to support broader themes in the academic and amateur study of the First World War.[17]

A further consideration makes the absence of the provincial press from the historiography of the war seem unusual. Historians emphasise the importance of localism not only in terms of British wartime society but also in shaping the outlook of fighting men. The lack of detailed study of the working-class evening newspaper appears more surprising considering the importance of locality in

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[14] Peter Simkins, 'The Raising of the New Armies: Some Further Reflections' in Peter Liddle (ed.), *Britain Goes to War: How the First World War Began to Shape the Nation* (Barnsley, Pen and Sword, 2015), pp. 92-111.
[15] Andrew J. H. Jackson, 'The Provincial, Local and Regional Press' in David Finkelstein (ed.), *The Edinburgh History of the British and Irish Press, Volume 2: Expansion and Evolution 1800-1900* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), pp. 709-729
[16] Adrian Bingham*, Gender, Modernity and the Popular Press in Inter-War Britain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), p. 1.
[17] See Peter Simkins, *Kitchener's Army: The Raising of the New Armies 1914-16* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988). Simkins uses more than 30 newspapers in his study (p. 343). In terms of amateur historians, The Wolverhampton Society's publication, *Wolverhampton's Great War 1914-1921* (Wolverhampton: Wolverhampton Society, 2019), covers a number of topics from railways to Victoria Cross winners and makes extensive use of the *Express and Star* in many of the essays.

framing people's reactions to war and the parochial nature of life in 1914.[18] The world war was 'fundamentally framed and defined by local particularities'.[19] Jay Winter and Keith Grieves both express the centrality of localism. Winter states that national issues never eclipsed a sense of place. For people in 1914 '…their England was envisioned as a very local and particular place, bounded in many cases by the streets they knew and the daily lives they led'.[20] Meanwhile, Grieves examines Sussex during the war and reaches a similar conclusion, stating that '…affinities relating to locality, county and associated landscapes persisted throughout the war.[21] Both Winter and Grieves refer to the local press as reflecting a sense of community and locality but neither attempts to explore this idea further. [22] Other historians add to this argument, stressing men took not only their individuality into the army but the popular cultural world of their locality. This involved a mixture of advertising, the press, music hall and early cinema as well as local and regional cultures from the workplace, school and local clubs and associations.[23] The understanding of the parochial nature of society in the First World War has not prompted any scholarly examination of the local newspapers that are acknowledged as being a key element of that localism.

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[18] Pennell, *Kingdom United*, p. 26. See also, Peter Simkins, 'Foreword' in J. M. Bourne and Bob Bushaway (eds.), *Joffrey's War: A Sherwood Forester in the Great War* (Beeston: Salient Books, 2011), p. 18.
[19] Adrian Gregory, 'Globalising and Localising the Great War', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 27 (2017), pp. 233-251.
[20] Jay Winter and Jean-Louis Robert (eds.), *Capital Cities at War: Paris, London, Berlin 1914-1919* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 7.
[21] Keith Grieves (ed.), *Sussex in the First World War* (Lewes: Sussex Record Society, 2004), p. xii.
[22] See Winter, *Capital Cities*, p. 20 and Grieves, *Sussex in the First World War*, p. xxii.
[23] Bourne and Bushaway, 'Introduction', *Joffrey's War*, p. 19.

The gap between First World War scholarship and the provincial press is even more disappointing considering the significant number of newspaper titles that have been digitised. Practically all national daily titles are now available online in searchable digital form. The British Library's British Newspaper Archive project now has a large number of provincial titles – dailies and weeklies - available for reading and searching online. It should be stressed; however, not all titles are available. For example, The British Newspaper Archive is beginning to digitise the archive of the *Express and Star* but is only beginning with some Victorian editions.[24] It is possible to suggest reasons for this lack of scholarly interest in the provincial press – both practical factors that apply to the study of all newspapers and the specific perceptions of local newspapers. The scale of daily newspaper archives can be daunting with page after page of closely printed material - the 'intimidating bulk of the newspaper archives' as it has been described.[25] The British Newspaper Archive alone has more than 37 million pages available for view.[26] Without some specialist knowledge, it can be hard to make sense of the structure and methods that lie behind the layout and presentation of news – Edwardian provincial newspapers had little 'signposting' to guide the reader through the newspaper and pages often look confusing. The small print size and density of text can make reading hard, even on magnified and digitised pages, and sometimes almost impossible on poor microfilm copies in local archives. One historian describes newspaper

[24] https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/titles/wolverhampton-express-and-star. Accessed 18 January 2021.
[25] Ian Cawood and Lisa Peters (eds.), *Print, Politics and the Provincial Press in Modern Britain* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2019), p. 75.
[26] https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/. Accessed 5 June 2020.

research as like working at the 'coalface of history'.[27] Looking at pages on computer or microfilm screens does not allow the reader to get a real impression of the newspaper as it was read.[28] In the case of the *Express and Star,* digital editions do not give the sense of a large broadsheet newspaper, densely packed with stories, mainly in single-column format and set in small type. Neither do they provide a sense of the impact of occasional photographs on newspaper pages that rarely carried pictures. Deian Hopkin has described the mass media as one of the most vital factors in Great War society but many studies barely mention it.[29] He says the huge amount of newspapers make it laborious and adds: 'Not only is it difficult in retrospect to relate Editorial comment to events, it is even more difficult to penetrate the impersonal façade of the newsprint and examine the writers and Editors, who are, in reality, the newspaper'.[30]

The perception of the local press can also present a barrier to its study. The longstanding view of local newspapers sees them as being unimportant and parochial. Even the term 'provincial' can be seen as derogatory in comparison to the national press.[31] The typical stereotype has presented the local press as insignificant and harmless, presenting uncritical celebrations of local culture and personalities – 'a curious if not perverse forum for collective

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[27] Glenn R. Wilkinson, 'At the Coalface of History: Personal Reflections on Using Newspapers as a Source', *Studies in Newspaper and Periodical History'*, 3 (1-2) (1995), pp. 211–221.
[28] Wilkinson, 'At the Coalface of History', pp. 214-215.
[29] D. Hopkin, 'Domestic Censorship in the First World War', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 5 (4) (1970), p 151
[30] Hopkin, 'Domestic Censorship', p. 151
[31] Laurel Brake and Marysa Demoor (eds.), *Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century Journalism* (London: Academia Press and The British Library, 2009), p. 514.

introspection'.[32] The parochial obsession with courts, councils, pageants, carnivals, local personalities and mayor-makings has seemingly proved unattractive to scholars.[33] Another factor may be linked to this lack of engagement with the First World War provincial evening press. It involves the *Daily Mail*. Historians have identified the *Daily Mail*, founded by Alfred Harmsworth in 1896, as the publishing phenomenon of its era.[34] It is important because it is seen as the prototype of the modern popular press – mass circulation, cheap and published daily.[35] Adrian Gregory devotes a number of pages to the *Daily Mail* and its coverage of atrocity stories in his study of British society during the war but he makes no mention of the provincial press.[36] Nicholas Hiley's article ambitiously entitled 'Newspaper Reading in the British Expeditionary Force 1914-1918' is largely an account of the development of the Continental edition of the *Daily Mail*.[37] Stephen Koss has written two dense chapters about the relationships between London newspaper proprietors, Editors and politicians during the First World War.[38] The considerable number of studies of Lord Northcliffe and his newspapers, before and during the war, has perhaps obscured the layer of halfpenny press activity that existed below the *Daily Mail* – the provincial press.[39] The focus on Northcliffe, the *Daily Mail*

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[32] Bob Franklin and David Murphy, *What News? The Market, Politics and the Local Press* (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 2.
[33] Franklin and Murphy, *What News?* p. 1-2.
[34] Gregory, *The Last Great War,* p. 47.
[35] Gregory, *The Last Great War*, p. 47.
[36] Gregory, *The Last Great War,* pp. 47-55.
[37] Nicholas Hiley, 'You Can't Believe a Word you Read: Newspaper Reading in the British Expeditionary Force 1914-1918', *Studies in Newspaper and Periodical History*, 2 (1-2) (1994), pp. 89-102.
[38] Koss, *Rise and Fall of the Political Press*, *Vol. Two*, pp. 238-347.
[39] The literature on Northcliffe is extensive and includes both popular and scholarly studies. See, for example, Peter Catterall, Colin Seymour-Ure and Adrian Smith (eds.), *Northcliffe's Legacy: Aspects of the British Popular Press 1896-1996* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 2000); S. J. Taylor, *The Great Outsiders: Northcliffe, Rothermere and the Daily Mail* (London: Phoenix, 1996) and J. Lee Thompson, *Politicians, The Press and Propaganda: Lord Northcliffe and the Great War 1914-1919* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 2000).

and other London newspaper owners has led to a longstanding and unbalanced outlook. Arthur Marwick in his 1960s study of society during the First World War points out that the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Express* were aimed at the lower middle class. He states: '…it is clear that the working classes were not yet a powerful enough advertiser's market for it to be worthwhile designing newspapers specifically for them'.[40] Gregory makes a similar point in his 2008 study stressing that the *Daily Mail* was the most influential newspaper with the mass public and adds: '…it should be remembered that the daily-newspaper-reading public was largely a middle-class one'.[41] It is possible the reading matter of the working class – the provincial evening newspaper – has been eclipsed by the attention paid to the mass circulation of the halfpenny *Daily Mail*. The fact that working-class people did not read the *Daily Mail* did not mean they did not read newspapers. Working people were not, in the mass, readers of morning newspapers of any sort. Instead, they read their local halfpenny evening newspaper during the week and penny Sunday newspapers such as the *News of the World* at weekends.[42] In 1914, the provincial press represented the only daily newspapers many people outside London actually read.[43]

This layered and complicated background has meant that the provincial press is glimpsed only fleetingly in much of the historiography of the First World War. Even when it is mentioned, it is in one-dimensional terms. The 'provincial

[40] Arthur Marwick, *The Deluge: British Society and the First World War. Second edition* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1991. First published, 1965), p. 186.
[41] Gregory, *The Last Great War*, p. 47.
[42] Donald Read, *Edwardian England: Society and Politics* (London: History Book Club, 1972), p. 58.
[43] Badsey, *The German Corpse Factory*, p. 72.

press' is rolled up together as one entity with no attempt to explain the nature of early twentieth-century provincial journalism or its gradations - the regional morning newspaper, the evening newspaper and the weekly press. The limited scholarship of the wartime provincial press follows a pattern - mainly focusing on the publication of letters from local men describing, often in graphic detail, the realities of the battlefield. The typical narrative points out that indifference from the censors allowed readers of provincial newspapers at home to get a more realistic view of the fighting front than they might have obtained from the more generalised coverage in the national press.[44] John Bourne briefly contrasts the provincial press with the national press. He stresses the human-interest nature of provincial press coverage –vivid accounts of battle from local men compared to the bland official statements that were often the staple of the national press. Obituaries and photographs meant death was personalised and allowed to 'assume its individual tragic significance'. [45] Helen McCartney's 2005 study of the Liverpool Territorials during the First World War is a missed opportunity as far as the wartime press is concerned. McCartney stresses the importance of localism as a key feature of society before the war with Territorial soldiers, in particular, sharing a local outlook.[46] She devotes a section of her study to stress the importance and influence of the city's newspapers, suggesting they represent an argument against the idea of the 'unbridgeable gap' between home and fighting fronts.[47] Unfortunately, the

[44] See, for example, J. M. Bourne, *Britain and the Great War 1914-1918* (London: Edward Arnold, 1989), p. 206; George Robb, *British Culture and the First World War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 113; Peter Hodgkinson, *Glum Heroes: Resilience and Coping in the British Army on the Western Front 1914-1918* (Solihull: Helion, 2016), pp. 61-62.
[45] Bourne, *Britain and the Great War*, p. 206.
[46] McCartney, *Citizen Soldiers*, p. 57.
[47] McCartney, *Citizen Soldiers*, pp. 103-117.

section is again devoted to the publication of soldiers' letters. There is no attempt to provide any context about the motives and actions of the newspapers in Liverpool. McCartney acknowledges the importance of the content of the provincial press but again the newspapers themselves remain an enigma. It is left to historians of the press and media to provide a business context for wartime provincial evening newspapers.

Historians of the Press

Historians of the press explore Britain's Edwardian provincial evening newspapers with a different outlook. The origins of evening newspapers like the *Express and Star* lie in the large-scale commercial expansion of the press – both in London and the provinces - between the middle of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth century.[48] The Education Acts (England and Wales) of 1870 and 1880 are seen as providing a focus for the development of mass literacy, although, it is stressed this was the culmination rather than the start of mass readership which had been developing gradually since much earlier in the century.[49] Along with the development of mass literacy came the abolition of taxes on newspapers and advertising – the so-called 'taxes on knowledge' during the middle of the century. The abolition of this financial drag on the press 'began to release the full force of competition

[48] A number of studies provide detailed accounts of the commercial development of the press – both London and provincial. See Martin Conboy, *Journalism in Britain: An Historical Introduction* (London: SAGE, 2011), pp. 8-20; Joseph J. Baylen, 'The British Press 1861-1918', in Dennis Griffiths (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of the British Press 1422- 1992* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), pp. 33-46; Mark Hampton, *Visions of the Press in Britain, 1850-1950* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), pp.19-47; Lucy Brown, *Victorian News and Newspapers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985).
[49] Martin Conboy, *The Press and Popular Culture* (London: SAGE, 2002), p. 94. and Hampton, *Visions of the Press*, p. 26.

into newspaper production' in London and the provinces.[50] Newspapers began to be seen as good commercial investments.[51] Typically, by 1914, an Edwardian provincial newspaper owner was a local businessman, a significant member of his local community who looked to make a profit and enhance his social standing in his town or city.[52] The proprietor employed an increasingly trained and professionalised staff of journalists to produce the newspaper instead of being an owner-Editor himself.[53] Media historian Martin Conboy points out that from the 1880s, newspapers developed as commercial concerns that would survive by generating revenue and profit or not at all.[54] This was achieved by targeting mass readership to attract advertising. Alongside the commercial development of the press came the gradual evolution of a different sort of journalism that was part of the commerce of newspapers. Its purpose was to entice a mass readership that would be attractive to advertisers.[55] Scholars disagree on the roots of what became known as the New Journalism. Joel H. Wiener sees many of the techniques and characteristics influenced by the cheap press in the United States.[56] Others see some of the techniques of the popular New Journalism in British newspapers – particularly, Sunday publications – from earlier in the Victorian era.[57] Historians agree, however, on the characteristics of the New Journalism. Newspapers increasingly became commodities, sold to as many readers as

[50] Conboy, *Journalism in Britain,* p. 8.
[51] Baylen, *The British Press*, p. 34.
[52] Rachel Matthews, *The History of the Provincial Press in England* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), p. 80.
[53] Hampton, *Visions of the Press*, p. 76-77.
[54] Conboy, *Journalism in Britain*, p. 9.
[55] See, Wiener, 'How New was the New Journalism?', pp. 47-71.
[56] See Joel H. Wiener, *The Americanization of the British Press, 1830s – 1914* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011) for a detailed exposition of this argument.
[57] See, Wiener, 'How New was the New Journalism?', pp. 47-71.

possible. The higher the readership a newspaper was able to maintain, the more attractive it was to advertisers.[58] The emphasis of the New Journalism as it developed during the 40 years before the First World War involved an all-encompassing emphasis on human interest.[59] There was less politics and more crime and entertainment, clearer layout and bigger more attractive headlines; all aimed at making newspapers more broadly attractive to potential readers and therefore more profitable.[60] According to Martin Conboy, journalism became a 'commercial vernacular'.[61] The politically based, conservative-looking newspapers, often with the leader comment occupying three or four columns, of the mid-Victorian era gradually gave way to newspapers with bigger headlines, shorter stories and column crossheads to break up the text.[62] Added to this were edited versions of political speeches rather than verbatim reports, an emphasis on news rather than comment and serialised fictional stories, normally romances or melodramas.[63] Leaders became shorter, news was separated from comment and breaking news along with human interest became the priority. The transformation of the press in the 50 years leading up to the First World War has been described as being of revolutionary importance.[64] It went from a political institution, read by relatively small numbers, to one catering for every conceivable interest and read by millions.[65] This included gossip columns, personal interviews, features aimed

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[58] Hampton, *Visions of the Press*, pp. 38-39.
[59] Adrian Bingham and Martin Conboy, *Tabloid Century: The Popular Press in Britain, 1896 to the Present* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2015), p. 6.
[60] Martin Conboy, *The Language of Newspapers: Socio-Historical Perspectives* (London: Continuum, 2010), p. 112.
[61] Conboy, *The Language of Newspapers*, p. 95.
[62] Wiener, 'How New was the New Journalism?, p. 51-53.
[63] Baylen, *The British Press*, p. 38.
[64] Wiener, *Americanization of the Press*, p. 3.
[65] Wiener, *Amercianization of the Press*, p. 4.

at the female reader along with late-breaking news. The development of the electric telegraph system was central to the expansion of the provincial press – in particular the evening press. Along with the founding of news agencies such as the Press Association and Reuters, the telegraph gave the regional press access to national and international 'breaking news' at the same time as London newspapers.[66] Stephen Koss has interpreted these developments as the *Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain*. Another interpretation is 'From Politics to Human Interest'.[67] Human-interest journalism was central to the New Journalism; making complicated, large-scale news accessible to the general reader who may otherwise find it too complex or arcane.[68] According to the American sociologist Helen MacGill Hughes, the more humanised a story can be made the more interest it generates because it can be understood in terms of human emotions.[69] The newspaper in the era of the New Journalism had to 'insistently declare its personalized character'.[70] By the early years of the twentieth century, popular newspapers, in search of readership, began to look upon individuals or groups who featured in 'hot news' as almost becoming their personal property with exclusive interviews and information.[71] The human-interest story changed the nature of the relationship between the newspaper and its readers. Instead of the high-minded idea of educating and influencing readers on subjects such as politics and social reform, the provincial newspaper reflected their everyday lives – local institutions, culture,

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[66] Bob Franklin, *Newszak and News Media* (London: Arnold, 1997), pp. 78-79.
[67] Helen MacGill Hughes, *News and the Human Interest Story* (London:Transaction Books, 1981 edition. First published 1940), p. 1.
[68] Hughes, *News and the Human Interest Story*, p. xv.
[69] Hughes, *News and the Human Interest Story*, p. 200.
[70] Richard Salmon, 'A Simulacrum of Power: Intimacy and Abstraction in the Rhetoric of the New Journalism', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 30 (1) (1997), pp. 41-52.
[71] Hughes, *News and the Human Interest Story*, p. 242.

commerce and 'newsworthy citizens'.[72] The provincial evening newspaper was not an ostentatiously political working-class publication and did not regard itself as being in the 'vanguard of the labour movement'.[73] Instead, its power and commercial success lay in being 'remarkably ordinary' and attracting mass local readership by reflecting the human interest of everyday life for working people.[74]

This thesis is timely. Two more recent works indicate the academic mood concerning the provincial press is beginning to change with a growing interest in its development from scholars of the media. [75] Rachel Matthews and Andrew Hobbs are both former provincial journalists who have become scholars of the media. They have made use of the expanding digital resources available for the study of newspapers. Both, however, fail to throw much light on the press between 1914 and 1918. Rachel Matthews charts the broad history of the traditional provincial press from the beginning of the eighteenth century to its current decline in the digital age. In such a broad study, the First World War is quickly covered in four pages.[76] Her central argument is that the provincial press has always been a commercial venture to its core and profit is the principle around which every other element of the newspaper is organised.[77] Matthews identifies the provincial evening newspaper as the 'financial

[72] Ian Jackson, *The Provincial Press and the Community* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1971), p. 14.
[73] John Nicholson, 'Imperialism and the Provincial Press: Manchester Evening and Weekly Papers 1895-1902', *Victorian Periodicals Review,* 13 (3) (1980), pp. 85-96.
[74] Nicholson, 'Imperialism and the Provincial Press', p. 94.
[75] Rachel Matthews, *History of the Provincial Press* and Andrew Hobbs, *A Fleet Street in Every Town: The Provincial Press in England 1855-1900* (Cambridge: Open Book, 2018).
[76] Matthews, *History of the Provincial Press*, pp. 141-145.
[77] Matthews, *History of the Provincial Press*, p. 4.

powerhouse' of the provincial press until well into the twentieth century.[78] She provides a brief description of the censorship regulations during the First World War and gives some examples of the graphic accounts of battle from local soldiers' letters before moving on to a more detailed account of the press in the Second World War.[79] Having stressed the importance of the commercial nature of the press, Matthews does not attempt to apply this to the years between 1914 and 1918. She does focus though on the understated importance of the provincial evening newspaper as a 'highly profitable product' in the early twentieth century.[80] She states the position at the beginning of the twentieth century: 'Newspapers are profitable, and the evening newspaper is the most profitable of all.'[81] Matthews argues that provincial newspaper owners had a far more unsentimental focus on profit while national titles were often a rich man's hobby.[82] Local newspapers' advertising-led business models constructed the readership as a community to be harnessed for commercial ends.[83] Meanwhile, Andrew Hobbs' study examines the provincial newspaper during the period of intense commercial development between 1850 and 1900 so his work does not get as far as the war. He uses newspapers in the north-west of England as his examples. Hobbs is emphatic that provincial evening newspapers were the newspapers of the working-class by the end of the nineteenth century – cheap, local and highly attuned to

[78] Matthews, *History of the Provincial Press*, p. 4.
[79] Matthews, *History of the Provincial Press*, pp. 141-145.
[80] Rachel Matthews, 'The Provincial Press', in Martin Conboy and Adrian Bingham (eds.) *The Edinburgh History of the British and Irish Press: Volume 3, Competition and Disruption, 1900-2017* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), pp. 643-659.
[81] Matthews, 'The Provincial Press', p. 645.
[82] Matthews, 'The Provincial Press', p. 644.
[83] Rachel Matthews, 'Historicising the Afterlife: Local Newspapers in the United Kingdom and the Art of Prognosis' in Gulyas and Baines (eds.), *Routledge Companion to Local Media and Journalism,* pp. 25-33.

popular working-class culture.[84] Both of these modern studies show how the digitisation of newspaper archives allows deeper analysis of the provincial press. They also indicate a growing awareness of the social and cultural significance of the provincial press.

Alan J. Lee's study of the development of the popular press in the 50 years leading up to the First World War was published in 1976.[85] Despite its age, it remains a source of immense detail about the development of the provincial press in Britain as well as a nuanced commentary on the themes associated with these changes. There is no consideration of how these developments influenced coverage in wartime. Lee narrates the commercial expansion of the press in the years up to 1914 and his analysis of the Edwardian provincial evening newspaper sector is uncompromising. He does not see the provincial evening newspaper as simply representing a naively local sense of community. In his eyes, the evening press outside London was not a journalistic backwater overshadowed by the metropolitan press. Instead, Lee sees the evening newspaper, by 1914, as a particularly ruthless manifestation of the industrialised, commercial press – constructed for the sole purpose of being popular and therefore profitable.[86] The evening newspaper's strength was in the expanding, industrialised, urban areas of England. Lee paints a portrait of the halfpenny provincial evening press that was very different from the high-minded politically important London newspapers that were the focus

[84] Hobbs, *A Fleet Street in Every Town*, p. 241.
[85] Alan J. Lee, *The Origins of the Popular Press 1855-1914* (London: Croom Helm, 1976).
[86] Lee*, Origins of the Popular Press*, p. 126-127.

of the Official Press Bureau. By 1914, provincial evening newspapers were a financially successful, but relatively new, phenomenon.[87] Most had been started in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and contained a mixture of local and national news. They represented an 'excellent advertising medium', dominating the lucrative classified 'small ads' market in their circulation areas[88] They were fast-paced, making use of the latest telegraphed news from the London news agencies as well as sports information and horse-racing betting odds and results – meaning many people bought more than one edition a day. Lee argues that the ability to move news and sports results quickly via the telegraph was the key factor in the success of the provincial evening press. [89] He suggests the evening press formed 'an important part of the structure' of the horse racing and gambling industries in Victorian and Edwardian Britain.[90] Added to this, was a tendency to focus on the morbid, the use of forced humour, maudlin sentimentality, a 'penchant for creating its own news' along with a willingness to 'lift' stories from other publications without acknowledgement or payment.[91] Given these characteristics, the highly profitable halfpenny provincial evening newspaper has been described as 'the cheap end' of the daily newspaper market.[92] This cheapness often took physical form with dingy, frail paper, thin inks and minuscule type aimed at saving costs in materials and newsprint.[93] Lee is not alone in emphasising the ruthless nature of the provincial press. A more recent interpretation by media

[87] Brown, *Victorian News and Newspapers*, p. 34.
[88] Lee, *Origins of the Popular Press,* pp. 126-127.
[89] Lee, *Origins of the Popular Press*, p. 61.
[90] Lee, *Origins of the Popular Press,* pp. 126-127.
[91] Lee, *Origins of the Popular Press*, p. 75 and 120.
[92] Brown, *Victorian News and Newspapers*, p. 35.
[93] Lee, *Origins of the Popular Press,* p. 120.

historian Adrian Bingham stresses that the national press did not begin to eclipse the provincial press until after 1918.[94] In the early years of the twentieth century the press –both national and provincial – were privately run businesses, little regulated, possessing an outlook that was far from public service and a reliance on advertising that created a 'general ethos of consumerism'.[95] Despite these reservations, the cheap Edwardian local evening newspaper is recognised in the literature of the press as the newspaper of the working man, bought in the street after emerging from factories and workshops, then taken home and read by other members of the household.[96] Readers were predominantly working-class, lived where they worked, took an interest in stories about their town, followed the local football team and had no other access to news. It is argued that this close local connection allowed evening newspapers to develop a core of loyal readership that the national press was unable to dislodge even with intensive provincial sales drives.[97] The literature of press history concerning the years before the First World War presents Britain's provincial evening press as commercialised and dependant on advertising; highly profitable; focused on fast-moving news and sport; familiar with the techniques of human-interest New Journalism and closely connected to the culture of its working-class readership. Historians of the press recognise the commercial and social importance of the provincial evening newspaper but its existence during wartime is subsumed into the longer narrative of the increasingly commercialised and competitive 'tabloid

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[94] Adrian Bingham, *Family Newspapers? Sex, Private Life and the British Press 1918-1978* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 16.
[95] Bingham, *Family Newspapers*, p. 25.
[96] Peter Cole and Tony Harcup, *Newspaper Journalism* (London: SAGE, 2010), p. 54 and p. 23.
[97] Cole and Harcup, *Newspaper Journalism*, p. 55.

century'.[98] The superficial nature of the debate on the wartime provincial press has meant there has been little consideration of where it fitted in what has been described as the Pandora's Box of propaganda during the First World War.[99]

Historians of Propaganda.

Any study of the First World War provincial press needs to engage with the complex and active scholarly debate about the nature of propaganda in early twentieth-century Britain. Historians see the period from 1914 until 1918 as highly significant - the beginning of the modern age of propaganda.[100] Several strands emerge from the complicated historiography. Philip M. Taylor provides a useful description of propaganda in its broadest form. He argues that it is a means to an end. Taylor's defines propaganda as '…the deliberate attempt to persuade people to think and behave in a desired way'.[101] Although he acknowledges much propaganda can be accidental or unconscious, Taylor goes on to add that propaganda involves '…the conscious, methodical and planned decision to employ techniques of persuasion designed to achieve specific goals that are intended to benefit those organizing the process'. Hence, in this definition, Taylor argues that advertising falls into the category of 'economic propaganda' since the marketing of a product is designed to

[98] Bingham and Conboy, *Tabloid Century*, p. 1.
[99] Philip M. Taylor, *British Propaganda in the Twentieth Century: Selling Democracy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), p. 5.
[100] Mark Connelly, Jo Fox, Stefan Goebel and Ulf Schmidt, 'Introduction: The First World War and Inter-War Period' in Connelly et al., *Propaganda and Conflict: War, Media and Shaping the Twentieth Century* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), p. 15.
[101] Philip M. Taylor, *Munitions of the Mind: A History of Propaganda from the Ancient World to the Present Day* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2003 edition), p. 6.

increase sales and advance the manufacturer's profits. Importantly, Taylor stresses that although propaganda is seen as something evil from a modern perspective this was not the case at the time of the First World War. It was no more the policy of official propaganda to lie deliberately than it was to tell the whole truth. Facts were deployed selectively but rationally and falsehoods were rejected in case they destroyed the credibility of the information.[102] Stephen Badsey develops this argument and explains that British officialdom during the war saw propaganda as information rather than deceit.[103] Propaganda did not have the negative connotations of the modern age but was a form of 'national advocacy or advertising' with the basic principle being that it should be based on selected facts and not lies and disseminated as reliable information as long as it did not give away any military secrets.[104] Badsey likens the figure of the wartime propagandist to a lawyer in court – presenting the best case for his client by careful selection of the facts.[105] Pioneering propagandists in the early twentieth century saw themselves not as secret and sinister purveyors of lies and distortions but professional persuaders using facts and the force of their arguments.[106] The First World War stimulated government interest in disseminating information in an organised way and this had led to a large literature on official propaganda but rather less on the techniques of commercial advertising and publicity.[107] It is argued, however, that the state's increasing use of the techniques of

[102] Taylor, *Munitions of the Mind*, pp. 1-3.
[103] Badsey, *The German Corpse Factory*, p. 16.
[104] Badsey, *The German Corpse Factory*, p. 16.
[105] Badsey, *The German Corpse Factory*, p. 17.
[106] Stephen Badsey, *The British Army in Battle and its Image 1914-18* (London: Continuum, 2009), p. 164.
[107] Jim Aulich and John Hewitt, *Seduction or Instruction? First World War Posters in Britain and Europe* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), p. 106.

advertising and publicity between 1914 and 1918 provided a brief legitimisation of many of the methods of the press and advertising.[108] Some scholars have expanded the interpretation of propaganda that emphasises persuasion and argument to consider advertising within the same context. From their perspective advertising is another form of propaganda 'designed to gain and hold the allegiance of a mass market' – conditioning people to act in a way favourable to the manufacturer and retailer.[109] David Welch is more specific, seeing the development of advertising and publicity as a form of propaganda developing at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. He identifies the period as witnessing the development of newspaper advertising as a method of persuading people to buy commodities rather than simply informing readers of product availability.[110] According to Welch, with mass production and mass consumption came the need for mass persuasion in the form of display advertising, brand names, publicity and advertising campaigns using newspapers, magazines, billboards and shopfronts. Commercial advertising as propaganda goes beyond influencing people to buy certain commodities. It can become an integral part of society, particularly in wartime. The advertising historian David Clampin presents a complex picture of the propaganda value of advertising during a time of war. He argues that wartime home-front morale had as much to do with the 'weary drudge of everyday life' as it did with the

[108] Aulich and Hewitt, *Seduction or Instruction?,* pp. 106-107.
[109] Edmund D. McGarry, 'The Propaganda Function in Marketing', *Journal of Marketing,* 23 (2) (1958), pp. 131-139.
[110] David Welch, 'Advertising', in Nicholas J. Cull, David Culbert and David Welch (eds.), *Propaganda and Mass Persuasion: An Historical Encyclopaedia, 1500 to the Present* (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, 2003), pp. 5-7.

direct impact of the enemy.[111] Advertising for all its frivolity and triviality presented a reassuring sense of continuity and normality that in itself had considerable propaganda value.[112] Commercial advertising's references to the mundane had great resonance with those at home and at the front. Advertising was connected to the experience of daily life, and provided reassuring symbols of normality that created 'an anchor by which to weather the storm'.[113]

The editors of a recent study of propaganda and war in the twentieth century provide a broad view of the state of scholarship concerning propaganda.[114] They particularly praise the study of propaganda during the era of the First World War as innovative and diverse creating a 'new analytical vocabulary'[115]. They come to three conclusions that make it seem surprising that there has been little study of the working-class, provincial evening press as an instrument of propaganda. The first is that greater emphasis is now being placed on the consensual dimension of First World War propaganda rather than the coercive elements of censorship and indoctrination. Secondly, and of particular importance to this study, ordinary people are seen not as victims but as participants in and facilitators of propaganda. The citizen was the subject of propaganda but also helped create and evolve propaganda at the same time.[116] Finally, the word 'propaganda' is being used less because it appears to be associated with a top-down approach to its operation. Instead, broader

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[111] David Clampin, *Advertising and Propaganda in World War II* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), p. 8.
[112] Clampin, *Advertising and Propaganda*, p. 29.
[113] Clampin, *Advertising and Propaganda*, p. 18-19.
[114] Connelly et al., *Propaganda and Conflict*, pp. 15-19.
[115] Connelly et al., *Propaganda and Conflict*, p. 17.
[116] Connelly et al., *Propaganda and Conflict*, p. 17.

descriptions such as ‘patriotic culture’ and ‘mental mobilisation’ are coming into use. The result is odd – a boom in the study of propagandistic methods going hand in hand with the demise of the concept of propaganda.[117]

The modern interpretation of propaganda sees it as a far more collaborative concept, rather than top-down lies and outright deceit from the elites broadcast to the general population. With this in mind, it appears there is a significant gap in the scholarship concerning a newspaper like the *Express and Star* in provincial Britain. Its daily content of advertising, news and comment represented an opportunity for myriad propaganda messages to be put in front of its working-class readership. Equally, the readers’ engagement with such issues as volunteer recruitment and fundraising for comforts provides an example of a working-class town not only being subjected to propaganda but also being an agent in creating propaganda. This scholarly gap appears even more unusual considering the press is recognised as the single most important element of communication during the First World War. The historiography fails to provide an insight into the means and methods of the newspapers read by millions of working-class people during the war or the key messages those publications provided to their readers.

[117] Connelly et al., *Propaganda and Conflict*, p. 17.

Historians of the *Express and Star.*

Two books by the *Express and Star,* detailing the newspaper's history, were published in the 1980s and 1990s.[118] Both were written by former journalists on the newspaper – Peter Rhodes and Ray Seaton - and inevitably present a highly favourable account of its development. Both, however, have the benefit of interviews with Malcolm Graham, grandson of the founder Thomas Graham. Malcolm Graham was born in 1901 and was able to provide detail of the newspaper in the early years of the century. According to Seaton, it was in the early years of the twentieth century that the Express and Star earned the unofficial title 'Bible of the Black Country'.[119] Rhodes' work provides a vivid picture of the Edwardian *Express and Star*, selling 60,000 copies a night by 1910 – 'snapped up in vast numbers, as much for its racing results as for its hot news'.[120] Rhodes stresses the 'deadly competition' between the *Express and Star* and the Conservative and Unionist-backed *Midland Evening News*, closed in 1915, which had offices on the other side of the road in Queen Street. He provides a colourful description of the streets of Wolverhampton in the era of the New Journalism and on the eve of the First World War. He writes:

> As papers came off the rival presses, horse-and-trap drivers would race hell-for-leather to and from the railway station while, along the main streets of the circulation area, teams of small boys would race hundreds of yards in relays carrying heavy bundles of the newspapers in order to slam their editions down on the street corner a few precious minutes before the opposition'. [121]

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[118] Ray Seaton, *Malcolm Graham: Sixty Years in the News* (Wolverhampton: *Express and Star*, 1983) and Peter Rhodes, *The Loaded Hour: A History of the Express & Star* (Hanley Swan: S. P. A., 1991)
[119] Seaton, *Malcolm Graham*, p. 18.
[120] Rhodes, *The Loaded Hour*, p. 44.
[121] Rhodes, *The Loaded Hour*, p. 46.

Within the framework of the commercialised press and the New Journalism, the *Express and Star* remained close to its readership. George Jones, in his study of Wolverhampton town politics, describes the *Express and Star* in 1900 as '…truly a local Wolverhampton paper concentrating on the affairs of Wolverhampton'.[122] This emphasis on localism is significant when considering the newspaper's presentation of the local volunteer soldier. A further element of the New Journalism applied particularly to the provincial press, this was the technique of 'civic boosterism'.[123] By the end of the 19th century, the commercial success of the provincial press depended on local newspapers being enthusiastic about the local area where they sold and fostering a very positive sense of identity for that area in order to create an attractive proposition for advertisers.[124] Boosterish stories and Editorials emphasised the presence of harmonious and progressive politics in a town, municipal enterprise and civic ambition. They stressed social development and well-being along with cultural vitality and economic prowess. By the early 20th century, boosterism in the provincial press gloried in aspects of the past, celebrated the noteworthy in the present and championed the great future that lay ahead.[125]

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[122] George Jones, *Borough Politics: A Study of the Wolverhampton Borough Council 1888-1964* (London: Macmillan, 1969), p. 15.
[123] See, Andrew J. H. Jackson, 'The Provincial, Local and Regional Press' in David Finkelstein (ed.), *The Edinburgh History of the British and Irish Press, Volume 2: Expansion and Evolution 1800-1900* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), pp. 709-729 Andrew J. H Jackson, 'Civic Identity, Municipal Governance and Provincial Newspapers: The Lincoln of Bernard Gilbert, Poet, Critic and Booster, 1914' *Urban History*, 42 (1) (2015), pp. 113-129.
[124] Jackson, 'Provincial, Local and Regional Press', pp. 714-715.
[125] Jackson, 'Provincial, Local and Regional Press', pp. 714-715.

The media historian Rachel Matthews lays considerable stress on pointing out that by the early years of the 20th century, the provincial newspaper was a highly profitable product with the provincial evening newspaper, in particular, having significant potential for making money.[126] Matthews argues that the impact of the New Journalism on the provincial press is that once-staid titles increasingly focused their content on engaging with their local audience in order to be attractive to advertisers. Mass circulation was something to be sought with higher readership providing a better platform to sell to advertisers.[127] By the twentieth century, newspaper profits lay in engaging a local audience. She adds: 'Thus, in the early twentieth century, the newspapermen (and it was overwhelmingly men) aimed local content at a local audience…'[128]

Wartime evening newspapers such as the *Express and Star* are worthy of much closer study. The literature has acknowledged their closeness to working-class culture, their popularity with working people, their centrality to town life and their intense commercialism. The historiography accepts they were the only source of news for many people in provincial Britain and the national press found it hard to topple their dominance in their heartlands. With close connections with its readership, the provincial evening newspaper appears an important wartime local institution worthy of scholarship. Instead, the evening newspaper has been picked over for evidence of greater themes

[126] Matthews, 'The Provincial Press' p. 645.
[127] Matthews, 'The Provincial Press',p. 645.
[128] Matthews, 'The Provincial Press', p. 645.

but has not been considered worthy of study in its own right. This thesis makes a modest attempt to change that. It examines how the *Express and Star's* commercial business model, its closeness to the reader, its belief in provincial Liberalism and the constant demand to maintain readership led it to take 'ownership' of the volunteer and use him for its own commercial purposes.

Chapter 1: The Volunteer and the Business of Newspapers.

The ethos of voluntarism reflected early twentieth-century ideas of commercial consumer choice that were central to the *Express and Star's* business and that of its advertisers. His self-determination in enlisting and volunteering for service overseas linked him closely to ideas of consumerism. Thomas Herbert Russell, Editor-in-Chief of Webster's Universal Dictionary, understood the significance of free will to consumerism. In his pre-war study of advertising methods, he explained that no consumer '…is happy in the consciousness of being forced'.[1] He added: 'The results of advertising depend upon voluntary actions on the part of free people, and threats, scares or pessimistic utterances will never make friends or customers.'

The volunteers of 1914 and 1915 were absorbed into the well-developed business model of the popular commercial press. Historians of the First World War have typically referred to the wartime press in terms of its patriotism and its desire to maintain morale among those at home.[2] Consideration has not been given to placing the volunteer soldier in the context of the commercial imperatives of the wartime press to maximise circulation to attract advertisers and increase revenue.[3] This chapter examines why the *Express and Star* and its advertisers considered the volunteer soldier such a valuable commercial

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[1] Thomas Herbert Russell, *Advertising Methods and Mediums* (Chicage: Whitman Publishing, 1910), p. 140.
[2] See, for example, DeGroot, *Back in Blighty*, pp. 237-240; J. M. Bourne, *Britain and the Great War*, p. 207; Ian Beckett, *Home Front 1914-1918: How Britain Survived the Great War* (Kew: The National Archives, 2006), p. 165.
[3] Bingham, *Family Newspapers?*, p. 20.

commodity. It explores how the newspaper rapidly incorporated the figure of the volunteer into its business model, both commercially and journalistically. Halfpenny newspapers presented themselves as 'family newspapers' out of commercial necessity to attract the maximum readership on which prosperity depended.[4] The commercial success of provincial evening newspapers like the *Express and Star* lay in their ability to deliver a mass working-class family readership to advertisers. This was commercially important in a nation in which 80 per cent of the population could be described as working class in 1914.[5] The advertising agent, Thomas Russell, explained this:

> The evening paper travels home. It is bought to read on the train or omnibus and comes right into the house where everyone is at leisure to read advertisements and write letters. The woman of the house has her opportunity. The sons and daughters are at hand to use their influence. Assuredly, the evening paper is the paper that will produce direct replies'.[6]

Russell described the provincial evening press as a 'miracle of precision' in delivering readers in a specific geographical area to advertisers and concluded 'evening newspapers do unquestionably sell goods'.[7] This chapter argues that the figure of the volunteer Tommy became a commercial centrepiece for the *Express and Star* and many of its advertisers because of his perceived value to drive sales and generate publicity thanks to his popularity with readers and his representation of family life.

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[4] Bingham, *Family Newspapers?*, p. 1 and P. 23.
[5] John Bourne, 'Introduction: The Midlands and the Great War', *Midlands History* 39 (2) (2014), pp. 157-162.
[6] Russell, *Commercial Advertising*, p. 190.
[7] Russell, *Commercial Advertising,* pp. 190-193.

The Circulation Area: Wolverhampton and the Black Country

The *Express and Star* provides an example of the working-class provincial evening press in an overwhelmingly working-class, industrial town where commerce was based around manufacturing. It has been argued that the major contribution of the Midlands to the British war effort on the home front came from manufacturing industry.[8] Early twentieth-century Wolverhampton, has been described as the metropolis of the Black Country, an 'Ironopolis' in the densely industrialised area of furnaces and factories to the north-west of Birmingham and notorious for its resultant grime and dirt.[9] The region known as the Black Country extends over approximately 160 square miles, covering the South Staffordshire Coalfield, including Dudley, Walsall and surrounding districts and goes as far north as Wolverhampton.[10] The 1915 edition of *Willing's Press Guide* described the range of commerce and manufacturing industry in the *Express and Star's* circulation area – iron-mining, smelting, founding, tool-making, hardware manufacturing, coal mining, tin ware and locks.[11] The town provides an example of an industrial district of provincial Britain that was significantly different from the metropolitan environment of the nation's political, press and military elites. One scholar has described it as being a place as far removed culturally, socially and economically from London and the Home Counties as it was possible to get.[12] For the industrial workforce,

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[8] Bourne, 'Introduction', p. 4.
[9] David Horowitz 'The Black Country', *Journal of the English Place Name Society*, 43 (2011), pp. 25-34.
[10] Trevor Raybould, 'The Black Country –What, Where, When?', *The Blackcountryman*, 43 (4) (2010), pp. 47-52. See also, Nick Moss, *Ironopolis: Standing Up for Wolverhampton* (Oxford: You Caxton Publications, 2018), 1-26.
[11] *Willing's Press Guide and Advertisers' Directory and Handbook* (London: James Willing Limited, 1915), p. 395.
[12] John Benson, *Gerald Howard-Smith and the 'Lost Generation' of Late Victorian and Edwardian England* (London: Routledge, 2017), p. 74-75.

life could be hard. According to John Benson, Edwardian Wolverhampton was overwhelmingly working class with many residents still living in wretched conditions. It had a reputation for dullness, backwardness and provincialism – one of the most insular and unfashionable regions of provincial England. [13] Officialdom at the time tended to agree with this grim assessment of the *Express and Star's* circulation heartland. A government's report on the cost of living among the working classes in industrial towns was published in 1913. Wolverhampton featured prominently.[14] The town's population was 95,328.[15] Nearly 60,000 of those had been born in the town.[16] It was considered poor enough to rank as the town with the lowest retail prices index in England and Wales.[17] The cost of food staples and coal in the town had increased by 14 per cent between 1905 and 1912.[18] Wages, however, had remained static except for pay for skilled men in engineering, which had risen by ten per cent.[19] The report described the typical house of a working-class family in Wolverhampton. Several houses were grouped around small communal courtyards. Narrow alleyways led out to the road.[20] The living room and scullery were downstairs with two bedrooms upstairs. In September 1915, London's *The Academy* magazine sent a journalist to tour England by train and report on his findings.[21] Oswald Davis described how he passed through

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[13] John Benson 'Domination, Subordination and Struggle: Middle-Class Marriage in Early Twentieth Century Wolverhampton', *Women's History Review*, 19 (3) (2010), pp. 421-437.
[14] *Cost of Living of the Working Classes. Report of an Enquiry by the Board of Trade into Working-Class Rents and Retail Prices* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1913).
[15] *Census of England and Wales 1911*: *Summary Tables* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1915), p. 8.
[16] *Summary Tables*, p. 371.
[17] *Cost of Living of the Working Class*, p. xi.
[18] *Cost of Living of the Working Class*, p. 13.
[19] *Cost of Living of the Working Class*, p. 28.
[20] *Cost of Living of the Working Class*, p. 260.
[21] Oswald H. Davis, 'Through England in Wartime', *The Academy*, 4 September 1915, pp. 153-154.

Wolverhampton and the Black Country as ‘factories rode the dark’ and ‘the slag banks went by like waves’. The train was packed with soldiers and Wolverhampton station was cold, desolate and ‘grudged any comfort for our fighters’. Another London magazine, *The Ludgate*, had sent a writer to explore the town for an article. He reported that it had not taken long to find the ‘worst and slummiest parts of Wolverhampton’ [22]

The Publicity Value of the Volunteer.

Promotional booklets published in 1907 and 1916 left readers in no doubt about the *Express and Star’s* commercial priorities.[23] There was no mention of Editorial content. Instead, the publications detailed a complicated price structure for everything from small, classified advertising to large retail display advertisements. Photographs showed smartly dressed clerks in the front office waiting to receive advertisements from the public. Extravagant, scrolled type declared the newspaper to be ‘The Leading Commercial Organ for the Midlands’.[24] The booklets told potential advertisers that the newspaper ‘…has a vast circulation which far exceeds that of any contemporary’. If that was not enough, they declared the newspaper’s editions ‘…reach the hands of investors and commercial men throughout Staffordshire…’ The proprietors of the *Express and Star*, Norval and John Douglas Graham, were so confident of their newspaper’s commercial prowess they offered a personal tour of the

[22] E. T. Slater, ‘Life in the Black Country’, *The Ludgate*, June 1900, pp. 173-176
[23] *Advertisement Tariff Book 1907* (Wolverhampton, *Express and Star*, 1907) and *Advertisement Tariff Book 1916* (Wolverhampton: *Express and Star*, 1916).
[24] *Advertisement Tariff Book 1916*, p. 4.

newspaper offices to any potential advertiser.[25] The brothers had been running the business for five years by 1914. They had taken over after the death of their father, the founder, Thomas Graham, in 1909 with Norval Graham becoming chairman and John Douglas Graham becoming general manager.[26] The booklets were an elaborate indication that by 1914 the owners of the *Express and Star* placed readership and advertising at the heart of their business.

For the commercial press, circulation and advertising formed the bedrock of the newspaper industry. Kennedy Jones, one of Lord Northcliffe's senior managers, described sales and advertising as being essential for the prosperity of any title. For a newspaper to succeed '…its prosperity depends on the money it obtains for advertisements; and the rate it charges for its advertisements are based upon its sales'.[27] He noted: '…when all is said and done, the single fact remains that the foundation of a modern newspaper's advertising revenue are its daily sales'. This commercial model placed the Editor of a newspaper like the *Express and Star,* at the centre of the business. He was no longer a writer, an educationalist or a social reformer. The industrialised press required him to be a business manager responsible for attracting readers. In 1913, George Binney Dibblee, the former general manager of the *Manchester Guardian,* provided a detailed description of the commercial realities of the Editor's role - with responsibility for circulation and

[25] *Advertisement Tariff Book 1916*, p. 7.
[26] See, *Express and Star,* 23 June 1909, p. 2; *Express and Star*, 11 February 1944, p. 2.
[27] Kennedy Jones, *Fleet Street and Downing Street* (London: Hutchinson, 1920), pp. 209-210.

getting 'utmost publicity' placed in his hands.[28] According to Dibblee, publicising the newspaper itself was a particular problem. Rival newspapers could not be used for promotional activity as it handed them revenue and credibility, while billboards and hoardings were considered cheapening. The Editor's job was to be constantly scanning the horizon for issues or personalities of the moment to publicise and sell newspapers – even if it meant the newspaper had to 'create' the news itself.[29] His finger had to be constantly on the pulse of what was interesting the public. He could miss nothing, had to find exclusives and involve the newspaper with local efforts and campaigns in the circulation area. Specifically, he had to 'bring prominent names conspicuously before the public'. Dibblee ended his job description with a key requirement: '…he must watch anxiously for any legitimate object of sensationalism, such as is sometimes offered in a war or, as is at other times the case, may be invented and planned in the office of the newspaper'.[30] Dibblee had indicated that the Editor's job was not only to find compelling human-interest news but also to develop it himself if it was not readily available.

This background demonstrates that when the local volunteer soldier emerged into the public life of Wolverhampton in August 1914, the techniques of creating campaigns, developing human-interest stories and placing the newspaper itself at the centre of the news agenda to increase sales were

[28] Dibblee, *The Newspaper,* pp. 127-128.
[29] Dibblee, *The Newspaper*, p. 129.
[30] Dibblee, *The Newspaper*, p. 129.

familiar ground for a newspaper like the *Express and Star* and its Editor, Andrew Meikle. The long-established Editor was a veteran of the era of the commercialised press and the New Journalism. He was not only a long-standing journalist, aged 67 at the outbreak of war but also a 'commercial Editor' with experience of the business and production side of the newspaper industry.[31] Meikle's career indicates the 'professionalization' of journalism by 1914 – a professional journalist, taking his skills to different newspapers around the country to advance his career.[32] He was the first Editor of the *Express and Star*, appointed in 1885. He had started his career as a print compositor on the *Dunfermline Press* before becoming a reporter on the same newspaper before moving around the country. He had been Editor of the *Bolton Guardian* and *Somerset County Herald* before becoming Editor and business manager of the *Warrington Examiner*. [33] The Editor was a professional journalist steeped in local news. His newspaper saw the volunteer specifically in terms of the town's Territorial Force units and already had established links with them. The Territorials were the product of the Liberal Government's pre-war Army reforms. It was what Lord Haldane, the architect of the reforms described as a 'citizen or Territorial Army'.[34] Volunteer members trained part-time with their units around the country.[35] The Territorial Force's main purpose was to provide home defence in time of war but members could

[31] *Express and Star,* 19 April 1921, p. 3; *Express and Star*, 15 August 1922, p. 4.
[32] For professionalisation of the press, see Hampton, *Visions of the Press*, pp. 76-77; Wiener, *Papers for the Millions*, pp. 58-59.
[33] *Express and Star,* 19 April 1921, p. 3; *Express and Star*, 15 August 1922, p. 4.
[34] Richard Haldane, *Before the War* (London: Cassell, 1920), pp. 33-34.
[35] For accounts of the formation of the Territorial Force, see Ian Beckett, Timothy Bowman and Mark Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 7-8 and 86-134; Ian Beckett, 'The Territorial Force', in Ian F. W. Beckett and Keith Simpson (eds.), *A Nation in Army: A Social Study of the British Army in the First World War* (London: Tom Donovan, 1985), pp. 127-164.

volunteer for overseas service – the Overseas Service obligation. At the outbreak of war, the Territorial Force stood at 268,777 officers and men of which less than 20,000 had volunteered for service abroad.[36] Wolverhampton had three Territorial units. [37] Wolverhampton's Territorial infantry battalion, the 6th Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment, had its headquarters at the Drill Hall in Stafford Street in the town centre.[38] The separate companies of the battalion were in Wednesfield, Willenhall, Tipton, Darlaston, Bilston and Tettenhall – all core circulation areas for the *Express and Star*. The 3rd North Midland Field Ambulance, Royal Army Medical Corps, was also based there. The 3rd North Midland Brigade of the Royal Field Artillery, along with the 4th Staffordshire Battery, had its headquarters and stables out of the town centre in Newhampton Road. The Brigade's other two batteries were in West Bromwich and Stafford. Before the war, the *Express and Star* published the Territorial's weekly activities and training schedules every Thursday under the headline 'Territorial Orders'.[39] The Territorial buildings were prominent in the town and the Territorial commanding officers represented the town's social hierarchy and its close connections with the *Express and Star*. Lieutenant Colonel Thomas F. Waterhouse, commanding officer of the 6th Battalion, was a solicitor with offices in Lichfield Street in the town centre.[40] He was clerk to the magistrates in Wolverhampton and Sedgley as well as being Clerk to the

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[36] Beckett, 'Territorial Force', p. 130
[37] Wolverhampton Town Council, *Wolverhampton Red Book and Directory 1914* (Wolverhampton: Alfred Hinde, 1914), pp. 116-117.
[38] On 15 August 1914, Territorial Associations were authorised to raise new units to replace those volunteering for overseas service. Hence, a 'second line' battalion the 2/6th Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment came into existence and the existing 6th Battalion became the 1/6th Battalion. See, Beckett, 'The Territorial Force', p. 132. The 2/6th Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment was formed in September 1914 in Wolverhampton. See, E. A. James, *British Regiments 1914-1918* (London: Samson Books, Joint Edition, 1978), p. 80.
[39] See, for example, *Express and Star*, 23 July 1914, p. 4.
[40] Wolverhampton Town Council, *Wolverhampton Red Book*, p. 263.

Governors of Wolverhampton Grammar School.[41] Waterhouse had been an original member of the South Staffordshire Golf Club along with the founder of the *Express and Star*, Thomas Graham.[42] Lieutenant Colonel Howard H. C. Dent was commanding officer of the 3rd North Midland Field Ambulance.[43] Dent was a surgeon at Wolverhampton General Hospital and the medical officer to Wolverhampton's Royal Orphanage.[44] He lived in Oaks Crescent in Chapel Ash, Wolverhampton.[45] The Editor of the *Express and Star* was a near neighbour, living around the corner in Merridale Road.[46]

The volunteer's potential value as a commercial commodity rapidly became evident in the first few days of war. He possessed the characteristics and status of the figure Dibblee had described as being central to the successful promotion of a popular newspaper – a prominent local personality and a 'legitimate object of sensationalism'. The military historian, K. W. Mitchinson, has described the urban working-class Territorials of 1914.[47] They came from the closely packed terraces of industrial towns, worked in the same workshops and factories, attended the same schools, drank in the same pubs and supported the same football teams. In Wolverhampton, could be added the

[41] Obituary: T. F. Waterhouse, *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 12 September 1930, p. 4.
[42] Trevor Boliver, *South Staffordshire Golf Club 1892-1992* (Wolverhampton: South Staffordshire Golf Club, 1992), pp. 8-12.
[43] Wolverhampton Town Council, *Wolverhampton Red Book*, p. 117.
[44] Wolverhampton Town Council, *Wolverhampton Red Book*, p. 138.
[45] Census of England and Wales, 1911. RG78. Registration District 369, Sub-District 4, Enumeration District 21, Schedule 275.
[46] Census of England and Wales, 1911. RG78. Registration District 369, Sub-District 4, Enumeration District 20, Schedule 187.
[47] K. W. Mitchinson, *The Territorial Force at War, 1914-1916* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 37.

fact that they felt at home speaking in the Black Country dialect.[48] Once war was declared, the volunteer was transformed from an everyday part of life in Wolverhampton into a heroic figurehead. Officers of the 6th Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment noted this change; the Territorials abruptly went from being normal respectable citizens in Wolverhampton to professional soldiers preparing to fight what the *Express and Star* had described as a ruthless and well-equipped enemy. [49] This change appeared to take place when members of the battalion volunteered for service overseas, rather than home defence, and entered into the Imperial Service Obligation.[50] The officers noted: 'Those who value not only their lives but the comforts they have earned for themselves and the positions they have won by their work or merit, can perhaps realise the awful oppression and the positive heroism of that occasion.'[51]

At the outbreak of war, the *Express and Star* reported on a mood that was not jingoistic but intensely curious. The volunteer rapidly became a figure of compelling public fascination. Meikle and the journalists at the *Express and Star* had the evidence in their own pages of the transformation of the volunteer from the everyday to the heroic – a figure of significant news value. All three Territorial units had been away on summer training camps during the Bank Holiday weekend before the outbreak of war. Crowds lined the streets as they returned to Wolverhampton, evidence that the war had already become a

[48] A Committee of Officers, *The War History of the Sixth Battalion The South Staffordshire Regiment (T. F.)* (London: Heinemann, 1924), p. 3; *Express and Star*, 17 October 1914, p. 7.
[49] Committee of Officers, *War History of the Sixth Battalion*, p. 3; *Express and Star*, 17 October 1914, p. 2.
[50] Beckett, Bowman and Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War*, p. 12.
[51] Committee of Officers, *War History of the Sixth Battalion*, p. 8.

human-interest story on a large scale.[52] Outside the Stafford Street Drill Hall, the crowds were so large; traffic had to be stopped as the 6th Battalion arrived back at their headquarters. The *Express and Star* reporter noted the human interest - many in the crowd were mothers, sisters and sweethearts, and most were in tears.[53] The following day, the Territorials of the 3rd North Midland Brigade arrived back in Wolverhampton. Describing the guns and limbers turning into the gates of the Newhampton Road Drill Hall, the *Express and Star* reporter at the scene noted things had changed. There was a large crowd – in the past, nobody would have stopped or noticed the routine activity. Now, the guns, horses and men '…provided some attraction and quickened the excitement'.[54] On 9 August, crowds lined the streets as the 6th Battalion marched from the Stafford Street Drill Hall to West Park for Sunday service at the bandstand.[55] People gathered in Newhampton Road to watch the Territorial gunners of the 4th Staffordshire Battery, carry out field gun practice and value commandeered horses. The same evening, large numbers crowded to watch Territorials carry joints of beef to a local bakery for cooking.[56] When the 6th Battalion left Wolverhampton for Burton upon Trent on 11 August, St John's Square and all the surrounding streets were jammed with crowds.[57] The mood of mass public engagement was encouraged by the *Express and Star*. The Editor urged readers to turn out whenever they could, writing '…their sacrifice merits the best send-off we can give. Bands and all reasonable "pomp

[52] *Express and Star*, 3 August 1914, p. 3
[53] *Express and Star*, 3 August 1914, p. 3.
[54] *Express and Star*, 4 August 1914, p. 4.
[55] *Express and Star*, 10 August, 1914, p. 4.
[56] *Express and Star*, 7 August, 1914, p. 2.
[57] *Express and Star,* 11 August 1914, p. 2. Burton upon Trent had been designated the place of concentration for the four battalions of the Staffordshire Infantry Brigade. See, Committee of Officers, *War History of the Sixth Battalion*, p. 1.

and circumstance" should be provided'.[58] The newspaper reported how the overwhelming public interest in the volunteers was raised in the pulpit. The Reverend J. V. Wilson, vicar of St Andrew's Church in Whitmore Reans, Wolverhampton, used his Sunday sermon to denounce the war as 'God's scourge'. He noted that the churches were empty while 'people crowd the streets to watch the Terriers'. [59] In Wolverhampton, the volunteers were already showing themselves to be a fascinating representation of what the night news Editor of the *Daily Mail* called 'this biggest human story'.[60]

Within 48 hours of the outbreak of war, the *Express and Star* took the opportunity to take ownership of the volunteer soldier and his family and friends. With the Editor's leader column focused on the national and international dimensions of the war, it fell to the newspaper's Special Commissioner to lay claim to the volunteer. The role of Special Commissioner was important in early twentieth-century journalism. The historian Catherine Waters describes the position, sometimes referred to as 'Special Correspondent' as the 'Star Turn in the Great Print Circus' of Edwardian journalism. [61] The Special Commissioner provided the human-interest reportage of events with graphic prose, a first-person voice that allowed readers to feel part of events. The role of 'Special Commissioner' or 'Special Correspondent' was a specific and important position in popular newspapers

[58] *Express and Star,* 10 November 1914, p. 2.
[59] *Express and Star*, 10 August 1914, p. 4.
[60] Tom Clarke, *My Northcliffe Diary* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1931), p. 84.
[61] Catherine Waters, *Special Correspondence and the Newspaper Press in Victorian Print Culture 1850-1886* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), pp. 5-10.

in the era of the New Journalism. At the *Express and Star*, The Special Commissioner was Henry J. Whittick, another long-standing professional of the New Journalism.[62] His article appeared prominently at the top of page two, close to the leader column.[63] Whittick placed the newspaper at the centre of what he saw as the community effort of war by using the word 'our'. His article was headlined 'An Appeal to Our Citizenship' and used the phrases 'Our Territorials' and 'Our brothers in arms'. The article read as if the newspaper, the community and the volunteer were one entity. Whittick used human interest to pay homage to the volunteer. He wrote that the war would affect every man, woman and child in the most intimate of ways. The Territorials' patriotism was being demonstrated surprisingly and dramatically. Whittick went on: 'Instead of engaging in sham fights and the study and solution of theories and manoeuvres in the different training centres, the Territorial is ready here and in other towns to guard our homes from attack.'[64] The Special Commissioner's lengthy article, 17 column inches, moved beyond factual reporting of the volunteer and instead engaged personally with him and those around him. The special commissioner recognised him as a figure of intense interest and admiration – a valuable mascot for the town and the newspaper itself.

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[62] Whittick had worked on the *Blackburn Times* and the *Lancashire Daily Post.* He had been Editor of the weekly *Herts Advertiser* in St Albans before joining the *Express and Star* in 1900. He served as chairman of the Birmingham and Midland Counties district of the Institute of Journalists and became a Fellow in 1914. He was appointed Editor in 1922 on the death of Andrew Meikle. See, 'Death of Mr. Henry John Whittick', *Express and Star*, 25 November 1937, p. 1.
[63] *Express and Star*, 6 August 1914, p. 2.
[64] *Express and Star*, 6 August 1914, p. 2.

The Volunteer and Newspaper Advertising.

Advertising revenue was at the heart of the *Express and Star's* business model with the newspaper regularly publishing nearly a thousand column inches of large display advertising each week before the outbreak of war Once war broke out these volumes fell by more than a half.[65] Newspapermen such as Ralph Blumenfeld, wartime Editor of the *Daily Express*, Kennedy Jones, the *Daily Mail* executive, and the war correspondent Hamilton Fyfe, all stressed that by 1914, newspapers were money-making institutions and their prosperity and survival depended on advertising.[66] Fyfe bluntly commented: 'When it is asked why newspapers do not publish fewer advertisements, the query is equivalent to inquiring: Why don't they cut their throats?'[67] He added that there was 'big money' made from the advertisements of those who supply 'the needs and whims of the masses'. Rolfe Scott-James, the former Literary Editor of the *Daily News,* pointed out in his 1913 survey of the press that the working classes and the lower middle class were particularly attractive to advertisers of cheap, mass-produced goods.[68] He commented ruefully on mass production and the poorer sections of society: 'Manufacturers wanted their shillings and their pennies – so many shillings, and so many pennies'.[69]

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[65] See Appendix I for the statistical analysis of display advertising for the period July to December 1914.
[66] See, Blumenfeld, *The Press in My Time*, pp. 205-206; Jones, *Fleet Street and Downing Street*, p. 209-210 and Hamilton Fyfe, *Press Parade: Behind the Scenes of the Newspaper Racket* (London: Watts & Co, 1936), pp. 1-25.
[67] Fyfe, *Press Parade*, p. 6. Fyfe worked for the *Daily Mirror*, the *Daily Mail* and *The Times* during his journalistic career. See, *The Times*, 19 June 1951, p. 6.
[68] Rolfe Scott-James, *The Influence of the Press* (London: S. W. Partridge, 1913), p. 179.
[69] Scott-James, *Influence of the Press,* pp. 180-181.

Advertising dominated the appearance of the *Express and Star*. Small classified advertisements filled the front page and spilt over onto the back page with several more columns. Considering that, the newspaper could only print four, six or eight-page editions this was a significant amount of space. [70] Classified advertising included jobs and money-lending along with properties to rent, items for sale and public notices.[71] Larger display advertisements, often running across several columns with elaborate type and layouts, illustrations and occasional photographs, appeared inside. National brands such as Oxo, Player's cigarettes, Rinso cleaner, Nestle's Milk and Lipton, the grocers, all advertised regularly in the *Express and Star*.[72] The exception to the division between classified and display advertising was based on localism. The Black Country's three biggest department stores - Beattie's department store in Wolverhampton, Jay's in Walsall and F. W. Cook in Dudley - all placed regular large advertisements, which were allowed to appear on the front page amongst the classified advertisements.[73]

For the *Express and Star's* advertisers, the volunteer soldier became a complicated, commercially-flexible figure, manipulated to appear as multiple personalities in multiple settings, according to the product or brand being sold. The first use of the image of the volunteer soldier in an advertisement in the

[70] The limitations of the printing presses at the *Express and Star* allowed the newspaper to publish only four, six or eight page editions. See, Rhodes, *The Loaded Hour*, pp. 58-59.
[71] See Appendix II for a breakdown of classified and display advertising for week beginning Monday, 20 July 1914.
[72] See *Express and Star*, 19 August 1914, p. 4; *Express and Star*, 31 July 1914, p. 4; *Express and Star*, 1 July 1914, p. 6; *Express and Star*, 7 August 1914, p. 4; *Express and Star*, 8 August 1914, p. 4.
[73] See, *Express and Star*, 20 July 1914, p. 1; *Express and Star*, 21 July 1914, p. 1; *Express and Star*, 24 |July 1914, p. 1.

Express and Star came on Friday, 9 October 1914, in an advertisement for Player's Country Life cigarettes.[74] One of the first to make extensive use of the volunteer, however, was the British Souvenir Spoon Company. The company regularly placed large advertisements of 30 column inches to sell, via mail order, sixpenny commemorative silver-plated spoons illustrated with the faces of wartime personalities such as Lord Kitchener, Lord Roberts, Sir Ian Hamilton and Admiral Jellicoe. [75] The manufacturers played heavily on readers' emotional attachment to the volunteer. In the company's depiction, he was a heroic figure leaving for war, rushing valiantly towards exploding shells on the battlefield. The company's copywriters told readers: 'Tommy is everybody's hero', and urged them to buy the spoons 'for Tommy's sake'. The reader was advised: 'Keep the set for Tommy when he comes home.' For the makers of Perfection soap, the volunteer became a cheery, sleeves-rolled-up cartoon personality in a three-column advertisement [76] Along with a grinning Jack Tar, he helped a glamorous Britannia dunk a screaming 'baby Kaiser' into a tub of foaming suds, at the same time prodding him with a mop. Perfection soap could 'wash and cleanse the dirtiest'. Meanwhile, the manufacturers of OXO beef extract took a similar view of Tommy's fortitude and stoicism in the face of adversity but decided to create a harder edge and placed him in a more realistic setting. [77] OXO showed two Tommies walking side by side down a rutted track in the rain with shells exploding nearby. The figures were more realistic but still young, handsome and square-jawed with

[74] *Express and Star*, 9 October 1914, p. 4. The advertisement showed a soldier behind a machine gun in a shallow trench and was illustrated in cigarette-card style with a caption reading 'Type of British Army: Infantry Entrenched with Machine Gun'.
[75] *Express and Star*, 13 October 1915, p. 5.
[76] *Express and Star*, 27 October 1915, p. 5.
[77] *Express and Star*, 19 November 1915, p. 6.

smart greatcoats and beaming smiles. The sales line explained: 'A cup of OXO and bread, or a few biscuits, enables one to carry on for hours, whether at the front or at home.' In September 1915, an advertisement placed by Associated Provincial Picture Houses Limited, a London-based cinema chain, depicted a crowd of smiling young Tommies and their sweethearts thronged outside the new Queen's Picture House in Queen Square, Wolverhampton.[78] The company was opening a new cinema in the town and the advertisement ran from top to bottom of the page across three columns – a lucrative seventy-two column inches altogether. At the front of the crowd, a smart young officer sat in an open-topped sports tourer motor car with a young woman in the passenger seat. It is the only visual depiction of an officer in an advertisement during the period of this study. This may be explained by the fact that the company was trying to sell the new cinema as appealing to the better-off in the town with tearooms, café-lounge, smoke room and tapestries on the walls.[79]

Throughout the war, H. Samuel advertised their mass-produced jewellery on Friday evenings. They placed small but strikingly illustrated advertising at the bottom of right-hand pages. Their advertising turned the tough and resilient image of Tommy on its head. Instead, he became a tender, hopeless romantic, at home in the world of wedding rings and elaborately-scrolled picture frames. In one advertisement, the handsome young volunteer was down on one knee.[80] His sweetheart, her head a mass of thick dark curls, was lowering her eyes

[78] *Express and Star,* 29 September 1915, p. 6.
[79] *Express and Star*, 27 September 1915, p. 2.
[80] *Express and Star*, 15 October 1915, p. 5

demurely to the ground. The advertising copy briskly announced 'Before you propose! Find out the lucky gem for your lady-love's birth month. Then think of her joy when she finds her engagement ring has her own Lucky Gem.' In November 1915, the company illustrated their advertisement with a wedding scene. The volunteer looked strong and dependable while his bride smiled coyly through a delicate lace veil. They were standing inside a huge H. Samuel ring. The copy told the reader there was a gift for any soldier who purchased one of the company's 'famous lucky wedding rings'. [81] H. Samuel was equally interested in using Tommy to sell wrist watches, one of the latest items to be made by factory mass production.[82] The wrist watch was something of a fashionable novelty for serving soldiers.[83] The advertisement artwork showed a manly arm stretched out in the darkness. Strapped on the firm wrist was a watch with luminous hands and numbers. The headline was 'Tell the Time in the Dark'.[84] At 21 shillings, they were proving 'a great boon in the trenches at the front'.

The manufacturers of patent medicines - pills, tonics and lotions – advertised daily but rarely placed large advertisements. In the week beginning 20 July 1914, they placed 40 column inches of advertising.[85] By 1914, patent medicine advertising in newspapers was notorious. The trade was the subject of an

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[81] *Express and Star*, 19 November 1915, p. 5.
[82] W. H. Fraser, *The Coming of the Mass Market 1850-1914* (London: Macmillan, 1981), pp. 191-192. Watch prices had fallen as low as 15 shillings to 20 shillings each by the turn of the century and demand had grown enormously in the years leading up to the First World War.
[83] John Brophy and Eric Partridge, *Dictionary of Tommies' Songs and Slang, 1914-1918* (Barnsley: Frontline Books, 2008 edition), pp. 206-207.
[84] *Express and Star*, 22 October 1915, p. 5.
[85] See Appendix IV for patent medicine advertising volumes between July and September 1914.

investigation by a Commons select committee that published its report in 1914. It highlighted the patent medicine industry's newspaper advertising – estimated to be worth two million pounds a year – as being of serious concern.[86] The committee concluded that patent medicines made up 'one of the most considerable sources of income' for many newspapers. Some small provincial newspapers would not have existed without it.[87] The report explained how newspapers drew 'a line of varying strictness' over patent medicine advertising. Some exercised a 'severe censorship' and others practically closed their columns to the patent medicine industry. The report regretted that '…most newspaper proprietors do not regard it as incumbent upon them to test the good faith of secret remedy advertising…' [88] Thomas H. S. Escott, the Editor of the *Fortnightly Review,* lamented how the new popular press allowed the latest political and diplomatic debates to sit alongside advertisements featuring 'ladies or housemaids excruciated by backache'.[89]

The *Express and Star* had no such qualms and welcomed patent medicine advertising. This included brands like Zam-buk ointment for cuts and bruises as used by 'soldiers in the trenches'.[90] Among other patent medicine advertisers were Peps throat and chest remedy, Grape-nuts, Phosferine tonic, Carter's Little Liver Pills, Angiers Emulsion for 'catarrh of the digestive organs', Scott's Emulsion, Hall's tonic wine and Dr William's Pink Pills. Beecham's Pills

[86] *Report from the Select Committee on Patent Medicines* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1914), p. x.
[87] *Report from the Select Committee on Patent Medicines*, p. x.
[88] *Report from the Select Committee on Patent Medicines*, p. xi.
[89] T. H. S. Escott, 'Old and New in the Daily Press', *Quarterly Review*, No. 227 (1917), pp, 353-368.
[90] *Express and Star*, 8 October 1915, p. 6.

placed a small single column advertisement in the front-page classified section every day. Veno's cough medicine was a regular advertiser as was Owbridge's cough syrup. The stereotypical view is that newspapers were full of 'patriotic advertising for products to send to Tommies'. [91] This view sees advertisers presenting a relentlessly positive view of the war and fighting men.[92] The evidence of patent medicine advertising in the *Express and Star* indicates this was not the case. The manufacturers of patent medicines seized the figure of the volunteer Tommy with relish and presented him as physically and mentally damaged – injured, exhausted and vulnerable. They drew him as a nervous wreck after long hours of work and time spent in the trenches. Often, the result was a graphic and disturbing depiction of the effects of war. Hall's Wine provided an example in November 1915 with an unusually prominent advertisement covering thirty column inches.[93] The illustration showed a Tommy sitting slumped in a wheelchair with his hands limply in his lap. His head was swathed in bandages and he looked tired, anxious and bewildered. Alongside him stood a smart, young nurse in a starched, white apron. She was holding a bottle of Hall's Wine tonic. The copy told readers that the tonic was 'working marvels' for men who had been invalided or wounded at the front. The sales pitch stated: 'The very strongest of us needs some reinforcement for our strength under the burdens of anxiety and strain we bear today.' On 19 October 1915, Hall's used an anonymous testimonial from a soldier as its sales pitch. The soldier stated: 'I had my arm blown off at Givenchy, a bullet wound

[91] DeGroot, *Back in Blighty*, pp. 176-177.
[92] Kate Macdonald, 'Popular Periodicals: Wartime Newspapers, Magazines and Journals', in Ann-Marie Einhaus and Katherine Isobel Baxter (eds.), *The Edinburgh Companion to the First World War and the Arts* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), pp. 245-259.
[93] *Express and Star*, 23 November 1915, p. 5.

in my shoulder and shrapnel in my head, so you can imagine the state my nerves were in. I can truthfully say Hall's Wine has strengthened my nerves wonderfully.' [94] In October 1915, Hall's took a position at the top of page five with an advertisement of twenty-four column inches.[95] The drawing showed two soldiers, both were smiling weakly. One was in a wheelchair with a blanket wrapped around his knees and a walking stick propped up against his leg. The other stood alongside, with his uniform jacket hanging over his shoulder and his arm is in a sling. The advertising copy was direct.

> It is one thing to patch up a patient who at worst is only slightly below par; it is quite another thing to restore nerve to a shattered man; to restore full strength to a man weakened by wounds, loss of blood, or grievous operation; to restore health where health seems almost to have gone forever. Hall's is doing and has done these things.[96]

The patent medicine industry also used the volunteer in 'advertising features' – advertisements that were made to look like news stories and published in the news columns. They were a commercial technique frowned on by some in the newspaper trade but were published regularly by the *Express and Star* throughout the war. A feature in the monthly journal, *The Nineteenth Century*, described 'advertising features' as a sham and deceitful with newspapers being prepared to sell their independence to advertisers.[97] An *Express and Star* article from 7 October 1915 provides an example. Under the headline 'Your Doctor in Khaki', a report explained that a respected, although anonymous, local doctor was leaving his practice to go to war. Equipped with

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[94] *Express and Star*, 19 October 1915, p. 5.
[95] *Express and Star,* 26 October 1915, p. 5.
[96] *Express and Star,* 26 October 1915, p. 5.
[97] See, H. J. Palmer, 'The March of the Advertiser', *The Nineteenth Century*, (January 1897), pp. 135-141.

his ‘khaki and new leather’, he wished his patients a sorrowful farewell before reminding them to use Warner’s Safe Cure to stay healthy while he was away.[98]

It is noteworthy that female figures appear in many of the *Express and Star’s* wartime advertisements – Perfection soap’s Britannia, H. Samuel’s brides-to-be, nurses caring for Tommy in patent medicine advertisements and the throngs of young women accompanying young Tommies to Wolverhampton’s new cinema. Advertisers saw women as an important commercial target, viewing them as controllers of the household budget in working-class homes.[99] Evening newspapers provided the access to the working-class family home. The journalist Dorothy Peel was a former Editor of *Hearth and Home,* who in 1914 published her household-management volume, *Marriage on Small Means.* [100] She argued newspapers were successful because of the goodwill of women, ‘…for it is women who spend the greatest part of men’s earnings and so make advertisements pay, and without advertisements, no newspaper can live’.[101] Newspapers themselves adopted the same philosophy towards women readers as the advertisers. The *Daily Mail’s* Kennedy Jones said the newspaper’s interest in female readers was purely commercial.[102] He argued

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[98] *Express and Star*, 7 October 1915, p. 4.
[99] For detailed discussion of the central role of working-class women in managing household budgets see: Joanna Bourke, ‘Housewifery in Working-Class England 1860-1914’, *Past and Present*, 143 (1) (1994), pp. 3-47; Carl Chinn, *They Worked All Their Lives: Women of the Urban Poor 1880-1939* (Lancaster: Carnegie Publishing, 2006), pp. 17-18; Angela Woollacott, *On Her Their Lives Depend: Munitions Workers in the Great War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 122-124.
[100] Dorothy Peel, *Life’s Enchanted Cup: An Autobiography, 1872-1933,* (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1933), pp. 129. See also, *The Times,* 8 August 1934, p. 12.
[101] Peel, *Life’s Enchanted Cup*, p. 229-230.
[102] Jones, *Fleet Street and Downing Street*, p. 331.

women were more loyal and conservative than men and '…if we had them with us and got a firm footing in their homes, the value of our papers from the advertiser's point of view would be greatly enhanced'.[103]

Advertising used the personal and the individual to attract the consumer with the volunteer providing the human-interest figure for a range of cheap branded products aimed at the working-class market. The advertising psychologist, Walter Dill Scott, explained the commercial value of human interest in 1910. It did not matter if the consumer saw the volunteer in the glow of positive proud patriotism or had deep sympathy for his selfless but dangerous plight – both had a commercial value and could be manipulated to generate sales and publicity. Scott saw this potential when he argued:

> …appeals to the sympathy either for pleasure or for pain, may be used for great profit by the advertiser. We are not cold, logical machines, but we are all human beings, with hearts in our breasts and blood in our veins, and we enjoy the depictions of real life with all its joys and sorrows.[104]

Advertisers were not alone in this outlook; the New Journalism, also recognised the human-interest value in the 'joys and sorrows' of the volunteer Tommy.

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[103] Jones, *Fleet Street and Downing Street*, p. 331.
[104] Walter Dill Scott, *The Psychology of Advertising in Theory and Practice* (Boston: Small Maynard & Co, 1910), p. 147.

The *Express and Star,* the Volunteer and Human-Interest Journalism.

By 1914, the *Express and Star* was a product of the era of the New Journalism and its journalists were well versed in the techniques of human interest. It had absorbed the views of men like T. P. O'Connor, one of the pioneers of the new methods of 'the more personal tone'. O'Connor's opinion was that personal journalism went far beyond public figures and that nobody's life was private any longer.[105] The *Express and Star's* familiarity with the methods of the New Journalism before August 1914 indicates how the newspaper was able to place the figure of the volunteer soldier so rapidly within the framework of its business model. Examination of the editions during the week beginning 20 July 1914, the last full week before the outbreak of war, provide evidence of the *Express and Star's* expertise in the use of these techniques - human interest, late-breaking news and information, up-to-the-minute stories from politics, salacious stories, gossip and sport. There was great emphasis on the electric telegraph's ability to provide up-to-date news and sport. The 7pm Final edition carried edited reports of that afternoon's debates in the House of Commons that had not started until 2.45pm. All the afternoon's cricket scores appeared on the same page along with that afternoon's horse racing results, up until the 4.45pm race, as well as the final betting odds. Another four columns of sports news appeared on page five. Page four carried the full closing London stock market prices along with the closing prices from the

[105] T. P. O'Connor, 'The New Journalism', *New Review* (October 1889), pp. 423-434. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, O'Connor founded the *Star* and the *Sun,* both evening papers. They aimed for a popular market with gossip, horse racing, divorce and murder cases and household features. See, 'T. P. O'Connor' in Laurel Brake and Marysa Demoor (eds.), *Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century Journalism in Great Britain and Ireland* (London: Academia Press and The British Library, 2009), p. 467.

Birmingham Stock Exchange.[106] Page two carried a leader column no longer than twelve column inches, a column of readers' letters and the local gossip column by 'Vigilant'.[107] The gossip column was edited so that it appeared to be the work of one individual. In reality, it was an amalgam of items produced by various members of the reporting staff.[108] A daily romantic serial appeared on either page five or six. At the outbreak of war, the running story was 'Wings of Love' by Guy Thorne who had also written the previously popular 'Mantrap Manor'.[109]

The staples of provincial journalism were covered comprehensively – town council meetings, the police courts, crown courts, inquests, industrial disputes, road and factory accidents, fetes and festivals.[110] The degree of detailed coverage had led to the *Express and Star* being referred to as 'The Bible of the Black Country' by the early years of the twentieth century.[111] Whenever there was an opportunity, the salacious and the titillating were prominent. Hearings for breach of promise, for example, allowed the *Express and Star* to display the New Journalism's focus on human interest. Typical was, 'On the Sands: Kiss in the Moonlight and a Broken Promise' on Saturday 25 July 1914.[112] Divorce courts provided such rich pickings that there was a regular Saturday round-up column of lurid cases under the headline 'Husband And

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[106] See, for example, *Express and Star,* 20 July 1914, pp. 4-5.
[107] See, for example, *Express and Star*, 22 July 1914, p. 2.
[108] Seaton, *Malcolm Graham*, pp. 25-26.
[109] *Express and Star*, 21 July 1914, p. 6.
[110] For an example of Police Court coverage see *Express and Star,* 20 July 1914, p. 4. For an example of coverage of Wolverhampton Town Council's Education Committee, see, *Express and Star*, 21 July 1914, p. 3.
[111] Rhodes, *Loaded Hour*, p. 41.
[112] *Express and Star*, 25 July 1914, p. 6.

Wives: States Of Unhappiness In The Divorce Courts'.[113] Detailed reporting of the criminal courts provided a well of human interest. Stories included 'How A Priest Was Mistaken For A Burglar: Cracksman's Clever Ruse', 'Wore Wife's Curls: A Deserter Who Dressed As A Woman' and 'The Marriage Day: Fell In The Ditch On The Way To Church.[114] The 'personal experience' story was also a regular feature. Henry J. Whittick, the *Express and Star's* special commissioner, for example, reported on his day flying over Wolverhampton in a biplane and seeing the town in a 'new class of glory' less than a fortnight before war was declared.[115] The war correspondent Philip Gibbs understood the importance of this sort of 'stunt' story and defined the New Journalism as anything that had 'a touch of human interest for the great mass of folk'. [116] According to Gibbs, it did not matter if it was comedy or tragedy, high politics or crime, as long as it made a good story. In the eyes of the Liberal politician Charles Masterman, a newspaper like the *Express and Star* represented the 'vacuous vulgarity' of popular journalism.[117] He saw the popular press indulging the prurient interests of the masses when he commented: 'They seek romance – and find it – in a complex murder case, in stories of crime which seem to the fastidious, sordid and disgusting'.[118] Another of the war correspondents, Hamilton Fyfe, provided a thoughtful and detailed view of the New Journalism in his biography of Lord Northcliffe.[119] Much of Fyfe's description can be seen in the content of the *Express and Star* and its

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[113] *Express and Star*, 25 July 1914, p. 3.
[114] See, *Express and Star*, 22 July 1914, p. 5; *Express and Star*, 24 July 1914, p. 5 and *Express and Star*, 22 July 1914, p. 6.
[115] *Express and Star,* 24 July 1914, p. 5.
[116] Philip Gibbs, *Adventures in Journalism* (London: William Heinemann, 1923), p. 9.
[117] C. F. G. Masterman, *The Condition of England* (London: Methuen, 1910), p. 91.
[118] Masterman, *Condition of England*, p. 262.
[119] Hamilton Fyfe, *Northcliffe: An Intimate Biography* (New York: Macmillan, 1930), pp. 79-84.

treatment of the volunteer. According to Fyfe, the old journalism saw its role in matters of politics, social policy, economics and foreign affairs. It was bewildered by the new commercial journalism that saw its job as creating 'talking points' that would engage people and get them to 'hand the paper about'[120] Anything that could be the subject of conversation could be in the newspapers. Fyfe wrote: 'Here is the real nature of the revolution now in progress. A newspaper is to be made to pay. Let it deal with what interests the mass of people. That will send its sales up – up to a point hitherto unimagined, undesired even. Then it can sell its advertisement space at prices which at first may sound absurd.'[121]

The character of the *Express and Star* was an example of what the Edwardian newspaper commentator Rolfe Scott-James termed, in 1913, the 'secretly commercial press', a phenomenon he considered to be most prevalent in the provinces during the years leading up to war because newspaper competition was less fierce than between the national titles. [122] The idea of the 'secretly commercial newspaper' explains a series of contradictions in the personality of the *Express and Star*. A newspaper that gave prominence to lurid divorce cases, titillating court stories, horse racing and betting also carried the latest stock market prices and up-to-the-minute political debate from the House of Commons. A newspaper that had embraced the new popular journalism still filled the front and back pages with columns of classified advertising. The

[120] Fyfe, *Northcliffe*, p. 80.
[121] Fyfe, *Northcliffe*, pp. 83-84.
[122] Scott-James, *Influence of the Press*, pp. 237-240.

Express and Star took coverage of the war seriously and carried comprehensive news agency reports of politics, diplomacy and military actions, as far as they were available. At the same time, it also turned the volunteer soldier into a popular human-interest personality and manipulated his image to create a popular publicity mascot. One possible explanation was that there was no local morning newspaper in Wolverhampton, so the better-off who wanted up-to-date news of stock markets and other local information needed to buy the *Express and Star*. Ralph Blumenfeld, wartime Editor of the *Daily Express*, provided another explanation for the contradiction between the old and the New Journalism in the *Express and Star.* He argued working-class and lower middle-class readers were not to be underestimated. They enjoyed gossip, scandal and human interest but also wanted serious news as well. He commented: 'The same man who eagerly devours his newspaper for its sensational news items or tit-bits of gossip, very likely makes other and more intelligent demands on it as well'.[123] Scott-James, however, saw the press as being more calculating. The secretly commercial press camouflaged their profit-driven personality by maintaining some of the 'Victorian standard' of the previous century while still developing a 'vitality, a quickness and a thoroughness' that would have put the old journalism to shame.[124] In the case of the *Express and Star* in 1914, the Victorian standards included advertising remaining on the front page, a traditional single-column format and few photographs. While developing an overwhelmingly commercial business

[123] Blumenfeld, *Press in My Time*, p. 210.
[124] Scott-James, *Influence of the Press*, pp. 239.

model, the secretly-commercial press still managed, by journalistic sleight of hand, to maintain its prestige and local influence.[125]

The *Express and Star's* emphasis on localism with its comprehensive reports of council meetings, politics and local community events, coupled with its focus on popular human interest, found tangible form in the figure of the volunteer. He was a ubiquitous and easily recognisable local symbol of civic patriotism and pride and an extraordinary human-interest story as well. Second Lieutenant Philip Highfield-Jones served with the 2/6th Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment. He recorded in his diary that as soon as war was declared 'the amount of khaki' in the streets of Wolverhampton was very noticeable.[126] He noted this was largely down to the mobilisation of the Territorials. Highfield-Jones, from Lower Penn near Wolverhampton, had been a trainee solicitor before the war.[127] He mused as to whether the public quite realised what the Territorials had done. Men who joined later in the war had time to put their affairs in order; the pre-war Territorials had no time. Highfield-Jones declared: 'On Tuesday, Aug. 4th, they were civilians in khaki going to their summer camp. On Wednesday, they were full-blown soldiers.'[128] At the outbreak of war, the *Express and Star* and its advertisers were presented with an extraordinarily valuable public celebrity, recognised in every walk of life and by every social class, highly regarded and able to draw huge crowds – the 'British workman in disguise' as he was described by the artist Sir William

[125] Scott-James, *Influence of the Press*, pp. 239.
[126] Philip Highfield-Jones, *Personal Memoir of the War*, p. 3. Staffordshire Regiment Museum, Lichfield.
[127] Highfield-Jones, *Personal Memoir*, p. 1.
[128] Highfield-Jones, *Personal Memoir*, p. 3-4.

Orpen.[129] He was also a man of Wolverhampton with family, friends and workmates keen for information about his activities and his well-being. At the highest level of government, David Lloyd George noted that the volunteers of 1914 were not men from the fringes of society but respectable working men and members of the lower middle class. He recognised that the public would take an 'intimate personal interest' in their fate.[130]

The figure of the volunteer portrayed by the *Express and Star* went to war shaped by far more than patriotism. The Editor was critical of any sign of jingoism. He had warned about the 'the perilous spirit of jingoism' which he thought had a very lurid record.[131] Even patriotism could often be misinterpreted and 'many evil things had been done in its name.[132] In the eyes of the *Express and Star*, the volunteer had become a commercial commodity, central to the newspaper's business model thanks to his perceived ability to develop sales and generate publicity. The newspaper had seized the figure of the volunteer within days of the outbreak of war and its advertisers were not far behind. The nature of the new citizen army allowed the *Express and Star* to take ownership of the Tommy. When the newspaper spoke about the soldier and the army it was talking to readers about a human-interest figure that was not just close to their hearts but had become a national obsession. Once war was declared, the Wolverhampton volunteer's career – his recruitment, his comforts from home, his stories of battle and even his death – was shaped by

[129] Sir William Orpen, *The Outline of Art* (London: George Newnes, 1924), p. 374.
[130] Lloyd George, *War Memoirs, Volume I.*, p. 220.
[131] *Express and Star*, 21 September 1914, p. 2.
[132] *Express and Star,* 30 September 1914, p. 2.

the demands of the newspaper business, contemporary journalism and the techniques of publicity. In 1908, the Director of Publicity for Shredded Wheat breakfast cereal highlighted the value of a familiar face for selling, when he wrote: 'We will, doubtless, all concede that there is some value in a trade-mark or in a familiar device or face, constantly employed to advertise a product.'[133] The volunteer became the human-interest symbol of the conflict, a mascot cast in the commercial mould required by the *Express and Star*. In the newspaper's projection of the volunteer, he became a symbol of the triumph of the new commercial press over the old Victorian political press. No longer, did he simply represent the patriotic citizen soldier defending the nation-state. Instead, he was a human-interest personality of the new mass journalism and the advertising industry that supported it. He was an everyman who had emerged from everyday life to become a figure of valuable human-interest fascination to the *Express and Star's* readers. Below the surface of patriotism, the volunteer Tommy had become part of the mechanism of the modern newspaper's business model and its demand for revenue and profit. The newspaper created him as an easily assimilated shorthand for the complexities of war and the complexities of the newspaper trade.

It should be stressed that the volunteer's publicity and sales value to the newspaper provides a direct example of the concept of commercial propaganda. Elements of journalism, publicity and advertising came together to create an instrument of what can be interpreted as propaganda. The

[133] Truman A. DeWeese, *The Principles of Practical Publicity* (Philadelphia: George W. Jacobs, 1908), p. 36.

historian David Welch identifies the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth as a period when a 'substantial shift' occurred in advertising and its relationship with propaganda.[134] Advertising took on a more focused and propagandist character. Instead of simply providing facts about a product and its availability, advertising became about persuading people to associate brands with desirable attributes by using emotional appeals rather than reason. The wartime *Express and Star* illustrates this. By associating itself with the volunteer, the newspaper attempted to take on his admirable qualities of trustworthiness and honour to encourage people to buy the newspaper. This in itself was a propagandist message but it went much deeper. The *Express and Star* provided the reader with an opportunity to engage with the highly regarded figure of the volunteer as a positive representation of the war itself. The *Express and Star* presented the volunteer as a highly positive and familiar manifestation of the war – and one which belonged to the town and its citizens. It gave a comforting impression that by taking ownership of the volunteer, the citizens and readers also had some control over their part in the war. The advertising historian David Clampin applies a similar propaganda perspective to wartime advertising. In his view, the sort of advertising that appeared in the *Express and Star* and made use of the figure of the volunteer was inherently propagandist.[135] The advertising of mundane and recognisable products using images of war provided a sense of reassurance and familiarity at a time of upheaval.[136] Advertising of products such as Oxo, Perfection Soap, H.Samuel and Hall's Tonic Wine provided a

[134] Welch, 'Advertising', pp. 5-7.
[135] Clampin, *Advertising and Propaganda,* pp. 12-19.
[136] Clampin, *Advertising and Propaganda,* pp. 13.

reference point for ‘normal life’ and helped sustain morale. Clampin argues that advertising represents a ‘form of propaganda’ – a force in the modern world that helps to shape society.[137] This point of view indicates that care needs to be taken in examining the propagandist nature of newspapers in wartime. It is not simply the reporting of the political messages put out by the elites that needs to be considered but the ‘newspaper package’ as a whole. News, Editorial comment, features, newspaper campaigns and advertising – the commerce of the press - can all contribute, either deliberately or unintentionally, to the persuasion of propaganda. The next chapter examines how the Liberal traditions of the *Express and Star* reflected in the newspaper’s commercial support for the volunteer. It also illustrates the evolution of a Liberal outlook that started the war with an unwavering belief in voluntarism in 1914 but came to accept the inevitability of conscription by the beginning of 1916.

[137] Clampin, *Advertising and Propaganda,* pp. 14.

Chapter 2: Liberalism, Voluntarism and the Coming of Conscription.

This chapter examines how the *Express and Star's* political tradition of Liberalism influenced coverage of voluntarism and the volunteer in the newspaper. It argues that although the business model of the commercial press was the central element in shaping the figure of the volunteer, it would be wrong to assume it was the only factor. The *Express and Star's* Liberal roots and the newspaper owners' social position played important parts in creating and reinforcing the *Express and Star's* role as a champion of voluntarism. The argument traces the evolution of the newspaper's Liberal outlook from 1914 to 1916 – an unquestioning belief in voluntarism at the outbreak of war that moved to a reluctant acceptance of conscription less than 18 months later. The Liberal theorist, J. A. Hobson, writing after the war, acknowledged the difficult position of leader writers in the Liberal press during the war as owners and Editors adopted '…strange and ingenious attitudes and writhings by which the Liberal idealism of England was harnessed to the war chariot.'[1] According to Hobson, it was best described as 'press propaganda'. Beyond commercialism, this chapter shows how the owners and Editor of the newspaper viewed support for the volunteer as an expression of their Liberal belief in voluntarism, an act of political compromise in the national interest and a tangible expression of patriotism and local civic duty that fitted the wartime outlook of their middle-class peers in the town. It is unsurprising the *Express and Star* took such a close Editorial interest in the conscription debate. For a period in 1915 and 1916, the issue of conscription became the centre of public

[1] J. A. Hobson, 'Foreword' in Irene Cooper Willis, *England's Holy War: A Study of English Liberal Idealism during the Great War* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1928), pp. ix-x.

decision-making, the main issue of debate in Parliament, in the press and amongst the public.[2] Conscription also struck at the heart of the Liberal beliefs that had formed the bedrock of the *Express and Star* since its launch more than 20 years before the war. Compulsory service threatened the commercial, consumer-orientated value of the figure of the volunteer by replacing him with compulsion and more central government control.

The *Express and Star* and its Liberal Tradition.

In August 1914, the politics of the press in Wolverhampton were overt and well defined. The two rival evening newspapers in the town did not disguise their political allegiances. Wolverhampton's municipal yearbook for 1914 listed the *Express and Star* as 'Liberal', while its competitor, the *Midland Evening News*, appeared under the heading of 'Conservative'.[3] The commercial and political rivals faced each other with premises on opposite sides of the road in Queen Street in the town centre.[4] The halfpenny *Midland Evening News,* owned by Midland Press Ltd, described itself as 'A Real Evening Newspaper Full of News' stressing it carried the latest news of the day, brightly written and well laid out.[5] Archive copies of the *Midland Evening News* are on microfilm at the Wolverhampton City Archive. They are indistinct and difficult to read. The copies show that the newspaper was presented in a similar style to the *Express and Star* – a broadsheet with a single-column format and comprising

[2] R. J. Q. Adams and Philip P. Poirier, *The Conscription Controversy in Great Britain, 1900-1918* (London: Macmillan Press, 1987), p. x.
[3] Wolverhampton Town Council, *Wolverhampton Red Book*, p. 155.
[4] Wolverhampton Town Council, *Wolverhampton Red Book*, p. 155.
[5] Wolverhampton Town Council, *Wolverhampton Red Book*, p. v.

of four or six pages each day.[6] The division of Liberal and Conservative in Wolverhampton's daily press was a reflection of the local political situation on the Town Council. In 1914, the Liberals held 16 seats and the Conservatives 15. Labour had three. [7] Both newspapers had competed for 30 years before the outbreak of war, starting when Conservative interests in the town had launched the *Midland Evening News* in 1884. It was the same year the *Evening Star* had purchased the *Evening Express* to create the *Express and Star. The Express and Star* had been founded by Wolverhampton businessman Thomas Graham, chairman of the Staffordshire Liberal Association.[8] He had been described as an 'advocate of radicalism' and his newspaper as 'a strong Liberal paper in this strong Liberal district'.[9] The Conservatives had feared the radical Liberal views of the new *Express and Star* would dominate the town, and had launched the *Midland Evening News*.[10] The rivalry continued for the first 11 months of the First World War until the *Midland Evening News* closed without warning on 31 July 1915 due to the financial stresses of the conflict.[11] The nineteenth-century Liberal foundations of the *Express and Star* remained in place in 1914. The chairman of the *Express and Star*, Norval Graham, was also chairman of Wolverhampton Liberal Club in Dudley Street, and his brother, John Douglas Graham, was its treasurer.[12] The Editor, Andrew Meikle, was also a member.[13]

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[6] Wolverhampton Town Council, *Wolverhampton Red Book*, p. v.
[7] Jones, *Borough Politics*, pp. 49-50.
[8] *Express and Star,* 15 January 1889, p. 4.
[9] *Express and Star*, 26 February 1885, p. 3.
[10] Wolverhampton City Archives, LS/L07/76. Dora Roston, *Wolverhampton and its Press 1848-1948* (Wolverhampton: *Express and Star*, 1948). p. 5.
[11] Roston, *Wolverhampton and its Press*, p. 5.
[12] Wolverhampton Town Council, *Wolverhampton Red Book*, p. 129.
[13] 'Andrew Meikle', *Who's Who 2020 & Who Was Who* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020). Entry published online, 1 December 2007. Accessed 1 July 2020.

An overtly Liberal newspaper like the *Express and Star* that had a largely working-class readership still had to tread carefully when it came to party politics. A work by Jon Lawrence is significant for this thesis. It is a rare use of Wolverhampton as a case history for academic study. Lawrence uses Wolverhampton as the case study in his examination of party politics in England during the 40 years leading up to the First World War.[14] It places an overtly Liberal newspaper like the *Express and Star* in the broader context of provincial party politics. Lawrence stresses the popular mistrust of party politics and authority figures in the years up to the outbreak of war. Despite popular support for Liberalism as a movement for reform there was considerable suspicion of party 'wire-pullers'.[15] When 'respectable opinion' suggested Wolverhampton's working-men's club were simply unregulated drinking dens, the clubs' leadership presented themselves as staunch champions of working-class dignity and independence.[16] Even the emerging Labour Party had to tread carefully. When Labour Party organisers attempted to highlight the town's slum housing they were denounced for launching shameful attacks on the town and its working-class residents.[17]

The underlying mistrust of authority was reflected in the pages of the *Express and Star.* This often surfaced in the letters' column. Readers shared their stories of the awkward moments when well-off and well-meaning women visited working-class homes where men were serving in the forces. One

[14] Jon Lawrence, *Speaking for the People: Party, Language and Popular Politics in England 1867-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
[15] Lawrence, *Speaking for the People*, p. 264.
[16] Lawrence, *Speaking for the People*, p. 139-140.
[17] Lawrence, *Speaking for the People*, p. 267.

correspondent, George Whitehouse, wrote that he knew of a soldier's wife who applied for relief and was visited by a woman. 'In one instance she told the wife she thought she should not apply for relief from the local funds as long as she had such good furniture and a piano she could sell,' he wrote.[18] Another Wolverhampton soldier's wife had an unfortunate experience when she applied for relief and was visited by 'a lady'. The woman told her the house was too big for her and one child and then accused her of being pregnant. It was, in fact, six ounces of wool that she was taking to her mother-in-law's house and was wrapped under her shawl.[19] In the aftermath of the heavy losses suffered at the Hohenzollern Redoubt in October 1915, Maud Marie, from Bilston, wrote: ''Dear ones who were looking forward to a reunion with those struggling at home have been taken. Others must return maimed for life. I consider it nothing short of a scandal if the remnant of the force has to continue fighting without respite.'[20]

Lawrence argues that in the early ears of the twentieth century, politicians feared they stood on the brink of a new order that threatened traditional party interests. This could involve the anonymous masses out-voting intellect and ability and the same masses developing a 'dangerous cohesion'. This could emerge as an independent force capable of overturning the rights of property.[21] Bearing in mind this interpretation, the volunteer soldier became an important figure in party politics and a Liberal newspaper like the *Express and*

[18] *Express and Star*, 26 November 1914, p. 2.
[19] *Express and Star*, 27 November 1914, p. 2.
[20] *Express and Star*, 23 October 1915, p. 7.
[21] Lawrence, *Speaking for the People*, p. 265.

Star. He represented a 'safe' interpretation of civic responsibility. He carried what Lawrence describes as the 'virtues of the honest working man'.[22] He also represented a willingness to sacrifice his own interests for the sake of defending the traditions of his home and community.

The *Express and Star's* support for the volunteer soldier should also be placed in the context of the Liberal perception of the relationship between the state and the individual. Being a Liberal implied a belief in free markets and the protection of individuals' rights against the state.[23] Freedom of the individual was still a central tenet but this free will was considered to exist within a reforming society, rather than being left to 'individual anarchy'.[24] By the outbreak of war, Liberalism had been subjected to a 'curious development' whereby mutual responsibility, common ends and social welfare had become as important as the freedom of the individual.[25] Liberalism's communitarianism and reforming zeal took tangible form before the war, with the Old Age Pension Act of 1908, Lloyd George's 1909 Budget and the National Insurance Act of 1911[26] Liberals understood their party was dependent on the votes of working men and the new Liberalism reflected their interests.[27] According to the

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[22] Lawrence, *Speaking for the People*, p. 265.
[23] John Turner, 'The Challenge to Liberalism: The Politics of the Home Fronts' in Hew Strachan (ed.) *The Oxford Illustrated History of the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 163-178.
[24] Michael Freeden, *The New Liberalism: An Ideology of Social Reform* (Oxford: Clarenden Press, 1978), p. 257-258.
[25] Michael Freeden, *Liberalism Divided: A Study in British Political Thought, 1914-1939* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), pp. 18-19.
[26] Michael Freeden, 'The Liberal Party and the New Liberalism', *Journal of Liberal History*, 67 (Summer 2010), pp. 14-20.
[27] See, P. F. Clarke, 'The End of Laissez Faire and the Politics of Cotton', *The Historical Journal,* 15 (3) (1972), pp. 493-512 and George L. Bernstein, 'The Limitations of the New Liberalism: The Politics and Political Thought of John Clifford', *Albion*, 16 (1) (Spring, 1984), pp. 21-39.

political theorist Michael Freeden, the Liberal view of civil society took on a dual meaning – the voluntarism of the individual assisted by an enabling state.[28] Liberalism still gave pride of place to the individual but took community and common good seriously.[29] In 1914, the *Express and Star* still considered it important to declare that the state should not make any 'rude incursions into the liberty of every subject of the King'.[30] The volunteer soldier represented the Liberal vision of the individual making a free decision to do the right thing and join up in defence of a shared community. Liberal opposition to military conscription sharply illustrated the balance between the liberty of the individual and the role of the state. Any form of compulsory service was an alien concept for pre-war Liberalism. Enforced military service was considered potentially the most controversial curtailment of individual liberty that could be imposed in wartime.[31] For many Liberals, a volunteer army was one of the tenets the party held dear; any change in this view was nothing less than a deviation from the path of Liberalism.[32]

Andrew Meikle's leader columns in the *Express and Star* during 1914 and 1915 reflected the Edwardian Liberal themes of individual liberty, the reforming state and the importance of a volunteer army. His leaders showed an attempt to justify fighting a war on Liberal terms while at the same time keeping close

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[28] Michael Freeden, *Liberal Languages: Ideological Imaginations and Twentieth-Century Progressive Thought* (Princetown: Princetown University Press, 2005), p. 11.
[29] Avital Simhony and David Weinstein, 'Introduction: The New Liberalism and the Liberal-Communitarian Debate', in Avital Simhony and David Weinstein (eds.), *The New Liberalism: Reconciling Liberty and Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 11.
[30] *Express and Star*, 9 September 1914, p. 2.
[31] Matthew Johnson, 'The Liberal War Committee and the Liberal Advocacy of Conscription in Britain 1914-1916', *The Historical Journal*, 51 (2) (2008), pp. 399-420.
[32] Trevor Wilson, *The Downfall of the Liberal Party 1914-1935* (London: Collins, 1966), pp. 32-35.

contact with the interests of the *Express and Star's* working-class readership. Meikle used every opportunity to praise the Liberal's 'distinctly favourable operation of the war' – from its outbreak, through the formation of the Coalition government and into 1916.[33] On the eve of war, Meikle was anxious to support the Liberal government, explaining: 'No party desires war and no party we are assured – certainly not the Liberal Party – would willingly have made war'.[34] He lauded the Liberal leadership regularly. The Prime Minister, H. H. Asquith was 'patriotic and dignified' in the first days of the war.[35] Meikle had particularly warm words for David Lloyd George. 'He has always stood for the people and for the integrity of Great Britain,' he wrote.[36] After the formation of the coalition government in May 1915, the praise continued, with Meikle writing: 'During the war, our Ministers from Mr. Asquith downwards have not spared themselves. Indeed the work they have performed and the good they have achieved will ever stand as a monument to their patriotism…'[37]

Meikle reflected the close connection between the reader and the volunteer but kept that relationship within the framework of Liberal philosophy. He associated the newspaper with the readers' obsession with the volunteer and his sacrifice and created a journalistic narrative in which the volunteer soldier became a significant political and social figure as well as a representation of provincial civic boosterism. [38] At the heart of his political vision was the

[33] *Express and Star*, 27 August 1914, p. 2.
[34] *Express and Star*, 4 August 1914, p. 2.
[35] *Express and Star*, 7 August 1914, p. 2.
[36] *Express and Star*, 21 September 1914, p. 2.
[37] *Express and Star,* 30 November 1915, p. 2.
[38] Gregory, *The Last Great War*, pp. 293-294.

Tommy's position as a representative of municipal Liberalism and localism. The volunteer and his patriotism belonged to the local community. Meikle described this as the 'local bearing of things'.[39] He used the Wolverhampton mayor-making ceremony in November 1914, as an opportunity to place the significance of the war, patriotism, recruitment and the volunteer himself into a local setting.[40] A letter of congratulations to the new Mayor, Alderman A. Baldwin Bantock, from Lieutenant Colonel Waterhouse on behalf of the 1,125 men of the 1/6th Battalion, in training in Luton, was read out at the event. Subtly, the Editor could have been talking about his newspaper when he commented in his leader column: 'It is a great thing to serve one's own community.' He described the national war effort as a series of local responses when he wrote: 'Let it never be forgotten that when we talk of national feeling we refer to that almost indefinable characteristic, spirit or sentiment which is and must always be created and sustained in the municipalities.'[41] Meikle threw a journalistic protective arm around local municipalism to defend it against the possibility of central government interference when he stressed that help for soldiers' families should be run locally and there should be no need for 'great relief schemes'.[42]

Local fundraising had a political dimension as well. It allowed the *Express and Star* to display its credentials of patriotic enterprise, pragmatic political compromise and Liberal virtue. A charity football match held at

[39] *Express and Star*, 9 November 1914, p. 2.
[40] *Express and Star*, 9 November 1914, p. 4.
[41] *Express and Star*, 9 November 1914, p. 2.
[42] *Express and Star*, 9 September 1914, p. 2.

Wolverhampton's Molineux football ground on Boxing Day, 1915, provides a specific example. The event was organised to raise money for the newspaper's Comfort fund and the chairman of the *Express and Star*, Norval Graham, was present.[43] Wounded soldiers were in the crowd. After the match, the Mayor, Councillor A. C. Skidmore, was fulsome in his praise for the 'public-spiritedness' of the *Express and Star* and its owners. He declared the Messrs. Graham had been exceedingly kind and the football match could not have raised nearly £500 had they not 'boomed the event in their paper for all they were worth'. Replying to the Mayor, Norval Graham took the opportunity to present the *Express and Star's* fundraising in the highest moral terms – a manifestation of provincial civic duty. Graham's words provide evidence of the moral imperative contained in the 'practical patriotism' that lay behind the newspaper's championing of the volunteer. It showed the owners of the *Express and Star*, Norval and John Douglas Graham, presenting themselves as prominent Liberal middle-class businessmen, motivated to perform their civic, social and political duties and aid the less fortunate in the district. In his speech, Graham said he and his brother felt the least they could do was help raise funds to help volunteers – particularly prisoners of war. To applause, he declared that the newspaper's Comforts campaign would continue until the end of the war so that every prisoner of war would continue to get a weekly parcel as long as parcels could get into Germany.[44] Graham seemed to show genuine concern for soldiers and prisoners when he mentioned the wounded

[43] All comments in this paragraph come from the *Express and Star*, 27 December 1915, p. 2.
[44] The *Express and Star's* Comforts campaigns are considered in more detail in Chapter Four.

men in the crowd at the football match, The *Express and Star* reported Graham explaining what motivated himself and his brother:

> It was an infinite pleasure to them to have so many men who had done service in the firing-line as their guests that day. It was their earnest hope that each and all would soon be restored to health and strength. They looked forward to the time when this miserable war would be finished –but finished only when the Allies dictated the terms – in order that soldiers would be able to get back to their homes which they had fought to protect.[45]

Before an impromptu singing of Auld Lang Syne, Graham proposed a toast to 'absent friends' and said people should think particularly of prisoners. He also stressed politics, saying the war was no time for 'party feeling'. He presented the Comfort fund as an example of political compromise, combining 'two different types of politics'. Graham described how he and his brother were both Radical Free Traders. They had joined forces with Wolverhampton industrialist, James B. Dumbell, a Conservative Tariff Reformer, to raise money for the benefit of the volunteer soldier through the *Express and Star* Comfort fund. Graham's description of himself as a Radical was significant. By 1914, this, along with the description of 'progressive' had become a shorthand that indicated a commitment to the cause of Liberalism.[46] Politics allowed the *Express and Star* owner to cloak the essentially commercial nature of the industrialised press and the New Journalism in an aura of public-spirited philanthropy and laudable intent that crossed political divides. The *Express and Star's* 'practical patriotism' and commitment to Liberalism adds a moral dimension to the newspaper's unswerving support for the volunteer soldier. The *Express and Star's* commercial imperative fitted the proprietors' Liberal

[45] *Express and Star,* 27 December 1915, p. 2.
[46] Andrew Vincent, 'The New Liberalism in Britain 1880-1914', *Australian Journal of Politics and History,* 36 (3) (1990), pp. 388-405.

tenets by championing the soldier's self-determination along with his defence of a reforming state. Support for the volunteer also allowed the newspaper to show itself standing side-by-side with its working-class readers and their concerns for the volunteers. In addition, it allowed the owners of the *Express and Star* to associate themselves with the patriotic efforts being organised in the town by their middle-class business, professional and civic peers at a time of national crisis.

Defending Voluntarism: August 1914 to April 1915.

An uncompromising defence of voluntarism dominated the *Express and Star's* Editorial outlook from August 1914 until May 1915. No opportunity was lost to praise the volunteer and Britain's system of voluntary recruitment. The simple language of the New Journalism was placed to one side when it came to praising the volunteer in the leader column. The Editor described one group of recruits lined up ready to enlist in Wolverhampton in glowing terms. He wrote: 'As evidence of practical patriotism, the spectacle was without parallel in the history of Wulfruna, although we remember that the loyalty of the fine old place has never been in doubt.'[47] Sometimes the language could be even more extravagant. Volunteers had 'the light of patriotism' shining in their eyes and were men willing to fight for a 'priceless heritage'[48] This high-flown language of historical tradition and an unusual reference to Lady Wulfruna, a tenth-century figure associated with the founding of Wolverhampton, harked back to

[47] *Express and Star,* 3 September 1914, p. 2.
[48] *Express and Star,* 30 October 1915, p. 5.

the era of Victorian journalism.[49] By 1914, it appeared oddly out of place in a halfpenny, working-class, evening newspaper in the era of the New Journalism. Commentators at the time thought the elaborate language of war in the leader columns of the Liberal press was significant. They divined political, journalistic and commercial motivations behind the archaic rhetoric in wartime leader columns. Irene Cooper Willis, a literary scholar and barrister at the Inner Temple, wrote a series of short books immediately after the war that examined the arguments and language in the leader columns of the Liberal press during the war. They were published together as one book in 1928 entitled *England's Holy War: A Study of Liberal Idealism during the Great War*.[50] The Liberal theorist J. A. Hobson provided the Foreword. Willis had studied many wartime Liberal newspapers and periodicals, but in particular, she had examined the *Daily News* – read at 'all the best Liberal breakfast tables'.[51] Her analysis was shrewd and uncompromising. In her view, the entire Liberal press of England was presented with a shocking and difficult situation in August 1914. Having spent years using its leader columns to advocate Liberal reason, diplomacy and peace, the Liberal press was suddenly confronted with a declaration of war by a Liberal government. The leader writers were forced to create a narrative and explanation of the war that had far greater and deeper significance than simply defeating the enemy. This was necessary to justify a 'Liberal war'. Hence, the leader writers created what Willis called the 'Holy War'.[52] She pointed out: 'The greater the sacrifice, the

[49] For an account of the history of Lady Wulfruna, see Chris Upton, *A History of Wolverhampton* (Chichester: Phillimore, 1998), pp. 4-5.
[50] Irene Cooper Willis, *England's Holy War: A Study of English Liberal Idealism during the Great War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1928).
[51] Willis, *England's Holy War*, p. xv.
[52] Willis, *England's Holy War*, p. xviii.

holier the war.'[53] The leader writers used language and argument that presented the war as the final overthrow of militarism and the liberation of all oppressed peoples.[54] According to Willis, naked commercialism sat behind the leader writers' extravagant and portentous language. She explained that by 1914 the press was a commercial industry in which 'vulgar sensationalism was well to the fore…'[55] She added: 'We are apt to forget that the first object of the journalist, as of the press, is to make money. To do that, a wide public must be secured, and to secure that, sensational appeals and all that goes against the grain of fastidious thinking must be stomached.'[56] The historian Adrian Gregory reinforces Willis's view. He argues that war licenses the killing of enemies. To justify the mass death and suffering of war, it was necessary to extol the values of what the nation was defending.[57] According to Hobson in his Foreword, the Editors and leader writers on Liberal newspapers had to reverse their previous views and go the 'whole spiritual hog'. [58] He added: 'The war had to be a Holy War to enable these Editors and writers to devour with a sacramental gusto, all they had said and written in the past.' Liberal leader writers could use phrases like 'War to End War' and 'A Fight to a Finish' and keep the flag of Liberalism flying even in wartime.[59]

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[53] Willis, *England's Holy War*, p. xix.
[54] Willis, *England's Holy War*, p. x.
[55] Willis, *England's Holy War*, p. xv.
[56] Willis, *England's Holy War*, p. xv.
[57] Adrian Gregory, *The Silence of Memory: Armistice Day 1919-1946* (London: Bloomsbury, 1994), p. 5.
[58] *Willis, England's Holy War*, p. x.
[59] *Willis, England's Holy War*, p. x.

Hobson and Willis had not only linked the commercial nature of the press to Liberal politics but also explained the high-flown language of war used by Andrew Meikle in his wartime leader columns. In Meikle's view, however, the volunteer represented much more than patriotism and national pride. In the Editor's eyes, he was also a bulwark against conscription. The Editor used his leader column to present the volunteer as the embodiment of communitarian liberalism – a heroic and selfless personality who exercised Liberal free will and chose to volunteer and defend his community and the nation-state. Meikle wrote in October 1914: 'Remember always that volunteers are better than conscripts. Britain does not force men to serve. But free men will serve willingly.'[60] Meikle pronounced the *Express and Star's* verdict on those joining the colours when he wrote: 'A spectacle so inspiring is the product of freedom. It always makes Britain and her Empire the wonder of the world.'[61] Less than a month into the war Meikle praised voluntarism as a way of avoiding the expansion of the state in the form of conscription. He wrote that men '…would rally to the call of the Motherland and so avert once more those "other means" – conscription – which we have always proudly declared we can do well without'.[62] Meikle linked heroism and duty to free will, arguing: 'As a freeborn nation we have always hated compulsion. It should be noted that the idea of men acting with free will in support of the nation-state was subtly important to Liberals; providing a way of differentiating itself from Socialism with its emphasis on state action. In Hobson's view, the central difference between Liberalism and Socialism was that Liberals saw the chief test of policy as the

[60] *Express and Star*, 30 October 1914, p. 2.
[61] *Express and Star*, 15 August 1914, p. 2.
[62] *Express and Star,* 26 August 1914, p. 2.

freedom of the individual rather than the strength of the state.[63] By the middle of September 1914, Meikle again saw the numbers joining up through the prism of Liberalism when he stated: 'It is conscription's deathblow as far as this country is concerned.'[64] In his eyes, voluntarism avoided creating the sort of nation that had turned Germany into a dangerous enemy – state compulsion and the domination of a 'military caste'.[65]

The recruiting figures of 1914 and early 1915 provide the context for the *Express and Star* Editor's unswerving Liberal belief in voluntarism. Peter Simkins describes the period from late August 1914 until the end of September as the 'recruiting boom' and labels the months October 1914 until May 1915 as 'recruiting in decline'.[66] Nearly 300,000 men joined in August 1914 and nearly 500,000 in September.[67] After September, numbers started to fall, causing some concern in the Government.[68] That month, 136,811 joined up. In November, there was an increase to 169,862 following a reduction in the height standard.[69] Then recruitment numbers fell back in December to 117, 860 as fewer men joined up in the period leading up to Christmas, 1914.[70] The Editor mentioned this slackening of pace at the end of November 1914. He wrote: 'Recruiting is not as active as it was a few weeks ago, nor are there as many joining the colours as could be wished.'[71] He did not suggest how to

[63] Hobson, *The Crisis of Liberalism*, p. 93.
[64] *Express and Star*, 12 September 1914, p. 2.
[65] *Express and Star,* 27 November 1914, p. 2.
[66] Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, p. 49 and p. 104.
[67] War Office: *Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire during the Great War, 1914-1920* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1922), p. 364.
[68] Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, p. 104.
[69] Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, p. 104-106.
[70] War Office: *Statistics of the Military Effort,* p. 364.
[71] *Express and Star,* 30 November 1914, p. 2.

improve the situation but praised the 'patriotic willingness' of those who had joined up. There was a New Year boost in January 1915 with 156,290 recruits before numbers fell back to 87,896 in February, 113,907 in March and 119,087 in April. There was an increase in May to just over 135,000 but this fell back again to 114,679 in June. Although numbers were declining, Meikle was still able to base his enthusiasm for the success of voluntarism on the fact that thousands of men were still joining the colours each month. David Silbey points out that the large number of recruits in August and September leads to undervaluing of what came later.[72] He points out that even excluding the boom months of August and September 1914, volunteerism still averaged 113,659 recruits monthly compared to 83,780 during the era of conscription.[73] Peter Simkins takes a similar view. Although noting the decline in recruiting after September, he stresses the magnitude of the national achievement throughout the period of voluntarism – not just August and September 1914.[74] Simkins points out that by the end of 1915, 2,466,719 men had voluntarily enlisted in the army – a 'remarkable feature' of the war.[75] The *Express and Star's* Liberal belief in voluntarism and the Editor's championing of the volunteer soldier should be set against the backdrop of tens of thousands of volunteers joining up each month during 1914 and 1915 rather than just seeing the decline from the high point of August and September.

[72] Silbey, *British Working Class and Enthusiasm for War*, p. 28.
[73] Silbey, *British Working Class and Enthusiasm for War,* p. 27.
[74] Simkins, *Kitchener's Army,* p. xiv.
[75] Simkins, *Kitchener's Army,* p. xiv.

Simkins identifies two factors in the early months of the war, concerning the material conditions of the volunteers, as being relevant to the decline in recruiting from October 1914. These were the stories of congestion and discomfort at depots and training centres along with shortages of equipment. In addition, there was inefficiency and delay in paying separation allowances for wives and dependants.[76] The Editor addressed concerns for the comfort and wellbeing of the soldier and his dependants in mid-September 1914. His view of the volunteer as the personification of Liberalism moved beyond the individual to take in the state's role in the welfare of the volunteer and his family. He considered that the first thought of any volunteer would be the fate of the relatives he left behind – possibly forever.[77] His leader of 18 September 1914, 'A Test of Patriotism' can be seen as indicating the *Express and Star's* support not only for the volunteer but also, more generally, for the newspaper's working-class readership at home.[78] It illustrates Liberalism's themes of the enabling state and the individual. Significantly, it addresses the state's obligation to the volunteer and his family. The Editor briefly quoted Rudyard Kipling's Victorian poem 'Tommy', using the line 'O it's Tommy this an' Tommy that…' to illustrate his point. [79] He then remarked: 'Fine poetry about his patriotism does not help him overmuch'. Meikle told readers that separation allowances should be more substantial and paid promptly. There should be a new pension scheme for soldiers paid for by increased income tax. Meikle wrote: 'The state has not yet erred on the side of generosity.' He returned to

[76] Simkins, *Kitchener's Army,* pp. 104-106.
[77] *Express and Star,* 10 November 1914, p. 2.
[78] *Express and Star,* 18 September 1914, p. 2.
[79] Rudyard Kipling, *Barrack Room Ballads and other Verses* (London, Methuen, 1892), pp. 6-9.

the same theme in November 1914 in a leader headlined 'The State and the Soldier'.[80] On this occasion, he argued that the state had lacked generosity because of the long-held and highly negative image of the soldier before the war. He was reflecting on a generally held view. Service in the ranks of the pre-war Regular army was unpopular. Harsh discipline and poor pay meant it tended to attract the unskilled and the unemployed. [81] It was an outlook noted by the officers of the Wolverhampton Territorials. Before the war, they had been respectable part-time soldiers but once mobilised and away from the town, they were viewed as 'lewd and lascivious soldiery' to be watched for predatory habits.[82] 'It is the result of a wrong mental attitude to all matters associated with the army,' the Editor argued and added, '…the people are coming to see that the army is not the sole concern of experts'. He concluded that better treatment of the nation's citizen soldiers was crucial to voluntarism and stated: 'We must learn to do better still by our soldiers if we want to maintain the glorious voluntary system.'[83]

The war placed a Liberal newspaper like the *Express and Star* in an awkward position relating to the Regular Army. On the one hand, it had to recognise its importance in defending the nation – particularly now that wartime recruitment was making it more representative of society, and therefore readership, in general. On the other, it remained wary of its position as representing two threats to Liberal thinking - increasing central state control and the potential

[80] *Express and Star*, 12 November 1914, p. 2.
[81] Beckett, Bowman and Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War*, pp. 31-33.
[82] Committee of Officers, *War History of the Sixth Battalion*, p. 8.
[83] *Express and Star*, 18 September 1914, p. 2.

for compulsory service. In Liberal eyes, The Regular Army represented national government control and bureaucracy as opposed to local endeavour and initiative. Walter Blease, in his 1913 account of the new Liberalism highlighted the problems of an overwhelming central bureaucracy. He argued that 'the Liberal distrusts the bureaucratic system of management' which he regarded as 'fatal to new ideas' and which 'leaves the determination of industrial policy to a sort of lay hierarchy'.[84] The Regulars also represented the threat of conscription. In an Editorial on 29 October 1914, headlined 'The Difference', Meikle warned readers about the outlook of the nation's military leaders.[85] The Editor claimed that in the past, a decision to join the Regular Army could have been seen as 'a pleasant change'. The downside was that recruits did not necessarily decide where they would serve but went where the bureaucratic system decided men were needed. He wrote: 'In the military mind compulsory service possesses the advantage of numbers and proportional cheapness'. Meikle finished his Editorial thoughtfully. He wrote: 'We are deeply anxious that the priceless liberties which we have inherited may be handed down untarnished to future generations of Britons.' Despite these anxieties, by spring 1915, the realities of war were beginning to make Meikle question his belief in an army based solely on volunteers.

The Coming of Conscription: April to December 1915.

[84] Walter Lyon Blease, *A Short History of English Liberalism* (London: T. F. Unwin, 1913), p. 335.
[85] *Express and Star*, 29 October, 1914, p. 2.

From April 1915, there was a change of mood in the Editor's leader columns. The Liberal devotion to voluntarism started to be qualified. The leaders started to show an attempt to reconcile Liberal principles with the measures demanded to fight an industrialised mass war – in particular, conscription.[86] The context displayed in the pages of the *Express and Star* in the second half of 1915 is significant. It shows the newspaper handling an increasingly febrile atmosphere surrounding the issue of recruitment with the Editor swinging between a robust defence of voluntarism and melancholy acceptable of conscription. The period from April to December 1915 illustrates a distinct shift, with growing awareness of the reality of war and an increasing realisation of the possible need for compulsory service.

Recruitment numbers dropped below 100,000 a month in July, August and September 1915 only rising above 100,000 in October and November, during the period of the Derby Scheme, before dropping back to just over 55,000 in the run-up to Christmas 1915.[87] With the battles of Neuve Chapelle in March 1915, 2nd Ypres in April and Loos in September - October, the newspaper was reporting increasingly large casualty lists. On 18 October, The *Express and Star* reported the 'Longest Casualty Lists of the War' with 228 officers and 6,134 other ranks – all but 300 associated with what the newspaper called the 'recent fighting'.[88] On 23 October, the newspaper reported under the headline 'Heroes of the Fight' that total casualties since 'the recent advance' were 2068

[86] Johnson, 'The Liberal War Committee', pp. 399-420.
[87] War Office, *Statistics of the Military Effort*, p. 364.
[88] *Express and Star*, 18 October 1915, p. 4.

officers and 30,886 other ranks. The Editor wrote that a glance at the casualty lists was sufficient explanation for Lord Kitchener's calls for more men.[89] On 6 October, Meikle pointed out: 'The Minister for War has announced that many more men are needed – how many might be gathered from the casualty lists – to maintain the strength of our armies.'[90] The general casualty lists were thrown into sharp local relief when both Black Country Territorial battalions suffered hundreds of casualties on 13 October 1915 in an attack on the German strongpoint of the Hohenzollern Redoubt.[91] The *Express and Star* found itself reporting an increasingly tense and pressurised atmosphere at home. For example, readers wrote to complain that the Wolverhampton branch of the Independent Labour Party had held an open-air Stop the War meeting in Snowhill, Wolverhampton. One said it was 'positively dangerous' and an insult to the town's citizens.[92] The Editor, Andrew Meikle, put his thoughts at the end of the letters' column on 20 August. The *Express and Star* had not covered the meeting but the Editor told readers to become police informants. He wrote: 'We understand the police are prepared to take action against these indiscreet speakers if they secure sufficient evidence to obtain a conviction. Our correspondents of today, as well as those who preceded them with letters, should at once place themselves in communication with the police.'[93] Later the same month, Meikle welcomed the natural death of the 'ridiculous craze' of distributing white feathers to young men who were not in uniform. He contemptuously described how it had been carried out by

[89] *Express and Star*, 20 October 1915, p. 2.
[90] *Express and Star*, 6 October 1915, p. 2.
[91] The *Express and Star's* coverage of the attack on the Hohenzollern Redoubt and its aftermath is considered in more detail in Chapter 5.
[92] *Express and Star*, 18 August 1915, p. 2.
[93] *Express and Star,* 18 August 1915, p. 2.

‘irresponsible young girls and women’ who should have been doing something more constructive.[94] Meanwhile, in October, the newspaper reported on the inquest into the death of 16-year-old Ernest Ford from Kate’s Hill in Dudley. He had drowned himself in a pond after he tried to get factory work and the foreman told him: ‘Get off and get into khaki’. The youth had tried to enlist aged 15 but had been turned away at the recruiting office. His sister, Florence, told the coroner that since then he had been ‘badgered by people about enlisting’.[95] Adrian Gregory makes the point that the act of volunteering was weighted with massive social approbation by 1915 and not volunteering met with social disapprobation. The decision to become a volunteer soldier became an important, real choice.[96] This was the background as Meikle agonised in his leader columns over the possibility of conscription and his defence of voluntarism.

The change of perspective was first seen in April 1915 after the battle of Neuve Chapelle, 10 - 12 March 1915. The battle has been described as occupying an important place in the experience of the BEF as the first large-scale planned British offensive of the war.[97] In addition, it was the first major British assault on German positions since the advent of trench warfare.[98] It confronted the Editor with the reality of mass warfare in a way he had not expressed previously. British casualties in the attack had been 583 officers and 12,309

[94] *Express and Star*, 21 August 1915, p. 2.
[95] *Express and Star*, 1 September 1915, p. 2.
[96] Gregory, *The Last Great War*, p. 90.
[97] Patrick Watt, ‘Douglas Haig and the Planning of the Battle of Neuve Chapelle’ in Jones (ed.), *Courage Without Glory*, pp. 183-203.
[98] Beckett, Bowman and Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War*, p. 242.

other ranks.[99] The first list of casualties appeared on 8 April 1915, nearly a month after the battle, under the headline 'Considerable Losses for Midland Regiments'.[100] The *Express and Star* told readers the list was from Neuve Chapelle. It carried the names of 150 men killed, injured or missing from the Worcestershire Regiment, but said the list in full, issued by the Official Press Bureau, ran to 44 closely typed pages. The newspaper said the list described the 'heavy price paid by the British' at Neuve Chapelle. Four days later, Meikle sounded almost despairing when he wrote that it was clear '…that the British paid dearly for the ground that they had won at Neuve Chapelle is shown by the successive instalments of casualty lists'.[101] He added: 'No doubt, there is yet in the German Army, an abundance of fighting spirit which it will be hard work to break down.' A few days later, the Editor still seemed shocked and pointed out that the casualty lists had been published nearly a month after the event and were 'not always published as quickly as anxious relatives might desire'.[102] He went on: 'The story of Neuve Chapelle is now fully to hand; and while we can admire the general plan and heroic efforts that were made to carry it out, we should be able also to realise more clearly the gigantic task with which an army is confronted…'[103]

Events involving the Black Country's two Territorial battalions added extra emphasis to the newspaper's growing concern over the overwhelming nature

[99] Brigadier-General J. E. Edmonds and Captain G. C. Wynne, *Official History of the Great War: 1915, Volume I* (Uckfield: Naval and Military Press/Imperial War Museum, Originally published 1927), p. 151.
[100] *Express and Star*, 8 April 1915, p. 4.
[101] *Express and Star,* 12 April 1915, p. 2.
[102] *Express and Star,* 19 April 1915, p. 2.
[103] *Express and Star,* 19 April 1915, p. 2.

of the war. The 1/6th Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment, the Wolverhampton Territorials and the 1/5th Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment, the Walsall and Cannock Territorials, had arrived in France, as part of 46th (North Midland) Division, less than a week before Neuve Chapelle.[104] Although they had not been involved at Neuve Chapelle, the two battalions had spent their first two nights in the trenches between 20 and 24 March 1915, at Armentieres before starting regular four-day tours of duty in the trenches at Wulverghem at the beginning of June.[105] The Black Country men quickly began to report on life at the fighting front to those back at home. It made for compelling but grim reading. Lance Corporal Duddell, of the 1/6th Battalion, son of the headmaster of St Jude's day school in Wolverhampton wrote to describe being part of a digging party. He wrote: 'We passed through a village which eight months ago might have been like Codsall. And now, every house and barn is in ruins and the old church looks like a relic of some centuries back. Not a soul lives in the place.'[106] Lance Corporal J. Mulloy of the 1/6th Battalions wrote to say how his nerves were suffering. He had been drinking tea with a comrade when there was a call for a stretcher-bearer – his companion had been hit in the chest by the nose of a shell.[107] Meanwhile, Private George Butler, from Heath Town in Wolverhampton had been shot in the head while on sentry duty – it had taken him four hours to die. [108] Butler had been a fitter at Jenks and Cottrell in Wolverhampton and a member of Holy Trinity Church choir. Meikle's leaders illustrated how the war had taken

[104] Committee of Officers, *War History of the Sixth Battalion*, p. 245.
[105] Committee of Officers, *War History of the Sixth Battalion,* p. 245.
[106] *Express and Star,* 14 April 1915, p. 4.
[107] *Express and Star,* 16 April 1915, p. 4.
[108] *Express and Star,* 13 April, 1915, p. 4.

on a more significant local dimension by Spring 1915. On 15 April he wrote: 'Letters which have reached Wolverhampton show the 6th South Staffs have had their baptism of fire. The war is thus being more directly brought home to the people of this town and district than it has hitherto been.'[109] The Editor and his readers were beginning to see the reality of mass warfare but by April 1915, this had still not translated into a recognition of the possibility of conscription.

It took the formation of the Coalition government in May 1915 for the *Express and Star* to consider the possibility of sacrificing firmly held, Liberal beliefs and contemplate the possibility of conscription. For many Liberals, conscription represented a betrayal of the very cause for which Britain had entered the war – the destruction of German 'Junkerdom'.[110] For a newspaper like the *Express and Star*, steeped in Liberalism, conscription created a significant Editorial and political problem. In Liberal eyes, the 'social contract' required individuals to give up certain liberties in return for the state protecting the citizen's life and property.[111] Conscription turned this on its head – citizens were being asked to sacrifice their lives for the state. The Prime Minister, Herbert Asquith, officially announced the Coalition, which included several leading Conservatives, on 25 May.[112] The changes also saw the creation of a new Ministry of Munitions under David Lloyd George. Peter Simkins interprets the formation of the Coalition and the new Ministry as heralding an end to the government's haphazard approach to manpower.[113] In addition, historians point out that the Coalition substantially increased the likelihood of

[109] *Express and Star*, 15 April 1915, p. 2.
[110] G, R. Searle, *The Liberal Party* (Basingstone: Palgrave, 2001), p. 134.
[111] Margaret Levi, 'The Institution of Conscription', *Social Sciences History* 20 (1) (Spring 1996), pp. 133-167.
[112] Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, p. 133.
[113] Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, p. 133.

conscription by including Conservatives who generally supported compulsory service.[114] The *Express and Star* saw the significance of the Coalition in the same terms – a growing sense of pragmatism because of the extraordinary nature of modern warfare. Andrew Meikle recognised the fine balance between military and industrial manpower, the need for a more managed approach to resources and a concern about conscription. Five days before the formation of the Coalition, he wrote under the headline 'Taking It Seriously', 'The war is now at any rate being taken seriously in the country. The government is being reconstructed with a view to the more vigorous prosecution of the campaign, further efforts are being made to increase the supply of munitions and 300,000 more army recruits are being asked for…'.[115] Meikle, for the first time, admitted that conscription might be necessary when he added: '…if the number required is not forthcoming under existing circumstances within due time then the reconstructed government will doubtless adopt as a temporary measure, the process of compulsion. If the voluntary system will carry us through, so much the better, but the present is a crisis of no ordinary character'.[116] On the same day, the newspaper started to carry panels, seven column-inches deep, dropped into the middle of news pages. They stated: 'Urgent Appeal: Enlist Now and Prevent Conscription'. The wording added: 'Let is also be remembered that delay means the introduction of conscription. This is a war for freedom. Let us go as free citizens of a free state'.[117]

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[114] Beckett, Bowman and Connelly, *The British Army*, p. 113.
[115] *Express and Star*, 20 May 1915, p. 2.
[116] *Express and Star*, 20 May 1915, p. 2.
[117] *Express and Star,* 20 May 1915, p. 4.

In the days before and after the formation of the Coalition on 25 May, Meikle's leader columns were dominated by the creation of the new government and the nature of modern warfare. He maintained an eye for the human-interest nature of war, pointing out its all-consuming nature. 'At home, our resources for naval and military supplies are being severely tested. There can be hardly a family throughout the land that has not given one or more of its members to the national service, and our anxieties are very real and personal,' he wrote.[118] The two days following the formation of the Coalition are significant in illustrating the emerging pragmatism of the *Express and Star's* Editorial outlook - no matter what the cost; nothing could stand in the way of victory. On 26 May, Meikle stated that after the formation of the new government, the nation '…will expect its members to work strongly and unitedly for the one purpose in hand – that is to bring the country victoriously through the Armageddon of the nations now being fought out.'[119] The Editor praised the appointment of David Lloyd George to the new Ministry of Munitions. Meikle commented: 'At present, it has been bought into being by the exigencies of the moment; and is essentially a position which requires the services of a most energetic, resourceful and determined man. This appointment is emphatically a good one.'[120] The following day, Meikle addressed the issue of total war and its impact on the country. He said it appeared Britain had finally become aware of '…the immense importance of her position as, in some respects, the chief

[118] *Express and Star*, 22 May 1915, p. 2.
[119] *Express and Star*, 26 May 1915, p. 2.
[120] *Express and Star*, 26 May 1915, p. 2.

factor in the war of nationality and liberation.'[121] He said people were deluded if they thought Germany had shot its bolt and all Britain and France had to do was hold their line and wait for the Russians to advance on Berlin. He added that few could have seen the difficulties involved with the landings at Gallipoli. Meikle recognised that the nature of modern warfare made industrial production on the home front as important as the fighting front. He went on:

> That the Prime Minister and his colleagues rightly appraised the situation is shown by the formation of a coalition government. The chief requirement of the Government are men and munitions and in both respects, a complete mobilisation is required. On the earnestness and steadfastness of the people at home, more depends than on the prowess of our naval and military forces.[122]

By the end of May 1915, Meikle's Editorials indicate he understood the extraordinary nature of industrialised warfare and the need for the total mobilisation of home and fighting fronts

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The mood of reluctant acceptance of the coming of conscription grew as the year went on and state intrusion on the management of manpower took on a more tangible form. The National Registration Act became law in July 1915 allowing for the creation of a register of all persons between the ages of 15 and 65 giving details of their birth, family situation, occupation and skills.[123] The National Register day was set as 15 August 1915 when local volunteers were involved in delivering and collecting forms and later classification and enumeration.[124] Historians have noted the irony in this 'precursor of

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[121] *Express and Star*, 27 May 1915, p. 2.
[122] *Express and Star,* 27 May 1915, p. 2.
[123] Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, p. 145.
[124] Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, p. 148.

conscription' being dependant on a massive voluntary effort.[125] In the wake of the national canvas, the Editor, Meikle, clung to a Liberal defence of voluntarism. On 18 August, under the headline 'Do We Need Compulsion?' he interpreted the National Register as a move towards conscription, which '…is now seized upon by the friends of compulsion as a handy instrument for the application of their pet theory'.[126] He said the *Express and Star* was in favour of the continuance of '…the current system based as it is on the principle of freedom and fair dealing'. Meikle was forced, however, to admit that all of Britain's allies were conscript nations. He added: '…any such step until it is proved to be absolutely necessary would be an unjustifiable betrayal of the people of Great Britain'.[127] In September, Meikle gave his clearest acknowledgement that conscription could be coming and wanted to make sure he could not be accused of missing the mood. The Editor wrote: 'Our own position has always been that should the Government, after full knowledge and consideration of the facts, deem it necessary to introduce conscription we should feel it our duty, and to be the duty of the public, to support them.'[128] He placed his faith in Lord Kitchener as the man who 'knew all the facts' and if he demanded conscription '…then we should all be ready and prepared to accept the inevitable'.[129] At the beginning of October 1915 lists of men compiled from the National Register were sent to recruiting offices so potential recruits could be canvassed.[130] The Editor saw the move as a final opportunity to save voluntarism and save the nation from the very militarism against which the war

[125] Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, p. 148; Gregory, *The Last Great War*, p. 103.
[126] *Express and Star,* 18 August 1915, p. 2.
[127] *Express and Star*, 18 August 1915, p. 2.
[128] *Express and Star*, 15 September 1915, p. 2.
[129] *Express and Star*, 15 September 1915, p. 2.
[130] Edmonds and Wynne, *Official History of the Great War, 1915, Vol 1*, p. 51.

was being fought. He explained: 'Those who, like ourselves, are anxious to see the war concluded without legal compulsion should be glad to find the evil day is not yet and that our men are to be given further opportunities of saving the nation from the fetters which militarism has so long riveted on the necks of Continental peoples.'[131]

Less than a fortnight after Meikle's defence of voluntarism, the newly appointed Director-General of Recruiting, Lord Derby, announced the outline of his so-called Derby scheme for recruiting.[132] It involved a personal canvas of all men aged between 18 and 41. Each man was to be asked to either to join up at once or attest his willingness to serve in the future if called. Attested men were split into two groups – single and married. The single men would be called up first, starting with those aged 19.[133] The scheme was an opportunity for the Government to show it had done everything it could to maintain voluntarism before the introduction of conscription.[134] Again, the Editor saw the Derby scheme as another last opportunity to prevent conscription. The day after the Derby scheme was announced he described it as a 'splendid patriotic appeal' He went on: 'If any number of young men now fail to show their patriotism by enlisting they will never have another opportunity, but will possibly have to render service under far less advantageous conditions.'[135] Meikle took some comfort from the fact that the canvas would be organised

[131] *Express and Star*, 6 October 1915, p. 2.
[132] Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, pp. 150-151.
[133] Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, p. 151.
[134] See, Simkins, Kitcheners Army, pp. 150-156; Trevor Wilson, *The Myriad Faces of War* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1986, p. 166-169.
[135] *Express and Star*, 16 October 1915, p. 2.

and carried out by voluntary local committees and would therefore be of a 'heart-to-heart' character.[136] The *Express and Star's* special commissioner, Henry Whittick, went to Wolverhampton Town Hall to write a feature on the organisation of the Derby canvas and the appeal from the Mayor for volunteers to carry it out. Whittick artfully presented the Derby scheme in terms of the New Journalism's human interest – the personal contact between the canvasser and the potential recruit on the doorstep. He noted the moral ambiguities involved in asking men directly to enlist. Whittick explained:

> It has been mentioned that in some quarters there have been misgivings on the score of the moral responsibility of persuading a man to enlist and so probably incurring the resentment of the members of his family. What the canvasser has to do, however, is not to press a possible recruit to enlist but to put before him plainly and politely the need of the country. The canvasser is strictly enjoined not to bully or threaten. The essence of the voluntary system is that the appeal goes to the conscience of the patriot and leaves the "still small voice" to do the work.[137]

The Derby scheme closed on 15 December 1915. Peter Simkins describes the results as disappointing.[138] Of the 2,179,231 single men, the National Register had shown to be available, nearly half had not attested. Simkins sees the poor results from the Derby scheme as removing the last major obstacle to compulsory service.[139]

At Christmas 1915, the *Express and Star* reflected the reality of the war as it affected the newspaper's readership. The confident tone of support for the

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[136] *Express and Star*, 16 October 1915, p. 2.
[137] *Express and Star,* 12 November 1915, p. 3.
[138] Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, pp. 155-156.
[139] Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, p. 156.

virtues of voluntarism and the volunteer seemed to be muted. A news round-up of activities during the festive period appeared on page three on Monday, 27 December, under the headline 'A Quiet Festival in Wolverhampton'. The story, emphasising human interest, explained how the town had tried to make the best of things 'under the shadow of a great war'. It went on: 'In many cases, they were gathered round the dinner table, sons and brothers from "Somewhere in France" or from one of the great training camps, while in others alas, there were gaps due to the ravages of war, and thoughts were of those who would never return.'[140] The fight appeared to have gone out of Meikle and his spirited attempt to defend the voluntary system. He seemed to accept the coming of some form of compulsory service. Meikle wrote on 29 December 1915: 'The opportunity of continuing the voluntary system with all its advantages has been given and the people well know the alternative.'[141] He expressed the hope that conscription would not become permanent but added: 'It may, however, be found necessary to adopt it to some degree as the price of victory.'[142]

Conscription: January 1916.

The New Year of 1916 saw the *Express and Star* complete its evolution from uncompromising defender of voluntarism in 1914 to reluctant advocate of conscription. It was a period fraught with Editorial difficulty for a Liberal newspaper. The Prime Minister, Herbert Asquith, introduced the Military

[140] *Express and Star*, 27 December 1915, p. 3.
[141] *Express and Star*, 29 December 1915, p. 2.
[142] *Express and Star*, 29 December 1915, p. 2.

Service Bill in the House of Commons on the evening of 5 January 1916.[143] It established the principle of conscription, which would apply to unmarried men, and widowers without children or dependants, between the ages of 18 and 41.[144] There were exceptions for those engaged in important war work, sole supporters of dependants, the unfit and approved conscientious objectors. The tribunals set up under the Derby Scheme to consider exemptions were to continue but with statutory authority.[145] The introduction of limited compulsory service has been described as a significant break in British military and political tradition – a remarkable story in an extraordinary period.[146] For Liberal fundamentalists, it represented the most serious wartime deviation from the Liberal position on personal freedom and self-determination.[147] The writer and journalist, G. K. Chesterton, described, in *The Illustrated London News,* how Britain was in an abnormal crisis and needed 'an abnormal army'.[148] He added that the Liberal explanation for this was '…we would not have it if we could help it, but that we can't help it'. The *Express and Star's* response to the introduction of compulsory service should be placed in the context of the manpower situation at the end of 1915. The effective limit of 2.5 million volunteers had been reached by December 1915.[149] The combination of large-scale casualties and competing demands for manpower from the armed

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[143] R. J. Q. Adams, and Philip P. Poirier, *The Conscription Controversy in Great Britain, 1900 –1918* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1987), p. 1.
[144] Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, p. 156.
[145] Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, p. 156.
[146] Adams and Poirier, *Conscription Controversy*, pp. 1-2; R. J. Q Adams, 'Asquith's Choice: The May Coalition and the Coming of Conscription, 1915-1916', *Journal of British Studies*, 25 (3) (1986), pp. 243-263.
[147] Trevor Wilson, *The Downfall of the Liberal Party 1914-1935* (London: Collins, 1968), pp. 33-34.
[148] G. K. Chesterton, 'Our Note Book', *Illustrated London News*, 22 January 1916, p. 104.
[149] Ian Beckett, 'A Nation in Arms, 1914-18', in Ian F. W. Beckett and Keith Simpson (eds.), *A Nation in Army: A Social Study of the British Army in the First World War* (London: Tom Donovan, 1985), pp. 2-35.

forces, industry and agriculture by the end of 1915, made conscription inevitable.[150] The canvas that formed part of the Derby Scheme in late 1915 provided the statistical information to support this. Only 1.1 million of the 2.1 million single men considered available for service were prepared to attest willingly. Only 318,533 of those willing to attest were believed to be available – it had been expected that at least 500,000 would be forthcoming.[151] It should be noted that David Silbey argues that the Government's statistics were flawed and 'grossly overestimated' the numbers of men available for service.[152]

It was an awkward moment for the *Express and Star,* a newspaper that had been a vociferous advocate of voluntarism and had adopted the figure of the volunteer as its commercial and Editorial mascot. The newspaper developed a response to compulsory service that was calculated and shrewd. The volunteer became central to the newspaper's support for conscription, providing a Liberal justification for an expansion of the state. Its argument was anchored on the idea of fairness. The *Express and Star* positioned itself as a conditional supporter of conscription at a time of national crisis, a steadfast champion of the volunteer and his family as well as a scourge of the so-called shirker. The significance of the Derby canvas statistics and the nation's situation in January 1916 was not lost on the *Express and Star,* which described events as a 'crisis of unprecedented gravity'.[153] It was a state of

[150] Ian Beckett, Timothy Bowman and Mark Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 113.
[151] Beckett, Bowman and Connelly, *British Army and the First World War*, p. 115.
[152] Silbey, *British Working Class*, p. 31.
[153] *Express and Star*, 6 January 1916, p. 2.

affairs that 'brooked no squeamishness'.[154] In January, the Editor, Andrew Meikle, devoted his leader column to compulsory service on ten occasions. When the Military Service Bill was introduced into the House of Commons - between 5 January and 8 January - it was the subject every day. Meikle saw conscription as inevitable and the Derby Scheme statistics as critical. He wrote on 5 January: 'Lord Derby's report on the comparative failure of the recent recruiting campaign can only result in one way. The scheme was devised with a view not only to augment the Army but also to test the feeling of the country regarding compulsory service. The number of those who voluntarily submitted to attestation is almost equal to those who declined…'[155] He told readers that the Government had no other options – the figures clearly showed there were over two million men 'who prefer to be fetched'. He added that there could be no complaints of 'undue precipitation' by the state. The Editor took the same view as G. K. Chesterton – abnormal circumstances needed an abnormal response. The day after the Bill's introduction Meikle highlighted the 'Prussian menace' and gave a Liberal defence of compulsory service.[156] He wrote that readers were well aware of the *Express and Star's* past opposition to conscription but explained: 'So fraught with vital consequences to Great Britain is this war that victory full and complete must be attained, even at the cost, if need be, of the temporary cessation of some our most cherished liberties'. It was a similar argument to that made by David Lloyd George – conscription was the result of the 'magnitude of the struggle and its life-and-death importance'.[157] Two days later, Meikle was still making the point and defending

[154] *Express and Star*, 5 January 1916, p. 2.
[155] *Express and Star*, 5 January 1916, p. 2.
[156] *Express and Star*, 6 January 1916, p. 2.
[157] David Lloyd George, *War Memoirs, Vol. 1* (London: Odhams Press, 1933), p. 427.

the Government. He wrote: 'No sane Government would ever dream of introducing compulsory service so long as it could get a sufficient number of recruits at reasonable cost by the voluntary system.'[158] The Editor understood how the introduction of conscription, albeit on a limited basis, fundamentally extended the reach of the state and the obligations of male citizens.[159] Neither was he naïve to the fact that the Derby Scheme had been seen by some as not necessarily an opportunity to save voluntarism but a platform to introduce conscription. When the scheme failed to provide the required number of recruits, the Government could justly claim voluntary recruitment had failed.[160] Meikle explained that it was forlorn to have thought of the Derby Scheme as the 'last hope of the friends of Voluntaryism' (sic).[161] He added: 'A large proportion of the members of the Cabinet only regarded the Derby scheme as the apology for and the prelude to general compulsion.'

At the heart of the Editor's view of conscription were his working-class readers and a sense of fairness towards them and the volunteer soldier. Meikle's leader columns in January 1916 provide an insight into his view of the wartime volunteer Army – a vast number of working-class men who had laid down the tools of their trades to go and fight the enemy. As soon as the job was done, the citizen army of workmen would proudly lay down their weapons and return to their factories and workshops. The volunteer had chosen to be a soldier and

[158] *Express and Star*, 8 January 1916, p. 2.
[159] See, Margaret Levi, 'The Institution of Conscription', *Social Science History*, 20 (1) (Spring 1996), pp. 133-167.
[160] Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, p. 150.
[161] *Express and Star*, 17 January 1916, p. 2.

that commitment only lasted for the war's duration.[162] On 5 January 1916, he wrote: 'It is mainly from the working classes that we have formed the voluntary army of three millions of which we are so justly proud.'[163] Less than three weeks later he explained '…it is desirable that our men should find it as easy to resume the utensils of their various handicrafts at the conclusion of the war as they did to exchange them for the weapons which they are now wielding'.[164]

The Editor recognised compulsory service as an unfortunate, but temporarily inevitable, development of state control at a time of national crisis. In his view, citizens had already accepted the Defence of the Realm Act that had given the military and civil authorities almost unlimited powers, the Munitions Act that had requisitioned factories and their workers for the public service and the restrictions on the licensed trade which meant that '…the interiors of public houses is every day now like Sunday'.[165] Conscription was simply a further extension to the growing list of state interventions that the nation had accepted 'without demur'. The Editor pointed out, however, that the *Express and Star's* support for conscription was conditional and based around fairness. Firstly, it could only exist temporarily, for the duration of the war. Meikle explained he had few fears on this point: 'The Government propose that the new regulations shall terminate with the war; the subsequent military system remaining to be voted upon by those who have to take part in the struggle.'[166] Secondly, he stressed the need for generous allowances not just for the dependents of married men but also for dependents of single men – particularly mothers.

[162] Bourne, *Britain and the Great War*, p. 218.
[163] *Express and Star*, 5 January 1916, p. 2.
[164] *Express and Star*, 25 January 1916, p. 2.
[165] *Express and Star*, 6 January 1916, p. 2.
[166] *Express and Star*, 5 January 1916, p. 2.

Meikle made this point in a leader on 12 January 1916 headlined 'Dependent Mothers' He emphasised the 'wisdom of establishing the scale of allowances to dependents of unmarried men' and stressed the importance of pension officers acting with 'tact and discretion'.[167] He argued that the Government '…is perfectly aware that in no case would the nation stand any reduction in the present scale of pay and allowances for dependents'.[168] Finally, he recognised the importance of the local tribunals set up to examine cases of those applying for exemption from military service. According to the Editor, the tribunals provided a 'fair and reasonable' system for those applying for exemption, allowing them to '…state their reasons for abstention before a tribunal of their fellow townsmen'.[169] Meikle had made it clear that his vision of conscription was as a temporary wartime measure based on fair play for all those involved. His view reflects a point made by Adrian Gregory in his study of First World War society – the British method of conscription was not simply a bureaucratic system in which the individual was a passive figure. Safeguard procedures were built-in, not least to protect local communities from economic damage and to protect families from hardship.[170]

The *Express and Star* made use of the figure of the volunteer to justify supporting compulsory service despite its Liberal traditions. While the volunteer did his duty, there were increasing numbers of 'whimperers' and 'shirkers' who avoided their responsibilities.[171] Debate surrounding the

[167] *Express and Star*, 12 January 1916, p. 2.
[168] *Express and Star*, 8 January 1916, p. 2.
[169] *Express and Star,* 6 January 1916, p. 2.
[170] Gregory, *Last Great War*, p. 101.
[171] *Express and Star*, 25 January 1916, p. 2.

volunteer and the shirker had highly significant commercial and journalistic implications for the *Express and Star*. It was ground on which the Editor had to tread carefully. The problem lay in the definition of a shirker. The newspaper's commercial success depended on delivering working-class family readership to its advertisers. Nothing was more commercially important than the relationship between the newspaper and its working-class family readership. The newspaper's business model demanded that the close relationship between the *Express and Star* and the town's working class had to be maintained. Hence, any criticism of married working-class family men, the core readership, would have been commercially disastrous and unthinkable. The newspaper was fortunate in that both the Government and the public saw shirking as largely involving young, single men.[172] The shirker was an unmarried loafer who hung back while married, family men joined the colours.[173] Conscription was a straightforward way to get at the 'pool of shirkers' and force them to do their duty.[174] As the Editor pointed out: 'Neither economically nor equitably could the Government call upon men with families to join the fighting line while so many men with lesser family responsibilities were allowed to shirk their obvious duty'.[175] The Editor placed the issue of conscription firmly in the context of his core readership – the working-class families who had so far provided the volunteers who had swelled the ranks. He wrote: 'We cannot believe that those who have relatives at the front, or are themselves ready to go, will let sentimental consideration for the 651,180

[172] David Silbey, *The British Working Class and Enthusiasm for War: 1914-1916* (London: Frank Cass, 2005), p. 31.
[173] Silbey, *British Working Class*, p. 31.
[174] Silbey, *British Working Class*, p. 37.
[175] *Express and Star,* 6 January 1916, p. 2.

unstarred, unattested single men outweigh their loyalty to the country.'[176] It was an artfully constructed argument. The *Express and Star* was able to present itself as the defender of the nobility and sacrifice of its core readers - working-class family men. Meanwhile, it could castigate unmarried loafers – a much safer commercial target for criticism. Even with single men, the newspaper had to take the sting out of its criticism by emphasising the need to provide proper allowances for single men's dependents. Helen McCartney emphasises what she describes as 'the concept of fair play' in her study of Liverpool Territorials in the First World War.[177] It is an idea strongly reflected in the leader columns of the *Express and Star* in early 1916. Fairness and the idea of shirking were central to the newspaper's view of conscription. McCartney argues that by 1916 the act of volunteering and ideas of fair play had acquired heightened significance – particularly for the Territorials.[178] She points out that those who had 'shirked' their moral duty and waited for compulsion were thought to have placed an unfair burden on volunteers. Conscripts could face intolerance and hostility from the volunteers of 1914 and 1915.[179] The Editor recognised this but gave the volunteers and the conscripts the benefit of the doubt. Volunteers, conscripts and their families were all readers or potential readers. Meikle was diplomatic and explained how 'our volunteer soldiers' would rise above such suspicions. He wrote: 'Our fighting men will no doubt understand, as we do ourselves, that many gallant young men have been deterred from enlisting by influences which – some kindly, some unsympathetic –can be overcome only by compulsion, and therefore we

[176] *Express and Star*, 5 January 1916, p. 2.
[177] McCartney, *Citizen Soldiers*, p. 130.
[178] McCartney, *Citizen Soldiers,* p. 130.
[179] McCartney, *Citizen Soldiers,* p. 130.

feel sure that under such circumstances our volunteer soldiers will show the conscripts every consideration.'[180]

The day before the Bill was introduced, the Editor placed the volunteer soldier at the heart of the conscription debate, stating: 'We should like to know what is the united feeling of the soldiers in the field with regard to the steps now contemplated.'[181] The day after the Bill's introduction, he argued: 'We have no hesitation in saying that if the working men now fighting in the trenches could be polled, the overwhelming majority would vote in favour of the very modest proposal before Parliament.'[182] In an industrial town like Wolverhampton, the local newspaper could not afford to ignore the contribution of those still working in industry. The Editor acknowledged this when he explained the need for the increased management of manpower through compulsory service. He stated: 'The burden of all wars falls largely on the working classes; but in the present conflict the collier, the mechanic and the railwayman are occupying positions the importance of which, in their degrees, is unprecedented.'[183] The Editor's comments indicate that by 1916, he understood the reality of 'total war' with both military and industrial manpower being of equal importance. He described the reality:

> Men of army age, married and single, starred and unstarred, not previously attested, should come forward without delay, and show to the Government and the world their readiness to serve their country either in the ranks of the Army, or in such other ways as they are best fitted by their physical and other qualifications. The nation is on its

[180] *Express and Star,* 5 January 1916, p. 2.
[181] *Express and Star*, 5 January 1916, p. 2.
[182] *Express and Star*, 7 January 1916, p. 2.
[183] *Express and Star,* 13 January 1916, p. 2.

> supreme trial and it is essential that every man should be in his proper place.[184]

The *Express and Star's* evolving Liberal view of the war provides a backdrop to this thesis. The changes that saw an uncompromising belief in voluntarism move to a reluctant and conditional acceptance of the need for compulsory service provides a context for the various incarnations of the volunteer soldier that the newspaper presented to its readers. These incarnations changed in emphasis between 1914 and 1916. They related to the growing understanding of the reality of industrialised warfare. The newspaper's notions of Liberalism developed alongside this reality. The politics of the *Express and Star* and its commercial imperatives came together to shape the evolving presentation of the volunteer in the pages of the newspaper. The next chapter explains the *Express and Star's* first incarnation of the volunteer soldier as an eager and selfless recruit ready to fight for his country.

[184] *Express and Star*, 8 January 1916, p. 2.

Chapter 3: Recruiting.

This chapter examines how the *Express and Star* became an active part of the recruiting effort to generate valuable content and publicity as well as gaining local prestige from being associated with the national war effort. The *Express and Star* presented the volunteer as an eager recruit and the newspaper as his champion. To do this, it used the techniques of the New Journalism – human interest, local civic boosterism, reader involvement and the newspaper being at the centre of the story. The *Express and Star's* engagement with recruiting did not sit in isolation as a simple local initiative – it can be placed in the wider context of the first eighteen months of the war.[1] It reflected the local nature of much of the recruiting effort of 1914 and illustrated the significance of the so-called Amiens Despatch in 1914 to the newspaper's recruiting effort.

The Amiens Despatch and the New Journalism

On Sunday, 30 August 1914, *The Times* published a special Sunday edition containing a sensational account of the British Army's retreat from Mons.[2] The British Expeditionary Force had unexpectedly found itself facing the main thrust of the German invasion of Belgium and France. After defeats at Mons on 23 August and Le Cateau on 26 August, the BEF had embarked on the Great Retreat in the face of overwhelming German forces.[3] The story was filed

[1] See Appendix V. for a brief analysis of recruiting figures in Wolverhampton between 1914 and 1915.
[2] Beckett, Bowman and Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War*, p. 96.
[3] Badsey, *The German Corpse Factory,* p. 100; Spencer Jones, 'Introduction' in Jones (ed.), *Stemming the Tide*, p. 18.

by war correspondent, Arthur Moore, from the French city of Amiens on Saturday, 29 August and so became known as the Amiens Despatch.[4] The 'scoop' was considered so significant *The Times* not only published a Sunday edition but also cleared the front page of advertising to display the report. Moore wrote how he had encountered scattered fragments of the British 4th Division and said there had been considerable numbers of casualties. His despatch referred to 'broken bits of many regiments' pushed back by the weight of enemy numbers.[5] He wrote about the bitter truth of the 'flotsam and jetsom of the fiercest fight in history' but added: 'It was a retreating and a broken army but it was not an army of hunted men'.[6] *The Times* had submitted the report to the censor before publication. It was returned later with a note from the head of the Official Press Bureau, F. E. Smith, reinstating some of the self-censored passages and adding an extra paragraph urging more men to join up. [7] Despite this, the publication of the report caused a furore among the political elite. The following day, it was criticised by the Prime Minister, H. H. Asquith; a statement from the Editor of *The Times* was read in the House of Commons and the censor, Smith, had to make a lengthy statement to the House.[8] The Amiens Despatch had exposed confusion and lack of organisation at the highest level of government censorship.[9]

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[4] Badsey, *The German Corpse Factory*, p. 100.
[5] *The Times*, 30 August 1914, p. 1. The Despatch is reproduced in *The History of The Times: The 150th Anniversary and Beyond, 1912-1948. Part I, Chapters I-XII, 1912-1920* (London: The Office of *The Times,* 1952), pp. 223-225.
[6] *The Times,* 30 August 1914, p. 1.
[7] Stephen Badsey, 'Strategy and Propaganda: Lord Kitchener, The Retreat from Mons, and the Amiens Despatch, August – September 1914'in Connelly et al. (eds.), *Propaganda and Conflict*, pp. 21-37.
[8] Badsey, 'Strategy and Propaganda', pp. 32-33.
[9] Badsey, 'Strategy and Propaganda', p 34.

The *Express and Star* had also noted the significance of the report in *The Times* and had speedily used a technique of the New Journalism for which the cheap evening press was notorious - the wholesale 'lifting' word-for-word of stories from other newspapers, particularly the morning titles.[10] It too produced a single-sheet 'Sunday Special' edition with *The Times* 'scoop' boldly dominating one side of the page.[11] Within hours of *The Times* publishing the exclusive, people in Wolverhampton were reading the Amiens Despatch in a Sunday edition of the *Express and Star*. The story was extravagantly headlined with four decks, all set in different fonts. The headlines read: Broken British Regiments/Forced Back by Sheer Unconquerable Mass of Numbers/Fourth Division Reduced to Scattered Units/ Colossal German Losses. The *Express and Star* acknowledged the report had come from a special correspondent of *The Times*, who had achieved many 'notable successes' in getting early information from the front. It then launched into the lengthy report, describing the German masses and the 'terrible losses' among British and French troops. The German Army 'had made a colossal effort and moved with extraordinary speed'. The newspaper added that the *News of the World* was reporting British casualties of 10,000. Because the *Express and Star* was published on Sunday afternoon, it also updated the story with a later statement from the Official Press Bureau in response to the report. This attempted to strike a more positive note about the retreat. It was placed next to the Amiens Despatch.[12] The brief seven-line report was also given the extravagant headline treatment, this time with six decks. It read: Silence

[10] Lee, *The Origins of the Popular Press,* p. 75.
[11] *Express and Star*, 30 August 1914, p. 1.
[12] *Express and Star*, 30 August 1914, p. 1.

Broken/British Forces in Four-Day Battle/A Desperate Conflict Bravely Endured/Estimated Losses 5,000-6,000/Germans Lose Heavily/ Reinforcements for Our Troops. The report said British soldiers had been involved in a four-day battle while withdrawing to new defensive positions. The fighting had been desperate and losses had been in the order of 5,000 to 6,000 men – reinforcements were double this. It could be argued that readers in Wolverhampton got a better service than the readers of *The Times* because the later publication of the *Express and Star* allowed it to publish the response from the Official Press Bureau as well. In his leader comment the following day, the *Express and Star's* Editor, Andrew Meikle attempted to strike a positive tone about the retreat from Mons. Under the headline 'The British Soldier's Glory', he argued people should be proud that Britain's gallant and comparatively small force had made a 'brilliant stand' against the Germans.[13] He acknowledged, however, that 'grim work' lay ahead to push the enemy back and German troops would inevitably strike again.

The *Express and Star's* owners and Editor had thought the news from Mons important enough to publish on a Sunday. The significance of this is emphasised by the fact that the newspaper had previously announced it did not have plans to publish Sunday special editions with war news. News telegrams from the Official Press Bureau received on Sundays were being displayed outside main Post Offices around the country.[14] Well-off people with telephones were also able to ring the telephone exchange and have Official

[13] *Express and Star*, 31 August 1914, p. 2.
[14] *Express and Star,* 8 August 1914, p. 2; *Express and Star,* 5 August 1914, p. 2.

Press Bureau bulletins read out to them.[15] The *Express and Star*, therefore, had decided there was nothing to be gained from publishing on Sundays as official information was already freely available elsewhere. The Amiens Despatch was different. It was an exclusive in *The Times*, not available elsewhere, and therefore provided an opportunity to sell. The handling of the Amiens Despatch illustrated how quickly important news could spread across the country. It showed how rapidly and effectively a newspaper like the *Express and Star* could take advantage of fast-moving news. It also illustrated how the *Express and Star* was not afraid to publish less favourable news about the war if there was a potential commercial sales advantage. It highlighted the importance of human-interest journalism in wartime. The Amiens Despatch fitted the character of the New Journalism – it was sensational, it was up-to-date, it was human interest on a large-scale and written in a style that appeared to suggest the reporter was 'on the scene'. The *Express and Star* presented it with large, dramatic headlines to attract street sales on a day when people would not be expecting the newspaper to be published. Geoffrey Robinson, the Editor of *The Times*, recognised the centrality of the New Journalism and human interest in the war. In his statement to the House of Commons, the day after the Despatch was published, Robinson took the opportunity to point out what he considered the inadequacies of the press censorship. He said the country wanted 'to take a human interest in what goes on' but that all human interest had vanished from the Official Press Bureau bulletins.[16] Robinson told MPs: 'Lord Kitchener may be a great soldier but he

[15] *Express and Star*, 15 August 1914, p. 2.
[16] *Hansard,* HC Deb. vol. 66, cols. 455-456 (31 August 1914).

does not understand…that the human element is, after all, what this country desires'.[17] Significantly, Robinson linked the lack of compelling human-interest news from the war to recruiting. He said recruiting was suffering because of lack of information and that Editors around the country had told him that it was 'killing recruitment'.[18]

The human-interest story of the Amiens Despatch had a dramatic effect on recruitment in Britain. In the final week of August, 66,310 men enlisted. After the article was published, in the first week of September, this almost tripled to 174,901.[19] Week beginning, 31 August 1914, became the highest recruiting week of the war.[20] Daily recruiting went from an average of 8,776 in the week before the article to 25,668 in the week after. The surge continued into the second week of September with over 136,000 men enlisting. These statistics are interpreted as showing there was no unthinking rush to the colours when war was declared – the largest numbers of volunteers enlisted over three weeks later, at the moment the 'war turned serious'.[21] Historians have described recruiting in this period as a ripple effect spreading out from London, as provincial newspapers caught up with *The Times* exclusive and reprinted the Amiens Despatch in the following days.[22] This was not the case in Wolverhampton, where people read it the same day with the added credibility of it appearing in their local evening newspaper. Meikle's leader column on

[17] *Hansard,* HC Deb. vol. 66 col. 456 (31 August 1914).
[18] *Hansard,* HC Deb. vol. 66 col. 456 (31 August 1914).
[19] Silbey, *The British Working Class*, p. 23.
[20] Pennell, *A Kingdom United*, p. 144.
[21] Pennell, *Kingdom United*, p. 145.
[22] See, Silbey, *British Working Class*, p. 24; Pennell, *Kingdom United,* p. 145.

Tuesday 1 September, two days after the publication of the Amiens Despatch, was entitled 'Do You Hear The Call!'[23] It combined the themes of recruitment, the tangible threat to the nation and ideas of localism. Meikle thought events of the previous few days had caused much soul-searching among young men who had so far not heeded the call to enlist. He concluded:

> This is really a matter for each district, and only in so far as the respective cities, towns and villages face the situation in the best spirit of patriotism can the call for men be adequately met in the present national crisis. We are firmly convinced that if the young men are made fully aware of the urgency of the appeal and the need for an immediate decision, the response will be as complete and satisfactory as we wish it to be.[24]

The Editor had placed the national crisis contained in the Amiens Despatch within the context of the need for more recruiting initiatives at the local level. His comments came as the *Express and Star* launched its own Roll of Honour recruiting campaign. The newspaper's 'lifting' and rapid publication of the Amiens Despatch should be viewed in the context of gaining publicity and momentum for the newspaper's recruiting activity at the end of August 1914.

The Roll of Honour and the Black-Coated Men in Queen Square'.

The publication of the Amiens Despatch, and its impetus to recruitment, came at an opportune moment for the *Express and Star*. On Saturday, 29 August, the day before the Sunday publication of the Despatch, the newspaper had launched its local recruiting campaign, the Roll of Honour. The unusual

[23] *Express and Star,* 1 September 1914, p. 2.
[24] *Express and Star*, 1 September 1914, p. 2.

decision to publish a Sunday edition and 'lift' the sensational and dramatic story of the Amiens Despatch can be seen as more than simply reacting to an important, breaking news story. In addition, it can be interpreted as the *Express and Star* moving quickly to take advantage of an unexpected moment of opportunity to add large-scale dramatic publicity and human interest to its recruiting campaign. The journalistic groundwork, before the launch of the Roll Of Honour, had been laid on Friday, 28 August and Saturday, 29 August 1914. Lieutenant Colonel Waterhouse, of the 6th Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment, gave an interview to the *Express and Star* explaining what he thought was a specific problem of local recruitment. It is noteworthy that the manual for apprentice journalists in Britain in 1915, *Pitman's Practical Journalism*, considered the interview a relatively new technique in use for less than 30 years. According to the Pitman manual, it was an American invention and a 'very interesting feature of present-day journalism'. [25] Waterhouse's interview appeared in a prominent position at the top of page two, under the headline 'A Call To The Middle Classes.'[26] In it, he claimed that since war had been declared only one per cent of the 'black-coated young men of Wolverhampton' had joined up. The use of the words 'black-coated' by Waterhouse can be seen as significant in class terms. David Lockwood's study of clerical workers, *The Blackcoated Worker,* described how in the early twentieth century 'blackcoated' meant what would now be regarded as 'white collar' and particularly applied to lower middle-class clerks and lower grade

[25] Alfred Baker, *Pitman's Practical Journalism* (London: Sir Isaac Pitman and Sons, 1915), p. 87.
[26] *Express and Star*, 28 August 1914, p. 2.

clerical staff.[27] Waterhouse told the *Express and Star* that he was disappointed in the lack of 'black-coated' recruits as these class of men – 'clerks and others' - had 'as much at stake as those of the labouring people'.[28] He went on to guarantee that 'friends of this class' would be allowed to serve side by side and pointed out the promotion prospects - non-commissioned officers were normally appointed from these sort of men. On Saturday 29 August, the newspaper published a further story setting up the campaign. This time it was a 'vox-pop' – the technique of interviewing the public in the street about a newsworthy subject of the moment. A reporter had been sent into Wolverhampton's central Queen Square. His task was to approach those who looked like Waterhouse's 'black-coated young men' and ask them why they were not in the army. Again, it appeared in a prominent position at the top of page two, next to the Editor's leader column and the letters' column.[29] The headline was pointed. It read '" Reasons" Why Lower Middle Class Does Not Enlist'. It was an example of what Rolfe Scott-James, Literary Editor of the *Daily News*, described in 1913 as 'coloured news' – a story that appeared to be a news item but was manipulated to reflect the newspaper's point of view.[30] The reporter wrote: 'I went in search of reasons. I invariably found excuses'. The young men were asked why they had not joined up. Their answers were published alongside the newspaper's rebuttal of each one. One said he did not want to be separated from his friends. The newspaper published its reply alongside, explaining the interviewee had forgotten that Lieutenant Colonel

[27] David Lockwood, *The Blackcoated Worker: A Study in Class Consciousness* (London: Unwin University Books, 1969 edition), p. 13.
[28] *Express and Star*, 28 August 1914, p. 2.
[29] *Express and Star*, 29 August, 1914, p. 2.
[30] Scott-James, *The Influence of the Press*, p. 229.

Waterhouse had promised that all friends could serve together. Another said if he joined up he would miss home and his parents would worry. The newspaper replied: '…forgetting that if the Germans are not crushed we may not have parents or homes left to love'. The reporter finished his article with a melodramatic flourish: 'Those "forgettings" might cost us dear'.[31]

The timing of the *Express and Star's* Roll was significant. It coincided with a period identified by Peter Simkins in his study of the raising of the New Armies.[32] The Roll of Honour represented a type of Pals Battalion, a phenomenon of the autumn of 1914. As the War Office struggled to cope with the number of recruits in autumn 1914, it was forced to depend more on local, civilian efforts to raise men. The most striking manifestations of this were the Pals Battalions – men from the same area or same social or occupation background who were allowed to serve together.[33] The Roll of Honour illustrates the Pals movement, which Simkins argues was largely a phenomenon of larger towns and cities, which had more scope for middle-class initiative and working-class self-help.[34] Like the Roll of Honour, they were mainly raised by local initiatives led by local elites – local authorities, business people or committees of private citizens. The *Express and Star's* Roll of Honour represented a particular time and place in voluntary recruitment.

[31] *Express and Star*, 29 August, 1914, p. 2.
[32] Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, pp. 79-83.
[33] Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, p. 79.
[34] Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, p. 82.

Waterhouse's comments and the interviews in Queen Square provided the journalistic platform for the launch of the Roll of Honour recruitment campaign on page four of the Saturday, 29 August edition. The launch article was vague as to which battalion the 'non-manuals' would serve with. No specific units were mentioned but most went to 'H' Company (Tettenhall) of the 6th Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment – the Wolverhampton Territorials.[35] The campaign placed the *Express and Star* took centre stage. It was presented in terms of the New Journalism's human interest. The announcement was headlined 'An Appeal to Non-Manual Workers. Put Your Name on Our Roll of Honour. Will You Answer The Call?'[36] The launch article told how the idea of raising units from the ranks of 'clerks and others of the middle classes' had been discussed at a meeting held at the *Express and Star* offices the previous day, Friday 28 August. Its structure indicated its purpose was not to recruit as many men as possible but to meet the specific needs of the newspaper. Despite the façade of patriotic activity, the newspaper's motivation lay in the last paragraph of the call to arms. It explained that the only way to get on the 'Roll of Honour' was to use the *Express and Star* itself as the gateway to military service. The article stated: 'We invite those who wish to join, as a preliminary step, to send to the *Express and Star* Office their names and addresses, which will be published in our columns day by day and forwarded, in due course, to Lieutenant Colonel Waterhouse'. Not only were the newspaper's recruits to be 'middle class' they also had to come to the *Express and Star* offices and agree to have their personal information printed in the

[35] Thornton 'The Territorial Force in Staffordshire', p. 117.
[36] *Express and Star,* 29 August, 1914, p. 4.

news columns. The *Express and Star* offices in Queen Street would stay open until 10pm each evening to receive recruits.[37]

It can be noted that the Roll of Honour provided an example of the early twentieth-century use of commercial cross-promotion between the newspaper and the town's cinemas. On the Saturday evening that the Roll of Honour campaign was launched, the newspaper supplied publicity slides to cinemas in the town – all were regular advertisers in the 'Entertainments' classified section on the front page.[38] These included the Picturedrome, the Coliseum, the Electric Theatre and the Picture House. During the intervals, slides showing Lord Kitchener, Sir John French, Admiral Jellicoe and the Prime Minister were projected onto the screens. At the end, the *Express and Star's* Roll of Honour slide appeared. According to the newspaper, the audiences reacted with cheers and clapping.

On the morning of 4 September 1914, the Roll of Honour became a public spectacle in the town centre. Crowds gathered outside the offices of the *Express and Star* in Queen Street.[39] The first 130 men who were joining the colours as part of the campaign were lined up in two ranks in the street. Before the volunteers marched off to the Town Hall for their medical examinations and attestation, Lieutenant Colonel Waterhouse, made a short speech to the crowd. His words indicated how closely the newspaper was associated with

[37] *Express and Star,* 29 August, 1914, p. 4.
[38] *Express and Star*, 31 August 1914, p. 2.
[39] *Express and Star*, 4 September 1914, p. 2.

the town's recruiting effort. He declared: 'I wish to say on behalf of those responsible for recruiting in this town and district that we very much appreciate what has been done by Mr Graham and the proprietors of the *Express and Star*. We recognise they have acted in the most patriotic manner.'[40] Photographs published the following day showed the men lined up outside the newspaper offices. Waterhouse stood in front of them in a civilian suit and wearing a summer straw boater.[41] The newspaper presented the occasion in terms of civic boosterism - a moment of spontaneous and emotional local patriotism that reflected provincial pride and a sense of duty at a time of national crisis. As the *Express and Star* reported: 'A smiling crowd; an admiring, proud, patriotic, interested crowd. Prouder still the men in the ranks.'[42]

The Roll of Honour coincided with the peak of what has been described as the recruiting boom.[43] It was launched in the week that saw the highest national recruiting returns of the war.[44] In this week (week beginning Monday, 31 August), 261 men submitted their names to the Roll of Honour with the highest individual day being Thursday, 3 September when 85 names were published.[45] This was the highest recruitment day of the war with 33,204 joining the army nationally.[46] The following week (Week beginning Monday 7 September), there were 73 names placed on the Roll of Honour. Week three

[40] *Express and Star*, 4 September 1914, p. 2.
[41] *Express and Star*, 5 September 1914, p. 2.
[42] *Express and Star*, 5 September 1914, p. 2.
[43] Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, p. 49.
[44] Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, p. 65.
[45] *Express and Star,* 3 September 1914, p. 2.
[46] Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, p. 66.

(Week beginning Monday, 14 September), produced 12 names and the final week (Week beginning Monday, 21 September) had just five names published. The last name appeared on Saturday, 26 September. Altogether, the Roll of Honour campaign to recruit the lower middle-class of Wolverhampton had produced a modest 391 names.

The Roll of Honour presented the *Express and Star* as a worthy institution of Wolverhampton, motivated by civic pride and patriotism. An understanding of the newspaper's commercial position once war had been declared, provides a different perspective that emphasises the business realities behind the rhetoric. The outbreak of war had placed the *Express and Star* as a business in a precarious financial position. Statistical analysis of advertising volumes from the beginning of July to the end of August 1914 provides evidence of significantly reduced advertising volumes. In July, before the outbreak of war, the *Express and Star* was publishing an average of 813 column inches of large display advertising each week.[47] This was worth about £203.6s.0d a week.[48] During August, after the declaration of war, the weekly average had fallen to 298 column inches, worth £74.12s.0d. The loss, in the newspaper's largest advertising category, averaged £129 a week. The *Express and Star's* Roll of Honour campaign was launched in the lowest week for display advertising in the second half of 1914. In that week, the week beginning 31 August 1914,

[47] See Appendix I for the statistical breakdown of *Express and Star* display advertising volumes between July and December 1914.
[48] To make this calculation the 1916 edition of the *Express and Star Advertising Tariff Book* (Wolverhampton: Midland News Association, 1916) has been used. Display advertising was charged at 6 shillings a column inch. No allowance has been made for any informal discounts that may have been given to large-scale regular advertisers.

the *Express and Star* carried just 103 column inches of display advertising worth £25.18s.0d. The statistics indicate that as the nation's voluntary recruiting effort reached its peak, the *Express and Star's* advertising revenues reached their lowest ebb. It was in this week that the owners and Editor chose to announce their highly targeted recruiting campaign and deploy the figure of the volunteer soldier. In a stroke of luck, the Amiens Despatch unexpectedly provided an urgent national context and justification for the *Express and Star's* recruitment campaign. No opportunity was lost to report the human-interest stories behind the recruiting statistics. They were not short of melodrama or self-congratulation. According to one correspondent, a mother in Sedgley sat in tears in her cottage one Friday evening. He wrote: 'She was reading down the Rolls and crying for joy because her son's name was in it with so many brave men who are going to fight for our country. The publication of his name seemed a great comfort to her.'[49] Howard Cotterell of Foden Road in Walsall wrote to praise the newspaper's Roll of Honour list as historic. He said: 'By this means the record will not be lost and should their descendants in generations to come want to trace them it may facilitate their search'.[50]

The campaign ran when the newspaper was at a low financial ebb. In this respect, the results were encouraging. The display advertising statistics show that advertising continued to struggle but never dropped to the low of 103 column inches again. The following week, after the launch of the Roll of Honour, it more than doubled. This was from a low base, but it continued to

[49] *Express and Star*, 5 October 1914, p. 2.
[50] *Express and Star*, 5 October 1914, p. 2.

rise slowly until display advertising received a pre-Christmas boost in the first week of December 1914.[51] In recruiting terms, the results were more modest with fewer than 400 men joining the *Express and Star's* Roll of Honour. Those that had joined the Regular Army and the Territorial Force, but not through the Roll of Honour, dwarfed the newspaper's efforts. The *Express and Star*, however, used typographical sleight of hand to exaggerate the success of its recruiting efforts. The Roll of Honour names were all published in a comprehensive list on Friday, 30 October 1914. The dramatic full page was headlined 'For Freedom and the Flag' with a second deck of headline stating 'Men Who Will Fight For Priceless Heritage'.[52] The accompanying article presented the volunteer in heroic terms: 'These stalwarts are rallying to the motherland in thousands, well equipped, physically fit, devoted, offering their all'. The page was manipulated for journalistic effect. The 391 names and addresses of the Roll of Honour men were spread over four and a half columns. Eight hundred other names without addresses, more than double the number on the Roll of Honour, were squeezed into the two and a half remaining columns on the page. These were men who had joined the Regular Army and the Territorials but not via the Roll of Honour. It looked as if the overwhelming number of recruits on the page had come through the Roll of Honour although this was not the case. The *Express and Star* had used larger type as well as full addresses to make the Roll of Honour names fill more space. They had also increased the amount of leading – the white space

[51] See Appendix I for the display advertising volumes for July to December 1914.
[52] *Express and Star,* 30 October 1914, p. 5.

between lines of type - to make their Roll of Honour names appear dominant.[53] This final full list of names marked the end of the Roll of Honour campaign and no similar campaigns were subsequently launched.

The *Express and Star's* recruiting campaign can be seen as being rooted in the early twentieth century understanding of advertising psychology. Advertising psychologist Walter Dill Scott emphasised the concept of 'Fusion' in 1910.[54] His theory stressed the value of using a mascot. He argued consumers did not think logically when it came to buying mass-produced goods. They did not separate the product being sold from the method and characters being used to sell it. They fused the product and the personality of the mascot into one.[55] He pointed out: 'The value of all objects depends on the relationship which they have to other things.'[56] Scott used the example of the Quaker Oats' Quaker Man. He was 'strong, hardy, clean and honest'. Hence consumers thought the oats were 'clean and healthful and bought them'.[57] The *Express and Star's* relationship with the volunteer reflected Scott's theory. The Roll of Honour allowed the paper to 'fuse' the image of the fighting man with the newspaper; reflecting his perceived strength – localism, self-determination, honesty, stoicism and sleeves-rolled-up resilience. The newspaper's stance appeared patriotic but had a highly developed commercial motivation.

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[53] 'Leading' involved putting strips of lead between lines of type to increase the amount of white space between the lines. See Thomas Russell (ed.), *Advertising and Publicity* (London: Educational Book Company, 1910), p. 284.
[54] Scott, *The Psychology of Advertising*, p. 96.
[55] Scott, *The Psychology of Advertising*, pp. 96-110.
[56] Scott, *Psychology of Advertising*, pp. 98-99.
[57] Scott, *Psychology of Advertising*, pp. 96-108.

The Roll of Honour and the response from readers was suffused with issues of class. Firstly, the campaign was organised by the town's civic and social leadership rather than any spontaneous action by the readership. The well-regarded social figure of Lieutenant Colonel Waterhouse was there to meet the men outside the *Express and Star* offices. He thanked the owners of the newspaper for organising the campaign. Norval Graham, the chairman and joint owner of the *Express and Star,* was a member of Wolverhampton's Town Recruiting Committee along with the Mayor and other leading social, civic and business leaders in the town.[58] Secondly, The Roll of Honour was aimed specifically at lower middle-class men. The commercial classes were a particular target for the raisers of the Pals Battalions.[59] From the *Express and Star's* perspective, however, the emphasis on non-manuals meant there was no risk of alienating the newspaper's core readership – the working classes - by suggesting they had been slow in coming forward. It also opened up a potential market of readers amongst the town's lower middle-class anxious for news about those who had attested. Finally, the launch of the Roll of Honour ignited a vociferous debate in the *Express and Star's* letters' column about the social position of the lower middle class in the town. Some welcomed the idea of serving with those of a similar background. A Patriotic Clerk wrote to say he would feel more comfortable serving with those 'whose occupation and interests are of a similar character'.[60] For some, it was a chance to air their suspicion of lower middle-class pretensions. One correspondent, writing under the pen name N. U. C., said he knew fifty or sixty 'able-bodied cowards in the

[58] Wolverhampton Archives, WOL-C-FWW/2, Minute Book of the Wolverhampton Recruiting Committee 1914 – 1916, p. 3.
[59] Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, p. 110.
[60] *Express and Star,* 31 August 1914, p. 2.

clerical profession' who '*talk* of what they would do if the Kaiser were to come'.[61] The writer went on: 'The clerks, the laggards in fighting, appear to me to be the laggards in every intelligent movement.' Others came to the defence of the lower middle class and were critical of the *Express and Star* campaign. A letter from G. E. S. D. sprang to the defence of the lower middle class, arguing that if people expected '…every able-bodied clerk to throw up his position to join the ranks, what is to become of the "intelligent movement" to which clerks are professionally called? They are the business connecting links between the masters and the manual workers.'[62] Another, who wrote under the name 'Not Eligible', questioned the Roll. He wrote: 'Is there not something very sinister in this latest method of obtaining volunteers?'[63] He said he was a strong opponent of conscription but the latest methods of obtaining men were 'the worst form of it'. Another letter, from 'Non-Conscript', defended the lower middle class saying: 'it is just as important that commercial England should be kept on the move as it is for our soldiers to wield the sword…'[64] Meanwhile, H. Dickinson from Wolverhampton complained about the hysteria over recruiting. He wrote; '…one must really protest against the spirit of contempt which sees in every young man in our streets a coward or a slacker'.[65] It should be acknowledged, that with its main readership among the town's working classes, the *Express and Star* itself would occasionally cast a suspicious eye over the social pretensions of the lower middle class. In 1915, for example, Henry Whittick, the newspaper's special commissioner, railed against the

[61] *Express and Star*, 3 September 1914, p. 2.
[62] *Express and Star*, 4 September 1914, p. 2.
[63] *Express and Star*, 3 September 1914, p. 2.
[64] *Express and Star*, 4 September 1914, p. 2.
[65] *Express and Star*, 4 September 1914, p. 2.

‘make-believe and veneer of suburbia and villadom’ in wartime.[66] He complained: ‘Lots of people live in houses that are too large for them; they can, and should, cut down expenses. Servants are kept in homes where the wife could well do some of the work herself. She would have less time for “At Homes” it is true, but she would gain in other ways.’[67] The Roll of Honour had illustrated the strong currents of class in a town like Wolverhampton, and how important it was for the *Express and Star* to consider this. By focusing on the lower middle class, the Roll of Honour had another advantage. It avoided any clash with the mass recruiting efforts at Wolverhampton’s Regular Army Recruiting Office where the *Express and Star* saw further readership opportunities.

The Regular Army Recruiting Office and the Official Press Bureau

On the morning of Friday, 7 August 1914 a reporter from the *Express and Star* was sent to see what was happening at Wolverhampton’s Regular Army Recruiting Office in Broad Street. Chaotic scenes met him, with the front door shut and the inside packed with men trying to join up.[68] Outside, there was a ‘crowd of would-be soldiers waiting to get in’. The door opened momentarily and a shirt-sleeved recruiting sergeant looked out. The journalist described how he looked ‘up to his neck in it’. The reporter did not linger but his story noted the type of men in the crowd with disdain. There were none of the heroic flourishes applied to descriptions of the town’s Territorials or the Roll of

[66] *Express and Star*, 30 October 1915, p. 4.
[67] *Express and Star*, 30 October 1915, p. 4.
[68] *Express and Star*, 7 August 1914, p. 2.

Honour. He wrote: 'For the most part they were roughly clad. The majority seemed to be workmen but others no doubt belonged to the great unemployed class.' The story ran to just four column inches. The article indicated the Regular Army was at a significant disadvantage with the *Express and Star* at the outbreak of war. It suggested a perception of the Regular recruit as lacking respectability and often coming from the ranks of the unemployed rather than the newspaper's working-class family readership. This was not unusual at the time; the army relied on the most deprived 'lowest levels' of the working class for recruits.[69] Respectable people regarded the army with a certain level of distrust and disgust. Some of this was the fault of the press, particularly as people before the war, outside garrison towns, did not see Regular soldiers that often.[70] Newspapers relished human-interest stories about soldiers' loutish off-duty behaviour which helped tarnish their image.[71] The writer and journalist Edgar Wallace put this viewpoint into words in 1915. Wallace described how, at the time of the outbreak of war, Regular soldiers were considered to be 'exclusively recruited from certain social strata'. He considered the public's view of Regulars in 1914 to be similar to that of a field of wheat – a necessary basic product but not something that ever needed to be thought about.[72] The Regular Army was 'apart and aloof' – and, according to Wallace, certainly not anything to interest young men 'occupying regular positions in commercial life'. David Lloyd George also understood what made the pre-1914 army less newsworthy than the new wartime citizen army. He

[69] Timothy Bowman and Mark Connelly, *The Edwardian Army: Training and Deploying the British Army 1902-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 147.
[70] Bowman and Connelly, *Edwardian Army*, p. 147.
[71] Bowman and Connelly, *Edwardian Army*, p. 167.
[72] Edgar Wallace, *Kitchener's Army: The Full Story of a Great Adventure* (London: George Newnes, 1915) p. 16.

noted that the pre-war Regular Army was made up of 'the ranks of those who have generally cut themselves off from home ties and about whose fate there is therefore not the same anxiety at home'.[73] The *Express and Star* referred to the Territorials as 'our citizen soldiers'.[74] From the newspaper's perspective, the Regular soldier did not appear to carry the Territorials' compelling commercial news values for its readers. The Territorial was a respectable, locally rooted, working man who had left his home, family and job to fight for his country. Wolverhampton's Territorial infantry battalion was a 'highly respectable element of its own community'.[75] The more disreputable figure of the Regular soldier had no local ties and was unknown in the town. He lacked local recognition and the positive characteristics that made the Territorial a respected and highly newsworthy figure. In early August 1914, the pre-war Regular soldier lacked news value to the readers of the *Express and Star* and therefore was of little interest to the newspaper.

The reticence towards the Regular Army soon began to evaporate once the *Express and Star* began to understand the changing social profile of Regular Army recruits. Within two or three weeks of the outbreak of war, the social composition of the army had changed beyond recognition with a far wider span of society joining up.[76] Respectable working men, who in the past would have seen the army as the refuge of the unemployed and unemployable, were now joining as privates. Regular Army recruits now fitted the *Express and Star's*

[73] Lloyd George, War Memoirs, Volume I, p. 220.
[74] *Express and Star*, 16 November, 1914, p. 5.
[75] Committee of Officers, *War History of the Sixth Battalion*, p. 3.
[76] Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, 71.

readership profile. The new commercial importance of the Regulars was reflected in a more positive outlook. The Editor highlighted the advantages presented by the Regular Army. He also urged improvements in the conditions of service for Regular soldiers. Before the war, the effective strength of the British Army had consistently fallen below establishment.[77] Low pay, harsh discipline, poor accommodation made pre-war army service unpopular and led to recruitment difficulties and desertion. In particular, the army pension only allowed ex-servicemen to eke out a living.[78] On 2 October 1914, an Editorial emphasised the 'numerous opportunities' open to young men who wished to join the colours. It explained: 'They can join the Regulars, Territorials, the Special Service (Non-Manual) Companies or the companies composed of "Old Boys" of our public schools'.[79] Another Editorial on 12 October 1914 said the *Express and Star* had often championed the manpower needs of the 6th Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment.[80] Now the newspaper wished to emphasise the claims of the Regular Army. The leader stated: 'The conditions in the army are continually improving. More will be, and should be, done in the near future to enhance the attractions and lead to the strengthening of the Regular army'.

With the changing social profile of recruits, the Regular Army Recruiting Office in Broad Street provided a valuable source of reader-interest in the form of the thousands of names of local men who had joined the colours. The

[77] Beckett, Bowman and Connelly, *British Army and the First World War*, pp. 31-33.
[78] Beckett, Bowman and Connelly, *British Army and the First World War*, p. 32-33.
[79] *Express and Star*, 2, October 1914, p. 4.
[80] *Express and Star*, 12 October, 1914 p. 5.

newspaper's Roll of Honour campaign may have only attracted 391 recruits to the Territorials, but in January 1915 the *Express and Star* estimated over 6,000 men in the Wolverhampton area had already enlisted at the Regular Army Recruiting Office since the outbreak of war.[81] The names of thousands of recruits allowed the *Express and Star* to present New Journalism's human interest on a grand scale. The newspaper arranged with the Wolverhampton Recruiting Office to publish the name of every man who enlisted. The lists provide a large-scale example of the New Journalism and its emphasis on human interest. The results were journalistically spectacular. In six editions between the beginning of October 1914 and the beginning of March 1915, the *Express and Star* published the names of the thousands of local men who had joined the colours. The first was the largest. On 2 October 1914, the newspaper published a list of over 3,000 names – 2,662 men who had joined the Regulars and another 672 who had joined the Territorials.[82] The headline 'For the Honour of the Flag: Is Your Name on the Rolls?' ran across the full seven columns of page four. The names filled page four and continued across the gutter between the two pages to fill three columns of page five. Short verses of patriotic poetry were inserted between the lists of names to provide column breaks. On 12 October, another 716 names appeared – 340 who had joined the Special Reserve, 149 Regulars, 143 for the Reserve Battalion of the 6th South Staffordshire Regiment (later to become the 3/6th Battalion) and 84 who had enlisted with the Reserve of the 3rd North Midland Field Ambulance – The Royal Army Medical Corps' Wolverhampton Territorial unit.[83] The third

[81] *Express and Star*, 18 January, 1915, p. 3.
[82] *Express and Star*, 12 October, 1914, pp. 4-5.
[83] *Express and Star*, 12 October, 1914, p. 5.

listing on 30 October 1914 carried the 391 men who had joined under the *Express and Star's* Roll of Honour publicity campaign as well as 348 Regulars, 326 from the Reserve Battalion 6th South Staffordshire Regiment and 130 from the 3rd North Midland Field Ambulance. It filled page five.[84] The list on 30 November was the last for 1914.[85] It contained 1,282 names. There were 761 Regulars, 212 from the 4th Staffordshire Battery – Wolverhampton's Royal Field Artillery Territorial unit, 19 who had joined the 3rd North Midland Field Ambulance and 290 from the Reserve Battalion 6th South Staffordshire Regiment. Under the headline 'The Call to Arms', the newspaper described the men on the list as showing 'patriotic willingness' to sacrifice their all. It admitted though that: 'Recruiting is not now so active as it was a few weeks ago nor are there so many joining the colours as could be wished.' Two further lists appeared in 1915. On 18 January, 2123 names filled page five. All were listed as joining the Regular Army. On 12 March 1915 another 1087 names appeared on page five. Again, all were listed as joining the Regulars. This was the final list. Altogether, between October 1914 and March 1915, the *Express and Star* published the names of more than 7,000 local men who had joined the Regular Army as well as those who had joined the Territorial Force outside the Roll of Honour publicity campaign. In a short space of time, the volunteer from the Regular Army Recruiting Office became a figure who was as important as the Territorial. The *Express and Star* had dismissed the men at the Regular Army Recruiting Office in four column inches at the beginning of August 1914. By September, the Editor wrote a leader column that amounted

[84] *Express and Star*, 30 October 1914, p. 5.
[85] *Express and Star*, 30 November 1914, p. 5.

to an apology for the newspaper's past attitude towards the Regular Army and a call for better treatment for Britain's military men in the future.[86] It read like an attempt to rehabilitate the image of the Regular pre-war soldier and embrace his new social standing in the role of mascot. The Editor explained: 'We forget the men whose courage gives us security and safety.' Meikle looked back to the Crimean War and the Indian Mutiny. The nation was disgraced by what had happened to many of the men who had fought. He wrote: 'The workhouse did for many of those men what the enemy could not do. It broke their spirit.' Meikle urged action to provide better pensions for Regular soldiers and, if necessary, increased taxation to pay for them. The Editor ended with a Liberal defence of voluntarism. He added: 'We must learn to do better still by our soldiers if we want to maintain the glorious voluntary system which has never yet failed us.'

The closer relationship between the *Express and Star* and the Regular Army Recruiting Office, forged in the first weeks of the war, created a specific problem that made the Editor take the unusual step of referring his newspaper to the Official Press Bureau. Since the week beginning 9 November 1914, the *Express and Star* had been publishing a panel every Monday on page two.[87] It contained the previous week's detailed recruiting figures for the Regular Army's Number Six Recruiting District. This included Wolverhampton and the South Staffordshire rural area as well as statistics for Lincolnshire, Leicestershire, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Nottingham city area, the

[86] *Express and Star*, 18 September 1914, p. 2.
[87] See Appendix VII for an illustration of the panel the Editor submitted to the Press Bureau.

Potteries and North Staffordshire. The figures allowed readers to compare the town's recruiting effort with other areas. At the bottom of the weekly panel was the exhortation: 'More Men Are Still Urgently Required'. Major Pearson, Wolverhampton's Regular Army recruiting officer, provided the figures,[88] In January 1915, the Editor wrote to the director of the Press Bureau, Sir Stanley Buckmaster who was also Solicitor-General. [89] He enclosed a proof copy of the panel and asked whether it was the sort of detail that 'would be wise of us to publish weekly in the future'. The Editor's request for guidance came after he had received a copy of a Private and Confidential Press Bureau notice, referred to as a 'D' Notice.[90] It warned newspapers that publishing details about volunteer recruiting might help the enemy and could therefore be 'dangerous subjects for discussion'. Despite the precise nature of the guidance notice, Buckmaster replied to Meikle three days later in vague terms. He said the Editor's concerns were 'somewhat difficult to answer'.[91] He wrote that there was a balance to be struck between giving the enemy information about the progress of recruiting and publicising the need for more men. He passed the decision back to Meikle, and added: '….this is a matter upon which you, speaking for your own locality, are probably better able to judge than we are'. He was confident Meikle would exercise a 'wise discretion'. A copy of Meikle's letter had been passed to Sir Reginald Brade, Permanent Under-

[88] TNA, HO139/21/87, Letter from Andrew Meikle, Editor of the *Express and Star* to Sir Stanley Buckmaster, Director of the Official Press Bureau, 22 January 1915.
[89] TNA, Letter From Andrew Meikle, 22 January 1915.
[90] TNA, HO139/21/87, Private and Confidential Notice to the Press: D137, 22 January 1915.
[91] TNA, HO139/21/87, Letter from Sir Stanley Buckmaster, Director of the Official Press Bureau to Andrew Meikle, Editor of the *Express and Star*, 25 January 1915.

Secretary of State at the War Office. The senior civil servant had no answer either and described the issue as awkward.[92] He wrote to Buckmaster;

> The position is we do not give figures showing the state of recruiting, but at the same time this prohibition is not so absolute as to require us to follow up isolated cases and forbid publication locally. Consequently, a reference like this from Wolverhampton is embarrassing, because whatever our answer, the result is not quite satisfactory.[93]

Meikle appears to have taken the view that the vague reply from Buckmaster indicated no objection to publication. The panels containing the weekly figures continued to be published. The last appeared on Monday, 14 June 1915 when their regular publication ceased without explanation. The correspondence illustrates several issues surrounding the provincial press during the First World War. Firstly, it showed the local relationship between the *Express and Star* and the Regular recruiting authorities in Wolverhampton – with the Recruiting Office providing the newspaper with detailed weekly statistics. It illustrated an Editor's willingness to submit the contents of his newspaper to the censor but also showed the Press Bureau's general lack of interest in the activities of the provincial press. A provincial Editor like Meikle was left to make his own decisions about what to publish with little interference from the metropolitan censors.

Advertising for an Army: Military Recruitment Advertising.

The publicist and advertising agent Sir Hedley Le Bas saw the volunteer recruiting campaigns of 1914 and 1915 in the commercial terms of 'Advertising

[92] TNA, HO139/21/87 Letter from Sir Reginald Brade to Sir Stanley Buckmaster, 24 January 1915.
[93] TNA, HO139/21/87 Letter from Sir Reginald Brade to Sir Stanley Buckmaster, 24 January 1915.

for an Army' with the advertising trade as a 'super recruiting sergeant'.[94] From August 1914, government recruitment advertising became a regular feature of the *Express and Star*. Analysis of advertising volumes during 1914 and 1915 shows the growing importance of government recruitment advertising at a time when retail display advertising had declined dramatically. [95] In August and September 1914, 625 column inches of military recruitment advertising appeared in the *Express and Star* with an estimated value of £156/6s/0d.[96] In the period from October to December 1914, 712 column inches of recruitment advertising appeared with a value of £178/0s/0d. Most of this was published in October and November. Only 20 column inches appeared during December in the lead up to Christmas.

By 1915, recruiting was in decline and giving the Government grounds for concern.[97] In February 1915, recruitment numbers dropped below 100,000 a month for the first time.[98] One Government response to this decline was, in March 1915, to form an advertising advisory committee made up of senior figures from the advertising and newspaper industries under the chairmanship of Le Bas.[99] It included Wareham Smith, advertising director of Lord

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[94] Sir Hedley Le Bas, 'Advertising for an Army', in Sir Hedley Le Bas (ed.), *The Lord Kitchener Memorial Book* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1917). No page numbers.
[95] See Appendices VI and VII for volumes of military recruitment advertising each week during 1914 and 1915. The period January to March 1915 is missing as these editions only exist in microfilm form and measurement of sizes of advertisements cannot be made. In terms of advertising revenue, no allowance is made for any informal discounts that may have been given for advertising on a regular basis.
[96] The value of this advertising is calculated by using the *Express and Star's* advertising tariff booklet for 1916, which shows display advertising of all types, charged at six shillings per column inch.
[97] Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, p. 104.
[98] War Office, *Statistics of the Military Effort*, p. 364.
[99] Wareham Smith, *Spilt Ink* (London: Ernest Benn, 1932), pp. 115-116.

Northcliffe's *Daily Mail* and *The Times*, the advertising agent Thomas Russell and Harry Simonis, the advertising director of the *Daily News*. The committee sat until the introduction of conscription in 1916.[100] Its secretary was Eric Field, advertising manager of Le Bas's Caxton Publishing Company.[101] He explained the committee's philosophy in terms of human interest appeal. He commented: 'Pure patriotism as a recruiting appeal soon lost its initial force. We ran the gamut of all the emotions that make men risk their lives…'[102] The new impetus for advertising was reflected in growing military recruitment advertising in the *Express and Star*. By the second quarter of 1915, recruitment advertising volumes had more than doubled compared to the previous year – 1887 column inches between April and June, worth £471/18s/0d. This period contained the week with the highest volume of recruitment advertising for the whole of 1914-1915. A total of 202 column inches appeared in the week beginning Monday 17 May 1915. This was the only time recruitment advertising exceeded 200 column inches in a single week.[103] From then onwards the volume of military advertising began to fall. This decline in military recruitment advertising in the *Express and Star* coincided with a growing and more intense debate in Government about the need for conscription in the light of falling recruiting numbers.[104] In the third quarter of 1915, (July to September) recruitment advertising in the *Express and Star* halved compared to earlier in the year. Only 899 column inches of Government recruitment advertising appeared

[100] Smith, *Spilt Ink*, p. 117.
[101] Eric Field, *Advertising: The Forgotten Years* (London: Ernest Benn, 1959), p. 22.
[102] Field, *Advertising*, p. 29.
[103] Nationally, the recruitment figure of 135,263 for May 1915, showed an improvement on the previous three months – February (87,896), March (113,907) and April (119,087). See, War Office, *Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire*, p. 364
[104] Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, pp. 138-139.

worth £224/18s/0d. In the last quarter of 1915, volumes reduced dramatically, particularly from the middle of October. The total for the quarter was 414 column inches worth £103/12s/0d. Overall, military advertising during the 17 months of voluntary recruitment was worth more than £1,200, a significant amount of revenue for the newspaper.

In the early months of the war, recruitment advertising in the *Express and Star* could be confusing, with many different branches of the Army all seeking men at the same time. The result could be bewildering. The edition of 31 August 1914 provides an example. On page two, the newspaper advertised its Roll of Honour recruiting campaign for non-manuals. It asked middle-class men: 'Will You Aid Your King and Country?' and told them to come to the offices of the *Express and Star*.[105] Meanwhile, on page four, Major W. Pearson told men to come straight to Wolverhampton's Regular Army Recruiting Office, to answer Lord Kitchener's call for another 100,000 men.[106] Major G. N. Going appealed for recruits on the same page with an advertisement declaring the South Staffordshire Regiment, 'The Old County Regiment', needed a thousand men. Potential recruits could go to any recruiting office to enlist. The message in the advertising changed throughout the era of voluntarism as well. It moved from a general call to arms to a demand for the skills of the workers of the Black Country. It moved from appeals to patriotism towards skills, wages and conditions. Normally appearing on the back page with the employment advertising it jostled with other private companies looking for the same skills.

[105] *Express and Star*, 31 August 1914, p. 2.
[106] *Express and Star*, 31 August 1914, p. 4.

By 1915, the army took its place in the jobs marketplace, seeking the engineering skills of Wolverhampton's factories and workshops. Large advertisements appeared a day or two after each call to arms by Lord Kitchener – 8 August, 31 August and 12 September.[107] These appealed: Your King and Your Country Need You'.[108] On 12 September, the advertisement on the back page announced Lord Kitchener needed another 500,000 men. It stated: 'Let Wolverhampton men show the world they can still do better.'[109] These general exhortations contrast with, a year later, the edition of Friday, 17 September 1915. The Army Service Corps advertised pay of six shillings a day plus separation and dependants allowances for experienced petrol motor drivers, fitters, turners and smiths. The figure of six shillings dominated the advertisement.[110] On the same page Dunlop Rubber in Aston, Birmingham advertised for recruits – 'men, youths, girls and women' – with good wages and two shillings in the pound bonus for good timekeeping. On page two of the same edition, W. H. Dorman & Co of Stafford offered 41 shillings a week plus bonus and overtime for good machine tool fitters making shells, rifles and cartridges.[111]

The style of recruitment advertising in the *Express and Star* illustrates important points about the nature and sophistication of newspaper recruitment advertising. Recruiting advertising was in stark contrast not only to commercial

[107] See *Express and Star*, 8 August 1914, p. 4; *Express and Star,* 31 August 1914, p. 4; *Express and Star*, 12 September 1914, p. 4.
[108] *Express and Star*, 8 August 1914, p. 4.
[109] *Express and Star,* 12 September 1914, p. 4.
[110] *Express and Star*, 17 September 1915, p. 6.
[111] *Express and Star,* 17 September 1915, p. 2.

advertising but also to recruiting posters. Retailers and manufacturers made full use of the image of the volunteer in advertisements. Recruiting posters did the same. Scholars have studied the sophisticated and colourful artwork and patriotic messages contained in First World War recruiting posters.[112] The newspaper advertising in the *Express and Star* used no drawings or photographs. The image of the volunteer never appeared. Throughout all of 1914 and 1915, there was no attempt at illustration, except for the occasional use of a crest or crown. Instead, text was simply set inside a plain panel. This suggests an arrangement that was more complicated and technically advanced than it appeared. At the outbreak of war, Hedley Le Bas's Caxton Publishing Company was given the contract to produce recruiting advertising specifically for newspapers.[113] This was separate from poster advertising which the Parliamentary Recruiting Committee handled.[114] Eric Field, Le Bas's advertising manager, was quite clear about the character of newspaper recruitment advertising. He stated; 'No Press advertisements were illustrated.'[115] He noted that most were 11 column inches deep across two columns – the size they appeared in the *Express and Star*. This style continued throughout 1914 and 1915 until the introduction of conscription.[116] Without the adornment and complications of illustrations, it gave far more flexibility. It allowed individual recruiting offices around the country to tailor their local newspaper advertising to their area. The national template could be used with

[112] See, for example, Aulich and Hewitt, *Seduction or Instruction?*; Nicholas Hiley, '"Kitchener Wants You" and "Daddy, What Did You Do In The Great War"': The Myth of British Recruiting Posters', *Imperial War Museum Review*, 11 (1999), pp. 40-58.
[113] Field, *Advertising*, pp. 28-29.
[114] Field, *Advertising*, p. 29.
[115] Field, *Advertising*, p. 29.
[116] Field, *Advertising*, p. 29.

local content inserted if required. This was apparent in the *Express and Star*. Military advertising had a 'corporate style' with the same shape and size of panel. The content, however, could change to incorporate the names of the local recruiting officers, the address of the office and references to local battalions and regiments. The advertisement published on Tuesday, 15 September was a national advertisement for ex-NCOs. It carried the crest and an exhortation – 'God Save the King'.[117] There was no local content. An advertisement that appeared on Saturday, 15 August 1914, was in the same shape, size and style but had been amended to make it local.[118] It stated that Lord Kitchener needed more men to protect the nation but it also contained local information. It gave the address of the Wolverhampton Recruiting Office and the names of Major Pearson and Sergeant Hammond. It told recruits that they would be interviewed promptly and could enlist in the South Staffordshire Regiment. It was sophisticated advertising. The simple and regular format of newspaper recruitment advertising allowed recruiting offices to make use of localism but within the framework of a national 'corporate style' campaign.

Behind the outward patriotism and civic pride of the *Express and Star's* recruiting efforts sat an important commercial dimension. The volunteer soldier and his recruitment satisfied the demands of the New Journalism, which in its turn aimed to attract readership. The recruiting efforts generated large-scale human interest with lists of thousands of names along with letters and background stories. It placed the nation's manpower needs in the local context of the newspaper's circulation area. It engaged closely with the readers and

[117] *Express and Star*, 15 September 1914, p. 4.
[118] *Express and Star*, 15 August 1914, p. 4.

their interest in the volunteer. The recruiting campaign was constructed in a way that placed the newspaper itself at the heart of the news – generating valuable publicity and kudos. The volunteer provided an opportunity for boosterism – presenting the Black Country, its citizens and the *Express and Star* in a highly positive and patriotic light. The newspaper seized on the publication of the Amiens Despatch to provide an unexpected publicity opportunity and a sense of legitimacy on a dramatic scale. The *Express and Star* overcame its concerns about the Regular Army to gain access to the lists of recruits names. It avoided antagonising its working-class readership by concentrating its direct recruiting campaign on the lower middle class. The recruiting effort also represented the *Express and Star's* Liberal outlook on the military situation in 1914 and early 1915 – that the heroic efforts of Britain's volunteer army would be enough to win the war.

The *Express and Star's* involvement with the recruitment of volunteers provides an example of the modern interpretation of propaganda that stresses the consensual element with ordinary people both participating in and facilitators of propaganda within a 'patriotic culture'.[119] The town's elites – army officers and newspaper owners – provided the framework for these vehicles of propaganda but the working-class readership were active participants. Readers of the *Express and Star* were placed in the complicated position of being the recipients of propaganda that they had played a part in creating. From the perspective of this modern interpretation, the *Express and*

[119] Connolly, et al., 'Introduction' in *Propaganda and Conflict*, pp. 15-19.

Star provided an active, positive and participatory impression of war and military recruitment. This was created through the support of the newspaper for recruitment and the volunteer. The propaganda messages were intense: the proud volunteers lined up in the street, lists of thousands of names, the creation of the heroic figure of the volunteer, crowds in the streets, emotional praise for the Roll of Honour and the military in general along with the newspaper's creation of a sense of community spirit and engagement. This all combined to create an impression of war in Wolverhampton in which the citizens themselves appeared to be involved and, to some extent, in control of events. The *Express and Star's* content appeared straightforward but on closer examination was highly complex. Readers became the receivers of propaganda and the propagandists at the same time. The next chapter explains how the newspaper was equally commercially aware when it came to using the products and places of mass production in Wolverhampton to create large-scale Comfort funds based on local human interest that presented the *Express and Star* as the gatekeeper to the town's citizen soldiers at the fighting front.

Chapter 4: Comforts and Fundraising.

This chapter examines the fundraising comforts campaigns run by the *Express and Star* to support Wolverhampton's fighting men. The newspaper cast the volunteer in a new role – moving from the eager recruit to the stoic in the trenches. This transition took place during September 1914 with the launch of the newspaper's Comforts campaign on 8 September and the last name appearing in the Roll of Honour recruitment campaign on 26 September. The *Express and Star's* construction of charity was based on the products and processes of industrialisation and commercialisation. In the newspaper's conception of the volunteer, he became a symbol of mass production and a developing consumer society shaped by the techniques of advertising, publicity, mail order and human-interest journalism. His comforts from home depended on the mass-production of canned and processed food, bread and cigarettes along with factory-produced chocolate and confectionery. These were all products that had seen the development of sophisticated industrialised production techniques since the last quarter of the 19th century.[1] The money for the Comfort funds was largely raised in the places of mass production themselves – the factories that were large-scale employers in the Black Country. In doing so, the *Express and Star* engaged with wartime Britain's huge voluntary and philanthropic effort – described as the 'civilian

[1] For a detailed examination of the development of mass-produced food, see, W. Hamish Fraser, *The Coming of the Mass Market: 1850-1914* (London: Macmillan, 1981), pp. 149-174.

counterpart to Kitchener's Army'.[2] Surprisingly little has been written about wartime charitable activity. Peter Grant argues that non-uniformed voluntary action during the First World War was at least as great as military voluntary recruiting.[3]

Raising Money for a Range-Finder and a Motor Ambulance

In October 1914, the *Express and Star* received two requests from Wolverhampton Territorial officers to run fundraising campaigns. Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Waterhouse, commanding officer of the 1/6th Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment, had bought a field gun range-finder, costing £75, out of his own pocket. On Friday, 16 October, he requested, in a letter to the *Express and Star,* that the newspaper might run a campaign to pay for the device.[4] Three days later, Lieutenant Colonel Howard Dent, commanding officer of the 1/3rd North Midland Field Ambulance (Royal Army Medical Corps), asked for a fundraising effort to collect £500 for a new motor ambulance, which, he explained, would be quicker and more comfortable than horse-drawn ambulances.[5] The newspaper ran both campaigns with the owners of the *Express and Star* providing five pounds to start the range-finder campaign and ten pounds for the ambulance fundraising.[6] Within a fortnight, the money had been raised to repay Colonel Waterhouse and buy a new ambulance from Wolverhampton's Sunbeam Motor Car Company. Workers at

[2] Gary Sheffield, 'Foreword', in Peter Grant, *Philanthropy and Voluntary Action in the First World War: Mobilizing Charity* (London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 16-18.
[3] Grant, *Philanthropy and Voluntary Action*, p. 24.
[4] *Express and Star*, 16 October 1915, p. 2.
[5] *Express and Star,* 19 October 1914, p. 2.
[6] *Express and Star*, 16 October 1914, p. 2; *Express and Star*, 19 October 1914, p. 2.

Sunbeam's sprawling 15-acre site - the Moorfield Works – near the town centre had rapidly moved from car production to military vehicles and aero engines during the war.[7] The 20 horsepower vehicle had enough space for four stretchers or twelve sitting-wounded and was lit by electricity.[8] Among the many donations published, George Thorne, the Liberal MP for Wolverhampton East, had given a guinea for each appeal. Alderman A. Baldwin Bantock gave £25 to the ambulance appeal and the paint manufacturer and industrialist Geoffrey Mander, of Wightwick Manor, had donated five pounds.[9] The Mayor of Wolverhampton, Councillor F. H. Skidmore, had given two guineas to the range finder appeal. Among many other donations, the Wolverhampton and District Mutual Glass Insurance Company had generously given five guineas; a collection outside the Merridale Road Presbyterian Church in Wolverhampton had raised £4/10s/0d for the ambulance; 'A Widow's Mite' gave a pound and Daisy, Ralph and Emmie Manning had collected three shillings.[10]

Although the newspaper ran the appeals, the Editor of the *Express and Star* had been concerned about the requests. The evidence of this appeared in the newspaper on Wednesday, 28 October. On page two, instead of news stories, a large double-column panel appeared with a lengthy comment by the newspaper complaining about the demands being made on the charitable. The

[7] Upton, *A History of Wolverhampton*, pp. 116 – 117 and p. 146.
[8] *Express and Star,* 19 October 1914, p. 2.
[9] *Express and Star,* 19 October 1914, p. 2. For an account of Mander's industrial and political life, see Nicholas Mander, 'Geoffrey Mander: Last of the Midland Radicals', *Journal of Liberal History*, 53 (Winter 2006-2007), pp. 27-32.
[10] *Express and Star,* 26 October 1914, p. 3; *Express and Star*, 29 October 1914, p. 3.

article carried a three-deck headline: War Appeals/The Demands Upon The Charitable/ A Friendly Protest. The copy was direct and started with a question: 'When will the appeals – whether charitable, military or otherwise – arising out of the present war cease?'[11] It went on:

> Why should it be necessary to ask for the cash to purchase a range-finder for the 6th South Staffordshire Territorials or a motor ambulance waggon for the local RAMC? Should not such equipment be always ready, and found by the military authorities? If it is important, as it certainly is, that Tommy should be kept warm and comfortable and in fighting trim, is it not the duty of the military authorities to find him the requisite blankets, sleeping helmets, socks and the numerous other garments that ladies are now cheerfully spending their time and their money in making?[12]

The newspaper argued that the time had come for a national tax on all classes to pay not only for the needs of the soldier but also for their wives and families so they should not be dependent on charity. The *Express and Star* added: 'It is humiliating for a great and wealthy nation that charity or philanthropy – call it what we may – should be called upon to provide the barest necessities for its soldiers…' As with recruiting, the newspaper was identifying itself with the everyday needs of its working-class readers by demanding the state should provide more. The *Express and Star* took the opportunity to weave the subject of class into the discussion about charitable giving. Although it argued too much was being asked of charity in general, it also noted that some were shouldering the burden of charitable donations more than others were. The wealthy were the 'shirkers' in the eyes of the newspaper. The article stated that many who 'could give generously of their abundance' had failed to do so while the contribution of others was out of all proportion to their income. It went

[11] *Express and Star*, 28 October 1914, p. 2.
[12] *Express and Star*, 28 October 1914, p. 2.

on: ‘A well-known publicist stated the other day that if the millionaires had contributed as generously to the Prince of Wales’s Fund as had the middle and working classes the fund would, by this time, have amounted to not three millions – the figure at which it then stood – but to thirty millions. That shows the multitude of shirkers there must be.’[13]

The ‘Friendly Protest’ article is significant for this chapter for several reasons. Broadly, it is an example of the developing view within early twentieth-century Liberalism that the state had a bigger role to play in the provision of charity and philanthropy.[14] The article indicated what the newspaper considered the limits of charitable activity. It showed the *Express and Star* as being uncomfortable with charity fundraising for the military hardware of war and saw the newspaper voicing its regular themes of class, the balance between the role of government and the individual, along with the importance of voluntarism. Significantly, for this thesis, the article indicates the reinvention of the volunteer soldier as championed by the *Express and Star*. It took the citizen soldier into a new phase of his existence as a commercial mascot. The article on 28 October moved him from being an eager recruit to the embodiment of the citizen soldier in the trenches in need of the state to provide the wherewithal to fight while his home town provided the comforts that made life bearable. The advertising agent, Thomas Russell, had stressed in his lectures at the London School of Economics, the need to keep a mascot

[13] *Express and Star*, 28 October 1914, p. 2.
[14] See, Hugh Cunningham, *The Reputation of Philanthropy since 1750* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020), pp. 1-8.

commercially vigorous by regularly moving him into new situations.[15] The recruiting boom of August and September 1914 was falling away. Nearly 300,000 men had enlisted in August and over 450,000 in September. For October, the figure fell to 136,811.[16] Fundraising for comforts for the volunteer allowed the newspaper to move away from waning recruitment and open up new, more positive, fields of opportunity for publicity and building readership using charity and philanthropy.

Several factors influenced the *Express and Star's* change of emphasis to fundraising for the volunteer in September 1914. The majority of the BEF had arrived in France by the middle of August 1914.[17] As explained in the previous chapter, the newspaper had seen the Amiens Despatch as significant enough to publish a Sunday edition on 30 August. This tangible evidence of the realities of war and the casualties it produced coincided with the newspaper's growing awareness of the commercial importance of the Regular soldier, also detailed in the previous chapter. The change of emphasis reflects a context in which the figure of the volunteer was moving away from Wolverhampton itself and becoming part of the broader context of war. To maintain the volunteer's local value to the *Express and Star,* the newspaper shifted its emphasis to reflect this. Comforts fundraising allowed the commercial value of the volunteer to be refocused back on local activity led by the *Express and Star* just at a time when the recruits themselves moved away from the area. The

[15] Russell, *Commercial Advertising*, p. 164.
[16] War Office, *Statistics of the Military Effort*, p. 364.
[17] Spencer Jones, *The Great Retreat of 1914: From Mons to the Marne* (London: Sharpe Books, 2018 Edition), p. 27.

6th Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment, the Wolverhampton Territorials, had left the town on 11 August 1914.[18] The first men who had been recruited under the *Express and Star's* Roll of Honour had left to join the 6th Battalion on 6 September 1914.[19] The news value of the volunteer had moved elsewhere and the newspaper's focus moved with him. This was emphasised as casualty lists began to appear in the *Express and Star* by early September 1914.[20] Added to this, local men serving as Regulars and Reservists began to provide their own, albeit limited, accounts of the early days of fighting. Rifleman E. W. Kimmock, 2nd Battalion Royal Irish Rifles, wrote to describe his experiences. The Reservist, a postal worker from Wednesbury, told how the Germans had outnumbered them ten to one. 'It was an awful sight in our trenches to see and hear the wounded,' he added.[21] Reservist Joseph Sibley, serving with the 3rd Battalion Worcestershire Regiment, wrote to his wife in Dudley. She passed the letter on to the *Express and Star*. Sibley described heavy casualties and added: 'It is maddening to see one's pals falling all round.'[22]

The 'Friendly Protest' was a cleverly crafted argument, at the end of which the *Express and Star* told its readers what, in its view, they should be doing to charitably support the town's volunteer Tommies in France. Unsurprisingly, it pointed them in the direction of the *Express and Star's* own local efforts to support the soldier – schemes that placed the newspaper at the heart of

[18] *Express and Star*, 11 August 1914, p. 2.
[19] *Express and Star*, 6 September 1914, p. 2.
[20] See, for example, *Express and Star,* 7 September 1914, p. 4.
[21] *Express and Star,* 1 September 1914, p. 4.
[22] *Express and Star*, 4 September, 1914, p. 4.

Wolverhampton's fundraising for the fighting men. The article stressed there were still many opportunities for a 'generous and kindly-disposed public' to show their admiration and appreciation of their heroes in the fighting line. It went on to suggest that tobacco and cigarettes, chocolate and cards as well as footballs and other forms of amusements were highly suitable items to be sent to fighting men. The previous month, the *Express and Star* had started its Comforts for Our Soldiers at the Front campaign.[23] In effect, the *Express and Star* had used its protest against the burden being placed on the charitable, to turn their readers away from national schemes and manoeuvre them in the direction of its own two campaigns.

Comforts for Our Soldiers at the Front Campaign.

The Comforts for Our Soldiers at the Front Campaign was run jointly by the *Express and Star* and James B. Dumbell, a leading industrialist in Wolverhampton, who was the owner and managing director of the Turner Manufacturing Company. The firm made sports touring cars at its factory – the Wulfruna Works – in Villiers Street, just outside the town centre. The business had originally manufactured steam-powered cars, then petrol vehicles, before coming under the control of the Ministry of Munitions during the war and producing machine tools.[24] In September 1914, Dumbell announced in the *Express and Star* that he had formed a committee to collect cigarettes, pipes and tobacco for men at the front. He also asked for cash donations to buy

[23] *Express and Star*, 8 September 1914, p. 2.
[24] Bev Parker, Turner Manufacturing, http://www.historywebsite.co.uk/Museum/Engineering/Turner/TM.htm. Accessed, 6 August 2021.

similar items. The *Express and Star* became the joint organiser and the publicity platform for the Comforts campaign.[25] The newspaper and Dumbell pledged there were no administrative or advertising charges with all costs being defrayed by Dumbell and the *Express and Star*.[26]

The statistics indicate the scale and speed of the development of the Comforts campaign by the second half of 1915. It had become a large-scale operation using the commodities of mass production, spanning volunteers fighting in France and local men held as prisoners of war in Germany. It pitted the largest industrial concerns in Wolverhampton against each other to raise money, while schools, clubs, public houses, workshops and individuals also collected cash and cigarettes. By September 1915, a year after the campaign's launch, nearly one-and-a-half tons of chocolate alone had been sent out to Black Country volunteers in France.[27] The *Express and Star* and Dumbell had shipped more than 9,000 pipes, 163,695 cigarettes and 634 packages of tobacco, along with large quantities of cigars, matches, candles, notepaper, envelopes, lighters, buttons, pins and musical instruments of various kinds.[28] Sports items including footballs, boxing gloves and fitness equipment had also been crated up and sent. On top of this, 3,000 tins of condensed milk were shipped to local units along with 2,000 pounds of cake.[29] Manufacturers had also used the comfort fund parcels as a method of mass, product sampling. Virol, the malt-

[25] *Express and Star*, 8 September 1914, p. 2.
[26] *Express and Star,* 3 September 1915, p. 4.
[27] *Express and Star*, 24 September 1915, p. 2.
[28] *Express and Star*, 24 September 1915, p. 2.
[29] *Express and Star*, 24 September 1915, p. 2.

extract syrup, for example, provided free tins for every package.[30] Meanwhile, the 175 local men on the *Express and Star's* list of prisoners of war in Germany were sent weekly food parcels – by September 1915, 2,775 boxes had been sent to prisoners of war. The *Express and Star* had invited readers to provide details of men they knew to be prisoners of war in Germany, so the Comforts fund could provide them with weekly parcels. The list of names was published under the headline 'Local Tommies who are Prisoners of War' on page five on Thursday, 16 December 1915.[31] The *Express and Star* made use of local businesses to provide products at cost prices in order to save money. The grocers, W. H. Weaver, supplied the food items while Singleton and Cole gave the cigarettes and tobacco at cost price. [32] The Patent Digestive Bread Company provided two, two-pound loaves to each prisoner every week – only charging for the flour and other ingredients. Carpenters in the town provided a regular supply of boxes and crates while printers produced the letters that went into the boxes.[33]

Two new elements were added to the Comforts campaign during 1915. Both provide evidence of how the *Express and Star* seized on the concerns of readers to create human interest content. George Binney Dibblee had made it clear that in the era of the New Journalism, Editors had to identify with their readers and to be '…prompt to hear and take up grievances'.[34] Firstly, in April 1915 the newspaper announced the Comforts scheme would be extended to

[30] *Express and Star*, 12 October 1915, p. 4.
[31] *Express and Star*, 24 September 1915, p. 2.
[32] *Express and Star*, 5 July 1914, p. 2.
[33] *Express and Star*, 9 September 1915, p. 4.
[34] Dibblee, *The Newspaper*, p. 129.

allow people to send their own parcels to individual soldiers with the *Express and Star* and James Dumbell picking up the cost of postage.[35] The newspaper reported that there had been complaints about the cost of sending small, individual parcels to the troops via the Post Office. The *Express and Star* made use of this growing concern about the cost of sending family parcels to men at the front to generate human-interest copy. Money worries created by the war made it difficult for some poorer working-class families to keep up the supply of parcels.[36] The newspaper announced: 'We want to make this scheme of real help to those who have not hesitated to send their gallant boys to defend their country.' [37] There were to be no perishables but vaseline, razors, cigarettes and towels were suggested. A week later the newspaper was reporting the human interest of poignant scenes in the *Express and Star's* front office as dozens queued daily to hand over their small cardboard boxes wrapped in brown paper.[38] The individual parcels provided a mechanism for the *Express and Star* to make itself part of the intimate connection between the local volunteer and his family. This was particularly true for wives and mothers who viewed parcels as a direct way of continuing to care for their loved ones.[39] The female reader remained important to the newspaper because she was important to the advertiser. The *Express and Star* created a closeness with the woman reader in particular through the manipulation of the humble parcel which could be seen as 'an approximation to former

[35] *Express and Star*, 21 April 1915, p. 2.
[36] See, Michael Roper, *The Secret Battle: Emotional Survival in the Great War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), pp. 104-106 for a more detailed account of the financial pressures of sending parcels to men at the front.
[37] *Express and Star*, 2 September 1915, p. 5.
[38] *Express and Star,* 28 April 1915, p. 2.
[39] Hodgkinson, *Glum Heroes*, p. 57.

transactions of love' but by the newspaper as a potent human-interest story.[40] The first shipment involved 200 parcels packed in 20 wooden cases and weighing over half a ton.[41] The second development involved the artful use of the men on the prisoners of war list. The *Express and Star* invited readers to tell the newspaper about loved ones who had been reported as missing. As soon as a friend or relative provided details of a missing man, a letter was placed in every prisoner-of-war comforts box asking the recipient to make enquiries in their camp about the missing individual. According to the newspaper on 21 August 1915: 'This week replies have been received that two such men are in certain camps.' [42]

The fundraising campaign burrowed deeply into many different elements of life in the town. Again, it reflected Dibblee's job description for an Editor following the tenets of the New Journalism. The contemporary Editor had to '…open subscription lists for the sake of important public charities of an occasional kind and to bring prominent names conspicuously before the public'.[43] The prominent names of Wolverhampton's large industrial complexes were pitched into competition with each other with regular league tables published to show which had collected the most money and products. By Christmas 1915, 60 of the area's largest manufacturers were involved in raising money and collecting cigarettes and tobacco.[44] The *Express and Star,* with an eye on its core working-class readership, used the campaign to praise factory workers,

[40] Hodgkinson, *Glum Heroes,* p. 57.
[41] *Express and Star,* 2 May 1915, p. 2.
[42] *Express and Star*, 21 August 1915, p. 5.
[43] Dibblee, *The Newspaper*, p. 129.
[44] *Express and Star,* 27 December 1915, p. 3.

saying: ‘In the Titanic struggle, the workers in the factories are, like the men in the trenches, called upon to make a superhuman effort’[45] On 16 November 1915, for example, a two-column table was published giving the latest figures.[46] By mid-November £2118 had been collected for comforts since the scheme had started in September 1914 – with £309 coming in during the first two weeks of November alone to buy Christmas parcels for prisoners of war. Wolverhampton’s biggest manufacturing names were at the top of the list. Workers at the Sunbeam Motor Car Company had raised £337 altogether. Sunbeamland, the bicycle and motorcycle works, was second with £150 and Star Engineering third with £150. AJS Motorcycles had raised £61 and J. Sankey & Son, £53. Recognition was important for the large companies and the *Express and Star* played on this, stating: ‘There are still a number of firms not yet contributing, and we again invite them to join in the good work and let us record their names on the roll of honour’.[47] Fundraising was not limited to large commercial organisations. Hundreds of small donations were listed regularly with smaller sums of a shilling or two shillings often anonymously given by ‘A prisoner’s wife’ or ‘A soldier’s wife’. Friends of Sergeant T. Parker donated five shillings, Miss Corbett’s collection in Wood End brought in five shillings, Codsall Working Men’s Club sent in 12 shillings, Mrs Cullin’s and Mrs Miller’s whist drive raised a pound, the girls at the Albion Road Council School in Willenhall sent £1/1s/4d while the Wolverhampton Steam Laundry gave £1/5s/0d.[48] It is noteworthy how many children were involved in collecting money for the *Express and Star* funds. The significant role of schoolchildren

[45] *Express and Star,* 7 September 1915, p. 2.
[46] *Express and Star*, 16 November 1915, p. 5.
[47] *Express and Star*, 16 November 1915, p. 5.
[48] *Express and Star*, 16 November 1915, p. 5.

and youth organisations such as the Boy Scouts, Girl Guides and Church Lads' Brigade in fundraising has been highlighted in the historiography of charitable giving.[49] This was reflected in the *Express and Star*, For example, Dan Taylor of Bentley Road in Walsall used his firework money to buy four packets of cigarettes for the fund.[50] Flora Evans, aged seven, from the Duke of York public house in Princess Street, Wolverhampton, had collected 200 cigarettes.[51]

As the boxes and crates of comforts arrived at the front, the *Express and Star* provided a platform for a dialogue between the fund-raisers in Wolverhampton and their citizen soldiers in France and prisoners of war in Germany. The Comforts parcels prompted letters back from France on an almost daily basis, each one providing brief human-interest insights into the volunteers' way of life. The responses to the *Express and Star's* comforts illustrates the newspaper's understanding of the rank-and-file soldier's view of the centrality of the ordinary 'practical details of everyday life'[52] Specifically, sharing food and cigarettes provided an opportunity to create order in a seemingly chaotic world.[53] Sergeant Charles Bloomer from 6 Platoon, B Company, 1/6th Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment wrote to thank readers for the condensed milk and cigarettes. 'They arrived at a very opportune moment, just before the battalion going into the trenches. Thanking you on behalf of the No. 6 – also

[49] Grant, *Philanthropy and Voluntary Action in the First World War*, pp. 94-103.
[50] *Express and Star,* 27 October 1915, p. 3.
[51] *Express and Star*, 12 November 1915, p. 4.
[52] Duffett, 'War Unimagined', p. 47.
[53] Duffett, 'War Unimagined', p. 68.

wishing you and your paper the best of luck,' he wrote.[54] Battery Sergeant Major F. Taylor, 3rd North Midland Brigade (Royal Field Artillery), wrote on behalf of the 'Wolverhampton lads' to thank the *Express and Star* for the case of comforts. He explained: 'We did not know it had been forwarded from Wolverhampton until probably all the milk had been consumed and your letter was found. Things are not as quiet as they probably are in the West Park.'[55] The newspaper appeared still to be a part of everyday life for local men at the front. Private C Haywood wrote: Whilst reading your paper sent out from England, I observed that Mr Musto had kindly given a melodeon to be sent to the troops at the front. May I say I would very much like to get the instrument. Whilst on our travels round one of the other companies we saw one melodeon that had come from the *Express and Star* and, accidentally, it had been broken.'[56] The comforts had cheered up life for Gunner G. Dicken. He wrote: 'It has been raining on and off for the past fortnight and we are absolutely up to our eyes in mud.'[57] The newspaper's parcels provided an opportunity to maintain a relationship with home.[58] Sergeant W. Phillips said he had had the pleasure of handing each of the men in his platoon an *Express and Star* tobacco packet that day. He added: 'All wish to be included in this note of thanks which we hope you will mention through the good old paper.'[59] Meanwhile, Company Sergeant Major P. McCormick described the scenes when two mouth organs, sent by the *Express and Star*, arrived in the trenches.

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[54] *Express and Star*, 4 May 1915, p. 2.
[55] *Express and Star*, 6 July 1915, p. 3.
[56] *Express and Star*, 27 August 1915, p. 2.
[57] *Express and Star*, 16 November 1915, p. 5.
[58] Hodgkinson, *Glum Heroes*, p. 64.
[59] *Express and Star,* 24 April 1915, p. 4.

‘Whilst writing this note I hear strains of music and my chums are enjoying themselves playing Homeland,’ he reported.[60]

Prisoners of war in camps in Germany also became involved in the dialogue with the town through the medium of the *Express by Star.* The *Express and Star* tapped into a significant cultural element in the relationship between the nation and its prisoners of war. Correspondence with home, no matter how limited, allowed the prisoner to give reassurance to family and friends. The discussion of mundane matters such as food and cigarettes gave those at home some comfort that their loved ones at home some reassurance that their loved ones were not being subjected to harsher treatment. The engagement with prisoners of war provided particularly compelling and intimate human interest for the newspaper. Parcels themselves, the contents of which could be tasted and smelt, gave tangible reassurance to the prisoner that he had not been forgotten.[61]. Parcels provided an emotional element between home and prisoners with the newspaper as the conduit – a physical symbol that prisoners were not forgotten and were valued members of their community.[62] The local human-interest stories came in as men responded to the arrival of cases of comforts by sending letters and photographs. Private G. Hindt, 1st Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment, wrote from his camp in Gottingen: ‘It cheers one up a bit to know we have such friends as yourself and the people of the town to keep on thinking of the men who are in queer straits. It will be a

[60] *Express and Star,* 23 April 1915, p. 6.
[61] Oliver Wilkinson, *British Prisoners of War in First World War Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 226-258.
[62] Wilkinson, *British Prisoners of War*, p. 247.

blessing when the end comes as we have had quite enough of the life we are now going through.'[63] Private J. Howells, 1st Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment wrote from a camp in Germany to say: 'I sincerely hope the good friends of our old town will continue to think of us during the coming winter.'[64] Again, the *Express and Star* tapped into the concerns of prisoners about getting enough to eat – an issue described as the 'demon of camp life'.[65] Many of the letters were domestic and indicated men who were not always content to accept meekly what they were given. Private H. Wright, 1st Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment, wrote to the *Express and Star* from Altdamm camp: 'We all enjoyed the beef which was sent in place of the cheese and I feel sure all my comrades would rather have that than cheese if possible.'[66] Private F. G. Wilkes wrote: 'Could you send me a bit of cake instead of biscuits as I have lost my teeth.'[67] Meanwhile, prisoners of war made enquiries about the 'missing men' listed in the letters sent with the parcels. Corporal H. Heath, 1st Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment, wrote from Gottingen: 'Your list has been posted up in the camp but no one has notified any information regarding those NCOs and men. Should I hear anything, I will notify you.'[68] Meanwhile, Private C. Hanson, 1st Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment, told the newspaper: 'Of the list you sent to me, I can only tell you that certain men were killed on October 26 last.'[69] By October 1915, photographs from prisoner-of-war camps started to be sent to the *Express and Star*. Private W. Green of the

[63] *Express and Star*, 20 October, 1915, p. 4.
[64] *Express and Star,* 26 November 1915, p. 4.
[65] Wilkinson, *British Prisoners of War*, p. 105.
[66] *Express and Star*, 26 November 1915, p. 4.
[67] *Express and Star*, 26 November 1915, p. 4.
[68] *Express and Star*, 21 October 1915, p. 4.
[69] *Express and Star*, 21 October 1915, p. 4.

Worcestershire Regiment, for example, sent a photograph of himself with ten of his friends in Doeberitz Camp. It appeared under the headline 'Prisoners Of War/ Wolverhampton Soldier And Some Of His Friends'.[70] Another Wolverhampton man, Private John Baker, from the 1st Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment, sent a photograph of himself with other members of the South Staffordshire Regiment and a group of Belgian soldiers, in a prisoner- of-war-camp in Germany.[71] The replies from the soldiers and prisoners added to a compelling narrative for readers. Kennedy Jones, Lord Northcliffe's senior executive, linked commercial success with the need for publicity when he wrote: 'A thing to succeed commercially must be talked about, praised orally and constantly asked for. It lives only where breath most breathes.'[72]

Like the recruiting campaign, the comforts fundraising was characterised by class. The local aristocracy set the framework and the parameters. A letter in the *Express and Star* from the Lord Lieutenant of Staffordshire, the Earl of Dartmouth, who was also chairman of the Staffordshire Territorial Association, had provided the catalyst for Comforts fundraising by the newspaper and James Dumbell. [73] Dartmouth, writing from his home at Patshull Hall near Wolverhampton, explained he had visited the various Territorial units around the county and suggested that efforts should be made to make sure the

[70] *Express and Star*, 18 October 1915, p. 2.
[71] *Express and Star*, 20 December 1915, p. 2.
[72] Kennedy Jones, *Fleet Street and Downing Street*, p. 223.
[73] 'Obituary: Lord Dartmouth', *The Times*, 12 March 1936, p. 20. The obituary detailed how Dartmouth had also been vice-chairman of Staffordshire County Council and Grand Master of Freemasonry for Staffordshire.

Territorials on active service were '…supplied with little comforts or even luxuries not supplied by ordinary regulations…'. [74] He suggested forming committees associated with each unit, to raise money, collect items and keep in touch with commanding officers. The Earl thought a scheme would be successful because '…nearly everybody has some relative or friend in the Territorial ranks'.

Those involved in the campaign reflected elements of the nature of the relationship between the industrial middle class and the aristocracy in the Black Country by the early twentieth century. The region's aristocracy and the area's middle-class, industrial and commercial elites had become much more closely involved with each other. The Black Country's long-standing aristocracy bought prestige, gravitas and 'external clout' to the philanthropic and civic activities of the middle-class elites. [75] The urban industrialist and the traditional county aristocracy came together with the *Express and Star* as the publicity platform, to create a Comfort fund for the town's volunteers and the newspaper's working-class readership. It has been argued that philanthropy of this sort encouraged 'community across class lines' rather than the blunt instrument of legislation such as the Poor Laws which divided classes.[76] At the same time, however, it emphasised the legitimacy of the social order, as it existed.

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[74] *Express and Star,* 8 September 1914, p. 2.
[75] See, Richard H. Trainor, *Black Country Elites: The Exercise of Authority in an Industrialized Area, 1830-1900* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 359.
[76] Trainor, *Black Country Elites*, p. 353.

The Comfort fund also illustrates the importance of localism to a newspaper like the *Express and Star* in wartime. The Earl of Dartmouth in his original letter to the newspaper in 1914 made it clear he thought the comfort funds should be for local Territorial units.[77] Later in 1915, the *Express and Star* was still emphasising the comfort funds were 'to benefit local soldiers'.[78] As the extent and complexity of the war expanded so did the *Express and Star's* definition of what was local. Initially, comforts were vaguely described as being for 'our men at the front'. [79] In October 1914, at the suggestion of the *Express and Star*, this became specifically the Wolverhampton Territorials, the 1/6th Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment and the town's RFA and RAMC Territorial units.[80] In April 1915, the *Express and Star* announced the comforts fund was being extended to include the 1/5th Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment – the Walsall Territorials.[81] This coincided with the 1/5th and 1/6th Battalions arriving in France as part of the 46th (North Midland) Division in early March 1915.[82] At the beginning of June 1915, the 1st and 2nd Battalions South Staffordshire Regiment – the Regular Battalions - were added to the list of those receiving comforts.[83] It can be noted that at no point in the period of this study was there any mentions of free copies of the *Express and Star* being sent to France by the newspaper itself. The newspaper's framework for supporting the volunteer soldier was created to generate reader interest and

[77] *Express and Star,* 8 September 1914, p. 2.
[78] *Express and Star*, 24 September 1914, p. 2.
[79] *Express and Star,* 8 September 1914, p. 2.
[80] *Express and Star*, 9 October 1914, p. 2.
[81] *Express and Star,* 2 April 1915.
[82] See, The National Archives, WO95/2687/1, War Diary: 1/6th Battalion, South Staffordshire Regiment, 1 February 1915 – 31 May 1919; The National Archives, WO95/2686. War Diary: 1/5th Battalion, South Staffordshire Regiment, 1 February 1915 – 28 February 1919.
[83] *Express and Star*, 7 June 1915, p. 2.

sell newspapers. Giving away newspapers did not fit the commercial nature of the *Express and Star's* relationship with the volunteer Tommy.

Smokes for Our Soldiers at the Front Campaign

The *Express and Star's* Smokes for our Soldiers at the Front tobacco campaign provides a detailed and well-defined example of how business was central to the *Express and Star's* support for the volunteer. Wolverhampton's volunteer soldiers became the centrepiece of a commercial relationship between the newspaper and Martins Limited, the world's largest tobacco mail-order company based in London.[84] The company does not feature in the historiography of the First World War despite its important role in the supply of cigarettes to soldiers and sailors throughout the war. This seems surprising, considering the two key personalities in the running of the Martins business and the Smokes campaigns both left detailed accounts of the company's operations and the workings of the wartime cigarette campaigns. Walter Martin, the owner and managing director, wrote an account of his sophisticated pre-war mail-order operation in a business self-help book published in 1911.[85] He described the extensive and complicated card-index system that held the details of thousands of customers. William Beable, the former advertising manager of the energy restorative, Vi-Cocoa, was brought in to run the Smokes campaigns on a day-to-day basis.[86] He wrote at least two accounts

[84] William Henry Beable, *Romance of Great Businesses* (London: Heath Cranton, 1926), p. 310.
[85] Walter Martin, 'Mail Order Organisation' in Thomas Russell (ed.) *Advertising and Publicity: Northcliffe Business Library, Vol V*. (London: Educational Book Company, 1911), pp. 225-233.
[86] Field, *Advertising: The Forgotten Years*, p. 101.

of the commercial imperatives behind Britain's wartime Smokes campaigns and was frank about their commercial nature.[87] By 1915, Martins, using its tobacco bonded warehouses, was running 150 mail order Smokes campaigns in newspapers across Britain and the Empire, all focused on raising money to send cigarettes and tobacco to men serving in the forces.[88] The *Express and Star* campaign, like the many others, was presented to the readers as a proud, specifically local endeavour by the newspaper itself in support of the town's fighting men. In reality, the *Express and Star* was a small outpost in a large-scale mail-order sales operation. Mail order advertising was described before the war as 'publicity employed to sell goods by post' with its bedrock based on generating consumer goodwill which was considered 'so valuable an asset to the mail-order man'. [89] The Smokes campaign was effectively a long-running, major mail-order advertising campaign by Martins that appeared all over Britain in the same format but with copy tailored for each newspaper.

The *Express and Star* Smokes campaign was launched on 23 September 1914.[90] A large panel running almost top-to-bottom of page two, across two columns – 40 column inches in total - announced the '*Express and Star* scheme'. Readers were urged to complete the printed coupon with their name and address and send it, along with a postal order for sixpence or multiples of sixpence, to the '*Express and Star* Tobacco Department' at the newspaper's

[87] Beable, *Romance of Great Business*, pp. 309-314 and William Henry Beable, 'A Romance of War: Tobacco and Cigarettes for the Men at the Front', *The Windsor Magazine,* 42 (5) (November 1915), p. 679.
[88] Beable, *Romance of Great Businesses*, p. 312.
[89] George J Orange and J. McBain, 'Mail Order Advertising' in Russell (ed.), *Advertising and Publicity*, pp. 209-224.
[90] *Express and Star*, 23 September 1914, p 2.

offices. In return for each sixpence, a parcel containing a quarter pound of tobacco and five cigarettes would be sent to members of either the Staffordshire Regiment or the Worcestershire Regiment. The copy stressed that parcels could not be sent to individuals but would have to go to battalions of the two regiments for general distribution. A reply postcard with the donor's name and address would be included in each small parcel so the soldier-recipient would know who sent it and could reply with thanks. The *Express and Star* played on human interest when it told readers: 'Tommy Atkins at the front will know whom at home has sent this comfort.' In an appeal to local pride and patriotism, it added: 'He will appreciate this very sensible way of showing your admiration of his bravery. There are no tobacco shops at the front – let us at home supply the deficiency.'[91] In passing, the article mentioned that the newspaper 'had made arrangements' with Martins Limited, a London cigar merchant, to supply the tobacco. The War Office was shipping the parcels at no cost. It was a stirring presentation and a direct appeal to the charitable nature of the newspaper's working-class readers. An elaborate drawing showed a packet of cigarettes and a pouch with tobacco cascading tantalisingly out of one end. The same-sized panel and similar format appeared regularly throughout 1914 and 1915. By the end of 1914, the scheme had become more sophisticated with new and elaborate illustrations of Tommies in trenches smiling while they smoked their cigarettes and pipes.[92] This suggests that the advertisements were presented to the *Express and Star* ready-made as the newspaper did not employ an artist or a photographer until

[91] *Express and Star*, 23 September 1914, p 2.
[92] See, for examples, *Express and Star,* 23 October 1914, p. 2; *Express and Star* 24 October 1914, p. 4.

the 1920s.[93] As the scheme developed, readers were able to send parcels to individual soldiers if they could provide a service number, company and regiment. They could also raise five pounds and send 200 parcels to a 'pet' battleship, cruiser, torpedo boat, destroyer or submarine.[94] The female reader was not forgotten. A collection card was produced, allowing 'ladies' to approach friends, relatives and neighbours for their sixpences.[95] The sales pressure increased as Christmas approached in 1914 and 1915 with a 'Christmas Box of Smokes' containing a briar pipe, rubber-lined khaki tobacco pouch, two ounces of tobacco, 50 cigarettes and a box of matches – all for 1/6d. *The Express and Star* told readers: 'The more one and sixpences you can give us, the more Christmas boxes you can send.'[96]

At first sight, the Smokes for our Soldiers at the Front campaign fits into the limited historiography of charitable giving and cigarette smoking during the First World War. By the outbreak of war, cigarettes, like tinned food, had become a consumer commodity, manufactured by mass production and part of the mass market.[97] Scholars have interpreted the campaigns to send cigarettes to soldiers as individual community schemes arranged by local organisations including provincial newspapers.[98] They are seen as spreading around the country in the local press during 1914 and 1915 and cementing a

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[93] Rhodes, *The Loaded Hour*, p. 60.
[94] *Express and Star,* 31 December 1914, p. 4.
[95] *Express and Star*, 2 December 1914, p. 3.
[96] *Express and Star*, 5 December 1914, p. 6.
[97] For a more detailed account of the development of cigarette mass production see, Matthew Hilton, *Smoking in British Popular Culture: 1800-2000* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 83-115.
[98] See, for example, Hilton, *Smoking in British Popular Culture*, p. 126; Grant, *Philanthropy and Voluntary Action*, pp. 54-57.

sense of home-front engagement with the war in individual towns and cities.[99] It should be stressed, however, that newspaper Smokes campaigns should not be viewed primarily through the prism of local patriotism and community support. They should be seen in the context of the development of mail-order advertising in the years leading up to the First World War and the specific problems mail-order businesses faced at the outbreak of war. The volunteer became the central mascot, in a complicated framework of coupon mail-order advertising and promotion. This context is important for the way the *Express and Star's* Smokes campaign was constructed. Mail-order businesses, using either a coupon in newspapers and magazines or illustrated catalogues, had developed rapidly in the 40 years before the First World War. A rise in the real value of working-class wages in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, along with the development of a low-cost, reliable parcel delivery service by the Post Office and the introduction of postal orders in 1881, had created a thriving mail-order trade.[100] The sale of watches and cheap jewellery by mail-order with monthly payments schemes was particularly successful.[101] This situation changed in the years leading up to the war. The real value of working-class wages was falling and increasing numbers of strikes and lockouts meant repayments became more uncertain. By 1914, mail-order companies were having to advertise heavily and focus tightly on low prices to maintain sales

[99] Grant, *Philanthropy and Voluntary Action,* p. 57.
[100] For a detailed examination of the early development of mail order in Victorian and Edwardian Britain, see Richard Coopey, Sean O'Connell and Dilwyn Porter, *Mail Order Retailing in Britain: A Business and Social History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 13-27.
[101] Coopey, O'Connell and Porter, *Mail Order Retailing*, p. 17.

among cost-conscious working-class consumers who could easily compare High Street prices with mail-order prices.[102]

When war broke out in August 1914, Martins Limited – 'the largest mail order cigar business in the world' – was faced with specific commercial difficulties that threatened the future of the company.[103] The business was based on the mail-order sale of cigars, cigarettes and tobacco. War meant many of its best customers were away on active service, those at home were economising and transport and deliveries were disrupted. It was feared the outbreak of war would put the company on the brink of financial collapse. [104] According to William Beable, to stop the firm from becoming a 'victim of the unforeseen circumstances', there '…evolved a plan by which the business could be kept going in the interests of the shareholders and at the same time contribute to the comfort of the men at the front'.[105] Beable described how, once the War Office had agreed to send the parcels free of charge, newspapers were approached to run the Smokes campaigns and more than 150 in 'this country and in the Colonies' took part. The *Express and Star* Smokes scheme was not a spontaneous and individual act of community support by the people of Wolverhampton and their local newspaper to provide comforts for their fighting men. It was one small cog in a large-scale commercial mail-order operation aimed at saving a major mail-order retailer from ruin. Beable noted: 'From every part of the United Kingdom came requests from leading papers to be

[102] Coopey, O'Connell and Porter, *Mail Order Retailing*, p. 22-23.
[103] Beable, *Romance of Great Businesses*, p. 310.
[104] Beable, *Romance of Great Businesses*, p. 311.
[105] Beable, *Romance of Great Businesses*, p. 312.

permitted to be associated with this splendid patriotic exercise.'[106] As soon as troops from Canada, Australia and 'other Colonies' arrived at the front, newspapers from those countries asked to run Martins' Smokes campaigns as well. Martins' campaign appeared in the different guises of individual newspaper tobacco fundraising. As well as the *Express and Star*, the many other titles included, for example, the *Leicester Daily Post*; the *Merthyr Express* in the Welsh valleys; the *Wishaw Press*, south of Glasgow; The *Berwickshire News* in the Scottish Borders; *The Cornishman* in Penzance; the *Dorking and Leatherhead Advertiser* in the Home Counties and the *Eastbourne Gazette*. The last-named added extra human interest to its appeal by telling readers that soldiers from Sussex were so short of tobacco they were smoking tea leaves.[107] The most high-profile Smokes campaign run by Martins was the Sunday *Weekly Dispatch's* Tobacco Fund which used Bert Thomas's distinctive 'Arf a Mo Kaiser' Tommy illustration to promote its appeal.[108]

Martins' wartime newspaper mail order campaigns became 'gigantic'.[109] The statistics nationally and in Wolverhampton appear to support this view. The various Martins schemes across Britain and abroad raised over £250,000 during the war – nearly £800,000 worth of tobacco products at duty paid prices. Sunday newspapers alone collected £100,000.[110] Approximately 300 clerks

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[106] Beable, *Romance of Great Businesses*, p. 312-313.
[107] See, *Leicester Daily Post*, 15 December 1914, p. 3; *Merthyr Express*, 12 December 1914, p. 3; *Wishaw Press,* 23 October 1914, p. 4; *Berwickshire News*, 27 October 1914, p. 3; *The Cornishman,* 16 September 1915, p. 3; *Dorking and Leatherhead Advertiser*, 7 August 1915, p. 3; *Eastbourne Gazette,* 28 October 1914, p. 5.
[108] See, *Weekly Dispatch*, 11 November 1914 and Beable, *Romance of Great Businesses*, p. 313.
[109] Beable, *Romance of Great Businesses,* p. 313.
[110] For these statistics, see, Beable, *Romance of Great Businesses,* p. 313 and 'A Romance of War', p. 679.

were employed at the company's four-storey office block in Haymarket, London, to administer the many newspaper schemes. The business employed 600 in total, including bonded warehouse staff. By the end of the war, the company's sophisticated card index system contained the details of 150,000 customers at home and across the Empire, taken from the newspaper coupons that had been submitted. Beable described the wartime Smokes appeals as an example of 'economical efficiency' and the conflict itself as one of 'cigarettes and tobacco as well as one of shells and ammunition'.[111] In Wolverhampton, the *Express and Star's* statistics paint a more modest but similar picture. By Boxing Day 1914, the newspaper had collected £403/2s/4d for its Smokes fund and by September 1915 the scheme had collected £904/6s/9d.[112]

The commercial arrangement was mutually beneficial to the *Express and Star* and Martins Limited. Martins gained access to the market they were losing – the men who had gone to war and those at home who economised. Newspapers like the *Express and Star* provided the publicity platform that enabled Martins to present the sales pitch that the purchase of tobacco products as a patriotic and charitable duty. The Smokes campaign reflected the nature of pre-war mail order operations with the emphasis on large-scale advertising and low prices. The Smokes campaign advertisements in the *Express and Star* were large – regularly 48 column inches each. The copy always stressed value and price compared to normal shop prices. The

[111] Beable, 'A Romance of War', p. 679.
[112] *Express and Star*, 26 December 1914, p. 4; *Express and Star,* 24 September 1915, p. 2.

sixpenny pack would have cost 1s/6d in the shops and the Christmas pack cost 1s/6d instead of four shillings.[113] The central element the *Express and Star* was able to provide, however, was credibility and trust. Walter Martin, the owner of Martins Limited, explained in 1911 that the key problem to overcome for mail order businesses was 'the inspiring of confidence in the mind of the buyer'.[114] He added: 'The natural tendency is to view with distrust people at a distance who ask for money…' In Martin's eyes, the key to mail order selling lay in being accepted and trusted. 'Gain this confidence; suggest to the people you are to be trusted,' he advised those using mail-order advertising.[115] Martins overcame this problem by associating itself with trusted and familiar local newspapers like the *Express and Star* and using the highly regarded figure of the local fighting man as a mascot in each town.

The *Express and Star* gained lucrative advertising revenue from Martins Limited regular advertising, but the benefit to the newspaper was more fundamental. The Smokes campaign gave the *Express and Star* a ready-made publicity campaign at no cost and requiring few resources. The newspaper was able to associate itself with the patriotic and charitable effort to support the town's volunteers – gaining valuable positive publicity for what was essentially a commercial adverting campaign. It also satisfied the human-interest demands of the New Journalism. Human interest was commercially important to Martins as well. Beable called it the 'personal and human touch'

[113] For example, see *Express and Star*, 6 October 1914, p. 4; *Express and Star* 7 December 1914, p. 4.
[114] Walter Martin, 'Mail Order Organisation', in Russell, *Advertising and Publicity*, p. 233.
[115] Walter Martin, 'Mail Order Organisation', in Russell, *Advertising and Publicity*, p. 233.

and argued that the large national fundraising campaigns lacked the intimate personal touch whereas a local newspaper scheme 'brings the giver and the receiver in direct touch with each other'.[116] The manipulation of the figure of the volunteer soldier was central. Beable recognised this when he explained: 'The whole secret of the wonderful business that has been built up arose from a full appreciation of the human element, and it was applied to the tobacco funds'.[117] After its launch in September 1914, the Smokes campaign rapidly began to display the characteristics of human-interest new journalism. These included lists of hundreds of names of those who had contributed and the publication of soldiers reply cards with their thanks and their glimpses of human interest at the fighting front. For example, the Liverpool Victoria Legal Friendly Society raised 20 shillings and the Willenhall Primitive Methodist Social Club collected 16 shillings.[118] Standard III class at Ettingshall Council School in Bilston collected four shillings and miners at Holly Bank colliery collected 25 shillings.[119] 'Emma' gave sixpence, Miss Bunch from the Oddfellows Hall in Wolverhampton sent 14 shillings, Goodyear and Son at Dudley gave 14 shillings and Beth's moneybox provided 2s/6d.[120] Readers who had received thank-you letters from grateful Tommies were soon sending them to the *Express and Star* for publication. Columns of thank you letters appeared regularly. Smoking became an important subject of conversation between Wolverhampton and its volunteer soldiers. Private F. Swain, of the 2nd Battalion Worcestershire Regiment, wrote to Mr G. Flow of Walsall: We

[116] Beable, *Romance of Great Businesses*, p. 312.
[117] Beable, *Romance of Great Businesses*, p. 312.
[118] *Express and Star*, 26 December 1914, p. 4.
[119] *Express and Star*, 30 December 1914, p. 4.
[120] *Express and Star,* 27 November 1914, p. 4; *Express and Star* 30 December 1914, p. 4.

enjoyed the smokes very much!'[121] Corporal Fred Rice, 1/6th Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment wrote: 'Last week I had a packet of tobacco through the *Express and Star*. I am smoking one of the cigarettes as I write.'[122] He added: 'Night is a time of horror especially when you are on sentry. The sentry stands on the firing platform with his head over the parapet and is not permitted to leave'. Bombardier J. Haywood, Royal Field Artillery, explained the tobacco parcels arrived while he was helping build a new dugout. 'Of course, we all prepared for a quiet smoke,' he wrote.[123] Norman Cope, Cyril Hinde and Robert Ford did not provide details of their unit but their thanks were heartfelt. They wrote: 'You have no idea of what the 'bacca is to us out here' before adding: 'Verily, now we shall be able to compete with the hum from the dead cow lying in front of our trench.'[124]

To the readers, the Smokes campaign appeared a spontaneous and local response by the *Express and Star* to the needs of the town's volunteer soldiers. It would be incorrect simply to view it in these terms. William Beable described the Smokes campaigns as '…the most marvellous illustration of the genius of Mr Walter Martin, to whom is due the success of this business'.[125] Martin himself summed up the success of his mail-order business when he said: 'Orders must be whipped in all the time. There must not be a single day's cessation or relaxation of selling effort'.[126] Wolverhampton's volunteers

[121] *Express and Star*, 4 December 1914, p. 5.
[122] *Express and Star,* 24 April 1915, p. 5.
[123] *Express and Star,* 11 May 1915, p. 4.
[124] *Express and Star,* 14 May 1915, p. 2.
[125] Beable, *Romance of Great Businesses*, p. 312.
[126] Martin, 'Mail Order Organisation', in *Advertising and Publicity*, p. 223.

became the commercial mascot for that selling effort. The owners and Editor of the *Express and Star,* however, preferred to couch their wartime charitable efforts in terms of political consensus and working-class generosity.

The *Express and Star* and Working-Class Fundraising

The *Express and Star's* Comforts and Smokes campaigns represented a large-scale fundraising effort by the newspaper's working-class readership on behalf of the town's volunteer soldiers. The evidence of the *Express and Star* indicates a different view of the stereotype of First World War charity, which sees philanthropic activity as a largely middle-class phenomenon typified by well-meaning knitting and good works.[127] The *Express and Star's* charity campaigns present a more complicated picture of fundraising in a provincial, working-class, industrial town. The local middle-class and even the local aristocracy were the visible part of the newspaper's campaigns. This included the owners of the *Express and Star*, the Wolverhampton industrialist James Dumbell and the Earl of Dartmouth. However, the working-class readership provided the main contribution of donating and collecting money and comforts.

James Dumbell the joint organiser of the Comforts campaign recognised this in a speech he gave after a charity football match in December 1915 at Wolverhampton's Molineux Football Ground. A detailed account of the charity match and the speeches was given in the *Express and Star* on 27 December

[127] Grant, *Philanthropy and Voluntary Action*, p. 25.

1915. [128] Dumbell told the crowd that although the well off had given money, the 'principal support' and the bulk of the donations had come from the working classes. Workers at 60 factories around Wolverhampton were regularly making donations. Over £3,000 had been raised for the Comfort fund – with workers at the Sunbeam Motor Car Company alone contributing nearly £500. The support that the newspaper's fundraising had received from the working men of Wolverhampton 'resounded to their eternal credit'. The structure of the *Express and Star's* fundraising campaign with its middle-class pinnacle and broad working-class base is significant. In historical studies of organised charity, the role of the working classes is likely to be underplayed because the efforts of the middle-class tend to be recorded in the documents and publicity of charitable institutions.[129] Much working-class charity was unostentatious and unrecorded. Sunday schools, soup kitchens, temperance societies, clothing clubs and sick societies were among many institutions that provided evidence of working-class self-help.[130]

The *Express and Star's* comforts campaigns provided another opportunity to use the volunteer soldier as a mascot figure to promote the newspaper's commercial ambitions. Support for the volunteer fitted the priorities of the New Journalism. It generated large-scale human interest as readers raised money and soldiers responded. It placed the war in the context of local fundraising and local community efforts – another example of civic boosterism. The

[128] *Express and Star*, 27 December 1915, p. 3.
[129] Frank Prochaska, *Christianity and Social Service in Modern Britain: The Disinterested Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 21.
[130] Prochaska, *Christianity and Social Service*, p. 21.

campaigns engaged closely with the newspaper's working-class readers – either individually or as part of large-scale industrial or social groups - as they raised money for comforts for local men. In all of this, the *Express and Star* gained valuable publicity by being at the centre of the news story of support for the volunteer Tommy. The newspaper itself sat alongside the soldier as the centrepiece of the Black Country's support effort. The Smokes campaign appeared part of this patriotic and civic effort but was in reality a large-scale mail-order operation. Commerce, mail order and the popular press's demand for readership sat at the heart of support for the volunteer. Again, this support fitted the newspaper's Liberal belief that the volunteer, supported by his local community, would win through against the enemy and conscription would be unnecessary.

The Comforts and Smokes campaigns can be viewed in the light of the broader conception of propaganda with its emphasis on consensual mobilisation rather than coercion.[131] As with the *Express and Star's* recruitment campaign, the fundraisers can be seen as both the receivers of propaganda and its creators. Fundraising created a sense of positive community spirit and participatory activity, giving working-class readers a sense of control over events. The readers themselves created this propagandist view through their active engagement with fundraising. They became subject to the propaganda message they had been responsible, in part, for making. The fundraising and the dialogue with men at the front and in prison camps created the impression

[131] Connelly et al., *Propaganda and Conflict,* p. 17.

of war that was extraordinary but at the same time manageable. It was based around familiar consumer items such as bread, cigarettes and musical instruments. The advertising historian, David Clampin, views these as highly significant at times of war in terms of propaganda. Using and making reference to things that were familiar before the disruption of war became a coping strategy – maintaining a degree of normality in wartime[132] The newspaper made use of this familiarity. Viewed from this perspective, the propaganda element of the *Express and Star's* fundraising campaigns becomes sophisticated. Stephen Badsey explores the nuances of propaganda in his study of the development of the 'German corpse factory' story during and after the First World War. He describes the idea of a clandestine and elaborate network of government propagandists secretly spreading lies to create confusion and destroy trust in the truth as 'one of the most persistent propaganda myths of the First World War'.[133] The reality of state propaganda in Britain was far more haphazard and improvised with a considerable degree of confusion and friction. Badsey stresses the importance in these circumstances of local and regional leaders in developing propaganda messages in their communities around Britain.[134] Propaganda was not necessarily sinister men in secret government rooms creating chaos and confusion among the population with clever lies. Instead, much of it was part of the fabric of life. Badsey argues that Britain had no official propaganda institutions before the war because they were not needed – the British people lived surrounded by the sights and sounds of patriotic propaganda.[135] They

[132] Clampin, *Advertising and Propaganda*, pp. 16-17.
[133] Badsey, *The German Corpse Factory*, p. 52.
[134] Badsey, *The German Corpse Factory*, p. 53-54.
[135] Badsey, *The German Corpse Factory*, p. 60.

were patriotic beliefs held by the mass of the population. Badsey stresses that one of the great strengths of the British propaganda effort once the war started was that it was based on a sometimes raucous 'idea of a nation in debate and dialogue with itself' rather than the centralised imposition of government views from above.[136] The *Express and Star's* fundraising efforts provide an example of how these modern concepts of propaganda come together. Those involved in the Comforts and Smokes campaigns were both propagandists and receivers of propaganda. The campaigns made use of consumer items, fitting David Clampin's conception of maintaining morale through familiar items and routines. Centrally, the fundraising fits Badsey's view of propaganda as often being created locally and reflecting a dialogue within a community that largely held the same patriotic beliefs. The motivation for the Comforts and Smokes campaigns may have been commercial but they illustrate the subtlety of propaganda during wartime.

Charitable fundraising during the First World War, it is argued, provided Britain with a distinct advantage in the shape of the reservoir of social capital it could call upon.[137] It helped raise morale at home and amongst troops and prisoners of war. According to Peter Grant, wartime charity also acted as an 'integration mechanism' between top-down philanthropy and bottom-up charitable mutual aid, which continued after the war.[138] The evidence from the *Express and Star* presents a different view of this argument. Fundraising was a commercial effort

[136] Badsey, *The German Corpse Factory*, p. 60.
[137] Peter Grant, 'Philanthropy in Britain during the First World War', *The Tocqueville Review,* 38 (2) (2017), pp. 37-51.
[138] Grant, *Philanthropy in Britain*, p. 48.

aimed at increasing the prestige and readership of the newspaper as well as generating advertising revenue and positive publicity for the newspaper. The Smokes campaign was more about the mail-order trade than making life more bearable for local volunteers. Rather than breaking down class barriers, the example of the *Express and Star* indicates the maintenance of the status quo rather than any change. The owners of the *Express and Star* and the manufacturer, Dumbell, organised the fundraising, ran the charity campaigns and largely took the credit while the working class contributed the money. For the newspaper, fundraising met the criteria of the commercial press and the New Journalism. It provided large-scale human interest, local boosterism, close engagement with the reader and the *Express and Star* remained at the heart of the story. The next chapter explains how Wolverhampton's volunteer soldiers took on the mantle of the New Journalism and became the *Express and Star's* on-the-spot correspondents, providing the human interest of warfare from the fighting front.

Chapter 5: Letters, Interviews and Official Sources.

This chapter explores how the *Express and Star* used letters, interviews and official sources to explain to readers what was happening to the Black Country's volunteers at the fighting front. On the one hand, the letters from volunteers published in the newspaper proved an outstanding success in terms of the New Journalism. The volunteers took on the role of chroniclers of the battlefield, providing graphic and sometimes lurid, human-interest stories of their personal experience of war - the New Journalism red in tooth and claw. On the other hand, the *Express and Star* failed to provide a comprehensive and rounded account of the fighting in which local men had been involved. This failure hinged on two factors - military censorship and the limited development of the New Journalism in the *Express and Star*. The chapter has five sections. The first explains the broad but flawed journalistic context within which the newspaper published the volunteers' accounts of battle. The second considers the significance and perception of letters to the Editor in the Edwardian press. Sections three, four and five take the form of a case study of the attack on the German strongpoint of the Hohenzollern Redoubt on the Western Front by 46th (North Midland) Division on the afternoon of 13 October 1915. The Black Country's two Territorial battalions suffered heavy casualties on the day. The three sections present, what was a major story for the newspaper, from the perspectives of local soldiers' own stories, the official sources and an *Express and Star* journalist-turned-soldier who was there on the day and provided his own detailed account. The chapter shows the *Express and Star* missed a significant opportunity to provide its readers with a comprehensive and detailed narrative of the fate of the Black Country

volunteers at the Hohenzollern Redoubt despite having eye-witness accounts from those that took part in the fighting and one of its reporters at the scene. It was as much a failure of journalism as a success of censorship. In conclusion, the chapter considers how the *Express and Star's* coverage of the experience of war contributes to the far broader debate about the scale of the dislocation in understanding between the home and fighting fronts.

The *Express and Star* and the Wartime Importance of 'The Story'.

The *Express and Star's* attempts to report the complexities of the First World War battlefield reveal the flaws and limitations in the newspaper's ability to handle a complicated narrative. This section explores a significant failure by the *Express and Star* to use the techniques of the New Journalism to provide a comprehensive account of the events at the Hohenzollern Redoubt. To a considerable extent, this was the newspaper's fault. In this interpretation, the *Express and Star* was, by 1914, only partially through the transition between the old Victorian journalism and the New Journalism – what has been described as the divide between the 'pre-modern and modern newspaper'.[1] This development was not linear or regular; different newspapers adopted different elements of the New Journalism at different times in the 30 years leading up to the First World War and beyond.[2] Specifically, the *Express and Star* had failed to adopt an important element of the New Journalism, the ability to produce a comprehensive story that collated the disparate accounts of an event to produce one detailed, all-encompassing article. The new way

[1] Matthews, *The History of the Provincial Press*, p. 90.
[2] Wiener, 'How New Was the New Journalism?', pp. 47-71.

stressed 'the story' rather than publishing different news items on the same subject sometimes on the same page or even on different pages in the same edition.[3] The New Journalism developed the technique by which related news items were woven into one comprehensive narrative so the reader got a fuller picture of an event.[4] It was a key driver of the commercialised press – a method of attracting mass readership by presenting a single, comprehensive story rather than scattered and confusing items on the same subject.[5] The concept goes to the heart of the changing journalistic interpretation of news during the years leading up to the First World War and represented a central difference between the old Victorian journalism and the New Journalism.[6] By clinging to the old Victorian concept of news presentation the *Express and Star* lacked any 'generalizing and sifting capacities' and left the newspaper incapable of digesting and synthesising a variety of reports.[7] This produced an unusual contradiction in the newspaper. The *Express and Star* was trying to cover the complexities of the First World War whilst attempting to straddle two eras of journalism. The content of the *Express and Star* represented the successful adoption of the New Journalism but its conception of news presentation on the page was still wedded to the Victorian era. Victorian journalism saw its job as collecting different items of information and publishing them separately rather than collating and interpreting to produce an overall picture of events.[8] The reader was left to draw their own conclusions from the

[3] Donald Matheson, 'The Birth of News Discourse: Changes in News Language in British Newspapers, 1880-1930', *Media, Culture and Society*, 22 (5) (2000), pp. 557-573 (p. 567).
[4] Matthews, *The History of the Provincial Press*, p. 91.
[5] Matthews, *History of the Provincial Press*, p. 90.
[6] Matheson, 'The Birth of News Discourse', p. 567.
[7] Brown, *Victorian News and Newspapers*, p. 253.
[8] Matheson, 'The Birth of News Discourse', p. 566.

different items of information provided, rather than the newspaper giving a rounded and comprehensive narrative.

In the new era of the comprehensive story, the job of the sub-Editor on a daily newspaper was to pull together a whole series of running reports, interviews, contradictory and confused items, into a single, all-encompassing story, so that the newspaper, not the reader, provided the interpretation.[9] The war correspondent Hamilton Fyfe explained that by the early years of the twentieth century 'the story' applied not just to fiction but was central to news reporting.[10] He stated: 'To the News Editor everything that happens in the world is judged by the test question: "What sort of story will it make?"'. It was not until after the First World War, however, that the new technique of presenting a collated and comprehensive news story became standard across the national and provincial press.[11] The sinking of the *Titanic* is cited as a large-scale, complex news story that was told in a confusing and fragmented fashion by many newspapers as late as 1912.[12] By not adopting new presentational and editing techniques by 1914, telling the story of a complicated and multi-faceted subject such as war became awkward for the *Express and Star*. It became difficult for the newspaper to provide a narrative of a complex event such as the attack on the Hohenzollern Redoubt that had a multitude of often conflicting and confusing elements revealed over an extended period. It explains much of the fragmented coverage of the war in provincial newspapers like the *Express and*

[9] Matheson, 'The Birth of News Discourse', p. 567.
[10] Fyfe, *Press Parade*, p. 35.
[11] Matheson, 'The Birth of News Discourse', p. 567.
[12] Matheson, 'The Birth of News Discourse', p. 566.

Star that had not adopted the technique of pulling together a comprehensive story. The newspaper never published news photographs from the fighting fronts This made the task of description even harder because very few civilian readers would have many ideas of the technicalities and jargon of a modern industrialised battlefield or what it looked like. The *Express and Star* maintained the old Victorian journalistic tradition of keeping individual items of news separate and not collating and synthesising them for readers. In doing so, the newspaper missed a significant opportunity to provide a relatively comprehensive account of what happened at the Hohenzollern Redoubt.

The Editor, Soldiers' Stories and the New Journalism.

The Editor of the *Express and Star*, Andrew Meikle, provided an insight into the use of readers' letters in the early twentieth-century press. He addressed the subject during the civic ceremony to mark his years of distinguished service in the town described in the introduction to this thesis. In his speech of thanks to the civic dignitaries, Meikle talked about what he called 'a few sidelights on the daily life of an Editor'. [13] He said that one of the most important and enjoyable parts of his job was reading the letters to the Editor each day. Over the years, he had received an immense amount of correspondence. He admitted to being amazed '…at the shamelessness of some correspondents, the audacity of others, the humour and pathos of more…' The letters allowed him the delight of watching '…the passing show, with its flotsam and jetsam, from the office chair'. Meikle mentioned that he

[13] *Express and Star,* 19 April 1921, p. 3.

received 'Letters to the Editor' containing 'numerous and varied secrets bearing on political, social, domestic, romantic, financial and many other questions'.[14] Sometimes, letter writers gave away confidences but he had always made sure these confidences went unreported. 'They were as sacred as the Confessional,' he added. Meikle said he viewed letters as nothing less than the journalistic equivalent of the 'very elixir of life'.[15]

Meikle's Town Hall speech illustrates how an Editor in the early twentieth century viewed readers' letters not primarily in terms of political debate or civic engagement but as the New Journalism's human interest – the passing show. He was confident to state publicly that it was part of his job to edit and censor correspondence. In Meikle's interpretation, letters were not a high-minded element of political discourse but commodities of the New Journalism, to be cut and edited to fit the Editor's outlook and the newspaper's needs. They were also news. Soldiers' letters and interviews were always published on news pages – never on the letters' page. Occasionally, they appeared gathered together in a column of several letters for greater impact under the headings 'War Stories' or 'Battle Stories'.[16] The grouping of letters on one particular subject is itself considered an indication of the developing New Journalism. Letters to the Editor were no longer lengthy political tracts but shorter comments on newsworthy matters of the day.[17] Also, the regular use of

[14] *Express and Star,* 19 April 1921, p. 3.
[15] *Express and Star,* 19 April 1921, p. 3.
[16] See, for example, *Express and Star,* 26 September 1914, p. 4; *Express and Star,* 13 October 1914, p. 3.
[17] James Owen and Samantha Wyndham (eds.), *The Times: Great War Letters: Correspondence from the First World War* (Glasgow: Times Books, 2018), p. 1.

volunteers' descriptive accounts on news pages allows for a specific interpretation of how they were seen from the perspective of the New Journalism. They can be viewed in the context of the Editorial tradition of the Victorian and Edwardian special correspondent. The soldiers became local and unpaid, chroniclers of the war – amateur 'special correspondents' providing vivid eyewitness accounts. By 1914, the role of special correspondent – or special commissioner as the position was often known at the time - was well defined in the New Journalism.[18] They did not necessarily have to be war correspondents but could equally report on domestic events. The 1915 journalism training manual, *Pitman's Practical Journalism*, devoted a chapter to the role, telling trainee journalists that the special correspondent had to concern himself with all 'departments of human interest'.[19] The manual defined the role as representing a national or large provincial title '…on some occasion of unusual importance, or to contribute to its columns articles on some subject of public concern with which the writer is specially qualified to deal'.[20] Catherine Waters, in her study of the figure of the special correspondent, describes the position as being a type of roving reporter, able to 'picture the news for the reader'.[21] Considered a much under-studied figure in Victorian and Edwardian journalism, the special correspondent was seen as a distinctive 'performer' in the newspaper, what Waters describes as the 'Star Turn in the Great Print Circus'.[22] The special correspondent's ability to be an eyewitness was crucial. It allowed him to produce graphic descriptions

[18] Waters, *Special Correspondence and the Newspaper Press*, p. 5.
[19] Baker, *Pitman's Practical Journalism*, p. 95.
[20] Baker, *Pitman's Practical Journalism*, p. 93.
[21] Waters, *Special Correspondence*, p. 9
[22] Waters, *Special Correspondence*, p. 9.

because he was at the scene; thus resolving the problem of 'how to picture the news' for the reader in the absence of news photographs.[23] As such, the soldier as special correspondent took his place on the news pages, part of the framework of the New Journalism and the commercial press. His contributions provided the vivid, human interest of the man-on-the-spot that was essential to the New Journalism; a rich vein of vivid and compelling personal descriptions of an extraordinary world, provided by men the readers knew. They were 'compulsive reading' for a newspaper that depended on readership to attract advertising.[24]

The volunteers' stories were subjected to a layered process of personal, journalistic and military editing and censorship before they appeared in the *Express and Star*. The subject of censorship and editing of soldiers' accounts is fraught with difficulty. Letters that appear in newspapers have been described as a 'highly-mediated form of expression'.[25] Professor of Journalism, Karin Wahl-Jorgesen, considers letters in newspapers to be a gold mine for scholars but warns they deserve to be treated with considerable caution as 'carefully crafted and curated texts' that are not always straightforward.[26] The wartime letters from soldiers had travelled a potentially tortuous route before they appeared in the news pages of the *Express and Star.* They should be viewed as being shaped by personal choice, military

[23] Waters, *Special Correspondence*, p. 8.
[24] McCartney*, Citizen Soldiers*, p. 107.
[25] Allison Kavanagh and John Steel, 'Introduction', in Allison Kavanagh and John Steel (eds.), *Letters to the Editor: Comparative and Historical Perspectives* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), p. 5.
[26] Karin Wahl-Jorgesen, 'Foreword', in Kavanagh and Steel (eds.), *Letters to the Editor*, p. viii.

censorship, journalistic routines of editing for length and language as well as the priorities of the newspaper and its news agenda. The letter writer himself could apply censorship to his accounts by playing down the harrowing elements of the battlefield and army life to save his family from worry and anxiety. He could also potentially over-emphasise his role in the narrative.[27] Letters were then subject to censorship by battalion officers, who were often struck by the frankness of the correspondence.[28] Beyond the military realm, the family who had received the letter could take out any material they felt unsuitable, or cast their relative in an unfavourable light, before passing it on to the *Express and Star*. Finally, Meikle could exercise his own editing and 'censorship' control of the letters before passing them on to his sub-Editors who could cut them to length to fit the page. Hence, the letters had passed through several hands, and several forms of mediation, before they appeared in the *Express and Star*. This has led to commentators pointing out that letters to newspapers can often say more about the publication itself than the writers or the subjects they are discussing.[29]

One element of wartime censorship had a particular impact on the provincial press and its ability to tell the stories of local men in action. According to Edward Cook, co-director of the Official Press Bureau, the biggest area of grumbling from the press was the general ban on naming specific units and their locations. Even when a unit was named, the precise date and location of

[27] See, Roper, *The Secret Battle*, pp. 63-64 and Hodgkinson, *Glum Heroes*, p. 59-60.
[28] G. D. Sheffield, *Leadership in the Trenches: Officer-Man Relations, Morale and Discipline in the British Army in the Era of the First World War* (London: Macmillan, 2000), pp. 136-137.
[29] Kavanagh and Steel, *Letters to the Editor*, p. 5.

the action in which it was involved could not be given.[30] The restriction on naming specific British regiments was only lifted, to an extent, in 1917 after complaints by war correspondents.[31] According to Cook, this censorship regulation was wide-ranging and strictly applied. He took the view that there was no information a commander was more anxious to obtain than the disposition of enemy forces.[32] The press took a different view. George Riddell, the owner of the *News of the World,* argued that this part of the censorship meant that the activities of the British Army were 'inadequately appreciated' by those at home compared to Australian and Canadian troops, whose censor allowed more flexibility on naming military units in the press.[33] Riddell said the authorities were resolute in not allowing descriptions of the doing of individual regiments although it would have been advisable from the public's point of view. War correspondents at GHQ reflected this journalistic frustration. Philip Gibbs worked for the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Daily Chronicle*.[34] He felt that not being able to name individual units was the 'worst handicap' of reporting on the Western Front.[35] He argued that on most occasions the Germans knew which battalions were facing them and described the restrictions on naming local units as both ungenerous and unfair.[36] His theory on the reasons behind much of the censorship was the military obsession with 'the necessity of fighting the war – "our war" as the Regulars called it – in the dark'.[37] In Gibbs'

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[30] Cook*, The Press in Wartime,* pp. 95-96.
[31] Badsey, *The German Corpse Factory*, p. 186.
[32] Cook, *The Press in Wartime*, p. 97.
[33] Lord Riddell, 'The Relations of the Press with the Army in the Field', *Royal United Services Institution Journal*, 66 (463) (1921), pp. 385-400.
[34] J. M. Bourne, *Who's Who in the First World War* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 105.
[35] Philip Gibbs, *The Pageant of the Years: An Autobiography* (London: William Heinemann, 1946), p. 169.
[36] Philip Gibbs, p. 233.
[37] Gibbs, *Adventures in Journalism*, p. 227.

eyes, many of the regulations were not about preventing the enemy from obtaining information. Instead, they existed to protect the military hierarchy from scrutiny. He wrote:

> We found that many of the regulations to which we were subject….were much more to safeguard the reputation and cover up the mistakes of the High Command than to prevent the enemy from having information which might be of use to him. They were afraid of the British public, of politicians and of newspapers, and were profoundly uneasy lest we should dig up scandals…'[38]

As Gibbs saw it, this element of censorship also threatened the foundations of the localism inherent in the human-interest New Journalism – what Gibbs himself defined as 'the human story wherever it might be found'.[39] He framed the reporting of the First World War within the context of the New Journalism, human interest and the importance of local interest. Gibbs explained: 'It was no satisfaction for the mothers of these boys or their wives and sisters to read of "North country troops" or "Lancashire lads" or men of our "Home County regiments". They wanted to know whether they were the 2nd Lancashire Fusiliers or the 8/10th Gordons or the Londoners of the 56th Division.'[40] Stephen Badsey argues that it was not necessarily the existence or severity of censorship that created problems, but inconsistency with the application of the policy of not naming individual regiments or units. [41] Naming regiments was normal practice in official film and photographic captions – although these were not published until some time after the event. Besides, battalions from each regiment were spread around the Army's fighting divisions so there was

[38] Gibbs, *Adventures in Journalism*, p. 230.
[39] Gibbs, *Pageant of the Years*, p. 39.
[40] Gibbs, *Pageant of the Years*, p. 169.
[41] Badsey, *The German Corpse Factory*, p. 186.

little security risk in mentioning them.[42] It should be stressed that for the *Express and Star*, soldiers' letters were not just graphic accounts of battle but also items of commercial value. They need to be viewed within the context of the essential demand for human interest from the commercialised press and a system of censorship that attempted to thwart access to just such information. The soldiers' stories became central elements in the *Express and Star's* efforts to frame the war in terms of localism and human interest. The fact that newspapers like the *Express and Star* managed to publish vivid soldiers' accounts with little official interference illustrates how little comprehension the metropolitan censors had of the size and importance of the provincial evening press in a town like Wolverhampton

When war broke out, Meikle gave strong support to censorship. On the day the formation of the Official Press Bureau was announced, he described it as a wise action of which he fully approved. [43] He appeared willing to give up one of the central pillars of the evening press – fast news transmission – for the national interest when he stated: 'Events may, and probably will, occur of which we shall not have immediate knowledge; but this will be in the interests of the nation.' This wholehearted support did not last long though, and within a fortnight Meikle was questioning 'an impenetrable veil of secrecy' that had obscured the British Army in France.[44] In a leader headlined 'The Public and the War', he was careful to stress that he did not want to see British lives put

[42] Badsey, *The German Corpse Factory*, p. 186.
[43] *Express and Star*, 7 August 1914, p. 3.
[44] *Express and Star*, 19 August 1914, p. 2.

at risk but was unhappy with the severity of news management. He argued that the public would only accept censorship '…so long as care is taken to supply promptly and regularly some really illuminating piece of information, be it favourable or unfavourable, no one will complain'. Meikle wrote that it was dangerous to have no news at all over 'several uneventful days involving a state of intense tension' because '…certain natures cannot extract much comfort from the hypothesis that No News is Good News'. Meikle had made the *Express and Star's* position clear. Severe censorship in the national interest only went so far before the commercial demand for news took priority.

How news from the Hohenzollern Redoubt broke in Wolverhampton.

A brief description of the attack on the Hohenzollern Redoubt on 13 October 1915 provides an opportunity to compare what happened on the battlefield to the accounts published in the *Express and Star* in the weeks that followed. The casualty statistics showed the scale of the Hohenzollern Redoubt story for the newspaper. The Wolverhampton Territorials, the 1/6th Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment, had suffered more than 400 casualties – 389 other ranks and 18 officers. The Walsall and Cannock Territorials, the 1/5th Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment, had suffered over 300 casualties – 306 other ranks and 13 officers.[45] Altogether, 112 other ranks from the 1/6th Battalion are recorded as having died on 13 October 1915 – all of them from Wolverhampton and the surrounding area.[46] On the same day, the 1/5th

[45] Edmonds, *Official History of the Great War*, *1915, Vol. 2*, p. 387.
[46] *Soldiers Died in the Great War 1914-1919: Part 42, The South Staffordshire Regiment* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1921), pp. 38-43.

Battalion recorded 76 other ranks killed – all from the Walsall, Cannock and Hednesford areas.[47] The attack has variously been described as a 'bloody repulse' and a 'useless slaughter of infantry'.[48] The Redoubt was a key German strongpoint for the defence of the Loos sector in the northern French coalfields. It had been the scene of relentless fighting before the Germans had gained full control of the position in early October 1915.[49] The attempt to capture the heavily fortified position was given to the 46th (North Midland) Division. This included the 137th (Staffordshire) Brigade, of which the 1/5th and 1/6th Battalions South Staffordshire Regiment were a part.[50] The Brigade was given the job of taking The Dump and Fosse 8, a large slag heap and a pithead near to the Redoubt.[51] The Official History recorded how gas was released before the attack but settled in shell holes and dips with little reaching the enemy lines.[52] The Brigade's attack collapsed under a devastating weight of fire.[53] The South Staffordshire Territorials attacked over open ground in front of the Redoubt and immediately began to suffer heavy losses from intense machine-gun and rifle fire.[54] The War History of the 1/6th Battalion described what happened to Wolverhampton's Territorials. It explained:

> As soon as the extended lines of infantry began the advance their position became clear. The enemy on the left were able to direct an enfilade fire at close range upon our men, who, advancing slowly over open ground, presented an easy target. But still the advance continued, and in orderly formation but with sadly depleted ranks the survivors

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[47] *Soldiers Died in the Great War*, pp. 31-36.
[48] See, Woods, 'Gas, Grenades and Grievances', p. 408; Edmonds, *Official History of the Great War, 1915, Vol: 2*, p. 388.
[49] Woods, Gas, 'Grenades and Grievances', p. 408.
[50] Edmonds, *Official History of the Great War, 1915, Vol.II*, p. 383.
[51] Woods, Gas, 'Grenades and Grievances', p. 426.
[52] Edmonds, *Official History of the Great War, 1915, Vol. II*, p. 384.
[53] Lloyd, *Loos 1915*, p. 203.
[54] Edmonds, *Official History of the Great War, 1915, Vol. II*, p. 384.

> arrived at their first objective, only to find that the troops whom they were supporting had been unable to make any ground…'[55]

What remained was the 'remnants of a Battalion'.[56] Brigadier-General Edmonds made specific mention in the Official History of the heavy losses of both the 1/5th and 1/6th Battalions with few getting as far as the trenches nearer the Redoubt.[57] Edmonds' analysis was that the fighting on 13 October had not improved the general situation in any way and had achieved nothing but 'useless slaughter of infantry', mostly in the first ten minutes of the attack.[58] The War History of the Wolverhampton Territorials described how the men of the 'old 6th South' who had joined before the war, and shortly after its outbreak, could never be replaced. 'They were the best type of civilian soldier,' it added.[59] For the *Express and Star,* it was a story on a vast scale that struck the heart of Wolverhampton and the surrounding area. The dead and injured were citizens of the town and relatives and friends of the newspaper's readers. It was a story that closely fitted the template of the New Journalism – a local human-interest tragedy that touched the lives of the mass of the *Express and Star's* readership in a personal way.

The day after the attack, General Headquarters briefly acknowledged the situation in one of its regular short statements but made no mention of which military units took part. It said the British had attacked the Hohenzollern

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[55] Committee of Officers, *War History of the Sixth Battalion*, p. 97-98.
[56] Committee of Officers, *War History of the Sixth Battalion,* p. 98.
[57] Edmonds, *Official History of the Great War*, *1915, Vol. II*, p. 385.
[58] Edmonds, *Official History of the Great War,* 1915, *Vol. II* p. 388.
[59] Committee of Officers, *War History of the Sixth Battalion*, pp. 97-98.

Redoubt under a cloud of smoke and gas but had been unable to maintain the assault because of enemy shellfire.[60] Without the names of the units involved, it lacked any local relevance to the *Express and Star*. It was not until six days later that the newspaper provided a vague but dramatic indication of the fate of the Black Country Territorials. The censorship regulations left the newspaper floundering to explain what had happened, but the presentation in the newspaper made it clear something serious had occurred involving the area's two local Territorial battalions. The two central columns of page three on 19 October 1915 were filled with a dramatic panel containing a large three-deck headline, 'Covered with Glory/Staffordshire Territorials in Action/Local Heroes Who Have Fallen in Battle'. [61] The story is significant for this study, illustrating the issues created by the censorship for a provincial evening newspaper attempting to explain to its readers what had happened to their local battalions. The *Express and Star* was caught in an awkward position – knowing far more than it was able to publish. The censorship prevented the naming of local units along with the dates and places of actions in which they were involved. Instead, the dramatic two-column panel presented details and pictures of a number of the dead but with no explanation of where, when or how they had died. The story was vague, inaccurate and unsatisfactory. It stated: 'It was always felt here that when Sir John French decided on important operations in which stamina, daring and skill were of supreme importance, our boys would be among those selected.' The article continued: 'The task they were set was accomplished gloriously though at times the difficulties made it

[60] *Express and Star*, 15 October 1915, p. 3.
[61] All quotations in the remainder of this paragraph taken from the *Express and Star*, 19 October 1915, p. 3.

appear as if success was impossible.' That was the extent of the 'news story'. There was no further detail and the rest of the panel was filled with the names and obituaries of several men who had been killed and wounded. The newspaper knew much more than it published. The article mentioned a letter home, from a Royal Army Medical Corps officer, that those at the newspaper had seen. The list of the dead and wounded had come from 'letters received from the front'. The story named 13 other ranks who had been killed or wounded. They included Private Walter Cope aged 21, from Wolverhampton whose family had been told he died after his leg was amputated. Also among the dead was a 19-year-old teacher, Private Charles Taylor. He worked at Netherton Council School in Dudley where his father was headmaster. Six officers were reported dead and photographs of three of them appeared in the panel. All were prominent Wolverhampton citizens. None of the reports mentioned their battalions. Captain E. A Cresswell, a solicitor in Wolverhampton, was match secretary of South Staffordshire Golf Club and the writer of the *Express and Star's* regular local golf column under the pen-name 'Divots'. Captain and Adjutant E. R. Collisson, also a solicitor, was a prominent member of Wolverhampton Cricket Club. The newspaper noted that Collisson had been shot through the spine. Also dead was Captain William Millner from Tettenhall. A wine and spirit merchant, he was a father-of-four who was also a keen member of both the South Staffordshire Golf Club and the Midland Counties Rifle Club. Cresswell and Collisson had served with the 1/6th Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment.[62] Millner, an old boy of King Edward's

[62] Wolverhampton Town Council, *Wolverhampton Red Book and Directory 1914*, p. 116.

School, Birmingham, had served with the 1/5th Battalion.[63] Lieutenant Howard Smith, son of Wolverhampton's Recorder, Judge Howard Smith, had been wounded while Lieutenant A. C. Finnis had also been wounded and his right leg amputated. The *Express and Star's* 'Covered in Glory' story had provided accounts of the individual tragedies that had befallen some of the South Staffordshire Territorials and given an indication of a significant, tragic event. There was, however, no reporting of the scale of the losses and no explanation of what had occurred. Readers were left uninformed about what had happened.

Two days later, on 21 October 1915, the newspaper published a letter from Major-General Edward Montagu-Stuart-Wortley, commanding officer of the 46th North Midland Division.[64] It should be noted that Montague-Stuart-Wortley was not mentioned by name but simply referred to as the 'Major-General' commanding the Division. The letter had been sent to the Staffordshire Territorial Association and passed on to the *Express and Star* for publication. Montagu-Stuart-Wortley's brief letter took the opportunity to praise the 'distinguished gallantry' of the men of the North Midland Division and to hope their example would 'bring every able-bodied man into the ranks'. He did not explain the tragic scale of events or provide any information about what had happened. The *Express and Star's* response to Montagu-Stuart-Wortley's letter came in the Editor's leader column on the same day, under the headline 'Midland Gallantry'. It was considered important enough to fill almost an entire

[63] https://kes.org.uk/RollofHonour/biogs/millner-william.html
[64] *Express and Star*, 21 October 1915, p. 5.

column.[65] It was a vague, rambling hymn of praise to the Territorial Force. It took a deferential tone by suggesting the *Express and Star* had waited for official military confirmation of the deaths before commenting. Meikle wrote: 'The permission given today to publish the communication lately received by the Staffordshire Territorial Association enables us to add our note to the chorus of praise evoked by the gallantry displayed in the recent fighting by the North Midland Division.'[66] The Editor wrote that the *Express and Star* had never taken the view that the Territorials were 'not warworthy' and instead praised the professional men and craftsmen of Staffordshire who used their leisure time in defence of the nation. He mentioned that the North Midland Division had the honour of being the first Territorial division to go to France in 'composite completeness'. Meikle indicated there had been large numbers of casualties and again mentioned that he knew more than he was telling readers. He explained that the North Midland Division contained thousands of men from across Staffordshire in its ranks and that the casualty lists would show their bravery. He added; 'This week private letters have told us of the conspicuous part one Staffordshire battalion has taken in the recent successful attacks on the German lines, and the sympathies of all have been with those amongst us whose brothers and sons have fallen.'[67] The *Express and Star's* strange atmosphere of blurred and undefined melancholy and mourning was compounded two days later with the publication of a letter from the Mayor of Wolverhampton's chaplain, the Reverend Reginald Thompson.[68] The Mayor and the Town Council used the newspaper to send a message of

[65] *Express and Star*, 21 October 1915, p. 2.
[66] *Express and Star*, 21 October 1915, p. 2.
[67] *Express and Star*, 21 October 1915, p. 2.
[68] *Express and Star*, 23 October 1915, p. 2.

sympathy to those who had lost loved ones. Thompson again provided no detail but was a little more specific. He said the borough had received '…news of casualties to very many of the officers and men of the South Staffordshire Territorials'. The Reverend wrote that a large number of homes in the town had been plunged into sorrow and added: 'Will you allow me, through your columns, to send a message of sympathy to everyone in the town, whether parent or child or friend or lover, who is suffering at the present moment'.[69]

Readers were left in the odd position of being told that the town's Territorial battalions had suffered heavy losses –some of them named and their pictures published - but the *Express and Star* gave them no information about where, when or how the casualties had occurred. The fate of the Black Country Territorials was hidden in a vague and hazy void. The situation echoes the comments of the war correspondent Philip Gibbs; that the censorship regulations existed as much to protect the military hierarchy from scrutiny as they did to stop the enemy from obtaining valuable information. The pronouncements of officialdom had failed to provide readers with an explanation of the high level of casualties suffered by the 1/5th and 1/6th Battalions. There was no journalistic linkage between the Hohenzollern Redoubt and the local Territorials; censorship regulations that prevented the naming of individual units prevented this. Neither the *Express and Star*, GHQ, the commanding officer of the 46th Division or Wolverhampton Town Council were able to provide readers with any details of the circumstances in which

[69] *Express and Star*, 23 October 1915, p. 2.

the Black Country's citizen soldiers had suffered hundreds of casualties. The military hierarchy escaped scrutiny and accountability in the fractured and vague accounts that appeared. The censorship had created a peculiar journalistic jigsaw with scattered random pieces and no clear idea of the overall picture. The censorship of the names of individual units had created what the political journalist Henry Lucy described in *The Times* in 1914 as a 'Tale Half Told'.[70] According to Lucy, the suppression of local unit names and places of battle was not only a 'cruel injustice to gallant men' but also a missed opportunity for recruiting. The *Daily Mail* was more forceful in 1917, declaring: 'Name the Regiments! The Censored English Soldier'.[71] The newspaper said the censorship of unit names was preventing people in Britain from understanding the real nature of the soldier's sacrifice. It was unnecessary, as there were so many battalions at the front, naming them made little difference. The *Daily Mail* argued Germany was using the ban to aid its propaganda – putting out the story that 'English troops are so rarely referred to because they never do anything'.[72]

The blurring of the story continued through October. On 23 October the *Express and Star* published a Reuters account of '…the attack on the Hohenzollern Redoubt which formed an important part of the assault delivered by us on the 13th inst.'[73] The report was considered important enough to be used at length and placed in a prominent position at the top of page five. It

[70] *The Times*, 25 November 1914, p. 9.
[71] *Daily Mail*, 10 September 1917, p. 4.
[72] *Daily Mail*, 10 September 1917, p. 4.
[73] *Express and Star*, 23 October 1914, p. 5.

described how: 'Our men advanced across the open in the face of murderous machine-gun fire'. With no mention of the formations involved, however, it had no relevance to anybody who did not have any background knowledge. Accounts in national newspapers illustrated the same problem. The *Daily Mail's* special correspondent, Valentine Williams, filed a dramatic and personal descriptive article on 24 October after visiting the area around the Redoubt. It contained the man-on-the-spot characteristics of the New Journalism. He explained: 'This morning I went into the Hohenzollern Redoubt, to the trenches which we captured by our attack on October 13.'[74] He described the scenes of squalor after the attack and added: 'The dead lie amid the chaos.' Again, with no names of units involved it had no relevance to readers seeking to find out the fate of specific battalions. The same applied to similar articles that appeared in other national newspapers.[75] The *Daily Mail* correspondent, William Beach Thomas, thought the ban on naming local battalions produced 'unfortunate results'.[76] He claimed he raised the issue several times with Brigadier-General John Charteris, head of intelligence at GHQ. According to Thomas, Charteris always gave the 'standard answer' that it was information that was useful to the enemy.[77]

A further significant factor helped to blur reports of the action at the Hohenzollern Redoubt and prevent any opportunity by the press to scrutinise what had happened. The casualty lists were published weeks after events had

[74] *Daily Mail,* 26 October 1915, p. 5.
[75] See, for example, *The Times*, 23 October 1915, p. 6; *The Times*, 26 October 1915, p. 7.
[76] Sir William Beach Thomas, *A Traveller in News* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1925), p. 123
[77] Thomas, *Traveller in News*, p. 122.

taken place, disconnecting the numbers of dead and wounded from the events themselves. When they were published, they appeared as straightforward listings, with no attempt by the *Express and Star* to provide any context, background or explanation. The first list of casualties was published on Saturday, 30 October 1915 with 40 officers and 106 other ranks from the 1/5th and 1/6th Battalions South Staffordshire Regiment named.[78] Another extensive list, 28 column inches in all, appeared on 8 November 1915. Under the headline 'Local Heroes: Casualties Among South Staffords' it listed 26 killed and 190 wounded from the 1/6th Battalion and 67 wounded from the 1/5th Battalion. It should be stressed that the lists of local names of the dead and wounded had the high readership value demanded by the New Journalism as the Editor acknowledged when he wrote: '…if there were no other record available, the casualty lists would tell the story of their employment and bravery'.[79] However, as an explanation of events at the Hohenzollern Redoubt, they are flawed. Published weeks after the event and with no reference to where or when the casualties had occurred, the lists lacked journalistic weight. Without context and fragmented under different headings for killed and wounded, the lists from the military bureaucracy lost impact and failed to reflect the scale of the sacrifice. Instead, the chronicling of the human-interest story of the Hohenzollern Redoubt was left to the volunteers themselves who took on the role of the *Express and Star's* special correspondents on the battlefield, the New Journalism's men-on-the-spot.

[78] *Express and Star*, 30 October 1915, p. 3.
[79] *Express and Star,* 21 October 1915, p. 2.

Letters and Interviews from the Hohenzollern Redoubt.

The Official Press Bureau understood a weakness existed in Britain's system of censorship created by the close relationship between Territorial battalions and their local newspapers. Less than three weeks after war had been declared, a draft memorandum circulated to members of the Bureau noted in passing that 'much difficulty' had already arisen with provincial newspapers.[80] They were blithely publishing details of the locations, activities and movements of local Territorials with no thought of the potential value of the information they might be giving to the enemy. The memorandum said the provincial press had shown a 'disregard for rules' when it came to their local battalions. As the war progressed, journalists were warned about the potential risk of publishing soldiers' letters. The Official Press Bureau's 'Blue Book' of guidance to Editors stressed that the censorship of men's letters at the front simply authorised them for delivery back to Britain but did not automatically pass them for publication.[81] Editors were still responsible for their contents. The co-directors of the Bureau complained about the publication of 'indiscreet letters' in newspapers published 'in places remote from London' which rarely, if ever, contacted the Official Press Bureau.[82]

The letters and interviews in the *Express and Star* giving accounts of 13 March 1915 at the Hohenzollern Redoubt provide evidence that the Official Press Bureau were correct in their analysis. They are vivid and graphic accounts of

[80] TNA. HO 139/19/78, Draft Memorandum, 21 August 1914, pp. 9-10.
[81] TNA, HO 139/19/78, The Blue Book: Guidance to Working Journalists, February 1916, p. 11.
[82] E. T. Cook and F. A. Swettenham, 'Preface', The Blue Book, p. 2.

battle, very different from official correspondence and reports. A journalistic interpretation of their contents illustrates the divide between the Old Journalism and the New Journalism. The military still harked back to the traditional and more formal era of the Old Journalism with despatches that described 'bombardments' and attacks '…from a point 600 yards south-west of Hulloch to the Hohenzollern Redoubt'.[83] In military communique, men behaved 'gallantly' and 'gave way' after suffering casualties.[84] Major-General Montagu-Stuart-Wortley, in his letter published in the *Express and Star* after the assault, described the attack at the Hohenzollern Redoubt in high-flown terms of 'love of King and country' and men 'imbued with patriotic sentiments' without any hard news or further explanation.[85] The war correspondent, Philip Gibbs, slyly noted how senior commanders in the Army needed to be spoken to in the language of the leading articles in the Conservative *Morning Post*.[86] In his view, their patriotism and imagination were restricted to the 'traditional views of English country gentlemen of the Tory school'[87] Anything outside that was considered 'wishy-washy sentiment'. The Territorials' accounts of the Hohenzollern Redoubt showed the contrast between the traditional and conservative language of the military hierarchy and the New Journalism with human-interest reality at the forefront for the ordinary soldier. Wolverhampton's Territorials represented the style of the New Journalism in reporting the war for the *Express and Star* – special correspondents at the scene with dramatic, violent and personal human-interest stories to tell.

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[83] *Express and Star*, 14 October 1915, p. 2.
[84] *Express and Star,* 29 November 1915, p. 3.
[85] *Express and Star*, 21 October 1915, p. 5.
[86] Philip Gibbs, *Now It Can Be Told* (London: Harper and Brothers, 1920), p. 57.
[87] Gibbs, *Now It Can Be Told*, p. 57

The evidence of the *Express and Star* shows that men did not flock to the newspaper to tell their stories of 13 October. Very few accounts were published. Both Territorial Battalions from the Black Country – the 1/5th and the 1/6th – took part in the assault but only four soldiers had their accounts published. All appeared on 23 October, ten days after the assault, and provided readers with vivid and graphic human-interest accounts of the battle. They mention the Hohenzollern Redoubt by name and date, therefore providing the link between the action and the fate of the Territorials, ten days after the event. Lance Corporal Walter Shotton, a Wolverhampton Territorial, was recovering from wounds at home in Hordern Road, Whitmore Reans in Wolverhampton when he was interviewed by an *Express and Star* reporter.[88] The journalist described the interview as 'particularly affecting'. Shotton recounted how he and his comrades had scrambled out of their trenches and lay down five yards ahead. Most unfastened their greatcoats from their packs and threw them aside so they could run faster. Shotton explained: 'Unfortunately, the Germans in the first line had not been extinguished by the artillery fire, neither had the wire-entanglements been torn aside'. Shotton went on: 'We made our first rush of twenty yards or more and as we did so the machine gun bullets struck many of us.' The 1/6th Battalion made a second rush and the same happened. A shell burst in front of Shotton and shrapnel hit his face as he was blown six feet into the air. The Lance Corporal described seeing Captain Colisson hit and Lieutenant Dann shot in the thigh and the bullet coming out of his foot, He died later from loss of blood. Captain Millner

[88] All quotations from Walter Shotton are taken from the article in the *Express and Star* dated, 23 October 1915, p. 5.

and Captain Cresswell were ‘riddled with bullets’ as they tried to break down the wire.

Mr and Mrs T. G. Pursell, of Owen Road in Penn, Wolverhampton provided the *Express and Star* with a letter from their son, Private T. Pursell, serving with the 1/6th Battalion.[89] He said the attack had happened at 2pm on Wednesday, 13 October. Pursell wrote: ‘At 2 p.m. our lads mounted the parapet only to be swept down by machine gun and shell fire. The men had to advance from the support trenches to the front line out in the open ‘because the communication trenches were blocked with dead and wounded. That is where we lost a lot of the boys.’ The soldier described the difficulty of crossing five or six hundred yards of open ground with no cover in broad daylight. Pursell was sent back to the second line. German machine guns played across the battlefield all day as wounded men cried and screamed out in the open only twenty yards from the British trenches. He wrote: ‘Two of our good fellows got killed in endeavouring to bring men in, and another who went out with me got wounded in the arm. Everyone who escaped ought to thank God. I know I do.’ Another member of the 1/6th Battalion, who was not named, wrote from the front to say their numbers had been ‘considerably diminished’ but they had ‘brought renown upon the old town’. He described the scenes before the Territorials attacked. ‘I was in the trenches about an hour before they charged and you should have seen them, huddled together with hardly an inch to spare, wet through,’ he wrote. Mr and Mrs Cliff, from Gorsebrook Road in

[89] All quotations from T. Pursell are taken from the article in the *Express and Star* dated 23 October 1915, p. 5.

Wolverhampton, brought a letter from their son, Private Fred Cliff, into the front office of the *Express and Star* for publication.[90] Cliff, serving with the 1/6th Battalion, had written home before the attack on the Hohenzollern Redoubt. He wrote: 'We are about to go into action at ---- and I hope to come out in safety. I want you to have a good heart and remember you are British.'[91] The newspaper told readers that Cliff had been wounded in the right arm and shoulder.

The accounts of the action at the Hohenzollern Redoubt on 13 October 1915 represented a success for the New Journalism. They provided dramatic, poignant and compelling human interest; giving readers of the newspaper an account of what their loved ones, friends and workmates had experienced on the battlefield. They contrasted with the stilted military language of the official despatches and the letter from Major-General Montagu-Stuart-Wortley. The jargon and euphemisms of military language drew attention away from the messy reality of war and towards a narrative that celebrated bravery and military skill.[92] Journalistically, the Major General's letter represented an example of what one of the pioneers of the New Journalism, T. P. O'Connor, Editor of the *Star*, described as 'the dullest disciple of the older and orthodox style'.[93] He stressed that the 'more personal tone' was the most important element of the new commercial press. The censors may have considered soldiers' correspondence and interviews 'indiscreet' but the New Journalism

[90] *Express and Star*, 23 October 1915, p. 5.
[91] *Express and Star*, 23 October 1915, p. 5.
[92] Donald F Matheson, *Media Discourses: Analysing Media Texts* (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2005), p. 21.
[93] O'Connor, 'The New Journalism', pp. 423-434.

saw it differently. As O'Connor pointed out: 'No one's life is now private.'[94] Lord Northcliffe, the proprietor of the *Daily Mail*, agreed. The soldiers' accounts fitted his view of the journalistic importance of human-interest news, told in straightforward language. He told Tom Clarke, a News Editor on the *Daily Mail*: 'The things people talk about are news – and what do they mostly talk about? Other people, their failures and successes, their joys and sorrows…'[95] Northcliffe also stressed the New Journalism's need for simple language, or 'being more frank with our English' as he described it.[96] He added: 'I never could understand the squeamishness which makes us talk in our law reports of "misconduct" when we mean adultery.' Northcliffe thought the false modesty of the older style of writing was a 'smoke-cloud' for hiding things, a technique that did more harm than good.[97] The metropolitan censor's lack of interest in the provinces, allowed them to escape the obfuscating language of the military elite to tell their own stories within the format of the New Journalism's human interest. The *Express and Star's* mascot, the volunteer soldier, had taken his place not just on the battlefield but also in the wartime vanguard of the New Journalism.

The *Express and Star's* Reporter at the Hohenzollern Redoubt.

The attack on the Hohenzollern Redoubt provides an opportunity to examine the role of the little-considered figure of the local journalist-soldier – the provincial newspaper reporter who joined his local battalion and continued to

[94] O'Connor, 'The New Journalism', p. 427.
[95] Clarke, *My Northcliffe Diary*, p. 204.
[96] Clarke, *My Northcliffe Diary*, p. 202.
[97] Clarke, *My Northcliffe Diary*, p. 202.

report on its activities during the war. In the case of the *Express and Star*, this figure was Ronald Lerry. He was a young *Express and Star* reporter whose wartime articles represented not only the phenomenon of the journalist-turned-soldier but also provided an example of what in 1913 was described as 'The New Journalist'.[98] His work illustrates how deeply rooted the human-interest New Journalism had become in the commercial techniques of the industrialised press by the outbreak of war. His war service writing culminated in a report of his own wounding on the open ground in front of the Hohenzollern Redoubt on 13 October 1915. As a member of the 1/6th Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment, he had been part of the attack on The Dump and Fosse 8. He described what happened to readers in an account written from his hospital bed:

> We were getting nearer and nearer, bullets were hailing more thickly, and I was just wondering inwardly if I should dodge through when, suddenly in the calf of my right leg I felt, as it were, the concentrated kick of ten thousand horses. I crawled to a shell hole, affording scant shelter, and I had barely reached it when a comrade fell across me, apparently dying.'[99]

His description was human interest at its most intense. Lerry represented the wartime journalist in the era of the New Journalism – steeped in the human-interest demands of the commercial press. He told the story of the Hohenzollern Redoubt not in terms of the high-flown language of tactics, strategy and gallantry but instead used small-scale, detailed human interest to report at a personal level.

[98] Scott-James, *The Influence of the Press*, p. 254.
[99] *Express and Star*, 3 November 1915, p. 2.

Lerry's professional background illustrates the nature of provincial journalists in the era of the First World War. The 1911 census shows Lerry, then aged 17, living with his family in Oswestry in Shropshire, his occupation was given as 'pupil journalist'[100] He had started his journalistic career on his hometown newspaper, the *Oswestry and Border Counties Advertizer.*[101] The training involved included shorthand and typing, the law as it applied to journalists, handling and writing press telegrams and covering parish councils, meetings of local Poor Law Guardians, police and coroners courts along with the routine of obtaining lists of mourners at the funerals of prominent people.[102] By 1914, he was employed at the *Express and Star*.[103] Like others on the *Express and Star*, he had moved from a weekly newspaper to progress to an evening newspaper. Similarly, the *Express and Star's* long-standing chief reporter William 'Billy' Small – described during the war as 'one of the best all-round journalists in the Midlands - had started in journalism on the *Dudley Herald* in 1890.[104] He had been a district reporter for the *Birmingham Gazette* before joining the *Express and Star* in 1904.[105] Meanwhile, the *Express and Star's* special commissioner, Henry Whittick, had served his apprenticeship on the *Blackburn Times* before moving to the *Lancashire Daily Post.* He had been Editor of the *Herts Post* before coming to the *Express and Star*.[106] The provincial journalists who reported on the First World War were not naïve men with little experience beyond their immediate areas. Instead, they were trained

[100] Census of England and Wales, 1911. RG78. Registration District 350, Sub-District 3, Enumeration District 17, Schedule 123.
[101] *Birmingham Daily Post*, 22 June 1957, p. 23.
[102] Baker, *Pitman's Practical Journalism*, pp. 14-25.
[103] *Birmingham Daily Post*, 22 June 1957, p. 23.
[104] Simonis, *The Street of Ink*, pp. 234-235.
[105] *Express and Star*, 1 January 1955, p. 4.
[106] *Staffordshire Advertiser*, 27 November 1937, p. 6.

professionals willing to sell their skills around the country to advance their careers. The *Express and Star's* wartime journalists reflected the growing development of training and professionalism within journalism in the years leading up to the First World War.[107] It was a trend that one scholar has described as the 'Modernization of Journalism'.[108] The Bohemian image of the journalist was dying out by the early years of the twentieth century with more emphasis on practical training and professional status. The university graduate who had the right connections and thought he could write was no longer routinely offered a job in the national press. He was more likely to be sent off to find training at a provincial newspaper.[109]

Lerry had joined the 1/6th Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment, the Wolverhampton Territorials, in September 1914 as number 168 in the *Express and Star's* Roll of Honour recruiting scheme.[110] His military superiors welcomed his work as a newspaper reporter, referring to him as the 'Battalion Pressman' in the Battalion's war history.[111] Lerry appears to have been lucky. Journalists in the ranks could be treated with suspicion by the military authorities. William Linton Andrews, News Editor of the *Dundee Advertiser*, joined the Territorial, 4th Battalion Black Watch along with a group of other journalists from the newspaper, dubbing themselves on enlistment as the

[107] For a detailed account of these developments, see Wiener. *The Americanization of the British Press*, pp. 211-234.
[108] Wiener, *Americanization of the British Press*, p. 211.
[109] Wiener, *Americanization of the British Press*, p. 228-229.
[110] *Express and Star* 3 September 1915, p. 2.
[111] Committee of Officers, *The War History of the Sixth Battalion*, p. 1.

‘Writers and Fighters Too’[112] Shortly after enlisting, Andrews was questioned by a captain on suspicion of being a German spy because he asked so many questions.[113] Lerry and the reports he wrote for the *Express and Star* represent more than candid accounts of life in the army and experience of battle. They illustrate the developing modernism of journalism in the provincial press with the increasing confidence of journalists through growing professionalism and training. Significantly, they showed how a reporter’s understanding and mastery of the New Journalism’s human interest provided readers with detailed accounts of the small-scale, personal military experience of the ordinary soldier. For readers, the war became a story told through the prism of human interest.

The description of the attack on the Hohenzollern Redoubt was one of many reports from Lerry. They provided a running account of the 1/6th Battalion’s training between the outbreak of war and active service in 1915. After joining, he provided readers with regular stories of his battalion’s activities during training in Britain and after arrival in France in 1915. They illustrate the broader aspects of Territorial training but, more parochially, they provided a picture of the military progress of Wolverhampton’s citizen soldiers to readers back at home. His reports showed the professional journalist’s eye for human interest, unusual incidents and the disciplines of army life. The war and soldiers’ lives were presented through the lens of the New Journalism with the readers of the

[112] William Linton Andrews, *Haunting Years: The Commentaries of a War Territorial* (London: Hutchinson, 1930), pp. 13-20.
[113] Andrews, *Haunting Years*, pp. 17-18.

Express and Star given the 'inside story' of many incidents involving the Black Country volunteers. For example, he described the volunteers bathing in old brewery vats in a barn behind the lines and friends who found a German bullet in a mother's cake sent from home – it had passed right through the tin and the wrapping.[114] Lerry's stories illustrate what K. W. Mitchinson describes as a period of frustration and acclimatisation for Territorial units in the first months of the war.[115] Territorials became accustomed to full-time military service while dealing with the frustrations of the shortage of kit, equipment and clothing. Only days after enlisting, Lerry was reporting on chaotic scenes as the recruits to the 1/6th Battalion started rifle training at Sedgley Park in Dudley. The introduction to shooting '…proved very interesting to those who had not previously handled rifles in the strict sense of the word'.[116] By December 1914, training had moved on. In an article, headlined 'On Guard At Night', Lerry described how he and his comrades had spent the night guarding a telegraph pole. He wrote: 'When on guard you are forbidden to eat, drink, smoke or read – these four staple habits of man must be suspended.'[117] The following year he was reporting on the sights, sounds and activities of the 1/6th Battalion on active service in France. The New Journalism's human interest remained central with the reports veering from mundane but intriguing detail of army routine to sudden violent drama. The Battalion's first two nights in the trenches were described in detail. The Wolverhampton volunteers arrived in the dark.[118]

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[114] *Express and Star*, 7 May 1915, p. 2.
[115] K. W. Mitchinson, *The Territorial Force at War, 1914-16* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp. 52-76.
[116] *Express and Star,* 9 September 1914, p. 4.
[117] *Express and Star*, 3 December 1914, p. 2.
[118] The 1/6th Battalion went into the trenches for the first time on the evening of 4 April 1915. See, Committee of Officers, *War History of the Sixth Battalion*, p. 34.

‘We stumbled along the trench, falling about and diving into mud every few yards,’ Lerry explained to readers. The men’s job was to build up breastwork. He went on: ‘We had to throw up earth on to it while we were open to fire from the flank as well as the front. Starlights were going off every minute or two, and down you have to go, mud or not, till the lights go down.’[119] Later the same month, Lerry and other members of his platoon were digging breastwork again when snipers started firing at them. One man was hit and his groans and screams bought down more fire. Lerry and his colleagues had to run back to their trenches.[120] Readers came to understand the anxiety of life in the trenches. Lerry described the Wolverhampton men watching as shells fell further along their line. He wrote the men had mixed feelings ‘…when one reflects that a slight alteration in the elevation of the gun might send shells flying into our midst’.[121] Death could be sudden and unexpected. In May 1915, Lerry gave the news that Lieutenant Joynson had been killed instantly when a grenade exploded as he instructed men in the use of the rifle grenade.[122]

Lerry’s longest report, however, was his account of the attack on the Hohenzollern Redoubt. He wrote it from his hospital bed in Boulogne after an operation to save his leg.[123] It appeared in the *Express and Star* three weeks after the attack. Lerry’s story provides a detailed example of how war reporting was perceived by journalists at the time of the First World War. The American journalist, Ralph Blumenfeld, wartime Editor of the *Daily Express,* described

[119] *Express and Star*, 14 April 1915, p. 4.
[120] *Express and Star,* 24 April 1915, p. 4.
[121] *Express and Star,* 24 April 1915, p. 4.
[122] *Express and Star,* 11 May 1915, p. 4.
[123] *Express and Star,* 3 November 1915, p. 2.

the work of the war correspondent in the era of the popular mass press.[124] He felt human-interest journalism had been particularly well developed during the First World War. The war correspondent in the era of the New Journalism was no longer to concentrate on military tactics but instead should 'write-up the human side'. Blumenfeld explained the journalist had to:

> …describe the drama of war as it was lived by the troops taking part, to give sketches of their lives in the field and in their billets, to depict their reactions to the country and the people and the strangeness of the local scene, to bring into the foreground all those incidental personal happenings of war – tragic, humorous, pathetic – which find no place in the despatches of generals and military histories but which are vital realities to the men who do the fighting.[125]

Lerry's account of the Hohenzollern Redoubt shows the extent to which human interest dominated the *Express and Star's* presentation of the war to readers. The newspaper's working-class readership was given a view of war seen through the prism of the New Journalism – a human-interest story on a grand scale. His accounts of arriving in the trenches on the evening of 12 October, the attack itself and the trauma after his wounding illustrate the New Journalism in detail. The simple 'news language' is noteworthy.

The young reporter began his story with a description of Bethune, where the 1/6th Battalion was quartered before the attack. The Wolverhampton men saw sights they had not seen since leaving England. Lerry told readers: '…electric light, shops, even tea-shops and cafes, and a few more smartly-dressed civilians of both sexes'. Things changed as the Wolverhampton volunteers

[124] Blumenfeld, *The Press in My Time*, p. 128.
[125] Blumenfeld, *The Press in My Time*, p. 128.

moved up to the trenches on the evening of 12 October. The Official History describes the congestion in the British communications trenches on the night before the attack meaning men were not all in place until 6am.[126] Lerry described the scene.

> I don't know what time we arrived. All I remember is we were greeted with some thundering heavy shells, and were packed in the trench so thickly that we couldn't all sit down for the night in the bottom trench.[127]

The next morning was spent cleaning and checking rifles and 'attending to the inner man'. The bombardment began at midday, there was a rum ration and at about 1pm and gas was released. Lerry described the 'clouds of yellow smoke' drifting towards the German lines. Edmonds, in the Official History, points out that neither the gas nor the preliminary bombardment had produced the desired effect.[128] The artillery barrage was of small volume and gas seemed to settle in hollows in the ground. Little reached the enemy lines and the gas release simply warned the Germans that an attack was coming. In 1924, The War History of the 1/6th Battalion describes how at 2.05pm, in bright sunshine, 'A' and 'C' companies of 'the old 6th South' climbed out of their trenches and advanced, followed at a distance by 'B' and 'D' companies.[129] According to the Committee of Officers: '…in the short space of ten minutes a valuable fighting force received a blow from which it was destined to recover but slowly'.[130] Three weeks after the attack Lerry described to readers of the *Express and Star* what had happened. He mentioned that before the men left

[126] Edmonds, *Official History of the Great War*, *1915, Vol. II.* p. 384.
[127] *Express and Star,* 3 November 1915, p. 2.
[128] Edmonds, *Official History of the Great War, 1915, Vol. II*, p. 384.
[129] Committee of Officers, *War History of the Sixth Battalion*, p. 97.
[130] Committee of Officers, *War History of the Sixth Battalion*, p. 97.

their trenches the German machine guns began to rattle, indicating 'the enemy were awaiting us'.[131] The young reporter painted a terrifying picture of the attack.

> Another battalion was leading and we immediately followed from the support trench. We had a considerable distance to go and the country was very open. As soon as we got up, we found ourselves under a heavy fire of shrapnel, machine gun and rifle bullets. The ground all round was being ploughed up. Soon comrades began to fall. Whilst we went along we saw some here and there who had already been knocked out – dead or dying. That was the sickening part of it. Although one only had a hurried glance at such sights during that battle rush, they impressed themselves on one more than all the murderous fire we were facing.[132]

In the moments before he was shot, Lerry noticed the detail of Lieutenant Yeatman lighting a cigarette as they lay down for a moment during the advance. After being wounded, Lerry managed to crawl into a sap and found Lance Corporal Latty Wedge who dressed his wound. His torment had not ended. He wrote:

> From the sap, I managed with difficulty, to get to a communication trench, which I worked down on my hands and knees till I reached our trench. It was a half-mile journey. I shall never forget it. After that, I was lying about the trenches, waiting to be taken away, for nearly a couple of days, and landed at the first dressing station on an oil sheet on Friday evening.[133]

It was Lerry's last report. His wounds led to his discharge from the army and a return to the *Express and Star* but his subsequent career again illustrated the growing modernity of journalism – the professional journalist taking his skills to different newspapers to gain experience.[134] After leaving Wolverhampton, he worked for the *Daily Sketch* and newspapers in

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[131] *Express and Star*, 3 November 1915, p. 2.
[132] *Express and Star*, 3 November 1915, p. 2.
[133] *Express and Star*, 3 November 1915, p. 2.
[134] *Birmingham Post*, 22 June 1957, p. 23.

Manchester and Stoke on Trent before joining the *Birmingham Post* from where he retired as chief reporter in 1957. The reporter who had been born in the reign of Queen Victoria and enlisted in 1914 also did regular radio commentaries on lawn tennis matches for the BBC's Midland Region in the 1930s.[135]

The letters, interviews and Ronald Lerry's accounts feed into a much larger debate concerning the extent of the gulf in understanding between the home and fighting fronts. John Bourne has argued that the limitations on press reporting meant that a curtain of unreality descended between the war and the public perceptions of it.[136] Evidence from the *Express and Star* suggests this statement is true in part but needs to be qualified. Readers of the newspaper were provided with a very clear idea of the tragic and terrifying experience of war for the volunteers – this came from the volunteers themselves and Ronald Lerry's professional reports from 1914 and 1915. For those who chose to write to the *Express and Star*, pass on a letter or agree to be interviewed, it also provided an opportunity to voice pride in loved ones in a public manner. What was lacking was any clear idea of the scale of casualties involved in any particular action or any senior military accountability. Censorship and news management did not stop readers from understanding the reality of what war was like but did stop them from getting any sense of the numbers of casualties against gains made. Those responsible for military decision making at a senior level remained unknown, unscrutinised and absent from public view. Even the

[135] *Birmingham Post*, 22 June 1957, p. 23.
[136] Bourne, *Britain and the Great War*, p. 208.

official war correspondents, no matter how descriptive their accounts of battle, always wrote with the hope of victory and without criticism of higher commanders.[137] Stephen Badsey stresses that it was the estimation of whether the effort and losses were worthwhile that was withheld from the public.[138] John Bourne describes there being 'no proper accounting' to measure men lost against ground gained and damage done to the enemy.[139] The *Express and Star's* attempts to report on the attack on the Hohenzollern Redoubt illustrated this. The restrictions on reporting the actions of local battalions and regiments meant there was no link between the attack and local casualties until long after the event. The lists of casualties without any background or context published weeks later added to the lack of accountability. The *Express and Star's* journalistic inability to put together a comprehensive account using the various disparate elements of the story added to the haziness. The military hierarchy remained invisible. Readers had a very good idea of the conditions of warfare on the Western Front thanks to the reports of their own volunteers. The conduct of the war itself, the actions of military commanders and the results obtained through combat involving heavy casualties remained obscured. The nature of this censorship also leads to the discussion surrounding the nature of propaganda. It is argued that propaganda has a chance of success only if divergent sources of information can be suppressed as much as possible. Therefore, the 'indispensable prerequisite' of successful propaganda is censorship.[140] Military censorship

[137] Badsey, *British Army in Battle and Its Image*, p. 20.
[138] Badsey, *German Corpse Factory*, p. 185.
[139] Bourne, *Britain and the Great War*, p. 208.
[140] Eberhard Demm, *Censorship and Propaganda in World War 1: A Comprehensive History* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), p. 5.

became ‘the real shock troops of propaganda’, creating an illusion of reality that counted for more than any active propaganda campaign.[141] The lack of accountability provided fertile ground for the other elements of participatory propaganda in the *Express and Star* – campaigns, advertising and reader involvement – to bear fruit.

The volunteer had fulfilled the commercial demands of the *Express and Star*. In his incarnation as a chronicler of the battlefield, the volunteer had added dramatic human interest to the pages of the newspaper. They were accounts from local men the readers would have known. Their stories provided compelling insights into modern warfare that had cost the newspaper nothing. Yet again, the *Express and Star* was at the centre of the story – providing the platform for the volunteers’ stories and a conduit for communication between officers and the families who had loved ones serving in the ranks. The next chapter explains how even in death, the volunteer continued to play his role as the *Express and Star’s* mascot in the human-interest presentation of the war.

[141] Stephen Badsey and Philip M. Taylor, ‘The Press, Propaganda and Passchendaele 1917’ in Badsey, *The British Army in Battle and Its Image*, pp. 163-183.

Chapter 6: Death, the Volunteer and the Khaki Portrait.

The death of the volunteer took its place in the pages of the *Express and Star* according to the priorities of the New Journalism - human interest, localism, reader involvement and the newspaper being at the heart of the story. As one scholar has pointed out, obituaries of soldiers in local newspapers during the First World War allowed death to be personalised and 'assume its individual tragic significance'.[1] Historians have paid little detailed attention to how death was portrayed in the pages of the provincial press. Consideration has been limited to an acknowledgement that newspapers carried regular casualty lists and obituaries of local men.[2] This chapter examines how the *Express and Star* covered death and the volunteer soldier daily. It places the volunteer in death within the context of Edwardian attitudes to death, grief, mourning and funeral rituals as well as the New Journalism's demand for human interest. Jay Winter describes mourning as a '…set of acts and gestures through which survivors express their grief and pass through stages of bereavement'.[3] He points out that prominent war memorials are collective symbols within communities but mourning and commemoration also happened at a much more intimate level in households – particularly through the possession of photographs.[4] This chapter argues that the *Express and Star* became, for some, an active part of the mourning process – an immediate memorial to the dead, framed by the demands of the New Journalism and the growth of the commercial

[1] J. M. Bourne, *Britain and the Great War 1914-1918* (London: Edward Arnold, 1989), p. 206
[2] Bourne, *Britain and the Great War*, p. 206.
[3] Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014 edition), p. 29.
[4] Winter, *Sites of Memory*, p. 51.

photographic industry. With no funeral at home for the dead soldier, the pages of the newspaper became a place where the dead could be honoured and immediately memorialised with a small photograph and an obituary provided by the family. The *Express and Star* was not simply a vehicle for publishing the state's bureaucratic version of death – the casualty lists. Jay Winter argues that the many forms of mourning during the First World War often compensated for the shortcomings of central authorities who were often too preoccupied or thoughtless to acknowledge personal loss.[5] The *Express and Star* provided recognition of individual death as one element of what Winter describes as 'communities in mourning'. It became a forum where the dead were mourned; journalists curiously observed its rituals and the volunteers themselves described dying in terms ranging from frank reality to fantastical invention.

Death, The New Emotional Economy and the New Journalism

News reports of the sudden and violent deaths of men, often young, were a feature of the pages of the *Express and Star* before the outbreak of war. The Black Country's maze of factories, workshops, building sites and mines produced regular stories of violent death. Adrian Gregory makes the broader point that the pre-1914 rawness of life at home and work for many of the working class gave capacities for endurance in wartime that are hard to imagine today.[6] Reports of industrial death and injury were a regular part of

[5] Winter, *Sites of Memory*, p. 30.
[6] Gregory, *Last Great War,* pp. 278-279. See also, John Bourne, 'The British Working Man in Arms', in Hugh Cecil and Peter H. Liddle (eds.), *Facing Armageddon: The First World War Experienced* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2003 {1996}), pp. 336-352.

the news agenda before August 1914. The weeks before the outbreak of war were typical. Richard Lowden, aged 33 was killed when machinery collapsed on him at the Davies' Oil Tank Works in Cannock Road, Wolverhampton. Shunter, William Simpkins, also 33, from Walsall, died when he became trapped between a railway engine and the buffers at T & J Bradley Blast Furnaces in Darlaston. Miner, Enoch Bennett, of Stafford Street in Dudley died when a pile of coal collapsed at the Teddy Bear Pit in Brierley Hill. Meanwhile, Joseph Newell, from Penn, was only 19 when he fell to his death from a girder he was painting at the Thompson Boiler Works in Ettingshall.[7] Death was a staple of the popular Edwardian press before the war. In 1913, the Fleet Street reporter, Frank Dilnot, described the best stories often coming from the 'great tragedies' of life citing coroner's courts and large-scale accidents as sources of major human interest news.[8] Another Fleet Street veteran, Aaron Watson, recalled being sent on a 'ghastly pilgrimage' to trawl riverside mortuaries in London by his Editor W. T. Stead, pioneer of the New Journalism and Editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*.[9] He was looking for evidence of notorious 'fighting gangs' who robbed and killed their victims before throwing their bodies into the Thames. Newspaper interest in death reached the highest levels of society. The war correspondent Philip Gibbs recalled the 'outrageous invasion of vulgarity' as photographers jostled for position and rearranged the bed curtains to get the best picture of King Edward VII in his death chamber at Buckingham Palace in 1910.[10] These recollections indicate how reports of

[7] See, *Express and Star*, 10 July 1914, p. 2; 13 July 1914, p. 3; 23 July 1914, p. 3 and 10 July 1914, p. 4.
[8] Frank Dilnot, *The Adventures of a Newspaperman* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1913), pp. 201-202.
[9] Aaron Watson, *A Newspaper Man's Memories* (London: Hutchinson, 1925), pp. 103-104.
[10] Philip Gibbs, *Adventures in Journalism* (London: Heinemann, 1923), p. 26.

death were familiar to readers of the popular press before the war in both national and local newspapers, framed in terms of human-interest New Journalism. At the outbreak of war, these journalistic conventions were confronted by emotionally charged currents of death, grief and mourning on a large scale. Joanna Bourke argues that the war dramatically rearranged 'the theatre of death'.[11] She stresses there was nothing new in unseemly endings but war made them ubiquitous. Another cultural historian considers this so important that she sees the First World War as creating the context for death in Britain for the following half-century.[12]

After August 1914, the *Express and Star* was forced to negotiate a new 'emotional economy' in which the newsworthiness of large-scale violent death became entangled in notions of stoicism and patriotic restraint in the face of bereavement and grief.[13] The context of bereavement and mourning in early twentieth-century Britain is significant in providing the background to the way the *Express and Star* engaged with the death of volunteer soldiers. The cultural historian Pat Jalland stresses that the war complicated what was already a changing era in terms of civilian death.[14] By the end of the nineteenth century, death was becoming a more secular matter, with religion being just one of several factors that shaped mourning and commemoration including class and the traditions of local communities. Meanwhile, advances in medical

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[11] Joanna Bourke, *Dismembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain and the Great War* (London: Reaktion Books, 1999 edition), p. 210.
[12] Pat Jalland, *Death in War and Peace: A History of Loss and Grief in England 1914-1970* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 15.
[13] Lucy Noakes*, Dying for the Nation: Death, Grief and Bereavement in Second World War Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020), pp. 21-40.
[14] Jalland, *Death in War and Peace,* p. 8.

science, particularly concerning infectious diseases, meant more people were living into old age. The war accelerated pre-existing changes in the culture and appearance of grief and mourning. Ostentatious Victorian mourning rituals were replaced by more simple and subdued expressions of loss.[15] Many of the traditional and elaborate rituals of mourning were considered inadequate, inappropriate and shallow in the face of so many men losing their lives on the battlefield.[16] Even the limited working-class displays of funerary pomp did not sit comfortably when so many had died on foreign fields and were unable to be repatriated.[17] David Cannadine warns that it would be wrong to accept the stereotypical view of a wartime nation of bereaved women wearing black widow's weeds. It was not necessarily the case, as black dress became to be seen as increasingly irrelevant.[18] It can be noted that the *Express and Star* during the period of this study, between 1914 and 1916, carried no advertising for mourning dress. Behind this lay the idea that overt and extravagant expressions of mourning and loss were unpatriotic. There was increasing pressure on families to remain stoical and unostentatious and keep up appearances in the face of death, to maintain morale.[19]

The *Express and Star* was uncompromising in its coverage of death. There was little attempt to hide its reality or scale from readers whose loved ones

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[15] Julie-Marie Strange, 'She Cried a Very Little: Death, Grief and Mourning in Working-Class Culture 1880-1914', *Social History* 27 (20) (May 2002), pp. 143 – 161.
[16] David Cannadine, 'War and Death, Grief and Mourning in Modern Britain' in Joachim Whaley (ed.) *Mirrors of Mortality: Studies in the Social History of Death* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011 edition), pp. 187-242.
[17] Julian Litten, *The English Way of Death: The Common Funeral since 1450* (London: Robert Hale, 1992), p. 87.
[18] Cannadine, 'War and Death', p. 218-219.
[19] Pat Jalland, 'A Culture of Silent Grief? The Transformation of Bereavement Care in 20th Century England', *Bereavement Care* 32 (1) (2013), pp. 16-22.

were serving at the fighting front. Scholarship has already characterised the popular evening press in pre-war Britain as focusing on the morbid, taking a close interest in the prurient and having a tendency towards maudlin sentimentality.[20] Two stories illustrate the *Express and Star's* interest in death and the routines surrounding it. They show the newspaper did not consider death to be a subject best avoided. It had a news value of its own that fitted the human-interest formula of the New Journalism. In November 1915, less than two months after the attack on the Hohenzollern Redoubt, under the headline 'After The Battle/Searching For Discs and Pay-books', an anonymous soldier described the grim scenes 'over the last big battlefield in France'.[21] It was placed prominently on page two, near to the Editor's Leader column, and ran to 12 column inches. The description was vivid and gruesome with a heavy dose of lurid melodrama, an example of the New Journalism's human-interest reporting. The soldier and his colleagues had travelled by motor bus to an area where there was a network of chalky trenches. According to the story, it was moonlight with the horizon lit by the flash of shells and shrapnel. They formed up, each man a few yards apart. The soldier continued: 'We were instructed to collect all bodies, searching our own fellows for identity discs and pay books and the Germans for papers…' They stumbled forward in the dark, becoming entangled in pieces of wire every few yards. Occasionally, someone would shout: 'Here's one'. The first body the soldier came across was '…a bearded and bespectacled German who might have been a schoolmaster'. As they went on the British and German bodies became

[20] Lee, *Origins of the Popular Press*, pp. 73-130.
[21] *Express and Star*, 29 November 1915, p. 2.

more numerous. '…some of them would not bear a second glance, much less a description,' he explained. Some of the British dead were wearing their smoke helmets. One group appeared to have been hit by a machine gun – grouped together still gripping their rifles in death. The writer ended by musing: '…we wondered how long it would be before our bodies were found and searched for our discs and pay-books'. The report contradicts any idea that those at home had little idea of the realities of war. The demands of the New Journalism are evident. The characteristics included the detailed narrative from an eyewitness, man-on-the-spot, along with personal and graphic detail, all told in the straightforward language of the New Journalism.

The military funerals of men who had died of wounds in Britain were another rich source of human-interest copy. An *Express and Star* reporter was sent to the funeral of Private Harold Segar, from Ettingshall. [22] The scene was very different from the historian's view of the simple nature of wartime mourning. Segar had served with the 1/6th Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment and had died of wounds received in the attack on the Hohenzollern Redoubt on 13 October 1915. The private had been one of the early wartime volunteers for the Battalion. Crowds turned out for his funeral at the Wesleyan Chapel in Ettingshall. The report provided detail of the personalities involved in the ceremony as well as a detailed description of the scene. The journalist told readers: 'There was a long line of mourning coaches and private carriages and a large motor car. In addition, the hearse was insufficient to accommodate the

[22] *Express and Star*, 10 December 1915, p. 3.

whole of the wreaths.'[23] The Reverend J. Hillary conducted the funeral and Lieutenant Parkes from the 3rd North Midland Brigade (T. F.), Royal Field Artillery carried out the military arrangements. The report veered from the factual to the melodramatic. The bearers and the firing party were under the command of Corporal Marsh and the bugler was Corporal Ellis – both comrades of the dead man. According to the reporter present, they were '…men who had passed through with only less scathe than the deceased in the grim fighting in which the gallant 6th had borne a part'. Following the firing of the volley, Corporal Ellis sounded the 'bugle call' which 'in such surroundings indicates that another soldier has reached his final bivouac'.[24]

Stories of death ran the gamut of emotions created by the upheaval of war. Some simply showed fear. Private A. Lloyd, of the 2nd Battalion Worcestershire Regiment and from Aldridge, wrote to describe how he and his comrades had been advancing over some open ground '…when we had got about 50 yards the first three men on my right came down like ninepins. The others lay down and as soon as we got up about four or five on my left dropped. I can tell you it made me shake.'[25] In October 1915, Private E. G. Hodgkiss, from Hordern Road, Wolverhampton, wrote to say he was sitting in a dug-out writing his letter. 'I need hardly say that any minute a shell might drop on the dug-out and put "finis" to it. But this is only one of our chances of life and death.'[26] In contrast, the *Express and Star* could use death and loss as romantic

[23] *Express and Star*, 10 December 1915, p. 3.
[24] *Express and Star*, 10 December 1915, p. 3.
[25] *Express and Star*, 1 October 1914, p. 2.
[26] *Express and Star*, 26 October 1915, p. 2.

melodrama as well. Under the headline 'A Wolverhampton Romance Cut Short', the newspaper told the story of an anonymous woman from the town who sent tobacco to a private in the 1/6th Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment.[27] They struck up a friendship by post, with the soldier sending her chatty letters about life in the trenches. They were looking forward to meeting when he came home, but the *Express and Star* reported '…a German bullet has put an end to the romance'. Her last letter had received a reply from another member of the soldier's company saying he had been killed at the Hohenzollern Redoubt. The accounts show how death could be a journalistically flexible human-interest commodity that could be shaped to express a range of emotions including fear, romance, grim reality and loss. By 1914, the popular journalism of the cheap press required the reporter to have 'a quick understanding of the smaller emotions and the ability to tell of them…'[28] This covered the range of emotions and attitudes, positive and negative, including humour, courage and sadness. Death was no exception. They were all part of the '…abiding interest to be found in the description of human personality'.[29] The *Daily Mail* war correspondent William Beach Thomas called them the 'human stories which unfolded every day'.[30] A veteran of the New Journalism like Frank Dilnot saw it as the democratisation of the press. The New Journalism was able to: '…understand and to present the feelings of the millions of ordinary people and not merely to present the beliefs of the privileged sections…'[31]

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[27] *Express and Star,* 4 November 1915, p. 2.
[28] Dilnot, *Adventures of a Newspaper Man*, p. 199.
[29] Dilnot, *Adventures of a Newspaper Man*, p. 199 and 213.
[30] Sir William Beach Thomas. *A Traveller in News* (London: Chapman and Hill, 1925), p. 59.
[31] Dilnot, *Adventures of a Newspaper Man*, p. 198.

The *Express and Star's* treatment of death as human interest could be intrusive from a modern-day perspective. Less than a fortnight before Christmas 1915, under the headline 'Save the Germans the Trouble', the *Express and Star* reported in detail on the story of Corporal William Mather, aged 27, from Dudley Road in Tividale.[32] He was serving with the 3rd Battalion The Rifle Regiment and had come home on leave for his brother's funeral but had arrived too late. Mather had waited until his family had left the house and used his rifle to kill himself. The *Express and Star* noted the detail that the bullet had lodged in the ceiling. The Coroner. Mr G. C. Lewis, sitting at the Britannia Inn public house, said Mather's long spell in the trenches could have affected his nerves and recorded a verdict of suicide. He had left a note saying: 'I have saved them the trouble. I hope my wife and child will be looked after.' On other occasions, the newspaper's reports of a volunteer's death were incorrect. This provoked further reader interest. Private G. Merrick from Duke Street in Wolverhampton wrote to his mother to say he had been reported killed in the *Express and Star*. 'It is in the 11th of November paper I have got here. Tell them at the *Express and Star* that I am a good way from being dead yet.'[33] Private Frank Sly, from Walsall, serving with the 1st Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment had a similar experience in 1915. A comrade had reported that Sly had been killed. He wrote: 'I have seen my photo in the paper and was dumbstruck to see such a thing.' He added: 'My comrades remark when they see me "Look out! Here comes the chap who is killed".' The examples show the intimacy and closeness of dialogue between home and

[32] *Express and Star,* 17 December 1915, p. 5.
[33] *Express and Star*, 26 November 1914, p. 2.

fighting fronts in respect of discussions about death. Specifically, they provide evidence that death was not hidden away but an everyday part of the newspaper's news agenda.

The *Express and Star's* mass, working-class readership meant that officers of the local Territorial battalions could use the newspaper to communicate with the bereaved families of other ranks. Acting Lieutenant Colonel F. W. Law, commanding officer of the 1/6th Battalion wrote to the *Express and Star* two weeks after the attack on the Hohenzollern Redoubt to express his condolences.[34] His letter appeared under the headline 'The Attack on the Hohenzollern Redoubt: A Well-merited Compliment'. Law wrote: 'I shall be glad if you will express through the columns of the *Express and Star* my deepest sympathy with all the relatives of the officers, non-commissioned officers and men of the 1/6th Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment who have fallen in the recent attack on the Hohenzollern Redoubt.' It was the first time an official source had linked the casualties among the 1/6th Battalion to the attack on the Hohenzollern Redoubt. Law said it would be impossible to write to everyone individually and fell back on the stilted language of the old Victorian journalism to express his thoughts. He added: 'I fell sure that the relatives of those who met such a glorious end will accept some consolation in the sympathy extended to them by the comrades of all those who have fallen…' Law's letter provides an example of what one historian has described

[34] *Express and Star*, 29 October 1915, p. 6. Law had taken over as Acting Lieutenant Colonel of the Battalion shortly before the attack of 13 October. The previous Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Waterhouse had been badly injured when a shell had exploded near him on 8 October 1915. See, A Committee of Officers, *The War History of the Sixth Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment (T. F.)* (London: Heinemann, 1924), pp. 82-84.

as the language of the 'denial of death', a phenomenon that was in existence well before 1914.[35] The consequences of battle were not ignored but were presented in idealised and noble language that avoided the reality of death. Dan Todman is more thoughtful about the style of words used by Lieutenant Colonel Law. He argues that rather than seeing it simply as the language of 'bombastic duffers' it should be seen in the context of the more restrictive expressive culture of the age and a sense of patriotic obligation.[36] These considerations aside, Law's letter illustrates how the newspaper was not only a place where stories of death and dying were told but could also be used as a means of contact with those who had lost loved ones at times of large-scale bereavement. Law similarly used the *Express and Star* at the end of November 1915 when he announced that he would be at the Drill Hall in Stafford Street on 29 November 'for the purpose of meeting relatives of members of his Regiment about whom information is desired'.[37]

Law's tone and language were in contrast to that of the Editor of the *Express and Star*. Andrew Meikle put the casualties of 1915 in the context of human interest in a leader comment immediately after Christmas that year.[38] He placed death, loss and the connection between home and fighting fronts at the centre of Christmas 1915. Meikle commented that there had been no shortage of substantial fayre due to the increased earning capacity of artisans and

[35] Glenn R. Wilkinson, *Depictions and Images of War in Edwardian Newspapers, 1899-1914* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 132-133.
[36] Dan Todman, *The Great War: Myth and Memory* (London: Hambledon and London, 2005), p. 14.
[37] *Express and Star*, 26 November 1915, p. 2.
[38] *Express and Star*, 27 December 1915, p. 2.

working men. People tried to make the best of things but were 'under the shadow of a great war'. He imaged the scene inside the family home, saying: 'In many cases, they were gathered round the dinner table, sons and brothers from "Somewhere in France" or from one of the great training camps, while in others, alas, there were gaps due to the ravages of war, and thoughts were of those who would never return'.[39] Meikle's words illustrate how death had become absorbed into the human interest of the New Journalism. In news terms, death increasingly became a commodity with a value in attracting audiences or readership.[40] Lord Northcliffe's newspaper manager, Kennedy Jones, described journalism by the twentieth century as 'a branch of commerce', a method of attracting readership that in turn attracted advertisers.[41] The dead, those who told the stories of the dead and the bereaved themselves had been absorbed into the *Express and Star's* framework of the New Journalism – narrating and explaining tragedies such as the scale of the attack on the Hohenzollern Redoubt through the medium of human interest. The result is complicated and can be interpreted in several ways. On the one hand, it can be seen from the commercial perspective of Kennedy Jones – the *Express and Star* attracting readership, to satisfy advertisers, with dramatic, maudlin and violent accounts of war and death along with the grief of those at home. On the other hand, this commercial motivation had other consequences. The *Express and Star* engaged with death and in doing so, the newspaper provided a platform for the volunteer

[39] *Express and Star*, 27 December 1915, p. 2.
[40] Jean Seaton, *Carnage and the Media: The Making and Breaking of News About Violence* (London: Allen Lane, 2005), pp. 214-215.
[41] Kennedy Jones, 'Journalism: A Branch of Commerce', *Fortnightly Review* 107 (642) (1920), pp. 826-833.

and others to tell their personal stories and convey to the *Express and Star's* working-class readership the sacrifice of their citizen soldiers and the grief and loss associated with industrial warfare. The American sociologist, Helen MacGill Hughes, reinforces this interpretation in her study of the human-interest genre in the British and American press. She explained: '…even the most extraordinary situation, when told in terms of personal feeling, is translated into something more familiar and understandable'.[42] Death was explained in the *Express and Star* not solely in the dispassionate dry language of military bureaucracy but instead through the human-interest stories of individual readers at home and at the fighting front. This was illustrated by the obituaries of the dead.

The Rituals of Mourning and the Photographic Obituary

The most prominent visual displays of wartime death in the *Express and Star* were 'khaki portraits' - the small obituary photographs of soldiers that appeared on the news pages.[43] It was the New Journalism's human interest at its most emotional. Historians have paid little attention to these small, contemporaneous human-interest memorials to the dead with Jay Winter, in 2012, describing wartime newspaper obituaries as 'an intriguing subject, still awaiting its historian'.[44] Little consideration has been given to them since then. The cultural historian, Maggie Andrews, notes in passing, the newspaper

[42] Helen MacGill Hughes, *News and the Human Interest Story* (London: Transaction Books, 1981 edition, originally published 1940), p. 212.
[43] The 'khaki portrait' description is used by photographic historian Janina Struk in her study of soldiers' photographs, *Private Pictures: Soldiers' Inside View of War* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2011) pp. 43-44.
[44] Jay Winter, 'Book Review: Death in War and Peace: A History of Loss and Grief in England 1914-1970', *War in History,* 19 (2) (April, 2012), pp. 249-50.

pages of portrait-style images of uniformed men who had died 'presented for local communities to remember, revere and feel grateful towards'.[45] The photographs of the dead, with brief obituaries, formed an important part of the *Express and Star's* response to the death of the volunteer soldier. He was given special recognition. Significantly, the small, head-and-shoulders pictures were the only war photographs the *Express and Star* published. Photographs of any sort were rare on the news pages of the newspaper. There were no photographs from the battlefront or pictures of prominent political or military personalities. The volunteer in death was the only figure to merit a published photograph. For those who only read the *Express and Star*, the khaki portraits were the news picture of the war.

The *Express and Star's* relationship with the khaki portrait was bound up with the nature of working-class mourning in Edwardian Britain and how this was changed by the war. Pre-war, working-class rituals of mourning were intimate and often closely connected with the care of the body itself. The funeral was a central part of the community ritual of death.[46] Julie-Marie Strange, in her study of working-class attitudes to death and grief before the First World War, points out that it was normal practice for the deceased to remain in the home and for the family – particularly the women - to prepare their loved ones for burial.[47] The funeral, the wearing of black and floral tributes were traditional habits that

[45] Maggie Andrews, 'Commemorating the First World War in Britain: A Cultural Legacy of Media Remembrance', *Journal of War and Culture Studies,* 12 (3) (August 2019), pp. 295-313.
[46] For a detailed analysis of the rituals of working-class grief and mourning in early twentieth-century Britain, see, Julie-Marie Strange, *Death, Grief and Poverty in Britain, 1870 – 1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
[47] Strange, *Death, Grief and Poverty*, p. 263.

indicated sympathy and respect as well as indicating the loss to the wider community.[48] The war changed the landscape of mourning by separating the living from the physical presence of the dead by distance on an unprecedented scale.[49] Instead, the absence of the deceased and the absence of a funeral made customary rites of mourning obsolete. Families were forced to look elsewhere for individual ways to express their mourning, loss and pride in their loved one in what has been described as the wartime 'improvisation of commemorative ritual'.[50]

The significance of the khaki portrait was not simply as an obituary of record. It allowed the *Express and Star* to drill deeply into the sensitive human-interest subject of working-class death and mourning and associate itself with the readership's conflicting emotions of pride and grief in the loss of the volunteer soldier. Amid the bureaucracy of death – official communications, casualty lists and censorship regulations – the photograph of the volunteer assumed a special authenticity.[51] Very often it was the last record of the dead volunteer's appearance. Catherine Moriarty argues that stone and bronze memorials with their 'indexed' lists of the dead lose their sense of connection with individual loss, which a photograph retains.[52] It bought the individual directly into view, in a way that a stone memorial was unable to achieve. Moriarty's conclusion

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[48] Strange, *Death, Grief and Poverty*, p. 263.
[49] Brian Parson, *The Evolution of the British Funeral Industry in the Twentieth Century: From Undertaker to Funeral Director* (Bingley: Emerald Publishing, 2018), p. 8.
[50] Strange, *Death, Grief and Poverty*, p. 266 and p. 273.
[51] Catherine Moriarty: 'Though in a Picture Only: Portrait Photography and the Commemoration of the First World War', in Gail Braybon (ed.), *Evidence, History and the Great War: Historians and the Impact of 1914-18* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2008 edition), pp. 30-47.
[52] Moriarty, 'Though in a Picture Only', p. 39.

is that: 'If stone and bronze are the main media of memorials, they should be understood to function in conjunction with the media of mourning – the photograph.'[53] The *Express and Star* recognised the intense human interest and emotions of grief and pride that surrounded the death of the volunteer. The newspaper's special commissioner, Henry Whittick, connected sorrow, patriotic pride and human interest less than a fortnight after the Black Country Territorials' assault on the Hohenzollern Redoubt. He wrote on 23 October 1915: 'Think of the gallantry, the chivalry, of the men of the Staffords, whose story, while thrilling us, has this week brought the war nearer to our doors than ever.'[54] His use of the word 'chivalry' echoes the Liberal leader writers' language of Holy War discussed in Chapter Two. On the same day, Maud Marie, a reader from Bilston, appeared on the letters' page saying: 'Dear ones who were looking forward to a reunion with those struggling at home have been taken. Others must return maimed for life. I consider it nothing short of a scandal if the remnant of the force has to continue fighting without a respite.'[55]

A statistical analysis of the khaki portraits published during the second half of 1915 illustrates how, for some, the *Express and Star* became a central element in the 'improvisation of the commemorative ritual'. It also shows the importance of two recurring themes of this thesis – class and localism – to the *Express and Star's* wartime news coverage. Altogether, 223 families chose to provide the *Express and Star* with a photograph of their deceased loved ones during

[53] Moriarty, 'Though in a Picture Only', p. 44.
[54] *Express and Star,* 23 October 1915, p. 3.
[55] *Express and Star*, 23 October 1915, p. 2.

the second half of 1915. The khaki portraits provide evidence of the newspaper becoming part of the rituals of mourning for some working-class readers.[56] Their presentation in the newspaper lacked ceremony and was haphazard - the portraits were scattered around news pages with little attempt to group them. Many of the brief written obituaries that appeared with the photographs were missing important pieces of information. Ranks were sometimes missing, while on other occasions the deceased volunteer's battalion or regiment did not appear. Some obituaries were missing details about the dead man's occupation before the war and others did not give an age. The importance of locality to the bereaved was vital - all of the 223 portraits provided the place where the dead soldier had lived before the war. There were 101 men from the town of Wolverhampton itself with the remainder from surrounding areas of the Black Country. None provided information about the circumstances of the soldier's death, adding to the sense that the khaki portraits were small and simple human-interest memorials rather than items of current news. Some give considerable detail about the individual's background. The family of Private William Wilkes from Pelsall Road in Brownhills, for example, told how he had been killed aged 31. He had worked on the railways in the Midlands and joined the Royal Engineers (T. F.) shortly after the outbreak of war.[57] Others were sparse on detail. Readers were told simply that Lance Corporal Frederick Crutchley, from Burntwood, had been killed in action serving with the 1st Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment.[58] The difference in the level of detail provided in the individual obituaries shows that the content of

[56] See Appendix X for the full breakdown of the 223 khaki portraits and obituaries.
[57] *Express and Star,* 22 October 1915, p. 4.
[58] *Express and Star,* 22 October 1915, p. 4.

newspapers was not comprehensive, considered or collated but fragmented, incomplete and immediate. It also suggests that what appeared in the *Express and Star* was what the grieving family had written themselves to go with the khaki portrait. No journalistic polish was added to the reports. Reporters had not tried to follow up the families' reports to get extra detail and information that was missing. The family's own descriptions appeared unadorned.

The average age of death for those in the khaki portraits was just over 24, including four 17-year-olds.[59] Of those where details of rank were provided, the overwhelming number were privates -147 in all. There were 24 lance corporals, 16 corporals and 18 sergeants. One Able Seaman was featured. There were nine officers – four captains, a major and four lieutenants. The captains and major were all prominent citizens of the area whose deaths had a particular news value. Three of the captains – Cresswell, Collisson and Millner - had been serving with the 1/5th and 1/6th Battalions South Staffordshire Regiment. They had been killed on the afternoon of 13 October 1915 in front of the Hohenzollern Redoubt.[60] The fourth captain was the Honourable Gerald Legge, son of the Earl of Dartmouth, Lord Lieutenant of Staffordshire and chairman of the Staffordshire Territorial Association.[61] The major was Richard Harris, son of the vicar of St. Michael and All Angels Church. Tettenhall, near Wolverhampton.[62] It was not only the individuals who were memorialised but the industrial traditions of the Black Country as well.

[59] Todman, The *Great War,* p. 44.
[60] See, Chapter 5, for a more detailed view of how their deaths were reported in the *Express and Star*.
[61] See, Appendix X.
[62] See, Appendix X.

The pre-war jobs of most of those in the khaki portraits show their working-class backgrounds and the manufacturing character of the area. There were 27 Regular soldiers. Another 31 were described as factory workers. Other occupations spanned unskilled labourers and cleaners through to skilled fitters, turners, brass casters, electricians and miners. Localism also extended to the battalions of the dead. Altogether 131 had served with a battalion of the South Staffordshire Regiment – 45 with the 1/6th Battalion, the Wolverhampton Territorials.[63] Another 26 had served with the Worcestershire Regiment.

Behind the *Express and Star's* khaki portraits lay the growth of commercial photographic studios in towns and cities across Britain during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[64] In 1914, there were ten in Wolverhampton town centre alone.[65] The commercial photographic studio provided the raw material that made the khaki portraits possible. The period 1900 to 1918 was also the heyday of the postcard-style of studio photographs that could easily be sent by post.[66] The photographic historian Janina Struk describes how the 'khaki portrait' became almost an 'essential requirement' for soldiers, once in uniform, looking to illustrate their pride and identity. [67] She argues that in wars before 1914, individual uniformed photographs were largely the preserve of the officer class. When other ranks were photographed, it was normally in groups. Increasing demand for personalised pictures was

[63] See, Appendix X.
[64] Robert Pols, *Dating Twentieth Century Photographs* (Bury: Federation of Family History Societies, 2005), pp. 13-16.
[65] Wolverhampton Town Council, *Wolverhampton Red Book and Directory 1914* (Wolverhampton: Alfred Hinde, 1914), p. 254.
[66] Pols, *Dating Twentieth Century Photographs*, p. 16.
[67] Struk, *Private Pictures*, p. 43.

becoming evident in the Crimean War and American Civil War, but it was in the First World War that they became mass artefacts.[68] No sooner had a soldier put on his uniform than he hastened to send a picture to his family and sweetheart. Catherine Moriarty evokes the intrinsic human interest of the khaki portrait that was used to such effect by the *Express and Star*. She describes the young volunteer standing in his new uniform in the photographic studio – unknowing of the fact that it would come to represent that which had gone forever.[69] The volunteer's sacrifice was memorialised with the exceptional honour of a photograph in the *Express and Star* and an obituary written by his loved ones. This carried significant cultural resonance, allowing the bereaved to signify their loss and pride in their loved ones to the wider community when there was no funeral to convey that message. The short articles could be cut out and kept, and copies sent to relatives living elsewhere. The newspaper's khaki memorials were both ephemeral and permanent – printed on cheap newsprint but giving both significance and recognition to the sacrifice and loss of the volunteer and his family. It is noteworthy that the *Express and Star* did not solicit the obituaries and photographs. The newspaper did not publish appeals for readers to send in obituaries and photographs of the dead. Providing the photographs and information appears to have been a spontaneous act of commemoration by bereaved families. This allowed the *Express and Star* to tap into a rich seam of human interest without resorting to unseemly appeals for information about the dead. Bringing a small, grainy photograph and a hand-written obituary to the *Express and Star's* front

[68] Struk, *Private Pictures,* p. 43.
[69] Moriarty, 'Though in a Picture Only', p. 39.

office, with its smartly suited clerks and imposing wood panelling, added weight and significance to the act and its importance. For those who brought in their photographs, the *Express and Star*, the trusted local newspaper and a well-regarded Black Country institution, represented continuity, familiarity, tradition and recognition. For the owners and Editor of the *Express and Star,* the khaki portraits allowed the newspaper to be at the heart of the town's memorialisation of sacrifice at a time when death had its most immediate news value. The *Express and Star* could be seen as acknowledging, representing and sympathising with the individual losses of the Black Country's working-class communities The obituaries were also the New Journalism's human interest on an intense scale – the faces and histories of local men who had died on the battlefield, provided by their own families. Hence, the *Express and Star* became not simply an observer and reporter of the losses of wartime but an active part of the community's rituals of mourning and memorialisation.

The *Express and Star's* khaki portraits suggest another perspective on the communities in mourning. The wartime background to the publication of the 223 portraits in the second half of 1915 is large-scale casualties on a national scale at the Battle of Loos in September and October and specific local mass casualties in the attack on the Hohenzollern Redoubt on 13 October. Brigadier General J. E. Edmonds describes the British casualties at Loos as very heavy and a tremendous sacrifice.[70] From 25 September to 16 October, they

[70] J. E. Edmonds, *Official History of the Great War: Military Operations France and Belgium 1915, Vol. II* (London: Naval and Military Press/Imperial War Museum edition, originally published 1928), p. 391.

amounted to 2,013 officers and 48,367 other ranks – of these, 800 officers and 15,000 men were killed or missing and never heard of again. Closer to home for the *Express and Star*, the 1/5th and 1/6th battalions of the South Staffordshire Regiment – the Black Country Territorials – suffered over 700 casualties among officers and men on the afternoon of 13 October.[71] Despite these mass casualties on a national and local level, the number of khaki portraits published each month remained relatively modest. In July 1915, 31 khaki portraits appeared and another 30 were printed in August. The largest monthly number was 54 in September 1915. The aftermath of Loos and the attack on the Hohenzollern Redoubt on 13 October 1915 was not matched by any increase in obituaries, in fact, they fell back in numbers – 42 were published in October 1915 and 44 in November. This dropped to 22 in December.[72] The average number of khaki portraits published daily for the 155 publishing days between 1 July 1915 and 31 December 1915 was less than two. Just 33 men who served with either the 1/5th or 1/6th Battalions South Staffordshire Regiment appeared as khaki portraits between October and December 1915.[73] The khaki portrait stood out on a plain broadsheet page and carried great local emotional human interest but they were not overwhelming in numbers. They were sufficient for the *Express and Star* to be seen as part of the rituals of mourning for some bereaved in the Black Country but were far from enough to be considered representative of the scale of loss on the battlefield.

[71] Edmonds, *Official History*, p. 387.
[72] See, Appendix X.
[73] See, Appendix X.

One study has described the attack on the Hohenzollern Redoubt on 13 October as achieving little '…except a growing list of names for the obituary pages of the local newspapers in the North Midlands…'[74] This was not the case as far as the *Express and Star* was concerned. The limited number of obituaries reflected the differing ways in which families dealt with the loss of a loved one who had volunteered. For some, this meant finding a way to give loss a purpose through the public recognition of patriotism, duty and honour.[75] The khaki portraits in the *Express and Star* provided this ritual of mourning, but only for those who wished to provide their pictures for publication. Many others decided they preferred grief and mourning to be 'silent and privatised' and contained within the family and household.[76] The volunteers whose obituaries did not appear in the *Express and Star* told their own story of how many people dealt with grief in private away from the glare of publicity. Instead, they chose to mourn their loss in what Jay Winter has described as the 'frameworks of silence'.[77] The historian Dan Todman makes a contextual point concerning death and its impact on communities in the First World War. He stresses that 'everyone did not die' and most men came back. Taking the country as a whole, a generation was not wiped out.[78] He states that questioning the 'myth of universal bereavement' should not obscure individual pain and suffering. If the number of those who lost an immediate relative was small compared to the total population, the wider circle of those touched by

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[74] Alan Macdonald, *A Lack of Offensive Spirit? The 46th (North Midland) Division at Gommecourt, 1st July 1916* (Iona Books, 2008), p. 46.
[75] Pat Jalland, *Death in the Victorian Family* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 374
[76] Strange, *Death, Grief and Poverty*, p. 263.
[77] Jay Winter, *War Beyond Words: Languages of Remembrance from the Great War to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 172-173.
[78] Dan Todman, *The Great War: Myth and Memory* (London: Hambledon and London, 2005), pp. 44-45.

wartime death – friends, workmates and relatives – encompassed the entire population.[79] In the case of the *Express and Star*, it can be noted that many families chose not to give their khaki portraits to the newspaper while many others had no close bereavement to commemorate. The *Express and Star's* khaki portraits were much more than straightforward responses to what had happened on the battlefield. They were subtle and complex memorials of the moment, shaped by the changing nature of mourning rituals in the face of wartime death. For some of the bereaved, this meant the newspaper itself took its place as part of the ritual of mourning. In its turn, the *Express and Star* became a representative of the Black Country's communities in mourning but with the focus firmly on the New Journalism and its demand for human interest.

Atrocity Stories: The Fact and Fiction of Death.

In contrast to the poignancy of the khaki portraits, death could also take an unusual and fantastic form in the pages of the newspaper. For the *Express and Star*, this was a phenomenon limited to 1914 – the era of Regular soldiers and Reservists before the deployment of the Territorial Force and the New Armies. Stories of German atrocities created accounts of death in which the Editor admitted finding it hard to separate fact from fiction. Soldiers wrote to describe the barbaric acts carried out by the German Army – killing women, children, the elderly and animals. They provided a very different narrative of death to the simple and dignified obituaries and photographs represented by the khaki portraits.

[79] Todman, *The Great War*, p. 46.

Scholars have wrestled with the problem of separating fact from fiction in the stories of German atrocities that appeared in the early period of the First World War. Stephen Badsey stresses the basis of reality in the German Army's behaviour during the invasion of Belgium. German soldiers did kill civilians both out of hand and in organised executions. Modern research has estimated that between 5,000 and 6,000 Belgian civilians were killed, including, in rare cases, mothers and babies. [80] Badsey concludes that some atrocity stories were exaggerated or fabricated, but most were not. In the critical first months of the war, the British did not have to invent the scale of German atrocities – British propaganda was powered by the actions of the Germans themselves.[81] Adrian Gregory sees stories that were false and exaggerated as being not necessarily created by unseen and sinister state propagandists, but bubbling up from the 'netherworld of rumour'.[82] Rather than being imposed on a gullible public from above, they often started with a letter to the press. Meanwhile, others have stressed the psychological background of atrocity stories. Joanna Bourke argues that many soldiers' accounts involving death are 'texts of trauma'; contradictory and often fantastical while pointing out that they are stories from men who have killed or attempted to kill. [83] She places their stories in the context of human interest when she states that '…bewilderment, hope and fantasy are the very stuff of human experience'.[84] Jay Winter is more specific and stresses the spiritual nature of soldiers' legends and stories. The sudden shock of war and the heavy casualties of 1914 created the perfect

[80] Stephen Badsey, *The German Corpse Factory: A Study in First World War Propaganda* (Warwick: Helion, 2019), p. 79.
[81] Badsey, *German Corpse Factory*, p. 83.
[82] Gregory, *Last Great War*, p. 67.
[83] Joanna Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing* (London: Granta Books, 2000 edition), p. 10.
[84] Bourke, *Intimate History of Killing*, p. 10.

atmosphere for legends and stories to grow and circulate.[85] Winter argues: 'The same minds which conjured up angels had little difficulty in seeing demonic forces at work on the other side.'[86] He points out: 'Supernatural tales, mixed abundantly with shock and fear, were rich sources of the proliferation of atrocity stories.' Many soldiers had little difficulty in accepting the incongruous and uncanny as part of everyday life – the range of 'psychic phenomenon', both the apocalyptic and divine, produced at the fighting front was vast.[87]

The eight letters and interviews that mentioned atrocities in 1914 reflect this context. The volunteers' accounts described deliberate barbarism that often took the form of indiscriminate amputation and decapitation reflecting Joanna Bourke's ideas of them being texts of trauma and battle. Gunner Harrison, a former police constable from Willenhall, serving with the Royal Field Artillery, was interviewed back at home where he was recovering from injuries. He had seen action on the Marne. The *Express and Star* article recounted: 'At this place, the soldiers saw two women whose heads had been cut off lying across the bodies of a cow and a calf which were also headless.'[88] The interview went on to describe how Harrison and his comrades had found a woman crying in a field who told them the Germans had cut off the hands of her 14-year-old son. Private S. Taylor, serving with the 2nd Battalion Worcestershire Regiment was at Mons. An *Express and Star* reporter visited him while he was at home in Rowley Regis recovering from wounds. According to the newspaper report:

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[85] Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014 edition), p. 67.
[86] Winter, *Sites of Mourning*, p. 68.
[87] Winter, *Sites of Mourning*, p. 54 and p. 64.
[88] *Express and Star,* 14 December 1914, p. 3.

‘He saw some of the Germans with little children being carried on their bayonets.’[89] Police Constable Coyne from Blackheath, a regular letter writer, mentioned German attacks. ‘They drive French and Belgian women in front to keep us from firing,’ he wrote.[90] Private E. Hattersley, a former *Express and Star* newsboy, described how he had been on the Retreat for 11 days before reaching Le Cateau. He wrote: ‘They had several women and children in the trenches.’[91] Private Harding from Dudley, serving with the Worcestershire Regiment had a similar story. He explained: ‘I saw the Germans place women and children in the firing line and one old woman must have been eighty. A woman was seen to rush out of a house with both hands cut off and another was vilely outraged and then bayoneted.’[92] The accounts contained in the letters appear lurid but reflect the conclusions contained in Lord Bryce’s report on German atrocities published in 1915.[93] The report detailed the evidence of brutality to civilians and the evidence of civilians being used as human screens.[94] Bombardier Stoddard wrote to tell how he had found a German soldier hiding in a barn and had driven a pitchfork right through him.[95] He added: ‘The things the Germans do to some of the women, even young girls of fourteen upwards, makes one’s blood boil.’ The specifics of the *Express and Star* accounts are significant. The American historian, Jeff Lipkes, describes how German troops looted, burned homes and murdered civilians during the invasion of Belgium but accounts of ‘gratuitous cruelty’ involving severed

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[89] *Express and Star*, 22 September 1914, p. 2.
[90] *Express and Star,* 26 September 1914, p. 4.
[91] *Express and Star*, 7 October 1914, p. 2.
[92] *Express and Star*, 3 October 1914, p. 4.
[93] *Report of the Committee on Alleged German Outrages* (London: His Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1915).
[94] *Report of the Committee on Alleged German Outrages,* pp. 45-54.
[95] *Express and Star,* 3 October 1914, p. 4.

hands, gouged eyes and crucifixions were mostly without foundation. Grisly allegations became entwined with the wartime 'prosaic crimes' of the German Army.[96]

The soldiers' accounts of atrocities reflect the scholarly debate around the subject. They can be viewed from different perspectives. Stephen Badsey points out that the main factual basis for visions during the Retreat was the reality of exhaustion and dehydration along with the stress of battle.[97] Nick Lloyd highlights the weariness of endless days of marching under a blazing sun.[98] In the *Express and Star*, both Privates Hattersley and Harding mentioned the long distances that they had trekked and their weariness on the Retreat in their accounts.[99] Private Harding, who had described how he had seen a woman with her hands cut off, claimed in his *Express and Star* account that he had marched around 190 miles and was exhausted. Men linked arms to save themselves from collapsing.[100] He explained: 'Practically all the men were footsore and some had to take their boots off and tie their puttees round their feet.'[101] At the same time, the accounts are based on the facts of German military behaviour during the invasion of Belgium and the particularly hard-bitten outlook on war of the Regular Army of 1914.[102] The historian Isabel Hull interprets German atrocities as German military culture at war with a

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[96] Jeff Lipkes, *Rehearsals: The German Army in Belgium, August 1914* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2007), pp. 13-15.
[97] Badsey, *German Corpse Factory*, p. 112.
[98] Nick Lloyd, *The Western Front: A History of the First World War* (London: Viking, 2021), pp. 32-33.
[99] *Express and Star,* 7 October 1914, p. 4 and *Express and Star*, 3 October 1914, p. 4.
[100] *Express and Star*, 3 October 1914, p. 4.
[101] *Express and Star*, 3 October 1914, p. 4.
[102] Spencer Jones, 'Introduction', in Spencer Jones (ed.) *Stemming the Tide: Officers and Leadership in the British Expeditionary Force 1914 (*Warwick: Helion, 2013), p. 17-27.

propensity for 'dysfunctional extremes of violence' and the 'deadly instrumentalization of civilians'.[103] Reality and rumour become hard to disentangle. John Horne and Alan Kramer make the point that much of the subject matter of atrocity stories lies in 'subjective perceptions'.[104] Beliefs, myths, cultural assumptions and what each side thought was going on, played their parts in shaping the accounts.[105]

At the time, the Editor of the *Express and Star*, Andrew Meikle, faced the same problems in interpreting stories of atrocities from local men and separating reality from fiction. He was concerned about the nature and content of the atrocity stories he was publishing. Towards the end of August 1914, he addressed the issue over two days in two separate leaders – one headlined 'The Public and the War' and the other 'War's Realities'.[106] He described the reports from the front as 'ragged and disconnected' but recognised they gave readers ample food for reflection on the grim realities of war. He did, however, question the truth of some of the stories and acknowledged the difficulty of separating fact from fiction. Meikle wrote: 'There may be reasons to suppose that some of the earlier stories of German brutality have been exaggerated. but it is difficult to dismiss in that way the authentic evidence of an eyewitness…'[107] The Editor recognised the upheaval and violence of war played their parts in the accounts that had appeared. Meikle wrote: 'It all shows

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[103] Isabel V. Hull, *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), pp. 2-4.
[104] John Horne and Alan Kramer, *German Atrocities: A History of Denial* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 2.
[105] Horne and Kramer, *German Atrocities*, p. 2.
[106] *Express and Star,* 19 August 1914, p. 2 and *Express and Star*, 20 August 1914, p. 2.
[107] *Express and Star,* 20 August 1914, p. 2.

that once the dogs of war are allowed to slip their leash the foulest passions may be aroused. Then it is that men who are said to be only "a little lower than the angels" often become ghoulish, and utterly disgrace our common humanity.'[108] The Editor took a journalist's view of the atrocity stories and placed them in the context of the dangers inherent in severe censorship. On 19 August 1914, under the headline 'The Public and the War' his leader comment highlighted the 'impenetrable veil of secrecy' that had obscured the theatre of war. [109] He was concerned that the void had been filled by the '…circulation of false reports'. He agreed that a certain degree of secrecy was a necessary part of fighting the enemy but added the caveat that severe censorship had its dangers. He wrote:

> So long as care is taken to supply promptly and regularly some really illuminating piece of information, be it favourable or unfavourable, no one will complain. There have, however been several uneventful days involving a state of intense tension; and here we may suggest some danger may lie, because certain natures cannot extract much comfort from the hypothesis that no news is good news.[110]

In death, the volunteer had fulfilled his role as the *Express and Star's* mascot figure. His loss and memorialisation met the needs of the New Journalism – graphic and sometimes maudlin accounts, reader involvement in the creation of obituaries and stories of death and dying all created compelling human interest. The volunteer's sacrifice again placed the newspaper at the heart of the town's story of the commemoration of the dead. The memorialisation of the dead and the publication of their 'khaki portraits' provided their own local civic boosterism. The motivation may have been commercial but the result was

[108] *Express and Star,* 20 August 1914, p. 2.
[109] *Express and Star*, 19 August 1914, p. 2.
[110] *Express and Star,* 19 August 1914, p. 2.

poignant. So close was the connection between the reader and the newspaper, that the *Express and Star* became part of the mourning ritual for some, with the publication of the khaki portraits – the bereaved bringing their small photographs and write-ups to the newspaper's offices signalled both their pride and their loss. In the newspaper's pages, stories of death involving atrocities were discussed and questioned. Coverage of death in the *Express and Star* showed how it was not a subject to be avoided but instead robustly debated and reported – the newspaper a place where, in the absence of a funeral, the dead could be recognised, considered and respected.

Conclusion

The Editor of the *Express and Star*, Andrew Meikle, died in August 1922, aged 75. His funeral took place at Wolverhampton's Presbyterian Church in Merridale Road on 17 August.[1] It was the same day as the funeral of Lord Northcliffe, which drew leading public figures and large crowds to Westminster Abbey.[2] The Editorial in the *Daily Mail* on the day stated: '…his name will live so long as men honour and remember patriotism and unselfish service to great causes'.[3] Meikle's funeral was a more modest affair reflecting provincial journalism and public life in a provincial industrial town. Among the mourners were representatives of Midlands' journalism and the civic life of the Black Country. The floral tribute from the journalists and staff at the *Express and Star* was in the shape of a star using delphiniums and carnations. The owners of the newspaper, Norval and John Douglas Graham, had sent their wreath with the inscription 'In grateful memory of our devoted friend and comrade'. Ronald Lerry, the journalist who had reported his own wounding in front of the Hohenzollern Redoubt on 13 October 1915, attended, representing the Wolverhampton Branch of the National Union of Journalists. The Reverend T. F. Kinloch conducted the service. Looking back on Meikle's career, Kinloch framed the Editor professional life in terms of localism when he told the mourners: 'He knew that a paper like that with which he was connected depended in the last resort for its success not on brilliant views on national politics but in perfect knowledge of local conditions.'[4]

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[1] *Express and Star*, 17 August 1922, p. 5.
[2] *Daily Mail*, 18 August 1922, pp. 7-8.
[3] *Daily Mail,* 18 August 1922, p. 6.
[4] *Express and Star*, 17 August 1922, p. 5.

This thesis has demonstrated how the figure of the volunteer soldier was shaped and presented in the pages of the *Express and Star* by far more complex factors than just Kinloch's 'local conditions'. He became a central part of the business mechanism of the newspaper – a highly-prized commercial figure that generated readership that in turn attracted advertising. The thesis has explored the wartime figure of the volunteer soldier from the perspective of the working-class, provincial evening press. In the pages of the *Express and Star*, the volunteer became a commercially-important, human-interest figure recognisable to the Edwardian advertising trade – a brand mascot used to sell the newspaper and garner positive publicity. He had the added advantage of reflecting the *Express and Star's* Liberalism, itself evolving from uncompromising support for voluntarism to reluctant acceptance of conscription. The way the volunteer was presented in the pages of the *Express and Star* can only be understood with an understanding of the historical development of the commercial press in the 50 years leading up to the First World War. The thesis has demonstrated how the *Express and Star* in Wolverhampton applied the techniques of the commercial press and the New Journalism to the figure of the volunteer soldier to create a complicated commodity moulded by the demands of the commercial press and popular journalism. It should be stressed that the *Express and Star's* use of the New Journalism did not mean the war was trivialised, despite being told through the medium of human interest. A significant part of the *Express and Star's* strength lay in the newspaper remaining serious and respectful of the volunteer's experience and sacrifice. Coverage, although motivated by the need for

readership, was nothing short of a daily tribute to the trials and tribulations of the volunteer soldier.

The wartime Editor of the *Manchester Guardian*, C. P. Scott considered newspapers to have two sides – a material and a moral existence.[5] The moral side allowed the newspaper to be an institution that reflected and influenced the lives of individuals and whole communities. However, the reality was that a newspaper was a business like any other that had to 'pay in the material sense' or it would not exist.[6] One scholar has described this dual personality as 'Culture and Profit'.[7] An important element in understanding the relationship between the *Express and Star* and the volunteer soldier lies in Scott's analysis. His viewpoint also addresses the research questions outlined in the introduction to this thesis: How far did the commercial reality of the newspaper industry shape the figure of the volunteer? How far did Liberalism play a part in the way he was portrayed in the newspaper? Did these two issues mean the newspaper became an instrument of propaganda? In the example of the *Express and Star*, the material side was represented by the newspaper's focus on commercial success through local mass readership. Its moral side was seen in its tradition of Liberalism, civic duty and voluntarism. What Scott called the 'balance of these two forces' created the journalistic and commercial figure of the volunteer Tommy.

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[5] C. P. Scott, 'A Hundred Years', *Manchester Guardian*, 5 May 1921, Special Centenary Supplement.
[6] C. P. Scott, 'A Hundred Years', *Manchester Guardian*.
[7] Kate Jackson, *George Newnes and the New Journalism in Britain, 1880-1910: Culture and Profit* (London: Routledge, 2001).

The evidence in this thesis suggests it was the commercial realities of the business model of the popular press that dominated the presentation of the figure of the volunteer soldier in Wolverhampton. The pre-war commentator, Rolfe Scott-James, considered the whole 'moral and material' debate to be largely irrelevant. In his view, everything came second to the commercial realities of the newspaper business. Without commercial success, there was no newspaper to provide a platform for political and social debate.[8] A newspaper owner's authority did not derive from his deep political and social insights but from having enough money to buy or start a newspaper and then make a profit. Journalists did not have freedom – they depended on the capital of capitalists. George Cadbury, owner of the London *Daily News* derived his power to promote Liberalism not from the sophistication of his beliefs but from the capital he amassed manufacturing cocoa. Writing the year before the outbreak of war, Scott-James seemed puzzled that some did not understand that newspaper's were businesses that built readership in order to attract advertisers. He wrote: '…today owners pay less attention to principle, and more attention to profit, than they did twenty years ago'. The reason was quite straightforward. The previous fifty years had opened up a huge new market of those able to read and businessmen had stepped in to exploit it with popular newspapers. It was 'supply and demand'. By the years leading up to the First World War, newspapers had become 'great profit-making institutions' and journalism 'a great branch of commerce' This conclusion considers how the

[8] All quotations in this paragraph are taken from Scott-James, *Influence of the Press*, p. 220-223.

volunteer soldier became a highly-significant commercial figure for the *Express and Star* and how this fitted the newspaper's Liberal outlook. Finally, it will consider whether the *Express and Star*'s coverage of the volunteer soldier meant the newspaper became a valuable tool of propaganda as well as a local, trusted news source.

Commercialism

The volunteer became the centrepiece of the *Express and Star's* drive to maintain and increase wartime readership and satisfy advertisers. By the outbreak of war, the editor of a newspaper was 'manager of a business' whose job was to sell newspapers and create a large circulation by producing 'something which he thinks the public will want'.[9] The editor who did not produce a newspaper the public wanted to buy was nothing short of a 'bad editor'. In terms of advertising volumes, the newspaper's championing of the volunteer can be viewed as a success. Display advertising actually increased between 1914 and 1915. The *Express and Star* carried 10,967 column inches of display advertising in the second half of 1914. The figure was 15,020 for the same period in 1915.[10] The statistics show how advertising volumes recovered during the era of voluntarism after the dramatic decline at the outbreak of war.

[9] Arthur Lawrence, *Journalism as a Profession* (General Books: Memphis, Tennessee, 2012), p. 21. Originally Published, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1903.
[10] See Appendices I and II for weekly display advertising volumes for July to December 1914 and July to December 1915.

The commercial construction of the volunteer can be seen in the *Express and Star's* changing perception of what the volunteer represented and how that affected the newspaper's relationship with the soldier. Chapter Three showed the significant pre-war divide between the *Express and Star's* view of the Territorial soldier and the Regular soldier. Prior to the war, the Territorial was seen as an integral part of the town – laudable citizens and family men giving up their time for the service of the community. They had a news value to the newspaper, their routines and activities regularly reported. The Regular soldier was different – ignored and rarely mentioned. Regular soldiers were considered to be at the bottom end of society, generating little community interest and hence of no value to the newspaper business. Even at the outbreak of war the scenes at the Regular Army Recruiting Office merited only four column inches including a reference to the men outside looking as if they were unemployed. This changed within a fortnight of the outbreak of war. As more working and family men from the area joined up through the Regular Army Recruiting Office the *Express and Star's* viewpoint changed. The volunteer became a single commercially-valuable figure – whether Regular or Territorial – and remained so for the period of this study. The perceived differences in news value between the Territorial and Regular soldier were eroded and lost as respectable local family men became members of the Regular army. By the middle of September 1914, the *Express and Star* made no distinction between Regular and Territorial instead referring broadly to 'our soldiers' and 'the men whose courage gives us security'.[11] The newspaper was quick to praise the Regular soldier, list the names of regular recruits and

[11] *Express and Star*, 18 September 1914, p. 2.

call for better conditions and pay for the Regular soldier. The *Express and Star* saw the changing social nature of the Regular Army and recognised its interest to readers and therefore its commercial value. The *Express and Star's* pre-war reticence towards the Regular soldier was abandoned for its commercial purposes and volunteers of every kind became all-purpose promotional tools for the newspaper during the period of this study. The volunteer movement as a whole carried a weight of human-interest news and reader-interest that the Express and Star could not ignore. The gulf between the Regular and the Territorial was abandoned at the outbreak of war and the volunteer soldier became a generic commercial figure to be used at will by the newspaper.

This recognition of Tommy's commercial value as a human-interest figure of public fascination and respect was significant. Rolfe Scott-James made it clear that journalism existed to maintain high levels of circulation.[12] The press had to give the public what it wanted. According to Scott-James '…public taste is its essential basis; and its skill in discovering and providing for that taste is the measure of its skill as journalism'.[13] The volunteer became a commodity moulded by the techniques of the popular New Journalism – described by the Northcliffe manager Kennedy Jones as a 'branch of commerce'.[14] In each of the four incarnations described in this study, the volunteer soldier carried the hallmarks of popular, mass journalism. Whether he was a recruit, on active service and in need of comforts from home, a chronicler of the war or

[12] Scott-James, *Influence of the Press*, p. 273.
[13] Scott-James, *Influence of the Press*, p. 273.
[14] Kennedy Jones, 'Journalism: A Branch of Commerce', *Fortnightly Review* 107 (642) (1920), pp. 826-833.

memorialised in death, the newspaper's commercial template remained the same. Most significant was human interest – the opportunity to gain readers by explaining the war through people and personalities rather than complicated issues. The second was his localism and ubiquity – a well-known personality who was respected and immediately recognisable to everybody. He was a man with the ability to generate local civic boosterism. Thirdly, the volunteer allowed the newspaper to engage with its readers and for them to generate valuable, large-scale, human-interest content at no cost to the *Express and Star*. This material included letters from and interviews with, soldiers and prisoners of war, along with reports of fundraising at home, lists of money raised and names of those who had raised it. There were extensive lists of names of recruits as well as the official casualty lists published in the newspaper regularly. Soldiers appealed for items to be sent to them – everything from watches to sports equipment – and readers responded. The bereaved provided dozens of small photographs and brief, written obituaries of those who had died. The volunteers and the readers themselves generated human-interest news on a grand scale at a time when the censorship regulations made it difficult for the newspaper to report on the activities of local units at the front. However, the *Express and Star's* focus on telling the story of the war through human-interest journalism created an unusual paradox. By using the modern methods of the New Journalism the newspaper presented an old-fashioned view of warfare. The colour and human interest of the war came from the 'heroic infantryman' who climbed out of his trench – with little coverage of the new technologies of war such as artillery, machine guns and aeroplanes. The artillery's calculations and trigonometry tables did not

produce compelling copy. Hence, the war became a story of the heroic infantryman being paramount in battle rather than the new technologies of warfare.[15]

Central to the commercial and journalistic activity was the placing of the newspaper itself at the heart of the story – the *Express and Star* became part of the news. The volunteer became a promotional tool or mascot for the *Express and Star* – allowing it to become a central part of the war effort and enjoy the publicity value of being associated with the heroic figure of the Tommy. The *Express and Star* was a recruiter of manpower – an artful campaign that focused on the lower middle class rather than its core working-class readership. Reports of the Retreat from Mons provided an unexpected but valuable publicity boost for the *Express and Star* recruiting campaign. The newspaper gained access to the names of thousands of recruits from the Regular Army and the Territorial Force – published in spectacular mass fashion. The *Express and Star* became a focal point for fundraising and the shipping of goods to local battalions – a gateway for the readers to keep in touch with their friends and loved ones. Fundraising, in the name of the *Express and Star*, took place across the circulation area – from individual events and donations to extensive collections in the Black Country's largest industrial combines. The *Express and Star* became a forum where the town's fighting men could provide accounts not only of what battle was like but also the fascinating routines of military life. The newspaper became a means of

[15] This argument is expanded in Robin Prior, 'The Heroic Image of the Warrior in the First World War', *War & Society*, 23 (1) (2005), pp. 43-51.

communication – just as familiar in the fighting line as it was at home. In death, the volunteer allowed the *Express and Star* to become, for some at least, part of the mourning ritual at home – accorded the honour of a small photograph and obituary on pages that were normally devoid of pictures. The *Express and Star's* Smokes for Our Soldiers campaign was, in reality, a large-scale national mail-order operation that gained the newspaper advertising revenue and publicity kudos. The newspaper became an integral part of the relationship between its working-class readership and the town's fighting men but it was on a commercial basis. All this activity was grist to the New Journalism's human-interest mill. The *Express and Star's* support for and engagement with the volunteer soldier was framed to gain a positive profile and gain readership to satisfy advertisers. The overwhelming sacrifice of the volunteer was not above being seen in commercial terms. The advertising agent and publicist Charles Higham sat on the Government's advisory committee on advertising.[16] in 1916, he explained that the most important feat of publicity and promotion in the war so far had been that '… by skilful advertising the idea of sacrifice was robbed of its, vague rhetorical glamour, and narrowed down, pressed home, to every individual in the land'.[17]

Finally, the volunteer Tommy also became a figure of outdoor publicity and spectacle for the *Express and Star.* The newspaper not only reported the news but also helped visually create it and played a central role in its creation. The volunteer Tommy became a vehicle that allowed the *Express and Star* to

[16] 'Obituary: Sir Charles Higham', *The Times*, 27 December 1938, p. 10.
[17] Charles Frederick Higham, *Scientific Distribution* (London: Nisbet, 1916), p. 133.

promote itself as being at the heart of the town's war effort. It was responsible for creating scenes where crowds watched recruits lined up outside the newspaper's offices and people queued to hand in parcels to be sent to the front. Cinema audiences cheered as advertisements for the Roll of Honour carried the *Express and Star's* name. The bereaved came to the *Express and Star* offices with pictures of their loved ones to be memorialised in print. Within its pages, the newspaper had created the volunteer as the central element in its commercial model for building and maintaining readership in wartime. The newspaper's owners and editor were fortunate that the volunteer also fitted the *Express and Star's* political outlook.

Liberalism

Politics and commerce became entwined in the figure of the Tommy during the era of voluntarism. Commerce and readership had priority but politics also played a part. At the outbreak of war, the volunteer represented the embodiment of Liberal self-determination, selflessness and voluntarism – a free man who made the difficult and selfless choice to defend the nation-state. The Editor's leader columns made it clear there would be no need for compulsory service as voluntarism would provide enough men to successfully defeat the enemy. Editorials supported the fighting man, calling for better pensions and better separation allowances for the volunteer and his family. The Regular Army, as respectable volunteers filled its ranks, became a reputable institution in the *Express and Star's* eyes and worthy of coverage and support. This fitted closely with the tenets of twentieth-century Liberalism

– the individual as part of a reforming and empowering state. The figure of the volunteer in 1914 and 1915 carried all the hallmarks of Liberalism. The working-class volunteer whether in his pre-war job or military uniform represented not just patriotism and local pride but the Liberal notion of 'the dignity of honest labour conducted in a spirit of self-reliance'.[18] His success came through 'persevering industry instead of by compassionate donation'. The newspaper's involvement with recruitment sat easily with Liberal theories of voluntarism. The owners of the newspaper, the Graham brothers, could portray themselves as civic-minded and patriotic Liberals, willing to compromise politically and co-operate with a Conservative industrialist to provide comforts for soldiers and prisoners of war. The 'khaki portraits' provided intense human interest but also immediately recognised and memorialised the heroic sacrifice of the free man for his country.

It can also be stressed that the nature of the *Express and Star*'s Liberalism was closely connected with the changing nature of the human-interest New Journalism that was being generated by the war. As recruiting campaigns and comforts campaigns gave way to graphic accounts of battle, lengthy casualty lists and 'khaki portrait' obituaries, so the *Express and Star's* Liberal outlook was modified. Support for the individual volunteer remained undiminished but unqualified support for voluntarism began to ebb away and was replaced by a reluctant acceptance of the reality of modern war and the necessity of conscription in January 1916. This study shows how Liberalism, the

[18] Hulda Friederichs, *The Life of Sir George Newnes, Bart* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1911), p. 143.

commercial press and the New Journalism went hand-in-hand. Both evolved as the war evolved – changing as the nature of the war changed. The *Express and Star's* New Journalism human-interest moved from a confident and patriotic view of recruiting the volunteer and providing his comforts to realistic accounts of mass warfare, casualty lists and obituaries. At the same time, its Liberal outlook moved from a highly positive view of voluntarism to support for conscription, albeit reluctantly. Even in a provincial newspaper like the *Express and Star*, coverage of the volunteer and the editorial viewpoint of the newspaper changed as the nature of the fighting changed.

Class has been shown to have played a significant part in the presentation of the volunteer. Recruiting the volunteer and fundraising for comforts reinforced the social hierarchy of the area. The owners and Editor of the *Express and Star* launched the Roll of Honour. The military contact was Lieutenant Colonel Waterhouse, a prominent solicitor in the town. The recruits, however, were from the lower middle class. The Comforts campaign was also run by the owners and Editor of the *Express and Star* along with assistance from the Conservative industrialist James Dumbell. Lord Dartmouth, the Lord Lieutenant of Staffordshire, suggested the campaign. However, much of the fundraising effort was carried out by the working-class readership in factories, clubs and societies in the circulation area. The figureheads for the newspaper's recruiting effort were the district's elites but the recruits and the fundraisers came from further down the social scale. The letters from soldiers and obituaries published in the *Express and Star* reinforce this view of the newspaper's working-class readership. The obituaries are overwhelmingly

working-class men – officers only appeared when they were particularly newsworthy. Officers did not provide the newspaper with lengthy accounts of their experiences – these came from privates and corporals. The middle-classes held the positions of authority, both militarily and socially. However, the working class provided the vital human interest for the *Express and Star*. The social order was further reinforced by the language used by officers and other ranks in the pages of the newspaper. Officers seemed comfortable using the language of the Victorian era – high-flown, extravagant and euphemistic. It was the working-class readership both at home and at the fighting front who embraced the straightforward language of the New Journalism and its emphasis on the details of everyday life. It was the *Express and Star's* very success in manipulating and developing the figure of the volunteer soldier that helped create the newspaper as a significant, locally-based instrument of propaganda.

Propaganda

The *Express and Star* provided a means of communication with three groups the publicist Charles Higham considered central to the Government's domestic propaganda message – potential recruits, skilled workers in factories and workshops and the purse strings of the well-off and the poor.[19] The newspaper represented one small, provincial example of what Higham described as the means whereby the nation's need for men and money was 'silently but vividly proclaimed' for everybody to see whether they were at home, at work or in the

[19] Higham, *Scientific Distribution*, p. 131.

street.[20] According to Higham, during the early period of the war, the thoughts of the men at the front were caught and vividly recorded 'for the silent reproach of the men still left at home'.[21] The dependence of the fighting men on the unflagging industry of factory workers was 'vividly presented to the minds of working men'. It was a subtle analysis of propaganda in 1916 – permeating many aspects of life.

Like Higham, modern scholarship has recognised that much propaganda can be subtle and often unconscious.[22] The influences of commerce and politics came together to create the volunteer soldier as a figure of propaganda in the *Express and Star*. The propaganda message was all the more potent for being carried in a newspaper that was an integral and trusted part of the community. The *Express and Star's* depiction of the volunteer illustrates two key elements of modern scholarship surrounding propaganda in the First World War. It fits a much broader definition of propaganda. Firstly, propaganda was not, as traditionally seen, the secret and sinister work of a 'cynical militaristic liar'.[23] It was not about telling lies but rather more about being selective with the facts made available.[24] Secondly, propaganda was often consensual. Rather than being imposed from above by manipulative elites, it was a more bottom-up phenomenon.[25] Instead of viewing ordinary people as being victims of clandestine propagandists during the First World War, they should be viewed

[20] Higham, *Scientific Distribution*, pp. 131-132.
[21] Higham, *Scientific Distribution*, p. 132.
[22] Taylor: *Munitions of the Mind,* p. 6.
[23] Badsey, *German Corpse Factory*, p. 40.
[24] Badsey, *German Corpse Factory*, pp. 16-17.
[25] Gregory, *Last Great War*, p. 69.

as both participants in and facilitators of propaganda.[26] Modern-day interpretations of propaganda see it as encompassing many elements of life – a 'patriotic culture' rather than a simply manipulative force.[27]

This broader view was represented by the four manifestations of the volunteer soldier used by the *Express and Star*: eager recruit, stoic in the trenches, chronicler of the battlefield and in death, the khaki portrait. Each presented a highly positive view of the Tommy and war effort. Each gave the impression that the readers were part of the war and had some control over events. Each manifestation fed off the reader's fascination with the volunteer soldier, creating a positive atmosphere of control and engagement. The appeals for men, the lists of names of recruits and the focus on the local Territorials, all played a part in localising the war and making it understandable and manageable at a parochial level. Raising funds for local men provided a further sense of control of events and involvement in the war at a local level – a feeling that those at home were doing their best to help and support fighting men. In return, the fighting men understood they were being supported in their efforts. Soldiers' letters again provided an understanding of war at a local level – allowing conflict on an industrial scale to be viewed through the prism of people who readers' knew and cared about. Finally, the death of the volunteer was not lost in the labyrinth of military bureaucracy. Instead, individual death was recognised and respected, heroism and loss acknowledged and the bereaved given a place where their grief could be expressed to the community and their

[26] Connelly et al., *Propaganda and Conflict*, p. 17.
[27] Connelly et al., *Propaganda and Conflict*, p. 17.

loved ones faces published for all to see. The *Express and Star* and its readers created these manifestations rather than the unseen hand of a metropolitan propagandist. The newspaper acted as a catalyst for activity that was enthusiastically taken up by its readers. The local newspaper and its readers created and took part in their own form of propaganda. The message was that ordinary people had a degree of control over events. The *Express and Star* allowed the war to be viewed through the lens of localism, men could be looked after and cherished from afar and even if a soldier died in battle he would not be forgotten but honoured not just by his family and friends but by the community as a whole. It was a reassuringly patriotic outlook.

Politically, the propaganda message went much deeper. The newspaper told its readers the war would be won by voluntarism and then by temporary conscription. Between August 1914 and May 1915, the Editor's Liberal leader columns pronounced the virtues of voluntarism and the idea that the figure of the volunteer would be strong enough and virtuous enough to win the war on his own. The *Express and Star* quickly applied this viewpoint not only to the highly-esteemed Territorials but also to what had, in the past, been seen as the dubious recruits to the Regular Army. For the first ten months of the war, the *Express and Star* was an enthusiastic recruiter of volunteers. After May 1915, as the long-term industrial nature of the war became more apparent, the tone changed and the *Express and Star* began to prepare its readers for compulsory service. It finally threw its weight behind conscription in January 1916 – telling readers there was no other way to win the war and compulsory service would only be a temporary measure. The *Express and Star* had

provided its readers with a Liberal justification for conscription couched in the language of national and local necessity.

Censorship also lay at the heart of the propaganda message in the *Express and Star*. Censorship has been described as the 'essential counterpart' to propaganda.[28] Both manipulate opinion. Propaganda is the process by which selected information is disseminated, and censorship is the process by which selected information is held back.[29] This concept is represented by how the censorship regulations affected the reporting of the volunteer in the *Express and Star*. The London censors had little interest in the *Express and Star* but the reverse was not true. The Editor, Andrew Meikle, saw the censorship as significant and threatening enough to refer his own paper to the censors over the publication of recruiting figures. He supported the censorship initially although he started to take a more critical line when he saw the impact it had on human-interest reporting of the war. Reporting restrictions, however, allowed the military elite to escape any scrutiny or accountability locally. They remained out of sight. The war correspondent Philip Gibbs saw one of the main purposes of censorship as being to protect the military elites. This was certainly true as far as the *Express and Star* was concerned as the coverage of the attack on the Hohenzollern Redoubt indicated. The gap between military action and the release of casualty lists blurred the view of a particular battle and its results. The casualty lists contained little information about where and when casualties had been incurred. The ban on naming local units involved in

[28] Taylor, *Munitions of the Mind,* p. 10.
[29] Taylor, *Munitions of the Mind,* p. 10.

particular actions also blurred understanding of what had happened until long after the event. Soldiers letters contained detail of individual experiences but no criticism or views of the higher conduct of the war. The result was that the *Express and Star*'s view of the volunteer was greatly flawed. Readers were given a detailed view of the reality of combat and life at the front line. They understood the level of casualties and the formidable nature of the enemy. However, they were given little information about the higher conduct of the war and the military elites escaped any form of scrutiny even when local battalions suffered heavy losses. Propaganda and censorship allowed for a very realistic view of the experience of war. Along with this, it portrayed war as allowing citizens a degree of influence over events and a view of war that was very local in its outlook. However, censorship had a significant impact – military authority remained anonymous and unquestioned even when the Black Country's battalions suffered heavy losses.

The focus of this thesis is both its strength and its weakness. It allows for a detailed examination of the methods and motivations of one evening newspaper in a provincial, industrial town during the First World War. It sets out the context of the commercial press and the popular New Journalism which helped create the *Express and Star's* view of the volunteer. The thesis is not, however, a comparative study. This emphasis on a single title creates significant opportunities for future scholarship. The wartime press remains a largely unexplored subject. Comparisons with other provincial titles in different geographical areas and of different political persuasions would be a valuable area of future study. Comparisons between coverage at the beginning of the

war and towards the end could also be a fertile subject for study. Did conscription change the nature of reporting? Coverage in national titles compared to provincial titles could provide further valuable insights. Within the wartime provincial press in general, many topics beyond the volunteer are discussed and examined – industrial relations, the role of women, local politics and food shortages are all covered. Detailed examination of the national press between 1914 and 1918 remains sketchy. The prominent war correspondents remain an area of interest for scholarship but there has been no consideration of how their previous journalistic experience in the era of the New Journalism influenced their war reporting and their relationships with the military authorities.

The physical nature of the early twentieth-century press remains a problem that is difficult to surmount. Unlike the modern press, there was little attempt to draw together subjects in particular areas of the newspaper – news, comment, features, letters and other material is all mixed on the same pages. Sometimes, local stories have national items attached to them if they appear vaguely related. National stories have local content inserted into them if they appear relevant. However, none of this is consistent, organised or signposted. As this thesis has explained, the contents of many wartime newspapers appear chaotic, fragmented, uncomprehensive and contradictory. This makes a key measure of the provincial press difficult to achieve – accurate measurement of the amount of space devoted to national news versus local news. The densely packed, columns of small type and the chaotic nature of news presentation do not lend themselves to this type of analysis. The value of such an exercise should also be questioned when it is so difficult to

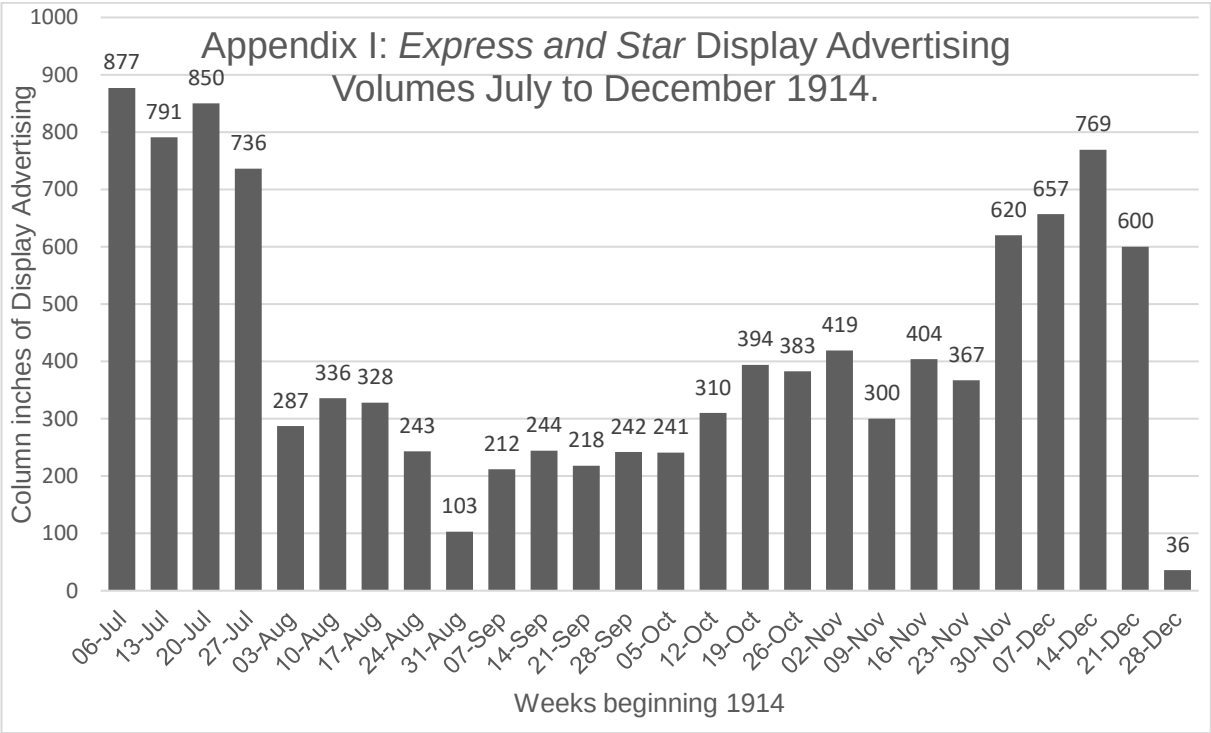
distinguish between local and national news, features and comment. Modern methods of guiding the reader around the newspaper with signposting and designated sections for news, features and comment had not reached the *Express and Star* by 1914.

This study has thrown a modest light on the workings of the *Express and Star*. In essence, it has shown how the owners and Editor of the newspaper harnessed the immense public interest in the volunteer soldier for their own commercial interests. The techniques of popular journalism and the publicity trade were used to construct the figure of the volunteer Tommy as a valuable commercial and Liberal figure who could encourage readership and reflect the political principles of the newspaper. In doing so, the newspaper became a potent and intimate instrument of propaganda, presenting a realistic but essentially positive and accessible view of the war and the readers' contribution to it. The thesis has provided support for the view that the early twentieth-century provincial press was neither the 'powerless victim nor the journalistic backwater' that some might suggest.[30] The *Express and Star's* wartime portrayal of the volunteer soldier showed it to be a thriving commercial and journalistic enterprise using sophisticated and manipulative techniques for its own ends. Significantly, it was a central element in the town's experience and perception of the war and how it was being fought.

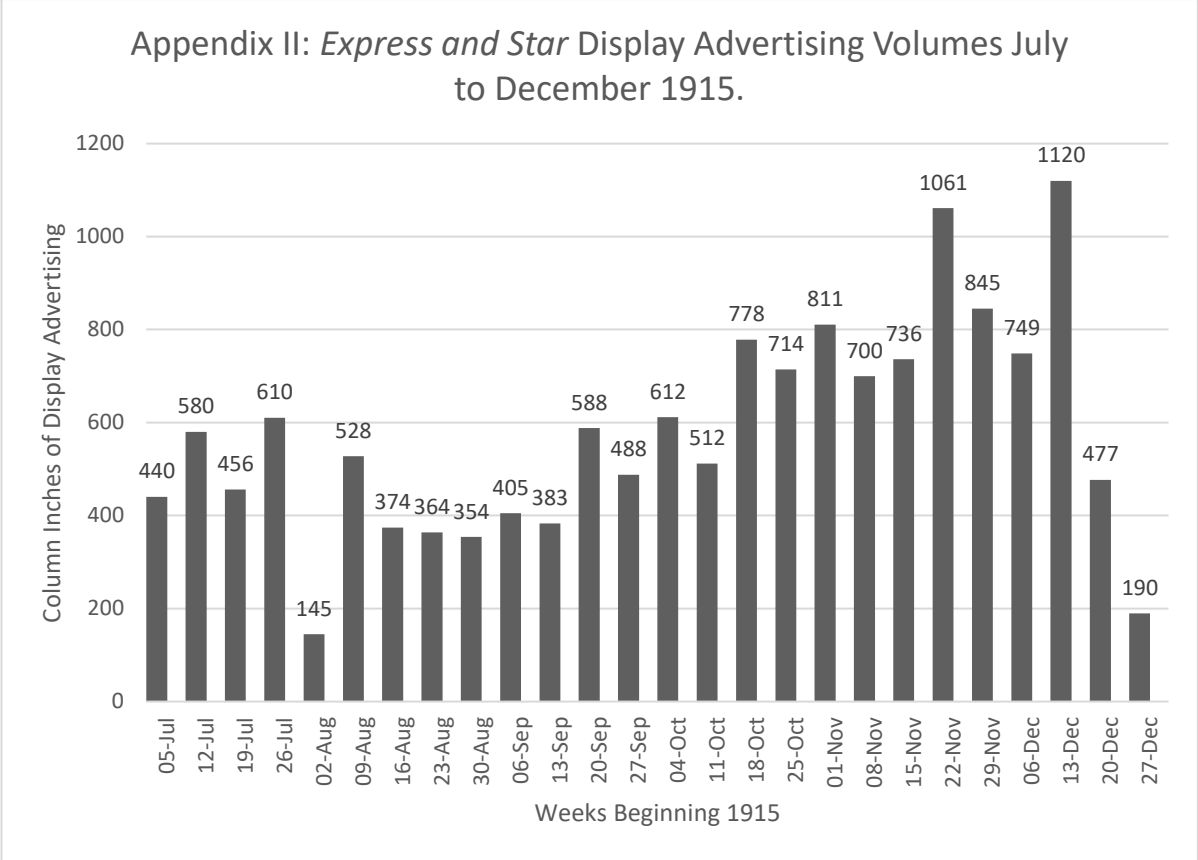
[30] John Benson, 'Calculation, Celebrity and Scandal: The Provincial Press in Edwardian England', *Journalism Studies*, 10 (6) (2009), pp. 837-850.

Commerce created a flawed and propagandist view of the war in the *Express and Star*. Its presentation of the volunteer was essentially a commercial construct aimed at creating mass readership to attract advertising. Despite this, it is difficult to ignore the poignancy of what the newspaper's conception of the volunteer represented. The pages of the *Express and Star* revealed daily how an unfashionable, working-class Midlands town was doing its best to support the nation's war effort and its men who had left their jobs and homes to fight. It shows how rapidly the town's citizens organised themselves not only to recruit men but also to focus support on the town's volunteers. This study illustrates the considerable amount of information and description readers were given about what modern warfare was like. It demonstrates the close and intimate connections that remained between the home and fighting fronts and between the volunteers and their loved ones. Any reader, who scanned the casualty lists, read the volunteers' accounts of battle and looked at the 'khaki portraits' could not fail to understand the scale of the war. The regular reader who examined the lists of charity fundraising, the donations to the Smokes campaign, the volunteers' requests for musical instruments and sports equipment along with accounts of large-scale factory collections could not fail to see the community effort involved in the war. The volunteer soldier represented more than the *Express and Star's* devotion to the New Journalism and its demand for human-interest news to maintain readership. Despite the lack of interest from the nation's elites and the absence of scrutiny of the military hierarchy, the *Express and Star's* commercial imperatives also provided respect, recognition and memorialisation for the sacrifice of Wolverhampton's volunteer soldiers.

Appendices



Appendix I: Display advertising volumes for the period July to December 1914. Note the sharp decline in advertising volumes for the week beginning 3 August 1914. Volumes reached a low in the week beginning 31 August. They only began to pick up and approach their pre-war levels in the three weeks leading up to Christmas



Appendix II: Display advertising volumes for the period July to December 1915. Note the increase in volumes from towards the end of November in the period leading up to Christmas and the sudden drop in the week after Christmas.

Date	No. of Pages in Newspaper	Classified (Column inches)	Display (Column inches)
20 July 1914	6	240	120
21 July 1914	6	264	158
23 July 1914	6	240	156
24 July 1914	6	216	150
25 July 1914	6	240	216
26 July 1914	8	312	120
Total	**38**	**1512**	**920**

Appendix III. This table shows volumes of small classified and large display advertising in the Express and Star during week 30, week beginning Monday, 20 July 1914. Note the lower volumes of display advertising on Monday and Saturday.

Date	Jobs: Domestic & Agricultural Servants (Column inches daily)	Jobs: Clerks, Assistants etc. (Column inches daily)	Money lenders (Column inches daily)
20 July 1914	27	32	17
21 July 1914	28	30	20
22 July 1914	28	32	24
23 July 1914	28	28	24
24 July 1914	22	29	20
25 July 1914	24	24	25
Total	157	175	130

Appendix IV. This table shows the volume of daily advertising for jobs, which was the largest classified category each day in the *Express and Star*. Note, jobs advertising was divided into two 'class' sections – domestic and agricultural servants and clerks and assistants. Advertising volumes also appear for national and local money lenders who made up the largest classified category on the front page each day along with Beatties department store in Wolverhampton.

Appendix V: Recruitment in Wolverhampton 1914-1915.

This appendix provides a limited context for recruiting in Wolverhampton during the early months of the First World War, the period when the *Express and Star* was most active in promoting the image of the selfless recruit.[1] The data is not detailed enough to show any correlation between the activities of the newspaper and recruiting numbers. However, statistics from Wolverhampton's Recruitment Office and the Census of 1911 illustrate two broad themes of voluntary recruitment that scholarship has identified – the chronological and occupational perspectives of recruiting in 1914 and 1915.

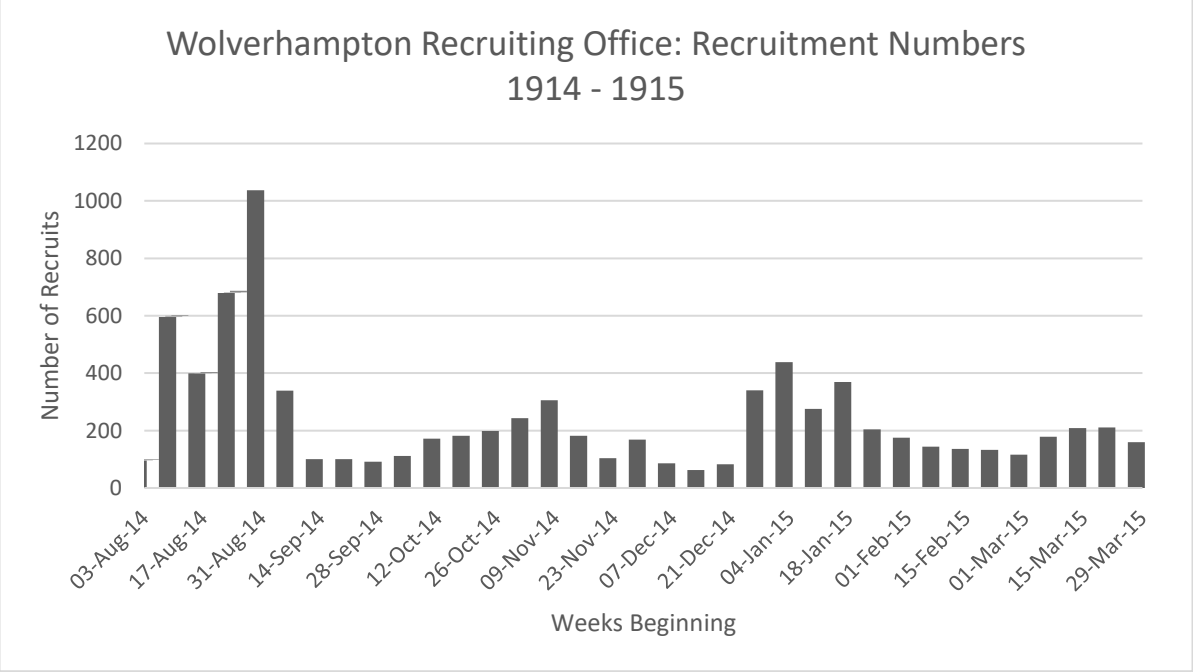


Figure 1:Recruitment figures provided by Wolverhampton Recruiting Office to the Government between the outbreak of war in August 1914 and the end of March 1915. Source: The National Archives: NATS 1/398, 'Approximate Number of Recruits Raised Daily, August 1914 to March 1915'.

[1] TNA: NATS 1/398, *Approximate Number of Recruits Raised Daily, August 1914 to March 1915*. No date of publication available.

Catriona Pennell has described how there was no immediate rush to the colours when war was declared and that week beginning 31 August 1914 - nearly a month after the outbreak of war - was the peak recruiting week of the entire war in Britain.[2] She stresses that the publication of the Amiens Despatch in a special edition of *The Times* on Sunday, 30 August had an instant impact on recruiting as provincial newspapers around the country caught up with the news in the following few days. Thursday, 3 September was the highest recruiting day of the war with 33,204 men joining up.[3]

The Wolverhampton recruiting returns shown in Figure 1 illustrate what Peter Simkins has described as the 'recruiting boom' of the end of August and beginning of September 1914, along with a subsequent decline from October 1914 on into 1915.[4] It also indicates a decline around Christmas 1914 with an increase in number in the new year of 1915. Figure 1 shows recruitment peaking in the week beginning 31 August with 1037 men enlisting at Wolverhampton's Recruiting Office that week. However, the highest day for recruiting was not Thursday, 3 September but two days earlier, Tuesday 1 September when 248 men enlisted in Wolverhampton in one day. One possible explanation for this is that the *Express and Star* rapidly 'lifted' the Amiens Despatch from the special edition of *The Times* and published its own Sunday edition.[5] Hence, people in Wolverhampton did not have to wait a few

[2] Catriona Pennell, *A Kingdom United: Popular Responses to the Outbreak of the First World War in Britain and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 144-145.
[3] Pennell, *Kingdom United*, p. 145.
[4] Peter Simkins, *Kitchener's Army: The Raising of the New Armies 1914-16* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), p. 49 and p. 104.
[5] *Express and Star*, 30 August 1914, p. 1.

days for news to filter through in their local newspaper but instead had the news from Mons on Sunday, 30 August, the same day as *The Times* report. Wolverhampton's highest recruiting day came 48 hours later. Stephen Badsey has described the despatch as a 'formidable piece of recruiting propaganda' with 174,901 volunteers coming forward in the week after its publication.[6] Peter Simkins has described the Amiens Despatch as providing a shocking jolt to people and creating 'a kind of recruiting fever'.[7] The 'fever' came to Wolverhampton two days earlier than other parts of Britain after the *Express and Star* had quickly understood the importance of the Amiens Despatch and published it on the day.

Figure 2: Males working in Wolverhampton's main employment categories according to the 1911 Census.

[6] Stephen Badsey, 'Strategy and Propaganda: Lord Kitchener, The Retreat from Mons, and the Amiens Despatch, August – September 1914'in Connelly et al. (eds.), *Propaganda and Conflict*, pp. 32.
[7] Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, p. 64.

Peter Dewey and Jay Winter, in separate studies, provide a different perspective on voluntary recruitment in the first 18 months of the war. [8] Both have used their works to interpret patterns of recruitment through the prism of the employment profiles of towns and districts across Britain. The occupation profile of Wolverhampton in 1911 is contained in the Census summary tables published in 1915.[9] The main categories appear in Figure 2. The statistics show the employment profile of a working-class, Midlands industrial town with an emphasis on work in engineering, machining, metalworking, iron, steel, coal mining, building and general labouring. Dewey and Winter interpret recruitment trends through the war in terms of employment factors – particularly the age profiles of those involved in specific work sectors. In their view, recruiting figures in a town like Wolverhampton should be viewed in the context of employment structures.

Dewey has used regular, but generalised reports published by the Board of Trade concerning employment trends during the war to draw his conclusions.[10] He argues, firstly, that recruitment differed widely in its impact on different industries. Secondly, he stresses that specifically economic concerns were among the most important factors affecting recruitment rather than just broader ones such as patriotism.[11] Different industries supplied recruits to the forces at very different rates. It was a highly complex situation with the age

[8] P. E. Dewey, 'Recruiting and the British Labour Force during the First World War', *The Historical Journal*, 27 (1) (1984), pp. 199-223; J.M Winter, *The Great War and the British People, 2nd Edition* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 33-39.
[9] Census of England and Wales 1911: *Summary Tables: Area, Families or Separate Occupiers and Population* (London: HMSO, 1915), Table 60: Occupations, pp. 226-241.
[10] Dewey, 'Recruiting and the British Labour Force', p. 201.
[11] Dewey, 'Recruiting and the British Labour Force', p. 200.

structure of employment sectors being highly significant. Dewey states: '…age-structure differences seem to constitute the largest single factor affecting enlistment rates in the pre-conscription period'.[12] For example, railway workers were notable for a very low rate of enlistment throughout the war. Dewey says this was due to the workforce being comparatively elderly.

Dewey argues that there is a tendency to assume heavy industries and mining as contributing disproportionately highly to the expansion of the Army but this does not appear to have been the reality. The contribution of men to the forces from manufacturing and heavy industry '…was almost identical with its importance in the pre-war economy'.[13] Dewey highlights that the highest contribution to recruitment was not from heavy industry, manufacturing or mining but the sector that the Board of Trade described as 'Commerce etc.' – men working in retail, hotels and public houses and clerks of all sorts. Workers in this sector were considered essential to the conduct of the war and they did not have the lure of high wages to hold them back from enlisting. In addition, they were occupations where women provided a cheap, alternative source of labour.[14] In this context, the *Express and Star's* Roll of Honour recruiting campaign, which was aimed at lower-middle-class white-collar workers, can be seen in terms of the newspaper recognising and focusing on the 'recruitment potential' of clerks and office workers.

[12] Dewey, 'Recruiting and the British Labour Force', p. 218.
[13] Dewey, 'Recruiting and the British Labour Force', p. 220.
[14] Dewey, 'Recruiting and the British Labour Force', p. 220.

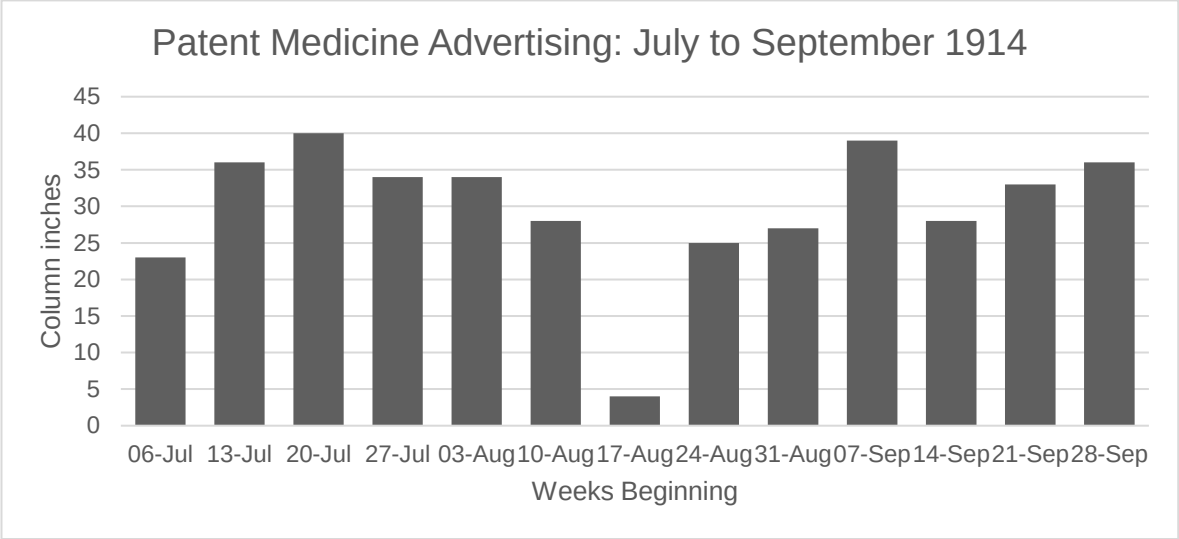
Jay Winter takes a similar view to Dewey but with a different emphasis. Regional differences in recruitment levels were slight in 1914 and 1915, but he sees recruitment before conscription as having a 'definite social structure.[15] By February 1915, 15 per cent of the industrial workforce were in uniform. Winter stresses the complexity of recruitment. Well-paid workers were conspicuous among working-class volunteers whereas men in less well-paid jobs may have hesitated before joining. There were higher recruitment rates in industries with a younger age profile of workers. He notes there were higher enlistment rates among non-manual workers than manual workers. Between 1914 and 1916, 28.3 per cent of the industrial workforce joined up but the figure was 40.1 per cent for the commercial and financial sectors.[16] Winter is quite clear in stating: '…it is clear that men engaged in commercial or distributive trades were in uniform and at risk for longer periods and in relatively larger numbers than were industrial workers…'.[17] Dewey takes the same view, stating: 'The soldiers of the First World War were as likely to have been clerks or shop assistants in civilian life as to have been miners or engineers.'[18]

The work of historians like Peter Dewey, Jay Winter, Catriona Pennell, Stephen Badsey and Peter Simkins illustrate the complicated social and economic factors that existed behind the *Express and Star's* over-simplified, commercial presentation of the volunteer recruit. The newspaper clearly

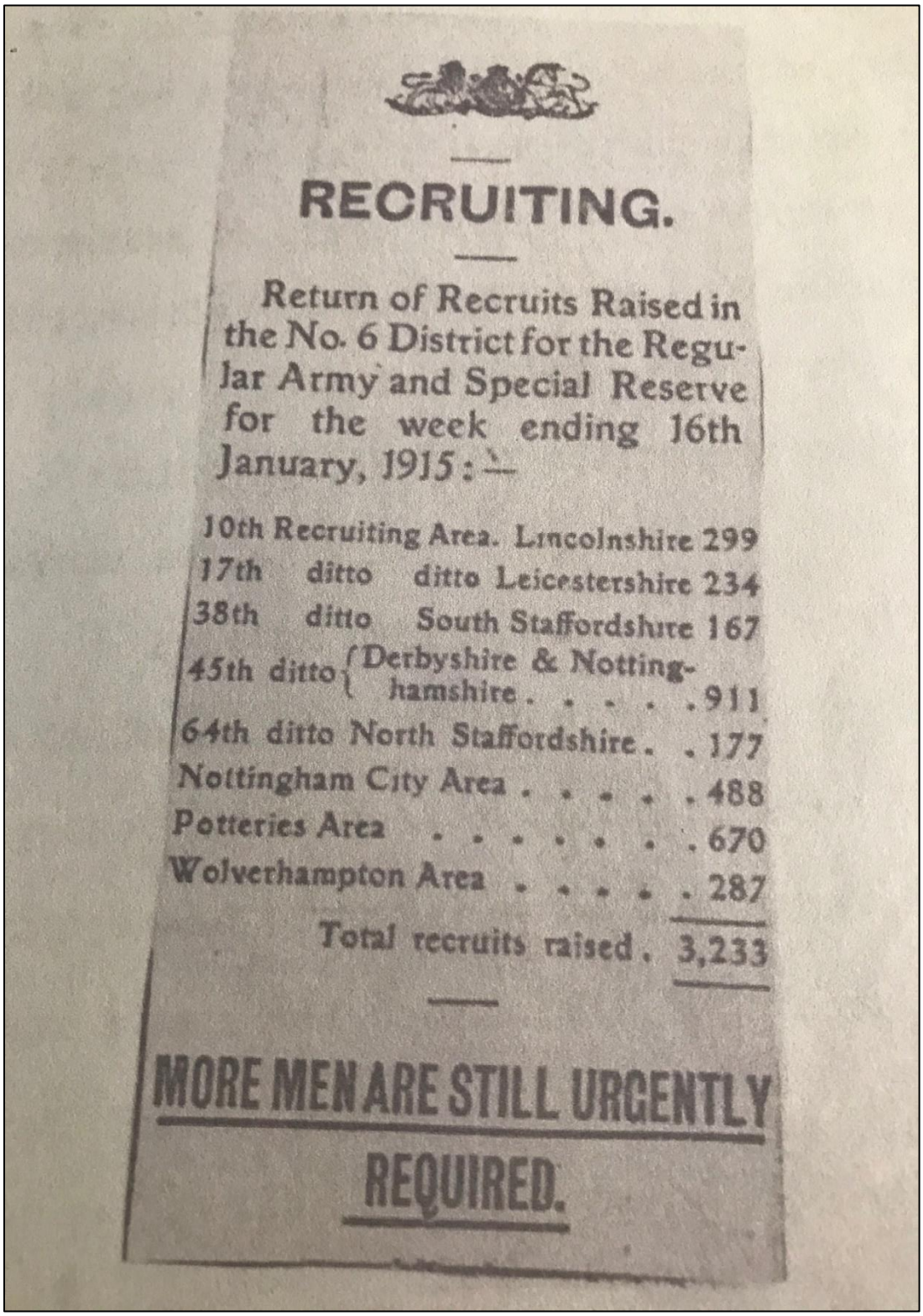
[15] J. M. Winter, *The Great War and the British People* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009 edition), p. 37.
[16] Winter, *The Great War and the British People*, p. 34.
[17] Winter, *The Great War and the British People*, p. 37.
[18] Dewey, 'Recruiting and the British Labour Force', p. 221.

understood the recruiting potential of the non-manual worker in its Roll of Honour recruiting campaign but the overwhelming numbers employed in manufacturing and industry in Wolverhampton is clear. Of the 217 photographic obituaries – the 'khaki portraits' – that appeared in the *Express and Star* between August 1914 and January 1916, only seven can be considered from the 'commercial sector'. This includes two insurance agents, a bank clerk, a shop worker, an office worker, an optician's assistant and a commercial traveller. More than a hundred of the 'khaki portraits' are of manual workers.[19] The overwhelming majority are manual workers with a small number of professionals – teachers or businessmen for example. The 'khaki portraits' can be seen as indicating that, despite the complexities of recruiting, the *Express and Star* was a newspaper that had its core readership in members of the manual working class and their families.

[19] See Appendix IX: 'Analysis of Khaki Portrait Obituaries'.



Appendix VI. Note the sudden but brief decline in volumes for the week beginning 17 August 1914, nearly a fortnight after the declaration of war. A suggested reason for this drop is the delay between cancelling advertising at the outbreak of war and its effect on published volumes.



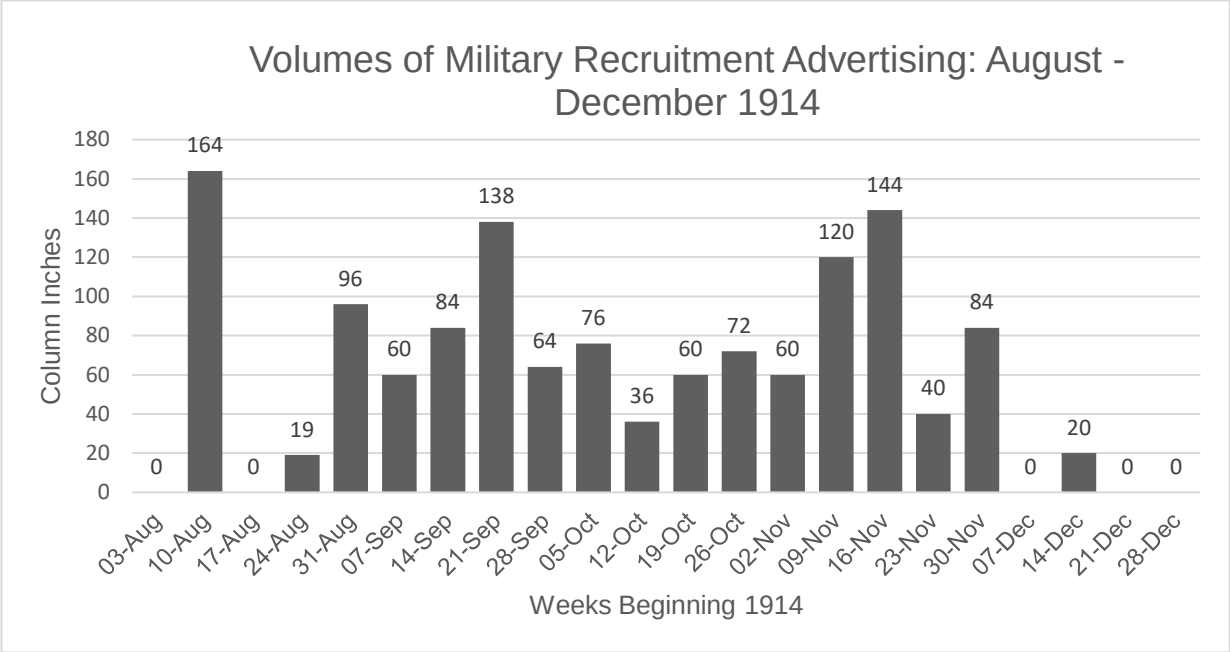
RECRUITING.

Return of Recruits Raised in the No. 6 District for the Regular Army and Special Reserve for the week ending 16th January, 1915:—

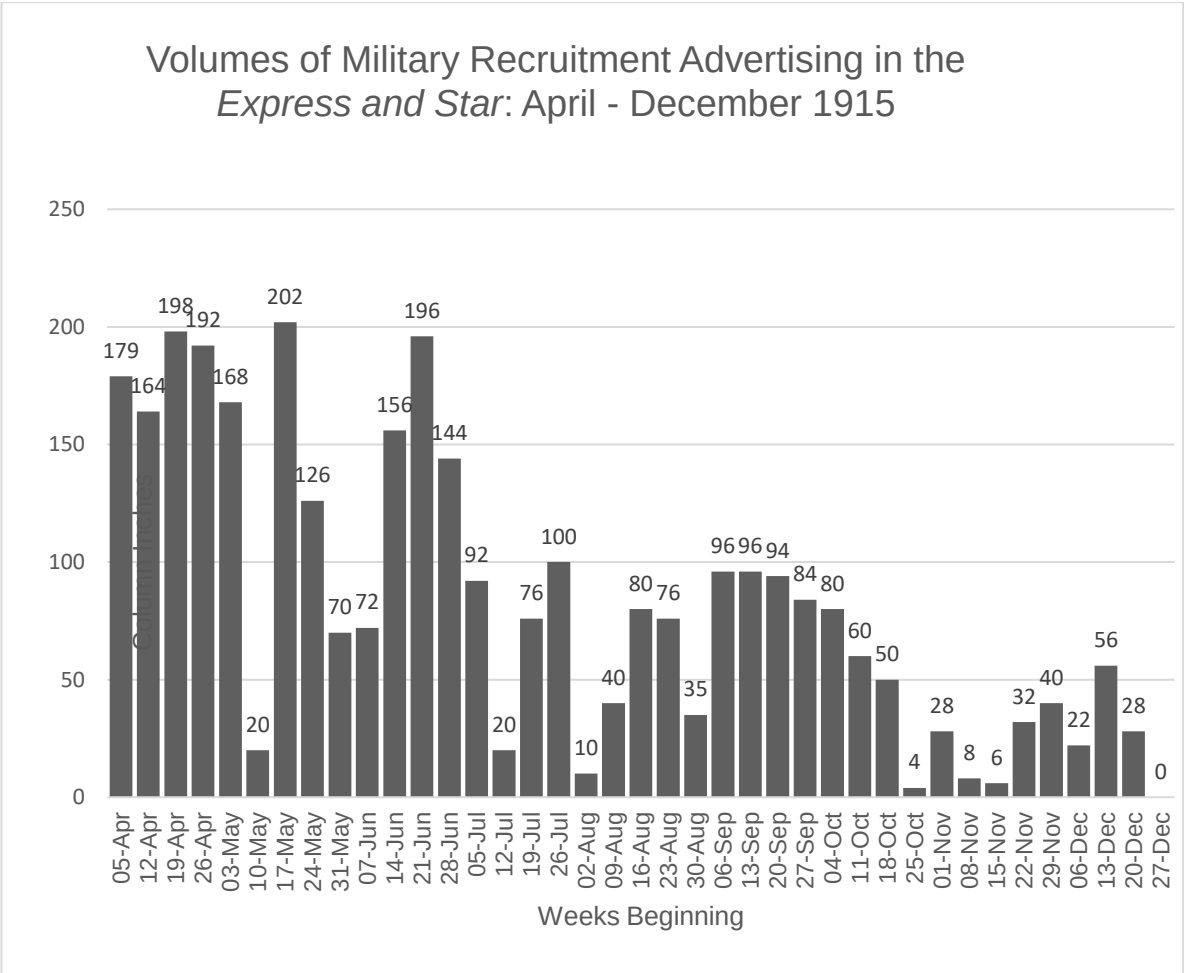
10th Recruiting Area.	Lincolnshire	299
17th ditto	ditto Leicestershire	234
38th ditto	South Staffordshire	167
45th ditto	Derbyshire & Nottinghamshire	911
64th ditto	North Staffordshire	177
Nottingham City Area		488
Potteries Area		670
Wolverhampton Area		287
Total recruits raised		3,233

MORE MEN ARE STILL URGENTLY REQUIRED.

Appendix VII: The statistical panel that appeared on page two of the *Express and Star* every Monday. The Editor considered it sensitive enough to refer his newspaper to the Official Press Bureau. The statistics were supplied to the *Express and Star* by Major Pearson from Wolverhampton's Regular Army Recruiting Office. This is the page proof sent to the Bureau director, Sir Stanley Buckmaster, in January 1915.



Appendix VIII: This chart shows the volume of recruitment advertising in the weeks before the outbreak of war and the end of 1914. Note no advertising appeared in the first week of the war. Over 160 column inches appeared in the second week - week beginning 10 August -, which coincided with Kitchener's first appeal for men. The two subsequent appeals had little impact on the volume of military recruitment advertising.



Appendix IX: Volumes of military recruitment advertising in 1915. The volume for the first three months of 1915 is missing so measurements cannot be made. Note the decline in recruitment advertising from July onwards with a brief increase in September and into October. From the middle of October, volumes were considerably reduced.

Appendix X. Analysis of Khaki Portrait Obituaries: July to December 1915, Based on Date of Publication in the *Express and Star.*

***Note: Some obituaries did not contain all the deceased's detailed information.**

***Note: Names of Regiments and Battalions are as they appeared in the *Express and Star*.**

Date	Rank	Age	Regiment or Battalion	Home Area	Occupation
July					
2 July	Private	36	1st South Staffs	Wolverhampton	Insurance Agent
	Private	18	6th South Staffs	Bilston	Bank Clerk
5 July	Private		3rd South Staffs	Willenhall	Factory Worker
6 July	Private	22	3rd South Staffs	Willenhall	
	Gunner	24	Royal Field Artillery	Wolverhampton	Regular Soldier
	Private	22	4th Worcestershire	Tipton	Regular Soldier
8 July	Corporal		4th Worcestershire	Willenhall	Regular Soldier
	Private		2nd Scots Guards	Willenhall	Regular Soldier
	Private		Australian Imperial Force	Wolverhampton	Regular Soldier
	Private	23	Worcestershire Regiment	Willenhall	Regular Soldier
	Private		4th Worcestershire	Wolverhampton	Regular Soldier
	Private	20	1st South Staffs	Wolverhampton	Cleaner
9 July	Corporal	39	2nd Scottish Rifles	Albrighton	
	Bombardier		Royal Field Artillery	Coseley	
12 July	Private		2nd South Staffs	Wolverhampton	
14 July	Private		1st South Staffs	Willenhall	
	Private	20	1st South Staffs	Wolverhampton	Factory Worker
	Private		2nd Worcestershire	Walsall	Regular Soldier
	L/Corporal			Netherton	
16 July	Private	21	2nd Manchester	Wolverhampton	Regular Soldier
17 July	Private		2nd Worcestershire	Dudley	
19 July	Seaman		Royal Navy	Wolverhampton	Fitter
21 July	Private	19	4th South Staffs	Wednesbury	Factory Worker
22 July	Private	18	3rd South Staffs	Willenhall	
23 July	Corporal	20	Grenadier Guards	Wolverhampton	Regular Soldier
25 July	Private		3rd South Staffs	Wednesbury	Factory Worker

27 July	Private	30	4th Worcestershire	Dudley	Factory Worker
	Corporal		2nd South Staffs	Wolverhampton	Factory Worker
28 July	Private			Dudley	
	Private	21	4th South Staffs	Wolverhampton	
31 July		30	KOYLI	Wood End	Miner
August					
6 August	Private	27	1st South Staffs	Wolverhampton	Regular Soldier
	Private	26		Wolverhampton	Factory Worker
	L/Corp	22	2nd South Staffs	Hurst Hill	Regular Soldier
	Private	25	1st South Staffs	Wolverhampton	Regular Soldier
9 August	Private	30	1st South Staffs	Willenhall	
11 August	L/Corporal		6th South Staffs	Blakenhall	Factory Worker
12 August	Private	25	6th South Staffs	Wolverhampton	Insurance Agent
	Sergeant	22	6th South Staffs	Wolverhampton	Optician's Assistant
	Private	21	3rd South Staffs	Wolverhampton	Factory Worker
	Private	25	1st South Staffs	Dudley	Regular Soldier
14 August	Private	21	6th South Staffs	Wolverhampton	Factory Worker
19 August	Sgt. Major	24	6th South Staffs	Willenhall	
20 August	Private		6th South Staffs	Dudley	
	Gunner	17	Royal Field Artillery	Dudley	
	Sergeant	26	1st South Staffs	Wolverhampton	Regular Soldier
	Corporal	22	9th Worcestershire	Tipton	
21 August	L/Corp		2nd South Staffs	Bilston	Carter
24 August	Major[1]		Royal Dublin Fusiliers	Tettenhall	Regular Soldier
	Private	21	Worcestershire Regiment	Wolverhampton	
	Sergeant		6th South Staffs	Darlaston	
	Sergeant		9th Worcestershire	Dudley	
	Lance Sgt.		1/3th South Staffs	Wolverhampton	Factory Worker
26 August	Private	19	5th Shropshire Light Inf.	Ketley	Iron Worker
	Private	19	5th Shropshire Light Inf.	Dawley	Miner
	Private	32	Royal Welch Fusiliers	Cannock	Miner
	Rifleman	32	King's Royal Rifles	Wolverhampton	Labourer
27 August	Private	26	4th Worcestershire	Dudley	Blacksmith
30 August	Sergeant	36	6th South Staffs	Wolverhampton	Factory worker
31 August	Private	17	2nd South Staffs	Wolverhampton	Factory Worker

[1] Major Richard Harris, son of the vicar of St Michael and All Angels Church, Tettenhall, was killed in the Dardanelles. He had been a Regular soldier in the Indian Army but was attached to the 7th Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers in 1915. (*Express and Star*, 24 August 1915, p. 2).

	Private	35	3rd South Staffs	Willenhall	Stamper
September					
1 Sept.	Private		2nd Durham Light Inf.	Bilston	Postman
	Private	19	6th South Staffs	Willenhall	Businessman
2 Sept.	Corporal	28	London Royal Fusiliers	Hednesford	Manager
	Private	32	5th South Staffs	Hednesford	Bricklayer
	Private		4th Worcestershire	Wolverhampton	Regular Soldier
3 Sept.	Private	19	6th South Staffs	Willenhall	Locksmith
	Private		2nd South Staffs	Wednesbury	
	Private		KOSB	Willenhall	Brass Caster
	Private	19	2nd South Staffs	Wolverhampton	Shop Worker
4 Sept.	Captain[2]		7th South Staffs	Patsull	
	Rifleman	23	4th King's Royal Rifles	Wolverhampton	Regular Soldier
	Private		5th Shropshire Light Inf.	Ketley	Iron Worker
8 Sept.	Sergeant		7th South Staffs	Wolverhampton	
	Private		7th South Staffs	Willenhall	Brass Caster
	Private	22	7th South Staffs	Wednesfield	Factory Worker
	Private		2nd South Staffs	Wednesbury	Factory Worker
	L/Corporal	22	7th South Staffs	Wednesbury	
	Private	29	5th South Staffs	Wolverhampton	
9 Sept.	Private	18	2nd Hampshire	Wolverhampton	Factory Worker
	Private	32	3rd Worcestershire	Wolverhampton	
	Private		7th South Staffs	Wolverhampton	
	Private	23	6th Lincolnshire	Wolverhampton	
	Sergeant	37	9th Worcestershire	Wolverhampton	Turner
	L/Corporal		7th South Staffs	Wolverhampton	
11 Sept.	Private		6th South Staffs	Wednesfield	Factory Worker
	Private	32	7th South Staffs	Wolverhampton	Cellarman
	Private		7th North Staffs	Walsall	
14 Sept.	Private	22	7th South Staffs	Wednesbury	Factory Worker
	Private	37	7th South Staffs	Wolverhampton	
	Rifleman	21	7th King's Royal Rifles	Wolverhampton	
	Private		7th South Staffs	Wolverhampton	Barber
	Private		6th South Staffs	Dudley	Grinder
15 Sept.	Sgt. Major		Worcestershire Regiment	Wolverhampton	Teacher
	Sergeant		8th South Staffs	Bilston	Carter
	Private	22	5th South Staffs	Willenhall	Pupil Solicitor
17 Sept.	Private	26	7th South Staffs	Tipton	Moulder

[2] Captain , the Honourable, Gerald Legge, was the son of the Earl of Dartmouth, Lord Lieutenant of Staffordshire and chairman of the Staffordshire Territorial Association. He was killed in the Dardanelles where he was serving with the 7th Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment. (*Express and Star*, 4 September 1915, p. 3).

	Private		3rd Worcestershire	Rowley Regis	
21 Sept.	Private	22	9th Worcestershire	Willenhall	
	Private	22	6th South Staffs	Wolverhampton	Teacher
	Private		7th South Staffs	Bilston	Steel Worker
	Private	20	8th South Staffs	Wolverhampton	Grinder
	Private	24	8th South Staffs	Bilston	Steel Worker
	Private	19	Shropshire Light Infantry	Shrewsbury	
	Private	22	7th South Staffs	Wednesbury	Factory Worker
23 Sept.	Private	23	6th South Staffs	Wolverhampton	Factory Worker
	Private	27	3rd Worcestershire	Willenhall	Miner
24 Sept.	L/Corp		Durham Light Infantry	Wolverhampton	Factory Worker
	Private		8th Worcestershire	Tipton	
	Private		Royal Welch Fusiliers	Wolverhampton	Regular Soldier
	Corporal	23	Royal Field Artillery	Wolverhampton	Foundry Worker
	Private		7th South Staffs	Willenhall	Factory Worker
28 Sept.	Rifleman	21	King's Royal Rifles	Tipton	Iron Worker
29 Sept.	L/Corp			Wolverhampton	
	Private		York and Lancaster	Dudley	
October					
1 October	Private	19	South Staffs Regiment	Sedgley	Foundry Worker
	Private	23		Short Heath	Miner
	Corporal			Moxley	Regular Soldier
	Private			Willenhall	Miner
2 October	Private	22	7th South Staffs	Wolverhampton	Bolt Maker
	Private	40	7th South Staffs	Wolverhampton	Sunbeam Worker
5 October	Sergeant		1st South Staffs	Wolverhampton	Regular
6 October	Private	21	The Welch Regiment	Wolverhampton	Regular Soldier
	Private	21	7th South Staffs	Wolverhampton	
7th October	Lieutenant	22	Royal Welch Fusiliers	Wolverhampton	Undergraduate
8th October	Private	31	6th South Staffs	Wolverhampton	Waterworks Worker
	Corporal		6th South Staffs	Bilston	Furnace Stoker
11 October	L/Corp		7th South Staffs	Willenhall	Regular Soldier
	Private	24	7th South Staffs	Wolverhampton	Electrician
	Private	19	7th South Staffs	Wolverhampton	Factory Worker
12 October	Sapper	26	Royal Engineers	Cheslyn Hay	Colliery Worker
13 October	Private	27	2nd South Staffs	Wolverhampton	Railway Worker
	Private		7th South Staffs	Bilston	

14 October	Private		2nd Grenadier Guards	Wolverhampton	Iron Worker
15 October	Private		Royal Welch Fusiliers	Wolverhampton	Factory Worker
	Private	27	8th South Staffs	Wolverhampton	Tinplate Worker
	Private	24	6th South Staffs	Wolverhampton	Factory Worker
18 October	Private		Highland Light Infantry	Darlaston	Foundry Worker
19 October[3]	Captain		6th South Staffs	Wolverhampton	Solicitor
	Captain		5th South Staffs	Tettenhall	Businessman
	Captain		6th South Staffs	Wolverhampton	Solicitor
	Sergeant	22	3rd South Staffs	Wolverhampton	
20 October	Private	32	RAMC	Wolverhampton	
	Private	21	1st Middlesex	Tipton	Foundry Worker
	Private	19	2nd South Staffs	Wolverhampton	Tool Maker
	L/Corp		2nd Warwickshire	Wolverhampton	Factory Worker
21 October	Lieutenant	25	5th South Staffs	Wolverhampton	Businessman
	L/Corp		2nd South Staffs	Wolverhampton	Motor Tester
22 October	Private		2nd Worcestershire	Wolverhampton	
23 October	Corporal		RAMC	Wolverhampton	
	Private	39	2nd South Staffs	Willenhall	Moulder
24 October	L/Corp	18	3rd Hussars	Bilston	Railway Official
26 October	Private	20	2nd Grenadier Guards	Walsall	Telegram Messenger
28 October	Private	24	South Wales Borderers	Wolverhampton	Office Worker
	Trooper		Fife and Forfar Yeomanry	Willenhall	Commercial Traveller
	Private	22	Royal Welch Fusiliers	Wolverhampton	Railway Telegraphist
	Private	38	7th South Staffs	Darlaston	
November					
2 Nov.	Private	28	1st South Staffs	Bradley	
3 Nov.			South Staffs Regiment	Tipton	
	Private	33	4th Middlesex	Wolverhampton	Carter
5 Nov.	Private		2nd South Staffs	Wolverhampton	Factory Worker
	L/Corp		7th South Staffs	Darlaston	
	Private		Worcestershire Regiment	Dudley	Garage Worker
	L/Corp	33	7th South Staffs	Bilston	Labourer
8 Nov.	Private	29	6th South Staffs	Wolverhampton	Factory Worker
	2nd Lieut.	38	1st South Staffs	Wolverhampton	Regular Soldier
	Corporal	22	RAMC	Willenhall	
	Private	33	2nd South Staffs	Willenhall	

[3] The three captains, whose pictures and obituaries appeared on page three on 19 October, were all killed on 13 October 1915, in the attack on the Hohenzollern Redoubt. (*Express and Star*, 19 October 1915, p. 3.

11 Nov.	Private		2nd Worcestershire	Willenhall	
	Private		Worcestershire Regiment	Dudley	
	Sergeant	22	6th South Staffs	Dudley	
	Private		7th South Staffs	Sedgley	
	Private	28	7th South Staffs	Wolverhampton	Boatman
	L/Corp	20	1st Royal Scots	Wolverhampton	Railway Fireman
	L/Corp	21	6th South Staffs	Wolverhampton	Tool Worker
	Private	25	6th South Staffs	Wolverhampton	Tinplate Worker
12 Nov.	L/Corp	24	6th South Staffs	Wolverhampton	
13 Nov.	Private	22	5th South Staffs	New Invention	
	Private	22	Grenadier Guards	Wombourne	Chauffeur
	L/Corp	20	6th South Staffs		Gas Worker
	Sergeant	20	6th South Staffs	Wolverhampton	
16 Nov.	Private	25	6th South Staffs	Bilston	Roofer
	Private		2nd Cheshire Regiment	Cinderhill	Iron Worker
	Private	20	KOSB	Willenhall	Bolt Maker
17 Nov.	Private	20	3rd South Staffs	Coseley	Railway Worker
	Private	17	North Staffs Regiment	Wolverhampton	Railway Worker
	Private	25	6th South Staffs	Bilston	
23 Nov.	Private		4th Worcestershire	Dudley	
	Private	27	8th South Staffs	Wolverhampton	
	Private	20	3rd Worcestershire	Bilston	Foundry Worker
	Private	25	Grenadier Guards	Essington	Colliery Worker
	Private	23	6th South Staffs	Gospel End	Miner
	L/Corp	20	6th South Staffs	Wolverhampton	Plumber
	L/Corp		6th South Staffs	Wolverhampton	Sunbeam Electrician
	Private		6th South Staffs	Wolverhampton	Iron Worker
26 Nov.	Private		6th South Staffs	Coseley	Foundry Worker
	L/Corp		6th South Staffs	Moxley	Factory Worker
	Private	22	6th South Staffs	Gornal	Colliery Worker
	Corporal	29	6th South Staffs	Wednesbury	Factory Worker
	Private		1st South Staffs	Bilston	Regular Soldier
	Private	17	7th South Staffs	Bradley	Iron Worker
December					
6 Dec.	Private	21	Grenadier Guards	Wolverhampton	Tube Runner
	Private		1st North Staffs	Stafford	
	Private	30	3rd Worcestershire	Willenhall	Postman
	Private		9th South Staffs	Wolverhampton	
	Private	21	6th South Staffs	Wolverhampton	Ironwork's Fireman

	Lieutenant		10th West Yorkshire	Wolverhampton	Accountant
	Sgt. Major	27	6th South Staffs	Wolverhampton	Builder
	Private		Army Service Corps	Wolverhampton	Electrician
	Private	23	9th South Staffs	Coseley	
	Private	22	1st South Staffs	Wolverhampton	Regular Soldier
	Private	26	6th South Staffs	Wolverhampton	Farm Worker
18 Dec.	Private	20	6th South Staffs	Bilston	
	L/Corp	36	6th South Staffs	Short Heath	Gasworks Worker
	Sergeant		6th South Staffs	Wolverhampton	Iron Worker
	Private	30	1st South Staffs	Wolverhampton	Tin Worker
	Private	19	6th South Staffs	Tettenhall	Cleaner
	Private	18	6th South Staffs	Tettenhall	Cleaner
20 Dec.	L/Corp		1st South Staffs	Wolverhampton	Sunbeam Worker
	L/Corp		7th South Staffs	Bilston	Works Clerk
27 Dec.	Sapper		Royal Engineers	Prince's End	Miner
	Sergeant		8th South Staffs	Bilston	Factory Worker
	Private	18	1st Lancashire Fusiliers	Wolverhampton	Toolmaker

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