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Dean Evans

Master of Arts - Master by Research and

Dissertation

School of History

How far were the lines between Frontline and the

Home Front blurred in East Kent (Canterbury)

during the Great War 1914-1918?

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List of Abbreviations

BEF	British Expeditionary Force
DORA	Defence of the Realm Act
GOC	General Officer Commanding
RAMC	Royal Army Medical Corps
WLA	Women's Land Army
WVR	Women's Volunteer Reserve
VAD	Voluntary Aid Detachment

Chapter One – Introduction and Historiography

From the early phases of the Great War it became apparent that the complexities and size of the war would require a revision to the existential boundaries that separate soldiers from civilians. This thesis will examine how the lines between the Home Front and the Frontlines are at a minimum, blurred as a result of the impact of the war on civilian constructions of identity. In McCartney's study of the Liverpool Territorials in *Citizen Soldiers*, she makes the claim that much of the soldiers' military life was rooted in their civilian occupations, social standing and identity: "...soldiers did not internalise regular army values, nor did they create new personalities and develop new values to cope with the experience of trench warfare. Soldiers and civilians turned to the traditional and familiar to survive..."¹ McCartney's study will be reversed here, testing whether the opposite actually occurred to the citizens of Canterbury; were they in fact, 'soldier citizens'? This may be a great irony of the war, in that civilians became soldiers at home whilst soldiers retained civilian identities at the front. Self-perception is instrumental to this study, to see how civilians saw themselves. An examination of all of Britain at this level is impossible within the confines of a MA dissertation, but by using a rich case study (Canterbury and its neighbouring areas in East Kent as a micro-study), operating at the level of everyday experience, this study aims to contribute to the big picture. This study will mostly draw upon contemporary sources from the local press, personal diaries and letters, district schools' magazines, war depot meetings and parish

¹ Helen McCartney, *Citizen Soldiers The Liverpool Territorials in the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp.2-3.

writings to see how the civilians of East Kent saw themselves during 1914-1918. This study will not try to impose uniformity on such a diverse topic as the social identity constructions of wartime civilians. Rather, it will address several key questions on a micro level: what can the study of mobilisation reveal about the breakdown of frontlines and home, what significance can the militaristic transformation of the environment have on civilian identity, and did 'normality' return to East Kent after November 1918?

"Do you remember the dark months you held the sector at Mametz-

The nights you watched and wired and dug and piled sandbags on parapets?

Do you remember the rats; and the stench

Of corpses rotting in front of the front-line trench-

And dawn coming, dirty-white, and chill with a hopeless rain?"²

"How doth the little busy wife,

Improve the shining hour.

She shops and cooks and works all day,

The best within her power.

How carefully she cuts the bread.

² *About Poetry* [online]. [cited 20 December 2013]. Available from: <<http://poetry.about.com/library/weekly/blssoonwar.htm>>

How thin she spreads the jam.

That's all she has for breakfast now,

Instead of eggs and ham.

In dealing with the tradesmen,

She is frightened at the prices

For meat and fish have both gone up,

And butter too and rice has.”³

How can one compare the two: soldiers and civilians, in light of such poetry? Sassoon's *Aftermath* and this popular British wartime rhyme instantly highlight the great divide that existed between civilian and soldier experiences of the Great War. One speaks almost violently of trench life and the encapsulated fear and the other of a lack of ham and the fear of rising prices. Using this logic, the argument that the identity of these two groups are much more similar and complicated, is muted. It is reasonable to claim that an existential divide existed between those facing combat and those who haven't. Was there really a shared sacrifice of the two groups? The argument may be pointless. Yet, this logic is flawed. It follows the notion that the soldier's story is the story of wartime Britain, with a debt to be paid to the combatants by the non-combatants. Yet the

³ Adrian Gregory, *The Last Great War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp.219-220.

identities of civilians could be matched with that of the soldier and their war efforts could be matched with the goal of victory. The triviality of eggs and ham missing from a breakfast plate, most definitely serve the point that some Home Front grievances were unremarkable, but nevertheless, the war was also hitting at home and was causing changes. After all, one woman recalled “...refusing to eat a bloater for her breakfast and her dismay at seeing it reappear on her plate at luncheon and tea. She was told that consuming it was a blow struck against the Kaiser...”⁴ Her mentality as a young child, other than a bit petulant, was that of a soldier doing her bit. Total War was not only central to the experience of day-to-day life of the soldier but also those left on home soil. Thus, a kind of ‘blurriness’ existed in Britain 1914-18 between the two fronts, covering a spectrum of civilian identification with the soldier.

“For the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts...half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life...”⁵ It is in the very ordinariness of civilian life during 1914-1918 that this study will reveal extraordinary changes and complexities in how wartime identities were shaped. Could the young child, eating her cured herrings, really think she was striking against Germany? These people’s ‘hidden lives’ complement and contrast the popular lives of the soldiers, revealing a more complex image than a simple ‘us and them’ mentality. Thus, at best, a ‘blurring’ of the identities (shaped by new experiences) was achieved in these four years. The new war-focused

⁴ Lawrence James, *Warrior Race, A History of the British at War* (London: Abacus, 2002), p.520.

⁵ George Elliot, *Middlemarch*, ed. by David Carroll (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 785.

experiences of civilians conflicted with the traditional civic identities and thus helped shape something more nuanced. The blurring may have been a short-lived phenomenon, restricted to four years, but it helps us to understand the mindset of Britons at war; how the majority of the country felt during a momentous occasion. The war called upon the physical and mental support of Britain's civilians for the army's benefit. Unlike the colonial expansion campaigns of Victorian Britain, the army abroad was no longer a world removed; correspondences, leisure time, work, volunteering and even what one ate at the kitchen table became a link to the fathers, sons and brothers at war. Susan Grayzel points to the Great War as redefining the meaning of battlefronts and setting out a more complex geography of war that now involved civilians in a way not found in any previous modern European war.⁶

"Key to this war was not only the kaleidoscope of experiences on the home front but also, and even more, the blurriness between home and battlefront."⁷ In her essay on identity in the Great War, Davis points to the work of Procacci's research into the blurriness in Italy and notes the strong interdependence between these two fronts, especially in uniting the nation against the government.⁸ Davis suggests that the work of B. Ziemann went even further in trying to break down what he refers to as trying to transcend imagined experiential barriers between battle and home and the impact this has on

⁶ Susan Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War: Gender, Motherhood, and Politics in Britain and France During the First World War* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), p.11.

⁷ Belinda Davis, 'Experience, Identity and Memory: The Legacy of World War I', *Journal of Modern History*, Vol.75, no. 1 (2003) 111-131 (p.115).

⁸ *Ibid.*, p.116.

soldiers whose self-perception was more closely connected with home than fellow comrades.⁹ This focus on 'imagined experiential barriers' can also help to explain how civilians were becoming more like fellow soldiers. Experience cannot be perceived only through the specificities of place or activity but also through the useful concept of 'identity'.¹⁰ It is this 'identity' of civilians that this study will aim to examine. There is a need to analyse non-combatants as the largest group of adults living through the war in order to make sense of their identities at a pivotal moment of the twentieth century. For the purpose of this thesis, it will not concern itself in returning to debates about whether the war was 'good' or 'bad' for men and women. A more complex wartime civilian identity will be investigated.

East Kent and Canterbury have been chosen because they stood as the 'gatekeeper' of Britain, as one war-time postcard called the county, with only one hundred miles separating frontlines and home.¹¹ War was heard by these civilians; seen, not only in the national press, but in the local voluntary aid detachments helping English and Belgian troops in Canterbury; and felt by those enduring Zeppelin raids. The city was also full of soldiers throughout the conflict; many of these from the East Kent Regiment and the Kent Brigade, as well as links to the Navy with the light cruiser, HMS Canterbury being

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., p.120.

¹¹ *The Forgotten Frontline Homepage* [online]. [cited 20 March 2014]. Available from: <<http://forgottenfrontline.blogspot.co.uk/2013/09/ww1-postcard-kent-doorway-to-england.html>>

commissioned in 1916.¹² Canterbury offers a micro-study of a much larger question. It was a city that was not too far from London, but close to France and one steeped in provincial Edwardian life yet modern enough for a small city of approximately 23,832 (based on 1911 figures).¹³ A focus on the culture of sacrifice that united both fronts of soldiers and civilians can help one judge the blurring between these two groups. This study will take a holistic approach across a range of themes in Canterbury in order to answer questions relating to the identity of the 'soldier-citizen' in wartime at a micro level to better understand Britain at war. The notion of a universal identity of a soldier is further complicated by the differences between units. McCartney makes the point that no one infantry unit was exactly the same as the next and that the experience of a soldier depended largely on the character of the unit in which he served.¹⁴ Furthermore, no one civilian is exactly the same. It is here in which the importance of a micro study is made. "It is precisely because of these diverse differences that individual studies are needed...they can both confirm and refute existing historical conceptions..."¹⁵ This stresses the need for this study to focus on one region.

The dictionary-definition between soldier and civilian is insufficient for the changes that occurred in both the physical challenges of day-to-day life, as well as the mental preoccupations with the war. In the immediate aftermath and the

¹² Michael Foley, *Frontline Kent* (Stroud: The History Press, 2010), p.92.

¹³ *Life in Kent During the First World War: S214: Kent* (unpublished research project, University of Kent Faculty of Social Science, 1975), p.3.

¹⁴ McCartney, p.4.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

next generation, it may have been difficult to claim hardship and common ground with those who fought and died on the battlefields. Such a clear distinction between non and actual combatant was necessary perhaps. But the Second World War eroded such artificial labelling with the popular concept of 'The People's War' (despite being first coined by H G Wells to describe 1914-1918). Civilians and soldiers were both a part of Britain's 'warrior nation'.

Due to the practicalities of this study, it is necessary to reduce soldier identity and culture to a set of principles or values – in particular, fixating on 'duty' and 'sacrifice' as a term of identification with the Tommy at war. This itself is a simplification of soldiering during the Great War since we see three different waves of soldiers during the conflict, which itself is worthy of more study. First, the professional soldier at the ready in August 1914, secondly 'Kitchener's Army' made up of volunteers, and finally the post-1916 conscripted army. Each of these groups had their own ideas of 'duty' and 'sacrifice', only adding to the complexity of identity. Interestingly, the memorial to the dead of the Metropolitan Railway Company at Baker Street, offers us an idea as to how civilians saw the soldiers, using its inscription: "...at the call of King and Country those who died left all that was dear to them, endured hardness, faced danger and finally passed out of sight of men by the path of duty and self-sacrifice..."¹⁶ More interesting still, is that this epitaph, written by the distinguished historian, M. R. James, also appeared on scrolls sent to the next of kin of the dead, in the name of George V. 'Sacrifice for others' unites these different groups of soldiers, in the eyes of civilians at

¹⁶ James, pp.397-398.

least. An enlightening answer as to how soldiers were possibly perceived, but this study must ask how did civilians see and refer to themselves? The identity of the soldier must be the control that I investigate the civilians against. 'Duty' means different things to different people. Soldiers were paid to do a duty with a potential rod in place to exert submission to this principle. Some chose to do this. Others were forced into duty. The civilian was engaged with the war, whether it was through war works, war bonds, reading about it, writing about it or just getting on with bloater fish for supper.

The sociologist, Schöpflin argues that social identity is constructed around a set of moral propositions that regulates one's behaviour, so when describing an identity, it necessarily involves ideas of right and wrong or desired and undesirable.¹⁷ Wartime values dictated that ideas of duty and sacrifice were the norm for all citizens – soldier and civilian. A shared or collective identity of citizenship was formed between these two groups. The citizen identity usurps all others here, since the occupation and role one takes is in part a response to the civic values and norms. Schöpflin stressed the idea of shared meanings as constructed by society or a larger group, but not the individual.¹⁸ Such an understanding of how people saw themselves, or rather how far they identified with the soldier, would be easier using this theory. However, Woodward points to the impact of the individual in conjunction with society: "It is partly internal and subjective, but also partly individual and dependent on the judgement of

¹⁷ George Schöpflin, *The Dilemmas of Identity* (Tallinn: Tallinn University Press, 2010), p.53.

¹⁸ Martin Holborn and Mike Haralambos, *Sociology: Themes and Perspectives*, 7th edn (London: Collins Education, 2008), pp.692-693.

others”, meaning it is a mixture of individual agency and structural constraint.¹⁹ It is important for this study to consider how people viewed their own identity during war via the language they used as well as how their community saw them. According to Gullace’s research on the language of citizenship at all social levels, military obligation and service gained an ever more authoritative place in measures of civic worth.²⁰ All sections of society, from the top to bottom, were focusing civic identity at the centre of behavioural norms during 1914-1918.

The distinction between personal and social identity is inexact, because personal identities can become social when people of a similar grouping are together and then a social meaning is attributed to that identity.²¹ Clayton notes the imperfect distinctions between personal identities (generally based on one’s individual traits and values) and social identities (a general reflection of one’s position in a group or network).²² Clayton emphasised that such concerns are all down to the extent to which social influences of a group are minimal.²³ With a minimal impact, the focus is on individual experience; as social influences and interactions become stronger, social or group identities are more important to the observer. This dissertation will work under this interpretation of identity constructions. While the study aims to minimise the idea of a uniform experience

¹⁹ Ibid., p.693.

²⁰ Nicoletta F. Gullace, *The Blood of our Sons. Men, Women, and the Renegotiation of British Citizenship during the Great War* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p.3.

²¹ Susan D. Clayton, ed, *The Oxford Handbook of Environmental and Conservation Psychology, Environment and Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p.3.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

for civilians, even at a local level and within the confines of an MA, it will be likely that associated social stereotypes may be acquired.

Terms used by historians, which emphasise a blurring of wartime identities centre around the concept of a 'shared sacrifice'. With regards to the economies of sacrifice, the bill paid for the Great War was a shared one – that much has been agreed in the historiography of the Home Front. Interestingly, 'duty' is expressed via the discussion of 'war-work versus war-service', which suggests a divide existed, not only potentially between soldier and civilian, but between groups of civilians. Should we only be interested with the primary motivation of a civilian's actions? Does it matter if patriotic duty was not the main motivator for signing up to in the munitions factories or becoming a VAD? To deny the complexity of motivating factors is to ignore over a century's worth of psychological studies into worker motivation. Thus, the blurring of soldier and civilian may be as simple as both being that of a worker. Both are nothing more than the proletariats of war. Perhaps this is so. The title is a difficult question to answer, hence 'blurring' being the best classification to use for this study. To help answer the title's question, one must look at the historiography of the home front and ideas of sacrifice and duty.

How have commentators viewed the impact of the Great War on the Home Front? As far as journalist, E. Turner was concerned, the Home Front was transformed with scenes of traditional England engulfed by war: "Belgians

colonised Richmond-on-Thames...Russian princesses nursed the wounded at Highgate; Australian soldiers coo-ee'd to each other down Piccadilly...wounded Indian soldiers recuperated in the Pavilion at Brighton..."²⁴ With England's new demographic described here, it proves difficult to claim life at home was normal. "Historians investigating the impact of war on society can be divided into those who see wars as a catalyst for change, and those who minimise their effects and stress the continuities..."²⁵ Naturally, the issue is a bit more complex than Pope suggests here with something of both being true, yet when one considers the sociologist Stanislav Andreski's concept of a Military Participation Ratio, the sheer number of people involved with the war must have created larger social changes.²⁶ The proportion of militarily utilised individuals in the total population had greatly increased. The greater the demands of war, the more the pyramid of social structure would be flattened and unite groups. This study does not aim to add to the debate on the extent of social change, but using Andreski's Ratio does suggest that the larger demands of war meant that more people were militarily minded and could not continue everyday life as in previous conflicts. By extension, 'the greater the demands of the war', the more civic identities would change. James asserts that everyone was at the disposal of the government – all forty-five million citizens.²⁷ Thus legal powers controlled and defined what was to be expected of the soldier and civilian via DORA. Civilians suddenly faced new regulations that dictated their everyday life, at home and at work. Although Calder is speaking of the Second World War, when he uses

²⁴ Ernest Sackville Turner, *Dear Old Blighty* (London: Micheal Joseph, 1980), p.18.

²⁵ Rex Pope, *War and Society in Britain 1899-1948* (London: Longman, 1991), p.9.

²⁶ Stanislav Andreski, *Military Organization and Society*, 2nd edn (California: University of California Press, 1968), pp.33-35.

²⁷ James, p.401.

Churchill's point that, "The fronts are everywhere. The trenches are dug in the towns and streets...the front lines run through the factories. The workmen are soldiers with different weapons..." the same can be said of the Great War. Both wars utilised the populations of Britain and not just the army.²⁸ While approximately five million Britons served in the armed forces in 1914-1918, another forty million at home engaged in some fashion.

Marwick extended this idea of a war-preoccupied society by claiming, "...the discipline of the army gives birth to all discipline..." and as such, changes the socially approved behaviour of the home front too.²⁹ Home life and social norms were dictated, albeit indirectly, by the army. Civilians were confronted with a disciplinary and organisational framework much more akin to that of the soldier. In 1916, even photography of seaside resorts in Dover became a military concern and potential crime against the war effort.³⁰ He articulates this point further in *The Deluge* by claiming that war and society were the same thing, therefore not separate spheres. Pope even goes as far as to argue that the most common type of soldier (volunteers and conscripts) never stopped seeing themselves as civilians temporarily in uniform.³¹ Pope points to the grievances shown by British troops as evidence of this; that they were essentially over bread and butter issues – accommodation, food, allowances and leave.³² Soldiers retained the concerns of their civilian lives. The soldier's 'indiscipline' was as a

²⁸ Angus Calder, *The People's War: Britain 1939-45* (London: Pimlico, 1992), p.1.

²⁹ Arthur Marwick, 'The Impact of the First World War on British Society', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 3, no. 1 (1968), 51-63 (pp.57-58).

³⁰ *The Dover Express and East Kent News*, 4 February 1916, p.5.

³¹ Pope, p.27.

³² Ibid.

result of their identification with their civic life and norms – not that of the professional soldier. It is easy to agree with such a claim, given that ordinary citizens became soldiers so quickly in 1914. Contrary to this, Eric Leed's *No Man's Land* argues that ideas of heroism and sacrifice could not sustain the combat soldier in the face of a technological war and was forced to reject civilian society and retreat into his own unique trench culture.³³ A new defensive identity was the only way to survive, thus ignoring values of the regular army and civilian roles. Such an argument however ignores the civilian interaction and use of civilian skills in army life.³⁴ The war was fundamentally an irony; despite being stretched far and wide from home in a new type of war, people clung to their pre-war status even more passionately. Continuities, more so than discontinuities, better explain people's identities. Marwick's idea is also central to Gregory's study of civilian life in wartime; that the mass experience of Army life and combat were, "...the main pillars of civilian existence."³⁵ Yet, his argument has the more nuanced observation that too often voluntarism came into conflict with ideas of fairness.³⁶ Not everyone was volunteering, or more precisely, seen as 'doing their bit'. Arguably, a 'keeping up with the Joneses' mentality emerged in Britain during 1914-18. Therefore, such a generalisation that all civilians were soldiers in some way is far too limited. The idea that it was a universal effort by all Britons was a myth created in the war's aftermath to cover up these social divides and tensions caused by war.³⁷ This is a convincing

³³ McCartney, p.2.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Adrian Gregory, *The Last Great War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p.7.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

argument. The very abundance of calls to civilians and propaganda prove the need to cover up tensions even during the war, never mind the aftermath.

War immediately called for the public's help. This is evident from Lord Derby urging all to work and listen to the government, writing in *The Times* in early 1915: "It is the duty of every man in this crisis to offer his services to the state, and for the state definitely to allot him in position, whether it be in some branch of His Majesty's forces, or in the munitions works, or in one of the indispensable industries of this country...it must be the state and not the individual which decides a man's place in the machinery of the country."³⁸ Watson makes the point in *Fighting Different Wars* that in 1914-1918, worthy participants (although not necessarily equal) included not only soldiers, but munitions workers, voluntary aid units, etc. However, by 1934, the war's twentieth anniversary, only the soldier was worthy.³⁹ Why was the communal experience of war reduced to that of the soldier's story? Perhaps the Great War was not seen as history – those involved in its memory were too removed from the desired objectivity of the historian. The power of the veterans' voices rises above that of the civilian.⁴⁰ This is not unique to Britain. With regards to Germany, Leed said that, "...the front experience is first of all Gemeinschaft experience."⁴¹ Ziemann's recent work emphasises that even amidst the chaotic birth of the Weimar, both pro and anti Republicans in Germany were actively engaged in using their own

³⁸ Alan G. V. Simmonds, *Britain and World War One* (London: Routledge, 2012), p.50.

³⁹ Janet Watson, *Fighting Different Wars: Experience, Memory, and the First World War in Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.186.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.306.

⁴¹ Eric J. Leed, 'Class and Disillusionment in World War I', *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 50, no. 4 (1978), 680-699 (p.680).

front-line service in shaping memories of the war.⁴² While memories were debated for political reasons, they remained the soldier's story. The contemporary linkages that Gregory speaks of in his book are lost because the people's war experience is not only subordinated by the soldier's story, but at times is completely replaced by it.⁴³ Countless remembrance services across the nation in town centres, schools and churches endorse this. Even modern academics fall into this trap. Niall Ferguson is not a historian to accept convention; he is self-consciously revisionist. But the final paragraph of *The Pity of War* places him firmly in the popular tradition. "The title of this book, then, is at once a sincere allusion to Wilfred Owen's twice used phrase and an echo of the understated idiom of the ordinary private soldier of the trenches."⁴⁴ Even Ferguson falls into tradition to sum up the war as the story of the trenched-in-Tommy, using the phrase of a soldier-poet who would not find commercial success until years after his death. The power of memory over history is almost without debate in modern historiography. Gregory places the blame of the devaluing of civilian war experiences squarely with the civilian population itself, rather than Watson blaming the veterans.⁴⁵ It is very easy to agree with Gregory when one bares in mind one particular air raid recollection in C. Peel's 1929 book, *How We Lived Then*: "Oh, I'm going to be killed! She moaned, pinching my

⁴² Benjamin Ziemann, *Contested Commemorations: Republican War Veterans and Weimar Political Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p.4.

⁴³ Gregory, p.8.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.3.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.294.

arm...I hope you will...my sympathies are with the men who have to bear this kind of thing day after day..."⁴⁶

Upon first sight, the conclusions to be drawn from Peel's 1929 study and Gregory's 2008 book are very different. Civilians and soldiers live in separate spheres. One group gets Peel's sympathies, the other very nearly gets a slap in the face. But where they do agree is that "The suffering of the soldiers stood at the very centre of wartime values."⁴⁷ The 'economies of sacrifice' and the working out of people's war contributions are at the centre of the issue. Through studying middle class correspondence Gregory revealed a considerable desire to give up material luxuries as a way of inflicting a self-suffering.⁴⁸ Many who did not serve in the army sought various degrees of what may be called 'redemptive sacrifice'.⁴⁹ Gregory argues that communities weighed up the extent of the sacrifices made by the killed and wounded to their own civilian lives; the belief being that sacrifices at home provided some form of redemption or solidarity with the soldiers proved to be a common feature of civilian life.⁵⁰ This solidarity with the soldier's life and sacrifice is what makes the 'blurriness' between home and front possible but the solidarity was not universal. Gregory goes as far as to debate the authenticity of other people's sacrifices in comparison to soldiers, making a clearer distinction between civilian and soldier. This is much closer to Peel's conclusions that separate lines exist. He explores the language used by

⁴⁶ C. S. Peel, *How We Lived Then 1914-1918* (London: The Bodley Head, 1929), pp.150-151.

⁴⁷ Gregory, p.135.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.142-147.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Gregory, p.150.

civilians at the time: "Writing in early 1917, Eva Isaacs tells her husband of a dinner party where one of the guests was...blinded in the war: Poor chap...I feel as if I was his debtor for life...one can never repay them for all they have lost..."⁵¹ Using the language of the period itself is very telling of how types of people saw themselves. A single story doesn't reveal too much. But the idea of an 'economy of sacrifice' becomes more explicit when similar ideas are used in civilian wartime poetry. Robert Lowell, a Newcastle labourer, produced a poem entitled 'The Separation Allowance' with the lines, "The banks of the universe could not meet the debt – All the world's a creditor."⁵² Similar imagery can also be found in poems such as 'The Debt' and 'Are We Worthy of the Sacrifice?' According to this, civilians saw themselves as owing to another group of people for their survival – the soldiers. But it also reveals the lack of alienation of soldiers from civilians to some extent. Civilians knew what conditions were like and of the losses. At the very least, could this be evidence of a blurring of civilian identity from a war-ignorant, happy-go-lucky civilian to a war conscious debtor?

The possible divide between civilians and soldiers and the shared sacrifice economy can be nicely analysed using the 1917 poem 'Other bugger's efforts':

"I knew a man of industry

Who made big bombs for the RFC

⁵¹ Gregory, p.112.

⁵² Ibid., p.113.

Who pocketed lots of LSD (money)

And he (thank God) is an OBE.

I knew a woman of pedigree

Who asked some soldiers out to tea

And she said 'Dear Me' and 'Yes, I see'

And she (thank God) is an OBE...

...I had a friend, a friend – and he,

Just held the line for you and me

And kept the Germans from the sea

And died without the OBE,

Thank God!

He died without the OBE.”⁵³

In this one poem, we can find so many answers as to whether there was a blurring between civilians and soldiers. The overriding theme of the poem is of the respect for the soldier and equal contempt for the civilian who claims special recognition of their war effort. Some civilians' identities did blur between being

⁵³ Ibid., p.148.

a soldier's aid, the breadwinner of the family, or simply as a civil service officer. Yet this poet elevated the soldier beyond the civilian's capabilities and saw no such blurring as acceptable. It may be this 'acceptability' or sense of decorum that stopped this poet from seeing the divide as anything other than blatant and offensive to take down. James argues the point that 'sacrifice' must be seen as equal in Britain.⁵⁴ But he does not address the debate over how to best represent active participation in the war. How can one equal risking one's life at the front with knitting socks for troops or giving up ham for a few years? Yet some civilians did. To understand how, one must move away from this black and white idea of a 'debt of blood' as the only way of showing duty and sacrifice. 'Equal' is such a controversial term to use. Thierry Bonzon comes closer to moving beyond this by looking at police reports on civilian protests in Paris. They read of an acceptance of sacrifice linked to equitable social distribution; an acceptance so long as no one is spared in society.⁵⁵ Parisians were ready to accept challenges based on everyone 'doing their bit'. Being a part of the war took many guises for civilians. How legitimate these guises appeared to be seemed to be at the whim of any passer-by. Some viewed war work as exemplary and awarded OBEs to civilians, thus blurring lines. Others, like the poet, judged them as unworthy.

Stevenson, in *1914-1918* points to the German idea of 'Schicksalsgemeinschaft' (community of fate) to explain how soldiers and civilians came together bound

⁵⁴ James, p.524.

⁵⁵ Thierry Bonzon and Belinda Davis, 'Feeding the cities', in *Capital Cities at War: Paris, London, Berlin 1914-1919*, Vol. I, ed. by Jay Winter and Jean-Louis Robert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp.305-341 (p.332).

by the possible fate of loss and invasion.⁵⁶ It is the word 'community' that is particularly interesting. Maybe the divisions between soldier and civilian are blurred because it is more about a shared communal identity. The early popularity of the 'Pal's battalions' certainly would testify to such an idea. Over two thirds of the battalions raised up to 1916 were Pal's battalions. In her book, *Fighting Different Wars*, Watson defends this idea that people were more than just soldier or civilian, and were a part of something larger in their own family or community. Although she focuses on gender and class identities, she stresses the importance of the ways in which people identified themselves is not a singular pursuit – soldier, civilian, friend, mother, teacher, etc.⁵⁷ What may be seen as a civilian acting voluntarily and patriotically in one class, may be seen as socially inappropriate for another. Class further complicates the issue of identity and sense of communal identity. Watson also agrees with Gregory, in that we must look at the language of those during the war to see how they viewed their identity and not focus on retrospective analyses. "How citizens imagined the work they (and others) were doing proved to be a critical line of demarcation between groups."⁵⁸ She further argues that such a line of contemporary analysis "...collapses a distinction much too long maintained in both the scholarly and popular literature: that between the home front and the combat zones."⁵⁹

⁵⁶ David Stevenson, *1914-1918: The History of the First World War* (London: Penguin Books, 2005), p.293.

⁵⁷ Watson, p.3.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p.4.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p.5.

One's professional or occupational identity can be very important here. For some, war work was nothing more than the current socially acceptable form of upper middle-class philanthropy that they had been trained for.⁶⁰ Other people worked full time for the war, and as such brought home a decent pay packet. Did this stop them from performing their 'duty' to King and Country? At home, the war-worker was the mainstream of the war economy, yet stands apart from the soldier because he, or she, is a 'worker'. Watson confronts this problem by highlighting how important the language of work and the workplace was for soldiers at the front. The immediate tension between the professional army and that of Kitchener's army proves Watson's point. The new volunteers who started arriving in the trenches in 1915 were met with resentment for not being professionals and for their eagerness.⁶¹ The Christmas Truce of 1914 provides an interesting case study to examine the validity of Watson's claim. General French, who had exchanged Christmas gifts with his counterpart, General Christian Beyers, during the Boer War, believed that soldiers cultivate, "...a freemasonry of their own", and share respect for the skills of their profession.⁶² This sense of professionalism may explain the 1914 Christmas Truce. Modris Eckstein argued that fraternization was possible due to the idea of war as a game and British attitudes of sportsmanship, helped by the presence of those new volunteer reservists in the trenches.⁶³ Yet, Watson concluded that what General French called the 'freemasonry of soldiers' better explains the truce. While there were volunteer reservists in the trenches in 1914, it was dominated by the

⁶⁰ Ibid., p.7.

⁶¹ Ibid., p.24.

⁶² Ibid., p.25.

⁶³ Ibid., pp.25-26.

professional army in regular battalions. “The volunteers who were fighting the war for a cause rather than because it was their job were still in the training camps at home.”⁶⁴ An attitude of work, rather than service, made the Christmas Truce possible. Work language slowly becomes the language of all soldiers, with diary entries calling soldering a job. Horace Bruckshaw, a volunteer, wrote down in his diary, “Why do they not get at the job we have come out for?” which continued months later with, “We are absolutely fed up with this life although the job has got to be done.”⁶⁵ Ilana Bet-El argues that the conscripts post-1916 identified themselves as workers in uniform, that despite war, “their perception therefore remained that of civilians hired to do a job of work.”⁶⁶ Bet-El’s analysis was limited to the research of conscripts’ letters and diaries, but the same mentality of work could be found in other files within the army. Thus, civilians were war workers and soldiers were war workers. Both are yet again, just workers.

Those at home, made the line clearer between soldier and civilian. While soldiers may have seen themselves as workers, popular culture at home made them soldiers by using the language of service to describe them. It was service – not work - that made him a soldier. Watson points to the opening poem used in Ian Hay’s 1915 successful book, *The First Hundred Thousand*, to show that no matter how many soldiers identified themselves as ‘civilians in uniform’ or such, civilians gave them the popular stamp of approval through a language of service:

⁶⁴ Ibid., p.26.

⁶⁵ Ibid., pp.26-27.

⁶⁶ Ilana Bet-El, *Experience into Identity: The Writings of British Conscript Soldiers, 1916-1918* (unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University College London, 1991), pp.245, 281-282.

“And now to-day has come along.

With rifle, haversack, and pack,

We’re off, a hundred thousand strong.

And – some of us will not come back.

But all we ask, if that befall,

Is this. Within your hearts be writ

This single-line memorial: -

He did his duty – and his bit!”⁶⁷

The soldier was a hero and people were taught to see them as such. Fussell notes the pervasive nature of how soldiers refer to themselves in letters using the high diction of glory and honour – not work. Even the flippant heroic image of one young officer’s comments to his sister, shows how commonplace the imagery was: “Warrior is resting from war’s alarms in his dugout...”⁶⁸ More serious tones of heroism could usually be found in letters home just before a battle. Jack Engall wrote home saying: “Day has almost dawned when I shall really do my little bit in the cause of civilisation...look upon it as an honour that you have been given a

⁶⁷ Watson, p.44.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p.45.

son for the sake of King and Country.”⁶⁹ Fussell’s sample cannot be taken as wholly representative but does complicate the idea of soldiers being on par with civilians. The lines between home and front blur much more easily under Watson’s more recent emphasis on the soldier-worker identity, but reading such letters puts the heroic soldier back onto his well-worn pedestal.

One area of the home front which certainly blurs the lines, is the introduction of air raids to Britain. With regards to air raids, “nothing better displays [the] disappearance of the distinctions between soldier and civilian.”⁷⁰ It is interesting to note how the first study of the home front, by Peel, being of the generation who endured the war, conceived the raids. Peel listed the numbers of the dead from newspapers and separates soldier casualties from civilian ones and drew no conclusions from it other than “...events which brought war home to us in more senses than one were the bombardment of coastal towns...”⁷¹ Peel recalls the event of a raid in London in which one woman, hiding in Hyde Park House during a raid, argued venomously with a scared, “Oh, I’m going to be killed! She moaned, pinching my arm...I hope you will...my sympathies are with the men who have to bear this kind of thing day after day...”⁷² Peel’s sympathies remain with the righteous woman, showing a clear distinction from the life of a soldier. Turner downplays the zeppelins and air raids even further, by calling them no menace to Britain.⁷³ Such a comment surely ignores that wartime casualties

⁶⁹ Ibid., p.46.

⁷⁰ James, p.504.

⁷¹ Peel, p.138.

⁷² Ibid., pp.150-151.

⁷³ Turner, p.17.

were including civilians in Britain for the first time in centuries. Despite Peel's ambivalent feelings towards heroizing civilians into soldiers, her recollection of a military doctor calling the bombsite scene in Folkestone as a "battlefield", suggests home and front were merging.⁷⁴

Peel's observations of the home front are clouded by her comfortable middle class position in society. Duty and service mean something very different to her from the majority of society. Ethel Alec-Tweedie, a WAAC member and philanthropist, complained that, "we have heard a great deal of late years about our Rights, but little about our Duty...the upper and middle classes learn something of duty at school, but in lower middle and lower class education the word 'Duty' seems as to be unknown."⁷⁵ There were differences in the way that 'duty' was perceived based on class. Marwick claimed that the war dissolved Britain's class structure, although it remained class conscious; a 'gone, but not forgotten' notion.⁷⁶ With Mrs Tweedie's comment above, one can see just how 'dissolved' class sentiment really was. Marwick does not claim that the class issue was removed at the home front though and does emphasise that the most notable blurring of class division was between the lower-middle and working classes.⁷⁷ Where one can strongly disagree with his analysis is in his support of Caradoc-Jones' study on how class language was to be ignored since the war

⁷⁴ Peel, p.143.

⁷⁵ Watson, p.303.

⁷⁶ Arthur Marwick, *The Deluge: British Society and the First World War*, 2nd edn (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p.340.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p.344.

forced the communities to resemble one another.⁷⁸ Simmonds observes that the standard of living of these different social groups gives us a better understanding of how shared and similar these communal 'sacrifices' were. Yes, the rich got less rich and the poor got a bit less poor but class warfare became inverted; the rich attacked the poor for inequalities of sacrifice based on their improved earnings. When one reads of how some upper class elites made sacrifices by loaning their yachts to the army, it is difficult to see how communities resembled one another.⁷⁹

The industries of war production to some extent united the classes and also helped to blur the lines between soldiers and civilians. According to James, the Munitions Acts passed between 1915 and 1917, along with amendments to DORA, meant a return to Britain as under the Napoleonic Wars – everyone capable of helping the war effort had to register and accept it.⁸⁰ Regulations ensured all involved were given a purpose – to help Britain win the war, and thus become militant. The law defined 'munitions' as anything that helped waged war, from making jam to knitting soldiers' socks.⁸¹ Lines may have been blurred, but how far was it a voluntary action of the civilian? The government forced civilians into accepting sacrifice. Pope questions the validity of civilians' willingness to help. Perhaps such civilians are only comparable to the men of 1916 who were conscripted. Yet, Watson claims that the patriotic voice of home

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Turner, p.41.

⁸⁰ James, p.512.

⁸¹ Ibid.

was not just mere rhetoric; people felt good about contributing.⁸² A general picture of Britain's industrial support for war is difficult to make. Gregory explored the patterns of industrial unrest to try and get a better picture, showing that the south had low levels of unrest, the majority of Britain had quite a large number but were brief and the North (and Wales) had small numbers but of a lengthy period.⁸³ How 'good' these people felt is hard to ascertain. However, those who did strike and disrupt production were described as 'traitors', more akin to deserters than disgruntled workers.⁸⁴ Whether it was out of genuine patriotism or as DeGroot suggests, out of helping not the army, but their family in the trenches, is unknown.⁸⁵ Marwick champions the war as a revelation of the value of the manual worker to the state.⁸⁶ This may be a case of the 'equal but separate' doctrine.

Sitting beside the war industries, entrepreneurs were told 'business as usual' by the government. Unaware of the economic sacrifice that war would ask for, the motto of 'business as usual' would prove a double-edged sword. Should businessmen accept sacrifice and answer the call of duty to the state, or follow its primary and legal duty to follow the profit motive and serve its shareholders? This particular group of civilians – the businessmen and shopkeepers – were subjected to accusations of profiteering from war and being unpatriotic – how un-soldier like. These people became the enemy of the home front and provided

⁸² Watson, p.301.

⁸³ Gregory, p.203.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p.210.

⁸⁵ Simmonds, p.89.

⁸⁶ Marwick, *The Impact of the First World War*, p.53.

the starkest difference between the front and at home.⁸⁷ These were men who were willing to deliberately make money out of the sacrifice of lives and at times, indirectly work with the enemy through sales to neutral countries with ties to Germany. John McDermott however supports the shopkeeper's work. The vilification of the local shopkeeper is moved to the medium-large sized businesses, which keep the economy truly afloat.⁸⁸ He makes the point that to make money did not have to sit against war service as an enemy of the soldier after all, economic survival is vital in wartime.

Another group that has received much attention and controversy from historians more than businesses are female workers. The reluctance of Peel to identify civilians with traits of the soldier finally yields when it come to the topic of women. Women in factories saved Britain according to Peel.⁸⁹ Her cause for such a claim was born out of a speech by Prime Minister Asquith: "How could we have carried on the war without them? Short of actually bearing arms in the field, there is hardly a service which has not contributed, or is contributing, to the maintenance of our cause in which women have not been at least as active and efficient as men..."⁹⁰ One must be careful not to exaggerate the changes that women saw. Did women emerge as equals in 1918? No, and as soldering was still a masculine pursuit, by extension she was not a soldier. At the time of Asquith's

⁸⁷ Marwick, *The Deluge*, p.163.

⁸⁸ John McDermott, 'A Needless Sacrifice: British Businessmen and Business As Usual in the First World War', *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, Vol. 21, no. 2 (1989), 263-282 (p.263).

⁸⁹ Peel, p.113.

⁹⁰ Susan Kingsley, *The Politics of Sexual Difference: World War I and the Demise of British Feminism*, *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 27, no. 3 (1988), 232-253 (p.235).

speech, *The Daily Telegraph* was still publishing articles entitled “Are women capable of driving at night?”⁹¹ Some women crossed gender conventions and some went even further to cross the boundary between soldier and citizen, proudly wearing khaki uniforms marching down the street. How women perceived and were perceived during 1914-18 offers a unique answer as to whether, not just gendered identities were blurred, but if civic ones were too.

Watson accuses past historians of pigeonholing women into a few select identities of nurse, mother and chief mourner.⁹² She claims that this ignores how women saw themselves while the war was being fought. Suffrage societies paraded London in 1915 to demand employment to free up men.⁹³ Their wording on the banners is of particular interest – “We demand the right to serve”. It focuses on ‘service’, not the right to ‘work’. Furthermore, at the outbreak of war, the London Society for Women’s Suffrage changed its name to London Society for Women’s Service, implying a shift of focus from politics to war service.⁹⁴ The services offered by this society, run by Millicent Fawcett, were a return to traditional female concerns: childcare and domestic care.⁹⁵ Fawcett saw these services worthy of the word. The word ‘service’ is of the upmost importance here. It could reveal similarities to their male counterparts at war, offering their service. Watson claims that work turned into service only to

⁹¹ Simmonds, p.152.

⁹² Watson, pp.2-3.

⁹³ Peel, p.110.

⁹⁴ Kingsley, p.248.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

protect notions of masculinity within Britain.⁹⁶ It was an easier way to defuse the much more dangerous issue of women casually doing men's jobs.

Looking at the language used by women to define their efforts reveals a mixed answer as to how employed women viewed their own part in the war. Simmonds looked at the 1917 interviews of female munitions workers in A. Fowwell's, *Munition Lasses*, only to find that women viewed sacrifice, patriotism, altruism and selfishness all as equal motivators. A. Foxwell talked of her joy at taking part in real war work, shorn of comfort or luxury and Naomi Loughlan assured that munition workers sacrificed their ease but gained a life worth living. "Our long days are filled with interest, and with the zest of doing work for our country in the grand cause of freedom."⁹⁷ Some women's lives improved but clearly some viewed their work as service for Britain.

Turner argues that women could not be seen as soldiers because they were not killers.⁹⁸ Is it this mentality of killing that divides civilians and soldiers so sharply? Yet, these munitions workers were aiding the killing of the men. "War ceased to be a masculine occupation" in the Great War due to the requirements of total war.⁹⁹ The changing theory of feminism saw a turn against the end to separate spheres and refocused on separate - but complimentary - spheres

⁹⁶ Watson, p.106.

⁹⁷ Simmonds, p.135.

⁹⁸ Turner, p.159.

⁹⁹ Kingsley, p.251.

between the sexes.¹⁰⁰ The separate but equal doctrine returns. Civilian female munitions workers compliment, but do not replace or become soldiers. A blurring of the divides is harder to find here, rather a reworking of boundaries. Even with this reworking of identities, the returning men after 1918 quickly helped to revise how women were to be seen as war contributors. Curiously, much of the work actually undertaken by women during the period was not what one might naturally consider to be 'war-work'. The greatest influx of female labour was into white-collar work in the commercial sector of the economy.¹⁰¹ "By April 1916, the female labour force had grown by 600,000; fully 30% of this growth was in commerce, and over half was in non-industrial occupations."¹⁰² Thus approximately 50% of the new workers were in the world of commerce – not war industries. Winter claims that too much attention is paid to women in shell production and serves to obscure the key role they played in freeing white-collar male workers.¹⁰³

By the end of war, Susan Kent claims that a sense of alienation was felt by men at the front from those safe at home, a complete estrangement – which was epitomised by the women at home.¹⁰⁴ Kent suggests that in Britain, hatred turned inward.¹⁰⁵ 1918-1919 saw a change in press attitudes to women's wartime identity from saviour to selfish.¹⁰⁶ The brief new identities of some

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p.233.

¹⁰¹ Jay Winter, *The Great War and the British People* (London: MacMillan, 1986), p.46.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Kingsley, p.247.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p.248.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. p.238.

women (depending on class and financial security) were already lost by 1919. Commemoration practices, which broadly mixed the image of the sacrificial Christ with the chivalric knight, meant that women's stories stood outside the soldier's tale. Civilians did not challenge the official identities of combatants and non-combatants. Although the actual percentage of deaths caused by war in Britain accounted for approximately only 2% of its population, it was a hallowed 2% of men.¹⁰⁷

How far did the lives of the soldiers become that of the civilian's preoccupations? Civilian life and culture catered for the army, whether to support them, read and talk about them or turn young boys over to them. Simmonds calls the 1914 song 'Keep the Home Fires Burning' the enduring popular anthem for the home front.¹⁰⁸ By looking at home front culture, a different way of analysing the blurred lines appears. It is not just civilians 'doing their bit' too, but how far their thoughts and daily culture matched that of a soldier; not just a shared sacrifice, but a shared sentiment. Pope notes that at the outbreak, the army imposed itself onto home life by boarding soldiers with civilians in their own homes.¹⁰⁹ The nation was made aware of the war in unprecedented ways, by means of cinema, many different news magazines, comics and weekly group meetings. Civilians became more interested in the daily affairs of war and popular culture helped enormously by focusing the cinema and entertainment industries to war. The dominance of war magazines and comics is used by James to explain Britain's

¹⁰⁷ James, p.398.

¹⁰⁸ Simmonds, p.275.

¹⁰⁹ Pope, p.27.

preoccupation with war, looking to news magazines such as *War Illustrated*. Despite paper shortages, the government encouraged the production of such items, especially boy's comics. *When the Comics Went to War* suggests that while sales figures were quite large, actual circulation of these comics was massive, with boys swapping in the playground.¹¹⁰ They served as powerful motivators to get boys to sign up. Civilians, young and old, could not escape the war.

At a minimum, there is hope of synthesis for explaining how home front identities changed during the war involving the dissolution of both extremes of soldier and civilian identities. Recent historiography has tried to break down the simple identity of the soldier as a hero (willing or not) to a 'civilian in uniform' and to unite them with the war workers at home. The study's original point by Gregory, "That there is an existential gap between those who have been under fire and those who haven't..." still stands undisputed. Yet this gap has proved to not be so clearly defined due to the sheer variety of experiences and roles within the army and in civilian communities. How did the citizens of Canterbury view their contributions? How did they view this existential gap between soldier and citizen? This study will therefore attempt to test established debates surrounding the Home Front and citizen's involvement in the war by looking at Canterbury and East Kent. Were the citizens of Kent soldiers without uniform?

¹¹⁰ Adam Riches, *When the Comics Went to War* (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 2009), pp.71-80.

The themes this study will look at in order to analyse how far lines and identities of the home front were blurred will be mainly focused between two central issues: how did Canterbury and East Kent mobilise for war and secondly, how far was life and the environment militarised between 1914-1918. For the first question, this will include investigating: Canterbury and East Kent's reactions to the outbreak of war in August 1914; male and female mobilisation patterns in the war effort; and the work of civic authorities. For the latter issue, daily life in Canterbury will be researched with a depth study of the Simon Langton Grammar School in the city centre due to a rich archive of contemporary documents and how the physical environment changed as a result of war. This study will conclude with an epilogue chapter looking at Canterbury and its neighbouring areas in 1919 and whether it returned to a period of 'normality' or continued to live with the war.

They will be studied by examining the following materials: contemporary newspapers covering Canterbury and East Kent, *The Langtonian* magazine for 1914-1919, personal diaries and scrapbooks held by Canterbury residents, parish magazines and the records and minutes of the Canterbury War Depot for the whole war's duration. The strength of these materials are that they place the focus of this study on the voices and opinions of the civilians as they felt at the time and not post 1918 where one might fear they might have changed their opinion of the war and their role for numerous reasons. These sources will offer a variety of civilians to be analysed across social class, gender and ages. By examining a variety of local press, the chance of bias can be minimised. However

such sources can still not be taken as indicative of an entire city's perception of itself and the sources do cater for a more middle class interpretation of the Great War due to the proliferation of their writings and places on local societies and authorities, such as the War Depot.

Chapter Two – The Mobilisation of East Kent for War

Canterbury's reaction to war's outbreak and male mobilisation

“My darling One and beautiful – ‘, Winston Churchill wrote to his wife on 28 July 1914, ‘Everything tends towards catastrophe... I am interested, geared-up and happy.’”¹¹¹ This excitement for war stood for decades as the accepted sentiment of all Britons in the summer of 1914. ‘Open arms’ and the ‘call to arms’ were not, as past historians unanimously spoke of, mutual partners. War enthusiasm was, if politicians’ war memoirs are to be believed, the prevailing feeling in Britain at the announcement of war with Germany. Lloyd George, writing in 1938, remembered ‘the warlike crowds that thronged Whitehall and poured into Downing Street’.¹¹² Ferguson goes as far as to blame Britain’s politicians for encouraging any enthusiasm and perpetuating the myth that it was a shared enthusiasm with the British public.¹¹³ Most modern studies highlight the ambivalences people felt towards the war, replacing the universal rallying to war that was the myth of war enthusiasm. Attitudes towards the war were more based on necessity and fulfilling one’s duty of national security, but only when the prospect of war was absolute, which suggests an acceptance of war by August 4th, not an enthusiasm for it.

¹¹¹ Hew Strachan, *The First World War Vol 1: To Arms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p.103.

¹¹² Simmonds, p.35.

¹¹³ Niall Ferguson, *The Pity of War* (London: Penguin Books, 1999), p.177.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine Canterbury and its neighbouring towns in light of the war enthusiasm debate to discover how its citizens viewed their role in the war. Further to this, how the area reacted over the first few months in the 'rush to the colours' needs consideration to see how sentiment changed in the short term from August to December 1914. If there was a change in public opinion between the immediate outbreak and the following months, it needs to be explained. The chapter will progress to look at three main lines of enquiry for analysis; male mobilisation, female mobilisation and that of the local civic agencies (non-gendered institutions such as the War Depot) to investigate blurred identities. How did Canterbury compare with London, just some sixty miles away? How did the outbreak of war not only impact the identity of Canterbury's citizens but also require people to reinterpret what citizenship meant in their local community?

The many reports of flag waving crowds, queues forming outside recruitment offices and boys marching with toy rifles have led historians to claim that Britons in 1914 universally greeted the war with rampant enthusiasm.¹¹⁴ The 'crowds' deserve much more attention than a simple quantitative analysis. To grasp the notion of a 'crowd', the press reported approximately eight thousand in London, actually meaning that little over one in every thousand of the metropolitan population attended.¹¹⁵ This figure also ignores the potential number of visitors that were in London for the extended Bank Holiday weekend

¹¹⁴ Simmonds, p.35.

¹¹⁵ Adrian Gregory, 'British war enthusiasm in 1914', in Gail Braybon (ed), *Evidence, History and the Great War: Historians and the Impact of 1914-18* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2003), p.72.

celebrations. When compared to figures for the flocking of crowds to London for news of the Armistice in 1918, standing at one hundred thousand, the awe of the crowds in 1914 must be minimised. Besides the statistical analysis of the crowds, as stated by Verhey in his study of war photographs, there is a difference between an audience and an active crowd.¹¹⁶ Individual identities are lost within a crowd, making mass opinion easy. At best, the myth of war enthusiasm is based on a rather small sampling size and general observations. Strachan used psychoanalysis to explain the motivation of the London crowds that did gather. The mentality of men in crowds is absolutely unlike that which they possess when isolated, thus a hysterical mass mind might explain what could be seen as a general war enthusiasm.¹¹⁷ In 1921, Freud tried to explain the crowds as the unconscious will of the group.¹¹⁸ Outside of London, there is evidence to cast doubts on the notion of enthusiasm. "In the Sussex coastal town of Littlehampton...it was recorded that the outbreak of war quelled the bank holiday merriment...In the same manner in Newcastle...a Methodist minister recorded in his diary for 5th August, 'Weeping women everywhere. There are no great demonstrations of enthusiasm. Everyone feels the awfulness of the situation...'"¹¹⁹ London stands as an inaccurate gauge of the national mood.

¹¹⁶ Jeffrey Verhey, *The spirit of 1914 – Militarism, myth and mobilization in Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p.22.

¹¹⁷ Strachan, p.108.

¹¹⁸ See the work of Gustav Le Bon who argued that hysteria explains war enthusiasm in his work in 1916 and Sigmund Freud's continuation of his 1913 work on 'the primal horde' looking at the coercive character of group formation in 1921.

¹¹⁹ Simmonds, p.35.

The scene at Canterbury reflected the anecdotal evidence from Newcastle and Littlehampton. In an article in *The Kentish Gazette* August 8th entitled, 'How the news was received in Canterbury?' it said: "The news of war was heard in Canterbury via special telegrams exhibited in the window of the Kentish Gazette office...the definite announcement on Wednesday...was received with in this part of the country with deep concern...The grim realities ...were reflected in the grave faces to be seen on every side."¹²⁰ Canterbury's citizens did not meet the news with militant fever. This article was similar to the tone of *The Times*, published only a few days before; a cautious tone can be detected along with a desire for peaceful reconciliation. *The Times* read: "We must pay handsome acknowledgement to the cool heads in many countries and not least in Germany, which are endeavouring to circumscribe the area of hostilities..."¹²¹ The same newspaper published 'peace prayers' and printed letters from 'public opinion and the crisis'; two readers hoped for neutrality and non-intervention, whilst only one patron believed Britain should fight, but only out of obligation to French allies.¹²² The sombre mood of the press in Canterbury was matched however by the acceptance of war and for the need to stand with the government. Acceptance, not enthusiasm, is key here. "The news did not, however, excite anything in the nature of a panic...A gratifying feature was the practically unanimous opinion to the issue expressed by men of all shades of political thought and creed in the locality – that England's cause was a just one...to vindicate her honour."¹²³ This acceptance is in direct contrast to claims

¹²⁰ *The Kentish Gazette*, 8 August 1914., p.5.

¹²¹ *The Times*, 2 August 1914, p.6.

¹²² *The Times*, 3 August. 1914, p.8.

¹²³ *The Kentish Gazette*, 8 August 1914, p.5.

of celebration. The newspaper further reports that: "A gratifying circumstance thus far has been the almost entire absence of the jingoistic spirit which was at times too prominent in the country during the Boer War."¹²⁴ Exuberance and celebration was not encouraged in the city, indeed, the Bank Holiday decorations in the high street were attacked by the press for being in bad taste in light of the war: "The gaily decorated and illuminated streets of Canterbury are regarded by many as being in, the nature of a travesty in view of the gloomy outlook caused by war."¹²⁵ Interestingly, the neighbouring district, Thanet, was anxious to report a 'business as usual' reaction to its readers during the holiday season, "All along the route from Herne Bay to Margate harvest operations are in progress just as usual. Golfers are still discovering where the bunkers are on the local course, the motor trips are as well patronised as ever."¹²⁶ An economic imperative may underline the 'business as usual' mentality of the coastal towns however due to the Bank Holiday.

The diaries of Fanny Coxe, the wife of a local priest, reveals a telling picture of Canterbury's reaction to war: that the initial reaction to the outbreak of war seems to be one of annoyance for the impact it had on the excitement for Cricket Week.¹²⁷ The declaration of war coincided with Canterbury's Cricket Week,

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Laura Probert, *Women of Kent Rally to the Cause – A Study of Women's Suffrage in East Kent 1909-1918* (Ramsgate: Milicent Press, 2008), p.134.

¹²⁷ Canterbury Cathedral Archives (hereafter CCA), CCA-AddMS-243, Diary of Fanny Coxe, 5 August 1914.

regarded as the most important social event of the year in the city.¹²⁸ On the first day of the event, crowds swarmed in large numbers, including the local garrison, the East Kent Regiment, to see the games.¹²⁹ Despite war's declaration, the two matches went ahead and concluded with its usual entertainment, including a performance by the Old Stagers at the Theatre Royal, of a song which highlighted the army's inadequacies:

"Oh, Tommy Tommy Atkins

You are run upon the cheap

So your rifle's undersighted

And your socks won't let you sleep

And the dye comes out of your trousers

Till your very legs are blue.

God Bless you Tommy Atkins

That's your country's love of you."¹³⁰

Celebration was in spite of war, not because of it. Such performance of songs could even suggest a feeling of pity for the regular soldiers and shows no intention to change from civilian to soldier at the outbreak. The exhaustive

¹²⁸ Audrey Bateman, *Wartime Canterbury 1914-1918* (Whitstable: Audrey Bateman, 2003), p.3.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

interest in Cricket Week over the war can also be seen in the local press. Provincial interests outweigh the war here. The press reported: "The opening day of the Canterbury Cricket Week was from many points of view a rather depressing affair. The gravity of the possibilities of the European Crisis had a marked effect in the attendance and the usual enthusiasm of the Bank Holiday crowd was conspicuous by its absence."¹³¹ Within the first three pages of the first edition of *The Kentish Gazette* since the war's declaration, out of fifty-two articles, only three concerned themselves with war. The reporting of the war's outbreak is strangely coupled with rather trivial provincial news in Canterbury. For example, while not only is the war subservient to the reporting of Cricket Week, but several local cinema advertisements at the Canterbury Electric Theatre show that the special pictures of the mobilization of the local forces was to be played alongside Chartham's garden shows and fete.¹³² Local or domestic identity seems to be more important than any patriotic or civic one in Canterbury – "an old fashioned city that was still fifty years behind the times".¹³³ The only crowd that gathered in the city was within the confinements of a cricket stadium. The city flitted between war acceptance and even disengagement at times in early August.

How did sentiments towards the war in Canterbury change after the immediate declaration? Pennell suggests that traditional views of British public opinion towards the Great War are over simplified and therefore provide an

¹³¹ *The Kentish Gazette*, 8 August 1914, p.3.

¹³² *Ibid.*, p.4.

¹³³ Bateman, p.8.

unsatisfactory explanation for the nation's response to war. A series of myths have built up since 1918 that suggest most ordinary British people supported the war simply because they were deluded and naively beguiled by propaganda into supporting the conflict.¹³⁴ Their support was very often carefully considered and complex. Canterbury's press showed a wary approach to the war, speaking much more about genuine concerns generated by the war rather than something more bellicose. Within a week however, the mood began to change with what may be something more similar to the 'rush to the colours' idea that swept through Britain. The number of men signing up in August to form Kitchener's Volunteer Army totalled 8,193 in the first week, then 43,764 per week, next 66,310, peaking at 174,901 recruits between 30th August and 5th September.¹³⁵ Three days after the declaration of war, the British Expeditionary Force, led by Sir John French, landed in France. No full-scale mobilisation of Britain was issued until the next day 8 August with the Defence of the Realm Act (DORA) awarding the government wide-ranging powers for the war. With this quick change in government policy, came a similarly sharp change in public and press opinion in Canterbury. War acceptance was becoming increasingly strong. The city quickly galvanised behind the war effort. While provincial and domestic concerns continued, war was not a secondary concern anymore. "Too high a tribute indeed cannot be paid to the people of the district for the courage...and for the patriotism which they are exhibiting in a large variety of ways. One may confidently hazard the assertion that there are very few persons in Canterbury and its neighbours who are not actively engaged...in helping forward their

¹³⁴ 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.4-6.

¹³⁵ Simmonds, p.41.

country's cause."¹³⁶ What is interesting is that the war is personalised here – it is “their country's cause” and not that of the government or soldier. On the very day that DORA was passed, a War Office notice was printed in *The Kentish Gazette* on how each and every man could volunteer for war work. It called for, “...civilians to enlist for one year or for the duration of the war in a special reserve force of quasi-military composite to serve with the Army in the field. This force will include: Motorcyclists, motor-lorry drivers, blacksmiths, coppersmiths, bakers, butchers, cooks and artificers.”¹³⁷ The phrase “quasi-military” is an early indication that identities between civilian and soldier would be far more complicated. The call to civilians to help the war, forced them to reinterpret what it is to be a citizen, what their ‘duty’ really is.

Canon Seymour Coxe, of the Precincts, Canterbury composed and published a new war hymn to be used in parish churches. It read:

“When the clouds of war are o'er them,

Duty calls them to the fight,

As their fathers strove before them,

Striving to defend the Right...

¹³⁶ *The Kentish Gazette*, 15 August 1914, p.5.

¹³⁷ *The Kentish Gazette*, 8 August 1914, p.5.

Help our soldiers to be brave.”¹³⁸

This hymn sung in churches in Canterbury clearly calls for civilians to see their ‘duty’, not only civic, but perhaps also Christian duty, to either sign up or help those fighting. War seems to have simplified what ‘duty’ means. The focus on duty and defence in many ways unites good soldiering and good citizenship. Coxe seems to try to appeal to the sense of citizenship to one’s community above anything else to rouse support.

The same focus on duty, as expressed by Canon Coxe, can be seen in the way people in Canterbury reacted to the panic food buying during the first week of war. The Mayor of Canterbury found it necessary by 8th August to make a public announcement in the press calling for people to stop purchasing goods for solely storage reasons, mainly to protect the prices and the poor; he appealed to the patriotic duty of the citizen to see sense.¹³⁹ A telling letter in *The Kentish Gazette* reveals how some people may have viewed cutting back on food as a patriotic and dutiful act: “Sir – In a crisis like the present, every member of the community can help or hinder the situation... ladies are giving impossibly large orders for food supplies...It does not reflect credit on the ladies of Kent...Let us all try to consider the wants of the community at large. Yours truly, FAIR PLAY.”¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ *The Kentish Gazette*, 15 August 1914, p.5.

¹³⁹ *The Kentish Gazette*, 8 August 1914, p.1.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.3.

The appeal to Kent's patriotism seems to have not yielded the larger results of male mobilisation as elsewhere in the country. In the 29th August edition of *The Kentish Times*, an appeal from Captain Henry H. C. Baird of the Buffs was made, "At the time of writing there are close on 300 who have already joined but this number must be more than trebled before the Battalion can become efficient and ready to take its place."¹⁴¹ There was some debate as to whether Kent was 'doing its bit' for the war, with Captain Baird continuing his article persuading the women of Kent to get their men to fight. The peculiarities of Kent's geography made it not only England's 'front line county' but also divided, with the northern half of the county up to the Medway estuary looking to London, while the southern half was overwhelmingly agricultural and pastoral.¹⁴² There was a desire in the regions around Canterbury to gather the harvest and maintain 'business as usual' whilst balancing the realistic fear of possible invasion.¹⁴³ Thus, Canterbury's recruitment patterns are quite complex, making generalisations about the region's enthusiasm difficult. The fact that the northern part of the county raised soldiers quicker than the southern half is not wholly indicative of a lack of enthusiasm. What is rather revealing is the great influx of recruits into the two Buffs Territorial battalions in the summer of 1914; the 4th battalion had an impressive 1,300 by early September, including local students from the agricultural college at Wye.¹⁴⁴ Domestic and civic duties were married rather well. Since no Territorial soldier could be forced to fight abroad

¹⁴¹ *The Kentish Gazette*, 29 August 1914, p.5.

¹⁴² Mark Connelly, *Steady the Buffs! A Regiment, A Region and the Great War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p.10.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

in 1914, these men remained civilians in uniform – in effect, a part of the same quasi-military idea from the War Office notice.

What can explain this ‘rush to the colours’ and support and what does it reveal about Canterbury’s understanding of citizenship and identity? Anne Summers highlights how unique Britain’s pace of volunteering to help and fight was in Europe. In the years 1914-16, “...an island with no system of conscription, and in which no major [home] military engagement had taken place for centuries, could furnish 1 ½ million volunteers for a war overseas, that island must have developed, over a long period, a very wide and pervasive range of military or militaristic modes of thinking...different from the more conventional and obvious forms...which existed in other European societies at this time.”¹⁴⁵ Summers claims that in Edwardian Britain it was politically possible and respectable to preach the ideal of a citizenry united in defence of the home while criticizing the Imperialistic endeavours of the Regular Army.¹⁴⁶ This certainly corroborates Connelly’s argument that Kent as the front line county helps explain Kent’s support. Lord Harris, Lord Lieutenant of the County, said in a speech at a Canterbury recruitment meeting: “Was there anything more terrible to imagine than all the peaceful occupation of harvest being carried on without interruption, and the smiling dales and hills that made Kent so beautiful, being tarnished by the horrors of invasion?”¹⁴⁷ Further use of the county’s motto, ‘Invicta’, Latin for ‘The Unconquered’ (dating to c.1066 relating to the county’s

¹⁴⁵ Anne Summers, ‘Militarism in Britain before the Great War’, *History Workshop Journal*, Vol. 1 (1976) 104-123 (p.105).

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ Connelly, p.10.

denial of submission), by the government proves the centrality of the local protection issue to Kent's support for the war.¹⁴⁸ In *The Kentish Gazette* 12th September 1914, a poem was published by the anonymous 'A Man of Kent', calling for men to serve, which reinforces Lord Harris' recruitment speech's message to protect Kent:

"Your brothers in arms o'er the water
Are bearing the brunt of the show
Will you stand aside, nothing daring?
Men of Kent, Kentish men, answer 'No'...
Just picture the 'Garden of England'
Devastated, wrecked, shattered and torn
Every village, town, borough and hamlet
Pillaged, ruined, burnt and left forlorn."¹⁴⁹

There is the suggestion that voluntary service was not meeting the nation's requirements in Kent after several months of fighting. A verse called 'The Loafers of Britain' was published in *The Kentish Gazette*, addressed to young men to embarrass them for not enlisting. It read:

¹⁴⁸ Hazel Basford, K. H McIntosh, and Western Front Association. *Gazetteer of East Kent in the Great War 1914-1918*. (Canterbury: K.H. McIntosh, 2008), p.6.

¹⁴⁹ Laura Probert, p.136.

“You with the cigarette in your mouth
And the cap pushed back on your head
Is not the sluggish blood of you stirred
By the thought of your country’s dead?
You who constantly loaf at Lord’s
With your small soul set on the game,
Is not the glory of war to you
As the brand of a burning shame?”¹⁵⁰

While it parallels the appeal put forward by Lord Harris and the anonymous ‘A Man of Kent’ by targeting men to share the duty of war, it is far more aggressive and unrelenting. The verse attempts to shame young men to enlist, rather than focus on using the locality of the county to gently stir feelings of protection for their home.

Anderson explains that it was something within the British national identity that resulted in popular support for the war effort, specifically, the importance of Christianity in Edwardian identity. Anderson suggests that the Crimean War saw the identity of the soldier change to something more heroic and religious –

¹⁵⁰ Bateman, p.14.

something of a higher worth than just putting down riots, swearing, drinking and fighting; they became Christian soldiers doing God's and the Empire's work.¹⁵¹ The Earl of Shaftesbury congratulated the Bible Society in 1858 on the public's acceptance that "psalm-singing is not inconsistent with heroism", and the popular preacher, E. P. Hood, declared that if Wellington had still been alive, he would have been obliged to recant his assertion that "a man who has nice notions about religion, has no business to be a soldier".¹⁵² Whilst the public and the army may have been brought closer under a shared ethos and a more sympathetic understanding of one another, they still remained separate spheres of life. Religion may explain in part the rush to arms as a part of British character, but not how civilian identity merged with the army.

The appeal of redemptive sacrifice in Christianity may explain how identities were changing however. A notable aspect of the nature of sacrificial duty is the role religion played in it. "Christianity, being based on Christ dying on the cross to absolve the sins of the world made sacrifice one of its central pillars."¹⁵³ Gregory stands alongside Leese and argues that religious connotations were utilised in propaganda and points to the widely publicised image of Christ comforting a British soldier and frequent declarations that Germany was a menace of Christendom as proof of this.¹⁵⁴ It is easy to imagine this as the primary motivation for Canterbury given the prominence of the church and

¹⁵¹ Olive Anderson, *The Growth of Christian Militarism in mid-Victorian Britain*, *English Historical Review*, Vol. 86 (1971) 46-72 (p.47).

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p.51

¹⁵³ Peter Leese, review of *The Last Great War: British Society and the First World War*, by Adrian Gregory, *The American Historical Review*, Vol.115 (2010), 292.

¹⁵⁴ Gregory, pp.152-158.

Cathedral in Canterbury life. Yet at a special service in Canterbury Cathedral at the end of August, which was to call on God's blessing in the days of war, attended by the elites of the city, Archbishop Davidson told them they had probably brought the war upon themselves by their extravagant lifestyles.¹⁵⁵ Once again, a more complicated image arises.

The outbreak of war called into question what good citizenship was, just as it may have cast new questions on what it meant to be a good Christian in Britain. New demands were asked of Canterbury's citizens in terms of making sacrifices and more importantly, volunteering before 1915. The Mayor congratulated the city regarding the collection of funds, the formation of VAD units and other skilled work: "...the results have been decidedly gratifying and at the Territorial Hall the applications to join one or another of the voluntary forces have been quite remarkable."¹⁵⁶ Citizenship was being remoulded. Membership in the community during total war meant new burdens to undertake. It is important to briefly review what the relationship between 'citizen' and 'identity' is. Citizenship is a matrix of rights and obligations governing the community that exists in tension with the heterogeneity of social life and the multiple identities that arise from it.¹⁵⁷ Trevor Purvis claims that citizenship has traditionally claimed priority over other identities people may have.¹⁵⁸ This would presume

¹⁵⁵ Bateman, p.7.

¹⁵⁶ *The Kentish Gazette*, 15 August 1914, p.3.

¹⁵⁷ Trevor Purvis and Alan Hunt, Practices of Citizenship Identity versus Citizenship: Transformations in the Discourses and Practices of Citizenship, *Social Legal Studies*, Vol. 8 (1999) 457-482 (p.457).

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

therefore that the majority of people in Canterbury were acting as good citizens through their volunteering, superseding any other identity construct with either their civilian role or that of the soldier. Much of the reports and letters point towards people acting upon their duty as a citizen to protect their homeland – their community in Canterbury. As this study has stated before, self-perception is pivotal to understanding how Britons saw themselves during the war.

Certainly little evidence is there to suggest that at the outbreak of war, the people of Canterbury saw themselves as soldiers, although a sizeable number began to merge the two fronts by joining the Buffs' Territorial battalion. Where the lines between the home and battle fronts starts to blur is in the galvanisation of Canterbury's efforts to help the war effort. It is through these new experiences from 1914-1918 that identities may begin to reflect that of a soldier and break down the lines between soldier and civilian.

While generally speaking, the flow of troops into Kent were well received, by December 1914 some tension arose in the District regarding the large number of billeted troops.¹⁵⁹ Initially it caused little inconvenience with mainly public halls and buildings being used in Canterbury but an increased number of concerned civilians sent letters to the local press. Some anxiety over public health in the area was raised with one concerned citizen worrying that the large numbers being added to Canterbury's population could result in the spread of dysentery or other diseases common in crowded cities.¹⁶⁰ The General Purpose Committee of Canterbury had to respond by creating public baths for the soldiers and

¹⁵⁹ *Life in Kent During the First World War*, p.101.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

improving the checking of sanitation of troops. The billeting of troops in the area became something of a burden to people in the city as the first few months of war set in. For most, the burden was upheld willingly, but nevertheless, it reveals a distinction did exist still between soldier and civilian up to the start of 1915 in Canterbury. These civilians did not want to fully share the hardships of war, or view it as necessary to an extent. The billeting of troops in Kent was welcomed in some areas however, with Broadstairs requesting that troops to the number of 5000 be billeted in the district.¹⁶¹ A petition containing over 200 signatures of Broadstairs residents was sent to the War Office in December asking for these troops; the motive for such a request however was far from patriotic or out of a shared duty with that of the soldier. It was down to finances. The petition mentioned that the billeted troops would alleviate the likely distress caused by a bad season owing to the war.¹⁶² The welcoming of troops was a business opportunity for a seaside town.

Spy mania coincided with the outbreak of war and arrival of troops in Canterbury as it did elsewhere in the country early on in August 1914. A sense of distrust between civilians can be interpreted with the wild accusations and stories passed on in the area. Audrey Bateman claims that there was a local obsession with spies in Canterbury in particular.¹⁶³ The sudden importance of the city and county for garrisoning troops may explain the civilians' heightened fear and hyperbole. On the 13th August 1914 the St. George's Cinema featured a

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Bateman, p.6.

special film about Mr Taylor of Port Farm in Upstreet who was supposedly shot and wounded by a German spy only the day before.¹⁶⁴ There was no mention of the incident in the press, no police reports to be found or any mention of the apparent attack by the media again so it may be believed to be a fabrication. Civilians in Canterbury became very suspicious and distrustful of people outside their city, often on the basis of whether they had a countrified Kentish accent or not.¹⁶⁵

Male mobilisation took on various forms besides just turning civilians into soldiers; Britain needed war workers too. The 'economy of sacrifice' was not simply sold as a blood debt owed by civilians who did not see combat; the government looked to utilise various civilian skills and praise them as war worthy. The National Registration Act 1915, passed in July, was intended to register every adult in Britain, aged between fifteen and sixty-five years of age, to establish what useful skills and dependants they had. This Act (also known as the Derby Scheme) can be interpreted as evidence that across Britain, working for the war effort could mean more than working as a soldier, rather than being seen as the first step towards conscription a year later.

The usefulness of the potential worker made them on par with the soldier, hence a blurring between identity of combatant and non-combatant. Munitions workers were especially targeted as a vital part of the war effort. While it must be remembered that the rhetoric of the Ministry of Munitions suggested that

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

'munitions' also meant knitted socks, shirts, blankets and jam, as mentioned before, ammunition was at the forefront, as shown by this cartoon from the popular *The Daily Graphic*, in which a soldier and worker are shaking hands, dubbed 'Brothers in Arms'.¹⁶⁶

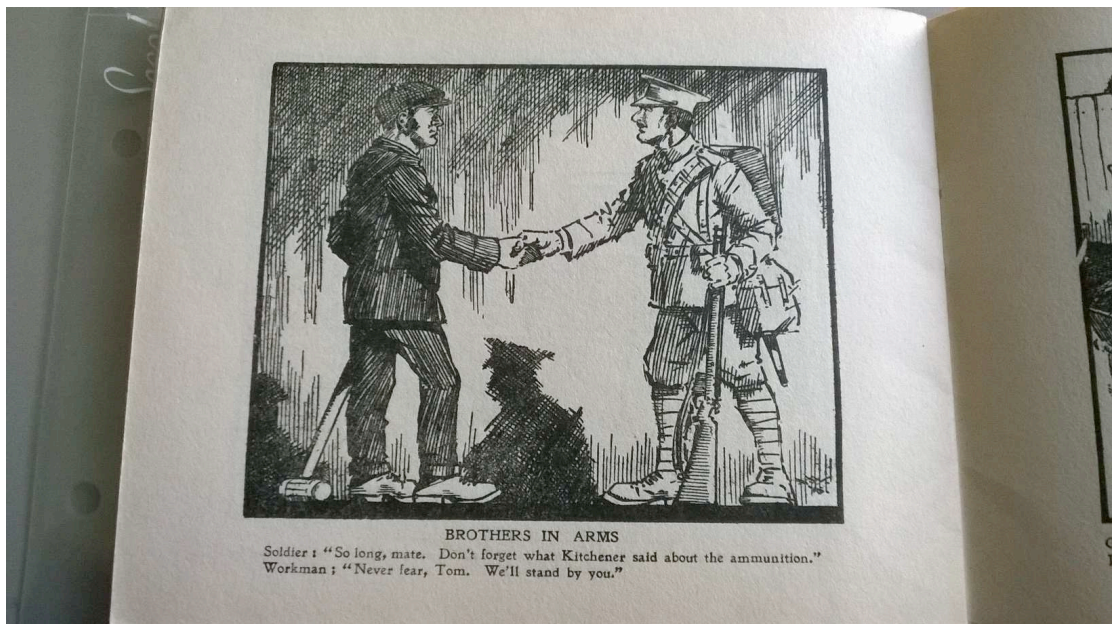


Illustration 1: Illustration from *The Daily Graphic* from F. Aitken's scrapbook, 1914. From Canterbury Heritage Museum, CANCM: 1992.1.335.

The text reads: "Soldier: So long, mate. Don't forget what Kitchener said about the ammunition. Workman: Never fear, Tom. We'll stand by you." They are partners in the war, with the very centre of the cartoon focusing the observers' eyes to the coupled pair of hands. Occupational identities and differences don't matter here, so long as both are war workers. Francis Aitken, a Canterbury based Railway Engineer, kept this cartoon in his scrapbook along with other wartime

¹⁶⁶ Canterbury Heritage Museum (hereafter CHM), CANCM:1992.1.335. Scrapbook collected by Francis Aitkens.

memorabilia. Much can be inferred as to why such a cartoon might have been kept so carefully by this Canterbury resident. As working in an important occupation for the war effort, Francis must have shared the sentiment of the cartoonist and felt on par with the soldier as 'Brothers in arms'.

An interesting case study surrounding the Aitkens family from Canterbury reveals how one's occupational identity had been changed by war, despite one's day-to-day contractual responsibilities not changing at all. A certificate and permit book for Cyril Aitkens, who had been registered under the National Registration Act 1915 for war work, granted him the right to travel as a Railway Engineer for the South Eastern and Chatham Railway.¹⁶⁷ What is illuminating is that prior to 1915, Cyril was a Railway Engineer and he may have viewed himself as such. By mid-1915 he was a war worker, worthy of recognition from Field Marshal Haig, who praised the vital work of the South Eastern and Chatham Railway Company and their great willingness to which the army owes much thanks.¹⁶⁸ His work entailed the same pre-war duties and problems, with the exception of now requiring a permit to travel to the Isle of Sheppey when necessary. This arbitrary distinction between his identity as an engineer and as a war worker is highly interesting. It requires no change or hardship to his life at the Home Front, but he was brought closer to the soldier and front than ever before.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁷ CHM, CANCM:1992.1.305. Permit documents for Cyril Aitkens.

¹⁶⁸ CHM, CANCM:1992.1.301. Letter from Field-Marshal Haig.

¹⁶⁹ Sociologist, Richard Jenkins looks at the example of the identity of a 64-year-old compared to a 65-year-old who becomes an old-age pensioner. This is based on an

The Military Service Act, 1916, brought a change to the mobilisation of men in Kent by enforcing the conscription of all eligible single men between the ages of 18 and 41. The Prime Minister, permitted the insertion of an exemption clause in the Act, as a means of appeasing the anti-conscriptionists within parliament, to allow men to appeal against being called-up on grounds of poor health, vital war work, having dependents or on grounds of conscience.¹⁷⁰ Individuals who sought exemption had to appear before their local Military Service Tribunal, made up of magistrates and chosen citizens, alongside a War Office Adviser or military representative.¹⁷¹ As a result of the Act, military tribunals were being held in Canterbury every week from March 1916 and their results reveal a move away from some civilians relating to the soldier.¹⁷² Lines become clearer and not so blurred when men are commanded to identify with the soldier by literally becoming one. Many desired to remain at the Home Front, marking it as a distinct area away from the soldier at the front. Canterbury based employers and farmers in particular were to make desperate attempts to hold onto their key staff to ensure the survival of their business with frequent coverage of military tribunals in the local press.¹⁷³ Requests were rather substantial with Charles Messenger claiming that within the first six months of 1916 alone, over 750,000 claims were made.¹⁷⁴ "Between 1st March 1916 and 31st March 1917, 779,936

arbitrary distinction, yet has a tremendous impact on one's identity. They were someone quite different on the eve of their 65th birthday according to Jenkins. The same idea can apply for civilians during 1914-18.

¹⁷⁰ Simmonds, pp.53-54.

¹⁷¹ Ibid, p.54.

¹⁷² Bateman, p.35.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Simmonds, pp.54.

men won exemptions from military service, whilst only 371,500 were compulsorily enlisted: a rate less than that achieved under the voluntary system..."¹⁷⁵ More men in these later years of the war were more concerned with other aspects of their identity than anything connected with the soldier. Support had even dipped. Most tribunal records were deliberately destroyed in the 1920s but a study of the coverage by the local press can offer great insight into how East Kent responded to conscription. Occupational identity was more important than soldiering to an ex-Sergeant, Mr Curling, for example, who at a sitting of the Dover Rural Tribunal in March 1916, asked for exemption from the Royal East Kent Yeomanry on the ground he was a farmer.¹⁷⁶ The tribunal agreed with him, thus showing to some small extent, what the elites of Dover thought about identity and priorities by 1916.

Grocers Finn & Sons of Canterbury applied on behalf of their 24 year old shop assistant, Alfred Bailey for military exemption.¹⁷⁷ Mr Finn claimed that Bailey could not be replaced by a woman, having lost 36 out of his 62 strong male staff and that his right shoulder was liable to be "flung out of place" at any moment and was therefore unsuitable for soldiering.¹⁷⁸ While the Tribunal was divided over Mr Finn's business concerns, they did grant a temporary exemption on the basis of Bailey's health. A similar flood of requests seemed to emerge from the businesses based within and surrounding Canterbury; with a small, but significant number of civilians desiring to cling to their civilian life. Far more

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, pp.54-55.

¹⁷⁶ *The Kentish Observer & Canterbury Chronicle*, 2 March 1916, p.5.

¹⁷⁷ Bateman, p.35

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

telling is the district's mistrust of using female employment as late as 1916. Hairdresser, F. Coast, applied on behalf of employee Arthur Whitebread. He had been short-handed for several months. The Mayor suggested he employ women. The applicant replied that the training took many years; he did not think the employment of women was practical.¹⁷⁹ Mr Wallace of Wallace Bros, market gardeners, echoed the same belief, claiming that women would not be able to do the milking work for his cows, to which the chairman answered: "My son is just back from France. He tells me you never see a man there. The ground is cultivated right up to the trenches. The horses are tended by a woman..."¹⁸⁰ Similarly, another local farmer told a tribunal that his farm would fail if his men had to leave since his cows would not put up with strange women milking them.¹⁸¹ His plea was only met with a ripple of laughter from the court. The appeals were refused.

How the men of East Kent responded to the Military Service Act 1916 can reveal which identity they responded to more; their civilian occupational one, religious one, domestic identity or that of the soldier. A newspaper analysis of *The Kentish Observer & Canterbury Chronicle* shows the reporting of Military Service Tribunals and the regularity. While the data is limited by the sample size and favouring of some news items over others, the analysis reveals some rather interesting insights into civilians and their concerns in East Kent. The data covers East Kent including Canterbury, Dover, Ramsgate, Whitstable, Folkestone,

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., p.36.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

Bridge, Faversham, Deal, Ashford, Maidstone, Herne Bay, Sittingbourne and Eastry. March to May 1916 has been compared to the equivalent months a year later to investigate any changes as a cross section of East Kent since the introduction of conscription.

Table 1: March–May 1916 of *The Kentish Observer*¹⁸²

Type of story	Number recorded	Number in favour of applicant – full exemption
Conscience/Religious	21	6
Economic – farming	15	4
Economic – other	68	8
Health	11	5
Domestic obligations	17	3
Unknown	26	7

The reports varied in depth but suggest that overwhelmingly the men of East Kent who applied for exemption, did so for economic reasons – for the preservation of their business or livelihood. 53% of reports focused on the economy, whilst only 13% were made on religious or moral grounds. Based on

¹⁸² Based on a three month sample of issues between 16 March 1916 and 25 May 1916 of *The Kentish Observer & Canterbury Chronicle*.

these results, East Kent Tribunals seemed to be relatively difficult to get full exemption from. Often the anecdotal evidence provides a mixed response, with contrasting decisions given to similar requests, depending on the panel that day. For example, a carpenter who had been caring for his widowed mother and three sisters applied at Maidstone to which the military representative answered the question of “What do you think of this applicant?” with, “I think that man is doing his duty to his country” and was exempted.¹⁸³ However at a similar appeal on domestic grounds in Canterbury the following week, “Oliver Goldsmith appealed on the ground that two brothers were serving, that his stepfather was in the asylum and that his sister was developing similar symptoms to her father.”¹⁸⁴ The appeal was quickly dismissed.

With only 21% of applications for exemptions reported by the press being successful, the tribunals in East Kent reacted quite harshly with the majority of requests. The first conscientious objector in Faversham was Albert Curtis, aged 22 and a member of the religious group, the Plymouth Brethren. The Faversham Borough Tribunal linked the concept of soldiering with the notion of being a good citizen during the trial. The tribunal asked “Do you intend to remain a citizen of this country after the war?” inferring also that if he did not fight, he did not deserve to live peacefully in Britain.¹⁸⁵ The Mayor said that Curtis was “selfishness personified”.¹⁸⁶ While the outcome was not made explicit, it was implied that he was not fully exempted. As a member of an unorthodox Christian

¹⁸³ *The Kentish Observer & Canterbury Chronicle*, 9 March 1916, p.2.

¹⁸⁴ *The Kentish Observer & Canterbury Chronicle*, 16 March 1916, p.5.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid*, p.6.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid*.

group in an area dominated by the traditions of Canterbury Cathedral, it may be that Curtis was a victim of such fierce attack by the tribunal for being a religious minority. Perhaps his plea on the basis of being a member of the Plymouth Brethren best explains Faversham Tribunal's reactions. Elsewhere in the county, members of the Plymouth Brethren were becoming involved in the war effort outside of fighting and distinguished between aiding the war effort and physically killing someone. In Herne Bay, Charles Holloway, an engineer and Brethren member, said that his professional abilities might better serve the war, but one removed from helping men to kill, even building a bridge for the army to cross was to be ruled out, but perhaps medical aid. The press said he was quite willing to help.¹⁸⁷ A unanimous answer for the Plymouth Brethren's identification with the war in Kent cannot be given. Applications were made to exempt an English Master at a local Secondary School until the end of the academic year owing to the difficulty of finding a replacement but it was pointed out by the tribunal that the needs of the Army came before those of education.¹⁸⁸ As time progressed, an increased number of requests were reported from March 1916 to May 1916, including a rise in the reporting on the number of failures to report for service in the area. On May 25th 1916, the press reported a more sensational impact of conscription in the area with its first related suicide. Worried about having to join the army, Mr Mowll, a farmer, had applied to the East Kent Tribunal at Bridge for exemption but was presumably dismissed, only to be found drowned in his farm's pond.¹⁸⁹ While these numbers and stories represent a minority of men in the area, they do show that identification with the

¹⁸⁷ *The Kentish Observer & Canterbury Chronicle*, 2 March 1916, p.5.

¹⁸⁸ *The Kentish Observer & Canterbury Chronicle*, 16 March 1916, p.6.

¹⁸⁹ *The Kentish Observer & Canterbury Chronicle*, 25 May 1916, p.2.

soldier had changed and some of the early support and acceptance of 1914 was lost, as more domestic based concerns dictated civilians' lives. However as most men in the area joined the territorial forces rather than wanting to fight abroad in 1914, this may simply represent an even firmer identification with home and duties there by 1916, rather than with the soldier

Table 2: March–May 1917 of *The Kentish Observer*¹⁹⁰

Type of story	Number recorded	Number in favour of applicant – full exemption
Conscience/Religious	0	0
Economic – farming	1	0
Economic – other	0	0
Health	1	1
Domestic obligations	0	0
Unknown	30	Unknown

¹⁹⁰ Based on a sample of all issues between 1 March 1917 and 31 May 1917 of *The Kentish Observer & Canterbury Chronicle*.

The reporting of tribunal cases had vanished in 1917 but this is not indicative of cases not occurring, rather that reports of them had halted for favour of other news items. Perhaps this can be explained by the fact that conscription had already been in place for over a year and that interest in such stories had diminished. The grimness of war had been endured for over two years by this point; high casualty lists after the Battle of the Somme 1916 cementing such realities. This may explain the drop in stories associated with sending men to the front, after such events.

The local press continued to report an increasing number of tribunals and absentees throughout the year, with articles turning towards men being charged by the Canterbury Police Court for 'failure to report'.¹⁹¹ The Headquarter Recruiting Officer of the Buffs called upon the general public to provide any information, which would assist in tracing no less than 365 missing men in the district.¹⁹² A list of these men, their age and last known address were published in the newspaper with the implication that these were potential absentees from military service.¹⁹³ A further announcement about recruitment in *The Kentish Gazette* was made several weeks later by the same Officer, after having received some ill tempered responses to the accusations implied about the previous 365 men: "It has been brought to my notice that the publication of names in the newspaper, even though nothing was said about absentees, tended to cast

¹⁹¹ *The Kentish Observer & Canterbury Chronicle*, 6 April 1916, p.7.

¹⁹² *The Kentish Gazette*, 26 August 1916, p.2.

¹⁹³ Bateman, p.39.

reflection on individuals.”¹⁹⁴ The information required from the public was made more precise and now extended to five hundred and forty wanted individuals. It still suggested that these men should have a proper reason to not be in the army, thus casting suspicion about the men of the area by asking questions such as: “whether they are in a reserved occupation” or “have moved to another district”, or “have already volunteered”, etc.¹⁹⁵ There is sufficient evidence to suggest that by the middle of 1916, the male citizens of Canterbury were becoming rather resistant to see themselves as soldiers or at the very least, were suspected of doing so by the government. When the imaginary wall between civilian and soldier is removed by the enforcement of conscription, the lines that separate them become more apparent as the civilian is forced to consider a soldier’s plight. Some men do not want to leave their home, some want to stay for work or because of ill health, whilst others don’t want to kill. The reality of identifying with a soldier was made fully apparent for all single men between the ages of 18 and 45 in East Kent by a combination of conscription and war reports.

The Dover Express and East Kent News provides a useful comparison to the reported coverage given to tribunal cases in Canterbury. The newspaper was more organised than its Canterbury counterpart, with stories separated into reports of Dover residents across multiple tribunals including: Dover Local Tribunal, Eastry Rural District Tribunal, Dover Rural District Tribunal and the Kent Appeal Tribunal (held in Canterbury). At the sitting of the first tribunal in Dover’s Town Hall on 3rd March 1916, one of the members, Mr Robson,

¹⁹⁴ Ibid, p.40.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

complained that an anonymous gentleman had sent him and other members of the tribunal a document intended to influence their decisions to exempt as many persons as possible. While this could be representative of a local anti-conscription sentiment, far more telling was the tribunal's response, which angered by this, saw it as a possible crime under DORA.¹⁹⁶ What the document contained was not shared, but a bribe is possible. Despite the tribunal's anger at this document, local belief was that some tribunals were being too relaxed. A running section of the paper which contained local gossip called 'In the Street' ran a story saying "They say that the Dover Rural District Tribunal are excusing a large number of single men."¹⁹⁷ This was an area to air local complaints, therefore suggesting that the earlier anonymous document sender was not representative of Dover's residents. As a point of comparison to *The Kentish Observer*, a similar analysis of stories reported about the Dover tribunals has been carried out.

Table 3: 1-31 March 1916 of *The Dover Express* ¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁶ *The Dover Express and East Kent News*, 3 March 1916, p.8.

¹⁹⁷ *The Dover Express and East Kent News*, 3 March 1916, p.5.

¹⁹⁸ Based on a sample of all issues between 1 March 1916 and 31 March 1916 of *The Dover Express and East Kent News*.

Type of story	Number recorded	Number in favour of applicant – full exemption
Conscience/Religious	12	9
Economic – farming	101	80
Economic – other	84	32
Health	16	9
Domestic obligations	21	10
Unknown	40	23

The regularity with which tribunals were reported in the Dover press was increased when compared to *The Kentish Observer*, but show similar results in that economic factors (farming and other enterprises together) were the most important reason for residents. The tribunal's focus seems to be more on local issues however with farming having an 80% exemption rate to ensure harvests were met and produce made available efficiently. *The Kentish Observer* only reported over a quarter of cases being exempted.

Table 4: 1-31 March 1917 of *The Dover Express*¹⁹⁹

Type of story	Number recorded	Number in favour of applicant - full exemption
Conscience/Religious	1	0
Economic – farming	7	6
Economic – other	44	17
Health	9	5
Domestic obligations	4	4
Unknown	10	9

Unlike the Canterbury press, Dover continued to follow stories of tribunals with some enthusiasm although, like Canterbury, the number covered decreased. Personal business concerns were however more important as the basis of exemption in 1917, compared with 1916, finding it a more difficult time to persuade tribunals that they were of vital importance to the area and the war. Civilians in Dover, when faced with forcibly becoming actual soldiers, seemed to cling to their civic roles and concerns.

¹⁹⁹ Based on a sample of all issues between 1 March 1917 and 31 March 1917 of *The Dover Express and East Kent News*.

In the middle of the newspaper's regular feature on the tribunals was another wartime regular section, 'Dover Men and the War' which photographed local men serving with a small personal biography and present military details (when they signed up, where they were fighting?). Typical of the biographies is that of H. Piggott's: "Lance-Corporal H. Piggott of the 1st Buffs, serving 'somewhere in France' since August 1915. Eldest son of the late Mr Joseph Piggott, of 13, Wyndham Road, Dover."²⁰⁰ What is the purpose of juxtaposing these men on a large centre-page spread between the tribunal news of men trying not to serve? The layout is repeated throughout 1916 and 1917. The publishers may have wanted to highlight the mobilised men of local pride to encourage volunteer enlistment whilst discouraging applications for exemption in the area. The 'Dover Men and the War' feature ran into late 1917 although less men were being featured but an increased depth of background to each individual was given. Great detail was also given as to the manner of death for many of these men. For example, one man was described as being killed "...by a shell which burst on an advanced post consisting of a shell hole on March 1st."²⁰¹ The grimness of war was not shied away from in the local press by mid 1917. However the same accounts of local soldiers' deaths was paired on the same page with a photograph of Stoker Philpott who was shown reading a copy of *The Dover Express* on board his battleship.²⁰² Locality is still central to many people and despite the reports of deaths, such photographs may have reminded civilians that they were the same as the soldier or sailor at war, still both reading the local newspaper.

²⁰⁰ *The Dover Express and East Kent News*, 24 March 1916, p.8.

²⁰¹ *The Dover Express and East Kent News*, 30 March 1917, p.8.

²⁰² *Ibid.*

The identity of the male civilian during the period of conscription is far more complex when analysing the impact of the Military Service Act on the district's conscientious objectors. Between 1916 and 1918, approximately 16,500 men registered as conscientious objectors under the Act.²⁰³ It is easy for one to forget that despite the heroic representations of recent historiography, all of Britain's conscientious objectors represented one-third of a per cent of all those who were eligible for military service in the country.²⁰⁴ While their particular identity issues are important for this study, they cannot be taken as typical of the region, nor the country. There are many cases of conscientious objectors that were reported by the local press covering a variety of reasons for refusing to become a soldier; most based on religious grounds.

F. End, a 21-year-old conscientious objector, who was deaf in one ear and suffered from discharge in the other, was refused exemption despite an objection on the basis that he was a Christian and not on his poor health. He told one member of the Tribunal, "...if someone was killing my mother, he would not kill that person in order to defend her."²⁰⁵ Similar cases from Canterbury, Dover, Maidstone, Herne Bay and Whitstable reflected the same objections to the same line of questioning that all of the Tribunals used – comparing the defence of the country to one's own mother being attacked. The act of killing another man was at the heart of End's objection to signing up and was one shared by many others

²⁰³ Simmonds, pp.53-56.

²⁰⁴ Ibid, p.56.

²⁰⁵ *The Kentish Observer & Canterbury Chronicle*, 2 March 1916, p.5.

whose tribunals were also reported. Is the act of killing all that separates the soldier and civilian? The direct contact with the enemy is missing, and so creates a clearer distinction between the two fronts.

Some conscientious objectors were content to help the war effort in a non-combatant service such as the Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC). The conscientious objector who would help the war but not kill is only separated from the soldier by not physically killing the enemy but shares a sense of duty. Frank Camburn, of Whitstable, who asked for non-combatant service when he was called up suggested that he would do his bit, but as a Christian could not kill for a government that decided on war and not him: "When the country decided to oppose Germany it was a matter for the country and he could not help what the country did. It did not ask him."²⁰⁶ Despite his political jibes he was granted the right for non-combatative service. The dubious terms 'duty' and 'sacrifice' are still shared between the soldier and this type of conscientious objector, only not always the literal blood sacrifice that some demanded. Although a blood sacrifice may have been shared to some extent as evidence from *The Kentish Observer* in 1916 suggests that some conscientious objectors would join the RAMC as suggested earlier.

The RAMC was not always wholly withdrawn from the fighting and death of the frontline. As suggested earlier in this study, there may be a link between being a

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

good Christian and a good soldier in Edwardian Britain on the basis of redemptive sacrifice, but some of these objectors, including F. J. End, see being a Christian soldier as antithetical. For the family of the fallen Buff, 2nd Lieutenant Bertram Bambridge, he was doing his civic and religious duty simultaneously as suggested by his memorial's epithet, "Christ's faithful soldier and servant..."²⁰⁷ For others however, being a good Christian is a priority above that of a being a good citizen, or is perhaps even the pinnacle of contemporary citizenship according to some objectors. Using either extremity, soldering is removed and demystifies the blurriness of soldier and civilian for these people.

Tribunals covered in Dover had a different rigor to the interrogation of conscientious objectors elsewhere in East Kent, perhaps due to its closer proximity to France and possible invasion. The focus on 'what if a German attacked your mother/sister?' is sidelined for genuine debate over morality and religion. While the frequency of stories of objectors is not high, the detail given to them by *The Dover Express* reveals a local interest in such events. In response to one religious objector, Mr Robson of the tribunal asked, "Did not Mr Hewitt think that if the Church were justified in blessing the weapons of the Crusaders, that the citizens of the Allied nations were justified in fighting these barbarians?" to which Mr Hewitt replied to him and the mayor, "I am not now an Englishman. I am a stranger, the same as the Apostle Paul, 'sojourning in this country'."²⁰⁸ Further theological debate continued in the same tribunal with another applicant, Mr Green. Mr Green was asked by the tribunal "Who and where is

²⁰⁷ CCA, CCA-U537/1. Scrapbook of press cuttings 1916-17.

²⁰⁸ *The Dover Express and East Kent News*, 17 March 1916, p.8.

God?” to which Mr Beeby of the tribunal answered their own question: “You will find that ‘Good’ is God and ‘evil’ is the Devil...God dwelleth here.”²⁰⁹ England became heaven according to this tribunal. The two testaments are used to test applicants on defending their religious stance. Religious identity is key here, although to the Dover Tribunal and Mr Beeby, fighting in the war is akin to religious work.

One dissatisfied conscientious objector wrote to the editor of *The Dover Express* expressing how being granted exemption from combative service was the same as being sent to the front. In his letter there is much evidence that some people at the time of war saw soldiers and civilians doing war work as not only complimentary but as one and the same. He wrote:

“Dear Sir – I am asking you to kindly publish this letter because I am not satisfied...for the Society of Friends...Our protest is, and has been for centuries, against all war as being anti-Christian... I could only crudely state the case before the Tribunal...to participate in it is a dis-service to humanity...I feel that there is no distinction really between services in principle – between the man who feeds and army in the field and the men in the trenches or between the maker and user of munitions...”²¹⁰

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ *The Dover Express and East Kent News*, 10 March 1916, p.2.

The mobilisation of men in East Kent witnessed an acceptance of war's outbreak, rather than any fanatic jingoism for it, which very quickly turned into a growing rally to become involved in the war effort on the basis of the rather masculine notion of protecting one's home, crops and family. 'Protection' was vital to the way that the men of Kent viewed the Great War amidst the very real potential threat of being invaded first. While the numbers in the Buffs regiments increased, more telling was the number who signed up for the territorial units to defend the Home Front. Conscription brought with it challenges to how civilians identified with the war and how they may have seen the frontlines as a possible mere extension of their own front. East Kent, reveals that out of the people who contested being called up to fight, more were concerned with business or health needs rather than out of conscience, suggesting that the male population saw a clearer distinction between the two arenas of home and front. This conclusion seems to be atypical of the national pattern as suggested by Gregory. Gregory's investigation of the Banbury Local Tribunal found that only a small proportion of tribunals were on the basis of conscientious objection with its first session seeing 40% of cases on domestic appeals, 40% based on employment, 10% on other issues and only 10% on conscientious grounds, similar to the findings in East Kent.²¹¹

Female mobilisation

²¹¹ Gregory, *The Last Great War*, p.101.

Soldiering was the domain of the male sex, whilst the Home was the domicile of the woman. This long held conception existed before the war, and still after it, despite women advancing within the army with the creation of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (W.A.A.C). They were never 'soldiers'; they did not enlist, they enrolled; they were disciplined by civic courts, not military ones and were denied the right to bear recognised military badges of rank.²¹² Technically they remained civilians. Irrespective of the fact that women do not emerge as equals to men after 1918 as a result of war, the Great War had a fundamental impact of the way that women perceived themselves and were seen by their male counterparts. It forced people into strange circumstances and raised questions about identity of gender and citizenship. While not wholly crossed, women certainly blurred the lines between Home and Front and soldier and civilian more than men. This section will investigate the way that men and women saw the role of women in wartime and whether they thought that women were crossing the boundaries of war zones. While gender politics is a heavily debated issue in the Great War, this study will only use the issue of whether women became 'men' when it relates to the breakdown of the frontlines and soldier identity, due to the constraints of a dissertation. It will focus on several case studies centred around Canterbury including: Voluntary Aid Detachments (VADs), the Order of the White Feather, munitions workers, the Women's Land Army and finally how in conjunction with the local community, the War Work Depot operated.

²¹² Grayzel, pp.198-199.

At the outbreak of war, women in Canterbury and East Kent were confined to work within the social constraints of Edwardian expectations of women. Early presumptions of what a woman could do in wartime were bound within this social framework. Bateman claims explicitly that in 1914 Canterbury, a lady seeking paid employment was socially unacceptable, with the exception of poorer families.²¹³ Those who were connected with the Cathedral were very unwilling to adopt any change in the status quo. A doctor's daughter who had taken work in a voluntary canteen just outside the Cathedral complained about the local snobbish attitude. She said: "Nobody was humble-minded. When you spoke to the Archbishop you hardly expected him to reply." Women, especially of a higher social standing, in Canterbury were expected to keep the home as their frontier.

The term 'home front' first entered into common English usage during the Great War; Grayzel focuses on the application of the adjectives 'home' or 'domestic' to the military term 'front' to suggest that all those living through the war years knew that they were no longer just civilians because of the language they used.²¹⁴ However, Grayzel suggests that although the divide between fronts was often porous, the distinction was created to keep men and women apart with separate identities, as a means of protecting the status quo of gender politics.²¹⁵ Women were supposed to stay at home and produce soldiers. Yet where Grayzel points to this as a clear separation from the battle line, Gullace argues that the

²¹³ Bateman, p.8.

²¹⁴ Grayzel, p.11.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

early expectations of women as mothers of soldiers is what bound them explicitly to the frontline. While patriotic sources increasingly depicted soldering as a domestic duty performed on behalf of the country's women and children, they correspondingly presented mothering as a military duty essential for the war.²¹⁶ The mother was the producer of soldiers and almost akin to a Recruitment Officer. As mothers, the lines were instantly blurred from August 1914 onwards. A poem printed in the *Primrose League Gazette* reminded mothers that:

“Mothers whose hearts are breaking,

Who sorrow and pain have known

How will ye answer England

If ye give England not her own?”²¹⁷

Mothers were to be praised for making sacrifices by sending sons and were obligated by duty to do so. The British Mothers Union reinforced this by appealing to its members with the slogan ‘Give Your Sons’.²¹⁸ Mrs Woodruff in Canterbury, deemed it worthy to keep a cutting of a poem addressed to women in *Blighty* magazine, entitled ‘The Woman’s Part’:

²¹⁶ Gullace, p.55.

²¹⁷ Imperial War Museum (hereafter IWM), IWM, WW, B06/4/6. *The Primrose League Gazette*, June 1915, no. 68, p.10.

²¹⁸ Gullace, p.55.

“And he’ll soon come back, with his duty done, and the hero’s cross on his breast.

There’s no place for a girl in the fighting line – but let this be your woman’s plan -

If we can’t enlist for service, we can each of us send a man.”²¹⁹

The poem divides men and women, battle and home but nonetheless suggests

that women are involved directly with the fighting front by sending sons.

Philanthropist Alec Tweedie declared that, “Men have become fighters and

women have become soldiers...Not only did women to start with give them

birth...but [they sought to] hearten and spur them on to work from the moment

war broke out.”²²⁰ A parallel army to that of the men is created – a mother’s

army who share in the sacrifices of war. Gullace calls Mrs Tweedie’s claim an

attempt at a military equality. The sentiment is shared in the *Girl’s Own Paper*

which said: “The mother lives every battle with her boy and more...With the boy

goes the mother – you cannot separate them.”, as well as *The Times*, which in

another poem reminded women that, “For you too to battle go...”²²¹ Being a

mother in Britain meant that a service was required of them and granted them a

right to suggest parallels between them and their soldier son. The erosion of the

battlefronts can be found in the rhetoric of motherhood used not only by

women, but also the men at the time.

²¹⁹ CCA, CCA-U537/1. Scrapbook of press cuttings 1916-17.

²²⁰ Gullace, p.57.

²²¹ Ibid.

On the 30th August 1914, retired Admiral Charles Fitzgerald founded the Order of the White Feather in Folkestone, 17 miles from Canterbury. The Order sent women out to present white feathers to educated young men to encourage, or more precisely, shame them into enlisting. While originating in East Kent, it spread throughout Britain as an early method of recruitment and poses an interesting alternative to motherhood as the sole means of sending men off to fight. Thirty women in Folkestone were deputised by Admiral Fitzgerald to whom he warned the men of Folkestone, saying that “a danger [was] awaiting them far more terrible than anything they can meet in battle,” for any idling young man.²²² According to *Chatham News*, an ‘amusing and novel’ method of obtaining recruits could be seen in Deal with the cries of women announcing, “Oyez! Oyez!! Oyez!!! The White Feather Brigade!”²²³ Women, and not just mothers, became the echoed voice of the recruiting officer early on in the war, and whether right or wrong in their actions, they saw themselves as an important part of galvanising support for the war. Christabel Pankhurst of the WSPU, started having her supporters in 1915 hand the feather to every young man in civilian dress, showing that the organisation had the support of some of the larger woman’s suffrage groups.²²⁴ In September 1914, the organisation printed a poster in Kent’s press encouraging women to help them. It read: “The National Call – Every woman, wife, mother, sister, or sweetheart should be a Recruiting officer. Remember the fate of your sisters in Belgium. See that your men enlist.”²²⁵ The poster keeps women apart from men and the realm of the military

²²² Ibid, p.73.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Probert, p.134.

²²⁵ *The Kentish Observer & Canterbury Chronicle*, 3 September 1914, p.5.

by reminding people that their role is in the domestic sphere and that of the romantic interest, yet interestingly also asserts their position as a recruitment officer. The power of enlistment for the military is in the hands of the women of East Kent according to this poster. Women saw themselves as officers therefore to some extent within this organisation.

However, one way to perceive the organisation of the Order of the White Feather is as the subjugation of women to soldiers and a part of the military voice and returns them to the very model of the passive damsel. The woman is the vulnerable mother or the longing sweetheart and the feather serves to remind men of this. Men must protect their women and become soldiers to do so. Recruitment leaflets often addressed women as 'Mothers' and 'Sweethearts'.²²⁶ Perhaps, Admiral Fitzgerald saw women in this role, rather than an extension of his or the army's voice.

The Order of the White Feather may have inadvertently widened the boundary between soldier and civilian in the way it targeted those men in civilian clothes, regardless of whether the women knew him or not. The organisation helped reduce soldiering to a male khaki uniform (a uniform women could not share without controversy) by targeting men who dressed in civilian wears. The soldier's uniform became an inadequate symbol for a complex identity involved in fighting that these women, irretrievably fixated by surfaces, fabrics and

²²⁶ Ibid, p.82.

colours, did not understand.²²⁷ Fashion was the focus of a man's identity to these women. Gullace recalls one particular story to summarise this argument: "a woman scornfully asked a young man in a tram car 'why are you shirking your duty?' He quietly withdrew from his pocket a handless stump and showed it to her! In confusion she tried to apologise – and quickly left the car."²²⁸ Similarly, a veteran of the Gallipoli campaign who when accosted by two women carrying white feathers, unscrewed his dummy hand and threw it into their shopping baskets.²²⁹ The East Kent based organisation makes for a confusing case study to test the stability of having two distinct fronts; one case can be made for women extending the voice of the army and making it their duty, while the opposite could be easily argued as it reinforced the separation between women and male soldiers. At best, a dichotomy existed with what the Order of the White Feather symbolised for women in Britain.

The direct involvement of civilians in the war effort in Canterbury can be clearly seen in the work of the Voluntary Aid Detachments (VADs). Voluntary Aid Detachments pre-date the war having been founded in 1909 and the involvement of civilians in the care of the wounded was a well-established tradition of the nineteenth century with the creation of the Red Cross. "Kent VAD cared for an estimated 126,000 patients in over eighty hospitals...This was one third more than any other county VAD organisation."²³⁰ The Scheme for the

²²⁷ Ibid, p.94.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Hazel Basford, *Kent V.A.D. : the work of Voluntary Aid Detachments in Kent during the First World War* (M. Phil Thesis, University of Kent, 2004), p.1.

Organisation of Voluntary Aid in England and Wales, published in 1909, established a plan to use civilian volunteers to only supplement the medical services of the Territorial Forces.²³¹ The mobilisation of the Territorial Forces did not happen and as such, the voluntary aid groups were instead used to help with the large number of Western Front casualties. Women's role as the nurse was not to be disputed and was separate from the soldier's identity but these were civilian volunteers for the most part, forcing the fronts to merge, as personal duties had to be fulfilled as well as being brought into direct contact with the horrors of the front. VAD members became "amateur professionals – neither volunteers, nor qualified workers".²³² This returns to the 'quasi-military' call for male civilians to enlist early on in the war as previously discussed. The boundaries between occupational identities were also blurring, making the oxymoronic title of an 'amateur professional' a very suitable label. The lack of a distinct answer as to one or the other reflects the blurriness of the battlefronts, too.

Bateman claimed that an essential part of Canterbury's role in the war was to provide medical aid.²³³ At the outbreak, only one suitable hospital was open, built by the ruins of St Augustine's Abbey and was for the most part, grossly unsuitable for much work due to a lack of funds.²³⁴ After some funding, it was ready to handle the 1,144 patients including British, Belgian and Canadian soldiers but could not cope with the increasing number due to a sheer lack of

²³¹ Ibid, p.3

²³² Ibid, p.11.

²³³ Bateman, p.11.

²³⁴ Ibid, p.12.

space.²³⁵ As the Dane John House and Abbots Barton were prepared as new hospital spaces, given by Misses Wightwick and M.P. Francis Goldney accordingly, it received over 120 wounded soldiers.²³⁶ Canterbury quickly became a centre for the care of wounded soldiers for Britain and her allies. Some of the wounded would be conveyed straight from the firing lines, with approximately 140 wounded soldiers arriving each fortnight at Canterbury East Station, often met with locals offering gifts to the new patients.²³⁷ In terms of the environment, the central areas of Canterbury were instantly militarised and remained so throughout the war. But what does this say of the VAD civilian's identity?

“The traditional view of the Voluntary Aid Detachment member has been that she was female, the daughter of a well-to-do upper-middle class family, about twenty years of age, naïve and innocent but enthusiastic, incredibly hard working and long-suffering.”²³⁸ Basford suggests that it is very difficult to understand whom the VAD member was and what views she had of her work because of the collective memory of the VAD. She points to Vera Brittain's memoir, *A Testament of Youth* and its subsequent television adaption along with archives' predilection for holding diaries of those who served in military hospitals or those abroad – not local auxiliary hospitals, even though only 10% of the 85,000 members served abroad.²³⁹ The experience of the local VAD

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Ibid, p.21.

²³⁸ Basford, p.61.

²³⁹ Ibid.

member has been lost to an extent. The other barrier to a more nuanced picture of the VAD worker is the sentimentalisation that is attached to women's work as a nurse.²⁴⁰ "Even during the war this was prevalent when VADs were referred to. Yet sentimental expression was a powerful tool in propaganda images showing pretty nurses attending brave Tommies. This is typified by the popular song 'The Rose of No Man's Land'."²⁴¹ The image of the VAD member as the caring nurse in propaganda, while keeping her in her domestic role, also kept her apart from soldiering. But the sheer number of wounded soldiers being treated proves that the lines were easily crossed. Further to the traditional view of the VAD, many ignore that far more men were involved that has been recognised. Of the 5,700 members listed in the 1920 Report for Kent about 30% were male VADs.²⁴² In October 1915, approximately 160 exclusively male members of the various East Kent detachments of the VAD journeyed to Canterbury for the purpose of holding a church parade at the Cathedral and an inspection by Lord Chilston.²⁴³ People in East Kent were not under the myth that VAD work was only the domain of female war workers.

While the propaganda may have selected the role they wanted the VADs to play, many others saw VAD work as akin to a soldier's duty and a sacrifice. Honours were allocated to Kent VAD workers during and after the war, although at a restricted number. Lord Chilston made a speech at the great gathering of VAD members in Bromley in May 1915, regretting that it was not in his power to

²⁴⁰ Ibid, p.170.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Ibid, p.67.

²⁴³ *The Dover Express and East Kent News*, 15 October 1915, p.2.

bestow an honour on each and every member.²⁴⁴ There is perhaps a suggestion that Kent VADs saw their work as more than just patriotic volunteering in the introduction to the after-war report publication by Kent VAD – “Kent may well take pride in the success of the VAD work throughout the county during the war...No mere report can express the value of the service which has been rendered...whose devotion and self-sacrifice has throughout been beyond praise.”²⁴⁵ Kent VADs clearly viewed their work as a sacrifice and a service given. Although both nouns ‘work’ and ‘service’ are used in the report, the emphasis is on “the service which has been rendered”. A Canadian Private who was a patient in Minster Hospital in Kent, sent the following tribute to his nurses in *The Times* 1916:

“We Sing of Jack and Tommy and the glorious deeds they’ve done

On every piece of land and sea wherever there’s a Hun.

Why not sing of our brave nurses – God bless them everyone

Who have volunteered to tend the boys until the victory’s won?”²⁴⁶

There is evidence to suggest that those outside the VAD itself saw the organisation as worthy of comparison to the soldier, further breaking down the existential divides that separate them. However, philanthropic work was the

²⁴⁴ Basford, p.78.

²⁴⁵ Ibid, pp.171-172.

²⁴⁶ Probert, p.143.

only alternative for some women who wanted to find an occupation and identity outside the home and nursing provided an obvious source. Philanthropy, while still a noble cause, may be interpreted as a rather selfish reason for becoming a VAD worker, and as such does not reflect the life of sacrifice others have praised them for. Bertha Stapley, a Canterbury VAD member, said in an interview in 1978, that the war gave her chances to escape her dull but comfortable life, “otherwise I was going to tea parties with my Mother, getting terribly bored, Mother trying to turn me into a Victorian maiden...”²⁴⁷ If such were representative of the VAD in Kent, the similarity to the soldier may be lessened, but their proximity to the war remains the same, still blurring the boundaries. War gave some middle class women the chance to experience life beyond their Victorian expectations of womanhood and the opportunity to evaluate their new identity. The official Commander-in-chief of the VADs, Katherine Furse, wrote an article for *The Kentish Observer & Canterbury Chronicle*, praising the spirit of the VAD in wartime; “Much has been said since the war began about ‘The Right Spirit’. V.A.D. members have it, there is no doubt about this...she is playing her part in a great scheme which means the success or failure of women with the army.”²⁴⁸ Furse puts the army and VAD side by side in the conflict.

One other important area of the mobilisation of female war workers was in the munitions industries, of which many worked at the Faversham munitions factory. These workers fought the enemy from behind the lines at notable

²⁴⁷ Hazel Basford, *Bertha Stapley – a Canterbury VAD* (Place of publication not identified: publisher not identified, 2001), p.12.

²⁴⁸ *The Kentish Observer & Canterbury Chronicle*, 26 April 1916, p.3.

personal risk and bear a claim to be indistinguishable from their soldier colleagues. By 1915, after the Munitions of War Act in July, women made up approximately half the workforce, although it was only a modest rise of 22% 'new' workers.²⁴⁹ The munitions workers represented not only a shared risk of sacrifice with the soldier but also to a lesser extent, a shared warrior attitude. "While home front panegyric preferred to emphasise the role of munitions girls in allowing troops to defend themselves, at least some munitionettes took a much more aggressive view of their role. Indeed, it was not uncommon for the girls to attach notes to the shells, sometimes encouraging soldiers to kill the enemy."²⁵⁰ The sentiment could be seen in popular culture too, in which a one act play, *The Munitions Worker*, emphasised the female lead's desire to help kill. "Tina, a dying explosives worker, refuses to take sick leave because God has told her to 'go along and make shells for your country', wishing to help men at the front kill Germans."²⁵¹

Hundreds of women died as a result of their work in munitions factories and countless more suffered from poor health, disability, maiming and poisoning.²⁵² Angela Woollacott has estimated that explosions may have accounted for in excess of 1000 female deaths, but were silenced by the deliberate under-reporting of casualties by munitions authorities.²⁵³ Such an occupation during the war put these mostly working class women (and men) as akin to soldiers and

²⁴⁹ Simmonds, p.133.

²⁵⁰ Gullace, p.161.

²⁵¹ Ibid, p.162.

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Angela Woollacott, *On Her Their Lives Depend: Munitions Workers in the Great War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), p.9.

a large part of the shared experience of sacrifice that also blurred the arenas of war. "In solemn acknowledgement of such sacrifices, St. Paul's Cathedral held a service on April 20, 1918, for London munitions workers, playing the 'Last Post' for those who had died."²⁵⁴ In many ways the work echoed the experience of men in Flanders – very difficult and dangerous work and was recognised as such by the end of the war.

One such explosion that was not reported fully at the time was the explosion of the Faversham Munitions Factory in April 1916. *The Kentish Observer & Canterbury Chronicle* noted the following on 6th April: "The following was issued by the Press Bureau and is all that the newspapers will be allowed to publish: - The Ministry of Munitions reports with great regret that during the week-end a serious fire broke out in a powder factory in Kent...Approximate number of casualties 200."²⁵⁵ Two hundred tons of TNT blew up after being triggered by a smaller fire, killing a number closer to 105 than the estimated 200 at the time of the accident.²⁵⁶ No women were believed to have died in this explosion however since it was the weekend and were not working. Whilst a more unique example since no women were working that weekend in Faversham it highlights just how dangerous the role of a munitions worker was for both genders.

²⁵⁴ Gullace, p.162.

²⁵⁵ *The Kentish Observer & Canterbury Chronicle*, 6 April 1916, p.4.

²⁵⁶ Bob Ogley, *Kent: A Chronicle of the Century* (Westerham: Froglets Publications, 1997), p.135.

By 1917, the need for agricultural workers was worsening in Britain, and initial reluctance towards female labourers on the farm succumbed to the pressures of war. In April 1916, one Canterbury farmer at a sitting of the East Kent Tribunal was rather shocked by Lord Harris' revelation that in France, women were doing the rough work on the farms.²⁵⁷ A year later, the following advertisement in *The Kentish Gazette* highlighted the change in attitude towards the employment of women in agriculture: "Wanted immediately – Motor Drivers and Ploughmen (Male or Female) for agricultural work for all posts of Kent. Voluntary or otherwise."²⁵⁸ The government created the Women's Land Army (WLA) in response to the problems of farmers in 1915 but was faced by traditional stereotypes that many farmers clung to regarding women. Farmers eventually accepted women on their farms as workers, as the need became greater. The St. Margaret's Parish magazine for April 1916, stressed the need for a new local branch of the East Kent Women's Agricultural Committee in order to encourage women to work on the land as it was their duty for their country.²⁵⁹ The need to free men from the farms and still continue food production was worsened by the attack of German U boats on British merchant ships. Female farm work was essential by late 1916. However, Simmonds warns that the 'land girl' of the WLA is illustrative of how history can occasionally magnify the significance of some events out of proportion to their factual reality.²⁶⁰ The WLA was not a large organisation; over 250,000 women worked in agriculture nationwide, but only 20,000 of those were in the WLA itself.²⁶¹ More 'village women' were used by

²⁵⁷ *The Kentish Gazette*, 8 April 1916, p.5.

²⁵⁸ *Life in Kent During the First World War*, p.113.

²⁵⁹ *The Dover Express and East Kent News*, 14 April 1916, p.8.

²⁶⁰ Simmonds, p.153.

²⁶¹ CCA, CCA-U88/A/2/2/7. Letters to and from St. Augustine's College 1917-1919.

farmers, as illustrated by the earlier newspaper's advertisement calling for "Voluntary or otherwise". Cambridgeshire had 143 land girls in comparison to 2,533 local women; Devon used 127 land girls and 3,801 locals; East Riding of Yorkshire had only 64 land girls alongside 1,358 village women.²⁶² While this study does not intend to exaggerate the impact of the WLA in Canterbury, it was a rather prominent part of the environment and everyday scene during 1917-1918 with over 3,000 members in East and West Kent by July 1918.²⁶³ East Kent was different to other counties in terms of numbers active in the area. While the men from St. Augustine's college (in the city centre) were at the frontlines, the building itself was used for the Women's Land Army as a training centre and the monastic cells as a hostel for women to work on the local farms.²⁶⁴ By harvest time 1917, the number of land girls averaged 60 within a two-mile radius of the city, making a common feature of East Kent therefore.²⁶⁵

An initial letter to Bishop Knight requesting the use of the college promised that: "only better class of girls and women will be placed in these hostels."²⁶⁶ The WLA tended to be mostly educated, middle-class women and do therefore represent a small segment of society, but one that was prominent in Canterbury's Edwardian society. How these women viewed their role in the WLA can offer another interpretation of how the lines between soldier and civilian were blurring, as farming became war work. *The Daily Mirror* reported the

²⁶² Simmonds, p.153.

²⁶³ CCA, CCA-U88/A/2/2/7. Letters to and from St. Augustine's College 1917-1919.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ Bateman, p.55.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

opening of the college for the WLA in the national press in 1917 with an article entitled, 'The New Sisterhood at St. Augustine's', but kept to traditional rhetoric to describe the women. It said: "Sandalled monks, murmuring prayers, once trod softly along the passages, but not so these laughing, happy girls, who were stout hobnailed boots."²⁶⁷ *The Daily Chronicle* reported similarly how the halls were now filled with 'the gay ring of feminine laughter' and 'a sunburnt company of girls' who ate their rations in the thirteenth century dining hall.²⁶⁸ The press' descriptions of the WLA were of young girls, never 'women' and made their new lives seem to be one more concerned with enjoying themselves. There is little to suggest that the press saw their contributions as akin to soldiering. Further to the press' emphasis on presenting the WLA as full of girls, rather than soldiers, the government also wanted to encourage their work to be seen as such – work, and not a war service. In the Canterbury press, a letter was reprinted in which women were reminded that if they registered for the WLA and wanted to farm their own land and business after the war, that by joining the WLA now, they would be helped by the Board of Agriculture.²⁶⁹ Special facilities would be prepared for them for settlement on land, either in Britain or in the Dominions overseas.

In the reports of the women of the WLA themselves, one can find an evaluation of their work that is rather different to that of the press'. A 1919 report on the completion of work by the WLA, written by Emma Moyes for the East Kent

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ *The Kentish Observer & Canterbury Chronicle*, 29 March 1917, p.6.

Women's War Agricultural Sub-Committee reveals a sense of pride: "There is a great consolidation in knowing that the Women's Land Army has served its purpose, and served it nobly, first by releasing men to fight...and secondly by securing food...in spite of submarine and mine menace."²⁷⁰ Tractor drivers in East Kent (women) also received the Service Bar, considered to be the Victoria Cross of the WLA, for record work.²⁷¹ The work of the WLA, like those who received medals for work in the factories and munitions, was indeed considered to be war work. The act of awarding of medals in such an occupation shows how the lines between soldier and civilians blurred. Despite the press reporting of "laughing girls", many saw their work as noble and the government saw it worthy of awards. However, the emphasis seems to be on the 'work' that the WLA did, not their duty or service. Sources based on the East Kent WLA do not mention either of these words but do report 'noble work' and praise for 'record work'. One WLA member in Canterbury only used the word 'work' when recalling her and her colleagues' war experience. She said that, "...they still remember their work among the docile, kindly animals and in the homely smell of the farm..."²⁷² While it is difficult to know how these women meant to use the word 'work', they do not seem to suggest a direct link to soldiering, unlike the munitions workers who scribed their personal messages into their shells. The prominence of Canterbury as a market town surrounded by farms in the Edwardian period may explain the prominence and view of the WLA there. Farming was important for Canterbury and thus garnered large support from the WLA. Perhaps, by looking after the local farms and food in East Kent, these

²⁷⁰ CCA, CCA-U88/A/2/2/7. Letters to and from St. Augustine's College 1917-1919.

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² Ibid.

women were not too dissimilar from the men who joined the Buffs Territorials. Both groups focused on local protection, be it people or food supplies.

A study of the coverage of stories that exclusively were about women in East Kent can help reveal what perceptions of wartime women were being created by the local press. The regularity to which communities would read stories about women are important to help assess how local people would judge women and their identities. This study investigated *The Dover Express and East Kent News* and *The Whitstable Times and Herne Bay Herald*, looking at all issues between 1st January 1915 and 31st December 1917. Identities searched for go across the main identities brought up by the historiography assessed. They include: V.A.D.s, farming, provision making (ie. knitting), munitions work, the Order of the White Feather and the Women’s Volunteer Reserve (WVR).

Table 5: 1915 Coverage

Type of article	January - March	April - June	July - September	October - December	Total reported
V.A.D.	1	0	2	1	4
Farming	1	1	0	1	3
Knitting/Provisions	0	0	1	1	2
Munitions	0	0	0	1	1

White Feather	0	0	0	2	2
WVR	0	0	6	15	21
Other	0	0	2	2	4

Table 6: 1916 Coverage

Type of article	January - March	April - June	July - September	October - December	Total reported
V.A.D.	0	0	0	0	0
Farming	1	6	1	0	8
Knitting/Provisions	1	0	0	0	1
Munitions	2	4	1	2	9
White Feather	0	0	0	0	0
WVR	13	13	9	8	43
Other	0	1	0	0	1

Table 7: 1917 Coverage

Type of article	January - March	April - June	July - September	October - December	Total reported
V.A.D.	1	2	1	3	7
Farming	3	1	1	2	7
Knitting/Provisions	0	0	0	1	1
Munitions	1	1	1	2	5
White Feather	0	0	0	0	0
WVR	7	4	3	0	14
Other	0	0	0	0	0

While there is nothing intrinsically surprising with regards to the variety of stories reported in the East Kent press, the overwhelming focus was on articles relating to the Women’s Volunteer Reserve (WVR), with 52% of accounted pieces from 1915 – 1917. Created at the outbreak of war by Decima Moore and suffragette, Evelina Haverfield, the organisation occupied various aid-related roles to help with the war in a quasi-military style. The high frequency of articles pertaining to the WVR were due to ‘Orders for the week’ printed with weekly drills and duties posted for members. The WVR were continuously the main image of women presented by the local press, regardless of time. This could perhaps suggest that most local communities within East Kent tended to view

women's war efforts as primarily that of the WVR. While the VAD units and land girls became a constant sight in Kent, in keeping with modern stereotyping of female war roles, and do appear within the three most common reports in the newspapers, the WLA were at times reported on a regular and weekly basis during the war, even if only announcing new drills.

The WVR was very popular in East Kent, claiming approximately 3000 members by December 1915 and 100 alone in Dover.²⁷³ The WVR further broke down the line between civilian and soldier as two leading members of the local organisation continued to insist on the military styling's of the group in the local press. C. C. Flashman and P. Hodgson wrote to the editor of *The Dover Express* stressing that their khaki uniformed women were organised on 'strict military lines'.²⁷⁴ Women in this group were partially trained first-aid nurses, involved in camp sanitation duties, signalling, helping Y.M.C.A. canteens and acted as chauffeurs and van drivers. The Christmas edition of *The Dover Express* praised the militant efficiency of the local WVR after a motorcar crash incident in Dover was aided by the presence of a WVR member who administered first aid and 'took charge' of the scene. It read: "We may be asked why the Women's Reserve wear a khaki uniform in military style? The answer is that khaki is the most serviceable colour and material...and it is made in the fashion for the reason that the corps, being run on military lines, its raison-d'être being work for the Navy or Army."²⁷⁵ The WVR was defended for appearing like soldiers because its

²⁷³ *The Dover Express and East Kent News*, 24 December 1915, p.8.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

members worked for the Navy and Army, much like common troops did so. In July 1915, the same corps in Dover were compared to a battalion, “...their drill movements being carried out with a ‘click’ worthy of a seasoned battalion of regulars...”²⁷⁶

Mobilisation of the local community and civic authorities

It is necessary to separate the efforts of the War Work Depot in Canterbury aside from the gendered approach taken in this chapter, in order to garner a more open analysis of the whole community’s identification with the war. While men and women were engaged in East Kent across a range of war work roles, the War Work Depot concerned itself with the everyday raising of funds, war bonds and supplies of the prosaic kind: jam, socks, sandbags, mending clothes, collecting money, cotton wool, etc. As previously mentioned, government regulations defined ‘munitions’ as anything that helped waged war, from making jam to knitting soldiers’ socks.²⁷⁷ It is in the everyday actions that one may be able to analyse citizen’s feelings since the depot’s efforts were constant and all pervasive. “In stark contrast to the Second World War, in 1914 the County Council and civic authorities were not required directly to provide additional services...required by the war situation. Instead the Council facilitated the setting up of committees to deal with various situations.”²⁷⁸ Canterbury showed a rather remarkable readiness to help by setting up several committees to

²⁷⁶ *The Dover Express and East Kent News*, 23 July 1915, p.2.

²⁷⁷ James, p.152.

²⁷⁸ Basford and McIntosh, p.7.

consistently aid, organise, encourage and monitor voluntary war work in the district. This was a prime example of the voluntary principle of social action that was a traditional focus of the district's social elites.²⁷⁹

In the service sheets issued for the district by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, a call to the local community to do all they can at home was made, and the suggestion of a shared sacrifice. One service from January 1915 read:

“Furthermore, we shall pray for those who at home and throughout the Empire are now preparing for service in the field; and for ourselves that we may cheerfully take our share of the burdens that are to be borne.”²⁸⁰ The Church had considerable influence on the area with the prominence of the Cathedral in Canterbury life. The ‘share of the burdens’ reveals an understanding that this war would need not only approval, but labour and effort from civilians too. The War Work Depot was the tangible outcome of the Archbishop’s plea, opening in 1915 in Canterbury. Hundreds of thousands of articles of garments and surgical necessities were sent from Canterbury’s depot, reaching the height of 252,254 items by 1918. This was subsidised by house-to-house collections made by the depot as well as using collection boxes in local churches to help.²⁸¹

The Canterbury Cathedral Archives houses an overwhelming abundance of thank you letters to individual women and the depot for their parcels and gifts to

²⁷⁹ Bateman, p.8.

²⁸⁰ CCA, CCA-SS1/51C. Service sheets, January 1915

²⁸¹ CCA, CCA-AJ22/1. Minutes of the General Committee, 31 July 1918.

the hospitals and soldiers.²⁸² These letters included many of Britain's fighting allies such as France, Serbia and Canada. While all of the letters are of the upmost appreciation for the aid, it is only ever referred to as 'work' and never anything using more militaristic rhetoric such as 'service'. One thank you letter from 1916 refers to the depot as "helpers".²⁸³ Several of the correspondences reveal some difficulties in Canterbury, however. Wool supplies were continuously requested in letters and the depot had difficulties in supplying enough, frequently asking for grants of wool from local traders, showing a certain resistance to offer.²⁸⁴ In these letters, Canterbury's War Depot seems to only serve the war in a purely domestic helpers role. Yet there is evidence to suggest that the depot saw itself as something more than just help to the troops. In 1917, one member of the General Committee, Mrs Williamson, suggested that they start making their socks with their name sown in, so that the men will know who and where it was from.²⁸⁵ A sense of pride in what they were doing was evident, as the Board agreed with Mrs Williamson. Making garments for the soldiers was not just a commercial or arbitrary act; it was a personal link between fronts, similar to the munitions worker who inscribed a personal message.

Coastal defence was also important to the Canterbury War Depot with the production of sandbags, which suggest that the protection of the home front from invasion was akin to those fighting abroad. Defence and offence are a part

²⁸² CCA, CC/W/16/5. Letters addressed to Mrs Furley, 31 August 1915.

²⁸³ CCA, CC/U236. Letter to the War Depot, 1 September 1916.

²⁸⁴ CCA, CCA-U236/4/4. Request letters sent to Depot, 27 Sep 1916 – 3 Oct 1916.

²⁸⁵ CCA, CC/AJ21/2. Minutes of the General Committee, 1 September 1917.

of the same military endeavour. The presence of the sandbags themselves is a symbol of the war-like environment that East Kent was evolving into, which will be discussed in the following chapter. A letter from *The Kentish Gazette* was addressed at the meeting of the depot's Executive Committee in July 1915. The women of Canterbury were called to share in the work of making sandbags, led by schoolteacher Mrs. Gilbert of St. Edmund's School.²⁸⁶ The Depot actively encouraged this and voted on donating the sum of £10 to the group. By August 1915, 1,600 had been made and sent 1,250 to protect Margate.²⁸⁷ Being a potential site of invasion made the work of the depot even more important and possibly explains the early success. Lines of war had crossed the channel and into Kent and its neighbouring counties as far as civilians at the time were concerned.

Men of the local community were also engaged quite actively with fund raising for the war effort. The Association of Men of Kent and Kentish Men listed the donations made towards the provision of Y.M.C.A. huts for the troops in the area in the local press. All were male donators ranging from 20 pounds to 2 shillings.²⁸⁸ 1916 also saw the same organisation hold a 'Patriotic Concert' in Holborn to also aid the building of huts for troops passing through Kent and the Kentish Prisoners of War in Germany Fund, raising £1171 in charity.²⁸⁹ Up to 1916, the local community's willingness to engage with the war via charity works was quite active.

²⁸⁶ CCA, CC/AJ21/1. Minutes of the Executive Committee, 31 July 1915.

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

²⁸⁸ *The Kentish Observer & Canterbury Chronicle*, 2 March 1916, p.1.

²⁸⁹ Ibid., p.2.

By 1917 there were signs that voluntary aid and funding from the local community had slowed its pace and in some cases, opting out of voluntary aid entirely. After the larger military pushes of 1916 and the introduction of conscription, 1917 seems to mark a turning point in Britain's home front regarding civilian support. In a letter sent out by Mrs Mason, the Chairwoman of the Canterbury & District War Work Depot, it read: "The Committee feel that the time has come when they must urgently appeal for more help... funds received from villages has been lacking...some fall woefully short and others seem to have dropped out altogether...The Committee hope that every effort will be made that such good work may not be curtailed...to the comfort and alleviation of suffering among those gallant men...in such different climes..."²⁹⁰ Further to the fall in monetary support for the depot, Mrs Mason seems to mark a clear distinction between the civilian and the soldier, 'in such different climes' and uses the phrase 'work' again. Their work is more 'maternal' than 'militant' as she presumes the efforts of the depot are to comfort and alleviate suffering. An appeal was sent out to the villages. One response from Chilham sent to the Committee argues that one reason subscriptions had dropped off was that the local women said that their men received no benefits from the Depot.²⁹¹ A lack of direct connection or benefit for their male family or friends fighting overseas meant that support for the Depot fell in the neighbouring villages. A very different sense of nationalism seems to have developed in East Kent, with localism being a more appropriate mood to explain Kent's reactions to the war. It

²⁹⁰ CCA, CC/AJ21/1. Minutes of the Executive Committee, 31 July 1915.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

may not have been an identification with the soldier that these civilians had, but rather an identification with their father, brother, husband or lover. Fighting for one's family, rather than community or even country was more important. The line between front and home disintegrates even further though with such an analysis since the war is shared very personally within a family unit.

Food was also causing anxiety within the local community during the second half of the war. Shortages of bread, margarine, butter, tea and beef had become a large concern for Canterbury. At the Canterbury Fat Stock Market, out of 57 bullocks up for sale, only 7 were allowed to be distributed amongst the 14 Canterbury butchers, which would not meet the needs of a 24,000 population.²⁹² A Communal War kitchen was opened at 92 Northgate Street, which was popular with Canterbury's residents.²⁹³ A rhyme was published in *The Kentish Gazette* to encourage civilians to not worry and again, see their food in-take as a military weapon.

"Your ration of bread

Will keep you well fed.

You don't need to eat any more.

Each ounce that you take

Has one life at stake

²⁹² Bateman, p.59.

²⁹³ Ibid., p.58.

And is helping to lose the war...

...And show honour and pride and good sense.

Bread is blood – bread is guns,

Bread's own fort against the Huns

Don't destroy the last line of defence."²⁹⁴

Written by an anonymous civilian, the language used to describe home front problems has overtly militaristic overtones. To this poet, they are helping fight a war – the protector of 'the last line of defence'. Food ties them to soldiering, much like the earlier story of the young girl told to eat her bloater fish, as it was a 'blow against the Kaiser'.

The mobilisation of Canterbury shows that while support for the war was maintained throughout, at times it wavered under the imposition of conscription and prolonged conflicts. With this change came a change in the civilians' perception of their identities; non-combatants moved away from simple supporters of the war and the soldiers to partners in the war. They were no longer simply civilians. Civilians of both genders battled with identities as the government encouraged different roles in society at different times, often complicating how civilians saw themselves. The people of Kent became changed by the war's needs as 'service' became paramount, and active engagement in the

²⁹⁴ Ibid., p.59.

war took on numerous guises to be engaged in by Kentish society. As conscription was introduced, men in Kent became less engaged with the war and identification with the war and soldier's life was lessened, whilst interestingly women were encouraged to see themselves as engaged in 'service' for the war. While not all women saw their efforts as that of a soldier's, many were transformed by the rhetoric of the war and government to see themselves as something more complicated than just a civilian. The language of service took on a militaristic tone and helps explain how some of the women of Kent saw themselves during the war. The local community can be further analysed by examining the militarisation of the environment as scenery and culture adapted to the war. This will be looked at in the following chapter.

Chapter Three: The Militarisation of Canterbury's Environment

This chapter will focus on issues pertaining more exclusively to everyday life in wartime Kent, examining the militarisation of the environment in East Kent and its impact on transforming civilians into soldier citizens. It is here that the barriers between fronts merge the ordinary and mundane with the sui generis atmosphere of the Great War. At the level of the everyday and mundane, we can analyse how life was truly impacted by the war. There were various ways in which the fronts were continuously being crossed – through letters, school magazines, church life, newspaper accounts, films, literature, the presence of local soldiers at home, refugees, wounded soldiers and war work, be it knitting and jam making or producing shells. The study is based on a place-identity model theory, used since the late 1970s, that emphasises the influence of the physical environment on identity and self-perception.²⁹⁵ It is only one factor, but an important one. When attachment to place grows, one starts to identify themselves with these places, both on a larger scale, including the nation and city, as well as at a smaller scale at the level of the local neighbourhood, workplace and home.²⁹⁶ This therefore results in self-concepts that are partly based on place and environment. Thus, the study of the changing environment during 1914-1918 is paramount to understanding how civilians saw themselves and viewed the lines between them and the troops. The place-identity model has been criticised because physical settings are only 'backdrops' against which

²⁹⁵ Ashild Lappegard Hauge, Identity and Place: A Critical Comparison of Three Identity Theories, *Architectural Science Review*, Vol.50, no.1 (2007), 44-51 (p.1).

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

events occur.²⁹⁷ In the period of the Great War, the 'backdrops' have been physically altered by the events of war as previous homes, workplaces, colleges and schools became bases of military operations. This heightens their significance in influencing one's identity and self-perception. In his study of Sussex in the Great War, Keith Grieves commented on the importance for soldiers in keeping a close mental proximity to their home districts, workplaces and recollected landscapes.²⁹⁸ The link to place, especially local sites were important for maintaining the persistent linkages between home and the battlefield. The Home Front is more than just a backdrop to the war itself. For the purpose of this study, the place-identity model works very well.

Daily Life in East Kent – how did it change?

The local environment of Canterbury just prior to the war in 1911 was described as an important market town with a population of 23,832 of which mostly concerned itself with the industries of maltings, tanneries, rape yards, cattle, corn, hops and butter markets.²⁹⁹ All of this took place under the presence of the Cathedral in the centre of the city. By the end of August 1914, the local press had described the once market town as a "great centre of military activity" bustling with war activities.³⁰⁰ Canterbury's skating rink, residences, schools and horses were all utilised at the outbreak by the army. Buildings quickly took on a

²⁹⁷ Ibid., p.5.

²⁹⁸ Keith Grieves, *Sussex in the First World War* (Lewes: Sussex Record Society, 2004), p.ix.

²⁹⁹ *Life in Kent During the First World War*, p.3.

³⁰⁰ *The Kentish Gazette*, 8 August 1914, p.5.

different function as to their original purpose, or at least, their perceived purpose by the local community. The city busied itself preparing for possible air raids, although this never occurred in the city. Historic buildings and their contents had to be protected; stained glass windows were removed from the Cathedral and the Beane Institute was stripped of its treasures, causing some panic in the area.³⁰¹ One worried citizen even demanded to Canterbury's M.P., Francis Bennett that an armed guard should be employed to look after the city's valuables in such a time.³⁰² The environment was changing, turning away from the quaint and historic city to a more militarised aesthetic.

Similar scenes could be found in neighbouring areas to Canterbury's centre. Commenting on the village of Eastry one observer said that: "Not since the days of the Napoleonic Wars has Eastry and the surrounding neighbourhood been such a scene of war-like activity as at the present time and in the evening the village is crowded with blue jackets (of the Naval Brigade) khaki-clad territorials."³⁰³ Soldiers quickly became a common sight in East Kent from August 1914 onwards. The presence of troops as a regular occurrence throughout the war forced people to engage with the war as army life and culture also became civilian culture to some extent. One boy from Whitstable recalls the impact of battalions arriving and staying there throughout the war. "On December 19th – the 8th battalion of the Liverpool Irish Fusiliers arrived. They brought with them a song...It's a long way to Tipperary...The 8th Irish soon made their presence felt

³⁰¹ Bateman, p.7.

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ *Life in Kent During the First World War*, p.102.

by commandeering all the public halls in the town...we gaged in wonder..."³⁰⁴

The presence of troops on a daily basis changed the environment to one awash with khaki clad men and one that caught the attention of children, as the young newspaper boy remarked, 'gagging in wonder'. The excitement brought by the soldiers in towns is matched however by the stark reality of defence equipment and armaments being stationed around towns. The same boy noted how his local school was turned into an armoury with cases of rifles there as well as the establishment of a series of machine gun posts throughout the town.³⁰⁵ He remarked: "The war seemed to come a step nearer...there was always a sentry with a fixed bayonet on duty..."³⁰⁶ This single comment suggests that as early as 1914, some viewed the lines between home and front eroding into something more interwoven. In general, the army fitted in well with the local communities in East Kent and became a part of everyday life. By the end of 1914, much of everyday life was already gearing to military needs. A pattern of life which emphasised the needs of the army and a shared determination to defeat Germany had been established for everyone.

While the common sight of the army and navy is a relatively uncomplicated example of how the environment was becoming overtly militarised, the sight of civilians openly doing war work, without a blue jacket or khaki uniform complicates the issue however. The work of the special constables in particular provides an interesting case study. While special constables have been used in

³⁰⁴ CCA, CCA-U467/J/2/2/1. Anonymous handwritten notes on Whitstable.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

Britain at various times since the 17th century, and predominantly dates back to the 1831 Act passing the appointment of special constables for the better deployment of the Police, it was the Great War that redefined their purpose. Special constables had all the power of the regular police force and were by most definitions, simply an extension of the police. In fact, the council in Canterbury were keen to stress that these men were to be viewed as “ordinary uniformed constables” with his duties but was primarily there to look for suspicious activities (especially as ‘spy fever’ gripped Kent), vehicles and aircraft.³⁰⁷ Even the council in 1914 highlighted, but ignored, the dual purpose of this new citizen – to police the area and help the war too. The extraordinary duties were merged with the very ordinary local policing of the streets. Three hundred special constables were employed in Canterbury as a means of keeping a constant eye.³⁰⁸ The fact that the council downplayed the special constables as having military connections might suggest that they were keen to not view life as becoming militaristic. Nevertheless, the duality of war work and civil work remains.

The role of the Scouts took on a similarly militaristic purpose to the special constables. In the early years of the war, scouts in East Kent were used to guard telephone and telegraph routes and the tunnels of the Light Railway Company.³⁰⁹ They offered valuable assistance to authorities at Dover Castle and to the Telephone Exchange. A special troop of Sea Scouts was also formed with the aim

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

³⁰⁸ *Life in Kent During the First World War*, p.105.

³⁰⁹ Ibid., p.102.

of carrying out vigilance work along the coast in Dover.³¹⁰ The Canterbury Education Committee were only too happy to help with such plans and agreed to relieve Boy Scouts from school if their services were required, especially as senior boys tended to be used as messengers.³¹¹ The work of East Kent's youth became overtly militaristic as they became an extension of the army in many respects. Was the work carried out the duties of a Scout, or of a soldier? No easy answer can be ascertained, but that is why a clear distinction between soldier and citizen cannot be made. The work of a soldier fixing a bayonet to his rifle at his gun post in Whitstable might merit the excited gawking of a child, but the war work of the Scout boy might go unnoticed as unique.

While Canon Coxe's war hymn has already been analysed in terms of how the duty of war was becoming a civic duty, it also reflects that everyday practices carried on in Canterbury despite war. New parish hymns were still being composed but now took on the theme of duty, "Duty calls them to the fight...Striving to defend the Right..." for example.³¹² Church environments were becoming militarised, as early as August 1914. While the notion of sacrifice is integral to Christian theology, and thus made it easier to encompass the army's agenda of raising support, it is another clear example of the everyday blurring war into the mundane. Weekly prayers linked the worship of God with supporting the troops. W. Tisdall wrote in one parish magazine that the success of the British army is dependent on whether they were prepared to do the work

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ Ibid., p.99.

³¹² *The Kentish Gazette*, 8 August 1914, p.5.

of God and pray, which will in turn ultimately lead them to victory.³¹³ The suggestion here is that God wanted the British and their allies to win. God and the Church became recruitment officers. In 1918, one Deal based priest called for united prayer to help the army, in part a plea in order to encourage attendance to the falling numbers of his Prayer Meetings.³¹⁴ Parish magazines greatly added to the change of the environment within church life. A regular feature of the Parish magazine in Deal was entitled, 'The Church at the Front', which discussed missionary work across the world during the war. This was not Western-centric and went as far as the Sudan and India. Stories exchanged in the magazine were focused on the work of the church and missionaries but often included stories of meetings with soldiers fighting.³¹⁵ Frontline news and stories become integral to daily life. The frontline and home are in constant dialogue with one another through various media.

The barrier between the two fronts was partly destroyed by the constant exchange of letters and news from the front. Everyday reading of the local newspapers and various magazines, including parish letters and school magazines, covered the war. The environment of one's own living room could be drastically altered by the constant presence of an occasional letter or newspaper reporting the war every day. The 'place' of the home was changing. The casual reading of papers at home gave one a constant familiarity with the lives of those at the front. The transfer of information between sides can be quite interesting

³¹³ CCA, CCA-U3-67/28/A/2. Parish magazines, January 1915.

³¹⁴ Ibid.

³¹⁵ Ibid.

and detailed at times, despite the influence of DORA. In a letter to his family in Canterbury, Cpl. Bradford wrote:

“We relieved the Gurkhas on Sunday night. The weather during the whole of that time was very bad. It was very cold and there was a lot of mud. The first night I was out in charge of an advanced post with six men quite near to the German trenches. To reach this post we had to go through a small trench and we were up to our knees in mud and water... At daybreak I spotted a German running out of his trench so I waited for him to come back to have a snipe at him. I think I caught him all right as he fell down quick enough... When so close it is dangerous for anyone on either side to put his head above the trench.”³¹⁶

Testimonies and letters from the battlefield were not always of a romanticised hue and often allowed for a developed mental image of the action for the reader. Bradford’s letter home suggests that one always knew about the fighting. Other letters reinforce the tone in the one like Bradford’s family received. One letter sent by an artillery man to his wife in Canterbury makes for a vivid account of a battle.

“General French said the fighting at Ypres was the worst in the history of any war. We were in action just outside Ypres when we were enfiladed by one of the German howitzers. It started firing on our battery and then got near our wagon

³¹⁶ Bateman, p.24.

line. One of their shells blew two of the detachment horses five feet up in the air. One was blown in half. At the time the shell burst I was only 8ft away and about ten seconds before I reached the exact spot. To think of my narrow escape!"³¹⁷

It was not only personal letters that conveyed realities of war to those reading at home. In the local press, letters were reprinted and stories written of a similar vein. On March 2nd 1916, *The Kentish Observer* reported the death of Flight-Lieut. Harold Rosher, as "death from misadventure".³¹⁸ A test flight went wrong, resulting in a nose dive of 260ft into the docks near Dunkirk. Civilians knew what was going on at the front, and at home because of the press and letters. The idea that DORA consumed all such knowledge cannot be upheld in the light of such correspondences. However, by examining the range of articles in the local press, a rather stark contrast can be noticed about the peculiar pairings of such war stories with the banal and at times, inappropriate. References to war and letters are paired with other pieces including holiday trips to the Cornish Riviera, Devon and sea trips to Plymouth.³¹⁹ Such items were hardly indicative of a country at war or civilians in a crisis of identity. However, it may be fair to suggest that in late 1914, the war still seemed too far away to affect normal life and would endure the next four years. The newspapers of East Kent do prove though that the extraordinary and the ordinary mixed together without it ever being considered as inappropriate or strange. Businesses used the war as a marketing tool in the local press, further emphasising how comfortable this new

³¹⁷ Ibid.

³¹⁸ *The Kentish Observer & Canterbury Chronicle*, 2 March 1916, p.2.

³¹⁹ *Life in Kent During the First World War*, p.100.

pattern of life was in East Kent. Piano makers, A.Court & Son, paid for this advertisement in *The Kentish Observer & Canterbury Chronicle* in 1915: "It's a Long Way to Tipperary, but go to Canterbury West for Good pianos by British makers."³²⁰ It is debateable as to whether businesses were simply taking advantage of the war, or used humour to simultaneously cope with the war and make some money, or whether buying British goods was genuinely patriotic. It may in fact be a combination of all three motives. Regardless of the rationale, it shows the blending of the war and everyday life.

The physical changes of the local environment in Canterbury did not continuously move towards the military throughout the war. Perhaps, most surprisingly in early 1915, the city witnessed the opening of its third cinema, St. George's theatre, as an entirely new entertainment venture. Obviously, it would not have opened and continued survival beyond the war years without a high demand for entertainment. The military took over and occupied various buildings and sites throughout the city, but rarely built and added to the scenery. The main example of something new being built in this period is the St. George's Theatre. The environment evolved, but not to the needs of the army. However, at the same time, entertainment and film productions were equally becoming very important and a prominent part of a soldier's life at the front too. By 1917, more than 4000 British cinemas sold approximately 20 million tickets a week (mostly to the working class and lower-middle class); more than three times the sales in

³²⁰ *The Kentish Observer & Canterbury Chronicle*, 28 January 1915, p.2.

1914.³²¹ By the same standards, soldiers at the front saw an increasingly large number of films during their leisure time. For example, by 1917, the 11 divisions of the 4th Army had 25 cinemas of their own which attracted 40,000 soldiers a week on average.³²² Soldiers and civilians were sharing the same collective popular culture during the war. Also in 1915, the army's physical influence on the buildings and places in Canterbury was in retreat. In the same year as the cinema's opening, the Canterbury Skating Rink, which had been commandeered by the army to house troops, was re-opened in October and the army also left the New Wing of the Simon Langton Grammar School, located in the main high street.³²³ Civilians were driving the demand for expansion of local cinema provision, meaning they wanted to focus on the normal aspects of modern life. However, such a conclusion cannot ignore that the cinema would show footage and films pertaining to the war too. Nonetheless the perception of local sites of interest may have changed by the end of 1915 in comparison to the early months of the war.

The cinema at St. George's showed many of the prolific documentary films made during the war including: 'Battle of the Somme', 'German Retreat and the Battle of Arras' and 'Advance of the Tank'.³²⁴ While the cinema would have presumably shown the popular comedies and dramas of the period too, the war films further break down the barrier to the front. The same pairing of the extraordinary with

³²¹ George Robb, *British Culture and the First World War* (Palgrave: New York, 2002), p.167.

³²² *Ibid.*, p.168.

³²³ *Life in Kent During the First World War*, p.113.

³²⁴ Hazel Basford and K.H. McIntosh, p.29.

the normal can be found in the advertisement for the screening of the 'Battle of the Somme' in Canterbury. The poster for the film at the St. George Theatre read: "Battle of the Somme – with the St. George's Orchestra with afternoon tea served in the tea room."³²⁵ A film, mixed with re-enactments and real footage of the battle, and showed some of the grim realities of death at the front was coupled with afternoon tea to entice potential audiences. Any sense of irony and inappropriateness seems to be of an entirely modern sensitivity and not representative of feeling at the time.

Another physical change to the landscape that merged the purpose of the military and those of most rural citizens is the creation of food allotments in Canterbury. Civilians were made to feel that they were just as important in the pursuance of the war effort as the fighting troops through local food production schemes.³²⁶ Whether such a claim was true of civilians, the government and local councils were keen for people to believe it. Food control committees all across Kent were set up to focus people's energies to grow food for the war. In February 1917, at a special meeting of the Canterbury City Council, a War Land Committee was appointed to carry out the Scheme for Food Production outlined by the Nation Food Production Committee set up in 1916.³²⁷ Within two months, by April 1917, 293 allotments across 23 acres of land had been set up for food.³²⁸ The essential purpose behind this scheme was to feed the family but in doing so, it was a vital part of the war. These allotments in Canterbury suggest that it was

³²⁵ Ibid.

³²⁶ *Life in Kent During the First World War*, p.111.

³²⁷ Ibid.

³²⁸ Ibid.

a popular scheme in the area and civilians could have viewed themselves as akin to soldiers through the tending of their allotment.

Simon Langton Grammar School for Boys case study – did boys ‘play soldier’?

By using the Langton school as a case study one might find many social and cultural changes and piece together evidence to document a community physically and mentally changed by war despite its apparent distance from battle lines. Manon Pignot’s study of children at war emphasises how important schooling was for the direct cultural mobilisation of children for the war effort.³²⁹ Children were not only the traditional figures of innocence that needed protection, but became legitimate war volunteers themselves. School life continued for all schools in the area, but the monthly writings of the Langton School have been uniquely archived to reveal how staff and students lived during the Great War. School life is the best example of everyday experience for many people. The school was located in the centre of the city and remained a link across age groups for students and ex-students. One Langton teacher, Mr Glanville, wrote in 1914, “We like to think that they now, in the trenches or in their training camps up and down the country, are remembering us. The tie that binds us in that we played and worked and fought together.”³³⁰ This part of the study will investigate the school’s magazine, *The Langtonian*, which was

³²⁹ Manon Pignot, ‘Children’, in *The Cambridge History of the First World War, Vol. III*, ed. By Jay Winter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp.43-44.

³³⁰ *The Langtonian*, December 1914, p.192.

published every three months with contributions from staff, students and Old Boys of the school fighting abroad.

The first impact of the outbreak of war in August 1914 was the commandeering of the School field by the army and for several months, a part of the New Wing and Sixth Form offices were to be occupied by a company of the South East Mounted Brigade Army Service Corps.³³¹ These soldiers drilled in the playground, worked in the offices and set up a sentry mounted at the school gate. The Headmaster, Mr Sharp, noted that the boys have shown intense interest in the soldiers, and that the Governors were most willing to share the sacrifice.³³² By the end of 1914, 130 ex-students were serving in the war. By 1918 it was nearly 500.³³³ As the war continued the boys undertook military training and other tasks to help the war effort. A Cadet Corps was organised and drilled by Sgt. Major Warr of the Buffs and uniforms quickly arrived in late 1915 to make the students feel even more like soldiers.³³⁴ The school went on to fund a miniature rifle range on the grounds for students and encourage students to take up plots on the allotments on Whitstable Road, to which fifty boys signed up.³³⁵

³³¹ Lawrence Lyle & Joyce Frame, *To be continued... : A History of the First Hundred Years of the Simon Langton Schools, Canterbury 1881-1981* (Canterbury: Simon Langton Schools, 1981), p.19.

³³² *The Langtonian*, December 1914, p.134.

³³³ Lawrence Lyle & Joyce Frame, p.19

³³⁴ *Ibid.*

³³⁵ *Ibid.*

A Form I and II (equivalent to 12-13 years of age) boy recounts what he called “the spell of war” in 1914 – playing soldiers at break, learning about war in history lessons and how they always know what’s going on with the current war with local gossip. Recalling his friends’ journey to school each day on the train, there was always “...a soldier or two in their carriage. These men always happen to be engaged on some special service...of course by the time they got to Canterbury those of ‘ours’ know all about it, and we reap the benefit. Norman very rarely appears without a ‘daily’ under his arm.”³³⁶

The Head’s Annual Report in the December 1914 issue of *The Langtonian* discusses the student’s various scholastic and sports successes of the last term but this is sandwiched between an opening speech on the school’s current commitments to helping the war and what ex-students of the school are doing for the war. It ended with: “The thoughts of all of us are turned to the war, and the call for men met with the magnificent response from the Old Boys. We have Old Boys holding commissioned ranks in the Army and Navy, but many, most indeed, have joined the new army as privates...They have learned in work and play at school to overcome difficulties, to work intelligently, and to submit cheerfully to discipline.”³³⁷ Linking the past students of the school with the war, made the linkages between home and front all the more prevalent beyond the confines of their immediate family. Further blurring the war and the everyday, the Dean of Canterbury and School Governor, Dr. Wace, explained the causes of the war to the whole school by means of comparing Germany’s policy of

³³⁶ *The Langtonian*, December 1914, pp.223-224.

³³⁷ *The Langtonian*, December 1914, p.135.

Weltpolitik to school life, thus bridging the lines between fair play in school and the equivalent in international politics. The army was fighting a bully, just as schoolchildren might encounter. The Dean said the same thing used to happen in Schools where the strong boy was tempted to become the bully of all the little boys, until...the younger boys combined against the bully.”³³⁸

In the Form Notes, a student from form V. B. reminisced about his first term in the form: “Thirty or forty years on when the youngsters ask us about the beginnings of the Great War we shall reply ‘Ah! That happened in 1914, when the soldiers were in possession of our school... Then we shall speak of the jostling...the terror to the small fry... the broken window which was nobody’s fault but must have been blown to pieces by a German spy...which make up the school boy’s day.”³³⁹ Everyday life did not conflict with the war but rather mixed together at school, where a German spy was not cause for alarm but rather an excuse for smashing a window. The spy threat that plagued Canterbury in 1914 was reduced to a joke by schoolchildren at the same time. While the interest with German spies can be found across age groups, it is interesting to note how differently it was dealt with.

The physical changing of the school’s environment due to the war had an immediate impact on the way students viewed their role and identity. “The military occupation of part of the school buildings and grounds by the Army

³³⁸ Ibid., pp.139-140.

³³⁹ Ibid., p.152.

Service Corps has interested us immensely...We believe that this close touch with warlike preparations will help to bring home to us all the seriousness of the great struggle in which our country is engaged, and it certainly will make this Term unforgettable.”³⁴⁰ However Form IV B stressed that despite the changes brought to the school’s grounds and lessons, civilian life must be retained, to accomplish longer term and personal goals. “And after all is said and done, the proof of the equality of triangles and the solving of an equation seem trifles compared with the great issues involved in this war, but it must be borne in mind that each one of us by strict and constant attention to school duties is preparing himself for the great battle of life.”³⁴¹

From early on in the war, the school received letters and visits from local soldiers and members of the Buffs fighting at the front. It became common for letters to be either partly or fully reprinted in the school magazine. In April 1916, the Head printed ‘A letter from India’ – H. Watts of the 5th Buffs. As previously suggested, the exchange of letters breaks down the wall between them. Watts stresses the importance of the link between them fighting at the front and those in school by using the school as an institutional link between them. In the letter, he in detail explained his average day at the front in the 5th Buffs who were stationed in India. It read: “I don’t suppose you know that I am a ‘Tommy’ in the ‘Marching Fifth’... I meant to pay you a visit before we left for India...In our Company are Thomas, James, Winters and myself, Old Langtonians ...They seem to be teaching us to be housemaids, washerwomen and all sorts of

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

³⁴¹ Ibid., p.157.

things... the thing we look forward to most of all is the English Mail... I am looking forward very much to get the Langtonian forwarded on to me from home by next week's mail."³⁴² The letter was almost devoid of death and action, instead discussing the everyday aspects with the boys, selling a dull interpretation of the early phases of war. Such letters combined the front and home into just one place – that of the secondary school. It was their story – not the army's, or families' of men abroad, but rather belonged to the past and present students of the school. In this instance, the 'place-identity' of the school is of great significance.

One student recorded a snow fight between themselves and the soldiers at the school during January 1915 by mimicking the events of August 1914. "Of course, as was only natural, we soon came into contact with the Military forces. The khaki forces, however, violated the territory of a neutral power and had to retire... During lesson time the enemy worked their ammunition factories at high pressure, but the ammunition evidently found 'a place in the sun' for by dinner-time it had disappeared."³⁴³ Not only is the fraternisation between soldiers and students surprising in this account, but also the student's willingness to use humour to describe the 'snow war'. The environment is described using military terms but it is doubtful as to how serious the schoolboy takes it.

³⁴² *The Langtonian*, April 1915, pp198-208.

³⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.212.

A Cadet Corps with 116 boys on the roll by 1916 was set up with drill attendance being most commendable. The rifle range was entirely built by teachers and students, to which the Headmaster proclaimed, "The Secondary Schools of England have played a part second to none in the development of the new army."³⁴⁴ At the rifle range, several evenings each week, boys met to train to make themselves proficient shots.³⁴⁵ Just days before the opening of the Battle of the Somme, on June 28th 1916, the Cadet Corps practiced at the Old Park under the instruction of Sergt. – Major Bennell, charged at a mock enemy trench, learning to 'advance at the double'. The reporter remarked that only a few of the Cadets saw the extended order drill as a "pretext for frivolity".³⁴⁶ The Cadets Corps had improved in 1916 as signalling training after school was carried out and uniforms were fully stocked. A sixth former said that only a few months prior to writing his form notes, the sight of such uniformed cadets would have been strange but now most had become accustomed to the image.³⁴⁷

By July 1916 the war was being coupled with the mundane as it became normal. A main event of the term was the opening of the miniature rifle range. A student said that, "...The sharp crack of the rifle after school makes us think that we are in the midst of realities [of war]." This story is told amidst very normal events at school. A 'life goes on' mentality developed within the school with the war as a constant in the background. War did not diminish the importance of normal school pursuits, nor vice versa. Although one student proclaimed his hopes to

³⁴⁴ *The Langtonian*, December 1916, pp.91-92.

³⁴⁵ *The Langtonian*, July 1916, p.66.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.68-69.

³⁴⁷ *The Langtonian*, April 1916, p18.

qualify as a sniper.³⁴⁸ In the same section of the magazine, exam dates are announced, swimming news, prize distributions and news of the Chess Tournament and Stamp Club garner equal interest to the rifle range.³⁴⁹ The Stamp Club had 60 members, less than the 120 members of the Cadets. However, even the Chess Club's reports use war analogies to describe events and explicitly linked the game to warfare. The boys who take part are credited for their development of strategic thinking against the enemy, "Sometimes German tactics creep in with a rash and needless sacrifice of men..."³⁵⁰

In 1916, one of the older students commented on how normal life continued, no matter the grander events at play, and instead focuses on the school and home as a place to recognise as being the most important consideration in their lives. He said, "Business as usual, and this in spite of the Great European War. Men may come, and men may go, but lessons at school and at home go on forever. We feel sometimes that we ought to be fighting the Germans, but this cannot and should not be. Our contest with them must be moral and educational, and so we stick to our 'business as usual'."³⁵¹

1917 starts to mark a slight transition in student responses to the war, and a sense of war-fatigue and gloom can be inferred from student's reports. "The many little incidents and episodes of everyday life in class at school are,

³⁴⁸ *The Langtonian*, July 1916, p.47.

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.41.

³⁵⁰ *The Langtonian*, April 1916, p.4.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p.18.

unfortunately, dwarfed by the great and awful events of the war.”³⁵² He later continues, “Small wonder, then, that our thoughts are martial rather than peaceful or studious,” and draws weary of ‘war-talk’.³⁵³ This is a remarkably different tone to the same form group of 26 boys in the December 1916 issue, which ignored the war and focused on making jokes about lessons instead for its form notes section. “We fail to understand why, if Latin is a dead language, it has not been buried long ago. Good gracious! Many of us would assist at the funeral.”³⁵⁴ Contrasting attitudes towards the war existed at one and the same time in the school.

Although sparingly mentioned by students, ‘Buff the dog’ marks several appearances as an adopted form pet in 1917, presumably a stray animal. Buff is described as a great friend and an important part of the school’s institution, although a competing form claim the dog as their own mascot.³⁵⁵ The undertones of gloom found elsewhere in the magazine are contrasted with such news of the dog. While the origin of the adopted pet’s name cannot be verified, there must be significance in their choice of name, ‘Buff’, in relation to the local regiment – The Buffs. This could suggest that the war had completely woven itself into the normal fabric of school life that something as common as a stray dog now took on a link to the war. Furthermore the link was not just to the war, but an important focus on the local regiment, giving the dog a local significance.

³⁵² *The Langtonian*, April 1917, p.152.

³⁵³ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁴ *The Langtonian*, April 1916, p.1.

³⁵⁵ *The Langtonian*, April 1917, p.152.

Through to 1918, the magazine continued to suggest an alliance between the grim realities of war, as forms noted the increase of visits made by Old Boys in uniform to share their war stories, with the more jovial episodes of school life. Form Vc wrote, “The absence of air raids has deprived our Dover friend of his favourite excuse for neglect of homework, and as his brain is not sufficiently fertile to discover a new one, he has been compelled to grace the detention register.”³⁵⁶ Form IVb decided to refer to themselves as ‘war-worn veterans’ of the IVb Regiment as they looked back at the year, reminding the reader that the light humour of the schoolboy had adapted to the war successfully after four years of the conflict.

A statistical analysis of the magazine’s regular features can reveal just how much the war concerned everyday life at the school. Of interest is the attention paid to news of Old Boys fighting, including information on promotions, deployments and casualties.

Table 8: Pages devoted to Old Boys:

Date	Page Count
April-1914	6

³⁵⁶ *The Langtonian*, July 1918, pp.332-337.

April-1915	13
April-1916	15
April-1917	14
April-1918	14

While there may be more to report on Old Boys after 1914, it becomes almost exclusively about the war. Whilst *The Langtonian* shrank in size due to paper shortages in the war, the amount of space devoted to news of Old Boys increased in 1916, with letters and news being printed from a variety of theatres of war. The Head pushed for the continuous publication on the basis that the magazine was eagerly anticipated by all ex-students serving at the front.³⁵⁷ The extra space devoted to serving Old Boys may have been a simple reaction by the Headmaster due to the prolonged nature of the war. The school's social and academic life had much changed by 1916 with war focused activities taking place alongside ordinary pursuits of school life. In the Head's editorial in 1916 he said: "We regret that it is our sour duty to record the death of other Old Boys, but we are proud that we have sent forth boys who have cheerfully gone out to meet wounds and death...Many an Old Boy is putting into practice his school motto: 'Meliora Sequamur' ('let us seek, or follow, better things')." ³⁵⁸ Further study of the regular features of the school magazine reveals that everyday life continued with a strong focus on the military. The extra attention to these men may have also served as an example to the students as well as the school proving that they

³⁵⁷ *The Langtonian*, April 1916, p.1.

³⁵⁸ *The Langtonian*, July 1916, p.39.

‘did their bit’ locally in training good men, especially as the magazine reached a wide audience.

The magazine’s distribution and readership beyond the school itself reached quite afar which means that the magazine is more influential than just the school alone. In 1916 the Headmaster noted that he had received an overwhelming number of letters sent to the school, addressed to “The Langton Dug-Out”, from the frontlines by soldiers eager to read their next issue of the magazine.³⁵⁹ It implies a wide readership within the area and across the world. The attention to details of Old Boys during the war must have come about through a large network of readers of families, past and present of the school, who shared information and expected to read about news in *The Langtonian* too.

Coverage of war-related stories in *The Langtonian* magazine:

Table 9: April 1915

Section	War-related	Not war-related	% of war-related stories in section

³⁵⁹ *The Langtonian*, December 1916, p.93.

Chronicles/Editorial	4	5	44%
Form Notes	10	26	28%

Table 10: April 1916

Section	War-related	Not war-related	% of war-related stories in section
Chronicles/Editorial	3	9	25%
Form Notes	13	34	28%

Table 11: April 1917

Section	War-related	Not war-related	% of war-related stories in section
Chronicles/Editorial	5	12	29%
Form Notes	6	35	15%

Table 12: April 1918

Section	War-related	Not war-related	% of war-related stories in section
Chronicles/Editorial	3	8	27%
Form Notes	6	33	15%

These statistics suggest that for the most part, war was a constant issue dealt with in school life. 1917-1918 saw nearly a 50% reduction in the attention given to the war by students in their form notes, as war entered its third and fourth years showing war and normality coexisted, suggesting some war-wariness.

The Home Front under attack – Air Raids extend the geography of the war to England.

“Zeppelin and airplane raids beyond the battle lines attacked targets miles away from the war zone in England and helped *literally* to bring the war home to non combatants and to women in particular.”³⁶⁰ Official propaganda emphasised that civilians who were far from the trenches in Flanders were becoming casualties

³⁶⁰ Grayzel, p.45.

of war. One official poster issued by the Parliamentary Recruiting Committee about the raids proclaimed German brutality “by murdering defenceless women and children...”³⁶¹ They illustrated that the battle lines had come to an area that was supposed to be protected and removed from the destruction of war. The raids further helped to erode the divide between soldier and civilian.

Grayzel illustrates the potential social impact of air raids and the associated fear and shock with a rather extreme example. In London, the terror induced by air raids became the rationale for induced infanticide. Testifying at the Crown’s case against Elizabeth Huntley, who was accused of decapitating her daughter, Margaret Wells claimed: “I have known Mrs. Huntley since childhood. She was a jolly hearted woman until the air raids.”³⁶² Mary Freeman, the sister of the accused, provided further evidence of her sister’s state of mind: “She has complained of her head and was treated by Dr. Holland...for air raid shock – She used to shake a lot during the raids...” Huntley’s doctor elaborated that she was much upset by the air raid. Was she in any way akin to those on the battlefield who suffered from similar war or fear-induced mental anguish? While answers cannot be attained, it does seem evident that for those who examined her, her having experienced air raids came up as a plausible explanation for the murder. ‘Air raid shock’ became a convincing reason for infanticide. The blurring of the line indicating who exactly was under fire seems fully accomplished.”³⁶³ A rather different picture emerges when looking at the impact of the raids in East Kent.

³⁶¹ Ibid., p.46.

³⁶² Ibid.,

³⁶³ Ibid., p.48.

While Canterbury did not suffer attacks, neighbouring towns did, including Dover, Ramsgate and Folkestone.

Dover, being the first place in Britain to be bombed in 1914, suffered 113 air raids in total during the course of the war with a casualty list of 94 people (71 injuries and 23 deaths).³⁶⁴ *The Dover Express'* number of separate news articles solely on the local air raids displays how raids became a regular feature of life at home in Dover. They reported the following amount each year from August 1914 onwards: 8 in 1914, 38 in 1915, 105 in 1916, 198 in 1917 and 166 in 1918.³⁶⁵ While these stories contain warnings, brief reports of raids and adverts for air raid insurance, talk of air raids was constantly and increasingly in the public sphere of life in Dover. One anonymous contributor to *The Dover Express* mocked the regularity to which civilians had become used to the raids by writing into the local gossip section of the newspaper, 'What do they say?' "They say that, according to 'John Bull', there was an air raid at Dover."³⁶⁶

Although many of the air raids in Dover were reported, the local press reveals a very strict restriction imposed on people freely sharing stories of the raids with people outside of the area via letters or photographs. DORA was used greatly to enforce a suppression of air raid stories in Dover for fear of strategically valued information falling into enemy hands. "People must not write letters or post

³⁶⁴ *Dover: Lock and Key of the Kingdom* [online]. [cited 18 February 2014]. Available at: <http://www.dover-kent.co.uk/history/ww1c_bombing.htm>

³⁶⁵ Taken from a search of *The Dover Express* between August 1914 and December 1918 from the British Newspaper Archive.

³⁶⁶ *The Dover Express and East Kent News*, 4 February 1916, p.5.

cards about air raids” was printed *The Dover Express* in June 1916.³⁶⁷ Elizabeth Shipley was summoned before the Dover Police Court after attempting to communicate information that might be useful for the enemy. Shipley wrote four postcards giving accounts of the air raids to four of her friends spread across Britain. It brought her under Regulation 18 of the Defence of the Realm Regulations. The prosecution claimed that regulations and notices pertaining to giving out information on air raids had been largely ignored and only this prosecution could raise effective awareness of the warnings.³⁶⁸ The Chairman convicted her and fined her £1 and gave this notice, “You must not take photographs! You must not write descriptions of air raids!”³⁶⁹ Raymond Cook was arrested for similar offences to Shipley just a few months prior to her conviction.³⁷⁰ Henry Walker was also prosecuted for taking photographs of an air raid and selling the pictures in Dover in 1916.³⁷¹ What does this reveal about the way people in Dover perceived the air raids? Perhaps these people were akin to profiteers, who were in some part trying to sell on a piece of the war’s damage. More likely, since either not much money was involved or was intended for friends if the defendants were to be believed, is that the raids were a spectacle. A picture of excitement is created opposed to the ordinary and mundane. If true, it would suggest a clearer distinction between soldier and civilian who might see war as a novelty to some extent.

³⁶⁷ *The Dover Express and East Kent News*, 2 June 1916, p.8.

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁰ *The Dover Express and East Kent News*, 7 April 1916, p.8.

³⁷¹ *The Dover Express and East Kent News*, 2 June 1916, p.2.

Morale in Dover seems to have been generally high in spite of the air raids, very different to that of Grayzel's infanticide episode. *The Dover Express* reprinted an article praising the spirits of seaside Britons during the air raids from *The Times*. "Sir, - The 'Hamburger Fremdenblatt' declares that it does not really care what were the practical effects of Monday night's air raid - 'what concerns us are the moral results' ...not a word has been heard anywhere to suggest that a solitary soul, man, woman, or child was frightened by the coming of the aerial visitors, or desired the war to be ended so as to avoid a repetition of the experience..."³⁷² Perhaps, civilians along the coast in East Kent had become embattled by the air raid experiences, bringing them closer to that of the entrenched Tommy.

In Ramsgate, a similar scene to that of Dover emerges, where after an air raid in May 1915, which resulted in several casualties and severe property damage, the town was described as behaving as if it was enjoying a bank holiday, drinking tea and discussing the raid casually.³⁷³ The late night raid was recorded by one local resident who heard the loud noise of engines in the air, proclaiming, "Great Scott! We have got the Zeppelins at last."³⁷⁴ At Deal, the same air raid caused only 'little public alarm' despite the sounding of fierce alarm systems, but the reaction at Faversham, which witnessed the Zeppelin fly over the area caused great distress in the area.³⁷⁵ A mixed reaction to the raid across East Kent was recorded, although areas where bombs actually fell were particularly affable about the whole affair.

³⁷² *The Dover Express and East Kent News*, 20 August 1915, p.2.

³⁷³ *The Kentish Observer & Canterbury Chronicle*, 20 May 1915, p.2.

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

In conclusion, the environment in East Kent reveals an increasingly militarised way of life throughout the war through the presence of troops in people's homes, schools and the street, buildings occupied by the army and buildings damaged by air raids. People identified with their environments becoming a part of the war effort and impacted how they identified themselves to a great degree.

However a more complex picture emerges with the study of the Simon Langton Grammar School for Boys in Canterbury as students, who are thrown into the war effort in and outside of classes, merge their regular life and identity with that of a training soldier. From as early as Christmas 1914 a new identity for civilians was emerging as their city changed around them and blurred the lines between them and the battlefronts.

Chapter Four: Epilogue: 1919 in East Kent: a return to 'normality'?

How was the war's impact remembered in Canterbury 1918 – 1919 – one of two distinct fighting zones and two distinct peoples – the soldier and the civilian?

The period of 1919 in East Kent could arguably be interpreted as co-existing with two conflicting narratives. On the one side it was a forced and superficial return to pre-1914 identities and casting off of the war years. Alongside this was the more confusing grey area that saw civilian war efforts and experiences earn them a position akin to the soldier's life that could not be easily forgotten. How could one in Canterbury forget the local schools being used as military training grounds, or VAD units in the local park supporting the thousands of injured troops passing through Canterbury East Station, or the occasional Zeppelin raid overhead? They were not just observers to the war but active participants.

However as troops returned such an accusation could not be made publically. By the end of the war, nearly all soldiers were either volunteers or conscripts as early battles saw the pre-war professionals killed. These surviving soldiers were very much civilians in uniform looking to become civilians again. Ironically, as suggested in this thesis, the civilian on the home front had become more soldier-like. Yet in 1918-1919 the civilians had to firmly become civilians again and had to revere soldiers. This reverence to the returning soldiers only served to hinder any opportunity to return to a pre-war life since these men could never lose their status as soldiers; they were now ex-servicemen and veterans. Civilians would treat them as such and therefore do themselves a disservice by reducing their own war efforts to nil. The division would be reinforced every year thereon

by the strict and traditional observance of Armistice Day when veterans would clearly wear their war-earned medals. This would continue to identify and separate those who had always been civilians who stayed at home and helped to destroy the grey area of the two identities that 1914-1918 had indeed created.

For some people in Britain, the war seemed to be endless and a longing for normality emerged by 1918. At his home in Cobham, Frederick Robinson wrote in his diary in January 1918, "When is this awful nightmare to end...The country is getting tired out, people no longer talk of war, they are saturated with it, it enters into their every thought and action, it is part of our flesh and of their bone. When are we again to live our proper lives."³⁷⁶ Such an entry reflects how far civilians had been consumed by the war across the country. Yet the return to their pre-war lives was not to be fully achieved with the end of the war. The soldier would not be allowed to be just a civilian again upon their return and the soldier-citizen that emerged during the war was partially forgotten. Neither returning soldier, nor civilian, return to complete normality but begin a new status quo that is far more complicated and blurred than the pre-war years that many hoped for. The longing for an end that Frederick Robinson showed was unsurprisingly shared by most people in Britain as proven by the euphoric scenes described by the press with the news of the Armistice, locally in East Kent and nationally.

³⁷⁶ Simmonds, pp.282-283.

On November 11th 1918, the news of the Armistice was met with ‘much glee’ in Canterbury with the hoisting of Union Jacks at landmark buildings in the city, including the Guildhall and Westgate Towers.³⁷⁷ London was similarly described as being caught up in “the throes of jubilation” by the *Daily Express*.³⁷⁸ Streets were lit up with lamps for the first time since 1915, parks and squares became sites of spontaneous celebrations and dancing was rife in public areas.³⁷⁹ The revelry of the capital continued in Canterbury as business was suspended and schools closed while citizens and soldiers mixed in the city centre together singing ‘Pack up your troubles’ and ‘Take me back to dear Old Blighty’.³⁸⁰ Formal declarations of praise were made by the Mayor to the 2nd battalion of the Buffs for its war contributions and sent a letter of congratulations to the King, whose secretary thanked the citizens of Canterbury.³⁸¹ In Dover, the police arrived in the town ringing bells that were once rung to warn the inhabitants to leave in case of German invasion or attack.³⁸² *The Dover Express* wrote that “Dover was old Dover again, and not the gloomy, dark hole it had been for four long years.”³⁸³ Within hours of the news of the Armistice, the local press seemed to have suggested that a pre-1914 status quo had immediately returned to East Kent, but perhaps this may have been nothing more than sheer joy and naivety at the sudden and unexpected peace. Similar events unfolded in Folkestone and Whitstable, although interestingly *The Whitstable Times* went further in implying an end to the wartime identity of citizens. The newspaper identified sacrifice to

³⁷⁷ Bateman, p.67.

³⁷⁸ Simmonds, p.283.

³⁷⁹ Ibid.

³⁸⁰ Ibid.

³⁸¹ Ibid.

³⁸² *The Dover Express and East Kent News*, 15 November 1918, p.5.

³⁸³ Ibid.

be exclusively that of the soldier: "...whose blood has been poured out on foreign soil..."³⁸⁴ The notion of a blood sacrifice is immediately created here. Civilians are reduced to the role of the bereaved and not partners in the struggle. Soldiers fought in foreign fields and died there. Civilians did not. In this sense, we return to the existential divide between soldier and civilian in the introduction, and the blurred lines are forgotten immediately. One could accuse such news reporting as helping to create the false narrative of the home front that has plagued interpretations of the war. It was civilians who sidelined themselves at the very end of the conflict. In an attempt to 'un-blur' the lines of soldier and civilian, civilians actually complex the situation further by pretending the war's impact was over in November 1918 and thus pre-war like.

In Folkestone on the 11th November, the order that placed areas of amusement in the town as out of bounds to the Army was lifted and many soldiers took advantage of the theatres and halls. *The Folkestone Herald* said that "naturally" a good deal of licence was allowed to those in uniform with regards to behaviour in the theatres but when a civilian ascended the platform at the Pleasure Gardens Theatre and asked the audience if he might tell them a 'chestnut', he was dragged off stage with the support of the audience.³⁸⁵ The different treatment of the civilian compared to the soldiers was more than apparent. Clearly, two types of people existed in Folkestone on Armistice day. The same edition commented that, "There are thousands of incidents that we shall recall, but we forget them all, dismiss them...as we whisper aye shout the blessed word

³⁸⁴ *The Whitstable Times*, 16 November 1918, p.5.

³⁸⁵ *The Folkestone Herald*, 16 November 1918, p.6.

– Peace!”³⁸⁶ The joyful spirit of the day seems to have changed how civilians saw themselves and their contributions to the war effort. Armistice day reactions only seem to hamper the observations one makes of post-war Britain and East Kent in particular. A happy and quick return to ‘Old Dover’ and the county did not occur as easily as this.

The 1918 election – did the pains of war open?

The coalition government of the war found itself after November considering the need for a general election. The government had been in coalition since 1915 and many politicians were calling for changes to be made, including franchise. While a study of the electoral changes and promises following the war would be interesting, this study is preoccupied with how far the election campaign sought to return to a status quo or whether it faced the consequences of war. If the war was still an important issue for the election campaign, then it would suggest that people did not want to, or could not, simply return to a pre-war life, and so a new type of civilian voter may have existed: a soldier citizen. While the war raised many questions about existing social welfare and economic programmes, at best the majority of East Kent’s voters seemed only to be preoccupied with issues pertaining to the war, despite it being over. At worst however, some seemed to disassociate with the election entirely. So much so that one commentator in Dover remarked, “They say that when there was a war on we knew it, and the

³⁸⁶ Ibid., p.7

siren helped to remind us, but Dover does not seem to know that there is a General Election and even a siren would have a job to make it known.”³⁸⁷ Polling Day itself was described in Folkestone for having an ‘absence of excitement’.³⁸⁸ *The Kent & Sussex Courier* reported that the only time ‘a little excitement’ was introduced into the polling evening was ‘The Battle of the Handbills’ being fought by Labour and Conservative party members.³⁸⁹

People in Canterbury were keen to question the Labour Candidate for the Canterbury Division, Mr Palmer, on the treatment of men who did not fight abroad during the war and remained in Britain. Palmer was asked if he supported the idea that men who had been at home during the war should be sent for garrison duty now.³⁹⁰ Palmer said no, adding that, “...they have done their part. The war could not have lasted five minutes without the work of the civilian population.”³⁹¹ When the Conservative candidate, Colonel Spender-Clay was asked the same question, he avoided such a personal response and simply suggested that the Army had sufficient men for garrison duty and didn’t need anymore.³⁹² It is very interesting that this was a popular question asked in Canterbury, given that it was a very active district during the war, in both fronts. While there were no reports of the crowds’ response to the question, the attention given to Palmer’s answers suggests that the press’ sympathy lied with him. The question also suggests that an air of antagonism existed between men

³⁸⁷ *The Dover Express and East Kent News*, 6 December 1918, p.5.

³⁸⁸ *The Folkestone Herald*, 21 December 1918, p.2.

³⁸⁹ *The Kent & Sussex Courier*, 20 December 1918, p.6.

³⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁹¹ *Ibid.*

³⁹² *Ibid.*

who fought and those who didn't in Canterbury, to warrant such a question during the election.

Elsewhere in East Kent, the lingering concern with the war continued in a different way. Rather than concerns over worker's rights, in Whitstable and Folkestone, voters were forcing politicians to tackle the issue of Germans living in Britain. With an almost fierce xenophobia towards Germans, Kentish people were calling for candidates to promise to exile them from Britain. "The following questions appealed particularly to the Whitstable audience which was largely composed of patriotic seamen...Are you in favour of turning all the Huns out of this country?"³⁹³ The controversial issues surrounding war profiteers in Britain was overlooked in favour of attacking Germany. A member of the audience interrupted Mr Palmer's speech shouting, "Mr Palmer says make the profiteer pay for the war. Never mind the profiteers. Let Germany pay..."³⁹⁴ The outburst was met with a cheering crowd. Similarly in Folkestone, their Labour Candidate, Sir Philip Sassoon spoke about worker's rights and protection, but the town hall's gathering just wanted to probe him about supporting the banning of German goods.³⁹⁵ The war was still important to these people, but many acted as if the war was still continuing. They seemed to be ensuring that a shared and 'just' sacrifice had been made, whether it was male civilians who didn't sign up, or forcing harsh reparations upon Germany.

³⁹³ *The Whitstable Times*, 14 December 1918, p.2.

³⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁵ *The Folkestone Herald*, 7 December 1918, p.3.

Demobilisation in East Kent

The repatriation of serving troops from November 1918 and throughout 1919 is a stark reminder that the war did not 'end' on the 11th November. Normality did not return quickly or easily, as can be proven by an examination of demobilisation in East Kent, which became a focal point for the dissatisfaction of troops. An analysis of how troops reacted to the demobilisation process and how civilians reacted to the ex-soldiers can help reveal how quickly, if ever, normality returned. Demobilisation proved to be a difficult issue for Lloyd George's new government to face as the prospect of mass unemployment was a potential reality. Demobilisation had to be controlled as the economy adapted to peacetime levels of production and the new influx of labour. Under plans by the Ministry of Reconstruction, demobilisation was put at the order of industry. Servicemen were divided into three categories: the 'pivotal' (skilled men such as engineers and managers who could quickly find and create work), then 'slip men' (soldiers who already had proof of guaranteed employment who could qualify for controlled release according to industrial needs) and lastly 'non-slip men'.³⁹⁶ It appeared to some that economic expediency took priority over human interest, especially as a by product of this system, the most recent recruits were the first to leave, since they were more likely to hold an active contract with their old employers. 'Last in, first out' seemed to dominate the administration of the scheme. Although Lloyd George reminded the troops and country that they were still technically at war, resentment came to a head in January 1919 in East

³⁹⁶ Stephen Graubard, 'Military Demobilization in Great Britain Following the First World War', *Journal of Modern History*, Vol.19, no.4 (1947), 297-311 (p.298).

Kent, when 12,000 soldiers in Dover and Folkestone protested against their re-embarkation orders to France.³⁹⁷ This local event in Kent culminated in London, where others joined the parade in demonstration against the scheme, with placards saying, "We want civvies suits".³⁹⁸ Post election, Britain still housed many standing troops and reminded many that they were still technically at war.

The protests in Dover and Folkestone achieved a wider national interest and the press, both local and national were generally keen to approach its reporting carefully, seeming not to want to criticise the government or the soldiers. The press' reaction shows the peculiar trepidation many had when discussing the armed forces after November, for fear of criticising them in light of their work and sacrifice. Needs of the country's economy were indeed prioritised over the soldier's desires but this rather large protest showed they were not willing to sacrifice anymore. In his 1947 study of demobilisation, Stephen Graubard suggested that the conscript army was always just a civilian force and that the average conscript soldier simply saw no further need for his service believing that the job was done after November, knowing that his job was always just a temporary one to his civilian life. His first thought turns to immediate release.³⁹⁹ Moral questions aside, this was a potential conflict between civilian needs and those of the soldiers. In light of the considerable power that mutinying armed forces in Russia and Germany had exerted at the end of the war, on the part proving they could help topple long-standing governments, such trepidation of

³⁹⁷ Simmonds, p.288.

³⁹⁸ Ibid.

³⁹⁹ Graubard, p.297.

the press may be a political, rather than social, consideration. Both the government and protesting soldiers were described as calm and considerate in such difficult times. *The Sheffield Evening Telegraph* described the mutiny as “irregular from a strict military point of view but here was a case for commonsense” yet still stressed that it was too early for the country to abandon the spirit of sacrifice and endurance.⁴⁰⁰ The origins of the disturbance in Folkestone was apparently due to misunderstandings over the contracts with pre-war employees, which when properly completed, allows men on leave from overseas to qualify for immediate demobilisation, as they were ‘slip men’.⁴⁰¹ Some men had heard comrades were leaving immediately to return to their old lives and discontent spread quickly throughout the camp at Folkestone, with the same issue causing tension at the camp in Dover. Many desired to return to their pre-war work and life, as proven by the number of attempts at Folkestone to use fake allegations of job allocations to get out.⁴⁰² While this may reveal a big misunderstanding of the Armistice that soldiers and civilians may have had as to whether the war was over, it shows an overwhelming desire by the troops to return to their civilian lives.

The reporting of both protests going to their respective town halls seems to differ however. While all accounts agree that approximately 9,000-10,000 and 2,000 men marched on Folkestone and Dover’s Town halls respectively and left

⁴⁰⁰ *The Sheffield Evening Telegraph*, 6 January 1919, p.2.

⁴⁰¹ *The Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 6 January 1919, p.1.

⁴⁰² *Ibid.*

peacefully, the levels of tension during the protest does not always match.⁴⁰³ *The Exeter and Plymouth Gazette* explained that the proceedings between the troops at Folkestone and General Dallas (G.O.C. Canterbury) and General Woolcombe (G.O.C. Eastern Command) was peaceful and made possible because, while acknowledging the guilty disobedience to orders, the men were respectful and perfectly orderly.⁴⁰⁴ The newspaper presents the mutiny as nothing more than a parley between the troops and Eastern Command. While no punishments were awarded and a fleet of clerks was sent to Folkestone by the Ministry of Labour to help expedite the matter, other newspapers suggest a tenser version of events. *The Whitstable Times* says that all approaches to the town hall were blocked and soldiers climbed onto the portico of the town hall and delivered short speeches.⁴⁰⁵ The soldiers were all said to leave without qualm by the press, yet the *Aberdeen Journal* remarked that upon hearing the Mayor's request to leave and go back to their camp to await some good news, the soldiers merely sang, 'Tell me the old, old story' in response.⁴⁰⁶ In Dover, while a similar protest ensued at the town hall, it seemed to have much sympathy from the Mayor and community as they helped secure a piano for the soldiers to pass the time, as well as reserve spaces at local cinema halls for free admission to overseas men.⁴⁰⁷ The impact of the war was still important in January 1919 across East Kent and while ambiguous, showed a desire to return to normality quickly.

⁴⁰³ *The Nottingham Evening Post*, 6 January 1919, p.1.

⁴⁰⁴ *The Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 6 January 1919, p.1.

⁴⁰⁵ *The Whitstable Times*, 11 January 1919, p.7.

⁴⁰⁶ *Aberdeen Journal*, 6 January 1919, p.3.

⁴⁰⁷ *The Whitstable Times*, 11 January 1919, p.7.

The desire to bring back the pre-war world was reinforced by the local communities' treatment of ex-army comrades in East Kent. Former Army Chaplain, Reverend David Railton, issued a special Comrades Service in Folkestone in April 1919 for ex-servicemen with the aim of binding them together and creating a spirit of comradeship in the town.⁴⁰⁸ Railton expressed his concern that the war had altered the worship of Easter's Holy Week but was comforted that now the soldiers were back in their homes, it could return.⁴⁰⁹ A desire to return to traditional life was being sought, and the Reverend found it necessary to invite not only local ex-servicemen, but also the National Association of Discharged Sailors and Soldiers to the service, thus reminding this particular group of repatriated civilians to return to normality, including the influence of the church on their previous everyday life. Perhaps Reverend Railton may have also saw this as an opportunity with new converts to reinvigorate Folkestone's religious commitments. During the war serving your country and God simultaneously had been used rigorously, so this may be a natural conclusion to the war years' focus on Christian values in Britain.

The welcome of the returned 1st Buffs battalion was met with a Thanksgiving Day in May 1919. While the day was popular and well attended, of greater interest was the vicar's address, on behalf of the parish in Canterbury, made to two men of the Buffs in particular – Captain George Jessel and Lieutenant

⁴⁰⁸ *The Folkestone Herald*, 19 April 1919 p.6.

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

William Barfield (both awarded the Military Cross). “We feel that that honour (the Military Cross) is reflected on the parish, and we desire on this day to thank you in person for the example you set...”⁴¹⁰ The address continues to focus on their ‘return’, almost like an immediate repatriation into parish life. The vicar’s rhetoric included: “rejoin those amongst you have lived so long...came safely home”, “return of so many”, and “your safe return”.⁴¹¹ In reference to Lieutenant Barfield, the vicar remarked that the parishioners considered his honour of the Military Cross to be not only a reflection of Barfield, but reflected on the parish and thus a shared honour from the King.⁴¹² In this Thanksgiving Day speech, the complexity of how civilians felt about the end of the war is displayed. Multiple perspectives can be seen here: the longing for a reaffirmation of their old lives is present; holding the soldiers as elevated individuals who deserve to stand above the civilian narrative; as well as a desire to share in the victory and recognition that they played an important role in the war too and share any honours, adding to their local pride. A closer analysis of the speech complicates any solid conclusions further. Is it a return to normality if the soldiers are still reminded they were soldiers, alien to the parish community? Or is the parish wishing to share in the honour of the Military Cross, what the vicar explicitly referred to as “a soldier’s reward”, the civilian and the soldier merging into something new? Or is this episode simply a return to older Edwardian dictums of parish life with heavy burdens of Christian duties? Such a reading would link the Great War and any discussion of bravery to a very local town and place, far away from the frontlines. Each town or city would own the individuals who fought and

⁴¹⁰ *The Kent & Sussex Courier*, 30 May 1919, p.4.

⁴¹¹ *Ibid.*

⁴¹² *Ibid.*

therefore it was a matter of local pride that could explain the parishioners longing to share the award. Lieutenant Burfield's note of thanks to the parish however firmly places the notion that the war was a shared sacrifice between soldiers and civilians as an answer. He thanked the "...wonderful way in which they had carried on during the war, and the many sacrifices they had made."⁴¹³ Burfield's speech serves as a reminder that in 1919 there was a conflict, albeit not a big public one, between civilians downplaying their role in light of the soldier but wanting to share in the victory. While the Military Cross clearly defines and separates soldier from civilian, the community's desire to share in it in fact blurs how civilians identified themselves offering a far more nuanced answer as to whether 'normality' returned in 1919.

In a similar manner to the support shown for returning troops, is the concern from the public regarding disabled veterans in East Kent. Gregory identified a collective sense of guilt about survival that fed a nation's need to commemorate and champion the soldiers in order to console a stricken conscience.⁴¹⁴ It is also difficult to escape the psychological impact of the presence of limbless and disabled men in public places as a constant reminder of the war and sacrifices. It makes the public's need to medicate its ailing collective conscience even more compelling. This 'collective guilt' that Gregory refers to could be seen in East Kent when dealing with disabled veterans. At a meeting of the Local Advisory Committee in Dover, the question of the training of disabled men was raised as there was no training centre in Kent. "The Chairman contended that apart from

⁴¹³ Ibid.

⁴¹⁴ Gregory, *The Last Great War*, p.251.

any other consideration, a county which had contributed so many men to the Navy and Army was certainly entitled to a training centre..."⁴¹⁵ The Committee made an application to the Ministry of Labour on the basis that after years of warfare, it was unjustifiable to make a man be separated further from his home and family for the long training period.⁴¹⁶ They were keen to make the home and family the priority – a return to domestication and not force the most vulnerable ex-servicemen to relive the pains of living away from home again. This shows that the public wanted to re-engage veterans and return to normal life, or perhaps may be a symptom of a public survivor's guilt upon the sight of disabled servicemen.

As the physical environment of Canterbury and East Kent began to change after November 1918 with the arrival of battalions coming home and the gradual demobilisation, so did the local buildings and institutions that had been militarised previously. Just within two weeks of the Armistice the make up of the city was changing; over 1,200 repatriated prisoners-of-war arrived at Canterbury East Station with a further 800 days later, all warmly welcomed.⁴¹⁷ Did the demilitarisation of the environment in Canterbury lead to a similar change in mentality of those who dwelled within the previous war used institutions and buildings? Could a pre-war status quo for the local public institutions be re-attained?

⁴¹⁵ *The Folkestone Herald*, 19 April 1919 p.8.

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁷ Bateman, p.68.

Two local institutions that particularly became militarised during the war were St. Augustine's College and Simon Langton Grammar School in Canterbury. Both were used to serve the war as analysed in the previous chapter, helping at home and abroad to various extents. St. Augustine's College, which had previously been utilised for the Agricultural Land Army, rather quickly returned to its original purpose and moved on from the war's tenancy of the building. The return to missionary education was welcomed by all those who attended the college's St. Peter's Day luncheon. *The Whitstable Times* printed an article entitled, 'Renewal of the college life and work', which read: "Added importance and interest were attached to this year's commemoration service and luncheon...as they marked the renewal of the college life and work after being suspended for the past few years on account of the war...the luncheon, which in pre-war days was always a feature of the College commemoration day..."⁴¹⁸ Mr Anderson of the College added that their institution had to suffer a break in its career of usefulness after 1914 and had to throw open its hospitality to the women of the Land Army in order to best help.⁴¹⁹ Interestingly, while Mr Anderson welcomed the return to normality in the College, he noted that the world was not "prepared for peace", and that peace brought many problems just as war did. "He believed that all Church people today were about to rededicate themselves to the service of God..."⁴²⁰ The 'rededication' comment shows a commitment to re-engage with the Church and its humanitarian concerns, rather than military matters. It is an open desire to remind themselves of their original

⁴¹⁸ *The Whitstable Times*, 5 July 1919, p.4.

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁰ *Ibid.*

purpose, which Mr Anderson believed was even more important in the post-war world.

The desire to move on from the war years in St. Augustine's College is a stark contrast to the reminders of war that the local grammar school, Simon Langton, clung to. While the school's extra curricular activities that were concerned with the war and home front came to a close and older pre-war social traditions started again, it could not forget the conflict, or at least, was not allowed to. The Headmaster, having lost his son, Eric Sharp (himself an Old Boy) in the war, was committed to erecting a permanent memorial personal to the school – a tablet to be placed in the school hall, recording the fallen Old Boys' names.⁴²¹ The Head wrote to the staff and students, "For many years those names will call up definite forms, but the day will swiftly come when they will be but names. Even then their power will not be diminished...For many generations then this tablet will bring up the tale of the noble part this country played in the war in general and this school in particular."⁴²² By the end of 1919 the school returned to normality, with the attention to rifle ranges and collecting funds having gone, and no military use of parts of the school or its playing grounds. Yet the school is forced to ever live in the shadow of the war in the school hall, to act as a source of inspiration and admiration. Normality existed but the status quo did not return because the memory of the war was made as ever present and alive as the war years themselves. A 'status quo' could not be achieved there for that generation of schoolboys and Masters who knew the names on the memorial tablet.

⁴²¹ *The Langtonian*, December 1919, p.517.

⁴²² *Ibid.*

Peace Day 1919

Peace Day was Britain's opportunity to celebrate the end of the Great War. While the anniversary of the Armistice signing is remembered annually now, in 1918 it represented a ceasefire. The 28th June 1919 saw the signing of the Treaty of Versailles and allowed the 'end' of the war to be marked. The time also coincided with many men returning home to Kent in the run up to the summer season. The proposals for a national Peace Day celebration were not without concern from some that such funding could be better spent, but in East Kent they were met with a great welcome and widespread participation. Peace Day represented a possible turning point in post-war Britain as to how identities were being remoulded into how popular memory has imagined the Great War's players – the mighty soldier and the others at home.

In Canterbury, Peace Day was officially opened with the formal handing over of a Tank to the city, in recognition of the services of Canterbury to the various War Loans by the War Savings Committee, to be placed on the Dane John Moat.⁴²³ Canterbury was among the few towns in Kent to be awarded a Tank, also including Maidstone, Folkestone and Ashford. Over 200 Tanks were presented by the British Treasury to some of the largest contributors to the government's war bonds. The Tank was chosen because the Tank excited the public imagination and conjured great fanfare during the Tank Week programme in

⁴²³ *The Whitstable Times*, 26 July 1919, p.4.

1917-1918, only to all be scrapped prior to 1945 with the exception of Ashford's Tank, which is currently an official war memorial.⁴²⁴ Much competition for the weapons seemed to have occurred in East Kent by local councils. Whitstable eagerly hoped to get a large gun for its own town centre in May 1919.⁴²⁵ Since Canterbury was already promised a Tank, Mr Fielding, the Canterbury Town Clerk, offered a captured German gun to Tankerton, Whitstable, which was also offered to the city.⁴²⁶ The need to have a Tank or gun as a local landmark only serves to suggest that officially, councils did not want to let communities forget the war and was to become a focal point. Weapons of the frontlines became memorials and desired attractions to the home front. One could interpret such motives as officially reducing war to the soldiers' story again and turning civilians into the ill informed and naïve group that cheered the sight of a Tank, rather than feared it. Or the weapons as memorials could prove that no pre-1914 status quo could exist as the physical landscape of home has welcomed the sights of frontline activity into its town centre. This interpretation shows the complexity of how civilians fought for their new identity, which had to marry the experiences of war with the monotony of their 'normal' lives.

The ceremony was lead by Gen. Sir Colin Mackenzie alongside the Mayor, Herbert Girgg James. The Tank had arrived a day beforehand, travelling under its own power through the main streets after disembarking at Canterbury West

⁴²⁴ Joe Bill, 'Ashford's World War One Tank the Last of its Kind on Show', *Kent News Online*, 12 June 2006, News section
<http://www.kentnews.co.uk/news/ashford_s_world_war_one_tank_the_last_of_its_kind_on_show_1_2233183> [accessed on 25 June 2015]

⁴²⁵ *The Whitstable Times*, 3 May 1919, p.4.

⁴²⁶ *The Whitstable Times*, 17 May 1919, p.3.

Station and was guarded by three members of the Tank Corps and a further fifty men from the Buffs. The gift of a Tank was to thank the city for raising one million pounds in war bonds. The Tank however, was more than just a symbol to bear testimony to the financial help given by the people of Canterbury. Itself instantly became a memorial to the war and Canterbury's efforts. In Gen. Sir Mackenzie's mind, it was really 'a symbol of victory' because it was entirely British.⁴²⁷ "It was the conception of British brains, its manufacture was the result of British energy...and its employment and success in battle were due to British courage..."⁴²⁸ His speech was met with great cheers from the thousands in the crowd. He further remarked that the Tank was a fitting gift to Canterbury because of the decisive role of the machine in contributing to victory. The Tank was akin to Canterbury's efforts. The Mayor agreed with the General, saying that the Tank was proof that the city rose to the occasion, despite not being large in size or purse.⁴²⁹

While one might interpret this gift as a sign of acknowledgment that all played a vital role in the war, whether at home or abroad, the Mayor quickly reshapes the Tank's meaning to be one solely for the soldier. He said to the crowd, "There was hardly a family in the whole city which had not had a son or brother serving in the ranks...and where the daughters had married either soldiers or sailors. That showed that the military spirit had long existed in Canterbury..."⁴³⁰ The Mayor continued to describe the Tank as a most befitting memorial as it was typically

⁴²⁷ *The Whitstable Times*, 26 July 1919, p.4.

⁴²⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴³⁰ *Ibid.*

British because it was not very beautiful, and nor did it pretend to be very beautiful, except in regard to their women.⁴³¹ In this one final comment by the Mayor to the crowd, he rendered the gift to be for the soldiers and sailors and the bereaved civilian. The efforts of those at home doing war work and the many women who helped were removed from identifying with it, because they were not the unattractive and rugged Brits that the Mayor's speech conjures.

Conclusion

Canterbury seemed to be juxtaposed between not being able to forget the war and trying to enforce a return to pre-war normality. An uneasy alliance between these opposites was created, much like the entire Home Front was during 1914-1918; simultaneously dealing with the war effort and trying to remember the government's line of 'business as usual'. 1919 was in many ways an extension of the war years but without an actual war. The Great War's shadow still caused many to confuse their identity and attitudes as they still lived with 1914-1918. How can one claim a return to normality in the area, when a Tank surrounded by a moat sat in the city centre of Canterbury, joining the Norman castle, medieval city walls and Cathedral as a local landmark?

⁴³¹ Ibid.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

“It is enough, if not too much, to say that there was a great and dreadful war in Europe, and that nightmare and chaos and the abomination of desolation held sway for four horrid years...Men and Women acted blindly...They went to the war, they stayed at home...they got rich, they got poor, they died, were maimed, medalled, frost-bitten, tortured, imprisoned, bored, embittered, enthusiastic, cheerful, hopeless, patient, or matter-of-fact, according to circumstances and temperament.”⁴³²

Rose Macaulay’s 1923 novel, *Told by an Idiot* is a helpful reminder that any generalisations about the war and its impacts on any category, including identity, are dangerous to make. By focusing on East Kent as a unique region, the danger is lessened but still exists. However, this study has highlighted the breakdown of the divide between soldier and civilian between 1914 and 1918 and the variations of identities at different times of the war and between different genders and ages. No general answer was being searched for in this study, rather the revelations of how different people viewed themselves during the Great War in order to better understand how a nation viewed their identity and role during the conflict, challenging the presumption that lines between home and battlefronts were strong and unique. The Great War had led, temporarily, to a closer and more complex relationship between the armed

⁴³² Grayzel, p.1.

forces and the civilian population. As shown, there is evidence that this changed relationship and identity lasted beyond the constraint of 1914-1918 but over subsequent generations and the experiences of the Second World War, the Great War simply became the gullible soldier's story fighting an unpopular war in light of the righteous 'People's War' against Hitler. Any irony of the phrase 'People's War' being coined to describe the Great War was lost over the rest of the twentieth century.

The mobilisation of East Kent showed that as the Gateway to England, the county reacted to the fear of potential invasion and soon geared to the war effort quickly, but not with the enthusiasm that early politicians were keen to emphasise about Britons in 1914. An acceptance of the war caused many civilians in East Kent to grapple with a new identity of being a soldier-citizen as new rules for correct citizenship were made ad hoc as people and businesses competed with a 'business as usual' philosophy to the realities of total war. Men, women and children all became militarised as the local environment of East Kent changed, from the fortifications at Dover to the military occupation of some schools in Canterbury. Identities altered and the lines between being a good soldier and a good civilian got much closer, regardless of location, gender or age. 'Blurriness' offers a very opaque and non-committal answer as to how lines and identities changed for civilians in East Kent, but perfectly describes the looseness of identity construction in the years 1914-1919. In this period civilians adapted to change through their own choices and at other times forced and reconstructed themselves each time, ultimately choosing a façade of normality

by 1919. Identifying more with the soldier was both a conscious and subconscious choice throughout the war making for a far more complex identity than the term 'non-combatant' allows for within a separate sphere based ideology. While the findings are specific to a micro-study of Canterbury and East Kent, they were often reactions to national changes and innovations and not just local concerns. A further triangular study of East, West and North Kent might reveal a more complex picture of civilian identities across the county and encompass a wider range of classes and backgrounds as the county borders the capital, whose wartime experiences have been well documented.

Ultimately, the Home Front people of the Great War were, and have been under-acknowledged; the existence of the soldier-citizen brushed aside in favour of respecting the fallen soldiers and ex-servicemen. Jay Winter places the total British war dead at 722,785, with the addition of wounded men reaching 1.6 million.⁴³³ This excludes the 15,000 deaths among the crews and passengers of merchant/fishing vessels or the 1,266 civilian deaths from air raids, or the number dead from factory accidents.⁴³⁴ Statistically there is a vast difference in the 'blood sacrifice' of the war, which may help explain why civilians sought out of guilt, to return to a pre-war identity, but the physical reminders of the war's experience at home and the psychological impact meant that any notion of 'normality' was superficial and a disguise. At the very least, both fronts saw similarities and a perverse irony that each side wanted to be more like the other. Identities and lines were not black and white as popular memory has perhaps

⁴³³ Simmonds, p.300.

⁴³⁴ Ibid.

suggested, but far more blurred and deserve recognition of their nuances and complexity.

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