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Space and Representations of Civilian Heroism in London during the Second World War

Ellena Matthews

**A thesis submitted to the University of Kent for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy in the Faculty of Humanities**

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Abstract

This thesis examines how, as the Second World War brought modern conflict into the domestic spaces of the nation, civilians were increasingly represented and constructed as heroic. While the effects and demands of war on the Home Front offered civilians increased opportunities to engage with traditional ideals of heroism, these ideals were also blurred as men and women of varying ages adopted new roles and responsibilities. Equally, as civilians fulfilled vital roles on the Home Front in production, protection and defence, different virtues and behaviours were celebrated and recognised as heroic. This thesis contributes to the current historiography of the Second World War by showing that the manufacture and production of Home Front heroism was multifaceted and complex. By tracing how Home Front heroism was framed, this thesis examines how constructions of heroism carried social and cultural meaning, and how popular representations of heroism influenced how behaviour was conceptualised.

Through examining four interlinking themes; space, material culture, the body, and death, this study uses a range of methodological approaches to demonstrate that Home Front heroism was fashioned in various ways and for specific purposes. As familiar peacetime spaces became sites of conflict, the civilian population were offered opportunities to behave heroically, through fulfilling production demands, displaying bravery and endurance, protecting people and property, and caregiving. Moreover, objects elevated heroic status; as bodies were adorned and decorated with clothing and medals, the civilian body became a site where the potential for, or recognition of, heroism could be articulated. However, modern warfare also placed the civilian at increased risk of injury and death. Indeed, as civilians were injured and lost their lives as a consequence of enemy action they were increasingly aligned with the armed forces; the state particularly valourised civilians who were killed by bombardment. This thesis offers a detailed study of Home Front heroism to highlight that the heroic civilian was a powerful creation during wartime; heroic virtues permeated the public sphere and were particularly contingent to periods of stress and strain, as such, this research highlights that studying heroism provides insight into the virtues and values that a society, or group of individuals, considers noteworthy.

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List of Abbreviations

AFS	Auxiliary Fire Service
ARP	Air Raid Precautions
BBC PWA	BBC People's War Archive
BPA	British Pathé Archive
CD	Civil Defence
IWM	Imperial War Museum Archive
LAAS	London Auxiliary Ambulance Service
LHA	Listener Historical Archive
LMA	London Metropolitan Archive
MHLSC	Merton Heritage and Local Studies Centre Archive
MOA	Mass Observation Archive
NFS	National Fire Service
TNA	The National Archives
ROF	Royal Ordnance Factory
WMA	Wimbledon Museum Archive

Introduction

On Sunday 2nd February 1941, J.B. Priestley spoke to the nation as part of his weekly Sunday night BBC 'Postscripts' radio broadcast. He declared,

I need hardly not tell you that this is a most peculiar war; it breaks all the rules; thus while millions of trained and heavily armed young men have hardly heard a shot fired, short-sighted middle-aged men with a perpetual cough and flat feet earn medals for valour, and old ladies turn aside from feeding the canary to putting out fire-bombs.¹

Priestley recognised how modern conflict had reconceptualised the nature of wartime heroism; in this new war, ordinary civilians were able to engage with heroic virtues and be recognised for acts of heroism. Priestley's statement is particularly illustrative as it highlights the way that behaviour was linked to wartime duty and contribution. As modern warfare shifted the battlefield to the Home Front, civilians were transformed into combatants. Total war on the Home Front altered the relationship between the civilian and state. As civilians fulfilled an increasingly central role in the conflict, through manufacture and production, and the defence and protection of cities, towns and villages, they were offered unique opportunities to behave heroically. As such, men and women of all ages were cast as heroic figures of the Home Front. As Priestley described, wartime participation enabled the medically unfit male, and the elderly female to feature as new faces of wartime heroism. Modern conflict had altered the remits of wartime participation and duty, and consequently, the nature of heroic individuals.

Stories, of anonymous, real and fictional heroism appeared throughout the war. The public were frequently exposed to tales which recounted the actions of specific

¹ Neil Hanson (ed.), *Priestley's Wars* (Ilkley: Great Northern Books, 2008) p. 291.

individuals or groups of people who had behaved in a notable manner. Across the Home Front, the public were informed of how their fellow countrymen had displayed heroism in both life and death, including children who had cycled through bombs to relay messages, men who had braved fires to rescue others, and women who had died as a result of enemy action. Tales also recounted the productivity of factory workers and the continuing good citizenship of the nation. These stories served a powerful purpose. In many ways, tales of Home Front heroism acted as inspiration during wartime; they captured notions of idealised and model behaviour and provided guidance during times of hardship. In popular culture, heroic individuals shaped national and collective identities, and shaped common ideals and values. As Gad Yair et al state, heroes anchor society, and orient individual choices.² Stories of heroism form a central part of this thesis. Each chapter is filled with tales of heroic acts. Yet, this thesis is not solely concerned with stories, it also seeks to unpick how heroic virtues were framed in the public domain. The heroic civilian, while distinct from the great heroes of war, fulfilled a critical role in wartime as representative of the archetypal everyday citizen. It was paramount that constructions of civilian heroism reflected notions of exceptionality, but also normality; civilians across Britain were reassured that heroic potential resided in the hearts and souls of each Briton. Therefore, in contrast to studies such as John Price's *Everyday Heroism*, which explores heroes in ordinary life, this study will focus upon examining the everyday civilian under duress, and reveal that the notion of the 'ordinary civilian' was central to varying constructions of wartime civilian heroism.³ War was a period of flux, as such, the heroism of ordinary people during wartime was far from an everyday phenomenon. This study will explore how the wartime disturbance of ordinary

² Gad Yair, Yaron Girsh, Samira Alayan, Henning Hues and Elad Or "“We Don't Need Another Hero”": Heroes and Role Models in Germany and Israel', *Comparative Education Review*, 58: 2 (2014), 269-295 (p. 269).

³ John Price, *Everyday Heroism: Victorian Constructions of the Heroic Civilian* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015)

life enabled civilians to be represented as heroic. Whilst wartime heroism has frequently been explored through a focus on the military, or in studies which explore gender and war, this study endeavours to broaden understandings of heroism through focusing on the spatial and temporal nature of civilian heroism during periods of conflict.

Heroes and Heroism

Firstly, it is important to identify how we can define heroes and heroism. As Geoffrey Cubitt states,

A hero is any man or woman whose existence, whether in his or her own lifetime or later, is endowed by others, not just with a high degree of fame or honour, but with a special allocation of imputed meaning and symbolic significance – that not only raises them above others in public esteem but makes them the object of some kind of collective emotional investment...The concept of reputation is thus central to the understanding of the heroic... and reputations are understood here not as the vapour trails of natural glory that the great and the good leave behind them, but as cultural constructions reflecting the values and ideologies of the societies in which they are produced.⁴

Moreover, as Scott Allison, George Goethals and Roderick Kramer state, ‘heroism represents the pinnacle of human behaviour.’⁵ Heroism involves displaying actions that are deemed morally good, performing exceptionally, making a significant sacrifice, or

⁴ Geoffrey Cubitt, ‘Introduction’, in Geoffrey Cubitt and Allen Warren (eds.) *Heroic Reputations and Exemplary Lives* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000) pp. 1–26 (p. 3).

⁵ Scott T. Allison, George R. Goethals and Roderick M. Kramer, ‘Introduction: Setting the Scene: The Rise and Coalescence of Heroism Science’, in Scott T. Allison, George R. Goethals and Roderick M. Kramer (eds.), *Handbook of Heroism and Heroic Leadership* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017) pp. 1-18 (p. 1).

taking a great risk.⁶ Clearly then, displaying heroism or being considered a hero fulfils a social purpose; heroic individuals embody model or ideal qualities. This thesis will use these definitions as a foundation for exploring wartime heroism. In examining how heroism was conceptualised during the Second World War, this study will question the purpose and role of heroic constructions, and how heroes were used as social and cultural tools. Exploring how civilian heroism was defined is useful for investigating wartime society and culture on a broader level, as Max Jones has explained, examining heroes reveals insights into cultural beliefs, and social practices, political structures and economic systems of the past.⁷

Aims

The primary aim of this study is to explore how civilian heroism on the Home Front was constructed, represented and communicated. It will consider whether ideals of heroism evolved and broadened during the conflict to account for civilian behaviour, or whether war enabled civilians to engage with established and traditional ideals of wartime heroism to a greater extent. Traditional ideals of wartime heroism were established in the nineteenth century. Throughout the Victorian and Edwardian period, ideals of heroism remained centred on notions of military masculinity, nationalist glory, adventure and personal valour.⁸ However, during the First World War, the nature of the hero evolved as warfare experienced modernisation. Machine guns, barbed wire, and heavy artillery, which created mass death on an unprecedented scale, put an end to notions of war as an exercise in chivalry.⁹ During this period, whilst heroic ideals remained closely associated

⁶ Ibid. p. 5.

⁷ Max Jones, 'What Should Historians Do with Heroes? Reflections on Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Britain', *History Compass* 5:2 (2007), 439-454 (p. 439).

⁸ Christine Grandy, *Heroes and Happy Endings: Class, Gender, and Nation in Popular Film and Fiction in Interwar Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016) p. 42.

⁹ Omer Bartov, 'Man and the Mass: Reality and the Heroic Image in War', *History and Memory*, 1:2 (1989), 99-122 (p. 106).

with the military, they instead adopted a collective, instead of an individual nature.¹⁰ This study will assess whether the demand to reward and acknowledge heroism on the Home Front encouraged traditional ideals of wartime heroism to further develop during the Second World War. In addition, this thesis will evaluate how the diversity of Britain's Home Front army, which consisted of men and women of varying ages and occupations, shaped the way that behaviour and actions were conceptualised by the state and the British people.

In order to explore how ideals of wartime heroism were represented, particular attention will be placed on exploring the varying strands of heroism. This thesis includes these as; courage, bravery, compassion, caregiving, duty, expertise, defiance, endurance, fortitude, productivity, self-sacrifice and death. Importantly, this thesis will consider how wartime broadened how heroism was defined and practiced. Through exploring how wartime heroism existed as different virtues, some which were intertwined, some which ran parallel to each other, and some which were considered superior, the complexity of wartime heroism will be analysed. Some virtues, such as dying for a cause, were presented as the ultimate act of sacrifice. Moreover, through exploring the varying strands of heroism, this study contributes to discussions of active and passive heroism.¹¹ Indeed, it will reveal how, on the Home Front, both the heroics of action, and the heroics of passive endurance were celebrated. Arguably, the heroics of action centred around specific individuals, whereas the heroics of passive endurance were often constructed as a trait of collective citizenship. Importantly, this study will also explore how civilians were positioned as heroic in both life and death, and examine the circumstances in which

¹⁰ Jessica Meyer, *Men of War: Masculinity and the First World War in Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) p. 89.

¹¹ For more information on the discussion of active and passive heroism see: Mary Beth Rose, *Gender and Heroism in Early Modern English Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002) p. xii.

heroic identities were framed; notably, death from enemy action heightened the heroic qualities of the deceased.

Moreover, a theme which will permeate this thesis is how notions of heroism remained centred upon constructions of gender. Whilst civilians were able to challenge expectations of gender through new wartime roles and responsibilities, conceptualisations of heroism largely remained centred upon gendered expectations of behaviour in wartime. Wartime mobilisation altered the roles of men and women on the Home Front. As labour demands brought women out of domestic spaces and into new spheres, gender roles were blurred. However, some jobs, such as firefighting remained gendered. Whilst some occupations offered the means for civilians to be raised to a heroic status, other occupations restricted opportunities for individuals to display, or be recognised for, traditionally accepted strands of heroism. Therefore, this study considers how heroism was constructed as an expected or extraordinary act in association with gender and occupation. In many ways, gender dictated an individual's behaviour. For example, representations of heroic women on the Home Front contrasted their role as civilian combatants, but also as wives, mothers and daughters. This thesis will reveal the complexity of wartime heroism and how war facilitated the potential for women to be constructed as heroic; women were able to move within traditionally masculine spaces of war, and as such, behave in ways not considered traditionally feminine. This leads to one of the central issues surrounding women's heroism; whether war caused heroic ideals to destabilise, or whether wartime gender ideals reinforced notions of heroism. Through examining the relationship between civilians, spaces of conflict and behavioural expectations, greater analysis will show to what extent heroism was shaped by notions of gendered behaviour.

This study will also explore the functions of heroism within wartime society. The creation of heroes are central to the construction of national identity in wartime, as such

it is important to explore how heroic individuals act as sites where cultural and social values and expectations are enacted. Indeed, this thesis will consider how heroism was encouraged, nurtured and cultivated in wartime. From the real-life heroes of newspaper articles, or the fictional heroes of film, this study explores how these characters embodied notions of Home Front heroism. Indeed, in a study which seeks to understand how wartime heroism was constructed and shaped, it is vital to consider the necessity for heroes in wartime. As Scott Allison and George Goethals note, heroic individuals serve as tools to encourage particular behaviours, teach valuable lessons, and prepare and guide civilians for future encounters.¹² The state used heroes as motivational figures to guide the population. As war altered all aspects of life on the Home Front, constructing civilian behaviour as heroic served an important role; to educate, entertain or inspire, provide a template of behaviour, or reassure the living that the deaths of relatives and friends were not in vain. Indeed, war was a transformative event which highlighted the social and cultural need for wartime heroism.

This study will consider who makes heroes in wartime, whether it is the government, press and media, or the people themselves.¹³ It will explore the way that individuals are raised to heroic status, and who produces and fashions heroic identities. Through an exploration of how heroism was framed on both a national and local level, this study will question how constructions of bravery, courage and endurance echoed throughout wartime society. This study will particularly examine the role of wartime propaganda in constructing ideals of heroism. An array of propaganda, including films, newsreels, publications, and radio broadcasts, informed the public about Home Front heroism, and offered ways to behave in a heroic fashion. It is important to consider how

¹² Scott T. Allison and George R. Goethals, *Heroes: What They Do and Why We Need Them* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) p. 32.

¹³ The notion of hero makers was discussed by Max Jones in his keynote lecture at 'The Hero and Heroism: Then, There, Now' Conference, Leeds Beckett University, 12 September 2019.

heroism does not exist until society, or a group of specific individuals agrees that it does. As this study explores, the parameters of heroism were shaped by the state, but also by the people, for a variety of reasons, and in a number of ways. Heroic qualities were established through the way that behaviour was identified and framed. As Charles Rosenberg notes, things such as disease, do not exist until they have been perceived, named and responded to; arguably, the same is applicable to heroic acts.¹⁴ Naming and recognising heroism is central to making it a social phenomenon. Therefore, by evaluating how heroism was fashioned, and by whom, insight is gained into how and why constructions of heroism developed during wartime. However, as John Price suggests, it is also important to recognise that public perceptions of heroism are rarely influenced by witnessing the original heroic act.¹⁵ Instead, the public are predominantly informed of heroic figures through the way that their actions are recounted and retold in the public sphere. Thus, heroic narratives shape public opinion, but are also fashioned by individuals who design and shape constructions of heroism. Notably, the construction of heroism relies on the audience; whether it is from onlookers, observers, or contemporaries. Above all, heroic identities are endowed by others, they are never placed upon the individual themselves.

For heroism to be acknowledged and recognised, public spaces played a particularly important role. Public spaces, such as streets and workplaces offered sites where individuals came together and interacted; as such, they provided ideal environments for onlookers to observe heroic acts. In contrast, private spaces of the home are in their very nature, private. Therefore, we could speculate that private spaces were not conducive to the recognition of heroism. However, under bombardment, war altered

¹⁴ Charles Rosenberg, 'Framing Disease: Illness, Society and History', in Charles Rosenberg and Janet Golden (eds.) *Framing Disease: Studies in Cultural History* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992), pp. xiii-xxiii (p. xiii).

¹⁵ Price, *Everyday Heroism*, p. 25.

the borderlines of public and private space. Bombs stripped away the privacy of homes and exposed the rooms within; the remains of bedrooms, living rooms, and kitchens became extensions of the wider cityscape. The contents of houses were strewn across streets, reducing material possessions to rubble and wreckage; this destruction highlighted the vulnerability of the civilian population. As homes were blown apart, they increasingly became sites of heroism; the destructive nature of modern warfare brought the dangers of the front line into the domestic realm and presented opportunities for heroic behaviour. Homeowners, the Civil Defence and Emergency Services interacted with previously private spaces in new ways as they fought fires, and protected and safeguarded those around them from the dangers of bombardment. Thus, this study will explore how heroism is both socially, and spatially constructed.

In a study which evaluates how heroism was produced and fashioned during wartime, it is central to acknowledge that the creation of heroism is a complex spatial and corporeal interaction between places, spaces and bodies. Understandings of behaviour are forged through the way that an individual interacts with an environment, landscape or space; based on occupation, age and gender, certain behaviours are expected. Equally, unforeseen engagement with environments and spaces also prompted unexpected actions. As peacetime spaces on the Home Front were transformed by war, civilians behaved in new ways. Spatial engagement informed how actions were aligned with heroic ideals. A spatial analysis of wartime heroism reveals that *where* actions are performed is central to the way that they are constructed.

This research considers the temporal nature of wartime heroism. It will examine how context and circumstance shaped the way that heroism was conceptualised, and how heroic identities were tied to particular events and moments in time. Indeed, constructions of heroism reappeared and resurfaced in association with major events throughout the conflict, such as the aerial bombardment of mainland Britain, or military turning points

or losses. For example, the bombing of British cities transformed the Home Front. In wartime, the destructive nature of bombardment enabled behaviour to be framed in a specific way. As this thesis will illustrate, aerial bombardment, which created an environment similar to the battlefield, was central in shaping notions of heroism. Under bombardment, the Home Front was transformed into a battlefield of disorder and confusion. As hundreds of tons of bombs were dropped on cities and towns across Britain, neighbourhoods were plunged into chaos, buildings were destroyed and bodies were maimed. As houses, shelters and workplaces were demolished from the impact of bombs, civilians were violently thrown from places of safety, buried under mountains of rubble, or were never found. Arguably, the destruction and danger caused by enemy attack created a prime environment for civilian heroism to be reported and recognised. This landscape created a behavioural expectation around specific individuals, equally, civilians were also recognised for behaviour which surpassed expectations of age or gender. As such, through analysing the temporal nature of wartime heroism, insight will be gained on how specific spaces and contexts produce heroic individuals.

Finally, this thesis explores the relationship between the material and corporeal dimensions of heroism. Objects and rituals were closely connected with cultural meanings of wartime heroism. Indeed, this study will examine how objects, practices and rituals affirmed cultural understandings of heroic conduct. Thus, it is important to explore how the civilian body was a site where heroic values were articulated and displayed; in both life and death, civilian bodies were adorned, decorated, and surrounded by objects which recognised and reflected heroic achievement. Exploring how objects and rituals created a visual and tangible representation of heroism will reveal the relationship between the civilian body and practices which reflected wartime heroism.

Scope of the Study

This study will focus primarily on London. In 1939, London was Britain's largest metropolis, the centre of finance, government, trade, and the monarchy.¹⁶ As such, it was the epicentre of war on the Home Front. For this reason, London was a prime target during bombing raids; bombardment was used to target areas of industrial importance, such as factories, docks and ports, as well as strike at the hearts of Londoners. The bombing of London was tactical and purposeful and aimed to destabilise the morale of Londoners and collapse the will of the British people. Therefore, as the city which sustained the greatest levels of bombardment, London was different from the rest of the nation. Through adopting a local study, this thesis will analyse how constructions of heroism surrounded individuals in the capital. Through concentrating on Britain's capital greater analysis will be drawn upon the way that heroism was forged around a community of individuals in a specific geographical region. This thesis will primarily explore London as a whole, rather than examining the individual districts within the capital, such as the impact of systematic bombing of homes and industrial areas in the East End. As this thesis will illustrate, constructions of heroism often depicted the capital, and the individuals within it, as a united entity; bound together by the demands, destruction and death created by modern warfare. By comparing and contrasting individual stories from across the capital, this study questions how individual stories of heroism were instrumental in unifying the city and its inhabitants. Therefore, by examining London as a whole, this study will question how heroic constructions shaped notions of national unity and collective endurance, even though individuals in districts across the capital, and in regions across Britain, experienced the effects and demands of war in different ways and to varying extents.

¹⁶ Philip Ziegler, *London at War 1939-1945* (London: Pimlico, 2002) pp. 4-6.

Moreover, a study of London reveals how although different, the experiences of Londoners were constructed as symbolic of the nation as a whole. As such, a study of London is not only a study of a locality, it investigates how London offered a focal point for a nation at war. However, a study of London raises questions. Most importantly, what can be defined as London? As Philip Ziegler notes in his study of London during the war, London's geographical dimensions can be understood through the traditional London County Council definition as the region within fifteen miles of Charing Cross.¹⁷ Equally, London's geographical boundaries can also be drawn from the map produced during wartime of The London Civil Defence Region (No.5), which stretched from Cheshunt in the North and Banstead in the South, to Crayford in the East and Staines in the West.¹⁸

However, as Ziegler has further stated, keeping to this definition is challenging.¹⁹ A study which focuses on Britain's capital reveals that London was more than a geographical location. During wartime, London was symbolic of public spirit and citizenship and consequently had no firm boundaries. Therefore, in this study, the geographical limits of London are fluid. Instead of defining London's dimensions, this study will seek to understand how London represented more than a city in wartime, and explore how its name could also evoke feeling and meaning. It is important to recognise that in wartime, London symbolised the nation's endurance, defiance and survival, and as such, it is impossible to truly distinguish London's geographical boundaries, as *London* prompted a breadth of connotative meaning.

This study will also interrogate the terms hero, heroine and heroic. Whilst connected, these terms can refer to different things and carry different meanings. For example, this thesis will question whether the term 'heroic' create a short-lived identity

¹⁷ Ibid. p. 3.

¹⁸ The London Civil Defence Region (No.5) Map, cited by Angela Raby, *The Forgotten Service: Auxiliary Ambulance Station 39 Weymouth Mews* (London: Battle of Britain International Limited, 1999) p. 52.

¹⁹ Ziegler, *London at War*, p. 3.

compared with the term 'hero'. Moreover, this study will also consider the gendered nature of heroic language. For example, it will consider whether the terms hero and heroine remained connected to masculine and feminine behaviour, or whether, as the gendered boundaries of heroism blurred in wartime, language was used interchangeably. Through an examination of how heroic virtues were communicated in wartime propaganda and in the public domain, this study will question whether displaying heroism makes someone a hero. Through examining how language and terminology fashioned different identities, greater analysis will be developed around the construction of momentary or long-lasting heroic identities. Heroic identities were anchored to specific moments, yet they could also extend to create heroic reputations. For instance, when heroic behaviour was documented and recognised, heroism transcended the moment of action. The recognition of heroic qualities and behaviours enabled individuals to be raised to a heroic status within society and used as a symbol of Home Front heroism.

Methodology

Naturally, a study which seeks to uncover how civilian heroism was fashioned and understood during wartime requires a range of methodological approaches. This study will use a multidisciplinary approach by drawing upon the fields of history, gender studies, geography, sociology and psychology. Engaging with these areas of study enables heroism to be explored through various lenses. Indeed, as this thesis illustrates, greater analysis can be gained from examining heroism through a focus on the body, material culture, space and time. By adopting this approach, this thesis offers new insights into the study of wartime heroism.

Historians such as Penny Summerfield, Linsey Robb, and Sonya Rose have examined wartime heroism through a gender analysis.²⁰ Through focusing on how gender relationships are produced and transformed, their research has shown that gender is crucial to understanding how wartime heroism was produced and constructed. Like these scholars, this study adds to the existing historiography of wartime heroism, by moving the discussion away from examining class and social change, a focus which was especially dominant in the 1960s and 1970s, to one concentrated on gender and space. Examining gender enables wartime masculinity and femininity to be analysed in greater detail, such as how gender roles evolved or were strengthened in direct connection to changes in the wartime landscape and spatial demands. Moreover, using gender as a category of historical analysis enables heroism to be viewed as a gendered notion. Historians have utilised this approach to explore how ideals of masculinity and femininity shaped social constructions and individual experience.²¹ As Sonya Rose notes, when examining the Second World War, gender is a critical tool of analysis as portrayals of the Home Front and the heroism of its ordinary people were closely intertwined with complex issues of gender.²² On the Home Front, some occupations and activities were gendered. However, in wartime gendered roles were also blurred as women moved into new professions and adopted new responsibilities, as such, behaviour was constructed both with and in opposition to gender ideals. Yet, in contrast to studies which explore the Home Front through a focus on masculinity or femininity, this thesis will use gender as a category of analysis alongside other methodological approaches to illustrate that whilst

²⁰ See: Penny Summerfield, Chapter 3 ‘‘Heroes’ and ‘Stoics’: War work and feminine identity’, in *Reconstructing Women’s Wartime Lives: discourse and subjectivity in oral histories of the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998)

Linsey Robb, Chapter 4 ‘Heroes on the Home Front: Firefighting in Wartime Culture’ in *Men at Work: The Working Man in British Culture, 1939–1945* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015)

Sonya Rose, Chapter 5 ‘Temperate Heroes: Masculinity on the Home Front’, in *Which People’s War: National Identity and Citizenship in Wartime Britain 1939-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003)

²¹ Sonya O. Rose, *What is Gender History?* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010) p. 57.

²² Sonya O. Rose, *Which People’s War: National Identity and Citizenship in Wartime Britain 1939-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) p. 6.

heroism was a gendered notion, it was also shaped through other vectors. Examining gendered representations of heroism enables us to analyse the changing nature of the complexity of heroic ideals, and how wartime enabled civilians to engage with ideals of heroism which were not traditionally associated with masculinity or femininity.

In addition, this study will use a spatial and temporal lens to further the examination of wartime heroism. Analysing space provides a useful framework for this study as it enables us to study heroism in relation to where it happened. This offers new lines of enquiry around the production and construction of heroic acts, and how representations of heroism are tied to specific moments or contexts. Indeed, a study of wartime civilian heroism cannot be conducted without a spatial analysis; the Second World War altered spaces across London, as well as changing the way that civilians engaged with spaces of war, as such, it is vital to evaluate the spatiality of heroism. Through exploring the way that heroism was represented, this thesis will examine how heroic activity occurred in relation to spaces and surroundings, but also how the fluctuating nature of space also produces a fluidity of heroic identities. As Henri Lefebvre notes, a spatial analysis enables us to consider how spaces are produced by people and how people are produced by spaces.²³ Indeed, the analysis of space can be used as a tool for the analysis of society.²⁴ Thus, locating the spatialities of wartime heroism reveals how social and cultural beliefs about environment, landscape and place informed the way that heroic behaviour was constructed.

This study will also examine the corporeal dimensions of heroism. Through focusing on the body as a category of analysis, the nature of civilian heroism will be examined further. This study will particularly examine the relationship between the body and material culture and how war is experienced and understood through the body.

²³ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991) p. 31.

²⁴ *Ibid.* p. 34.

Through examining the body as a site where the destructive nature of warfare is displayed, greater analysis will be developed around the embodied nature of warfare. It is also important to bring together these methodological approaches of gender, space and the body to further the study of heroism. As Kevin McSorley notes, examination of the embodied practices of war also requires analysis to extend temporally and spatially to consider the bodily preparations for, and the corporeal aftermaths of war.²⁵

A central consideration of the research methodology for this thesis is how heroism can be researched. Although during wartime, the terms hero, heroic and heroism were used to commend notable behaviour, heroic conduct was also communicated through the use of heroic virtues alone, such as bravery, courage and valour. This complicates the research process, as looking for heroism not only involves looking for heroes, it also entails scrutinising heroic virtues. For example, in the press, headlines and articles did not always use the term hero; courage, bravery, duty and sacrifice were meaningful enough to reflect heroism. Thus, researching wartime heroism involves evaluating the cultural and social significance of a set of behaviours and how they were presented, valued and aligned with heroic ideals as the wartime significance of particular qualities meant that virtues alone could denote heroism. Equally, objects also symbolised heroic conduct. For example, medals were not inscribed with the word hero or heroism, and yet still reflected heroic status. For instance, the George Cross was only inscribed with the words 'for gallantry'. This signified that objects alone could be markers of heroic conduct. As such, this study reveals an interesting aspect when researching wartime heroism; that the historian needs to immerse themselves into the culture of wartime heroism to identify patterns, continuities and changes in the way that heroism is constructed and represented. This process prompts the historian to make a judgement

²⁵ Kevin McSorley, 'War and the Body', in Kevin McSorley (ed.), *War and the Body: Militarisation, Practice and Experience* (London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 1-32 (p. 2).

during the research process; the study of heroism requires not only looking for heroes, but also examining heroic virtues.

Whilst this section has outlined the methodological approaches of this study, it establishes methodological boundaries. For example, this thesis has not used an anthropological approach. This study has not used an economic analysis and has therefore not drawn upon records of wages, food prices or living costs. This work has not utilised medical records or inpatient registers since these sources are subject to 100 years closure periods. Rather than analysing a select group, this study focuses on what the study of heroism can reveal about wartime culture as a whole.

Sources

This thesis utilises an array of primary material to explore how civilian heroism was constructed and represented throughout the war. The nature of this study largely requires an examination of sources which reveal how heroism was reported in the public domain, these sources are valuable as they show how heroic ideals were manufactured, but also how the public consumed heroic representations. In addition, it will also draw upon sources which reveal how popular representations of heroism were understood on a personal and local level. Predominantly, this study has drawn upon material which was produced during the war years.²⁶ In utilising material produced between 1939-1945, this study offers an in-depth analysis on how heroism was depicted and shaped during the wartime period.

Examining wartime propaganda has formed a central part of this study as propaganda material was used as a means of shaping public attitudes and the lived

²⁶ Exceptions to this include material sourced from the National Archives and reports from the British Library which provide context to the wider wartime situation, and legislation and circulars which were passed in the pre-war period.

experience. Pamphlets, booklets, posters, films, newsreels, documentaries and radio broadcasts, produced by the various government ministries, including the Ministry of Information and Ministry of Labour and National Service, have been particularly useful in revealing how heroism was presented in the public domain. These sources suggest that the experiences of Londoners were frequently used in the public domain as representative of the nation as a whole. The comprehensive and broad nature of this material reveals how constructions of heroism permeated the public sphere; reports and stories of civilian heroism appeared through a variety of mediums. However, examination of wartime propaganda also indicates that constructions of heroism were shaped by a select group of individuals.

National and local newspapers also provide a wealth of material for examining how heroism was represented and communicated to the general public; they provide an important medium for the researcher to uncover how readers were informed of specific subjects, but also how reporters, editors and the state chose to present information. The press was an important outlet in wartime society, as newspapers reinforced and challenged traditional social and cultural beliefs and ideals. During wartime, the Ministry of Information worked alongside newspapers to regulate press coverage. The content of newspapers was shaped by individual reporters, along with teams of editors. Thus, instead of being viewed as a reflection of reality, newspapers provide the researcher with a construction of reality and an interpretation of social, cultural and political issues.

Whilst this is a study of how heroism was constructed and represented in the public sphere, it is also important to examine how civilians within specific districts, organisations or services framed heroic behaviour. Local borough magazines and journals provide valuable insight on this. Throughout the war, an array of magazines and journals were produced by a range of Civil Defence and Emergency Services to distribute between members. Businesses also produced newsletters and journals for employees. Within these

publications, contributors expressed their thoughts on courageous behaviour through cartoons, poems and articles; this material enables the researcher to look beyond official constructions of civilian heroism and into the attitudes of the everyday Londoner. Similarly, the reports, directives and diaries produced and collected by Mass Observation, the wartime social survey organisation, offers valuable insight into the attitudes of the civilian on the Home Front. Moreover, art produced under the direction of the War Artists Advisory Committee also exposes how artists frequently conceptualised heroism through engagement with the sensory aspects of an environment. Lastly, recollections of wartime experiences which were published during the war reveal how individuals framed their own experiences.

In addition, through drawing upon aspects of material culture, including medals, uniforms, badges and flags, this study will explore how civilian heroism was constructed and represented through a range of decorations and clothing. These objects reveal the corporeal and tangible dimensions of wartime heroism. Indeed, in many ways, these sources expose how wartime society manufactured and cultivated their own heroes in wartime. When actions were rewarded, decorations represented a physical embodiment of achievement and acted as a visual marker of heroism. Examining material culture reveals how objects reflected the values and beliefs that surrounded particular behaviours and how they were articulated and communicated in the public sphere.

Government circulars, records, reports and correspondence are valuable for exploring the attitudes of the state. These records deal with administrative matters relating to managing and controlling civilian conduct on the Home Front. In particular the National Archives files series relating to the minutes and recommendations of the Inter-departmental Committee of Civil Defence Gallantry Awards has proven particularly useful in tracing select cases of heroism. Parliamentary debates and discussions provide insight into the proceedings of various government departments and legislation, such as

the Air Raid Precautions Act (1937) and the Personal Injuries (Emergency Provisions) Act 1939, provide context to wartime measures.

Analysing this array of primary material requires a multi strand approach. Therefore, this study has utilised a discourse analysis, along with content analysis to evaluate how constructions and representations of heroism appeared across a range of material. Importantly, these sources enable researchers to explore the lives and actions of individuals from across the class spectrum. For example, the working classes, whose lives remained relatively undocumented during peacetime, were identified as central figures of Home Front heroism during wartime. As ordinary civilians responded to the demands and effects of war, they were thrust into the public domain and their voices and experiences, which would not have usually have been documented, were noted down by reporters, filmed for newsreels, and referred to at annual events. As such, a study of wartime heroism enables researchers to examine the lives of ordinary Londoners, from different backgrounds and districts of London, whose lives would likely have remained largely absent from the public domain had wartime conflict not altered and impacted upon the Home Front in such a comprehensive manner.

There are a variety of limitations to this study. Firstly, the sources available are primarily created by a specific group of elite individuals. Writers, reporters, broadcasters and film makers played a central role in shaping how Home Front heroism was represented. Equally, it is important to recognise that these mediums were informed by the directives of the Ministry of Information. It is harder to understand how local communities and the working classes framed heroic behaviours and actions. Mass Observation surveys are particularly useful in addressing the limitations. Whilst some understanding can be gathered from letters, diaries, and the journals and magazines that individual organisations produced, undoubtedly, they were overshadowed and informed by popular representations in the mass media. Secondly, some material was impossible

for me to access, including documents which were confined to storage during the renovation of the Imperial War Museum Duxford site.²⁷ Lastly, it is beyond the remit of this study to explore heroism in regards to race or religion. These characteristics were largely absent from constructions of heroism in the public domain, instead, heroic ideals were manufactured in ways which aimed to reinforce British national identity, and did not make room for celebrating the multicultural and ethnic diversity of heroic individuals in the capital and in regions across Britain.²⁸

Current Literature

Current studies of heroism are wide ranging and interdisciplinary, ranging from works which explore the lives of specific heroes to studies which investigate the social and cultural meaning of heroism. Research which explores constructions and conceptions of heroism are particularly central to this thesis, as they not only provide context to the discussion of wartime heroism, they illuminate how a lack of attention has been given to exploring how civilian heroism was framed during the Second World War. A review of the literature reveals that greater attention can be devoted to exploring how civilian heroism was constructed, represented and communicated during wartime. As this review illustrates, heroism is a topic which instead appears within studies which explore the wider context of life on the Home Front; wartime citizenship and national identity; space, landscape and identity; material culture, war and the body; propaganda and the lived experience; injury, wounding and the body; and death in wartime.

²⁷ These included: Imperial War Museum Archive, London. Strand Magazine, LBY E.J. 3063. The Croydon Advertiser and Surrey County Reporter, LBY E.J. 4207. Borough and District Record, LBY E. 85 / 352. Beckenham Borough War Weapons Week Bulletin, LBY E.J. 3272

²⁸ Further studies would benefit from exploring race and religion in regards to the way that the ‘unheroic’ were conceptualised in wartime; for example, whether particular communities were criticised for cowardice or lack of courage.

Analysis of the literature reveals that throughout history, suffering and endurance repeatedly fuel the creation of heroes and how acts of heroism are conceptualised. War is an event which creates suffering and distress, but also provides the opportunity for populations to respond with displays of fortitude and courage. The Second World War is a particularly important event in the exploration of heroism as it was a when heroic values were re-evaluated, recast and broadened. As the arenas of wartime conflict expanded to encompass the civilian population, understandings of heroism evolved to account for the behaviour and experiences of civilians on the Home Front. Equally, as civilians behaved in new ways and adopted new responsibilities, the civilian population were able to engage with traditional ideals of wartime heroism. Fundamentally, this study illustrates that the Second World War was a turning point in the way that ideals of civilian heroism were communicated, constructed and represented.

An article written by Max Jones in 2007 entitled, ‘What Should Historians Do with Heroes?’ underpins this discussion and acts as a platform upon which further enquiry can be formed around the relevance and importance of studying heroes and heroism. In his discussion, Jones questions the value of examining and analysing heroes, and particularly asks, what significance do such studies give historians?²⁹ Notably, as Jones argues, studies of heroism reveal insight into cultural attitudes and social practices of the past, such as ideals surrounding gender, citizenship and national identity. Significantly, Jones suggests that more research is needed on the reception, rather than the representation of heroic figures.³⁰ Therefore, this thesis seeks to address this point. Through examining a range of primary sources and drawing on an array of secondary literature, this discussion explores how civilian heroism was communicated, constructed and represented, by the crown, state officials, the press and media, and by the people

²⁹ Max Jones, ‘What Should Historians do with Heroes?’, 439-454 (p. 439).

³⁰ Ibid.

themselves. In doing so this thesis will evaluate the social role of heroism in wartime and who makes heroes during periods of conflict.

Heroism

Undoubtedly, Joseph Campbell's work, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, marks the first study of heroism after the end of the Second World War. Published in 1949, in a world which had just survived a global conflict, Campbell's work reveals that heroes in mythology are all variants of the same hero, and that they can, in many ways, be understood as a 'hero with a thousand faces.' Central to Campbell's argument is the notion that all heroes travel a similar journey; it is this journey that creates parallels between heroic figures.³¹ According to Campbell, there are 17 stages to the creation of a hero, which span from the initial call to adventure, the road of trials, crossing the return threshold, and which ultimately ends in the freedom to live.³² This journey is central to the way that understandings of mythological heroic identities are formed. As such, this thesis will consider whether these stages differed for the creation of wartime heroism. Indeed, it will question how total war altered the way that heroism was recognised, and how conflict created unexpected prospects and opportunities for heroism.

More recently, historians have explored how ideals of heroism are created and fashioned within specific time periods and around specific individuals. These works generally approach the study of heroism through exploring unexpected heroes, everyday heroism and gendered heroism. A similarity which spans across works which explore heroism is the fluidity of heroic identities. Specific events alter the way that behaviour and actions are perceived, therefore studies repeatedly situate heroism within its wider

³¹ Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004) pp. 45-221.

³² Ibid.

context in order to explore how heroic ideals are shaped and how understandings of heroism are tightly connected with duty and social contribution. In particular, Christine Macleod's work, *Heroes of Invention: Technology, Liberalism and British Identity, 1750-1914* reveals that during the nineteenth century, the British inventor was raised to hero status. In particular, Macleod explores how the inventor was an improbable and unexpected hero of the period; the inventor's heroism occurred away from the glorious field of battle, ice floes, desert or jungle. Instead, it was their ingenuity, enterprise and technical achievement which defined their heroism.³³ MacLeod suggests that the significance of the inventor's construction as a hero reveals a lot about nineteenth century British culture.³⁴ In particular, MacLeod argues that during the nineteenth century there was a cultural shift in the perception of inventors. Notably, her work illustrates the complex values which surround understandings of heroism. For example, MacLeod suggests that during the 1850s, technological innovation enabled the inventor to be celebrated in a similar vein to the political or military leader, as their work had also made a social contribution.³⁵ Significantly, MacLeod's study reveals the variable and fluid nature of heroism; during the Victorian period, ideals of heroism broadened to account for behaviour which bolstered the industrial strength of the nation. The thesis will explore the meaning of unexpected heroism further. It will consider how social and political needs fuelled the creation of unforeseen and unanticipated heroes.

Geoffrey Cubitt's and Allen Warren's edited collection *Heroic Reputations and Exemplary Lives* explores how heroes have been represented, the way that heroic status is established and maintained, and how the lives of heroes are constructed in both life and death. The individual chapters focus on examining specific heroic case studies, from

³³ Christine MacLeod, *Heroes of Invention: Technology, Liberalism and British Identity, 1750-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) p. 1.

³⁴ *Ibid.* p. 9.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

Patricia Fara's examination of Isaac Newton in eighteenth century England, to Tom Lodge's analysis of Nelson Mandela as a political saint. However, it is Cubitt's introduction to the volume, and his analysis of the creation of heroic reputations, which is of particular use to this study. As Cubitt details, human societies have developed a range of procedures and practices for the creation of heroic reputations, such as honours systems, decorations and citations, canonisation procedures, state funerals and pantheonisations, centenary celebrations, public statues, the naming of streets and cities, and through imagery on stamps and banknotes. However, heroic reputations are also developed through informal means, such as through story-telling, entertainment, gossip and news-reporting, in literature and in propagandistic imagery.³⁶ Moreover, Cubitt also comments on the social value of heroes, suggesting that heroes must be representative of wider society but also embody the exceptional. Moreover, it is important to recognise that the construction of heroic reputations appear across a spectrum, with virtuous normality at one end and romantic genius at the other.³⁷

In contrast, other works explore constructions of everyday heroism within the wider population. In particular, John Price's study *Everyday Heroism: Victorian Constructions of the Heroic Civilian* examines acts of heroism performed in daily life, and broadens the lens away from studies which explore the nature of military heroism. Specifically, Price argues that for the working classes, understandings of heroism centred upon the display of specific behaviours; notably acts which resulted in loss of life. Through his work, which is structured through an analysis of the history of heroism from below, Price also reveals the gendered nature of heroism through detailing how the response to courageous actions was shaped by expectations of gender. Most significantly, *Everyday Heroism* fills a gap in the study of heroism; it demonstrates that whilst 'great

³⁶ Cubitt, 'Introduction', pp. 1–26 (pp. 3–4).

³⁷ Ibid. p. 9.

men' dominated cultural understandings of heroism, the working classes were also able to engage with heroic values through displays of bravery and courage. While Price's work reveals that alongside the nineteenth century military and imperial models of heroism, a parallel strand of everyday heroism existed, it has largely been overlooked by historians.³⁸ Through employing Geoffrey Cubitt's analysis of the relationship between heroes and the exemplary, Price contends that for acts of everyday heroism to be recognised, they must be both representative and exceptional. As Price, notes, everyday heroism embodied this through the way that heroism among the working classes fulfilled a social function by inspiring and connecting with the wider population.³⁹ This study will build upon the idea that heroism fulfils a social function. However, in contrast to Price, it will argue that in wartime, civilian heroism was not an everyday heroism. As war was a period of change, the heroism of the British people was not an everyday occurrence.

Similarly, in *Extraordinary Ordinarity: Everyday Heroism in the United States, Germany and Britain*, the concept of everyday heroism is explored further. The edited collection presents an interdisciplinary approach to expanding the scholarship of everyday heroism. Notably, the volume questions how everyday heroism emerged, how it changed, and how it was discussed and depicted in popular culture. Moreover, in a similar vein to Price, the collection of essays also questions the social, cultural and political function that heroes serve and the ideals and values that they embody.⁴⁰ Through addressing a vast array of topics, from heroism in the nineteenth century American fire service, to heroism in superhero narratives, this collection of essays illustrates the complexity of everyday heroism in Western societies. This thesis will particularly connect with works that explore everyday heroism to analyse the relationship between

³⁸ Price, *Everyday Heroism*, p. 3.

³⁹ *Ibid.* p. 6.

⁴⁰ Simon Wendt, 'Introduction: Studying Everyday Heroism in Western Societies', in Simon Wendt (ed.), *Extraordinary Ordinarity: Everyday Heroism in the United States, Germany and Britain, 1800-2015* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016) pp. 7-24 (p. 9).

social expectation, behaviour and actions. Indeed, this thesis will question whether in wartime civilian heroism can be considered an everyday heroism. Or whether, heroism on the Home Front was reserved for civilians in specific professions and in specific contexts.

In addition, scholars have also analysed the gendered nature of heroism and heroic identities. For example, Mary Beth Rose, in her study of *Gender and Heroism in Early Modern English Literature* suggests that heroism is a gendered notion. Rose suggests that in early modern literature, a strand of heroism emerged which centred on enduring danger, where the hero resists and suffers with patience and fortitude. This notion of the stoic hero contrasts with traditional action-heroes whose courageous behaviour centred on an active confrontation with danger.⁴¹ As a result, the heroics of stoic endurance were generally gendered as female. As Rose reveals, these representations of heroism were shaped through cultural understandings of gendered spheres and gendered behaviour within these domains.⁴² As such, acts of heroism were presented as both active and passive, in accordance with cultural understandings of masculinity and femininity. Moreover, Christine Grandy's study *Heroes and Happy Endings: Class, Gender and Nation in Popular Film and Fiction in Interwar Britain* further explores how gendered expectations inform ideals of heroism. Grandy's work provides an in-depth analysis of the most popular films and novels that emerged in the interwar period and the issues they addressed. In particular, Grandy argues that on screen and in literature, heroic characters embodied characteristics that were valued by British society, and particularly sought to reinforce pre-war notions of work, the nation, and masculinity.⁴³ Significantly, Grandy asserts that the experiences and memory of the First World War largely informed the work that was produced once the conflict was over. Films and novels regularly channelled

⁴¹ Rose, *Gender and Heroism*, p. xii.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Grandy, *Heroes and Happy Endings*, p. 41.

notions of England's might and heroics and reinforced notions of men as the breadwinners, defenders, and soldiers of the nation. Importantly, Grandy's study reveals that British audiences actively consumed these characters through their attendance to cinemas and the procurement of novels. Yet, throughout her discussion she also questions whether mass consumption is truly reflective of an acceptance of ideas and beliefs. Essentially, Grandy questions whether the 'audience is a passive consumer of popular culture or an active agent that exerts a measure of control.'⁴⁴ A similar notion of passive or active heroism will be addressed throughout this thesis. This work will question how in wartime, passive endurance and fortitude was framed as heroic alongside traditional ideals of active heroism.

Other studies specifically focus on analysing the masculine or feminine dimensions of heroism. Graham Dawson's study, *Soldier Heroes*, explores how the soldier is a quintessential figure of heroic masculinity. As Dawson notes, military heroes represent one of the most powerful and idealised forms of masculinity within Western culture, as they are able to engage with soldierly virtues of aggression, strength, courage and endurance. As Dawson states, the soldier hero is one of the archetypal figures of masculinity.⁴⁵ In particular, Dawson argues that the status of the soldier hero was complemented by notions of domestic femininity, where women and children remained in the home and required protection.⁴⁶ Sonya Rose has also explored the connection between masculinity and heroism through a specific focus on the Home Front in the Second World War. Rose argues that tempered masculinity emerged during on the Home Front, which centred on the good humour, kindness, heroism and bravery of the ordinary

⁴⁴ Ibid. p. 5.

⁴⁵ Graham Dawson, *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire and the Imaginings of Masculinities* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1994) p. 1.

⁴⁶ Ibid. p. 2.

man. This tempered masculinity appeared in opposition to the hyper masculine Nazi enemy.⁴⁷

Other studies reveal how femininity is traditionally linked to motherhood rather than wartime heroism. Motherhood and the home were directly connected to feminine identity. For example, in *The Making of Modern Woman* Lynn Abrams explains how in the nineteenth century, motherhood was the pinnacle of a woman's life; it confirmed her virtue and her fulfilment.⁴⁸ During the First World War, as Susan Grayzel notes, motherhood was reinforced as central to feminine identity. Motherhood was a gender specific experience and was presented as a unifying experience, in the same way that soldiering was used to unify men.⁴⁹ However, in the period after the end of the First World War, as women were accessing birth control, motherhood became a choice, rather than a chore.⁵⁰ Moreover, as Katharina Rowold notes, in the interwar period, marriage rates were high among the middle classes, and many women saw raising children as their primary task in life.⁵¹ The biological responsibilities of motherhood removed women from the battlefield; women's innate purpose was to nurture rather than kill. Yet, as Christine Hallett suggests, women's identity as mothers enabled them to participate in specific areas of wartime work, and thus engage with heroic virtues. During the First World War, women worked as nurses in field hospitals, on hospital ships, and at base hospitals; these areas of employment utilised the traditional roles of women as mothers and caregivers to fulfil important wartime work.⁵² Whilst some nurses fashioned themselves as heroines,

⁴⁷ Sonya Rose, 'Temperate Heroes: Concepts of Masculinity in Second World War Britain', in Stefan Dudink, Karen Hagemann and Josh Tosh (eds.), *Masculinities in Politics and War: Gendering Modern History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), pp. 177-198 (p. 193); Sonya Rose, *Which People's War*, pp. 15-18.

⁴⁸ Lynn Abrams, *The Making of Modern Woman* (London: Longman, 2002) p. 101.

⁴⁹ Susan R. Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War: Gender, Motherhood, and Politics in Britain and France during the First World War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999) p. 86.

⁵⁰ Abrams, *The Making of Modern Woman*, p. 126.

⁵¹ Katharina Rowold, 'Modern mothers, modern babies: breastfeeding and mother's milk in interwar Britain', *Women's History Review*, 28:7 (2019), 1157-1176 (p. 1159).

⁵² Christine E. Hallett, *Veiled Warriors: Allied Nurses of the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014) p. 99.

others found themselves as reluctant heroines as heroic identities were thrust onto them.⁵³

This thesis will build upon the discussion of feminine identity in wartime, particularly around the representation of female heroism. Through examining the extent to which women were able to distance themselves from traditional notions of motherhood, this thesis will evaluate how notions of gendered heroism blurred in wartime.

This thesis will question the extent to which war challenged or reinforced gendered constructions of heroism. As war blurred the lines between the military and domestic sphere, the role of the protector and the protected was blurred. As such, a theme that will permeate throughout this discussion is how war caused understandings of gendered behaviour to blur; active bravery and passive endurance were no longer stringently linked to understandings of masculinity and femininity.

However, more recently, scholars have also explored the psychology of heroism. For example, in their study *Heroes: What They Do & Why We Need Them*, Scott Allison and George Goethals explore how heroes are perceived and how concepts of heroism are socially and culturally constructed. Throughout their discussion, Allison and Goethals examine understandings of heroism, the formulas of heroism, and the defining qualities of heroism. Through their examination of specific case studies, they illustrate how behaviours and actions are perceived in relation to context and circumstance. Although their work largely draws upon American culture, and is therefore nation specific, they conclude that heroic identities are largely decided by the perceivers of heroism; society decides who is and who is not a hero.⁵⁴ In addition, Allison and Goethals argue that human beings create and construct heroes to energise and guide their thinking and behaviour.⁵⁵ This thesis will develop these themes, particularly how during times of hardship, heroes

⁵³ Ibid. p. 15.

⁵⁴ Goethals and Allison, *Heroes: What They Do and Why We Need Them*, p. 195.

⁵⁵ Ibid. p. 206.

act as motivational tools to direct and encourage desired behaviour.⁵⁶ Similarly, in their study on the changing nature of American valour, Bruce Peabody and Krista Jenkins also investigate the psychology of heroism and the role heroes play in society. Their work explores the changing nature of heroism through examining three facets of American society, the politicians, the press, and the general public. Their discussion illustrates the complexity which surrounds understandings of heroism, and how heroic standards are not consistent within each group. Through a comparative approach, their work highlights the changing nature of the heroic narrative, not only across American history, but also across elite and everyday sectors of American society.⁵⁷ As Peabody and Jenkins illustrate, whilst heroic narratives are largely shaped by politicians and the press, the general public also select personal heroes that are situated outside of the narratives furnished by society's leaders. Instead, local and personal heroes are celebrated by society away from the influence of the press.⁵⁸ In contrast, in their edited collection, *Heroism as a Global Phenomenon in Contemporary Culture*, Barbara Korte and Simon Wendt, explore how heroism is increasingly a global phenomenon both in terms of production and consumption. However, in a similar vein to other studies which explore the psychology of heroism, this collection addresses how heroes attract and enchant people from across the globe; heroic individuals 'help others and champion ideals, projecting excellence and exceptionality over common human existence.'⁵⁹ Significantly, the essays within this collection demonstrate the complexity and ambiguity of heroic figures; understandings of heroism are influenced by historical contexts and cultures. The collection of essays, which range from case studies of non-Western and Western cultures, reveal that it is

⁵⁶ Ibid. p. 207.

⁵⁷ Bruce Peabody and Krista Jenkins, *Where Have all the Heroes Gone? The Changing Nature of American Valor* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017) pp. 8-9.

⁵⁸ Ibid. p. 192.

⁵⁹ Barbara Korte and Simon Wendt, 'Introduction: Studying Heroism from a Global Perspective', in Barbara Korte, Simon Wendt and Nicole Falkenhayner (eds.), *Heroism as a Global Phenomenon in Contemporary Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2019), pp. 1-18. (p. 3).

important to not only examine fictional and real heroes, but also the heroic backdrop. In other words, it is important to explore the dimensions of contemporary culture in which heroic figures emerge. Across these three separate publications, it is clear that scholarly interest in the psychology of heroism remains an area of continued discussion. Yet, studies of heroism reveal far more than solely the exploration of acts of courage and bravery. They also explore how ideals surrounding gender, class and race largely influence the creation and emergence of heroic figures. These studies reveal how heroism is framed in relation to a range of contexts and circumstances, and fulfils an array of social and cultural needs. This thesis will develop these points further to explore how and why heroes were manufactured in wartime and the range of ways that heroism was framed.

Beyond studies which specifically focus of heroism, texts which explore broader social and cultural aspects of wartime are also relevant to this thesis. Areas of academic research which explore life on the Home Front during the Second World War; civilian identity in wartime; space, landscape and identity; material culture, war and the body, propaganda and the lived experience; injury, wounding and the body; and death in wartime, inform and contextualise the study of heroism in the Second World War. As this thesis argues, the construction and representation of civilian heroism was directly shaped by the way that wartime conflict altered civilian responsibility, safety, and behaviour on the Home Front. As such, examining a wealth of scholarship is central to understanding the complex and multifaceted nature of wartime civilian heroism. Civilian heroism did not occur in a vacuum, instead attitudes and understandings of heroism were tightly affected by social, cultural and political pressures and events. War was a period of flux during which ideals of heroism evolved to account for and publicly acknowledge acts of valour and virtue, but also displays of duty, endurance and fortitude.

Social and Cultural Histories of the Home Front

Social and cultural histories of Britain tell the history of a nation at war, they detail the lives and experiences of ordinary people and lay the foundations for analysing the construction of heroism. Examining these texts not only reveals how war altered life on the Home Front, they also reveal how the historical discourse has evolved and changed since the end of the war. The historiography surrounding the civilian experience during wartime has developed and changed since 1945; from a stance which portrayed the war as an event which unified the civilian population, to one which has placed increased discussion upon the traumatic nature of warfare. The literature surrounding the social and cultural history of Britain at war can be divided into three main stages, a post war traditionalist view, a revisionist view, and a re-evaluation of the revisionist view. These works place emphasis upon different themes such as changes in social services, the health of the population, aerial bombardment, wartime preventative measures, and wartime management. Thus, to begin, this section will discuss the central texts which explore Britain's Home Front, including work by Titmuss, Calder, Longmate, Gardiner, and Smith, in order to explore discussion surrounding the real life of ordinary people and the way wartime impacted upon society. Secondly, discussion will move on to address research which specifically discusses London at war.

The historical discourse of the Second World War has evolved since 1945, where scholars first addressed the impact of the war years on Britain; indeed, ever since, the social history of Britain has been an area of continued discussion. One of the first major texts to be published on the social history of the Second World War was Richard Titmuss' *Problems of Social Policy*. Published in 1950, Titmuss' work detailed an extensive history of Britain during the war years through a specific focus on the nation's social services, addressing themes such as the pre-war anticipation of war casualties, war preparations and measures, the strain of the war on civilian health, and the reality of

casualty figures. Titmuss' work reflects a traditional post war standpoint, typical of literature published shortly after 1945, which portrayed British civilians as possessing a steadfast, dedicated attitude. Titmuss argues that the experience of war on the Home Front acted as a unifying experience for the British people, as such, 'The mood of the people changed and, in sympathetic response, values changed as well.'⁶⁰ In the post war period, the history of Britain at war was also recorded in the official History of the Second World War series, published by HMSO. The series was divided into strands, including the United Kingdom Civil Series, which included volumes such as 'Civil Defence', and the Medical Series, which included 'The Civilian Health and Medical Services' and 'Casualties and Medical Statistics'. These volumes detail valuable statistical information regarding the effects and impact of war.⁶¹

However, the 1960s marked a revisionist shift in the way that the historians approached the study of war on the Home Front. Through their examination of a new range of primary material, scholars presented an alternative narrative of the war years. In his classic study *The People's War: Britain 1939-1945* Angus Calder reevaluated the effect of war on civilian life. Calder's work, originally published in 1969 stands out from early histories of the Home Front. He argues against the traditionalist views of scholars such as Titmuss, and contends that war did not unite social classes and create unwavering levels of morale and stoicism.⁶² His research encompasses numerous cities and towns across Britain, and in doing so provides increased analysis of how civilians were affected outside of London in locations such as Coventry, Bristol, Glasgow, Plymouth, Belfast and Southampton. In his later work *The Myth of the Blitz* Calder builds on this thesis further. Calder argues that despite class tensions and fluctuating levels of morale, heroic

⁶⁰ Richard Titmuss, *Problems of Social Policy* (London: HMSO, 1950) p. 508.

⁶¹ Terence Henry O'Brien, *Civil Defence* (London: HMSO, 1955)

William Franklin Mellor, *Casualties and Medical Statistics* (London: HMSO, 1972)

Arthur MacNalty, *The Civilian Health and Medical Services* (London: HMSO, 1953)

⁶² Angus Calder, *The People's War: Britain 1939-1945* (London: Pimlico, 2008) p. 17.

narratives were nurtured at every level of society. The heroism of everyday civilians during the Blitz was particularly celebrated.⁶³ Similarly, Norman Longmate in his work *How We Lived Then*, explored the experiences of British civilians throughout the war, a story which, Longmate argues, had largely gone untold up until 1971. Longmate's work placed emphasis upon exploring the individual experience, rather than social trends, and instead focuses on a variety of sufferings of Home Front life.⁶⁴ Similarly, Tom Harrison's study *Living Through the Blitz* contributed to the wave of revisionism which swept across the study of the Home Front. Harrison's work primarily draws upon reports produced by the wartime social survey organisation, Mass Observation, to argue that the human effects of war were profound.⁶⁵ In telling the story of everyday life on the Home Front from the people themselves, Harrison reveals that civilians were intensely affected by the danger, death and destruction brought by modern warfare.

Arthur Marwick's 1976 study of *The Home Front* similarly contributed to the revisionist historiography of the war, albeit in a different way to other scholars. Instead, Marwick's work suggests that there is truth in the myths constructed during the war around 'national unity and mixing of social classes', 'heroism and humour in face of the dangers of the Blitz', and 'hard work and grim determination producing victory against the odds'.⁶⁶ Marwick contends that these myths, regardless of their accuracy, served powerful purposes. As Marwick recognises, the story of the simple heroism of the British people was tinted, coloured and shaped by wartime propaganda.⁶⁷ Overall, these revisionist studies represent the transition made by historians in the late 1960s and early 1970s to explore war on the Home Front through a new lens. Through their re-evaluation

⁶³ Angus Calder, *The Myth of the Blitz* (London: J. Cape, 1991) p. 173.

⁶⁴ Norman Longmate, *How We Lived Then: A History of Everyday Life During the Second World War* (London: Hutchinson & Co Ltd, 1971) p. xiii.

⁶⁵ Tom Harrison, *Living Through the Blitz* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1979) pp. 7-12.

⁶⁶ Arthur Marwick, *The Home Front: The British and the Second World War* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1976) p. 10.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* p. 180.

of traditional histories, revisionist studies reveal how constructions of heroism fuelled the wartime narrative of stoicism and humour. They show that, despite class tensions and fluctuating morale, heroic constructions served a powerful purpose in presenting war as a unifying and collective experience.

Over the last twenty-five years, historians have further developed the revisionist view; offering in depth analysis on the plight of civilians on the Home Front. Juliet Gardiner in *Wartime Britain 1939-1945*, draws upon similar themes to Calder, exploring the ‘people’s war’ in all of its entirety. Gardiner’s work addresses the pervasiveness of war and the nature of Home Front life experienced by the population. Most notably, Gardiner’s work explores the changes and consistencies in wartime society; from danger, separation and deprivation, to new opportunities and confidence across the gender divide.⁶⁸ Yet, Gardiner also argues that in addition to the popular constructions of heroism which surrounded the British people, and particularly those in London, cases of looting and criminality also occurred.⁶⁹ The Second World War created opportunities for heroism, yet the prevalence of bombed out homes and shops also created opportunities for robbery and theft.⁷⁰ Similarly, Harold Smith’s collection of essays, *Britain in the Second World War: A Social History*, is also reflective of a revisionist standpoint, reminiscent of both Calder and Gardiner. Smith is critical of the portrayal of the ‘people’s war’ as a time during which ‘the class divided Britain of the 1930s gave way to a united national community in which rich and poor stood shoulder to shoulder’.⁷¹ In fact, Smith contends that through framing the war as a ‘people’s war’, an image is created which succeeds in ignoring the wartime experiences of racial and ethnic minorities and provides a misshapen view about the extent to which class feeling remained strong. ‘If the war

⁶⁸ Juliet Gardiner, *Wartime Britain 1939-1945* (London: Review, 2005) p. xi.

⁶⁹ Ibid. p. 600.

⁷⁰ Ibid. p. 599.

⁷¹ Harold Smith, *Britain in the Second World War: A Social History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996) p. 2.

created a new sense of solidarity, it did not include Jews, blacks, the Irish, German and Austrian refugees or Italians living in Britain.⁷² More recently, Daniel Todman's two-part study *Britain's War* explores the military, social, political and economic dimensions of the Second World War.⁷³ Within the first volume, which focuses on the period between 1937 and 1941, particular attention is given to examining the impact of the Battle of Britain and the Blitz on the Home Front. As Todman argues, aerial attack impacted upon the British public in different ways; people became accustomed to running for shelter during raids; around the Kent coast people regularly watched airborne battles over the channel; and thousands of new workers were employed in war-related industries to fulfil production demands.⁷⁴ The Blitz in particular, which brought pain, suffering and destruction to the civilian population, transformed life on the Home Front.⁷⁵ As Todman suggests, although the state presented the Blitz experience in ways which aimed to strengthen the population and encourage civilians to endure bombardment, the human cost of war was widespread, impacting upon all sectors of British society.⁷⁶ Examining social and cultural histories of the Home Front is of integral importance to this thesis as it illuminates how the historical narrative has evolved since the end of war. However, these histories also provide insight into prewar measures and fears, and the political and social situation prior to the war; aspects of the Second World War which need to be equally understood if wartime heroism is to be analysed sufficiently. This thesis will constructively engage with these studies, building upon the broad histories of Britain in the Second World War and adding historical depth to the civilian experience and the emergence of Home Front heroism.

⁷² Ibid. p. 10.

⁷³ Daniel Todman, *Britain's War: Into Battle, 1937-1941* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); Daniel Todman, *Britain's War: A New World, 1942-1947* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020)

⁷⁴ Todman, *Britain's War: Into Battle*, p. 440.

⁷⁵ Ibid. p. 524.

⁷⁶ Ibid. p. 441.

This thesis recognises that wartime experiences varied across the nation. It is particularly important to understand that while the experiences of Londoners differed to the rest of the nation, the construction of civilian heroism within London was shaped on both a local and national level and was often framed as representative of the nation as a whole.

A central text regarding London's history is Stephen Inwood's *A History of London*. Inwood's work provides a comprehensive history of London, ranging from AD 43-2000. In particular, Chapter 24, *Under Fire 1939-1945* explores an array of aspects of wartime London, ranging from the pressures of Home Front life, the challenges which faced its civilian population, and government policies which were enacted to manage the difficulties of war. Inwood structures his work chronologically, leading the reader from pre-war, through London's time under fire to its victory, placing emphasis upon how London functioned as a capital and how its inhabitants conducted their daily lives.⁷⁷ Similarly, Roy Porter's *London: A Social History* charts London's rise and decline, and the way the city has previously been, and still is, entwined with human affairs. It examines the city's people, its economy, and its physical fabric. Published four years before Inwood, this work adopts a familiar narrative, describing how the Second World War was far less destructive upon London and its people than it had been originally feared.⁷⁸ Jerry White, in *London in the Twentieth Century* also explores London's vast history. White structures his work into themes, the city, people, economy, popular culture and politics, providing a wealth of detail about the city and its inhabitants.⁷⁹ Yet, the seminal text on London at war is undoubtedly Philip Ziegler's 1988 study *London at War 1939-1945*. In his work Ziegler examines how wartime conflict impacted upon life in London, and explores the complexities of uncovering the civilian experience on the Home Front. As

⁷⁷ Stephen Inwood, *A History of London* (London: Macmillan, 2000) p. 793.

⁷⁸ Roy Porter, *London: A Social History* (London: Penguin Books, 1996) p. 338.

⁷⁹ Jerry White, *London in the Twentieth Century* (London: Penguin Books, 2002) p. xi.

he describes in the introduction to the study, ‘individual stories might not be verifiable, yet in essence every legend illustrating the courage, the self-sacrifice, the dignity, the humour of Londoners under fire could readily be substantiated.’⁸⁰ Indeed, Ziegler’s work reflects the difficulties which are associated with ‘uncovering’ the experiences of a city. As Ziegler argues, examining the civilian experience during wartime does not involve challenging or rejecting previous studies. Instead, it centers upon understanding how civilians manufactured their own myth, and in many ways romanticized their experiences through the lens of comradeship, unity and good humour.⁸¹ Notably, Ziegler contends that whilst the civilian experience during wartime was depicted as a period of endurance, in reality, Londoners and London itself were not unscathed by their experiences. Instead, it is crucial to understand how the experiences of Londoners were framed by the State in a way which championed fortitude and stoicism. Moreover, in contrast to post war texts which suggest that war was a unifying experience, Ziegler suggests that anti-Semitism was evident during the blitz and that rates of looting and criminal activity increased. In many ways, Ziegler’s work balances the traditionalist and revisionist interpretations of the war. Ziegler’s discussion is particularly useful to this thesis, as it highlights that the experiences of Londoners were manufactured by both the state and the people. The public understood their own experiences through the way that they were constructed by the press and media; in their own lives the public also echoed and reinforced this narrative of endurance and fortitude.

These histories provide a comprehensive account of wartime Britain. They detail the social and cultural backdrop in which heroic constructions were manufactured and produced. National and local histories of the Second World War complement one another

⁸⁰ Ziegler, *London at War*, p. 1.

⁸¹ *Ibid.* p. 165.

and illustrate how the experiences of the capital differed to, and were representative of the rest of the nation.

Civilian Identity in Wartime

In a study which examines the heroic identity of the civilian population, it is important to review the literature which examines how wartime conflict altered how civilians were represented and how they conceptualised their own role on the Home Front. The heroic identity of the British people was reshaped throughout the war, on a national, local and personal level. The Second World War placed greater responsibility on the civilian population, civilians adopted new roles and moved into new lines of employment. Examining the current literature on Home Front identity provides insight into how understandings of citizenship, national identity and social responsibility altered during wartime. While some historians discuss this in passing, the following works devote specific attention to exploring how modern conflict altered civilian identity. As the following discussion illustrates, scholars have predominantly discussed the notion of identity through examining the role of the civilian combatant on the Home Front, in regards to citizenship, through notions of masculinity and femininity, and through the changed responsibilities of civilians in wartime.

As non-combatants, civilians remained separate from traditional military efforts to secure victory, yet remained central to the war effort. The reality of this situation, and the impact this had upon their identity as civilian combatants is an area which has been greatly debated in recent years. Within the current literature, studies explore the role of civilians and how their contribution to the war effort shaped their identity as combatants of the Home Front. In the years leading up to 1939, the British people were mobilised and encouraged to ready themselves for war. Men and women were recruited into new areas

of wartime work, including factory and industrial work and into the various sectors of Civil Defence. Helen Jones, in *British Civilians in the Front Line* explores wartime identity through the relationship between civilians and wartime work, particularly for individuals who were required to remain working even when the air raid sirens had been sounded and action had commenced. Such individuals included Civil Defence workers, roof spotters, firemen, rescue crews, fire watchers, hospital workers, and those on night shifts in factories. Her focus on behaviour is particularly relevant to this thesis. Central to Jones' argument is that the air raid experience was central in shaping feelings of both personal, local and national identity through the way that civilians were expected to respond to and engage with danger. Indeed, Jones suggests that wartime altered traditional ideals of how civilians were expected to behave during periods of conflict. Since air raids were the most direct, physical and violent feature of the civilian's war, they had the power to alter not only the physical landscape of cities, but also the mental landscape of people's identities.⁸² Jones further explains that people who remained working throughout the air raid, such as factory workers, and survived, drew upon a sense of personal success. In particular, the working classes, who would not have necessarily achieved highly in education or wealth throughout their lives, would have gained the most in terms of a personal sense of survivors achievement.⁸³ Jones emphasises that it is not only important to consider national identity, but also the local identities which developed, as people often identified with the immediate community which surrounded them, rather than with the nation.⁸⁴

Sonya Rose in *Which People's War?* also explores the role of civilians in Britain, yet adopts a broader approach than Jones when discussing identity. Rose explores civilian

⁸² Helen Jones, *British Civilians in the Front Line: Air Raids, Productivity and Wartime Culture, 1939-1945* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006) p. 3.

⁸³ *Ibid.* pp. 7-8.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* p. 150.

identity on a national level; discussing what citizenship meant to the people of Britain in a war which stressed that the British were a united people fighting a people's war.⁸⁵ The civilian's role in the war is explored in terms of class, and the way that social change during the war affected people's identity. Rose contends that the relationship between class and their contribution to the war effort are particularly important areas to discuss when considering national identity. For a population which was suffering from high levels of unemployment prior to the war, the war years instead demanded the whole of society to work towards the war effort. Rose argues that the government, the media and the people themselves all constructed a characterisation of 'the common man' as central to the nation at war; an image which celebrated diversity and recognised Britain as a class and gender divided society, but denied that it mattered to national unity and to the image of the British as essentially one people.⁸⁶ The main strength in Rose's work is that it illustrates the social appeal of good citizenship; showing how perceptions of 'good citizenship' categorised, legitimised and delegitimised civilian behaviour. Moreover, Rose's exploration of the wartime message of 'equality of sacrifice' suggests that there was a conscious effort by the government to construct the war as a 'People's War'; one where the whole population would do their bit for the war effort.⁸⁷ In addition, Jessica Hammett's research on the changing popularity of Civil Defence reveals how wartime identities were forged alongside notions of good citizenship and social contribution. As Hammett notes, as soon as bombs started falling on Britain, the Civil Defence services were placed at the centre of the war effort and went from being mocked and ridiculed to praised for their heroism.⁸⁸ Their identity was directly shaped by the way that contribution was conceptualised. This thesis will connect with these discussions, particularly in

⁸⁵ Rose, *Which People's War*, p. 24.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* p. 15.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* p. 31.

⁸⁸ Jessica Hammett, 'We're absolute heroes now to everyone': The Fluctuating Popularity of Civil Defence in Britain', *University of Sussex Journal of Contemporary History*, 16 (2015), 5-17 (pp. 7-9).

regards to notions of citizenship, equality of sacrifice and the fluctuating nature of identities. It will build upon the notion of good citizenship to argue that in wartime, heroic virtues were constructed as extensions of good citizenship. Through examining how notions of fortitude, resilience and courage were constructed as national characteristics, this study will explore how the nation as a whole could be represented as heroic.

Discussions on gender have remained at the forefront amongst literature which discusses identity; war served to both challenge and reinforce gender expectations and has thus received significant attention by historians. This thesis connects with these studies to further explore how gendered norms and expectations shaped heroic identities. Studies have placed particular emphasis upon exploring how masculine and feminine identities were defined and constructed through wartime participation, responsibilities and duties. It is integral for this thesis to critically engage with the prevailing historiography on the construction of masculinity and femininity in wartime in order to understand how heroic ideals were forged alongside wartime changes to gender roles and stereotypes. In their collaborative work *Contesting Home Defence*, Penny Summerfield and Corinna Peniston-Bird address how meanings of masculinity and femininity were plunged into uncertainty by total war; the militarised feminine identities of women and the insecure masculine identities of men had the potential to disturb gender relations, particularly in regards to organisations such as the Home Guard.⁸⁹ This study of war, gender and the Home Guard provides insight into the developing identities amongst civilians on the Home Front. Particular reference is made to the significance of the Home Front itself in destabilising societal tropes, as it represented an environment in which both men and women could participate in the war effort. However, it is noted that despite the fact that women participated in ‘masculine’ roles such as home defence, they were

⁸⁹ Penny Summerfield and Corinna Peniston-Bird, *Contesting Home Defence: Men, Women and the Home Guard in the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007) p. 16.

expected to preserve their femininity through the help of wartime cosmetics and campaigns such as Make-Do and Mend.⁹⁰ Moreover, in her own study of women in wartime, Summerfield echoes similar views. Particularly central to this thesis is her third chapter on ‘‘Heroes and Stoics’: War Work and Feminine Identity.’ While Summerfield illustrates that wartime literature presented the behaviour of female war workers as exceptional, their heroism was circumscribed.⁹¹ Women’s heroism resided in public service, and in the way that women performed successfully in unfeminine settings; yet, importantly their heroism was constructed as temporary.⁹² Moreover, within her studies on wartime citizenship, Sonya Rose also investigates the notion of gendered heroism and its relationship to understandings of British wartime identity. Through examining how men and women engaged with heroic ideals on the Home Front, Rose illustrates that the construction of heroic behaviour was complex and tightly connected to the way that wartime society characterised appropriate feminine and masculine behaviour. As Rose notes, women were able to ‘contribute heroically to the war effort in factories, on the land, in the services, or in Civil Defence.’⁹³ However, as Rose argues, although women could behave heroically, it was crucial that their actions did not alter the gender order. One exception to this was nursing. Due to the caring nature of the profession, nurses were able to perform heroically without threatening gender norms as they were conducting stereotypically female work.⁹⁴ However, this thesis will argue that in addition to nursing, women were recognised for their heroic conduct in other professions such as ambulance work and fire watching. These occupations enabled women to engage with dangerous situations, and yet not challenge the gender order. Thus, this thesis will build on Rose’s work to illustrate the complexity of gendered heroism.

⁹⁰ Ibid. p. 275.

⁹¹ Penny Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women’s Wartime Lives: Discourse and subjectivity in oral histories of the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998) p. 78.

⁹² Ibid. p. 82.

⁹³ Rose, *Which People’s War*, p. 123.

⁹⁴ Ibid. p. 124.

Notions of heroic masculinity were also forged on the Home Front. As Rose notes, the behaviour of men on the Home Front engaged with heroic ideals. Stories of heroic masculinity were prevalent in the press and media, where ordinary men were celebrated for their ‘soldier-like’ heroism. As Rose states, in a war which judged men as good citizens through their contribution to the battle for victory, it is no wonder that men on the Home Front were likened to battle heroes; their masculinity was verified through their heroic conduct at work, and in the defence of their nation.⁹⁵ In addition, as Linsey Robb argues, masculine identities particularly centered around men who adopted the role as ‘protector’. In wartime, and especially during periods of bombardment, men in the fire service were adorned with heroic identities which celebrated their role in fighting the battle of the flames.⁹⁶

The complexities between upholding gender expectations and negotiating war work have been explored by Juliette Pattinson in her study of women in the Special Operations Executive. She highlights that despite the fact that women engaged with dangerous environments throughout the war, many women chose to adhere to socially accepted forms of gender, and still managed to ‘get in front of the mirror to put on their make-up’.⁹⁷ Pattinson notes that wartime society still required a level of reassurance that although women participated in some of the most masculine roles; their behaviour signified that they had retained their femininity.⁹⁸ Lucy Noakes has similarly explored the complexities surrounding gender roles in wartime. In her 1998 study *War and the British* Noakes argues that traditional gender roles were challenged in wartime by the movement of women into the armed services and into traditionally male job roles.⁹⁹

⁹⁵ Ibid. p. 196.

⁹⁶ Linsey Robb, *Men at Work: The Working Man in British Culture, 1939-1945* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015) pp. 91-94.

⁹⁷ Juliette Pattinson, *Behind Enemy Lines: Gender, Passing and the Special Operations Executive in The Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007) p. 4.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Lucy Noakes, *War and the British: Gender, Memory and National Identity* (London: I.B Tauris, 1998) p. 51.

Through her examination of women's magazines and army education texts she reveals that ideals of active citizenship were encouraged in wartime, yet, they were shaped and constrained by existing ideals around masculinity and femininity.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, in her exploration of the roles of men and women in Civil Defence, Noakes argues that the passing of the ARP Act in 1937 which lay the foundations for the organisation of Civil Defence, and which intended to engage the participation of every citizen, acted as the catalyst in beginning to sever the gendered duties of citizenship.¹⁰¹ Yet despite this, it was important that the inclusion of women in Civil Defence work did not threaten the masculinity of the role. Although, Noakes suggests that the actual participation of men and women in Civil Defence did not reflect the same gender divide, as they were expected to carry out the same duties and responsibilities and face the same dangers.¹⁰² The central argument which emerges from Noakes' discussion is that the wartime drive to incorporate different social groups within a shared sense of citizenship and nationhood was not without its difficulties; the presence of gendered identities remained a constant in wartime Britain and was seen to permeate throughout Civil Defence. This thesis will contribute to this area of the historiography through providing further analysis into the roles of men and women on the Home Front, and how gender expectations impacted the construction of civilian heroism. Current studies inform how in wartime, gendered duties and gendered spheres were blurred. This thesis will build upon this discussion to explore how gender ideals shaped how heroic behaviour was constructed and represented.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. p. 73.

¹⁰¹ Lucy Noakes, 'Serve to Save': Gender, Citizenship and Civil Defence in Britain 1937-41', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 47:4 (2012), 734-753 (p. 736).

¹⁰² Ibid. p. 750.

Space, Landscape and Identity

Scholars have explored how notions of citizenship, gender and Englishness were shaped through the way that war altered spaces and landscapes, and the human interaction and engagement with them. As the following chapters illustrate, exploring spaces of war is a particularly important methodological tool to analyse the construction and representation of civilian heroism. As London was transformed by wartime demands, strains, and destruction, the capital was transformed into a battlefield of production, defence and danger. As a result, male and female civilians of varying ages, were forced to engage with spaces created by war, including the factory, city streets and home in both expected and unexpected ways. Total war turned peacetime civilian spaces into spaces of war. Significantly, this engagement created opportunities for heroic behaviour. As such, it is important to recognise the centrality of space in shaping wartime understandings of heroism and heroic behaviour.

In *Landscape and Englishness*, David Matless reveals the complex relationship between the physicality of the English landscape and the cultural identity of the people within it. As Matless suggests, during wartime the geography of England was severely disrupted, people were relocated, landscapes were transformed, and places were given new meanings.¹⁰³ He notes, ‘a study of the shifting formation of landscape and Englishness through these decades can hardly ignore the War.’¹⁰⁴ Indeed, Matless’ study reveals the correlation between changes to the landscape and understandings of Englishness and wartime citizenship. During the war, London’s battlefield like landscape was represented to embody the suffering and heroism experienced by the British people.¹⁰⁵ While London’s war-torn landscape was used to symbolise the endurance of the British people, it also acted as a setting for civilians to display battlefield like heroism.

¹⁰³ David Matless, *Landscape and Englishness* (London: Reaktion Books, 2016) p. 239.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. p. 255.

Other studies, which examine the city as a site where identities are formed are also useful to this thesis. For example, Xiangming Chen, Anthony Orum and Krista Paulsen in *Introduction to Cities: How Place and Space Shape Human Experience* address how the physicality of the city, as well as people's engagement with the fabric of the city, shapes the collective and individual identities of people.¹⁰⁶ Similarly, in *The City as Power: Urban Space, Place, and National Identity* Alexander Diener and Joshua Hagen have explored how cities are forums for creating, maintaining and contesting ideas of national identity and belonging.¹⁰⁷ Urban landscapes are sites where spatial interaction is directed through the physicality of the city. This thesis will build upon these studies to examine how the cityscape and the spaces within the city shaped wartime identities. As London's cityscape was transformed by war, the Home Front became a landscape for heroism.

Scholars have also explored the interplay between people and places, and how human produce spaces as much as spaces produce people. In his seminal work, *The Production of Space*, Henri Lefebvre notes that spaces do not simply materialise, they are produced and reproduced by the people within them. Equally, spaces constrain and influence those manufacturing them.¹⁰⁸ Nigel Thrift has also analysed how the multisensory nature of physical spaces affects the way that an individual reacts to and experience an environment.¹⁰⁹ The visual attributes of an environment, along with touch, sound and smell, impacts upon an individual's behaviour. In addition, Yi-Fu Tuan, in his work *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, has explored how people attach meaning to space and place, and are in turn shaped by the experience.¹¹⁰ Therefore, these

¹⁰⁶ Xiangming Chen, Anthony M. Orum, Krista E. Paulsen, *Introduction to Cities: How Place and Space Shape Human Experience* (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2013) p. 10.

¹⁰⁷ Alexander C. Diener and Joshua Hagen, 'The City as Palimpsest', in Alexander C. Diener and Joshua Hagen (eds.), *The City as Power: Urban Space, Place, and National Identity* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019), pp. 1-22 (p. 2).

¹⁰⁸ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 31.

¹⁰⁹ Nigel Thrift, 'Space: The Fundamental Stuff of Human Geography', in Nicholas Clifford et al. (eds.), *Key Concepts in Geography* (London: Sage Publications Ltd, 2003), pp. 95-107 (p. 102).

¹¹⁰ Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (London: Edward Arnold Ltd, 1979) p. 5.

works highlight that it is important to look beyond the physicality of a space to analyse its auditory dimensions and the social and cultural importance of specific environments. Through examining the attributes of a space, the human engagement with that site can be better understood.

Feminist geographer Doreen Massey has shown how gender identity is shaped by spatial engagement, and how understandings of place and space are shaped by notions of gender. In her seminal text, *Space, Place and Gender*, Massey suggests that gender relations and gender ideals are closely connected with space.¹¹¹ However, in wartime, as the demands of production and defence caused men, women and children to move into new roles, the gendered division of spaces was blurred. This thesis will build on these studies which evaluate space as a locus for identity. Significantly, through adopting a spatial analysis as a methodological tool, this thesis evaluates the importance of wartime spaces in shaping how heroism was represented.

Material Culture, War and the Body

Other scholars have addressed how objects create and shape social hierarchies, human behaviour and action. Such studies are particularly important to this thesis as they highlight how identities are constructed through the use of objects. For example, in wartime, objects such as uniforms, medals, badges and flags imparted meaning upon an individual, community or nation; they reflected collective endeavour and potential, and acknowledged courage and sacrifice. However, the examination of objects also reveals the interplay between civilians and war; an object's materiality offers insights into how human behaviour, and particularly heroic actions, are perceived and constructed. In examining studies which explore how objects shape narratives of identity, this study will

¹¹¹ Doreen Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994) p. 177.

build upon the literature to reveal the complex relationship between material culture, war and the body.

In their edited collection, *Uniform: Clothing and Discipline in the Modern World* Jane Tynan and Lisa Godson explore the social and cultural meaning of uniforms and the impact of clothing upon the wearer. Each essay within the volume discusses how uniforms transform the body. In particular, studies focus on how regulation clothing promotes a normative understanding of the body, in regards to gender, nationality, race and sexuality.¹¹² Part six of the volume specifically addresses the nature of military clothing, and how army clothing is encoded with hierarchy and military status. Although the authors do not discuss Second World War uniforms, they offer areas of analysis which this thesis will build upon. In their separate chapters, Amin Parsa and Stephen Herron both suggest that uniforms promote regulated behaviour and encourage individuals to think in particular ways.¹¹³ Moreover, they argue that uniforms attach the wearer with responsibilities and behavioural expectations. It is therefore critical to evaluate how clothing created the potential for heroism; as civilians were provided with military-like uniforms to equip them for work on the Home Front, their bodies were transformed into that of civilian combatants, who were expected to defend and protect their nation. This thesis will develop this discussion further by analysing how bodies are physically transformed during war.

In contrast, other scholars have specifically focused upon analysing how objects both gain heightened meaning and create meaning during times of war. In particular,

¹¹² Jane Tynan and Lisa Godson, 'Understanding Uniform: An Introduction', in Jane Tynan and Lisa Godson (eds.), *Uniform: Clothing and Discipline in the Modern World* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), pp. 1-24 (p. 10).

¹¹³ Amin Parsa, 'Military Uniform and Lethal Targeting in International Law on Armed Conflict', in Jane Tynan and Lisa Godson (eds.), *Uniform: Clothing and Discipline in the Modern World* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), pp. 239-254.

Stephen Herron, 'Military Uniforms and Women in the Ulster Defence Regiment', in Jane Tynan and Lisa Godson (eds.), *Uniform: Clothing and Discipline in the Modern World* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), pp. 255-276.

Nicholas Saunders and Paul Cornish's edited collection, *Contested Objects: Material Memories of the Great War*, provides increased detail on how our understanding of conflict can be enhanced through examining the cultural biographies of specific objects.¹¹⁴ A central argument which flows throughout the collection are how objects are encoded with cultural meaning. In particular, Matthew Richardson's chapter suggests that the meaning of medals can change depending on the recipient, the reasons for issue and the way they are worn or displayed.¹¹⁵ As Richardson notes, 'these small metal objects embodied and represented the social worlds of their wearers.'¹¹⁶ For families whose relatives had been killed, medals represented a tangible symbol of pride, whereas for survivors, many individuals kept medals out of sight in the same way that memories of war were kept in the back of the mind.¹¹⁷ While the purpose of medals was defined by the recipient, they also shaped the way that wartime contribution was perceived. Jody Joy's study of the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) Medal echoes similar conclusions. Through a case study of her Grandfather's DFC, Joy suggests that medals act as symbols of recognition; medals store meanings and associations and grow in significance when they are associated with warfare.¹¹⁸ However, whilst scholars such as Joy and Richardson also comment on objects as vehicles of remembrance and reminiscence, this study will primarily focus on analysing objects as vehicles for the construction of heroic identity during the wartime period. Therefore, when exploring civilian heroism, it is important to examine how gallantry medals rewarded and recognised heroic conduct and how they created heroic reputations.

¹¹⁴ Nicholas J. Saunders and Paul Cornish, 'Introduction', in Nicholas J. Saunders and Paul Cornish (eds.), *Contested Objects: Material Memories of the Great War* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), pp. 1-10 (p. 2).

¹¹⁵ Matthew Richardson, 'Medals, Memory and Meaning: Symbolism and Cultural Significance of Great War Medals', in Nicholas J. Saunders and Paul Cornish (eds.), *Contested Objects: Material Memories of the Great War* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), pp. 104-118 (p. 109).

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Jody Joy, 'Biography of a medal: people and the things they value', in John Schofield, William Grey Johnson and Colleen M. Beck (eds.), *Materiel Culture: The Archaeology of Twentieth-Century Conflict* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 132-142 (pp. 132-133).

Studies have also explored the relationship between corporeality and materiality. As Cornish and Saunders note in their collection, *Bodies in Conflict*, ‘in war, bodies are put at hazard. They receive wounds, they suffer pain.’¹¹⁹ *Bodies in Conflict* examines the relationship between the human body, landscape and material culture to explore the innumerable ways that war impacts the body. The volume reveals that the body is a distinct kind of material culture in itself. It is a site where historians can explore how the death, maiming and destruction of war impacted on how the human body was regarded, represented, used and abused, in both life and death.¹²⁰ Kevin McSorley’s edited collection *War and the Body*, similarly promotes new ways of exploring war. Through placing the body at the centre of analysis, the collection explores the various ways that war is experienced through the bodies of men and women.¹²¹ For example, Emma Newlands argues that to ready them for conflict, the bodies of British soldiers were controlled and transformed by military authorities.¹²² As Newlands notes, the moment that a civilian became an army recruit, everything associated with his body, including his diet, his appearance and his physical fitness became subject to control.¹²³ The collection reveals the importance of analysing how the body can be affected by and through war, and how war is an array of embodied practices and experiences.¹²⁴ This thesis will build upon these areas of analysis to broaden the study of wartime heroism. Through exploring embodied objects, rituals and practices this thesis will illustrate that the body was a central site for constructions of heroism.

¹¹⁹ Paul Cornish and Nicholas Saunders, ‘Introduction’, in Paul Cornish and Nicholas Saunders (eds.), *Bodies in Conflict: Corporeality, Materiality, and Transformation* (London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 35-52 (p. 37).

¹²⁰ *Ibid.* p. 41.

¹²¹ McSorley, ‘War and the Body’, pp. 1-32 (p. 1).

¹²² Emma Newlands, ‘Preparing and Resisting the War Body: Training in the British Army’, in Kevin McSorley (ed.), *War and the Body: Militarisation, Practice and Experience* (London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 35-50 (p. 35).

¹²³ *Ibid.* p. 46.

¹²⁴ Kevin McSorley, ‘Rethinking War and the Body’, in Kevin McSorley (ed.), *War and the Body: Militarisation, Practice and Experience* (London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 233-244 (p. 241).

Propaganda and the Lived Experience

Within the historiography of civilians at war, scholars have widely debated how wartime propaganda shaped the lived experience. Studies have focused on examining how propaganda fortified and improved levels of morale, communicated a sense of national unity, and disseminated instructions and advice. Studies which explore the relationship between propaganda and morale are particularly useful to the study of heroism, as the construction of heroism on the Home Front served a social purpose. Heroic civilians were celebrated for their endurance and bravery across a spectrum of wartime propaganda, they embodied an ideal which the rest of the population could aspire to. This thesis will build upon these studies to explore how propaganda shaped the lived experience of the nation, and how heroic figures were used by the propagandist to fortify and strengthen morale.

Through the regulation of wartime propaganda, the Ministry of Information played a central role in the construction of wartime heroism. Ian McLaine's study *Ministry of Morale* presents a comprehensive account of the creation of the wartime Ministry of Information, and their role in shaping the civilian experience. As McLaine states, one of the primary concerns of the Ministry of Information was the management of civilian morale.¹²⁵ In order to manage the stresses and trauma of war, the wartime experience was presented in a way which centred upon championing the endurance and unity of the British people. The propaganda produced in response to aerial bombardment generated ideas of stoicism and resistance, and shaped how that civilians framed their own experience. In his study *We Can Take It! Britain and the Memory of the Second World War* Mark Connelly discusses how public opinion was shaped by wartime propaganda. Notably, Connelly argues that propaganda served a crucial purpose in

¹²⁵ Ian McLaine, *Ministry of Morale: Home Front Morale and the Ministry of Information in World War II* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1979) p. 41.

wartime; war was a period of acute crisis and people needed to believe in something.¹²⁶ On the Home Front, the Blitz was a particularly defining experience for the British people, and especially for Londoners. As Connelly argues, despite the destruction caused by enemy action, the bombardment of British cities was constructed as a time of defiance, solidarity and togetherness.¹²⁷ This construction appeared across a range of wartime popular culture, including books and newspapers, broadcasting and films.¹²⁸ Although people were fully aware of the negative aspects of war, they chose to behave in line with this interpretation; a reality which helped to shape the way people perceived themselves and the war itself. In *At Home and Under Fire*, Susan Grayzel discusses how constructions of the blitz experience shaped the identity of the population; issues of morale remained at the forefront of the government construction of the war at home.¹²⁹ Grayzel states that propaganda, namely literature and film, were highly influential forms of media which succeeded in shaping civilian understanding of how they were expected to act and behave in wartime.¹³⁰

Other studies have explored how specific forms of propaganda shaped the lived experience. Historians including Jeffrey Richards and Anthony Aldgate particularly emphasise the power of film in influencing and shaping public opinion. As Aldgate and Richards describe in their joint study, *Britain Can Take It: The British Cinema in the Second World War*, during wartime the cinema was recognised as a powerful tool in furthering the national cause and sustaining civilian morale.¹³¹ Feature films, documentaries and newsreels were utilized by the Ministry of Information to

¹²⁶ Mark Connelly, *We Can Take It! Britain and the Memory of the Second World War* (Harlow: Pearson Education Ltd, 2004) p. 8.

¹²⁷ Ibid. p. 129.

¹²⁸ Ibid. p. 14.

¹²⁹ Susan Grayzel, *At Home and Under Fire: Air Raids and Culture in Britain from the Great War to the Blitz* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) p. 2.

¹³⁰ Ibid. pp. 295-296.

¹³¹ Anthony Aldgate and Jeffrey Richards, *Britain Can Take It: The British Cinema in the Second World War* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986) p. 4.

communicate messages and principles to the British public.¹³² As Richards further describes in his separate study of *Films and British National Identity*, across almost every wartime film two qualities are emphasised, firstly sense of humour, and secondly, stoicism.¹³³ As a result, wartime films and documentaries embodied ideals of British national identity. For example, documentary style films such as Humphrey Jennings *Fires Were Started*, and Basil Dearden's *The Bells Go Down*, were permeated with values of duty, service, decency, stoicism, humour and self-sacrifice.¹³⁴ As Nan Turner notes, British cinema was a morale booster in wartime as going to the movies provided an escape from the realities of war. Yet, films not only provided entertainment, they were permeated with messages of confidence, camaraderie and fulfillment of war service.¹³⁵ Examining how films created behavioural standards is particularly relevant in the study of civilian heroism. On screen, the population were encouraged to respond to the dangers of aerial bombardment with courage and endurance. Moreover, as this thesis illustrates, films with a heroic narrative also reassured the population that in times of conflict, all civilians were capable of heroism. The radio was also a central outlet for wartime propaganda. As Alex Goody argues, radio broadcasts and feature programs were a crucial vehicle for articulating a sense of national unity.¹³⁶ The influence of radio propaganda lay in the affective power of sound and voice, and the potential to be moved by listening.¹³⁷

In addition to films and radio broadcasts, exhibitions, posters, paintings and leaflets were also produced to fortify the morale of the British population. As David Welch describes, throughout the war, the British public were bombarded with appeals,

¹³² Ibid. p. 6.

¹³³ Jeffrey Richards, *Films and British National Identity: from Dickens to Dad's Army* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997) p. 87.

¹³⁴ Ibid. p. 109.

¹³⁵ Nan Turner, 'Costumes Go to War: British Propaganda Films Influence Women to Do Their Part', *Dress*, 45:2 (2019), 153-171 (p. 171).

¹³⁶ Alex Goody, 'BBC Features, Radio Voices and the Propaganda of War 1939-1941', *Media History*, 24:2 (2018), 194-211 (p. 194).

¹³⁷ Ibid. p. 195.

exhortations, and instructions such as ‘Make Do and Mend’, ‘Careless Talk Costs Lives’ and ‘Dig for Victory’ which sought to maintain the morale of the British public, acknowledge the contribution of the allies, and to foster a hatred of the enemy.¹³⁸ Wartime propaganda played a central role in shaping public opinion and helping civilians understand their role on the Home Front. This thesis will particularly address how Home Front heroism was presented in the public domain, on screen, on the radio, through the press, and through visual media, and how constructions of heroism served a social purpose. Indeed, as Jeffrey Richards notes, ‘culture, in particular, popular culture is the battleground for identity.’¹³⁹ During wartime, heroic ideals were forged in wartime popular culture, as such it is important to engage with the current research on propaganda and the lived experience, to explore the relationship between the Ministry of Information, the government and the people.

Injury, Wounding and the Body

Examining how bodies were wounded in wartime is central to this study. As civilians engaged with the dangers brought by modern warfare, bodies were disfigured and damaged. Exploring the current literature on injury and wounding during wartime is critical when investigating the construction of civilian heroism. Wounding was a central aspect of the experience of both service personnel and civilians during wartime. As such, it is important to analyse the symbolic meaning of wounding during periods of conflict and how sustaining injuries affected the way they were perceived. Significantly, the space and context in which wounding occurred, as well as the occupation and gender of the injured all affected the way that injury was represented. In many ways, sustaining injuries

¹³⁸ David Welch, *Persuading the People: British Propaganda in World War II* (London: British Library, 2016) pp. 16-17.

¹³⁹ Richards, *Films and British National Identity*, p. xii.

under bombardment was constructed as symbolic of self-sacrifice and devotion to others, and heightened understandings of courage and bravery.

A large proportion of the literature on wartime wounding explores the injured combatant of the armed forces. Scholars have particularly focused on examining the types of wounds sustained whilst in combat, advances in hospital medicine and the development of psychiatry.¹⁴⁰ Scholars have also explored how cultural attitudes towards injury were shaped through the types of wounds sustained. These studies inform how injuries sustained in battle were represented and conceptualised by the injured themselves, but also by wider society. These studies are particularly central to this thesis, as they place the body at the centre of critical thinking about the destructive nature of modern warfare.

In *Dismembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain and the Great War*, Joanna Bourke explores the impact of the Great War on the male body. As Bourke notes, the male body was an object of mutilation during the First World War. Modern conflict maimed and disfigured men's bodies and caused civilian society to confront the nature of wartime disfigurement. Attitudes towards injury and disablement were reflected in the way that the government distributed disability benefits to war wounded, according to race, class, rank and whether the wounded man was a volunteer or conscript.¹⁴¹ Emma Newlands, in *Civilians into Soldiers: War, the Body and British Army Recruits, 1939–45*,

¹⁴⁰ For more information see:

Mark Harrison, *Medicine and Victory: British Military Medicine in the Second World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004)

Kevin Brown, *Fighting Fit: Health, Medicine and War in the Twentieth Century* (Gloucestershire: The History Press, 2008)

Joanna Bourke, "Disciplining the Emotions: Fear, Psychiatry and the Second World War," in Roger Cooter, Mark Harrison and Steve Sturdy (eds.) *War Medicine and Modernity* (Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing, 1998)

Edgar Jones and Simon Wessely, *Shell Shock to PTSD: Military Psychiatry from 1900 to the Gulf War* (East Sussex: Psychology Press, 2005)

Ben Shepherd, *A War of Nerves: Soldiers and Psychiatrists in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001)

¹⁴¹ Joanna Bourke, *Dismembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain and the Great War* (London: Reaktion Books, 1996) p. 16.

has similarly explored the connection between war and the body of the male soldier. Newlands argues that ‘the chaos and the destruction of the body were of crucial concern to the British military authorities during the Second World War as part of the enduring quest for manpower.’¹⁴² Newlands discusses the injured military body in terms of wounding, their rescue from the battlefield, medical treatment, compensation and death; the body was not only controlled in the medical environment, it was also categorised and ranked in the years after if a soldier sought compensation. Yet, Newlands also contends that it was not only the body of the injured soldier that suffered from categorisation, the civilian wounded were classified as different from the military. This led to the civilian wounded receiving lower rates of compensation than their military counterparts, a notion, Newlands claims, illustrates the way that injured bodies were privileged as a result of their military participation.¹⁴³ These works highlight how war was directly experienced through the bodies of the armed forces; this interplay directly informed how trauma and mutilation was conceptualised.

Other scholars have looked beyond the instance of injury to analyse the wounded body and its role in developing medical care, namely methods of rehabilitation. This area has been explored by Julie Anderson in her work, *War, Disability and Rehabilitation in Britain*. Anderson focuses upon the relationship between war and the body, emphasising that rehabilitation ensured that bodies were not a wasted commodity in wartime.¹⁴⁴ Anderson examines how work was a central aspect of the rehabilitative process; an element which played a definitive role in reshaping the way that the disabled body was viewed as a contributing member within society.¹⁴⁵ Similarly, Emily Mayhew in *The Reconstruction of Warriors: Archibald McIndoe, the Royal Air Force and the Guinea Pig*

¹⁴² Emma Newlands, *Civilians into Soldiers: War, the Body and British Army Recruits 1939-1945* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014) p. 177.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.* p. 174.

¹⁴⁴ Julie Anderson, *War, Disability and Rehabilitation in Britain: Soul of a Nation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011) p. 72.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.* p. 73.

Club, echoes a similar standpoint in regards to rehabilitation and the military body, yet places her focus upon a specific group of individuals with unique wartime bodies. Mayhew explores how an increase in burn casualties that emerged as a consequence of aerial warfare fuelled developments in medical techniques and rehabilitation. Mayhew's research also examines how the rehabilitation for burn injuries was as much medical, as it was social.¹⁴⁶ Methods of rehabilitation were intimately connected with the need to reconstruct men's bodies, which often suffered from devastating physical disfigurement, 'at East Grinstead [McIndoe] created a therapeutic environment that successfully reconstructed not only the heroes of the new war, but also the very concept of heroism itself.'¹⁴⁷ Mayhew's study details how burned airmen were represented as symbols of the new war; physical injuries were conceptualised as markers of heroism. The analysis offered here around the body and war will give this thesis the foundations for examining how injury impacted upon the identity of the wounded civilian.

Within the literature on the war wounded, a far larger proportion discusses the wounded servicemen, fewer texts detail the experiences of the civilian population; even less has been written on the experiences of wounded women on the Home Front. The wealth of this information remains in the official histories. In *Casualties and Medical Statistics*, published in 1972 as part of the official histories of the Second World War, the nature of civilian wounding was detailed. The volume recorded the causes of hospital admission, whether it was for management of medical conditions or treatment for injury.¹⁴⁸ Statistics detailed the categories of people who were injured, whether they were male or female and their position, such as individuals in the Women's Auxiliary Service, casualty services, Civil Defence, national fire service, police, home guard and royal

¹⁴⁶ Emily Mayhew, *The Reconstruction of Warriors: Archibald McIndoe, The Royal Air Force, and the Guinea Pig Club* (Barnsley: Frontline Books, 2010) p. 80.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.* p. 202.

¹⁴⁸ William Franklin Mellor, *Casualties and Medical Statistics* (London: HMSO, 1972)

observer corps. However, the primary focus of this text are the physical injuries and medical conditions sustained during the war. It is no surprise that there are few studies detailing the types of physical injuries civilians sustained, as the civilian experience, particularly that of women, was overshadowed by the experiences of male combatants. Instead, historians have had to be inventive in their methodologies for exploring civilian injury. For instance, Julie Anderson explores civilian injury through the rehabilitation that individuals received, paying particular attention to the women's experience. Whilst rehabilitation was offered to women in the forms of hospital workshops and non-competitive games, it remained that women who had been disabled as a result of war were perceived in a different way from men, by society and the state.¹⁴⁹ Injuries were tightly bound with the perception of the war hero. Disabled and injured women were not viewed by society as heroic in the same way as men were and thus became exempt from the heroic narrative of war, something reserved for the male, and even more so the male combatant.¹⁵⁰ This thesis will build upon these discussions around the heroic nature of injuries, by exploring the way that gender, occupation and behaviour shaped the heroic narrative of injury on the Home Front. This thesis will utilise the notion of the body as a site of heroic recognition, where injury could indicate contribution, duty, and service.

When discussing civilian wounding it is important to address how physical injuries were not only caused by enemy action, they were also a product of war work. Literature which details occupational health and danger during wartime provides an alternative dimension to civilian injury. During the war many civilians were employed in dangerous occupations, this created the potential for workplace injuries. Exploring attitudes towards wounding in the workplace is important as bodily disfigurement was not limited to those in the armed forces or civilians injured or killed as a result of aerial

¹⁴⁹ Anderson, *War, Disability and Rehabilitation in Britain*, p. 163.

¹⁵⁰ Julie Anderson, 'British Women, Disability and the Second World War', *Contemporary British History*, 20:1 (2006), 37-53 (p. 49).

bombardment; the bodies of individuals working in munitions factories, steelworks, coal mines and shipyards were also at risk. As Ronnie Johnson and Arthur McIvor describe, in wartime Scottish industry, maximising wartime production was prioritised over controlling risks to health. Their work also addresses the gendered nature of injury in wartime. Although, women made up a far larger proportion of the workforce during wartime, gendered divisions remained in the most hazardous occupations. For instance, in industrial regions like Clydeside, where male chauvinism was strong, it was perceived as entirely appropriate for men to dominate the more dangerous jobs and bear the brunt of such bodily damage.¹⁵¹ Bodily damage was conceptualised by workers as a marker of their masculinity. H. A. Waldron's study into occupational health during the war period similarly addresses how wartime jobs placed the civilian population at risk on injury. As Waldron states, industrial health was affected by various factors during the war, including working conditions which were poorly lit, badly heated and badly maintained workplaces, employees with little or no previous experience, older workers who lacked speed and manual dexterity, and inadequately supervised equipment and workforce.¹⁵² Such conditions led to an increase in industrial diseases and work-related accidents. 1941 and 1942 saw a particularly high increase in numbers of civilians suffering from industrial diseases such as TNT poisoning, aniline poisoning, toxic jaundice and toxic anaemia, as well as numbers of fatal and non-fatal accidents also peaking in 1942. Conversely, during the last two years of war, when production schedules had been relaxed and blackout restrictions had been lifted, accidents decreased.¹⁵³ Furthermore, Hepler, in discussing occupational health in America, echoes the same conclusions, noting that civilians involved in wartime work were at increased risk of bodily damage; indeed, this health

¹⁵¹ Ronnie Johnston and Arthur McIvor, 'The War and the Body at Work: Occupational Health and Safety in Scottish Industry, 1939-1945', *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies*, 24:2 (2004), 113-136 (p.130).

¹⁵² H.A. Waldron, 'Occupational Health during the Second World War: Hope Deferred or Hope Abandoned?', *Medical History*, 41:2 (1997), 197-212 (pp. 202-204).

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

risk was the case for all combatant countries.¹⁵⁴ Scholarship which considers occupational health and workplace danger reminds us of the relationship between the vulnerable body and the wartime workplace. This study will build upon this literature to analyse how, in a war where thousands of civilians were being wounded by enemy action, maintaining the health of the worker was considered paramount. Whilst sustaining injuries in the workplace was conceptualised by workers themselves as a marker of heroic masculinity, this study will examine how these injuries were framed by the state. In many ways, it was through remaining uninjured that the wartime workforce were constructed as heroic through their efforts to fulfil productivity demands.

When compared with military wounding and rehabilitation, there has been less discussion on the civilian body and war. Through examining how war was experienced through the body, in the way that it was maimed and mutilated, this thesis will devote particular attention to exploring how specific ways of being wounded affirmed acts of heroism and heroic status. Through building on current studies, this work will explore the complex relationship between injury, wounding and the body in wartime.

Death in Wartime

Whilst this thesis examines how ideals of heroism were constructed around the living, it also explores how notions of heroism were constructed around death in wartime. Over the past three decades, scholarly interest in the social and cultural history of death has grown, with research examining attitudes, practices and beliefs towards death, along with the practices and rituals surrounding internment. Joachim Whaley's edited collection, *Mirrors of Mortality: Social Studies in the History of Death*, first published in 1981,

¹⁵⁴ Allison L. Helper, "'And we want steel toes like the men': Gender and occupational health during World War II", *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 72:4 (1998), 689-713 (p. 689).

marked the initial movement of scholarly interest into the history of death. While the essays within the collection detail a broad history of death, David Cannadine's final chapter 'War and death: grief and mourning in modern Britain' is particularly relevant to this discussion. Cannadine suggests that any investigation of death cannot overlook the impact of war and killing; these are crucial dimensions to death.¹⁵⁵ Later studies, such as Peter Jupp and Clare Gittings' edited collection, *Death in England: An Illustrated History*, present an extensive study of death, ranging from the earliest known humans to the close of the twentieth century. Importantly, the collection reveals how cultural attitudes and rituals surrounding death have experienced constant change.¹⁵⁶

John Wolffe has explored how heroism is shaped not only in life, but also in death. In his study of *Great Deaths: Grieving, Religion, and Nationhood in Victorian and Edwardian Britain*, Wolffe reveals how heroic deaths fulfil a national and spiritual purpose. As Wolffe details, the death of national figures, such as prominent military individuals or members of the Royal family, have the power to shock and superficially unify the nation. The public response to great deaths has the ability to create a narrative of heroic dedication and sacrifice.¹⁵⁷

However, more recently, scholars have turned their attention to examining death specifically during periods of conflict. Luc Capdevila and Danièle Voldman, in their study *War Dead: Western Societies and the Casualties of War* examine how war and death intersect, and the complex societal attitudes which emerge towards death during times of war. As they argue, 'Much more than ordinary death, death in war is special. It is at once heroic and appalling, dreaded and unexpected, unjust and accepted, and in no

¹⁵⁵ David Cannadine, 'War and death: grief and mourning in modern Britain', in Joachim Whaley (ed.), *Mirrors of Mortality: Social Studies in the History of Death* (Oxon: Routledge, 2011), pp. 187-242 (p. 242).

¹⁵⁶ Peter C. Jupp and Clare Gittings, 'Introduction', in Peter C. Jupp and Clare Gittings (eds.), *Death in England: An Illustrated History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp. 1-10 (p. 8).

¹⁵⁷ John Wolffe, *Great Deaths: Grieving, Religion and Nationhood in Victorian and Edwardian Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) p. 276.

way resembles what was imagined before battle.’¹⁵⁸ Indeed, their discussion examines how the brutality, suddenness, and sheer numbers of the war dead during the twentieth century altered attitudes towards death. Importantly, they suggest that death in combat became associated with sacrifice, respect, and duty. This was a particularly important construction for the living; it was important for societies at war to believe that their relatives and friends had died for their country.¹⁵⁹ These studies inform how widespread death on the Home Front prompted attitudes towards the war dead to develop.

Other studies have turned their attention to specifically exploring attitudes and responses to death during the Second World War. Indeed, it is crucial to examine the Second World War when exploring death and conflict, as war brought death to the Home Front in numbers never experienced before. In contrast to the First World War, where families in Britain’s villages, towns and cities mourned the brothers, fathers, and sons who had died in conflict overseas, in the Second World War, civilians also grieved for friends and relatives who were killed on the Home Front. Whilst civilians had been killed from aerial bombardment during the Great War, nothing compared to the scale of civilian death experienced between 1939 and 1945. Historians have explored the impact of mass death on attitudes around dying in conflict, public expressions of grief, and methods of internment. Pat Jalland’s research, *Death in War and Peace: A History of Loss and Grief in England, 1914-1970*, represents a central contribution to the study of death in the Second World War. In particular, her examination of death in the Blitz reveals that death and destruction were so widespread that it could not be concealed from the public.¹⁶⁰ Jalland’s research connects with the notion of the ‘myth of the blitz’, suggesting that events in wartime were constructed to support the positive morale of the public; the same

¹⁵⁸ Luc Capdevila and Danièle Voldman, *War Dead: Western Societies and the Casualties of War*, trans. by Richard Veasey (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006) p. xi.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.* p. 13.

¹⁶⁰ Pat Jalland, *Death in War and Peace: Loss and Grief in England, 1914-1970* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) p. 122.

occurred around death.¹⁶¹ Although an incalculable amount of individual lives were devastated by loss, in the public sphere civilians were encouraged to respond to death with stoicism and courage.¹⁶² Notably, this emotional response was encouraged by constructing death in a specific way. This thesis will develop this point further by exploring how death was constructed on the Home Front, and how, through dying, civilians were able to engage with traditional heroic ideals associated with dying in battle. Moreover, Lucy Noakes, in her article ‘Gender, Grief and Bereavement in Second World War Britain’, explores the emotional responses to grief during wartime. Noakes argues that expressions of public grief were silenced during in the Second World War, in favour of a stoic outward exterior. Through examining a range of cultural texts including magazines, newspapers, films and novels, Noakes reveals that the British public were guided on how to express, or rather suppress, public displays of grief.¹⁶³ Advice specifically targeted women, and suggested that restrained self-management was the most patriotic response to bereavement and the most appropriate way to honour the deceased.¹⁶⁴ More recently, Noakes’ publication, *Dying for the Nation: Death, Grief and Bereavement in Second World War Britain*, reveals a deeper analysis of the experience, management and memory of death. As Noakes argues, the war dead played a central role in the Second World War; the political and emotional power of the war dead were used as symbols of unity and determination.¹⁶⁵ Yet, the loss of loved ones brought grief to the Home Front. The public expression of grief was closely managed by the wartime state. When successfully controlled, grief strengthened wartime resolve and collectivity.¹⁶⁶ In addition, Julie Rugg’s case study into death and burial in Yorkshire during wartime

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid. p. 124.

¹⁶³ Lucy Noakes, ‘Gender, Grief, and Bereavement in Second World War Britain’, *Journal of War and Culture Studies*, 8:1 (2015), 72-85 (p. 78).

¹⁶⁴ Ibid. pp. 73-78.

¹⁶⁵ Lucy Noakes, *Dying for the Nation: Death, Grief and Bereavement in Second World War Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020) p. 267.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid. p. 196.

explores how practices and attitudes towards burial changed during the blitz. Notably, Rugg explains that due to the demands of mass casualties caused by enemy action, the number of burials without coffins and in common graves increased. However, to combat negative public opinion, the state attempted to apply a heroic military rhetoric to civilian deaths to counteract the lack of familial control over the destination of the corpse, along with negative associations with a pauper burial.¹⁶⁷ Significantly, Rugg notes that research into death and burial on the Home Front is challenging since wartime censorship prevented extensive reporting on death-related issues. Instead, civic records, government documentation, and administrative material from funeral directors and cemeteries provides an important resource for the historian.¹⁶⁸ However, Rugg suggests that despite state efforts to attach heroic narratives to civilian deaths, the public maintained its disapproval of burial in mass graves.¹⁶⁹ This study will add to current studies on death in wartime by exploring how meanings of death changed under the context of war. By exploring the relationship between causes of death, practices and rituals surrounding internment, increased analysis will be provided on the relationship between death, sacrifice and heroism in wartime.

Chapter Outline

Rather than approaching the study of heroism from a chronological standpoint, this thesis adopts a thematic approach. It is organised in accordance with the various ways that civilian heroism was constructed and framed in wartime.

The first chapter, *Spaces of Heroism: The Factory, The City on Fire and the Ambulance*, examines three sites within London where war created the potential for

¹⁶⁷ Julie Rugg, 'Managing 'Civilian Deaths due to War Operations': Yorkshire Experiences During World War II', *Twentieth Century British History*, 15:2 (2004), 152–173 (p. 154).

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid. p. 172.

heroism. Through a spatial analysis, this chapter argues that spaces formed a fundamental aspect of the creation of heroic identities. As war transformed the Home Front, through production demands, changes to daily life, and threats of aerial attack, civilians navigated and engaged with environments and landscapes in familiar and unfamiliar ways. This chapter focuses on three specific spaces within London, the factory, the city of fire, and the ambulance; these spaces all provided the potential for heroic behaviour. A central argument of this chapter is that the changed landscape of war enabled civilians to engage with spaces in new ways. This engagement created opportunities for a spectrum of heroics. Indeed, in wartime, ideals of heroism broadened to account for the heroic productivity of factory workers, the masculine heroism of the fire service, and the caregiving heroism of ambulance personnel. As this chapter argues, spatial engagement reframed how heroism was understood, in accordance with an individual's occupation, gender and age.

Chapter Two, *War, Materiality and Heroism: Representations of the Militarised and Capable Civilian* explores how the civilian body was a site where the potential or recognition of heroism could be displayed. This chapter specifically focuses on how objects which adorned the civilian body created either an expectation of behaviour, or recognised achievement. In particular, it argues that decorating and adorning the civilian population with uniforms, badges, medals and awards shaped the way that contribution to the war effort was understood. Through a specific focus on how the body was adorned and decorated in wartime, this chapter reveals how war was experienced through the civilian body. This chapter is divided into two sections. Firstly, through an analysis of civilians as militarised individuals, this chapter illustrates how the civilian body was militarised through the wearing of uniforms. Notably, uniforms played a central role in reflecting heroic potential; they created an expectation that the wearer would behave in a particular way. Secondly, this chapter explores the notion of the capable civilian through

an analysis of medals. Objects of recognition, such as medals and awards, attached acclaim to particular behaviours. The civilian body was an important site where capability was reflected. Arguably, capability and wartime heroism were tightly connected notions; demonstrating capability was a marker of heroic achievement. Medals and awards acted as physical markers of achievement; depictions of medal recipients in the public domain revealed how these individuals were surrounded with notions of national service and heroic capability.

Chapter Three, *Sustaining Injury: Wounded Bodies and Heroism*, explores how injuries were constructed and represented, and how wounding from enemy action aligned the everyday civilian with ideals of national duty and heroic self-sacrifice. Space and the body will remain central to the analysis of heroism. This chapter illustrates that the context that injuries were sustained, whether through accidents at work, or from enemy action, influenced the way they were perceived and represented in the public domain. During wartime, it was essential to maintain the physical and mental health of the population as healthy bodies were vital if war on the Home Front was to be fought effectively. As such, the civilian population were reminded that workplace injuries were avoidable and unnecessary and therefore not heroic; each worker was personally responsible to safeguard their health at work. In contrast, wounding from enemy action was represented as symbolic of wartime participation, duty and heroic defiance.

Chapter four, *Heroic Deaths: The Civilian War Dead*, examines how dying from enemy action was constructed as equal to dying in battle. This chapter illustrates that in death, ideals of heroism transcended the corporeal dimensions of the body. Dying in battle carried cultural meanings of dying a hero's death as the deceased had given the ultimate sacrifice. This chapter particularly considers the social value of framing civilian death as heroic. Reinforcing the heroic nature of deaths from enemy action reassured the bereaved that their relatives had not died in vain. Through an examination of burial practices and

rituals, this chapter argues that in the public domain, deaths from enemy action were saturated with heroic meanings. As military burial practices and funerary rituals expanded into the civilian realm, parallels were drawn between the deaths of civilians and those serving in the armed forces. This chapter argues that as victims of modern warfare, it was critical that the civilian war dead were presented as heroic in death. Constructing death as heroic reflected recognition and respect. However, this chapter argues that children were generally not surrounded with heroic narratives in death. Their vulnerability as children meant that in death, their position as victims of war remained consistent.

The final chapter presents the concluding comments and draws together the overarching themes which weave throughout each of the chapters. It evaluates how, as battlefield lines were blurred during the Second World War, ideals of heroism were also blurred. In wartime, civilian heroism was not an everyday heroism as was war not an everyday phenomenon. Civilian heroism was contingent to the wartime period, it was multifaceted and comprised of different strands and layers. Yet, above all, Home Front heroism was constructed as attainable; under the right circumstances, all civilians might be represented as heroic.

Through exploring these various strands, this thesis contributes to the current discourse on civilian heroism. In examining the ways that heroism was constructed spatially, experienced through the body, and in relation to objects and practices of cultural meaning, this thesis shows that civilian heroism was constructed in an array of ways. More broadly, this study also demonstrates the social need on a multiplicity of agencies for heroism during times of war. In doing so, this thesis builds upon the study of heroism, as well as making a contribution to the wider history of the Second World War.

Chapter One

Spaces of Heroism: The Factory, the City on Fire, and the Ambulance

In a discussion in the House of Commons on 27th October 1944, Captain David Gammans, of Hornsey, North London, described how the Second World War had renegotiated the position of civilians, especially those in the capital.

Let us realise that there are no civilians in this war. Some of us happen to wear civilian clothes, because it suits the convenience of the State that we should do so, but there are no civilians in the sense that there were in the last war. It has been said truly, that London is in the front line.¹

Gammans' statement encapsulated how modern warfare had blurred battlefield lines, and had in turn blurred the meaning of combatants. In this new war, as London was brought into the front line and transformed by modern warfare, the identity of civilians was reconfigured.

The Second World War demanded more of the British civilian population than in any previous conflict. Civilians not only had to fuel the war effort from the Home Front, they also had to endure aerial bombardment as the front line shifted to the British mainland. Thus, as the battle ground of the Second World War moved into the domestic realm, civilians became combatants too. This chapter explores how engagement with wartime spaces across London shaped the way that heroic behaviour was perceived and constructed. As the largest metropolis in Britain, London sustained the greatest concentration of bombardment. Homes, workplaces, and streets were transformed by the

¹ Hansard, House of Commons, 'War Damaged Houses, South-East England (Repairs)', Captain Gammans (Hornsey), 27 October 1944, vol. 404, col. 529.

demands of wartime production, defence and ‘making do’. It is therefore important to examine how London’s cityscape and the spaces within it shaped the way that civilians were able to engage with ideals of wartime heroism. As this discussion will illustrate, certain spaces across the capital heightened the opportunity for heroic behaviour, or conversely, limited it. This chapter focuses on three spaces, the factory, the city on fire, and the ambulance. These spaces, although distinctly different, all facilitated the construction of Home Front heroism during wartime. While civilian behaviour both conformed to and challenged existing ideals of heroism, acts of defiance, fortitude and endurance amongst the civilian population also caused traditional heroic ideals to evolve and develop. The relationship between civilians and spaces of war was complex; an individual’s occupation, responsibility, age and gender all affected the way that behaviour within a specific environment was understood and represented.

While the changing nature of civilian heroism has been explored by historians, little has been said about the connection between wartime space and the construction of Home Front heroism. Studies have particularly emphasised the connection between environment and gender expectations. As Sonya Rose has demonstrated in her work on national identity, on the Home Front, men were able to engage with ideals of wartime heroism through displays of physical fitness, endurance, but also of good citizenship.² Men fashioned themselves as worker-heroes through their capacity to protect women and children, and positioned themselves as equally important to the nation as soldier heroes.³ Moreover, as Penny Summerfield has shown in her exploration of war work and feminine identity, women could also be constructed as heroic. However, female heroics centred upon public service, and the often extraordinary and exceptional nature of female behaviour. Women were recognised for their heroism in unfeminine settings including

² Rose, *Which People's War*, p. 162.

³ *Ibid.* p. 195.

the munitions factory and through unfeminine work such as engineering.⁴ In addition, Linsey Robb's research on the working man in British culture, reveals how danger was a central component of the heroic identity which surrounded firemen.⁵ However, more can be said on how heroic ideals were fashioned through engagement with wartime space. This chapter will explore three spaces of heroism within London, and in doing so, will complement current studies of wartime heroics by providing insight into the multifaceted heroic identity which surrounded civilians during the Second World War. Firstly, this chapter will address current studies of spatial theory and their importance to this discussion, before examining the factory, the city on fire, and the ambulance as sites where civilian heroism was shaped and recognised. Significantly, these spaces offered opportunities for the civilian to match the behaviour of soldiers, sailors and airmen. A spatial analysis of civilian heroism reveals that as London's spaces were transformed by war, behaviour was constructed as heroic in line with the environment an individual engaged with. In many ways, as wartime altered London's cityscape, civilians became the accidental and unplanned heroes of war and were plunged into the heroic limelight.

Reframing Heroism Through Wartime Spaces

When exploring wartime heroism, it is fundamental to consider how space contributes towards establishing a civilian dimension to wartime heroism. It is especially important to explore the notion of space in relation to heroism as the spaces on the Second World War Home Front were central to the way that heroic ideals were constructed; spaces both enabled and restricted varying identities of heroism. Civilian engagement with spaces and environments shaped how wartime heroism was understood. In many ways, spatial interactions enabled behaviour to be framed in accordance with heroic ideals. Heroism

⁴ Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives*, p. 78.

⁵ Robb, *Men at Work*, p. 251.

was recognised through dedication to wartime production, through protecting the city, or through caregiving. In particular, wartime spaces, and the individuals who moved within them, influenced the way that heroism was constructed and framed in contemporary society. War created spaces which enabled men, women and children to interact with heroic ideals in a way not experienced before wartime, and, as such, their engagement with wartime spaces also caused the heroic ideal to alter and evolve. As this chapter will illustrate, particular spaces on the Home Front enabled behaviour to be framed as heroic. The physical attributes of different environments legitimised behaviour and confirmed social responsibility. Thus, space provides a useful lens to examine how the hero was reframed in wartime, and particularly, how civilians experienced a different framing of the hero depending on their gender, age and occupation, and the physical spaces they occupied. As Jo Guldi explains, when the historian broadens their lens to explore a particular landscape or environment, the opportunity arises to ask questions about how an environment impacts upon social experience.⁶ Thus, by adopting such an approach, increased details are revealed around how different spaces harboured different social consequences for the individuals who moved between them. However, as Doreen Massey reminds us, the study of space is multifaceted and complex, and the term ‘space’ itself carries an array of connotations and meanings.⁷ It is therefore important to consider an array of wartime spaces within London in order to analyse the range of ways that civilians were able to engage with heroic ideals. The separate spaces under consideration in this chapter reveal the complex interplay between civilians and spaces of war; civilian behaviour was both specific to a particular environment and setting, yet was also entwined within the wider context of war. As such, it is important to consider how actions and behaviours are woven within wider social expectations and opportunities.

⁶ Jo Guldi, ‘Landscape and Place’, in Simon Gunn and Lucy Faire (eds.), *Research Methods for History* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), pp. 66-82 (p. 66).

⁷ Massey, *Space, Place and Gender*, p. 1.

This chapter will approach the study of space and heroism by breaking down the discussion into two parts; firstly, this discussion will explore spatial theory before exploring how wartime spaces facilitated the recognition of heroism amongst the civilian population. In other words, it will explore how wartime created conditions and environments which in turn created social consequences. Indeed, this chapter will question how civilian engagement with spaces within London enabled ideals of heroism to broaden and evolve throughout the war. Secondly, this chapter will explore three wartime spaces, the factory, the city on fire, and the ambulance.

Spatial theory provides an important foundation upon which to explore the relationship between heroism and the civilian experience. This chapter utilises theories presented by a range of thinkers, including humanistic and feminist geographers, anthropologists and historians, to consider how the body and behaviour can be understood through the way it is spatially constructed, as well as how spaces narrate the human experience. While discussions on spatial theory have their roots in geography, the study of space has developed an interdisciplinary nature as its theories have spread into the studies of history, philosophy, anthropology, architecture and sociology. By drawing upon the work of spatial theorists and acknowledging the importance of space in the study of social and cultural history, analysis is provided on the relationship between physical spaces and the construction of wartime heroic identities. As Paul Stock has explained, using a spatial approach provides increased detail on societies, cultures and mentalities of the past.⁸ Moreover, as Barney Warf and Santa Arias have described, understanding *where* things happen is critical to knowing *how* and *why* they happen.⁹

⁸ Paul Stock, 'History and the Uses of Space', in Paul Stock (ed.), *The Uses of Space in Early Modern History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. 1-18 (p. 1).

⁹ Barney Warf and Santa Arias, 'Introduction: the reinsertion of space into the social sciences', in Barney Warf and Santa Arias (eds.), *The Spatial Turn: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 1-10 (p.1).

This chapter draws upon ideas presented by key thinkers of space and place, including Henry Lefebvre, Nigel Thrift and Doreen Massey, to provide greater analysis on how engagement with spaces affects how actions and identities are constructed. However, there are various ways in which the study of space has been theorised. As Henri Lefebvre has demonstrated in his seminal work *The Production of Space*, humans produce the spaces in which they live; space does not simply materialise, but is produced and reproduced through the way that humans interact with it.¹⁰ More recently, Nigel Thrift has explored the multisensory nature of physical spaces, suggesting that the presence of sight, sound, touch and smell within physical space influence the way that the body reacts to encounters.¹¹ Thrift comments upon the strong link between such spaces and the involvement with embodiment; recognising that the presence of sight, sound, touch and smell within physical spaces influence the way that the body reacts to encounters and evolves out of them. Thrift also notes that these human encounters with physical spaces produce affect, or emotion; certain physical spaces bring the human experience alive in different ways.¹² When examining the connection between the physical spaces and the construction of Home Front heroism, it is important to consider how these spaces were not only physically tangible, but were also sensory environments and as such, impacted upon the way people behaved within them. As war transformed familiar spaces into unfamiliar sites, behaviour was understood in relation to the physical attributes of a space. Indeed, the way heroic acts were constructed in the public sphere largely depended upon the visual and sensory attributes of each space; for instance, varying degrees of physical danger or risk, combined with the environment which they could be found, were central in the construction of different ideals of heroism.

¹⁰ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 31.

¹¹ Thrift, 'Space: The Fundamental Stuff of Human Geography', pp. 95-107 (p. 103).

¹² *Ibid.* p. 104.

Feminist geographer Doreen Massey's work on space, place and gender has highlighted how geography and gender are tightly connected; understandings of masculinity and femininity are directly affected by place, and yet understandings of place are also shaped by notions of gender.¹³ Moreover, through using a geographical framework, Susan Hanson and Geraldine Pratt have highlighted the connection between gender, space and occupational segregation, and provide valuable discussion on the way that male and female participation in the labour force has and continues to differ.¹⁴ Similarly, Daphne Spain has explored the way that space, gender and status are linked with changing spatial arrangements in society, with specific focus upon how gender affects access to specific spaces.¹⁵ As, Phil Hubbard and Rob Kitchin have suggested, spaces are fundamental in creating a sense of belonging and providing a locus for identity.¹⁶ Thus, previous studies which explore the relationship between space and society provide a valuable foundation to investigate space in the Second World War. Through exploring spaces and their connection with heroism, increased analysis will be provided regarding gender, age and occupation and how the demands of total war caused heroic identities and activities of the wartime combatant to be recast. This work will explore a range of wartime spaces; spaces of production, spaces of protection and spaces of caregiving to understand how a range of spaces facilitated the construction of civilian heroism within wartime culture.

¹³ Massey, *Space, Place and Gender*, p. 177.

¹⁴ Susan Hanson and Geraldine Pratt, *Gender, Work, and Space* (London: Routledge, 1995) p. 3.

¹⁵ Daphne Spain, *Gendered Spaces* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992) p. 233.

¹⁶ Phil Hubbard and Rob Kitchin, 'Introduction: Why Key Thinkers', in Phil Hubbard and Rob Kitchin (eds.), *Key Thinkers on Space and Place* (London: Sage Publications Ltd, 2009), pp. 1-19. (p. 6).

Spaces of Heroism within London

This chapter will explore three distinct physical spaces within London, the factory, the city on fire, and the ambulance; a space of production, of protection, and caregiving. These sites, although separate, were intertwined within the wider landscape of the city. Rationale for selecting these spaces centres upon their contrasting, but also congruent nature; they are all spaces in which civilian behaviour was constructed as heroic. However, the varying nature of these spaces meant that displays of wartime heroism differed between each environment. Heroic conduct within the factory, a space of wartime production, differed to ideals of heroism in the burning city, or to the heroism of individuals in the ambulance service. Importantly, this study reveals that ideals of heroism were tightly connected to behaviour in response to spatial demands. Indeed, a space which threatened danger shaped different ideals of heroism to a space which demanded efficient production. A study of three separate, but also interwoven spaces with London reveals that ideals of civilian heroism were shaped through behavioural expectations, spatial engagement, occupation and gender. Moreover, this discussion also illustrates the temporal and changing nature of space; constructions of civilian heroism were informed and manipulated by specific spatial conditions and thus fluctuated throughout the war.

Indeed, this discussion considers the way that certain locations and environments heightened or limited the potential for heroism in wartime. Discussion also considers how meanings of heroism were reconfigured through changing perceptions of civilian behaviour. This discussion interrogates how notions of spaces of safety and danger, spaces of duty and responsibility, spaces of production and manufacture, created an expectation of how individuals would behave. Notably, this chapter illustrates that across a spectrum of wartime spaces, battles for production, for life, of the flames, and against the enemy, enabled ideals of wartime heroism to be understood. Ideals of heroism were shaped through the complex relationship between people and places, along with cultural

expectations of behaviour associated with specific environments. Thus, the study of space is central to understanding social experience and exploring the way that notions of heroism were reframed during the Second World War. Indeed, adorning civilians with heroic identities acted as a form of recognition of wartime contribution, whilst also acting as a political tool to encourage the population to behave comparably and reinforce the notion that all civilians had the potential of acting heroically.

The relationship between spaces and human experience enabled understandings of heroism to evolve during wartime. The physical spaces found within London, and the way that civilians behaved within them, and were recognised for such behaviour, contributed towards shaping ideals of wartime heroism. The relationship between civilians and wartime space is complex; in war spatial arrangements reinforce differences between the civilian and armed forces populations. Whilst traditionally, civilians and soldiers remain separated through divisions between spaces of conflict and domesticity, as these spaces were blurred during the Second World War, notions of what constituted wartime heroism were also blurred. It is important to explore the relationship between physical space and heroism in depth as spaces of war all carried with them a behavioural expectation depending on the physical characteristics of each space. Through exploring physical spaces in their various forms, this chapter illustrates that ideals of heroism differed depending on the space being engaged with. Furthermore, a key theme which weaves throughout the discussion of physical space is the fluidity of heroic identities; civilians were able to move between physical spaces and thus move between different ideals of heroism. Through examining of a range of primary material, including recruitment propaganda, legislation, newspaper articles, radio broadcasts, magazines and war art, this chapter reveals how a spatial dimension influenced how wartime heroism was framed. Thinking spatially allows us to examine how space and time played a central role in the way that acts of civilian heroism were fashioned in the public sphere. Exploring

primary material through a spatial lens provides us with new directions of historical enquiry. This approach will highlight that by understanding how behaviour was framed in line with space and circumstance, heroism was constructed around understandings of spatial engagement, and the age, occupation and gender of an individual.

The Factory

The factory was the primary space of wartime production. As such, it is important to consider how this environment, a vital space of manufacture, shaped the identity of workers within it. In preparations for war, the number of industrial spaces across Britain grew as they were expanded in order to meet the needs of wartime production. The location of industries were dictated by a variety of factors, including utilising sites where sufficient labour was already available, or spreading important factories over a wide area to safeguard against enemy attacks.¹⁷ Within London, factories were situated across the capital. On the Southern bank of the Thames Estuary near Woolwich stood the Royal Arsenal, workers were responsible for the scientific research and planning of weapons, ammunition, combat vehicles, and equipment.¹⁸ In Hayes, West London, workers produced tanks and guns.¹⁹ Factories were also located underground. For example, one factory was positioned in an un-used section of the Central Line between Leytonstone and Gants Hill, where workers produced fittings and components for aircrafts and armoured cars.²⁰ However, along with the expansion of factory sites, additional workers were also required to fulfil production targets in both new and existing factories. As such, increased importance was placed on mobilising the working population. As Sue Bruley

¹⁷ Ministry of Labour and National Service, *Ministry of Labour and National Service, Report for the Years 1939-1945* (London: HMSO, 1947) p. 65.

¹⁸ Ian Hay, *R.O.F. The Story of the Royal Ordnance Factories 1939-1948*. (London: HMSO, 1949) p. 32.

¹⁹ Nick Holder, *The Royal Ordnance Factory at Hayes* (London: MOLA, 2011) p. 1.

²⁰ 'A War Factory in London's Underground System: How a Tube Tunnel became a Five Mile Long Munition Workshop', *Illustrated London News*, 06 December 1947, pp. 632-633.

describes, from March 1941, labour was controlled by the state through the *Essential Work Order*. The order required all skilled workers to register for work, and once in employment they were restricted from leaving jobs which were considered part of the essential industries, such as aircraft and munitions manufacture.²¹ The expansion of war industries was largely facilitated through the use of female labour.²² Whilst women were initially encouraged to volunteer their services for war work, by 1940, it became clear that women would not meet the labour shortage voluntarily. As Penny Summerfield notes, the demand for an increased workforce was met by the conscription of women in 1941.²³ As such, the *National Service Act (No.2)* was passed in 1941 to enlist women between the age of 18-40 into wartime work. Prior to 1939, women were predominantly employed in textiles, clothing, factory work and domestic service. In the interwar years, women began to move into industries such as light metal trades, electrical engineering and scientific apparatus making. However, during the Second World War, women were employed in significant numbers in engineering, metals, chemicals, vehicle building, transport, the energy industries and shipbuilding, along with white-collar work in national and local government.²⁴ As a result, the number of women working in wartime production rose exponentially. Between 1939 and 1945, the ratio of men to women working in industry fell from 2.7-1 to 1.6-1.²⁵ Significantly, this legislation altered the relationship between the civilian female and the state. The movement of women into manufacture emphasised that workers on the Home Front could serve their nation through wartime

²¹ Sue Bruley (ed.), *Working for Victory: Diary of Life in a Second World War Factory* (Stroud: The History Press, 2010) p. xx.

²² Ibid.

²³ Penny Summerfield, *Women Workers in the Second World War: Production and Patriarchy in Conflict* (London: Routledge, 2013) p. 29.

²⁴ Penny Summerfield 'Women, War and Social Change: Women in Britain in World War II', in Arthur Marwick (ed.), *Total War and Social Change* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1988), pp. 95-118 (p. 97).

²⁵ 'Proportion of Women in Industry', in Ministry of Labour and National Service, *Ministry of Labour and National Service, Report for the Years 1939-1945* (London: HMSO, 1947) p. 127.

The numbers of men and women working in industry between 1939 and 1945:

Mid 1939: 13,083,000 Men and 4,837,000 Women

Mid 1945: 10,021,000 Men and 6,268,000 Women

work. As such, in London and across the nation, male and female factory and industrial workers played a central role in the battle for production. Importantly, factories and industrial spaces provided an environment where workers could demonstrate their corporeal potential. Their corporeal potential was realised through the way that workers could serve their nation through workplace productivity. However, as this discussion illustrates, factory and industrial environments were surrounded with cultural understandings of gendered roles in the workplace. As such, constructions of factory and industrial workers, as heroic in their endurance and productivity, also conformed to notions of gendered work in wartime.

Throughout the war, factory and industrial workers were represented as vital to the war effort. Workers were needed to fulfil production demands and support the armed forces. Within this environment, workers were often required to work long hours, under hazardous conditions in order to meet manufacture requirements.²⁶ Recruitment posters and advertisements produced during the war stressed the importance that was placed on the contribution of the factory worker. For example, in the 1941 newsreel, *The Services Need Arms*, viewers were informed of the vital role that factory workers played in the war effort through the production of material for the armed forces.²⁷ The newsreel emphasised that to work in factories prior experience was not required, and both men and women, boys and girls from 16 upwards were welcome to ‘train to win’.²⁸ Moreover, recruitment posters not only constructed a notion of the ideal worker but also suggested that such work was vital in the battle for national victory. In recruitment posters, it was emphasised that workers were responsible for fighting the battle for production; as such, they were portrayed as the warriors of the workplace. For instance, posters, such as the series,

²⁶ Calder, *The People's War*, pp. 328-335.

²⁷ BPA, 1101.30, ‘The Services Needs Arms’, Pathé News, 1941.

<<https://www.britishpathe.com/video/the-services-need-arms-trailer/query/The+Services+Needs+Arms>>
[Accessed: February 2017]

²⁸ Ibid.

‘Fighting Fit in the Factory’ portrayed an idealised image of the male and female worker, and emphasised physical fitness as a central characteristic of employees.²⁹ These posters reflected the physical demands of working in the factory; individuals required strength and physical fitness in order to work effectively. Similarly, posters such as, ‘Combined Operations Include You!’, directly compared a worker with a soldier by depicting a Royal Marine and factory worker side by side, echoing each other’s positions despite the fact that one was in battle and other was in a factory.³⁰ The image emphasised the parallels between firing a gun and operating machinery; both jobs were vital to the war effort. In addition, a series of posters, ‘The Attack Begins in the Factory’, emphasised the centrality of the factory to the war effort. Posters reminded readers that in the Mediterranean invasion, weapons from British war plants were pouring ashore from landing craft, guns and ammunition from British factories were supplying allied submarines with the chance to wreak havoc amongst Axis shipping, and in the raids on Germany, the British war plants shared the credit with the RAF.³¹ Another poster series, ‘Facts of the fight for the factory’ conveyed a similar message. The posters suggested that in the construction of Spitfires and Lancaster Bombers, workers were producing a machine which would help to win the war. The series suggested that the power to win the war was firmly in the hands of factory workers. As a statement repeated across the posters proclaimed, ‘Their success, their confidence, their safety - They all depend on you.’³² Workers were reminded how

²⁹ IWM, PST, 14311, ‘Fighting Fit in the Factory’, c.1939-1945.

<<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/26221>> [Accessed: February 2017]

IWM, PST, 14309, ‘Fighting Fit in the Factory’, c.1939-1945.

<<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/32044>> [Accessed: February 2017]

³⁰ IWM, PST, 14077, ‘Combined Operations Include You’, c.1939-1945.

<<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/22282>> [Accessed: February 2017]

³¹ IWM, PST, 14362, ‘The Attack Begins in the Factory’, c.1939-1945.

<<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/32051>> [Accessed: February 2017]

IWM, PST, 14360, ‘The Attack Begins in the Factory’, c.1939-1945.

<<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/23484>> [Accessed: February 2017]

IWM, PST, 14359, ‘The Attack Begins in the Factory’, c.1939-1945.

<<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/20395>> [Accessed: February 2017]

³² IWM, PST, 14230 ‘Facts of the fight for the factory Lancaster Bulletin No. 1’, c.1939-1945.

<<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/32011>> [Accessed: February 2017]

IWM, PST, 14229, ‘Facts of the fight for the factory Spitfire Bulletin No. 14’, c.1939-1945.

<<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/32010>> [Accessed: February 2017]

they were serving in the front line of production. Indeed, war had renegotiated the peacetime factory space into an environment firmly connected with duty and service in wartime. The connection between wartime work and spirited productivity was also echoed in a speech given by Ernest Bevin, the wartime Minister of Labour and National Service, on 18th September 1940. In his speech, Bevin addressed the hurdles wartime industry was faced with, including changes in the methods of production and working under conditions of air raids and attacks while at the same time maintaining levels of productivity.³³ Bevin also emphasised the centrality of the factory to the war effort:

This is a total war, and if we do not stop production the quicker shall we create our own defence and security...If production does not cease then the means for our defence are increased, the protection of our people is speeded up and the workplace themselves are more securely defended...This is a total war. We are all in it.³⁴

As such, the factory environment shaped the identity of the workers within it as they were represented as not only contributing towards production, but one which was vital to victory. As Paul Stock notes, space is constructed by specific circumstances and perspectives.³⁵ Specific cultural moments, such as war, radically alter the way that a society understands a space or environment.³⁶ As such, in wartime, the factory space was reimagined as an environment directly connected with wartime service, and the workers within it were represented as the warriors of the workplace.

The workplace was constructed as vital to wartime production, and as such, it is important to consider how spaces are both physical but also embody notions of duty and

³³ Ministry of Labour and National Service, *A Speech by the Minister of Labour, The Right Honourable, Ernest Bevin to the Works Management Association at the Park Lane Hotel, London. W.1.18 September 1940* (London: HMSO, 1940) p. 1.

³⁴ *Ibid.* p. 3.

³⁵ Stock, 'History and the Uses of Space', pp. 1-18 (p. 6).

³⁶ *Ibid.* p. 7.

contribution. In this regard, factory workers were presented as valiant in their efforts to meet demands of wartime production. However, the representation of workers as heroic through their productivity contrasted with traditional understandings of wartime heroism. Civilians working within this environment were collectively constructed as enduring and industrious. The heroism that surrounded workers centred upon their service and contribution to the war effort. However, as Graham Dawson has noted, traditionally, heroic behaviour was recognised as something achieved in battle, but as battle lines spread onto the Home Front, and into the factories, civilians were able to engage with ideals of heroism as understandings of wartime ‘battles’ evolved.³⁷ Through the recognition of the importance of factory workers, a collective heroism was constructed around these workers as they were positioned as a central cog in the machine of wartime production; without individuals working in the essential industries war could not be fought by the armed forces. In the public sphere, it was important to emphasise this construction in order to encourage the flow of new workers into industry. These representations, which likened factory work to military service, revealed how the factory was an environment where a vast army of workers could achieve heroic status through production. As a writer for the *West London Observer* noted in 1942, the factory, along with other sites, such as the mine, office and railway, was now an environment where ‘heroism at home’ could be displayed through ‘the dogged everyday labour of a determined people.’³⁸

However, greater examination of the relationship between space and gender reveals that a divide existed between the heroism which surrounded factory workers. Spaces of war were firmly connected with cultural expectations of gender. Whilst representations of war workers as a collective engaged with heroic ideals of duty and

³⁷ Dawson, *Soldier Heroes*, p. 1.

³⁸ ‘There is a formula for it...’ *West London Observer*, 23 October 1942, p. 4.

national service, the potential for individual heroism in industry centred upon male workers. As Arthur McIvor and Ronnie Johnson have argued, the notion of the heroic wartime worker not only developed out of meeting production demands, but also since working in industry was often highly dangerous.³⁹ Industrial workers were exposed to risk of injury and industrial disease.⁴⁰ Whilst women moved into factory and industrial work, the most dangerous jobs such as welding and shipbuilding remained dominated by male workers. As McIvor and Johnson have suggested, this segregation ensured that men were employed in the most dangerous jobs, a reality which reinforced ideals that they were the ones who should bear the brunt of potential bodily damage and sacrifice in the workplace.⁴¹ Such divisions served to strengthen the notion of masculinity within spaces of danger. Ideals of ‘worker heroism’ were shaped by perceptions of danger associated with specific war work. For male workers, the factory and industrial space was an environment where physical resilience could be displayed.

The nature of male heroism within the factory environment is perhaps best exemplified through an examination of the Royal Ordnance Factory (ROF) workers who were awarded gallantry awards. Out of the 96 awards that were given to ROF workers, only seven were awarded to women.⁴² In Woolwich, London, George Henry Lawson was recognised for displaying fortitude and devotion to duty when igniters and cordite were set on fire at the factory where he worked. Lawson, who was the factory auxiliary fireman, remained at his post fighting the fire until he was removed to hospital to be treated for burn injuries.⁴³ Across the nation, other male industrial workers were celebrated for responding courageously to the dangers of working in industry. This list of ROF workers who received awards highlights the gendered nature of factory heroism; male workers

³⁹ Johnston and McIvor, ‘The War and the Body at Work’, 113-136 (p. 126).

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid. p. 130.

⁴² Hay, *R.O.F. The Story of the Royal Ordnance Factories 1939-1948*, pp. 103-104.

⁴³ ‘Awarded the British Empire Medal’, *Fourth Supplement to the London Gazette*, 03 July 1942, p. 2918.

were more frequently the face of heroic achievement in the factory sphere. Arguably, this prevalence of heroic masculinity in the factory was a result of increased levels of male engagement with danger. Working in a factory was dangerous. In an ammunition factory there was the ever-present potential for explosions, blasts and detonations to occur. Heavy industrial work also carried risks; iron and steel working placed workers at increased risk of injury and disablement.⁴⁴ Indeed, as Arthur McIvor states, in the factory, male workers engaged with these dangers to a greater extent than their female colleagues.⁴⁵ The way that sustaining injuries shaped heroic identities will be developed later in Chapter Three. Instead, what remains significant to this discussion, is that whilst women were also exposed to factory dangers, it was the male worker who was predominantly celebrated for his heroic engagement with danger within this environment.⁴⁶ Stories which celebrated heroic achievement in the factory highlighted that the factory was a space of not only production, but also heroic masculinity. This engagement with danger enabled men's bodies to be heroized to a greater extent than women's. In an environment which saw the increased movement of women into the factory and industrial workforce, it was important for stories of male heroism to reassert the gendered nature of the factory and industrial sphere. As Matthew Shepherd notes, interactions and behaviours are informed by spatial backdrops; work and home spaces are associated with particular meanings of masculinity and femininity.⁴⁷ However, wartime employment blurred the distinction between male and female spheres. Thus, through confronting the dangers created by production, men were able to assert their masculinity as heroic responders.

⁴⁴ Juliette Pattinson, Arthur McIvor and Linsey Robb, *Men in Reserve: British civilian masculinities in the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017) p. 192.

⁴⁵ Arthur McIvor, 'Rebuilding 'real men': work and working class male civilian bodies in wartime', in Linsey Robb and Juliette Pattinson (eds.), *Men, Masculinities and male culture in the Second World War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp. 121-144 (pp. 134-135).

⁴⁶ As Penny Summerfield has detailed, women were also exposed to dangers as a result of factory work. Munitions work was particularly dangerous as there was the constant threat of explosion. See: Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives*, pp. 99-101.

⁴⁷ Matthew Shepherd, 'Re-Thinking Masculinity: Discourses of Gender and Power in Two Workplaces' (Ph.D. diss., University of Sheffield, 1996), p. 67.

In contrast, whilst women were able to engage with the heroic status connected with war work, the opportunity for this was restricted. Representations of women's heroism within this environment was largely centred around their ability to work successfully in traditionally masculine lines of work, rather than engage with dangerous situations. Yet, as Penny Summerfield notes, whilst women's participation in war work was constructed as heroic, these representations were contingent and temporary.⁴⁸ Whilst factory and industrial work enabled women to be associated with notions of the heroic worker, it was a short-lived identity. As production demands were met, women engaged with ideals of endurance and productivity through challenging gendered expectations of women and work. For example, women's workplace aptitude was captured by war artist Laura Knight in a 1943 painting entitled 'Ruby Loftus Screwing a Breech Ring.' Notably, Knight's depiction of Ruby Loftus captured the 21-year-old in action, performing a highly skilled job which had been previously reserved for male workers with years of experience behind them, yet she had qualified in less than a year.⁴⁹ The painting paid particular attention to the heroic nature of women performing war work in factories. Loftus's heroism centred upon the way that she was able to skilfully work machinery in a manner previously unexpected of her gender or age. What is particularly significant about Knight's depiction is that it not only illustrated female capability in contributing towards the battle for production, but actively situated Loftus in a masculine environment. Loftus's behaviour was all the more noteworthy as she performed a job that placed her at risk of physical injury and required a high level of skill; her heroism centred upon the extraordinary nature of her behaviour. The painting received considerable attention in the press, with the *Daily Herald* reporting that 'To-day [Loftus] is doing one of the most intricate operations in gun-making – one of the "women-couldn't-do-it-jobs"'.⁵⁰ For the

⁴⁸ Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives*, p. 82.

⁴⁹ IWM, ART, LD 2850, 'Ruby Loftus Screwing a Breech Ring', c.1939-1945.
<<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/15504>> [Accessed: February 2017]

⁵⁰ Mea Allan, 'Ruby Loftus is a Smash Hit at Academy', *Daily Herald*, 01 May 1943, p. 3.

public, such art was important in visually situating women alongside men in the factory environment as capable colleagues, and thereby reinforced their identity as warriors of the workplace. However, as Brian Foss notes, while Knight's painting reflects Loftus' technical prowess, it does not directly challenge notions of workplace masculinity; Loftus is represented as an attractive young woman who excelled in her job, without threatening gendered norms.⁵¹ Through emphasising women's extraordinary heroism in the workplace, the temporary nature of their heroism was also enforced. Importantly, it was the factory space and the demands of wartime production which enabled women to behave in this way. Knight's painting captured the way that spaces of production attached employees with a sense of worker heroism, particularly women who had moved into jobs which were reserved for male workers. As Daphne Spain notes, examination of gender and space reveals that 'definitions of masculinity and femininity are constructed in particular places – most notably the home, workplace and community.'⁵² As such, the wartime demand for labour caused the spatial division of labour to blur as women moved into traditionally masculine lines of work.

The heroic productivity of female workers was echoed in printed media. Wartime publications and booklets which aimed to encourage women into wartime work, also commended the work of Britain's female workforce. Constructions of the efficient and competent female factory worker frequently appeared within texts which celebrated women's contribution to all areas of wartime work. These publications carried a strong propaganda message that women were fulfilling vital roles in industry. *Eve in Overalls*, which was first published by the Ministry of Information in 1942, drew attention to the movement of women into new areas of work. In particular, the third section of the book paid particular attention to women's war work in factories. It noted how, 'women are

⁵¹ Brian Foss, *War Paint: Art, War, State and Identity in Britain, 1939-1945* (London: Yale University Press, 2007) p. 112.

⁵² Spain, *Gendered Spaces*, p. 34.

working these machines with careful precision, carrying out their tasks methodically, their faces betraying the strain and concentration.’⁵³ Yet, it emphasised that while women were working in traditionally masculine areas, the femininity of female workers was not compromised within this environment. For example, readers were informed of an 18-year-old female who was in sole charge of a machine tool worth £4000, and another worker whose grinder polished a complicated looking piece of steel. Yet these stories were complemented with the assertion that despite this, female workers found time to knit for their husbands or sons during breaks, or hum romantic songs while they worked.⁵⁴ This illustrates that whilst women were moving into new spheres in society which were previously dominated by men, they maintained the characteristics associated with femininity. A year later in 1943, J.B. Priestley authored *British Women Go To War*, to celebrate the mobilisation of women into all aspects of wartime work. The fourth chapter, *Industry*, particularly recognised the work of women in factories. Yet, although Priestley detailed how women successfully worked as lathe operators, power saw operators, producing guns and torpedo grommets, he also noted how female war workers functioned as housewives.⁵⁵ Highlighting the double role of these women was significant; they could work in male professions, yet retain their femininity. As Priestley described, ‘Surely there is something of the Stalingrad spirit about this heroic British working-class mother...with a large young family to support, a home destroyed by the blitz, and a man’s job added to all her maternal responsibilities.’⁵⁶ These maternal responsibilities involved doing the family shopping, caring for children, and maintaining the domestic sphere. This construction suggests that the factory was a wartime space where women could display, and be recognised for their proficiency and expertise in masculine areas of work, yet, in order to be recognised for their heroic productivity, it was important that wartime work

⁵³ Arthur Wauters, *Eve in Overalls* (Ministry of Information: 1942) p. 23.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ J.B. Priestley, *British Women Go to War* (London: Collins, 1943) pp. 34-37.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* p. 38.

was balanced with expectations of femininity. Examining the relationship between gender and space reveals social norms and expectations. As Daphne Spain notes, through analysing labour forces in the context of workplaces, we can identify gendered spaces and women's status within them.⁵⁷ Where men and women worked in the same sphere, spatial understandings of gendered behaviour were complex. As Spain further describes, factories brought women out of their homes and into contact with men and technology.⁵⁸ This movement destabilised gendered roles in the workplace. Thus, behaviour in the factory and industrial sphere was constructed in a way which sustained gender ideals and behavioural expectations.

The factory was a space where workers were recognised for their heroic productivity. Significantly, the centrality of the factory to the war effort encouraged heroic ideals to evolve; production was constructed as vital in wartime. Men and women were commended for their contribution towards wartime production. However, the movement of women into factory and industrial spaces challenged expectations of women and employment. As such, female heroic productivity was constructed as temporal and tied to their work in the factory and industrial sphere. This made women's wartime heroism acceptable, once war was over women would relinquish their wartime roles and reclaim their conventionally feminine identity. The image of a women entering a traditionally masculine space of work was a powerful construction, it was therefore important that female worker heroism was balanced with traditional concepts of femininity. In contrast, men in the factory were raised to a heroic status through their productivity, but also through their ability to respond to factory disasters. Recognising the heroism of male employees reasserted the masculinity of male workers within this environment. The physical demands of the factory strengthened spatial-gender relations;

⁵⁷ Daphne Spain, 'Gendered Spaces and Women's Status', *Sociological Theory*, 11:2 (1993), 137-151 (p. 140).

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* p. 145.

the heroic productivity of workers was intersected by behavioural expectations of masculinity and femininity.

The City on Fire

The city on fire was one of the most iconic spaces within London during the Second World War; it was a landscape created directly by changes in modern warfare. As bombs fell on the capital, London's streets and buildings were transformed into spaces of destruction and danger. Aerial bombardment brought the front line directly to the Home Front. As such, London's inhabitants were required to navigate life within this environment, whether it was through evacuating the city, sheltering during times of imminent danger, or taking an active role in protecting and defending the city and its population. Notably, the city on fire was specific to periods of bombardment. It was a temporal space produced by the destructive nature of aerial warfare. The way that civilian behaviour was constructed and represented within this environment was central to shaping notions of civilian heroism. As previously discussed, the factory created opportunities for heroism through the way that civilians were able to demonstrate their productivity and endurance. However, ideals of heroism which surrounded individuals in the blitzed and burning city were multifaceted; they were shaped according to an individual's role and responsibilities, and through active engagement with the danger brought by bombardment. Indeed, central to constructions of heroism within the blitzed and burning city was the way that individuals managed and responded to the fires caused by bombardment. The city on fire was a space of protection. Fires were a threat to not only life, but also to property and livelihoods; as such, civilians who responded to this threat were celebrated for their role in protecting the city. As this discussion illustrates, the relationship between the civilian and the city is central to understandings of wartime heroism. As bombardment created fires throughout the capital, it also created the

opportunity for civilians to be positioned as the heroic protectors of the city and its inhabitants. Therefore, the city on fire was a space in which individuals could display their heroism through the protection of people and buildings.

For civilians who remained in the capital, the dangers and destruction of the burning city were inescapable. After a year of relative peace, the 7th September marked the first night of continuous bombardment, and a distinct change in the nature of enemy attack. Whilst Britain had sustained sporadic attack before this date, the 7th September marked the first of fifty-seven consecutive nights of bombing. London's cityscape was transformed by the devastation brought by bombardment. High explosive and incendiary bombs rained down on the capital, igniting homes, offices and workplaces; flames transformed the city into a raging inferno. This new landscape of war prompted action; the Civil Defence and Emergency Services played a particularly crucial role in managing levels of destruction in this new battlefield. While the fire service and fire watchers fought to control the spread of fire, Wardens ushered locals to safety and reported incidents, the Ambulance Service attended to the injured, and rescue parties searched through the rubble for survivors. Equally, ordinary civilians were tasked with continuing daily life as the city was bombed around them.

Throughout the war, the blitzed and burning city was presented as an environment which tested the courage and endurance of its people. The work of London's Civil Defence and Emergency Services were frequently praised in the press and media for their role in protecting the city and its inhabitants from danger. During the war, a narrative developed around these individuals which centred upon the expectation that the services would fulfil their duty as the guardians and protectors of the city and its people. This message was particularly emphasised in the 1940 Ministry of Information film *London Can Take It!* which was initially made for an American audience, and the later *Britain*

Can Take It!, which was slightly amended to suit a domestic audience.⁵⁹ The film paid particular tribute to the civilians who were part of what the narrator Quentin Reynold's described as, 'the greatest civilian army ever to be assembled', individuals who changed into the uniform of their service after their normal working day to protect the city from the German bombers.⁶⁰ Whilst the later adaption of the film was directed at celebrating the fortitude displayed by the whole nation, the feats of Londoners remained central to both versions. The film was widely received by the press as accurately depicting the reality faced by cities on the Home Front. Indeed, a writer for the *Western Daily Press* claimed that, 'This film is stark realism – not imagination – and was taken during actual air raids. It is a glowing tribute to the Civil Defence workers who defy bombs and shrapnel to quell fires and help in rescue work.'⁶¹ The film emphasised that while everyday civilians remained defiant, the true heroes of Britain's cities were the workers of Civil Defence and the Emergency Services. The narrator reminded viewers that 'the people's army of volunteers is ready, they are the ones who are really fighting this war, the firemen, the air raid wardens, the ambulance drivers...brokers, clerks, peddlers by day, they are heroes by night.'⁶² Through actively facing danger, these individuals were represented as heroic; in defying the hazards caused by bombardment the Civil Defence and Emergency Services were celebrated for their calmness, efficiency and, as Reynolds put it, their 'surging spirit of courage.'⁶³

The courage displayed by civilians under bombardment, and particularly the Civil Defence and Emergency Services, was echoed across all strands of the press and media. Radio in particular provided a vital platform where these notions could be communicated to the public. As Ian Whittington notes, broadcasts guided listeners' involvement in the

⁵⁹ IWM Film, COI 943, 'London Can Take It', GPO Film Unit, 1940.

IWM Film, COI 944, 'Britain Can Take It', GPO Film Unit, 1940.

⁶⁰ IWM Film, COI 944, 'Britain Can Take It', GPO Film Unit, 1940.

⁶¹ 'Britain Can Take It', *Western Daily Press*, 21 October 1940, p. 2.

⁶² IWM Film, COI 944, 'Britain Can Take It', GPO Film Unit, 1940.

⁶³ Ibid.

war; they addressed official politics and information, and connected with the frustrations, confusions and dangers experienced by the average Briton.⁶⁴ As aerial bombardment exposed civilians to the dangers of the battlefield, the radio provided an outlet for a community of listeners to hear about the feats of the nation's civilian army. For example, in his radio broadcast to the British people on 15th November 1942, Home Secretary Herbert Morrison recounted the nine months of the blitz and praised the unity and common faith displayed by the 'men and women, boys and girls; Civil Defence workers and citizens, firemen and fireguards.'⁶⁵ The broadcast collectively praised the British people for 'carrying on unbeaten, full of work and fight.'⁶⁶ Radio broadcasts which praised the courage and endurance of civilians in both London and across the nation served a powerful purpose. As Whittington suggests, the radio was a particularly central mode of communication during wartime; as rates of listening increased, the radio proved an effective medium at binding the public together.⁶⁷ Broadcasts created an awareness of simultaneous and united action, regardless of the proximity or spatial distribution of listeners.⁶⁸ Through documenting how the Home Front population were responding to the dangers of bombardment, a discourse was created which was suggestive of shared encounters and shared endurance. Importantly, on screen and on the radio, audiences were reminded of the commonality of experience under bombardment.

Constructions of heroism centred upon the notion that civilians were serving in the front line, in a comparable manner to the armed forces serving overseas. War wrecked London's landscape in a way which created physical parallels to a warzone, as such, civilians became the combatants of the Home Front. Within the city on fire, the threat of

⁶⁴ Ian Whittington, *Writing the Radio War: Literature, Politics, and the BBC, 1939-1945* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018) <<https://bl.idls.org.uk/accessnow/start.html>> [Accessed: January 2020] 20.4

⁶⁵ LHA, Herbert S. Morrison, 'You, the People', *The Listener*, 19 November 1942, 28:723, p. 647.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Whittington, *Writing the Radio War*, <<https://bl.idls.org.uk/accessnow/start.html>> [Accessed: January 2020] 38.1

⁶⁸ Ibid.

danger and the responsibility to protect the nation enabled civilian combatants to engage with traditional notions of soldierly conduct during periods of conflict. In many ways, the bombardment of the Home Front, which altered the spatial dimensions of the battlefield, refashioned the identity of civilians. As civilians were recognised as combatants in their own right, they were also recognised for their role in the defence of the nation. The connection between danger and wartime identity was addressed by J.B. Priestley on 8th September 1940 during his Sunday night BBC 'Postscripts' radio broadcast. Significantly, Priestley stressed how sharing and responding to danger had renegotiated the identity of civilians during wartime.

At least we are sharing such danger as there is, and are not leaning back watching all our young men wither away. Strictly speaking, we're no longer civilians... We see now, when the enemy bombers come roaring at us at all hours, and it's our nerve versus his, that we're not really civilians any longer but a mixed lot of soldiers – machine-minding soldiers, milkmen and postmen soldiers, housewife and mother soldiers – and what a gallant corps that is – and even broadcasting soldiers.⁶⁹

Notably, Priestley captured how the dangers of the blitzed city were fundamental to the creation of a combatant identity which surrounded civilians, Civil Defence and the Emergency Services. Importantly, constructing civilians as combatants associated them with a wider communal identity of a nation at war; of a group of people willing to display heroic endurance in the fight for victory. The notion of the civilian soldier grew in meaning as London's landscape became increasingly akin to a battlefield. During periods of bombardment, photographers including Herbert Mason, captured the changes to London's cityscape. Iconic images of the blitz such as Mason's photograph of St. Pauls

⁶⁹ Hanson, *Priestley's Wars*, p. 260.

emerging unharmed from clouds of smoke were viewed by *Daily Mail* readers across the nation.⁷⁰ Images of destruction appeared in national and local newspapers and drew attention to the destruction and danger caused by modern warfare. These images included damage to familiar landmarks, or destruction to homes and offices.⁷¹ Moreover, these images highlighted how in wartime, cities such as London, experience the greatest levels of destruction due to the close proximity of buildings. During periods of bombardment, it was rare for only one building to be destroyed; aerial attack created the potential for whole streets or neighbourhoods to be demolished. In November 1940, *The Illustrated London News* published images of the damage sustained to the North Bastion of the Tower of London, as well as bomb damage to the famous 17th century Christopher Wren Church, St. Clements Danes, in Westminster.⁷² These pictures further connected the physicality of conflict with the lives and experiences of Londoners. As Nigel Thrift notes, space cannot be separated from time; spaces are backdrops to specific moments in time.⁷³ As such, spaces cannot be separated from the human experience. The combatant identity of Londoners was not only shaped through displays of defiance and endurance, it was also fashioned through the physical changes to the cityscape. It is therefore important to recognise that London's bombed and burning cityscape forged the wartime identity of civilians within it. As Thrift further describes, bodies are part of a complex 'spatial dance' with other bodies, things and places, and therefore spaces are central in shaping human encounters and human identity.⁷⁴ Temporal spaces, such as the city on fire, transformed the civilian into a national defender. Constructions of heroism centred upon the expectation that individuals, and particularly those working in the services, would fulfil

⁷⁰ 'War's Greatest Picture: St Paul's Stands Unharmed in the Midst of the Burning City', *Daily Mail*, 31 December 1940, p. 1.

⁷¹ 'London Bombed Again, Glare Light the City Sky', *Daily Herald*, 26 August 1940, p. 1.

⁷² 'Our London Office Bombed, Carries On', *Daily Record*, 15 October 1940, p. 2.

⁷³ 'Two Gems of London Bombed: The Tower and St. Clement Danes' *Illustrated London News*, 16 November 1940, p. 613.

⁷⁴ Nigel Thrift, 'Space', *Theory, Culture and Society*, 23 (2006), 139-146 (p. 142).

⁷⁵ Thrift, 'Space: The Fundamental Stuff of Human Geography', pp. 95-107 (p. 103).

their responsibilities as guardians of the capital. Indeed, against the backdrop of bombardment, ideals of wartime heroism were shaped through notions of collective courage and shared risk.

However, within this environment of the city on fire, heroic identities emerged which favoured particular groups of workers, notably individuals in the fire service. In 1938, under the Air Raid Precautions scheme, the Auxiliary Fire Service (A.F.S.) was created to support the existing peacetime service. By 1941, the A.F.S. and existing local fire services were united to form the National Fire Service (N.F.S.) to create a centrally controlled organisation with standardised training and equipment.⁷⁵ By 1941, there were around 80,000 full time and 150,000 part time members, a number which remained steady until the end of the war.⁷⁶ Whilst men and women were recruited into the service, to work on pump crews, to work at communication centres, run mobile canteen vans and act as drivers and dispatch riders, only men were tasked with fighting fires. Firemen in particular were surrounded with a heroic identity which set them apart from, and above, other individuals in Civil Defence and the Emergency Services. Whilst personnel in Civil Defence and the Emergency Services were all credited with acting heroically, it was firemen who dominated constructions of the heroic ideal within the city on fire. Yet, as Linsey Robb has explained, this was not the case at the beginning of the war as firemen were in fact far distanced from the masculine ideal.⁷⁷ It was not until the bombing of British cities that perceptions of firemen changed, as the dangers they faced and the sacrifices they made became comparable to the sacrifices made by the military.⁷⁸ As Robb notes, it was the dangers faced by the fire service that enabled them to become the ideal

⁷⁵ BPA, 2995.01, 'The Birth of a Service', Pathé Pictures Ltd., c.1939-1945.
<<https://www.britishpathe.com/video/the-birth-of-a-service/query/The+Birth+of+a+Service>> [Accessed: February 2017]

⁷⁶ Robb, *Men at Work*, p. 77.

⁷⁷ Linsey Robb, 'The Front Line: Firefighting in British Culture 1939-1945', *Contemporary British History*, 29: 2 (2014), 179-198 (p. 182).

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* p. 185.

symbol for the ‘people’s war’.⁷⁹ Significantly, the nature of bombardment altered the relationship between the fire service and wartime participation; as London was engulfed in flames, the role and responsibilities of the fire service grew. Indeed, Robb’s study of the working man in British culture between 1939 and 1945, provides extensive analysis of the cultural portrayal of the fire service in wartime and reveals how, during periods of bombardment, men in the fire service were positioned as heroes separate from the rest of the Civil Defence structure.⁸⁰ However, more can be said on the connection between the construction of heroic identities and the engagement with spaces of danger. Thus, through adopting a spatial analysis, this work will build upon current studies of fire service heroism to reveal how heroic identities were fashioned in relation to the bombed and burning cityscape and through behavioural expectations within this environment.

Indeed, the dangers of the burning city, which were presented as akin to the front line, particularly facilitated the construction of heroism within the fire service. Notably, the destruction created by aerial bombardment created a temporal environment in which the fire service were recognised for courage and bravery whilst performing their duty. For the fire service, the battle against the flames created an environment which heightened the heroic endeavours of male firefighters. As Shane Ewen notes, the work of the wartime fire service sharply contrasted with the work of the peacetime service; wartime firefighting demanded co-ordinated tactics, strategic management of resources, and prioritisation of which fires to tackle first.⁸¹ Before the blitz, professional firemen had never faced such extensive fires, yet, under bombardment they had to fight the flames whilst dodging bombs and work throughout the night without rest or refreshment.⁸² The work of fire brigades during periods of bombardment featured heavily across a spectrum

⁷⁹ Ibid. p. 195.

⁸⁰ Robb, *Men at Work*, p. 279.

⁸¹ Shane Ewen, *Fighting Fires: Creating the British Fire Service, 1800–1978* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) p. 132.

⁸² Ibid.

of wartime media, most notably, in film, newspapers, and visual culture. During the period of the blitz between 1940 and 1941, newspapers including *The War Illustrated* bolstered perceptions of fire service heroism through publishing regular articles which commented on the bravery of the service. The danger of fighting fires was particularly stressed. Articles placed particular emphasis on highlighting the bravery displayed by the service in response to danger. In September 1940, shortly after the Blitz had commenced, a headline declared, 'Firefighters did a man's job in the battle of London.'⁸³ The article stressed how, whilst at work fighting fires, men in the London Fire Brigade and Auxiliary Fire Service were bombed and machine gunned, but remained at their posts. Later in January 1941 it was reported, 'Let us now praise those who fought the fire – They served like heroes in London's front line.'⁸⁴ The article particularly stressed how war had altered the dangers and responsibilities of the service; the inferno of the city had created a temporal space in which individuals could be praised and recognised for behaviour that was not considered particularly heroic before the blitz.

Recognition of the heroism of the fire service centred upon the way that war had changed the nature of firefighting. As a writer for the *War Illustrated* detailed, in wartime, the fireman has to extinguish fires, to rescue, to brave fumes with tons of high explosives descending upon himself and the burning building around him... He has to work for long periods without relief.⁸⁵ As Angus Calder notes, during periods of enemy attack, firemen work longer hours than other Civil Defenders, such as wardens and rescue men.⁸⁶ Moreover, as Robb describes, while the civilian population were encouraged to shelter during air raids, 'the men of the fire services were duty bound to head out into a world of burning buildings and falling bombs'.⁸⁷ Indeed, their work bought them into direct

⁸³ 'Firefighters did a man's job in the battle of London', *The War Illustrated*, 20 September 1940, p. 293.

⁸⁴ 'Let us now praise those who fought the fire', *The War Illustrated*, 17 January 1941, pp. 46-47.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* p. 46.

⁸⁶ Calder, *The People's War*, p. 208.

⁸⁷ Robb, *Men at Work*, p. 257.

contact with hazards which heightened the risk of injury and death. Similarly, during a radio broadcast in September 1941, Herbert Morrison detailed how war had altered the demands of firefighting,

The fall of high explosives means not merely that fire-fighting in war is an enormously bigger job than in peace, but that it presents entirely different problems. Mains may be destroyed, street basins hit, hoses severed...We cannot replace [these] during the raids – nothing can do that – but by these and other means we can enlarge the firemen's resources, and put off, perhaps indefinitely, the moment the very worst blitz deprives him utterly of water...Britain will have a force whose organisation and resources are a match for the splendid valour of its officers and men.⁸⁸

War had not only altered the responsibilities of the service; it also altered the spatial demands of the profession. Under bombardment, urban fires tested the efficiency of the fire-service. As fire was used as a weapon of war, to disrupt industrial production and destroy civilian morale, the responsibility and importance of the fire service grew.⁸⁹

The ability of the firemen to operate efficiently and effectively despite these new challenges did not go unnoticed. In February 1941, *Picture Post* documented the heroic work undertaken by the fire service.⁹⁰ An image of firemen featured on the front cover of the issue, and continued across a six-page feature. The article particularly emphasised how fighting the battle of the flames had positioned firemen as central to the fight for victory. Throughout the article, images of firemen at work reiterated to readers the

⁸⁸ LHA, 'Britain Shall Not Burn: Broadcast by the Rt. Hon. Herbert Morrison on September 14th 1941', *The Listener*, 18 September 1941, 26:662, p. 402.

⁸⁹ Greg Bankoff, Uwe Lübken and Jordan Sand 'Introduction', in Greg Bankoff, Uwe Lübken, Jordan Sand (eds.), *Flammable Cities: Urban Conflagration and the Making of the Modern World* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2012), pp. 3-22 (p. 12).

⁹⁰ 'Fire Fighters', *Picture Post*, 01 February 1941, 10:5, p. 9.

dangers experienced by the service. Contrasts between shadowy and bright black and white images revealed the close proximity between personnel and walls of fire. Readers were reminded that when on duty, '[a fireman's] stock in trade is his courage. His armament is his hose.'⁹¹ An amateur film which captured the wartime work of Morden and Merton Auxiliary Fire Service, also stressed how bombardment had altered the nature of the profession.⁹² The opening scenes showed personnel waiting, preparing and planning for bombardment; later scenes revealed the centrality of firemen in fighting the flames. The film further emphasised the valiant work of firemen during bombardment by including images of the February 1941 issue of *Picture Post* which was dedicated to celebrating the service. The way that war had transformed the environment of the Home Front, and had altered the nature of firefighting, also featured in a documentary *London Fire Raids 29th-30th December 1940*, produced by the London Fire Service Film Unit and The Pathé Gazette.⁹³ The film detailed how on the 29th and 30th December 1940, firemen experienced particularly demanding conditions as they battled with the 'raging inferno' within the City of London. Moreover, the narrator reminded viewers how shortages of water and high winds created dangerous and challenging conditions for the fire service, as such the service were faced with fierce cutting winds which 'caused streams of sparks to fly among the fighters and dense volumes of acrid smoke almost choke them.'⁹⁴ The risks of working within this environment heightened the heroism of the service; firemen were placing their lives in danger to fulfil their duty. As Kristine Miller has noted, as they were 'faced with falling bombs, flying shrapnel, and gas and water main ruptures, firemen fought in the vanguard of a war waged on the British Home

⁹¹ Ibid. p. 11.

⁹² MHLSC, 'Merton & Morden Auxiliary Fire Service 1939-1941', Amateur Film, c.1939-1945

⁹³ IWM Film, LFB 53, 'London's Fire Raids 29th-30th December 1940', London Fire Brigade Film Unit and Pathé News, 1942.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

Front.⁹⁵ The city on fire altered the nature of firefighting and the way it was constructed in the public domain. Whereas in peacetime, firemen tackled distinct blazes, during the blitz, the fire service were tasked with battling infernos of a newfound intensity and power.

The hazardous and dangerous nature of the blitzed city was captured by many artists throughout the war. Their work served as an important visual representation of the threatening conditions firemen were expected to engage with, and thus supported associated ideals of heroism. Throughout the war, artists including Enid Abrahams, E. Boye Uden, Leonard Henry Rosoman, Paul Dessau, Bernard Hailstone, Norman Hepple, Rudolf Haybrook, and W. Matvyn Wright produced images depicting the fire service at war. Art ranged from posed portraits of individuals who had received decorations for their actions, to scenes which showed the danger of fighting the battle of the flames.⁹⁶ Whilst many of the artists who produced pieces were firemen themselves and as such did not necessarily represent their work as heroic, their art contributed towards the wider narrative of bravery and valour which surrounded the service. In many ways, art reinforced the heroic narrative which surrounded the work of the fire service during periods of bombardment. Paintings captured the emotion, danger and risk experienced within a specific moment, which otherwise may not have been depicted if communicated in words; and served as a visual interpretation of the human experience. This artwork was widely viewed by the general public. The first exhibition of firemen art was held in March 1941 at the Central School of Arts and Crafts in Kings Cross, and attracted 22,000 visitors.⁹⁷ Later in August 1941, the second exhibition of work was held at the Royal

⁹⁵ Kristine Miller, *British Literature of the Blitz: Fighting the People's War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) p. 96.

⁹⁶ For example, see: IWM, ART, LD 1356, 'G V Blackstone, GM, London Fire Force', Paul Dessau. IWM, ART, LD 1353, 'A House Collapsing on Two Firemen, Shoe Lane, London, Ec4', Leonard Rosoman.

⁹⁷ 'We Serve No. 11: The story of the firemen artists told by Mary Pitcairn', *N.F.S. Firewomen's Magazine No.29*, Nov-Dec 1943, p. 9.

Academy in Burlington House, Mayfair. The exhibition ran for four and a half weeks and attracted 64,404 visitors.⁹⁸ In total, seven exhibitions were organised through the war,⁹⁹ displaying work such as a piece entitled 'Knightrider Street' by Norman Hepple which was painted during a raid and as a result had cinders embedded into the canvas.¹⁰⁰ As Mary Pitcairn, in her review of the first two exhibitions described, 'they have raised the status of firemen in the eyes of the public; and have provided for all time a record of the havoc wrought by air raids, as well as the discipline, courage and heroism of the firemen themselves.'¹⁰¹ In 1942, *Fire and Water* was published as a literary equivalent to the Firemen Artists exhibitions. In the book, which consisted of 23 separate stories written by firemen themselves, the hazardous and dangerous nature of firefighting under bombardment was also captured. Philip Henderson recalled a night in the East End,

Volumes of livid smoke pour up from factories and warehouses; showers of sparks tossed from the housetops fly towards us like a swarm of yellow bees; even the road is alight with the whitish-green of newly fallen incendiaries. Overhead flares float down, breaking up and melting as they fall into the glare of their own gigantic candlelight. It is a repetition of a familiar nightmare.¹⁰²

In addition, William Sansom's chapter 'The Wall' encapsulated the dangerous and unpredictable nature of firefighting. He detailed the process of quelling fires, but also

⁹⁸ 'Fireman Artists Exhibition at the Royal Academy', *N.F.S. Firewomen's Magazine No.18*, Jan-Feb 1942, p. 10.

⁹⁹ The seven exhibitions were held on: March 1941, Firemen artists exhibition, Central School of Arts and Crafts. August 1941, Firemen Artists Exhibition, Royal Academy. May 1942, Joint Firemen Artists/Civil Defence Artists Exhibition, Cooling Gallery. August 1942, Firemen Artists Exhibition, Royal Academy. May 1943, Firemen Artists Exhibition, Rootes Showroom, Piccadilly. June 1944, Firemen Artists Exhibition, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. November 1944, Firemen Artists Exhibition, Royal Academy. For more information see: Anthony Kelly, *Firemen Artists 1940-45 'Heroes with grimy faces'* (Wellington: Halstar, 2013) p. 19.

¹⁰⁰ 'Firemen artists exhibit', *Chelsea News and General Advertiser*, 27 October 1944, p. 2.

¹⁰¹ 'We Serve No. 11: The story of the firemen artists told by Mary Pitcairn', *N.F.S. Firewomen's Magazine No.29*, Nov-Dec 1943, p. 10.

¹⁰² Philip Henderson, 'Dockland', in H.S. Ingram (ed.), *Fire and Water: An Anthology by members of the NFS* (Exeter: Firestorm Publications, 1992) pp. 166-170 (p. 166).

the hazards associated with such work. He wrote, ‘Very suddenly a long, rattling crack of bursting brick and mortar perforated the moment. And then the upper half of that five-story building heaved over towards us. It hung there, poised for a timeless second before rumbling down at us.’¹⁰³ Firemen, whether painters or novelists, did not construct their own actions as heroic. Instead, the city on fire formed a central feature of the way that firemen articulated and communicated their experiences. However, arguably this record of actively engaging with life threatening danger reinforced the wider heroic narrative which surrounded their work. As a writer for *The Scotsman* noted in a review of *Fire and Water*, ‘there is throughout the fine sincerity of men intent upon unselfish service.’¹⁰⁴ Moreover, another reviewer detailed, ‘These stories and sketches are one of the most heroic of our war services and as illuminating as any of the conflagrations the authors have had to deal with – and much more welcome.’¹⁰⁵

These works connected the danger experienced within the blitzed and burning city with the human experience; they highlighted how heroic behaviour in wartime was directly linked to landscapes of danger. As Anthony Kelly notes, paintings by firemen artists of often depicted recurring images of crews racing to the scene of a fire, manoeuvring equipment, tackling flames, and exhausted after an incident.¹⁰⁶ They also captured the dangers firemen were exposed to whilst conducting their work.¹⁰⁷ Paintings reflected the emotion and sensation of a lived experience.¹⁰⁸ On the Home Front, heroic identities were shaped in the changing metropolis. As Xiangming Chen et al state, places, such as cities, fulfil important social needs through shaping notions of identity, community and security. Whilst some places provide environments in which people

¹⁰³ William Sansom, ‘The Wall’, in H.S. Ingram (ed.), *Fire and Water: An Anthology by members of the NFS* (Exeter: Firestorm Publications, 1992) pp. 120-123 (p. 121).

¹⁰⁴ ‘N.F.S. Anthology’, *The Scotsman*, 31 December 1942, p. 7.

¹⁰⁵ ‘All Firefighters’, *Aberdeen Weekly Journal*, 24 December 1942, p. 2.

¹⁰⁶ Anthony Kelly, *Firemen Artists 1940-45 ‘Heroes with grimy faces’* (Halstar: Wellington, 2013) p. 27.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.* p. 40.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.* p. 27.

thrive, other places deprive inhabitants of a safe and secure life.¹⁰⁹ Indeed, the aerial bombardment of London, which threatened the safety of its inhabitants, heightened the role of the fire service as their task to protect the city grew. The heroism of fire service personnel was constructed around the prevalence of fire and its threat to human life. As such, the fire service adopted a soldierly role as the nation's first line of defence as they found themselves in direct opposition with fires created by the enemy. In a comparable way that armed forces fought the enemy, firemen waged war by defeating the fires created by them. Therefore, popular representations of heroism stemmed from how firemen led the way in the battle fought across London. The behaviour of firemen in response to danger positioned them as the ultimate heroes of the blitzed city; they represented the pinnacle of Home Front heroism.

The burning city was also a space of heightened masculinity, where fire service personnel were constructed as the masculine heroes of the Home Front. This environment of heightened masculinity was defined by the risk posed to personnel; fighting fires could result in lasting physical injuries as firemen were at risk of burns, smoke inhalation, electrocution, being crushed from falling masonry and injuries from gas explosions. This physically dangerous environment was constructed as a masculine domain, largely due to its parallels with the battle front, and the task of those within it to protect the nation from its dangers. As such, constructions of heroism also centred upon ideals of the masculine protector. As Shane Ewen has described, the courageous actions of firemen enabled them to be represented in a different way to other sectors of Civil Defence.¹¹⁰ This was predominantly since their work positioned them as soldiers of the Home Front; individuals exposed to the greatest threat to life, and assigned the greatest responsibility

¹⁰⁹ Chen, Orum, and Paulsen, *Introduction to Cities*, pp. 4-5.

¹¹⁰ Shane Ewen, 'A Service Forged in the Flames', in Mark Clapson and Peter J. Larkham (eds.), *The Blitz and its Legacy: Wartime Destruction to Post-War Reconstruction* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), pp. 47-60 (p. 48).

to protect. Indeed, depictions of the burning city reinforced the masculinity of the service. Art and literature, which generated graphic and vivid portrayals of the city on fire, exposed the public to the traditionally masculine nature of this environment. Indeed, fighting fires created by the enemy positioned firemen as equal the armed forces; both were subjected to extreme danger in the line of duty.

In particular, wartime documentary films, emphasised the heroic masculinity of the fire service. Indeed, films including Humphrey Jennings *Fires Were Started* (1943), which recorded the work of the fire service, constructed the experiences of the service in a way which celebrated the manly heroism of workers.¹¹¹ In the film, a brigade fights to prevent flames spreading across their district. Yet, it also communicated an important propaganda message about duty and sacrifice. Towards the end of the film, one firefighter dies whilst on duty, and in doing so portrays soldier-like heroism as he is willing to sacrifice his life for his nation. As Ewen has further described, wartime portrayals of blitz firefighting such as in *Fires Were Started* depict firemen as embodying a cohesive identity, performing a single task and fulfilling a common goal.¹¹² Representations of the fire service in the press and on film embodied notions of heroic masculinity, centred upon collective endurance, courage and bravery. Indeed, this portrayal was shaped by cultural expectations of gender in wartime. During wartime, men traditionally fulfilled the masculine role as protectors. Thus, through protecting their nation, firefighters were able to assert their masculinity. Similarly, *The Bells Go Down* (1943), released a few weeks after Jennings' documentary film, similarly depicted tragedy in the fire service, but more importantly acted as a testament to the bravery and endurance of male personnel.¹¹³ In *The Bells Go Down*, one fireman remains on duty, rather than returning home to check on his pregnant wife. As Corinna Peniston-Bird notes, through prioritising their wartime

¹¹¹ *Fires Were Started*, dir. Humphrey Jennings. (United Kingdom: Crown Film Unit, 1943)

¹¹² Ewen, 'A Service Forged in the Flames', pp. 47-60 (p. 56).

¹¹³ *The Bells Go Down*, dir. Basil Dearden. (United Kingdom: Ealing Studios, 1943)

responsibilities as firemen over anything else, even family, the characters within the documentary were presented as devoted to their role as the nation's protectors.¹¹⁴ Moreover, as Robb describes, it is telling that no equivalent films were produced to celebrate the work of other strands of ARP, the police, or the ambulance service.¹¹⁵ Instead, films which solely centred on men in the fire service raised their profile and contributed towards their celebrated status; these films created a heroic exclusivity, and reminded the public that no other behaviour could match that of the fire service.

Constructions of heroic masculinity within the fire service were further reinforced through real life stories of firemen who had placed themselves in danger in order to save others and had heroically battled with the dangers of the blitzed city. Stories which commended the heroism of firemen centred upon the way that individuals had disregarded the dangers of the burning city to perform their duty. For example, the story of Harry Errington, a London Auxiliary Fireman, highlighted the bravery and selflessness of personnel within the fire service. Errington saved the lives of two of his colleagues when the basement they were sheltering in was hit by a high explosive bomb. Although dazed and injured, Errington managed to rescue two of his colleagues from the basement. His behaviour was widely celebrated in the press, as the *Daily Mirror* noted, he was 'Hurt, [but] defied fire to save two pals'.¹¹⁶ Indeed, Errington's heroism centred upon his strength, but also his devotion and camaraderie towards his fellow firemen. Later in the war, the story of Frederick Davies further reiterated the heroic masculinity of the service. Davies was killed in 1945 whilst attempting to save two young girls from a burning building in Harlesden, North London. Although he managed to rescue both girls from the building, he later died in hospital from the severity of his burns. As the *Kensington Post*

¹¹⁴ Corinna Peniston-Bird, 'Were Fires Started? Exploring Gender in British Cinema of the Second World War', in Sam Edwards et al (eds.), *Histories on Screen: The Past and Present on Screen in Anglo-American Cinema and Television* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), pp. 81-102 (p. 90).

¹¹⁵ Robb, *Men at Work*, p. 233.

¹¹⁶ 'Hurt, defied fire to save two pals', *Daily Mirror*, 09 August 1941, p. 3.

detailed, ‘he lost his life in a gallant but unavailing attempt to rescue two children trapped by fire.’¹¹⁷ Indeed, understandings of Davies’ heroism were shaped through his engagement with danger and the way that he prioritised his responsibility as a member of the fire service over his own safety. The danger that fire posed to individuals within the burning city created an environment in which firemen were recognised for their soldier like heroism as they battled to overpower the fires created by the enemy. This soldier heroism, as Graham Dawson describes, centred on virtues of strength, courage and endurance.¹¹⁸ However, as firemen were also tasked with protecting the public, their heroic masculinity evolved away from notions of soldier heroism which centred on aggression, and towards notions of the heroic guardian of the Home Front. As Kristine Miller notes, through fighting fires on the front line of the People’s War, firemen stood out as the ‘gods among everyday heroes.’¹¹⁹ As the protectors and defenders of the Home Front, firemen embodied an ideal of heroic masculinity during periods of danger.

Yet the task afforded to firemen as protectors when the city was ablaze was not limited to the protection of people. Fire could destroy buildings as easily as it could destroy life. Indeed, central to the construction of firemen as masculine protectors was their role as protectors of architecture. Throughout the war, the government placed great importance upon preserving historic landmarks. Within London, many buildings were considered of national importance, including St. Paul’s Cathedral, the Houses of Parliament, Big Ben and Buckingham Palace; it was believed that any significant damage to them would damage the morale of Britain’s civilian population. As Philip Ziegler notes, ‘buildings as well as people enjoyed a talismanic significance.’¹²⁰ Indeed, protecting London’s infrastructure was as important as protecting its people. A writer for

¹¹⁷ ‘George Cross for Heroic Fireman’, *Kensington Post*, 06 February 1946, p. 3.

¹¹⁸ Dawson, *Soldier Heroes*, p. 1.

¹¹⁹ Miller, *British Literature of the Blitz*, p. 97.

¹²⁰ Ziegler, *London at War*, p. 165.

Mass Observation captured the aversion of seeing London burning, ‘We heard a number of bombs or guns and saw a red glow in the sky in the direction of the City – the idea of fire seemed to anger everyone much more than H.E.’¹²¹ In particular, St. Paul’s Cathedral symbolised the heart of London, and during the war developed into an icon of stability and endurance. In peacetime London’s cityscape symbolised national power, yet, the burning cityscape was symbolic of the destructive nature of modern warfare. As such, preserving St. Paul’s was of national importance. As Ziegler details, the fate of St. Paul’s during periods of bombardment was a perpetual concern.¹²² St. Paul’s symbolised the endurance of the British people, it was therefore critical for it to be protected. As Juliet Gardiner suggests, during the war, St. Paul’s became a symbol of London’s resistance; as a result, few buildings were guarded as vigilantly.¹²³ The symbolic nature of St. Paul’s was captured by J.B. Priestley on 15th September 1940 during one of his wartime ‘Postscripts’ broadcasts:

The other night, when a few fires were burning so fiercely that half the sky was aglow, and the tall terraces around Portland Place were like pink palaces in the Arabian Nights, I saw the Dome and Cross of St. Paul’s silhouetted in sharpest black against the red flames and orange fumes, and it looked like an enduring symbol of reason and Christian ethics seen against the crimson glare of unreason and savagery.¹²⁴

London’s burning cityscape represented more than simply a nation at war; images of the burning city emphasised the cultural importance of protecting the city’s districts and areas of architectural importance. While, as Mark Connelly notes, fire was symbolic in wartime, it signified destruction, it was also symbolic of redemption and restoration. Fire

¹²¹ MOA, Diarist 5285, Image 34, 25 August 1940.

¹²² Ziegler, *London at War*, p. 122.

¹²³ Gardiner, *Wartime Britain*, pp. 360-362.

¹²⁴ Hanson, *Priestley’s Wars*, p. 263.

was constructed as something which created havoc, but which could be overcome.¹²⁵ The role of the fire service in protecting London's architecture from fire was reinforced in a 1941 London County Council publication, *Fire Over London: The Story of the London Fire Service 1940-1941*. In the publication, which honoured the courage and work of the service, emphasis was placed upon recognising the role of firemen in the protection of London's buildings.¹²⁶ Through a dramatic narrative, readers were informed of the battle to save St. Paul's from falling bombs and nearby buildings that were ablaze. It described, 'Flames reached out across the street, licking close to the venerable stone. Firemen on ladders and on the ground worked furiously. Hour after hour they slaved to hurl back that advancing wall of fire. But hurl it back they did, and after a battle lasting hours they cheered to know that St Paul's was saved.'¹²⁷ Notably, the heroic identity of the fire service was not only based on their role as protectors of people; protecting culturally significant landmarks and buildings was also fundamental to their heroism during periods of bombardment.

As such, protecting iconic landmarks across the capital was fundamental to protecting the architectural identity of the city. The importance of protecting London's buildings was reiterated in the Ministry of Information publication *Front Line 1940-1941*. In the text the city was anthropomorphised, through anatomical comparisons of gas lines and cables, with nerves, veins, muscles and tissues.¹²⁸ In humanising the city, it became a landscape which required protection. Indeed, as David Matless argues in his exploration of *Landscape and Englishness*, wartime texts which humanised the city, such as *Front Line*, reinforced that the city was a body to be cherished and protected.¹²⁹ Although

¹²⁵ Connelly, *We Can Take It*, pp. 132-134.

¹²⁶ William Sansom, *Fire Over London: The Story of the London Fire Service 1940-41* (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1941) p. 18.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ Ministry of Information, *Front Line 1940-1941. The Official Story of the Civil Defence in Britain* (London: HMSO, 1942) p. 39. cited by Matless, *Landscape and Englishness*, p. 257.

¹²⁹ Matless, *Landscape and Englishness*, p. 257.

firewatchers also played a large role in protecting the spread of fire, through extinguishing small fires before they had the chance to take hold, the heroic identity of the city's protectors remained firmly centred upon the Fire Service. As Dorothy Barton observed during her morning commute to work after a raid, it was the fire service who were particularly admired after a night of bombardment.

Quite spontaneously, the office workers burst into a cheer and several shook hands with the firemen as they passed. I was in tears as I walked along, it was such an emotional moment. I don't think that anyone should ever forget that firemen were heroes during the entire war, especially during the Blitz.¹³⁰

Purposeful combat within the burning city raised the heroic status of the fire service. Similarly, as one fireman recalled, at the end of their shift, whilst driving through the city with blackened faces and filthy clothes, they were met with looks of wonder from men and women heading to work.¹³¹ Indeed, protecting the city and fighting the battle of the flames transformed firemen in figures of collective emotional investment. As Geoffrey Cubitt notes, collective emotional investment refers to the way that society views a group of individuals or a person and holds them in high esteem.¹³² Figures of emotional investment hold shared meaning, and are symbolic of achievement and potential. Undoubtedly, fighting fires embodied the height of Home Front heroism. In contrast to the work of firewatchers, men in the fire service were exposed to greater risk and afforded greater responsibility in protecting the city when fires became uncontrollable. Firemen were tasked with protecting the city's infrastructure. Indeed, protecting London's architecture helped to legitimise their masculinity on the Home Front; as the engineers

¹³⁰ Pam Schweitzer (ed.), *Londoners Remember Living Through the Blitz* (London: Age Concern Publications) p. 20. cited by Gardiner, *Wartime Britain*, p. 364.

¹³¹ Henderson, 'Dockland', pp. 166-170 (p. 170).

¹³² Cubitt, 'Introduction', pp. 1-26 (p. 3).

and builders of the city, it was vital for men to protect it. Therefore, the heroic identity which surrounded firemen, and set them above other members of Civil Defence and the Emergency Services, was concreted in the multifaceted nature of their role as protectors; saving Britain's urban landscape was equivalent to saving the spirit of the people.

In contrast, women who worked as telephonists, despatch riders, drivers or canteen workers in the fire service were portrayed as supporting the feats of male firefighters.¹³³ As Robb has argued, the depiction of women within the fire service served to reinforce, rather than challenge gender expectations.¹³⁴ While stories of women who assisted fighting fires were infrequent, they did occur. For example, in the *National Fire Service Firewomen's Magazine* in 1943 it was reported how Zoë Wilkin was no ordinary firewomen. The article claimed that she was the 'first woman fireman in England', she could drive any vehicle, in both day or night, and had attended all the fires in her district, sharing dangers with her fellow firemen and showing a courage equal to theirs.¹³⁵ Significantly, the article suggested that Wilkin's heroism was more than a match for the warrior women of Greek mythology, or the renowned Russian sniper of the Second World War, Ludmilla Pavlechenko.¹³⁶ Similarly, in 1941, reports were published across national and local newspapers documenting how two members of the London women's A.F.S., Bridget Gibson Harris and Joan Winifred Hobson, had performed firefighting duties.¹³⁷ The *Daily Mirror* reported how 'Two members of the women's AFS went into action as

¹³³ IWM, PST, 13894, 'Women You are Needed in the National Fire Service', c.1939-1945.

<<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/31813>> [Accessed: March 2017]

IWM, PST 13877, 'Serve by his Side for Victory', c.1939-1945.

<<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/25117>> [Accessed: March 2017]

¹³⁴ Robb, 'The Front Line: Firefighting in British Culture 1939-1945', 179-198 (p.194).

¹³⁵ 'Our Other Lives No. XXV. Firewomen Zoë Wilkin', *N.F.S. Firewomen's Magazine No.26*, May-June 1943, p. 7.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Reports of their actions featured in local presses including:

'Trapped Girls Saved', *Western Mail*, 02 August 1941, p. 3.

'Air Raid Heroines Fought Blaze, Gain Medals', *Dundee Courier*, 02 August 1941, p. 2.

'Heroines Rewarded', *Aberdeen Evening Express*, 02 August 1941, p. 4.

'In Brief', *Aberdeen Weekly Journal*, 07 August 1941, p. 2.

'Roof Ordeal in Blitz', *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 02 August 1941, p. 3.

firefighters'.¹³⁸ Hobson was reported to have fought flames from a rooftop for three and a half hours despite falling bombs, whilst Harris had supported her from the ground. Importantly, these accounts of female firefighting recognised that women were acting outside the norms of traditional female behaviour. The burning city was an environment of destruction, danger and devastation; and as such, traditionally a masculine space during periods of conflict. Behaviour within the burning city was circumscribed by gendered expectations of masculine and feminine conduct in response to enemy action. As Doreen Massey has argued, gender relations structure understandings of space and place and the human experience within them.¹³⁹ Therefore, battlefield landscapes, such as the city on fire, whilst creating new opportunities for heroism, also carried an expectation of heroic behaviour. Firefighting within the burning city centred upon masculine conduct and the notion of the male protector. Therefore, whilst stories of female firefighting recognised how women could perform courageously, the extraordinary and unexpected nature of their behaviour was also emphasised; readers were reminded how firefighting was traditionally a masculine pursuit and an uncommon occurrence for women.

Whilst women rarely fought fires as members of the Fire Service, the duties associated with fire-watching enabled women to move within the burning city and provided them with the opportunity to be recognised for heroic conduct. While fire-watching was initially voluntary, the number of fire-watchers required to guard London's skyline was so great that it became compulsory.¹⁴⁰ Throughout the war, businesses and local communities were encouraged to organise fire watching parties to ensure that rooftops and buildings were protected against the fires caused by falling bombs. As the number of individuals performing fire watching duties grew, the service became known as the Fire Guard. Fire Guard duties involved putting out incendiaries and preventing

¹³⁸ 'He got his experience – and G.M.', *Daily Mirror*, 02 August 1941, p.3.

¹³⁹ Massey, *Space, Place and Gender*, p. 182.

¹⁴⁰ Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013) p. 363.

small fires from spreading. Significantly, both men and women were encouraged to work as fire watchers. This work within the Fire Guard service created an expectation that women would actively engage with the dangers caused by bombardment. *The Midnight Watch*, a wall sheet poster series published at intervals throughout the war, captured the work of the Fire Guard. The posters provided tips on extinguishing small fires along with detailing the work of Fire Guard groups across the country. However, they also drew attention to the behaviour of women within the burning city. In the second issue of *The Midnight Watch* particular attention was given to the work of a female fire watcher in London. The headline of the article exclaimed, 'Roof Top Heroine of the Blitz'.¹⁴¹ Notably, the article, which commended the bravery of a female fire watcher, was written by a fireman of the East End of London, Station Officer George Switzer. Switzer recalled how on a night where fire bombs were falling in showers, a female fire watcher singlehandedly battled with the continuous flow of fires. He described, 'To this day that woman is an outstanding figure in my memories of those nights. Equipped with only a torch, steel helmet and indomitable courage, she stood unfaltering at her Post.'¹⁴² Similarly, in 1944 *The Midnight Watch* reported how male and female Fire Guards had successfully managed a fire until assisted by the National Fire Service. Once relieved by the fire service they remained at the scene providing help to all branches of Civil Defence Work. Mr E.A. Baker, the N.F.S. Divisional Officer proclaimed that this example, 'justifies my faith that when put to a real test the Fire Guards can put forth superb efforts to assist us in our common aim to never again allow London to suffer an ordeal by fire.'¹⁴³ It seems notable that approval of the work of female fire guards came from the perspective of male personnel within the Fire Service. Arguably, this praise suggested that the masculinity which surrounded the fire service was not threatened by the heroic actions of

¹⁴¹ TNA, INF 13/218, *The Midnight Watch* No.2., 'Roof Top Heroine of the Blitz'.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ TNA, INF 13/218, *The Midnight Watch* No.19., 'Trailer Pump Parties in Action in London: N.F.S. Congratulations of Magnificent Assistance'.

female fire watchers. Instead, within the city on fire, women were transformed through fire watching duties; fire watching enabled women to demonstrate their corporeal potential. However, in contrast to cases of female firefighting, stories of female fire watching were not constructed as particularly extraordinary; as members of the Fire Guard, it was a women's duty to protect the city against small fires. Recognition of heroic behaviour within the city on fire reveals that behaviour was understood in line with gender, occupation, expected duty, and landscapes of danger.

Therefore, the city on fire can be understood as an environment which both pushed the boundaries of expected gendered behaviour in wartime, but which also reinforced ideals of masculinity and femininity. Within this landscape, men in the fire service, who were tasked with responding to large scale fires, were surrounded with a heightened notion of heroism. Indeed, in *The Midnight Watch*, Fire Guards were reminded that their role was to prevent the spread of small fires, not to tackle large blazes; fighting large fires remained the duty of the Fire Service. Therefore, danger within the burning city reinforced wartime understandings of gender and citizenship during wartime. Official publications particularly stressed how the environment of the burning city was a space of gendered behaviour. For example, in *Fire Over London*, it was reinforced that whilst the story of the blitz was a story of collective courage and endurance, it was also a time in which each man, woman, boy or girl fulfilled a specific role. As the author, William Sansom, detailed,

The men fought fires unflinchingly. Young dispatch riders rode their motorcycles through the dark, crater torn streets, providing an invaluable liaison service between officers at fires and their control centres. Women drivers and canteen workers smiled their way through the worst areas. Women control-room telephonists stuck to their posts

after their stations had been largely demolished by direct hits or set on fire by incendiary bombs.¹⁴⁴

Readers were reminded that in the burning city, each individual had a demarcated role to fulfil. Notably, the city on fire created an environment in which the fire service could engage with established ideals of masculine heroism in wartime and adopt a position as the nation's protectors against the battle of the flames.

Constructions of heroism within the burning city centred firmly on cultural expectations of gender and war. Moreover, cultural expectations of gender and war also informed the way that civilians interacted with the city on fire. Using Julie Tuason's analysis of gender relations, public space and the private sphere, it is clear that ideals of gender play a key role in influencing how individuals interact with urban spaces.¹⁴⁵ Under enemy attack, the city experienced a spatial transformation. The bombardment of London brought danger to the streets of the capital, as such ideals of heroism within this environment centred upon notions of courage, bravery and physical endurance. Yet, whilst civilians, the Civil Defence and Emergency Services were recognised for their collective heroism during periods of bombardment, constructions of heroism particularly centred upon men in the fire service. In contrast to other sectors of Civil Defence and the Emergency Services, firemen were surrounded with an expectation that they would actively fight fires created by the enemy. Periods of bombardment, which were presented as parallel to the dangers faced by the military, enabled firemen to fulfil their duty as protectors of people and architecture; danger and fire changed the way that the fire service were perceived. Through their battle with the flames, firemen embodied ideals of Home Front as they fought to save their city and its people.

¹⁴⁴ Sansom, *Fire Over London*, p. 12.

¹⁴⁵ Julie A. Tuason, 'Public Space/Private Sphere: Gender Relations and Urban Park Development in the Progressive Era', in Bonj Szczygiel, Josephine Carubia and Lorraine Dowler (eds.), *Gendered Landscapes: An Interdisciplinary Exploration of Past Place and Space* (The Pennsylvania State University: The Centre for Studies in Landscape History, 2000) p. 139.

The Ambulance

The physical space of the ambulance was a unique medical space during the Second World War. Compared with the space of the hospital or first aid post, which were also medical spaces where heroic acts were performed, the ambulance was a mobile space where workers interacted with a multitude of environments. The ambulance was an enclosed space of caregiving, but also a moving object within the wider landscape of the city. As such, heroics occurred both inside and outside of the ambulance. Notably, war altered the nature of ambulance work, under bombardment the ambulance, as a space of caregiving was heightened. Within London, the requirements of the service caused the traditional heroic ideal to alter as women in the London Ambulance Service interacted with a range of environments. As such, this discussion considers how work in the ambulance service caused definitions of heroism to broaden across genders as engagement with danger influenced the way that heroism was constructed and framed. It will particularly focus on how the behaviour of women was represented as heroic within this space. Whilst the ambulance itself was an enclosed space where lives were saved, it operated within a wider space of destruction where people were injured or killed. It was a space of liminality between life and death, safety and danger. Thus, the individuals who engaged with the space of the ambulance also experienced the threats of the burning city, and as such, heroic identities were shaped which enabled individuals to behave in ways which were not expected of their gender. However, in contrast with the city on fire, the ambulance was less gendered; it was a space where women could be recognised for heroism alongside their male colleagues. Yet, as this section will illustrate, within this environment, behaviour was framed in a way which emphasised the primary role of female ambulance personnel as heroic caregivers.

The Ambulance Service was a central feature of the wartime Emergency Services. As part of preparations for Civil Defence a triage system of casualty services was established. This included, first aid parties, first aid posts, casualty clearing hospitals, and the creation of the Auxiliary Ambulance Service to support the work of the pre-existing London Ambulance Service. As it was feared that casualty figures would occur in large quantities once Britain was subjected to continuous aerial bombardment, significant emphasis was placed upon creating an efficient system to manage casualties.¹⁴⁶ An increase in numbers of personnel within the ambulance service was particularly important if casualties were to be successfully moved from the site of an incident to a location where they could receive medical care. As such, large numbers of individuals were recruited into the service to ensure that the medical services were sufficiently staffed.

Recruitment posters produced during the war encouraged individuals to volunteer for the service. Posters announced, ‘Women wanted as ambulance drivers’ and ‘Men over 30! London Volunteer Ambulance Service is now open to you!’ appealed to both men and women to work as drivers and attendants.¹⁴⁷ In such posters, the recruit takes centre stage; workers were depicted alongside their ambulance, ready, or readying themselves for action by pulling up their gloves. Indeed, the propagandist targeted civilians in prime physical fitness and constructed a narrative that the civilians engaging with this work were strong and able men and women. In addition, adverts appeared in local and national newspapers encouraging people to consider positions in the service. In 1939, an advert in the *West London Observer* called for ‘Ladies and Gentlemen’ to drive ambulances,¹⁴⁸ and

¹⁴⁶ Mike Brown, *Put That Light Out! Britain’s Civil Defence Services at War 1939-1945* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing Limited, 1999) p. 57.

¹⁴⁷ IWM, PST, 13858, ‘Women Wanted as Ambulance Drivers’, c. 1939-1945.

<<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/31794>> [Accessed: March 2017]

IWM, PST 13864, ‘Civil Defence. Women Wanted as Ambulance Drivers’, c.1939-1945.

<<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/3639>> [Accessed: March 2017]

IWM, PST, 13882, ‘Men Over 30! London Volunteer Ambulance Service is now open to you!’ c.1939-1945.

<<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/31806>> [Accessed: March 2017]

¹⁴⁸ ‘Motor Drivers’, *West London Observer*, 27 October 1939, p. 8.

in the same year *The Sunday Times* called for 'fearless women wanted without delay' to take up positions as ambulance drivers.¹⁴⁹

Yet, whilst the recruitment drive appealed to both men and women to join the service, the ambulance service developed into an organisation with a strong female presence. This was particularly the case in London. In April 1942, the *Northern Whig* detailed how, 'For a considerable time, women have been taking over the ambulances in England. In some districts, all the drivers are women, in London, as high a percentage as 70 has been reached.'¹⁵⁰ At Station 39, an Auxiliary Ambulance Station in Weymouth Mews, Marylebone, women formed over two thirds of the workforce.¹⁵¹ Similarly at Station 126, located in Invicta Road, Blackheath, the service consisted of a male to female ratio of 2:3.¹⁵² The casualty services as a whole, which included the ambulance service and first-aid post service, when compared with the ARP Services and National Fire Service, were the only services which had a greater number of full-time and part-time female than male recruits.¹⁵³ Newspaper articles, such as that published in *The Illustrated London News* in September 1939, reveal how the recruitment drive increasingly appealed to female recruits. The article particularly emphasised how women could contribute towards national service through work in the ambulance service. It especially appealed to women who were physically fit and knew how to drive a car.¹⁵⁴ However, it also advised readers that training would equip recruits with mechanical knowledge, a good geographical knowledge of London, including the location of hospitals, confidence with driving in gas masks, and first aid training.¹⁵⁵ Therefore, whilst the recruitment drive

¹⁴⁹ 'ARP, we want and we want now', *The Times*, March 24 1939, p. 23.

¹⁵⁰ 'Ambulance Drivers', *Northern Whig*, 01 April 1942, p. 3.

¹⁵¹ Angela Raby, *The Forgotten Service: Auxiliary Ambulance Station 39 Weymouth Mews* (London: Battle of Britain International Limited, 1999) pp. 122-123.

¹⁵² MOA, Diarist 5285, Image 1.

¹⁵³ 'Table: 3.10, Numbers Employed in the Civil Defence Services', in Peter Howlett, *Fighting with Figures: A Statistical Digest of the Second World War* (London: HMSO, 1995) p. 44.

¹⁵⁴ 'Women's Part in National Service: Ambulance Drivers Undergoing Training', *Illustrated London News*, 09 September 1939, p. 12.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

suggests that both men and women were employed in the service, in reality, a greater number of women worked as ambulance personnel. Indeed, it is important to question why recruitment posters did not emphasise the high female workforce. Though using Lucy Noakes' exploration of Civil Defence work and the challenges related to advertising jobs so that they appealed to both men and women, greater understanding is provided on the motives behind the recruitment of ambulance workers. As Noakes notes, the task of the propagandist was to construct work so that it appealed to both men and women in a way which did not overly emphasise feminine qualities and ensure that male workers continued to feel heroic and masculine.¹⁵⁶ By appealing to both men and women to join the service, the profession remained ungendered, as doing so could have affected the number of men willing to offer their services. Therefore, whilst both men and women were recruited, this discussion will particularly focus on women in the ambulance service and how their behaviour was understood and represented. In particular, a spatial analysis of wartime ambulance work reveals how the ambulance became an acceptable theatre for female heroism.

This was not the first time that ambulance work had brought women into contact with wartime conflict. During the First World War, women of the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry (FANY) served on the front lines; ambulance drivers worked under especially dangerous conditions, manoeuvring large vehicles, and negotiating hazardous conditions including ice packed roads, shell craters, unexploded ammunition and the debris of war.¹⁵⁷ The FANYs were established in 1907 as an elite women's yeomanry to provide first aid during times of war. As Janet Lee describes, they combined the masculine

¹⁵⁶ Noakes, "Serve to Save", 734-753 (p. 752).

¹⁵⁷ Janet Lee, 'FANY (First Aid Nursing Yeomanry) 'Other Spaces': towards an application of Foucault's heterotopias as alternate spaces of social ordering', *Gender, Place and Culture*, 16 (2009), 647-664 (p. 656).

identity of a military group with feminine notions of nursing care.¹⁵⁸ The work of the FANYs was significant during the First World War, as through their work in collecting the wounded, they established domestic sites within masculine spaces of bravery and valour.¹⁵⁹ Indeed, the role and responsibilities of FANY members, as Lee further explains, blurred the boundaries between traditionally gendered behaviours.¹⁶⁰ However, this blurring was complex. As such, FANYs moved within spaces which reflected femininity and domesticity, while at the same time they also displayed the physical strength, courage and stamina that was required of combat.¹⁶¹ As Lee notes, ‘in these ways the FANYs negotiated the gendered spatial arrangements of the battlefield through the practices of domesticity...subverting the boundaries of women’s normative space in war.’¹⁶² As Juliette Pattinson further suggests, as FANY’s travelled abroad and served their country through nursing, a new model of modern military femininity emerged.¹⁶³ As this discussion will illustrate, during the Second World War, work in the ambulance service enabled women to move once again into spaces of conflict, whilst remaining in an environment associated with care and femininity.

During wartime, the ambulance was a space of caregiving, but during periods of attack, it was also a space of danger, as such, ambulance work brought women into the centre of wartime conflict. Aerial bombardment particularly altered the nature of ambulance work. For example, to efficiently retrieve the injured and transport them, the ambulance required safe passage between the site of an incident and the hospital, yet, bombardment created obstacles for ambulance work. As such, through their engagement

¹⁵⁸ Janet Lee, ‘Sisterhood at the Front: Friendship, comradeship and the feminine appropriation of military heroism among World War I First Aid Nursing Yeomanry (FANY)’, *Women’s Studies International Forum*, 31 (2008), 16-29 (p. 17).

¹⁵⁹ Lee, ‘FANY (First Aid Nursing Yeomanry) ‘Other Spaces’’, 647-664 (p. 647).

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.* p. 648.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.* p. 655.

¹⁶² *Ibid.* p. 660.

¹⁶³ Juliette Pattinson, *Women of War: Gender, Modernity and the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020) p. 167.

with ambulance work, personnel moved through areas of bombardment, between First Aid Posts, rescue centres, hospitals and morgues. During and after periods of bombardment, drivers were required to navigate through ruined streets, which were often strewn with potholes, lumps of concrete and unexploded bombs in order to reach the wounded.¹⁶⁴ Thus, female drivers and attendants consequently engaged with life threatening dangers which were more commonly associated with being on the front-line and wartime masculinity. As such, the ambulance was a space of safety within the wider dangers of the city; it was a space of liminality between life and death, between care and trauma. A space of liminality, as Robert Tally Jr. has described, signifies a threshold between two zones.¹⁶⁵ In many ways, an ambulance had an internal and external life. While the ambulance vehicle was a space of care and nurture, under periods of bombardment its external environment was a space which demanded courage and resilience in order for care to be administered. As Nicholas Saunders and Paul Cornish have argued in their exploration of bodies in conflict, during wartime, mobilisation exposes the body to conflict situations and alters perceptions of the body.¹⁶⁶ In London and across the nation, ambulance work altered the relationship between the female body and war; whilst working for the ambulance service, female personnel were exposed to increased risk of injury and death as they navigated the burning and blitzed city to retrieve casualties. As such, ambulance work brought women into direct contact with the danger, destruction and death associated with war. Indeed, as the physical space of the ambulance changed, the social boundaries which defined gendered expectations during periods of war and conflict also altered. As this discussion will illustrate, the construction of female

¹⁶⁴ BBC PWA, Ambulance Driver, Edith Taylor.

¹⁶⁵ Robert T. Tally Jr, 'Foreword: "A Utopia of the In-Between" or Limning the Liminal', in Dara Downey, Ian Kinane and Elizabeth Parker (eds.) *Landscapes of Liminality: Between Space and Place* (London: Rowman & Littlefield International Ltd, 2016) pp. xi-xiv (p. xii).

¹⁶⁶ Nicholas Saunders and Paul Cornish, 'Introduction', in Paul Cornish and Nicholas J Saunders (eds.) *Bodies in Conflict: Corporeality, Materiality, and Transformation* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014) pp. 1-8 (p. 5).

heroism grew and developed in line with women's changing roles and responsibilities on the Home Front.

The changed and demanding nature of ambulance work within the blitzed and burning city environment did not go unnoticed by the press. Articles regularly commented on how women in the ambulance service, like their male colleagues, continued their jobs whilst battling with the challenges around them. In 1940, *The War Illustrated* reported how 'London's War Ambulances are Always Under Fire'. It detailed how drivers and attendants, both men and women, went out under the splinters and the bombs to collect the wounded.¹⁶⁷ A year later, the same paper detailed how drivers were skilled in making a mad dash through the blackout in order to get casualties to hospital.¹⁶⁸ Articles particularly stressed how changes in modern warfare had brought the ambulance service into the front-line; they particularly centred on how the threat or presence of danger had transformed the work and requirements of the service. As such, ambulance work situated women in this changed wartime environment. As Doreen Massey describes, places and spaces are gendered sites and are important means in which gender is constructed and understood.¹⁶⁹ As such it is central to understand and unravel the complex relationship between space and place and the construction of gender and gender relations.¹⁷⁰ During wartime, the spatial separation of gender and danger was blurred as men and women in the ambulance service were exposed to the same dangers. The liminal space of the ambulance, as it moved through sites of destruction within the city, distorted spatial expectations of gender, war and conflict. Representations of workers within this space emphasised how ambulance work had brought women into direct contact with the danger, destruction and death associated with war.

¹⁶⁷ 'London's War Ambulances are Always Under Fire', *The War Illustrated*, 18 October 1940, p. 410.

¹⁶⁸ 'Front Line Women when the bombs are falling', *The War Illustrated*, 21 February 1941, p. 190.

¹⁶⁹ Massey, *Space, Place and Gender*, p. 179.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.* p. 2.

Changes to the space surrounding the ambulance enabled women to behave in ways which were not traditionally associated with femininity and war. The press frequently published stories of female bravery, and were an important means through which female heroism was represented, communicated and understood. Reports of female behaviour within the ambulance service drew upon the contested position of women and hazardous environments, yet, they also commented upon the behaviour of women in response to danger. As a result, the press adorned women who had acted courageously with heroic identities which centred upon courage, fearlessness, and self-sacrifice. Notably, ambulance heroism required women to leave the physical space of the ambulance vehicle and engage with the outside environment. The interplay between the internal safety of the vehicle and the external danger surrounding it created the potential for behaviour to be understood in line with heroic ideals. Constructions of female heroism, as Penny Summerfield has described, centred upon women performing in exceptional ways; by performing heroically in ‘unfeminine’ settings women proved their worth as they demonstrated courage, effort and self-sacrifice.¹⁷¹ Therefore, the danger and destruction which surrounded the ambulance enabled women to perform in ways which were considered exceptional for their gender. Tales in the press of specific women who had faced danger, positioned women as not only caregivers, they were also celebrated as heroic rescuers and protectors; traits which were central to traditional definitions of heroism, and which were more commonly associated with masculinity during wartime. As Graham Dawson has explained, during the mid 20th century, and particularly during periods of conflict, heroic narratives largely centred around gendered understandings of war; ideals of heroism were intimately bound up with military masculinity.¹⁷² Heroic virtues of strength and courage could only be achieved during the

¹⁷¹ Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives*, p. 78; p. 82.

¹⁷² Dawson, *Soldier Heroes*, p. 1.

height of battle, and were thus traditionally associated with the military.¹⁷³ However, the aerial bombardment of the Home Front created conditions comparable to the battlefield, and thus enabled female civilian, as well as male military behaviour, to be recognised and represented as courageous and self-sacrificing.

In the press, stories such as that of Margaret Wood and Dora Shadbolt celebrated the actions of women during periods of aerial attack. Notably, accounts of female heroism emphasised the position of women in relation to the external dangers of the blitzed city and their duty and responsibility as caregivers. On 17th April 1941, Wood and Shadbolt were on duty when their Auxiliary Ambulance Station Number 90 was demolished by enemy action.¹⁷⁴ Wood and Shadbolt provided emergency first aid to their colleagues who had been wounded, despite being injured themselves. Their ambulance had been largely demolished in the explosion and was missing its roof and sides, but despite this, Wood and Shadbolt managed to collect the injured, and holding the stretchers in place while they travelled, successfully transported the wounded to St. Leonards Hospital.¹⁷⁵ Significantly, this case highlighted how destruction could blur the interior and exterior spaces of the ambulance; without sides, individuals within the ambulance were vulnerable to the dangers of the blitzed city. Shadbolt's actions in particular were reported in numerous local papers across the country, including the *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, *Coventry Evening Telegraph*, and *Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail*, which commended her bravery and devotion to those around her over her own safety.¹⁷⁶ As the *Coventry Evening Telegraph* detailed, 'Dora's tin hat was deeply dented and, although she had bad cuts over one eye and on her neck and was in great danger of bleeding to death, she went

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Raby, *The Forgotten Service*, p. 137.

¹⁷⁵ TNA, HO 250/42/1646A, 'Margaret Wood' and HO 250/42/1646B, 'Dora Shadbolt'.

¹⁷⁶ 'Young Heroines of Banff and London', *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 02 January 1943, p. 2.

'Two Guide VC's for heroism in Mandalay and Burma', *Coventry Evening Telegraph*. 18 December 1942, p. 2.

'Tin Hat Dented', *Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail*. 18 December 1945, p. 5.

to the rescue of others.’¹⁷⁷ Moreover, the *Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail* commended how Shadbolt, whilst injured, had successfully transported her casualties through the city in a half-ruined ambulance.¹⁷⁸ Indeed, Shadbolt’s actions were constructed as particularly noteworthy as she had overcome the external dangers of the bombed city, and had prioritised others safety over her own. This behaviour was central to notions of heroic endeavour. As Scott Allison and George Goethals note, compelling stories of heroism centre upon moral choice and competence; hero narratives typically emphasise how an individual makes the decision to help others at some sacrifice to themselves.¹⁷⁹ Therefore, through engaging with dangerous environments, and placing their safety at risk for the benefit of their patients, women drivers and attendants were able to demonstrate courage and resilience. Notably, the press did not position these women as vulnerable; instead a heroic narrative surrounded their actions which drew upon ideals of capability, bravery and self-sacrifice. Their bravery and courage in the face of danger had been recognised. As a writer for *The Listener* detailed, ‘women’s expanding radius of influence’ enabled them to act with ‘serene good temper and efficient bravery’ when behind the ambulance wheel.¹⁸⁰ Moreover, these stories highlighted how war posed new challenges to ambulance work. Drivers and attendants were not only responsible for caregiving; under bombardment the responsibilities of the service were heightened as personnel were tasked with transporting the wounded whilst facing dangers caused by enemy action. As Doreen Massey states, gender is understood in relation to the social boundaries of spaces and places.¹⁸¹ However, ambulance work enabled female personnel to confront the gendered boundaries of wartime participation. As such, the changing pressures of wartime ambulance work created the potential for heroism within the service; war required

¹⁷⁷ ‘Two Guide VC’s for heroism in Mandalay and Burma’, *Coventry Evening Telegraph*, 18 December 1942, p. 2.

¹⁷⁸ ‘Tin Hat Dented’, *Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail*, 18 December 1945, p. 5.

¹⁷⁹ Allison and Goethals, *Heroes: What They Do & Why We Need Them*, p. 11.

¹⁸⁰ LHA, ‘War and the Woman’, Harold Keeble, *The Listener*, 16 January 1941, 25: 627, p. 73.

¹⁸¹ Massey, *Space, Place and Gender*, p. 7.

workers to behave in new ways and therefore provided increased opportunity for behaviour to be constructed as heroic.

Moreover, the story of Mabel Ann Armitage and Betty Leverton further exposed the public to acts of female heroism. Reports of Armitage and Leverton's actions reappeared at various occasions throughout the war; articles celebrated the way that on the first night of the Blitz the pair had defied bombs to save women and children trapped in the Tate and Lyle factory in London's East End. Along with one female and three male auxiliaries from another station, the ambulances ran a convoy backwards and forwards through flames and smoke to carry out the rescues, narrowly avoiding bomb craters and explosions. At one point, Leverton had to stop the ambulance to remove sugar boxes which had been strewn across the road, all whilst high explosives and incendiaries fell around. Arguably, their story was told as a way to embody the wider bravery which was being performed by others in the ambulance service who had faced similar dangers. Their story was first reported on in detail in the *Daily Herald* in 1941, where an image of the women appeared alongside a description of their actions.¹⁸² The article commended how they had successfully ran 'a convoy of ambulances backwards and forwards through the flames and smoke to carry out the rescues.'¹⁸³ Later in 1943, during a parade in Hyde Park which celebrated the work of the London Auxiliary Ambulance Service, Mr. Ernest Brown retold the story of Armitage and Leverton, a journey which Brown described 'led them through streets which they had never seen before and which were at the time nothing but an inferno of destruction.'¹⁸⁴ It was the engagement with external dangers which made their behaviour noteworthy. Through moving between separate spaces of caregiving and destruction, the work of the ambulance service was heightened from caregiving, to heroic

¹⁸² 'Popeye - and 3 Heroines', *Daily Herald*, 31 May 1941, p. 3.

Their story also featured in: 'Bombing or Boredom: The work of London's Ambulance Drivers During and Since the Great Blitz', *The Sphere*, 09 January 1943, p. 26.

¹⁸³ 'Popeye - and 3 Heroines', *Daily Herald*, 31 May 1941, p. 3.

¹⁸⁴ Iris Carpenter, 'Once they drove through fire and ruin, yesterday they were in a parade of London's forgotten heroes,' *Daily Herald*, 15 October 1943, p. 3.

caregiving. As personnel battled against the odds to drive through the city unharmed, their identity as caregivers was enhanced through displays of courage. The self-sacrifice and devotion to duty that was performed by the service was evident. Indeed, in the retelling of heroic tales, parallels were drawn between the dangers faced by the ambulance service and dangers faced by the military. Language which was suggestive of combat, such as ‘action’, ‘faced’ and ‘battlefield’, transformed workers within the ambulance into not only carers but also combatants. This act, of facing danger despite the threats to personal safety, formed the cornerstone of constructions of bravery and heroism which surrounded the ambulance service.

These accounts of female heroism within the ambulance service were accompanied by tales of male heroism. These stories served to both create parallels between male and female behaviour within the service, whilst also strengthening the differences between the nature of heroism performed by men and women. For example, on the night of 7th September 1940, the same night as Armitage and Leverton were recognised for their heroism, George Goshawk and Bertram Matthewman of Station 126, Greenwich, were praised for defying the dangers of aerial bombardment to collect a group of people who were trapped. A fellow member of their ambulance station recorded the event in her diary,

Saturday the war really started. All our stations round here sent out ambulances. One of ours came back with an epic story. Manned by Matthewman (a little elderly charming creature) and Georgie (who has a saggy chin and a vacant expression) it went down to Surrey Docks through flames meeting from each side of the road. (Where our next ambulance two minutes later could not get through) and picked up 5 casualties, including one woman who had just had a baby. Sparks and

fragments kept falling on them – they beat them off their trousers...and came back another way past a wall that collapsed just behind them.¹⁸⁵

This story was further dramatized in the press. As the *Daily Mirror* reported, in order to reach the group, the pair drove their ambulance through a sheet of flame.¹⁸⁶ Moreover the *Daily Herald* noted how despite being told by a police officer that it was impossible to get through, they defied the advice and were successful.¹⁸⁷ This story of male heroism within the ambulance service was in many ways comparable to that of Armitage and Leverton; both male and female personnel were praised for facing fires whilst retrieving casualties. In this regard, reports of the men's actions drew parallels to the work of women within the service. Both men and women were reported as courageously facing the dangers associated with wartime ambulance work. Yet, representations of male heroism within the service also conformed to gendered understandings of behaviour. Indeed, reports of their actions, which emphasised how the two men had actively faced danger, Goshawk and Matthewman were fashioned as individuals who were willing to risk their lives for the benefit of others. This emphasised more than the caregiving heroism which surrounded women; it created a sense of fearless masculine heroics. This was particularly emphasised in the way that Goshawk and Matthewman drove into a wall of flames to rescue women and children, despite being advised not to. In many ways, their behaviour aligned them with the image of soldiers fearlessly charging into battle. As Kimberly Hutchings notes, at any given time or place, war and masculinity are understood through qualities such as aggression, rationality or physical courage.¹⁸⁸ However, it is important to recognise that meanings of masculinity in relation to war also shift.¹⁸⁹ Therefore, although not on the front line, male heroism in the ambulance service was represented in

¹⁸⁵ MOA, Diarist 5285, Image 56, 9 September 1940.

¹⁸⁶ 'His One-Man Fire Brigade', *Daily Mirror*, 29 March 1941, p. 2.

¹⁸⁷ Mary Ferguson, "'Let's push on' he said – and won a medal", *Daily Herald*, 29 March 1941, p. 3.

¹⁸⁸ Kimberly Hutchings, 'Making Sense of Masculinity and War', *Men and Masculinities*, 10: 4 (2008), 389-404 (p. 389).

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

line with traditional understandings of masculinity and war. Their heroic masculinity was reinforced through their position as protectors, and women and children as requiring protection. Indeed, as Ann-Dorte Christensen and Palle Rasmussen state, understandings of war and masculinity are largely based on traditional notions of men as aggressive and violent, fighting for the sake of women and children, and women as peaceful anti-violent mothers.¹⁹⁰ Although men in the ambulance service did not display the violence of the armed forces who were required to fight the enemy, their fearlessness when facing danger enabled their behaviour to be positioned as soldier-like. On the Home Front, the ability to endure and perform under the extreme and dangerous conditions of bombardment enabled men to be recognised for their comradeship and devotion to duty. The feminine qualities of caregiving were not overly emphasised. Rather, men in the ambulance service were celebrated for their fearless and daring heroics in navigating danger. However, these displays of masculine heroism, contributed to the emergence of what Sonya Rose has termed ‘temperate heroes’; heroics which centred on courage, but also on devotion to those around them rather than the aggression of battle.¹⁹¹ Displays of masculine heroism on the Home Front were not only defined by courage and physical toughness, but also virtues of the ordinary man.¹⁹² Physically, Goshawk and Matthewman did not conform to the physical attributes of the soldier hero, one was over the age of conscription, and the other was not the image of physical fitness, yet, work in the ambulance service provided them with the opportunity to behave heroically.

Representations of male heroism in the ambulance service fulfilled a dual role. It served to heighten the nature of female heroism within the ambulance service; these women, like their male counterparts, were performing heroically in battlefield-like

¹⁹⁰ Ann-Dorte Christensen and Palle Rasmussen, ‘War, violence and masculinities: Introduction and perspectives’, *NORMA International Journal for Masculinity Studies*, 10:3-4 (2015), 189-202 (p. 189).

¹⁹¹ Rose, *Which People’s War*, p. 153.

¹⁹² *Ibid.* p. 160.

environments. Constructions of heroism within the ambulance service illustrated that women were not passive bystanders to male heroics; in this environment, women actively engaged with the dangers of ambulance work. Yet, constructions of male and female heroism within the ambulance service channelled subtle differences and therefore reinforced gendered understandings of war; whilst men were surrounded with notions of fearless heroism, the unexpected nature of female courage and bravery was moderated by traditionally feminine characteristics of compassion and care.¹⁹³

In their battle to save lives, women in the ambulance service were constructed as heroic. This construction confronted the changing position of women on the Home Front; women too could behave courageously, save lives, and place their own lives in danger, but this was achieved through the form of a caregiving profession. Changes to the external space surrounding the ambulance provided women with the potential to behave in ways which were not traditionally associated with femininity and war. The wartime press and media recognised this; women were celebrated for their courage, bravery and sacrifice, yet, their heroic identity was balanced with ideals of caregiving femininity. It was through their single-minded purpose to save lives and their unrelenting desire to safeguard the injured, that female behaviour was constructed as heroic. In order to achieve this, women were required to face the dangers external to the ambulance vehicle. Arguably, the ambulance was an acceptable sphere for female heroism; it was a site where women were provided with the potential to act heroically, and be recognised for it. The construction of female heroism, while it celebrated the actions of women, also restricted their behaviour to a specific sphere. It was acceptable for women to be celebrated for their bravery and heroism, providing it complemented the heroism of civilian men. As such, women were

¹⁹³ The medals awarded to ambulance personnel reveals the gendered nature of heroism in the ambulance service; the highest awards were only issued to men. Three male personnel were awarded the George Medal. Six female and three male personnel received the British Empire Medal. Five female personnel received a Commendation. For more information on medal recipients in The London Ambulance Service see: Raby, *The Forgotten Service*, p. 137.

constructed as heroic within the bounds of normative womanly behaviour, yet, through engaging with dangerous environments, their behaviour was also framed in a way which were more commonly associated with masculinity and war.

Conclusions

Through an examination of three specific wartime spaces, this chapter has examined how spatial engagement facilitated the construction of wartime heroism. A variety of spaces on the Home Front caused ideals of heroism to alter in line with the changing nature of warfare and the increased responsibilities afforded to civilians. In the factory, the city on fire, and the ambulance, behaviour was understood in line with spatial engagement. Across these spaces, civilians were provided with the opportunity to behave in ways which were both expected and unexpected of age and gender. Heroic acts were understood in line with the space they were displayed in. The heroic ideal also broadened during wartime. The factory enabled workers to be recognised for their heroic productivity. As thousands of workers flowed into wartime industry it was important to construct their work as valuable. While productivity was not a traditionally heroic trait, the spatial demands of the factory caused ideals of heroism to widen. Within the city on fire firemen were represented as heroic protectors of life and architecture; in many ways, male fire service heroism embodied the height of civilian heroism. In addition, engagement with spaces both inside and outside of the ambulance vehicle facilitated constructions of caregiving heroism. Through their work as drivers and attendants, women were able to face dangers which were traditionally associated with masculinity during periods of conflict. As such, spatial engagement enabled gendered boundaries of wartime heroism to blur. However, the production of heroism was not only spatial, it was also temporal. Displays of Home Front heroism were understood in relation to landscape and place, but also in regards to circumstance and context. Civilian heroism was framed

in line with temporal changes to specific spaces, such as increased production demands or heightened dangers. These temporal changes also created a social need for heroism to emerge. In many ways, constructions of heroism were thrust upon civilians to verify that the Home Front population were responding heroically to the demands, threats and dangers created by modern warfare.

Chapter Two

War, Materiality and Heroism: Representations of the Militarised and Capable Civilian

In September 1940, an article in *The People* addressed how the proximity between civilians and war had changed, it described: ‘Every man, woman, yes, and child is now seasoned to the horrors of war. The last few weeks have brought it right to our door. By day and night, the throbbing drone of Hitler’s bombers beats down from the skies.’¹ As the Second World War brought conflict to the Home Front, the civilian body became a site where heroic ideals and expectations of behaviour were articulated and displayed. As civilian bodies were decorated with clothing and objects of recognition, they became important sites where understandings of heroism were explored. This discussion then, will explore how the changing nature of warfare caused the corporeal nature of the civilian body to alter, and how civilians were depicted as unique heroic figures in wartime.

This chapter will place the body and material culture at the centre of thinking about civilian heroism. It will explore how the civilian body was clothed and decorated in wartime, and how this produced varying heroic identities which surrounded the civilian. Indeed, the civilian body was an important site for cultural norms and ideals around wartime participation, contribution and sacrifice to be communicated. The reality of war was experienced through the bodies of the civilian population. War was an embodying event. By this I mean the way that war altered how the civilian body was perceived, clothed and transformed. In order to explore the relationship between the civilian body, material culture and constructions of heroism, this section will examine a

¹ ‘Our way to victory’, *The People*, 08 September 1940, p. 5.

range of objects including clothing, such as uniforms and badges, and objects of recognition, including medals and awards. Indeed, through decorating the body with objects of cultural meaning, the body was a site where cultural beliefs and ideals could be displayed and articulated. Therefore, this chapter will focus upon the embodied practices of heroism. Through focusing upon the relationship between the body and material culture, this discussion will particularly interrogate how objects created notions of the 'militarised' and 'capable' civilian, and how such concepts enabled civilians to interact with cultural ideals of heroism.

The heroic identity which surrounded civilians in London was complex. Residents in London were at the centre of wartime conflict. London was the heart of life in Britain; it was the centre of trade, government, cosmopolitan life, and royalty, therefore, as Philip Ziegler has noted, in 1939, it also became the prime target for aerial attack.² Residents in London, whilst residing in the 'greatest city in the world' were also in the most vulnerable.³ It was therefore important that a heroic identity surrounded these individuals; as civilians at the centre of wartime conflict, it was essential for the country's morale that they were constructed as resilient and courageous. These heroic identities negotiated cultural expectations of how the civilian was expected to act during periods of conflict. Indeed, objects which adorned the civilian reflected their unique status as combatants of the Home Front and were central in shaping ideals of heroism; civilian bodies were clothed in ways which suggested they could perform bravely, or were decorated in ways which suggested exceptional achievement. Uniforms and badges created an expectation of heroic behaviour, whereas medals and awards recognised heroic conduct. As we will see, uniforms, and the way that the wearer was depicted in the public sphere, were central in shaping expectations of heroism. Indeed, as civilians became combatants of the Home

² Ziegler, *London at War*, p. 8.

³ *Ibid.*

Front, increasing numbers of individuals conducted their daily life in uniform; seeing the body in uniform became commonplace on the Home Front as overalls, armbands and badges reflected position and job role. As a result, civilians both developed their own identity away from military associations with uniform, whilst also becoming militarised in their own right as a uniformed group, whether it was a part of Civil Defence or through working in industry.

In addition, awards and medals decorated the civilian body in a way which recognised Home Front heroism. Both national and local awards which recognised achievement positioned the civilian body as capable. Thus, when exploring civilian heroism, it is important to consider how objects which adorned the body shaped social expectations, behaviour and experience. Decorating the body instilled notions of expected heroism and recognised heroic behaviour; consequently, each created differing constructions of what the civilian body represented in wartime, and therefore what it meant to be heroic. As Paul Cornish and Nicholas Saunders describe, ‘any human body in any conflict, is an arena where a multitude of physical, psychological, cultural, spiritual and emotional issues are played out, often in unpredictable ways, and with kaleidoscopic complexity.’⁴ Indeed, the civilian body was one of these arenas; it is thus important to utilise this lens to explore how the uniformed and decorated civilian body shaped perceptions of heroism within the public sphere. Firstly, this discussion will briefly examine scholars who have explored the relationship between the body and material culture, before concentrating on the way that objects shaped understandings of wartime heroism.

Within the current literature, there has been significant discussion on the importance of objects in the study of history and exploring the relationship between

⁴ Saunders and Cornish, ‘Introduction’, pp. 1-8 (p. 6).

people and the things around them. The growing emphasis which has been placed upon material culture has enabled historians to understand objects in their wider context. As Karen Harvey notes, material culture is not simply examining the objects people make, use and throw away, it also involves considering how such objects play an integral part in shaping human experience.⁵ Objects possess more than a physical presence and can also be read to understand their social and personal meaning within a larger framework.⁶ Of particular interest to this chapter is literature which explores the body and its relationship with material culture. Notably, as Nicholas Saunders and Paul Cornish demonstrate in their edited collection *Bodies in Conflict*, human bodies are transformed by the material culture of war, whether that is through clothing, prostheses or weapons.⁷ Moreover, as Saunders notes, ‘the extreme behaviours provoked by war illustrate how an individual’s social being is determined by their relationship to the objects that represent them.’⁸ The human body is our way of relating to and perceiving the world; in the process of destruction and creation during war, artefacts and human beings combine together to reveal the complex relationship between human beings and conflict.⁹ Thus, it is important to consider how clothing and items that adorn and decorate the body can reflect particular cultural attitudes towards civilians and war. Indeed, as Peter Pels describes, it is important to consider in historical analyses how objects make people as much as people make objects.¹⁰ Additionally, Kevin McSorley’s edited collection reveals the embodied nature of warfare, and illustrates how war is experienced through the bodies of men and

⁵ Karen Harvey, ‘Introduction: Practical Matters’, in Karen Harvey (ed.), *History and Material Culture: A Student’s Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources* (London: Routledge 2009), pp. 1-23 (p. 3).

⁶ Richard Grassby, ‘Material Culture and Cultural History’, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 35:4 (2005), 591-603 (p. 593).

⁷ Cornish and Saunders, ‘Introduction’, pp. 1-8 (p. 2).

⁸ Nicholas J. Saunders, ‘Material Culture and Conflict: The Great War 1914-2003’, in Nicholas Saunders (ed.), *Matters of Conflict: Material Culture, Memory and the First World War* (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 5-25 (p. 6).

⁹ Saunders, ‘Material Culture and Conflict: The Great War 1914-2003’, pp. 5-25 (p. 9).

¹⁰ P. Pels, ‘The Spirit of Matter: On fetish, rarity, fact and fancy’, in P. Speyer (ed.), *Border Fetishisms: Material Objects in Unstable Spaces*. (London: Routledge, 1998) cited by Saunders, ‘Material Culture and Conflict: The Great War 1914-2003’, pp. 5-25 (p. 6).

women.¹¹ Therefore, this chapter will adopt an object-centered analysis, exploring the objects themselves, their role and place within contemporary society and their relationship to the civilian body.

In addition, historians of gender have also detailed the complex relationship between the body and war. For example, some scholars have turned their attention towards exploring the way that wartime affected how the body was clothed. Predominantly, discussion around clothing and the body centers upon the way that wartime altered fashion trends, with increasing numbers of the population dressed in uniform. Julie Summers has examined how everyday clothing in Britain altered as a consequence of rationing and wartime work. While Summers explains that about a third of the Home Front population were in uniform, which equated to roughly 15 million people, she notes that uniform meant different things to its wearer as to its observers. For some, wearing uniform was a rite of passage, for some a challenge or even a threat, whereas for others it provided a sense of belonging or self-worth.¹² Motivations for clothing the body in uniform stretched further than simply providing occupation specific clothing; uniform also acted as a tool to strengthen emotional health during wartime. Furthermore, Geraldine Howell's exploration of wartime fashion reveals a story that centers around changes in clothing and the relationship between classes, changing perspectives of femininity and altered priorities of daily life which were exemplified by pressures of making-do.¹³ Howell notes that uniforms reflected the social shift that women experienced in wartime; the wearing of uniform and workwear signified a break with traditional standards of femininity. As Howell explains,

¹¹ McSorley, 'War and the Body', pp. 1-32 (p. 1).

¹² Julie Summers, *Fashion on the Ration: Style in the Second World War* (London: Profile Books, 2015) p. 47.

¹³ Geraldine Howell, *Wartime Fashion: From Haute Couture to Homemade, 1939-1945* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013) p. xiii.

The divisions between the sexes became less visually rigid. Clothing, in many ways unintentionally, became an arena for reviewing gender divisions and clarifying issues of status and identity. On one level, clothes moved simply and logically towards practicality and ease of wear. On another, they challenged what it was to be a woman and raised issues about the nature of equality and freedom of choice.¹⁴

Moreover, as Jane Tynan and Lisa Godson describe in their edited volume on the cultural and social meaning of uniforms, as specialist clothing, they shape human behaviour and actions. As traditionally gendered objects, uniforms are encoded with understandings of gender, discipline and modernity.¹⁵ More recently, Juliette Pattinson has explored how FANY uniforms were signifiers of modernity through the way they reflected a movement of women into the public domain and into new spaces of conflict.¹⁶ Building upon this literature, this discussion will explore how uniforms embodied what it meant to be a civilian combatant, and how they attached meaning to civilian conduct.

Other scholars, including Penny Summerfield and Corinna Peniston-Bird have turned their attention to the relationship between women, clothing and opportunity in the Second World War. They contend that uniforms served a powerful purpose on the Home Front. In their analysis of the Home Guard, they explain how restricting the provision of uniforms for women served to establish gendered divisions within the organisation; the resistance to provide women in the Home Guard with uniforms altered their identity as armed defenders and trivialized their sacrifice and

¹⁴ Ibid. p. 57.

¹⁵ Jane Tynan, 'Understanding Uniform: An Introduction', in Jane Tynan and Lisa Godson (eds.), *Uniform: Clothing and Discipline in the Modern World* (London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2019) <<http://bl.ldls.org.uk/acesnow/start.html>> [Accessed 13 January 2020] 43.0

¹⁶ Pattinson, *Women of War*, p. 89.

involvement.¹⁷ Furthermore, in her discussion of the body and military masculinity in the Second World War, Peniston-Bird emphasises the power of the social body in defining the meaning of the individual body. For men and women on the Home Front, bodies were transformed by wartime service in different ways which ensured that traditional hegemonic gender roles were not challenged too heavily. Where men actively moved into the militarised environment of the front line, uniforms only altered women's bodies on the surface, they still retained their physicality and role within society.¹⁸ As Kathleen Canning notes, histories of the body enable us to analyse the body as a surface upon which laws, morality and power are inscribed.¹⁹ Considering bodies and material culture as modes of historical analysis enables us to explore the complex relationship between war, people and materiality.

This chapter will build on current literature which explores the materiality of objects and its relationship with the human experience. Through engaging with literature surrounding the civilian body this chapter will provide greater analysis on the provision and role of uniforms and medals during the Second World War. Particular importance will be placed upon exploring how decorating the civilian body impacted upon the way that an individual's actions, or contribution towards the war effort was presented. This chapter examines the subject of bodily identity on the Home Front by studying the body as a site of imagination and experience. By moving away from exploring the body as a marker of wartime health to a site of collective and individual experience, greater analysis will be provided on the construction of civilian heroism through the way that the body was adorned and decorated. Through examining how heroism was an embodied practice

¹⁷ Penny Summerfield & Corinna Peniston-Bird, 'Women in the Firing Line: The Home Guard and the Defence of Gender Boundaries in Britain in the Second World War', *Women's History Review*, 9:2 (2000), 231-255 (p. 250).

¹⁸ Corinna Peniston-Bird, 'Classifying the Body in the Second World War: British Men in and Out of Uniform', *Body & Society*, 9:4 (2003), 31-48 (p. 44).

¹⁹ Kathleen Canning, 'The Body as Method? Reflections on the Place of the Body in Gender History', *Gender & History*, 11:3 (1999), 499-513 (p.500).

during wartime, this discussion will complement current studies of war, the body and material culture. Through particularly focusing on the way that war affects how the body is framed and presented, additional lines of enquiry will be developed for understanding how constructions of civilian heroism were established.

The Militarised Body

The mobilisation of the civilian population to support the war effort is a familiar story of the Second World War. Civilians from all walks of life became involved in the fight for victory. As a writer for the *Londonderry Sentinel* summarised in 1942, ‘This present war was not like former wars. The civilian population of the present time had not been mere spectators, but had shared the perils of the armed forces.’²⁰ As a consequence of mobilisation, the civilian body itself was militarised, in the way that it was expected to perform and in its appearance. Significantly, militarizing the civilian enhanced their status as combatants of the Home Front, and created an expectation of how they would behave. This discussion will place particular emphasis upon exploring how uniforms, badges of rank and service chevrons constructed a notion of the militarised civilian body and how clothing played a central role in reflecting heroic potential. Indeed, decorating the body with objects which were traditionally connected with the armed forces provided civilians with military associations and created parallels between individuals on the Home Front and personnel in the forces. However, the militarised civilian body was unique to the Second World War, as whilst channeling military characteristics, it comprised of a diverse group of individuals of varying ages, genders, and abilities, which created an ‘army’ which was very different from that on the battlefield. Thus, recruitment into the civilian army of the Home Front did not have the same restrictions placed upon it when compared

²⁰ ‘Civil Defence Day’, *Londonderry Sentinel*, 17 November 1942, p. 2.

to the forces. Instead, the bodies of the young and old, male and female, able and disabled were welcomed into the Home Front army and were adorned in ways which identified them as militarised individuals.

The use of uniforms, badges and service chevrons on the Home Front reinforced parallels between the civilian and military populations throughout the Second World War. As such, it is important to explore how the provision of uniforms shaped expectations of heroic conduct and duty amongst the civilian population. Indeed, uniforms serve as important cultural markers which reflect role and responsibility on their wearer. Uniforms, as Paul Fussell describes, carry important social meaning:

The uniform, no matter how lowly, assures its audience that the wearer has a job, one likely not to be merely temporary and one with extorting a degree of respect for being associated with a successful enterprise.

The uniform attaches one to success.²¹

Moreover, as Susan Kaiser details, uniforms serve important social functions; they are symbolic of group membership, legitimise role and promote goals by encouraging conformity in behaviour.²² Uniforms are also highly gendered and reinforce sexual difference.²³ Therefore, uniforms, as objects of personal adornment which were firmly connected to success and achievement, influenced how civilian involvement in the war was constructed and presented.

The provision of civilian uniforms to the Home Front population dominated discussion throughout the war, and particularly focused upon individuals involved in Civil Defence. The distribution of uniforms for civilian use was limited at the start of war

²¹ Paul Fussell, *Uniforms: Why We Are What We Wear* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2002) p. 5.

²² Susan B. Kaiser, *The Social Psychology of Clothing and Personal Adornment* (London: Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1985) pp. 308-309.

²³ Pattinson, *Women of War*, p. 78.

as its provision was prioritised to specific wartime roles. It was not until war had commenced that uniforms were recognised as being of importance across all services. As Mike Brown describes, upon the initial creation of Air Raid Precautions in 1937 (which was renamed Civil Defence in 1941), ARP personnel were only provided with badges, helmets and armbands.²⁴ It was felt that the ARP service, essentially a citizens service, did not require uniforms.²⁵ In contrast, individuals in other services such as the Police War Reserve and the Auxiliary Fire Service were provided with uniforms from the outset as they were auxiliaries to existing uniformed organisations.²⁶ Importantly, the uniforms of the Police War Reserve and Auxiliary Fire Service were not created out of wartime necessity. These organisations were uniformed services during peacetime, as such, the provision of wartime uniforms to auxiliary divisions built upon established customs. However, within a year, the demands of the ARP services caused the provision of civilian uniforms to be reassessed. Changes to warfare techniques, most notably aerial bombardment, altered the civilian's role on the Home Front from noncombatants to combatants. Millions of ordinary British people outside of the Armed Forces became involved in Home Front activities, as victims of enemy aggression, but also as members of organised bodies providing war service.²⁷ Civilians were required to respond to the heavy bombardment which commenced in September 1940, and as such, their bodies were uniformed to aid their efforts. Significantly, the Civil Defence services were clothed in ways which were believed to help in the defence and protection of the nation. However, the provision of uniforms also transformed civilian bodies into a militarised mass. As the following discussion illustrates, the militarisation of the Civil Defence services was twofold. Firstly, clothing physically drew upon military designs for practical reasons, and secondly, it served as a means to strengthen and unify Britain's civilian army. As Emma

²⁴ Brown, *Put That Light Out*, p. 3.

²⁵ TNA, HO 186/1345, 'Serge Battle Dress for Wardens'.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ T.H. O'Brien, *History of the Second World War: Civil Defence* (London: HMSO, 1955) p. 3.

Newlands states, wartime transformed and moulded bodies to serve social purposes.²⁸ In the army, bodies were controlled and transformed through clothing, fitness regimes and battle training.²⁹ Equally, on the Home Front, uniforms moulded the identity of the wearer. Clothing which was created specifically for the use of Britain's Civil Defence services attached heightened meaning to their position on the Home Front; in wartime, uniforms suggested responsibility, duty and the potential for heroic endeavour.

While it was initially thought that the Civil Defence services would not require combat specific clothing, this attitude swiftly changed as the demands of the services grew. By the summer of 1939 authorities began to issue basic uniforms to those in Civil Defence to prevent individuals from using expensive anti-gas protection suits to cover their own clothes while on duty. The ARP Act of 1937 recognised the shift between civilians and the wartime state; they were now required to undertake defensive duties and mobilise against attack. The provision of uniforms further illustrated the changed relationship between civilians and modern conflict.³⁰ The state recognised that civilians needed suitable clothing to match the demands of war work. Initially, men in Civil Defence were issued overalls, and women Macintosh style coats, both made out of a dark bluette, denim like, material.³¹ However, one month after bombs started falling regularly on Britain's cities, concerns were expressed regarding the effectiveness of the current Civil Defence uniforms. In a statement written in October 1940 by the Ministry of Home Security it was expressed that,

Among the most urgent matters to which our attention should be given is the provision of a suitable uniform. Representatives from local authorities and the reports of regional officers show that the existing

²⁸ Newlands, 'Preparing and resisting the war body', pp. 35-50 (pp. 36-40).

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Noakes, "Serve to Save", 734-753 (p. 743).

³¹ Brown, *Put That Light Out*, p. 13.

uniform is in many respects unsatisfactory...It is considered that a suitable type of uniform would be one similar to the battle dress supplied for the army. The uniform should be in two pieces to facilitate movement and should be made of stout woolen cloth dyed dark blue to correspond with the colour of the existing uniform.³²

Furthermore, in a meeting held in November it was concluded that uniforms for the entirety of Civil Defence needed reviewing as they were not holding up to the demands of heavy work caused by bombing. Work which involved moving or clambering over rubble and broken glass placed clothing at risk from heavy wear and tear. Taking care of ordinary civilian clothing was particularly important during wartime as personal clothing was in limited supply during wartime. Campaigns such as 'Make-do and Mend' emphasised that clothing should be looked after, reused and repurposed.³³ As such, the provision of uniforms across the Civil Defence services prevented civilian clothes from being unnecessarily damaged from activities involved with war work. For individuals in rescue teams it was decided that army boots would be provided as continued exposure to broken glass was wearing down their boots too quickly. For wardens, oilskin waterproofs or coats were considered to be more appropriate for the winter weather, and for ambulance drivers, it was agreed that a warmer coat was required.³⁴ However, whilst it was recognised that the conditions of aerial bombardment meant that uniforms needed to be altered, the widespread provision of uniforms across the Civil Defence service was feared to be fraught with complexities. It was thought that changes to Civil Defence uniforms would cause discontent among the services, in the same way that earlier differences caused discontent between the uniformed Police, Fire Service and the rest of Civil Defence. It was believed that adjustments to meet the demands of the heavy work

³² TNA, HO 186/1345, 'Uniform for the ARP Services', 23rd October 1940.

³³ Howell, *Wartime Fashion*, p. 124.

³⁴ TNA, HO 186/1345, 'Clothing for Civil Defence Services', 7th November 1940.

of Rescue and First Aid Parties would cause discontent between the different strands of Civil Defence as it would appear that certain sectors were receiving privileges.³⁵ In order to combat this, it was proposed that a serge battle dress, similar to that worn by the military, should be made general issue across the Civil Defence services. From February 1941, a heavy battledress uniform was issued first to the First Aid and Rescue Parties, and later in the year across other strands of Civil Defence.³⁶

The design for the uniform was of an identical cut to the army pattern. The only difference was that the uniform for Civil Defence personnel was manufactured in navy, in contrast to the khaki of the armed forces. This serge battle dress, in its design and material, firmly connected those on the front line with those on the Home Front. This change in uniform represented a direct acknowledgement that civilians were experiencing comparable circumstances to individuals in the forces; they also required clothing that would meet their needs as combatants. As the Home Front environment became militarised through targeted bombardment, clothing was also militarised so that individuals were able to respond accordingly. The durability of uniforms suggested that the wearer would be expected to face similar dangers as the armed forces. Indeed, the provision of uniforms similar to the armed forces also carried important cultural significance. As Jane Tynan describes in her analysis of uniforms worn by the British Army in the First World War, khaki carried with it a range of positive associations in wartime; khaki uniforms signified readiness for combat, masculine adventure and active service.³⁷ Khaki, as Juliette Pattinson notes, is intrinsically linked with the military; when khaki inspired uniforms are worn by non-combatants individuals are visually aligned with the armed forces.³⁸ As such uniforms are central in shaping public perceptions of a

³⁵ TNA, HO 186/1345, 'Serge Battle Dress for Wardens', 15th April 1941.

³⁶ Brown, *Put That Light Out*, p. 13.

³⁷ Jane Tynan, *British Army Uniforms and the First World War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2013) pp. 53-55; p. 89.

³⁸ Pattinson, *Women of War*, pp. 87-88.

service.³⁹ For the British army, uniforms suggested that individuals would fulfil their role as masculine protectors of the nation. Similarly, as Lucy Noakes argues, during the First World War, military uniforms embodied a ‘chivalrous, heroic, patriotic ideal of masculinity.’⁴⁰ Therefore, by the Second World War, military uniforms were firmly surrounded with understandings of honour, service and duty; they signified the potential for heroic behaviour centered on victory and achievement.

Extending the provision of uniforms to civilians during the Second World War served to extend ideals which were attached to wearing uniform during periods of combat from the military into the civilian realm; like the military, these civilians were also tasked with serving their nation. Clothing the civilian population with uniforms to equip them for hazardous conditions served to surround the uniformed services with notions of patriotism, duty and responsibility. Moreover, as Tynan describes, uniforms were also an emblem for the dangers the body could encounter as a result of wartime participation; clothing the body in appropriate attire revealed the destructive and dangerous reality of conflict.⁴¹ Additionally, during periods of war, uniforms are traditionally gendered objects and are usually associated with masculine spaces. However, as women’s bodies were also uniformed through their roles in Civil Defence, the boundaries between gender and war were blurred. Therefore, uniforms acted as important cultural markers during periods of conflict, they suggested that the wearer had the potential to perform heroically in the defence of the nation. As Alan Jeffreys has noted, clothing fulfils an important role in war, to serve as an identifying mark and a visual indicator to others.⁴² Importantly, in

³⁹ Tynan, *British Army Uniforms*, p. 1.

⁴⁰ Lucy Noakes, ‘Playing at being soldiers?’: British Women and Military Uniform in the First World War’, in Jessica Meyer (eds.), *British Popular Culture and the First World War* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), pp. 123-145 (p. 125).

⁴¹ Jane Tynan, ‘Military Chic: Fashioning Civilian Bodies for War’, in Kevin McSorley (ed.), *War and the Body: Militarisation, Practice and Experience* (Abingdon: Routledge 2013), pp. 78-90 (p. 85).

⁴² Alan Jeffreys, ‘Distinguishing the Uniform: Military Heraldry and the British Army during the First World War’, in Nicholas Saunders and Paul Cornish (eds.), *Contested Objects: Material Memories of the Great War* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), pp. 119-129 (p. 119).

wartime, uniforms acted as a visual indicator that the services were suitably equipped to deal with the challenges that they were required to face. Uniforms altered the identity of the wearer, and transformed the uniformed civilian of Civil Defence into a militarised group with the potential for acting heroically.

The addition of badges of rank and length of service chevrons to civilian uniforms served to reinforce parallels with the visual appearance of the armed forces uniforms. In 1941, the Minister of Home Security announced that he had decided to introduce a national system of badges of rank for Civil Defence uniforms.⁴³ Significantly, the creation of badges to signify rank amongst Civil Defence was informed by the organisation of army rank.⁴⁴ In addition, in 1943 the Committee on the Grant of Honours, Decorations and Medals in the Time of War, announced that the Police, National Fire Service, and Civil Defence Services would be supplied with War Service Chevrons.⁴⁵ These chevrons, which were identical to those worn by the armed forces, recognised periods of 12 months service. These badges served to further arrange the civilian workforce in a way which organised them as if they were a collective military body.

However, changes to the way that the civilian body was clothed was not only fuelled out of practical reasons; it also reflected the wider political situation in Britain. Altering existing uniforms to channel military features, whilst also expanding the number of civilian personnel in uniform, served a second purpose; to act as a visual aid to bolster the nation's morale during times of strain. Changes to uniforms, and the widespread distribution of uniform throughout the Civil Defence services served to establish a uniformed group amongst Britain's population, alongside the familiar military body of

⁴³ TNA, HO 186/1347, 'Home Security Circular No. 189 Civil Defence General Services', September 1941.

⁴⁴ TNA, HO 186/1347, 'Home Security Circular No. 189 Appendix – Badges of Rank', September 1941.

⁴⁵ TNA, HO 186/1992, 'Committee on the Grant of Honours, Decorations and Medals in Time of War: The Africa Star and the 1939-43 Star, the Clasps to the Two Stars, the Dispatches Emblem, Wound Stripes and Chevrons for War Service', August 1943.

the armed services. The notion of utilising uniforms to unite the population became a topic of frequent discussion within the Home Office. The department recognised that the need for improved uniforms stretched beyond practical reasons and were in fact a highly influential factor in maintaining morale. Upon distribution of the serge battle dress uniform throughout the First Aid and Rescue Parties the Home Office recognised that, 'Issue of the new uniform for these services is beginning and where the Minister has seen it in wear his view is that the effect on morale on the wearer and of the public is marked.'⁴⁶ It is notable that wearing a militarised uniform could have a marked effect on both the wearer and those around them; the visual image of the militarised civilian body was a powerful tool for shaping morale. As Paul Fussell notes, uniforms are powerful in elevating and sustaining the morale of the wearer as well as those around them.⁴⁷ Wartime correspondence between local councils and the Home Office emphasised that adding a piece of headgear to the current uniform, which would be worn by all those in Civil Defence, would unite those fighting on the Home Front. As a Leeds County Council Clerk wrote in 1941, 'At the present time some of the men wear trilby hats, some bowler hats and some cloth caps and it has been suggested that if some uniform type of hat could be provided it would lead to increased smartness.'⁴⁸ Moreover, in May 1941, an Area Officer, G.V. Wallbank, wrote to the Home Office plainly expressing his views on the subject of headgear:

The First Aid Parties are very pleased with their new uniforms and the issue of them has done a lot of good and increased their enthusiasm...The men have a smart battle dress uniform but have to walk about bareheaded, as no civilian cap or hat matches the rest of

⁴⁶ TNA, HO 186/977, 'Serge Overcoats, Uniforms, Berets, Gaiters and Boots for Civil Defence Personnel'.

⁴⁷ Fussell, *Uniforms*, p. 174.

⁴⁸ TNA, HO 186/977, 'Letter from J. Charles McGrath: Air Raid Precautions. Special Uniforms for First Aid Party and Rescue Party Personnel', 12 March 1941.

their dress. A steel helmet would look respectable, but obviously they cannot go about the streets with one of these perched on their heads.⁴⁹

This correspondence stressed that by improving the image of the uniformed civilian through the addition of headgear, in a way which reflected military smartness, unity would emerge throughout the various services. Another writer proposed that through introducing a form of headgear which could be worn by all individuals in Civil Defence, feelings of smartness and esprit de corps, loyalty and pride, would spread across the different services.⁵⁰ It is particularly notable that in describing levels of pride, the expression 'esprit de corps' was used. As James Burke notes, the term was traditionally used to refer to the commitment and pride soldiers feel towards their military establishment.⁵¹ Yet, upon the provision of uniforms to civilians, this pride was now also felt on the Home Front. Discussion amongst area officers particularly focused upon the provision of berets to meet this need. In April 1941 a Deputy Principle Officer wrote to J.H. Burrell of the Ministry of Home Security suggesting that '[Berets] are a form of uniform for which there appears to be a great demand.'⁵² It was suggested that a beret, similar to the tank corps, would be sufficient. Military designs were considered central if uniform was to unite and smarten the Civil Defence services. Uniform constructed civilian wartime involvement, particularly for individuals of the Civil Defence services, in a way which suggested civic responsibility. As Susan Kaiser notes, 'uniforms may serve as either formal or informal forms of social control at various levels of social organisations, that is, from small groups to large organisations.'⁵³ As such, adorning the civilian body in this way shaped wartime participation through associating it with national duty, responsibility and honour. Uniforms demonstrated that the wearer was fulfilling an

⁴⁹ TNA, HO 186/977, 'Letter to Home Office from G.V. Wallbank', 19 May 1941.

⁵⁰ TNA, HO 186/977, 'Letter from B.P. Moore to T.L. Rowan', 31 January 1941.

⁵¹ James Burk, 'Military Culture', in Lester R. Kurtz, Jennifer E. Turpin. (eds.), *Encyclopaedia of Violence, Peace, and Conflict* (London: Academic, 1999), pp. 447-462 (p. 447).

⁵² TNA, HO 186/977, 'Letter from Deputy Principle Officer to J.H. Burrell', 25th April 1941.

⁵³ Kaiser, *The Social Psychology of Clothing and Personal Adornment*, p. 310.

important social role in the war effort. As the appearance of the civilian body was increasingly controlled and readied for war, uniforms strengthened the connection between war, the civilian body and national duty.

The creation of Civil Defence Day, on 15th November 1942 served to mobilise a visual presence of the uniformed civilian body. Indeed, the creation of Civil Defence Day illustrates the importance the wartime authorities placed on displaying the Civil Defence services as a militarised group. The day itself was a nationwide event and was marked by parades throughout the major cities across Britain. It served to both celebrate the defeat of the Luftwaffe in the Battle of Britain whilst also remembering the Civil Defence services who had played their part in the fight against the enemy. The press heavily reported upon the event and presented readers with plentiful images of Britain's Civil Defence personnel participating in marches and parades, actions both traditionally associated with military groups.⁵⁴ Images showed streets across Britain filled with individuals wearing the uniform assigned to their service, complete with headgear. Within London, St. Paul's Cathedral formed the focal point of the parade. A newsreel which reported on the day showed the King and Queen honour the front-line fighters of the Battle of Britain.⁵⁵ The procession was led by the men of the anti-aircraft command, and were followed by detachments of the RAF, men and women of Civil Defence, the Police force, and the National Fire Service. Whilst it is notable that the armed forces headed the procession, it is significant that both military and civilian services were involved in the parade. The parade was made up of not only individuals from London, but divisions from across the country. Whilst the day intended to celebrate the defeat of German aerial

⁵⁴ 'Civil Defence Day at Lydney', *Gloucester Journal*, 21 November 1942, p. 4.
'Victory Ringers: Civil Defence Day Parade', *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 21 November 1942, p. 6.
'The Day that Will Commemorate Civilian Valour and Fortitude', *Illustrated London News*, 21 November 1942, p. 22.

⁵⁵ BPA, 1344.07, 'Civil Defence Day in London', Pathé Gazette, 19 November 1942.
<<https://www.britishpathe.com/video/civil-defence-day-in-london/query/Civil+Defence+Day+in+London>> [Accessed: November 2017]

bombardment, it also succeeded in placing the uniformed civilian body at the fore of public consciousness. Hew Strachan's analysis of military parades in the First World War is particularly helpful here in understanding the impact of such parades on the Home Front. As Strachan explain, military parades were fundamental events in fusing the nation and the Army, parades were a popular celebration of patriotism, 'with the Army at its core but with the crowd integral to the occasion.'⁵⁶ Indeed, the militarised presentation of the uniformed civilian was not only important for those watching the parades, but also to those observing the efforts of Britain's 'civilian army' through the press and media. These parades were a performance which displayed the heroic potential of those in uniform. Importantly, as Civil Defence day occurred after the Blitz, these parades reflected the heroic endurance which had been displayed during bombardment. However, they also revealed that the Civil Defence services were prepared for when they would be needed next. Presenting Civil Defence as a militarised unit, in both the way they were decorated and united as a collective entity, drew upon traditional soldierly qualities of endurance and defence and thereby reduced the gap between the duties of civilians on the Home Front with the forces. Clothing the civilian body in this way and exhibiting it in parades served to draw upon expectations of military behaviour; these individuals were part of a united team of combatants. Importantly, uniforms served a dual purpose; they fulfilled a practical goal in ensuring that the wearer was equipped to perform their job, yet, they also fulfilled a social purpose in attaching meaning and importance to the work of Civil Defence. Uniforms were a symbol of group membership and collective identity.⁵⁷ Therefore, uniforms carried important social value in surrounding Civil Defence and the Emergency Services with an expectation that they would behave accordingly in the defence and protection of their nation; uniforms were indicators of expected heroism.

⁵⁶ Hew Strachan, 'Liberalism and Conscription 1789-1919', in Hew Strachan (ed.), *The British Army, Manpower, and Society into the Twenty-first Century* (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2000), pp. 3-15 (p. 13).

⁵⁷ Pattinson, *Women of War*, p. 82.

Parades, such as those on Civil Defence Day were important social events in which the appearance of individuals was shaped by the physical attributes of their uniform. In wartime, uniforms were active objects; they attached meaning to the wearer and to the responsibilities of the civilian body.

However, adorning civilians with uniforms, badges of rank and war service chevrons did not simply define the wearer as heroic. Instead, militarizing the body suggested that the civilian had the potential of performing heroically as they were aligned with cultural understandings of duty, patriotism and responsibility. This notion was particularly centered around individuals in Civil Defence; as the nation's defenders it was their responsibility to engage with the danger and destruction caused by enemy attack. As Jane Tynan describes, the uniformed figure in wartime symbolised bodily transformation and human potential.⁵⁸ As such, uniforms served to connect Civil Defence personnel with positive associations of military conduct; uniforms did not only equip the wearer with appropriate clothing, they also adorned them with an identity which centered upon potential, valour and national duty.

The Capable Body

The Second World War transformed the way that civilians were expected to behave. However, it also transformed the way that individuals were recognised for their behaviour. As total war moved from the battlefield to the Home Front, civilians were placed in increased danger in London and across the country. Indeed, as the nature of warfare changed, London also changed. As discussed in Chapter One, warfare disrupted and transformed London's spaces and as such, Londoners were expected to navigate these

⁵⁸ Jane Tynan, "Tailoring in the Trenches": The Making of the First World War British Army Uniform', in Jessica Meyer (eds.), *British Popular Culture and the First World War* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), pp. 71-93 (p. 71).

spaces within the city whilst continuing their day-to-day lives. These reconfigured spaces of war enabled civilians to behave in new ways. Whether it was in the home, at work, or on the streets, civilian interaction with London's changed cityscape altered as the duties and responsibilities of the civilian population changed. Indeed, as civilians became increasingly central to the war effort, increased focus centred upon the capability of their bodies. Medals and awards recognised this capability. In contrast to the way that uniforms and badges militarised civilian bodies, and created an expectation for heroism, medals and awards publicly acknowledged heroic behaviour. Medals and awards decorated the body and recognised civilians' role as combatants. As this section illustrates, a notion of heroic capability surrounded the recipients of medals and awards, regardless of how they had been earned. Emphasising the capability of the civilian population was a frequent construction throughout the war. The bodies of the young and old, male and female, in a range of occupations and situations, were decorated in ways which acknowledged wartime achievement.

Firstly, it is important to define what this discussion will refer to as 'capability'. Indeed, medals and awards reveal that capability was a broad characteristic.⁵⁹ Responding capably to a situation enabled civilians to be recognised for their bravery, endurance and fortitude; and emphasised that capability was as much about knowledge and experience, as it was about physical ability and courage. Capability existed as a spectrum of attributes; of resilience in times of hardship, strain or danger, displays of resourcefulness, proficiency and knowledge, or courage, bravery and valour. Medals and awards recognised these skillsets. Yet most significantly, the civilian did not have to be youthful, strong or physically able to be recognised as capable; men and women, the young and old could all be awarded for their heroic capability in wartime. On a national and local level,

⁵⁹ It is important to note that recognising capability was also highly subjective. It relied on conduct being singled out by others as being notable. Moreover, behaviours had to be witnessed and authenticated to be recognised.

representations of capable civilian bodies were frequently connected to saving another individual's life or putting one's own life in danger. Yet this discussion will demonstrate that capability did not always centre upon acts of gallantry; capability could also indicate intellectual or social achievement. Heroism did not always occur in a burst of glory. Moreover, as this discussion will explore, capability was also a gendered construct during wartime, and as such, definitions of capability altered depending on an individual's gender, where their actions were performed, and the way that they were recognised for their behaviour.

Through analysing the relationship between the civilian body and objects of recognition, increased analysis will be provided on how the civilian body was a site where heroic capability was recognised and represented. The notion of capability provides a foundation to examine how war was experienced through the bodies of the civilian population. Indeed, medals and awards, in the way they were earned and received, were deeply rooted in the experience of the civilian body. Civilian bodies were placed in danger, under strain and under pressure in order to earn objects of recognition. Moreover, when they were received and worn medals and awards became embodied objects; they were an extension of an individual's corporeal achievement. In decorating the body in a way which publicly recognised civilians as heroic, the wartime civilian was positioned as a capable wartime combatant. As Jody Joy notes, medals are important social objects; they store meanings and associations that become tied to the lives of people and events.⁶⁰ Yet, as Joy further explains, it is important to recognise that medals are not innately meaningful; they acquire meaning through being socially constructed in a particular way.⁶¹ As such, by analysing how medals and awards imparted meaning on the wearer,

⁶⁰ Joy, 'Biography of a medal: people and the things they value', pp. 132-142 (p. 133).

⁶¹ Ibid.

greater analysis will be provided on how ideals of wartime heroism were shaped and constructed.

However, the following discussion will also illustrate that whilst representations of the decorated civilian body strengthened the notion that all civilians regardless of age or gender were able to be represented as capable, the way civilians were able to interact with this ideal was complex and multifaceted. Indeed, for a body to be publicly valued, it had to conform to ideals and expectations circumscribed by gender, age and occupation.

A Wartime Need for Medals and Awards

During the war, increasing pressure was placed on ensuring that civilians were rewarded for courageous conduct on the Home Front. Medals and awards were used as a way to formally recognise the efforts being undertaken by civilians in a war which was demanding more of each individual. The Second World War was like no other war experienced by the British civilian population. After the relative quiet of the first year of war, 1940 brought increased danger to civilians on the Home Front. On 7th September 1940, London became subject to aerial attack, and as popular historian Juliet Gardiner describes, this day, which became known as Black Saturday, marked the date the Home Front became a front-line battlefield.⁶² Indeed, as Britain's cities became an extension of the battlefield, civilians were transformed into combatants as they were tasked with fuelling the war effort, defending their homes and protecting their fellow citizens. But whilst civilians were expected to engage with dangers which were comparable to that experienced by the armed forces, in 1939, a disparity existed between recognising military and civilian individuals for their contribution to the war effort. Discussions within parliament, the Home Office and in the press, particularly highlighted this disparity

⁶² Juliet Gardiner, *The Blitz: The British Under Attack* (London: Harper Press, 2011) p. xiv.

and stressed the need to reward civilian contribution to the war effort in an equal manner to the armed forces. Growing importance was placed upon decorating the civilian body in a way which reflected their capability and skills as combatants of the Home Front. This narrative was particularly prevalent in September 1940 as the environment of the Home Front became increasingly comparable to the front line. Indeed, a writer for *The People* on 15th September 1940 noted that ‘It has been suggested with excellent reason that the country should bestow decorations upon these valiant “troops,” who change into civilian clothes when their brave work is done. They seek no medals, but I, for one, agree that medals should be struck for them.’⁶³ Three days later, *The Bystander* addressed how a high-class decoration was not available to individuals who had performed gallantly away from enemy action. The article used the Victoria Cross to illustrate its point. It stated, ‘Civilians, including women, can win the Victoria Cross, but they must have been under the order, direction or supervision of naval, military or Air Forces of the Empire.’⁶⁴ It pointed out that due to this, Britain’s civilian heroes were largely excluded from receiving the award.

This disparity was not only recognised by the press; discussions within parliament and the Home Office reveal that concerns were prevalent regarding the adequacy of civilian medals. In a series of letters between Winston Churchill and Lord Chatfield during September 1940, the importance of creating an award of equal importance to the Victoria Cross, which could be earned by the entire Home Front population was stressed.⁶⁵ Churchill also emphasised that decorations should form a prominent part of life on the Home Front:

Now that the country is under sporadic air bombardment, many brave actions are being performed by the A.R.P. Services and also by civilians

⁶³ Man O’ The People, ‘Let’s Talk it Over’, *The People*, 15 September 1940, p. 6.

⁶⁴ A.G. Macdonell, ‘The Passing Hour’, *The Bystander*, 18 September 1940, p. 8.

⁶⁵ TNA, HO 186/2908, ‘Letters between Winston Churchill and Lord Chatfield’, September 1940.

of all kinds. In particular the workmen in all factories engaged on war work must be encouraged to stand to their work under Air Raid warnings. In order to promote the highest standard, I am anxious that a considerable number of recommendations for gallantry and good conduct shall be made every month.⁶⁶

Medals and awards were recognised as important tools in recognising civilian capability. However, they also served as an important political tool in encouraging desirable behaviour.

It is important to note that prior to the Second World War, a range of awards and medals did exist which recognised acts of civilian heroism. However, none equalled the prestige of the Victoria Cross. This disparity reveals why such emphasis was placed upon creating a new medal to recognise extraordinary acts of civilian heroism during wartime.

The Albert Medal, instituted in 1866, marked the first formal recognition of civilian acts of gallantry. It awarded gallantry performed at sea and on land and was divided into two classes: First Class in gold and Second Class in silver. In 1883, The Royal Red Cross was created to award women at home and abroad for their service and devotion to nursing as it had been identified that no official decoration existed to award women for their service. In 1907, the Edward Medal was created, and later divided in 1909 into two strands to award the bravery of miners and industrial workers. In 1909, the Kings Police Medal was instituted to recognise Police Officers and Firemen for distinguished service, it was later renamed in 1940 to the Kings Police and Fire Services Medal to better reflect the eligibility of its recipients.⁶⁷ During the First World War the creation of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire marked a significant step

⁶⁶ TNA, HO 186/2908, 'Letter from Winston Churchill to Lord Chatfield', 14 September 1940.

⁶⁷ 'The King's Police Medal', *The London Gazette*, 09 July 1909, Issue: 28269 p. 5281.

towards recognising civilians for their service in wartime.⁶⁸ It was divided into five grades with Knight and Dame Grand Cross (GBE) at the head, followed by the degrees of Knight or Dame Commander (KBE/DBE), Commander (CBE), Officer (OBE) and finally Member (MBE). Initially there was only one division, but in 1918 it was divided into civil and military divisions. At the same time as the establishment of the Order, the 'Medal of the Order of the British Empire' was also founded, allowing recipients association with the Order, but not membership. In 1922, The 'Medal for the Order for the British Empire' was split into two separate medals, the 'Medal for the Order for the British Empire for Meritorious Service', also known as the British Empire Medal (BEM), and the 'Medal for the Order of the British Empire for Gallantry', also known as the Empire Gallantry Medal (EGM). 'Commendations' or as they later became known, the 'Kings Commendation for Brave Conduct', were created in 1916 to award bravery which did not meet the requirements of a gallantry medal. They fell into disuse after the First World War, but were reintroduced in 1939.

On 23rd September 1940, King George VI made a radio broadcast announcing to the nation the creation of a new medal. His speech publicly recognised the changing nature of warfare and the new dangers that civilians, particularly those in London, were experiencing:

In this battle for Britain, London, the mighty Capital of the Empire, occupies its forefront. Others of our cities are being subjected to the barbarous attacks of the enemy...But it is London that is, for the time being, bearing the brunt of the enemy's spite...Tonight, indeed, we are a nation on guard and in the line. Each task, each bit of duty done, however simple and domestic it may be, is part of our war work. It takes

⁶⁸ 'Central Chancery of the Orders of Knighthood', *The London Gazette*, 24 August 1917, Supplement: 30250 p. 8791.

rank with the sailors, the soldiers and the airman's duty; and the men and women in the factories or on the railways who work on regardless of danger though the sirens have sounded, maintaining all the services and necessities of our common life, and keeping the fighting line well supplied with weapons, earn their place among the heroes of this war...Many and glorious are the deeds of gallantry done during these perilous but famous days. In order that they should be worthily and promptly recognised, I have decided to create at once a new mark of honour for men and women in all walks of civilian life.⁶⁹

This new medal was named the George Cross, and ranked next to the Victoria Cross, the highest award in the British honours system. A George Medal was also created as a lesser counterpart for wider distribution. In appearance, the George Cross was designed to mirror the Victoria Cross. The Cross was made of plain silver, was attached to a dark blue ribbon and featured images of St. George and the dragon on the front. Space remained on the reverse for the award to be inscribed with the name of the recipient and the date of the act of gallantry. In contrast, the George Medal was made of silver, was circular in shape, and attached to a dark red and blue striped ribbon. On the reverse was an image of St. George slaying the dragon.⁷⁰ It is significant that the aerial bombardment which commenced in 1940 changed the level of danger faced by British civilians, and thus altered the way that civilians were recognised for their behaviour. The creation of a new medal also reveals that there was a strong desire to see heroism rewarded amongst the civilian population. The changing nature of warfare caused civilian medals to be reassessed as the centrality of the civilian body to warfare was recognised. Indeed, the creation of the George Cross during the height of the blitz illustrates the way that external

⁶⁹ LHA, His Majesty the King, 'Let Us Be of Good Cheer', *The Listener*, 26 September 1940, broadcast on 23 September 1940, 24:611, pp. 3-4.

⁷⁰ 'For Civilian Bravery', *Birmingham Mail*, 22 November 1940, p. 4.

pressures, most notably the threat of danger, changed the way that the civilian body was perceived. As Kevin McSorley has described, ‘from steeled combatants to abject victims, from the grieving relative to the exhausted aid worker, war occupies innumerable bodies in a multitude of ways, profoundly shaping lives and ways of being human.’⁷¹ Indeed, changes to the way that civilian bodies were decorated reveals how war altered the civilian experience; objects of recognition presented the civilian as capable and competent, and thus celebrated heroic endeavour.

Objects of Recognition: Medals and Awards

The press and media were central in exposing the British civilian population to awards and providing a visual image of medals and their recipients. Through these mediums the British public were most readily exposed to stories which documented the capable nature of the civilian. Whilst it is difficult to ascertain how many people saw medals on a first-hand basis or met recipients of awards, many read stories about them in newspapers or saw footage of recipients in newsreels. Newspapers, the cinema, and the radio provided a valuable means through which information and attitudes towards acts of civilian heroism were spread. As Jeffrey Richards describes, visual mediums such as newsreels, films and documentaries, carefully shape and place their subjects; they are responses to the wider social and political world around them.⁷² It is important to acknowledge that film is both a reflection of the national mood, but also influenced opinion.⁷³ Similarly, newspapers, as Stephen Vella describes, filter out and present information in a way which create categories of thought. They shape the views of the reader by employing a

⁷¹ McSorley, ‘War and the Body’, pp. 1-32 (p. 32).

⁷² Jeffrey Richards, ‘Film and Television: the moving image’, in Sarah Barber and Corinna Peniston-Bird (eds.), *History Beyond the Text: A Student’s Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources* (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 72-88 (p. 78).

⁷³ *Ibid.* p. 87.

framework for understanding particular events.⁷⁴ The spoken word, distributed through radio broadcasts, also served as an important means of communicating the feats of the civilian population.⁷⁵ These mediums were not only central in exposing the population to medals and the feats of their recipients, but also played a central role in constructing and framing behaviour in a heroic manner. This exposure served to position the decorated bodies of heroic civilians firmly in the public sphere.

Notably, civilian medals and awards recognised a spectrum of capability, and through doing so recognised that capability was a central characteristic of heroic endeavour on the Home Front. In order to be awarded for heroic behaviour, it was central for an individual to display skill, knowledge, and emotional fortitude. As Scott Allison and George Goethals describe, competence is a central facet of heroism; competence illustrates ability.⁷⁶ Therefore, a range of medals and awards suggested that all strands of heroism would be awarded, regardless of its scale. The George Cross and George Medal formed the cornerstone for recognising capability amongst the civilian population; as the newest medals for civilian gallantry, they embodied the epitome of civilian capability. As soon as the George Cross and George Medal had been announced, newspapers commented upon its all-inclusive nature. For example, in October 1940, *The Daily Mirror* reminded its readers that ‘Boys and Girls can win [the] George Cross’, but also that all civilians, not only those in the defence services, were eligible for recommendation.⁷⁷ Moreover, in 1941, *The Daily Herald* printed a similar message and reminded its readers that for recommendations for the George Cross ‘there is no distinction between man,

⁷⁴ Stephen Vella, ‘Newspapers’, in Miriam Dobson and Benjamin Ziemann (eds.), *Reading Primary Sources: The Interpretation of Texts from Nineteenth and Twentieth Century History* (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 192-208 (p. 192).

⁷⁵ Paul Readman, ‘Speeches’, in Miriam Dobson and Benjamin Ziemann (eds.), *Reading Primary Sources: The Interpretation of Texts from Nineteenth and Twentieth Century History* (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 209-225 (p. 209).

⁷⁶ Allison and Goethals, *Heroes: What They Do and Why We Need Them*, p. 8.

⁷⁷ ‘Boys, Girls Can Win GC’, *The Daily Mirror*, 17 October 1940, p. 3.

women and youth'.⁷⁸ Medals and awards of a lower status ensured that a range of capability was formally recognised; it was important that a spectrum of commendable behaviour was celebrated in order for the civilian population to be represented as durable and resilient.

Newspaper articles which detailed stories of medal recipients of varying ages served to illustrate how both young and old, strong and fit bodies, were able to demonstrate capability and be rewarded for it. Importantly, medals and awards recognised heroic virtues of competence, skill and composure in dangerous circumstances. Medals attached acclaim to bodily conduct, and singled out specific behaviour. Whereas uniforms standardised the body, medals enhanced its value. For example, attention was drawn to the action of Britain's youth through the publication of stories, such as that of John Cain, a 15-year-old costermonger from Hackney, East London. Cain was awarded a George Medal after he helped to rescue workers from a factory which had been hit by a high explosive bomb, drew attention to the actions of Britain's young people.⁷⁹ In March 1941, the *Birmingham Daily Gazette* described Cain as 'thick set and sturdy, absolutely fearless, and always trying to do someone a good turn.'⁸⁰ The article detailed how Cain's feats were all the more impressive, as when he was born he only weighted 2½ lbs.⁸¹ Moreover, *The Daily Mirror* exclaimed to readers how Cain, or 'Buster' as he became affectionately known in the press, had won the 'Hero Medal at 15', and despite not having shaved yet, he was a 'real man'.⁸² Indeed, newspapers clearly emphasised how Cain, at 15 years old, had showed courage beyond his years; his age made his actions all the more extraordinary. Cain's exploits were also documented in a 1941 newsreel which detailed

⁷⁸ 'Children May Win George Cross', *Daily Herald*, 17 October 1940, p. 1.

⁷⁹ 'We Take Our Hat Off To', *The Sketch*, 02 April 1941, p. 12.

⁸⁰ "'Cotton Wool" Babe a Hero "Buster", GM', *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 22 March 1941, p. 1.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² 'Buster Won Hero Medal at 15', *Daily Mirror*, 22 March 1941, p. 3.

how he had won the medal by helping to save seven lives in the London blitz.⁸³ For Cain, the George Medal was a physical representation of his behaviour. Indeed, Cain's story was complemented by tales where young people across Britain were rewarded for their behaviour. For example, Charity Anne Bick, a 15-year-old dispatch rider from West Bromwich, was awarded the George Medal for her actions during a raid on the night on 19th November 1940. When incendiary bombs began to fall on the local area, Bick assisted her father, an Air Raid Warden, to extinguish incendiary bombs which had lodged themselves in the roof of a local pawn shop. However, during the process Bick fell through the ceiling of the building and into a bedroom below and sustained minor injuries. After recovering from the fall, Bick set out to relay information to the control room that their area needed assistance, as by this time high explosives were falling in the district. On five occasions during her journey, she had to dismount from her bicycle and lie in a gutter to protect herself from falling bombs.⁸⁴ As Warden W.F. Collett, who witnessed Bick's behaviour described, 'although only a girl, she did what many an adult male Warden would hesitate to do, and has set an example of outstanding courage, tact and ability.'⁸⁵ Local papers, including the *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, reported how Bick's behaviour had been recognised through the presentation of the George Medal. As the *Gazette* detailed, 'Miss Bick, by acting as a means of communication between the wardens' post to which she was attached and the control room, did very valuable work and released other wardens for duty. She displayed outstanding courage and coolness in very trying circumstances.'⁸⁶ These gallantry medals celebrated the heroism of Britain's young people and recognised that wartime heroism could be performed by all sectors of

⁸³ BPA, 1111.07, 'Boy of 15 wins George Medal', Pathé Gazette, 1941.

<<https://www.britishpathe.com/video/boy-of-15-wins-the-george-medal/query/Boy+of+15+wins+George+Medal>> [Accessed: November 2017]

⁸⁴ TNA, HO 250/10/330, 'Charity Anne Bick'.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ 'George Medal for Charity Bick: Midland Girl Who Cycled Through Bombs', *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 15 February 1941, p. 6.

society. Medals were embodied objects which carried cultural associations of distinguished conduct and wartime participation. As Saunders notes, it is through the human body that the world is related to and perceived; in wartime the human body and artefacts are joined together.⁸⁷ This was particularly the case for medals; they were transformative objects, and manipulated how the capabilities of the civilian body were constructed. This was particularly significant for children; medals highlighted that Britain's youths and adolescents were no longer in the shadows of modern conflict, as they too could be recognised for their corporeal capabilities.

However, the recognition of heroism among Britain's children and young people questioned the position of children on the Home Front. As Hugh Cunningham describes, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, perceptions of childhood altered, from them being thought of as members of the workforce to being seen as schoolchildren.⁸⁸ Yet, as Cunningham states, wartime highlighted the difficulties associated with 'preserving the territory of childhood'.⁸⁹ As Juliet Gardiner notes, children often undertook hazardous tasks which placed them at considerable risk on the Home Front. Some of these roles included undertaking fire-watching duties, alerting the Emergency Services of fallen incendiary bombs, helping to put bombs out, and those who had a good knowledge of the local area acted as dispatch riders for the police and ARP wardens.⁹⁰ These tasks caused boundaries of exposure to risk to blur; children could no longer be protected as they were exposed to heightened levels of danger through their war work. However, this engagement with danger caused ideals of wartime heroism to broaden; Britain's young people were behaving in the same way as adults. This physical risk caused children to be

⁸⁷ Saunders, 'Material Culture and Conflict: The Great War 1919-2003', pp. 5-25 (p. 9).

⁸⁸ Hugh Cunningham, *Children and Childhood in Western Society Since 1500* (Harlow: Pearson/Longman, 2005) p. 158.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* p. 186.

⁹⁰ Juliet Gardiner, *The Children's War: The Second World War through the eyes of the children of Britain* (London: Portrait, 2005) pp. 137-138.

recognised for their capability as combatants of the Home Front as they too moved into spaces which provided them with the potential to act bravely.

In contrast, Lillian Halle, a 95-year-old resident of Kensington was awarded a letter of Commendation for extinguishing an incendiary bomb on her own when it had crashed into the flats where she lived, even though, as the *West London Observer* described, she was ‘a small frail old lady’.⁹¹ Halle carried sand and water up to her flat roof to extinguish the fire and ensure that it did not spread throughout the building. Only after the fire was smothered did she go to the street to ask for help.⁹² In a similar manner to Cain, Halle’s actions were constructed as extraordinary due to her age and frailty; it was unexpected for an elderly woman to demonstrate such courage and capability. In many ways, medals and awards reflected the inclusivity of wartime decorations, as they were awarded to the old and young, male and female. Medals symbolised the changed nature of wartime heroism.

These cases contrasted with stories such as that of Henry George Davies, Superintendent for London Fire Brigade, who was awarded an M.B.E. for demonstrating leadership, initiative and courage when a fire, started by enemy action, threatened to spread to an important building.⁹³ Davies succeeded in preventing the spread of fire despite very little water being available, and risked his own safety in doing so.⁹⁴ However, in contrast with Cain and Halle, Davies, as a member of the fire service, worked in an occupation where engagement with danger was expected. As detailed in Chapter One, as men in the fire service engaged with spaces of danger their heroic masculinity was reinforced. It was by exceeding his occupational duties, that Davies’ received a

⁹¹ TNA, HO250/11/578, ‘Lillian Halle’.

‘Woman of 99 Put Out Fire Bomb’, *West London Observer*, 24 January 1941, p. 5.

⁹² TNA, HO250/11/578, ‘Lillian Halle’.

⁹³ The location or name of this building was not disclosed in the press.

⁹⁴ ‘Central Chancery of the Orders of Knighthood’, *Supplement to the London Gazette*, 25 July 1941, p. 4251.

decoration. Yet, his case also presented the notion that, at 50 years old, older than the age for national service, extraordinary behaviour was still commended. Though receiving a medal, Davis' was constructed as a valuable member of the Home Front. Moreover, in 1941 the British Empire Medal was awarded to Reginald William La Fosse, a Watchroom Attendant for the London Fire Brigade, for his actions in ensuring that petrol supplies did not run out during an air raid. It was reported in the London Gazette that La Fosse 'acting entirely on his own initiative, obtained a staff car, loaded it with cans of petrol and drove round the district distributing it where required. He carried on with this arduous work, which was not part of his normal duty, regardless of danger from falling debris, until the next morning.'⁹⁵ La Fosse's case illustrated that heroic actions occurred in a manner of forms; importantly his medal highlighted that ideals of heroism did not centre upon saving lives. Heroism also centred upon civic duty. Through being awarded for his initiative and courage, La Fosse's medal validated his capability, and recognised his heroism as a civilian on the Home Front.

Even fictional stories reassured that a spectrum of capability, from all sectors of society, would be recognised through awards and medals. In the 1943 illustrated children's book *Boo-Boo the Barrage Balloon*, it was reiterated that commendable behaviour would be awarded. In the story, Boo-Boo, a brave and patriotic barrage balloon, received a medal for successfully causing the crash of an enemy plane.⁹⁶ The story detailed, 'Boo-Boo was indeed proud and happy that he had done his duty – and helped to save the land he loved.'⁹⁷ As David Welch has described, the book served to communicate the importance of civic responsibility and pride.⁹⁸ Medals which awarded acts of civilian heroism challenged conventional notions of the military hero during times

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ *Boo-Boo the Barrage Balloon* (London: Raphael Tuck and Sons Ltd, 1943).

⁹⁷ Ibid. p.10.

⁹⁸ Welch, *Persuading the People*, p. 76.

of conflict. Whilst the traditional military hero was a figure of masculinity, valour and physical strength, medals illustrated that heroic behaviour in wartime could also be displayed by the ordinary Londoner. Through utilising medals and awards to attach meaning to behaviour performed by civilians on the Home Front, notions of civilian capability shaped understandings of heroic acts. Importantly, medals and awards commended a spectrum of civilian capability, ranging from saving life, to saving property, to exceeding the remits of an occupation and displaying devotion to duty. Medals, as symbols of achievement, embodied civilian contribution and served as an important tool in recognising and reflecting heroic ideals. As Jane Hoskins notes, objects are important vehicles for imagination and inspiration because they are saturated with meaning.⁹⁹ As such, awards ensured that extraordinary behaviour was connected with notions of national duty, citizenship and honour. Medals therefore, renegotiated ideals of heroism as they publicly confirmed the value of the civilian body to the war effort.

In addition, medals and awards served to strengthen the notion that heroic behaviour was being performed by not only Londoners, but also by civilians throughout Britain. Along with recognising a spectrum of capability, decorations reinforced the notion that any civilian had the potential to act capably and be recognised for it. Civilian capability was constructed as a characteristic that could be found within everyone. For example, newspapers which published stories and images of heroic individuals served to reiterate notions of the civilian hero, through providing a visual dimension to the recipient's identity. For example, within each weekly issue, the *Sketch* published a segment 'We Take Off Our Hat To', to praise noteworthy behaviour amongst the population, both at home and abroad. In some issues the segment focused on individuals who had fulfilled a social service, such as Miss Ellen Wilkinson, for being the first to test

⁹⁹ Jane Hoskins, *Bibliographical Objects: How Things Tell the Stories of People's Lives* (London: Routledge, 1998) p. 196.

a steel table shelter in front of Mrs. Winston Churchill and Mr. Herbert Morrison; other segments focused on civilians who had been awarded medals.¹⁰⁰ For example, in January 1941 it was detailed how Sister Catherine McGovern, of the Royal Chest Hospital, London was awarded a George Medal for rescuing patients and Evelyn Harmer, a telephone operator for a Southampton coal company, was awarded the British Empire Medal at the age of 16 for remaining on duty during a daylight raid.¹⁰¹ Other issues featured the story of Mr. Thomas Alderson, an ARP warden from Bridlington, Yorkshire, who was the first man to receive the George Cross from the King, for his devotion to duty during air raids.¹⁰² Similarly, Sidney Ernest George Bradford, a dispatch rider in the London AFS, was praised for winning the George Medal for his bravery.¹⁰³ The issue published on the 9th October 1940 paid particular attention to exclusively recognising civilians and servicemen who had been decorated with the George Cross and George Medal, awards *The Sketch* termed, ‘the King’s new mark of honour.’¹⁰⁴ The issue detailed stories such as that of Dorothy Clarke and Bessie Jane Hepburn, ambulance driver and attendant from Aldeburgh, Suffolk, and winners of the George Medal, alongside, Sapper George Cameron Wylie, a member of the Bomb Disposal squad who removed an unexploded bomb from under St. Pauls Cathedral. By visually positioning stories and images of both civilian and military medal recipients alongside each other in the press, regardless of age, gender and wartime role, new notions of wartime heroism were strengthened.¹⁰⁵ Tales of how civilians had earned medals also confirmed the value of the civilian to the war effort. These stories were from across the nation, and so complemented the behaviour of recipients in London. Reports of medal recipients from across Britain

¹⁰⁰ ‘We Take Off Our Hat To’, *The Sketch*, 19 February 1941, p. 12.

¹⁰¹ ‘We Take Off Our Hat To’, *The Sketch*, 29 January 1941, p. 14.

¹⁰² ‘We Take Off Our Hat To’, *The Sketch*, 28 May 1941, p. 12.

¹⁰³ ‘We Take Off Our Hat To’, *The Sketch*, 26 February 1941, p. 14.

¹⁰⁴ ‘We Take Off Our Hat To’, *The Sketch*, 09 October 1940, p. 20.

¹⁰⁵ However, it is notable that *The Sketch* placed emphasis upon the recipients of the GC and GM; it was particularly this new medal which was celebrated and which was presented as representing capability amongst the civilian population.

illustrated that although Londoners were experiencing the greatest degree of bombardment, civilians nationwide were responding to the offensive in a comparable manner. Moreover, photographs of recipients, which accompanied these articles, served to provide an additional source of information to the reader. They provided a visual image of what capability amongst the civilian population looked like. As Derek Sayer has described, photographs capture the real but they also have the ability to communicate cultural meaning and fulfil a cultural purpose.¹⁰⁶ Thus, civilian medals reconfigured traditional understandings of heroic bodies in wartime; the George Cross and George Medal associated civilian bodies, as well as soldiers, sailors and airmen, with wartime gallantry.¹⁰⁷ In this regard, articles and images which detailed the actions of medal recipients fulfilled an important societal role; they provided readers with a visual image of individuals who were awarded for acts of Home Front heroism.

Whilst medals illustrated that all civilians had opportunities to be decorated, the actions of Civil Defence personnel were particularly celebrated for their capability. Therefore, the extent to which bodily capability was represented equally across ages, genders and occupations is questionable. Indeed, examination of newspaper reports and newsreels reveals that the decorated bodies of Civil Defence, compared with other sectors of the population, were most prominently represented in the press and media. Firstly, it is important to note that individuals in the Civil Defence services overwhelmingly received medals compared with ordinary civilians.¹⁰⁸ In this regard, the reason for such prominent representations in the press was since Civil Defence received such a high proportion of the awards. However, arguably, medals also sought to attach acclaim to

¹⁰⁶ Derek Sayer, 'The Photograph: The Still Image', in Sarah Barber and Corinna Peniston-Bird (eds.), *History Beyond the Text: A Student's Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources* (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 49-71 (pp. 64-65).

¹⁰⁷ These medals contrasted with the decorated bodies of Victoria Cross recipients of the First World War. Victoria Cross recipients pre-1939 reinforced the notion that gallantry medals were earned by soldiers and sailors under enemy attack.

¹⁰⁸ For example, in 1940, out of the 63 George Cross and George Medals that were awarded, 55 went to the Civil Defence services. In 1941, out of the 405 awards, 377 went to Civil Defence.

behaviour which was of social importance; it was important that the Civil Defence services, as the nation's defenders, were seen to be thriving in their defence roles. Medals therefore commended Civil Defence for their ability to cope with the demands of modern war. Newsreels focused upon documenting examples of decorated personnel within the Civil Defence services. Newsreels including, *Heroes of the Battle of Britain* (1940), *Heroes All* (1941) *Heroes Honoured* (1941) and *Home Front Heroes* (1940) all detailed Civil Defence personnel who had received honours, and in doing so, placed emphasis upon the superior capabilities of those in these services. These newsreels, all produced in 1940 and 1941, drew upon the dangerous environment of Britain's bombed cityscapes to emphasise the close proximity between danger, physical sacrifice, and the role that individuals played in earning their medals. Indeed, corporeal accomplishments received particular attention. The newsreels, including *Heroes of the Battle of Britain* and *Home Front Heroes* featured footage of notable Civil Defence individuals, such as Patrick King and Sonia Straw, the first man and one of the first women to be awarded the George Medal, and the Bomb Disposal squad responsible for removing the unexploded bomb from under St. Pauls Cathedral.¹⁰⁹ However, newsreels, such as *Heroes All* and *Heroes Honoured* also showed footage of recipients wearing their medals after investitures at Buckingham Palace.¹¹⁰ Indeed, the presentation of a medal, as Jody Joy notes, carries an important purpose. While the ceremony is intended to make the recipient feel proud and to reward an individual for their actions, its purpose stretches beyond the individual. For the general public, the presentation of medals and the wearing of medals are integral to

¹⁰⁹ BPA, VLVA92QMU1SSH44WTB6KU623LU1OD, 'Heroes of the Battle of Britain', Gaumont British News, 1940.

<<https://www.britishpathe.com/video/VLVA92QMU1SSH44WTB6KU623LU1OD-BATTLE-OF-BRITAIN-MAKES-HEROES-OUT-OF-ORDINARY-PEOPLE/query/Heroes+of+the+Battle+of+Britain>> [Accessed: February 2018]

BPA, 1164.02, 'Home Front Heroes', Pathé Gazette, 1940. <<https://www.britishpathe.com/video/home-front-heroes/query/Home+Front+Heroes>> [Accessed: February 2018]

¹¹⁰ BPA, 1117.37, 'Heroes All', Pathé Gazette, 1941. <<https://www.britishpathe.com/video/heroes-all-1/query/Heroes+all>> [Accessed: February 2018]

BPA, 1115.30, 'Heroes Honoured', Pathé Gazette, 1941. <<https://www.britishpathe.com/video/heroes-honoured-2/query/heroes+honoured>> [Accessed: February 2018]

the establishment of the medal as a meaningful object.¹¹¹ Therefore, footage of recipients wearing medals provided a visual connection between performing heroic behaviour and decorating the body with objects of recognition. Through adornment, the body was an object in itself where capability and competence were reflected. In particular, reports of Civil Defence who had received medals emphasised the connection between occupation, environment and behaviour. In many ways, for the Civil Defence services, medals rewarded expected behaviour. Unlike the elderly resident of a block of flats, individuals in Civil Defence were anticipated to protect and defend their fellow citizens; their proximity to danger created a belief that they would act in a certain way. Medals separated the decorated civilian body from individuals who had simply been reported to have acted bravely; representations in the press depicted an ‘appropriate’ and ‘acceptable’ body and a corporeal capability that the rest of the population could aspire to.

Gendered Capability

However, representations of the recipients of medals reinforced gendered expectations of the body and war. Whilst, as Penny Summerfield and Corinna Peniston-Bird have described, wartime mobilisation served to blur the boundaries between men and women, as women moved into different types of work, definitions of what it meant to be a man or a woman were also reinforced.¹¹² Representations of the recipients of medals in newspapers and newsreels were one way in which these definitions were strengthened. In particular, the most prestigious awards were not only directed towards particular occupations such as the Civil Defence services; they were also directed toward male bodies. As discussed in Chapter One, during bombardment, women’s bodies were frequently exposed to comparable dangers as their male counterparts, yet it was men’s

¹¹¹ Joy, ‘Biography of a medal: people and the things they value’, pp. 132-142 (p. 135).

¹¹² Summerfield and Peniston-Bird, ‘Women in the Firing Line’, 231-255 (p. 232).

bodies that were more widely and highly decorated. As Noakes argues, in Civil Defence, women had to negotiate between models of femininity which emphasised their duty to the home and models of citizenship which emphasised their duty to the wartime nation.¹¹³ Thus, decorated female bodies had to navigate this gender ideal. It was not appropriate for women's bodies to be perceived in the same way as men's; representations of female capability had to conform to their traditionally nurturing and caring role in society. Therefore, it was problematic to decorate women's bodies with medals which reflected equal capability to men's; doing so would publicly challenge constructions of femininity, but also masculinity in wartime. The recipients of medals, and their representation in the press and media, whilst commenting upon an individual's capability, also conformed to gender norms and expectations.¹¹⁴

Descriptions of women who received decorations, whilst emphasising courage and aptitude, also emphasised traditionally feminine characteristics of the nurturing caregiver. Medals which awarded female bravery were often situated within the context of caregiving. For example, in 1941 Patricia Marmion, 24-year-old nurse at the Royal Chest Hospital London, received a George Medal for her actions when her ward was hit by a bomb. In the *Liverpool Daily Post*, Marmion was compared to Florence Nightingale when it was reported she 'carried a male patient downstairs over her shoulders to remove him from a hospital that had been hit by a heavy bomb.'¹¹⁵ Whilst it was significant that Marmion displayed physical strength to save a patient; her actions were fuelled from a desire to save those under her care. A writer in *The People*, even described her as an 'Angel of the Blitz' due to her courage and caring nature.¹¹⁶ Whilst the press emphasised

¹¹³ Noakes, "Serve to Save", 734-753 (p. 752)

¹¹⁴ It seems telling that throughout the war only 3 women received the George Cross, and they were all involved in overseas work for the Special Operations Executive (SOE). This recognition was grounded in the fact that women involved in the SOE, as Juliette Pattinson has described, were trained in armed combat in the same way as men, and were thus very much active agents in war.

¹¹⁵ 'A Nurse's Pluck', *Liverpool Daily Post*, 18 January 1941, p. 4.

¹¹⁶ Piers England, 'Angels of the Blitz', *The People*, 23 February 1941, p. 4.

her gallantry, as a nurse and a woman it was important that Marmion's heroism was constructed in a way which conformed to wartime ideals of occupation and gender. As a nurse, it was expected that she would fulfil her duty and care for those around her. Caregiving heroism was also recognised in the case of an East End doctor, Hannah Billig, who was awarded the George Medal for her work attending to the injured during an air raid. During a raid in March 1941, Billig was attending to casualties when she was thrown down by a blast and broke her leg. Despite her injury, she continued to attend to patients for a further four hours, refusing treatment until all cases were cared for.¹¹⁷ In a comparable way to Marmion, Billig was recognised for her bravery through the way that she behaved within the restraints of expected feminine conduct; fighting for life was a way that women were able to demonstrate their courage and endurance in wartime. As the *London Gazette* reported, 'She showed great bravery and attention to duty, regardless of her personal safety and injuries.'¹¹⁸ Issuing medals to women recognised wartime contribution and good citizenship and constructed a heroic identity around them which was centred on care, courage and compassion.

In contrast, decorated male bodies served to reinforce notions of the masculine protector. For the male body to be publicly celebrated it had to conform to expectations of masculinity. For example, for individuals to receive the George Cross, the highest award for civilian gallantry, behaviour had to embody notions wartime masculinity. For example, in 1941, Leonard John Miles, a London ARP warden was described as having 'a spartan sense of duty' when he was fatally wounded in an explosion.¹¹⁹ While Miles was on duty when a bomb fell in the district where he was working, instead of taking cover he chose to usher residents to safety and was later wounded and died from his injuries. He was posthumously awarded a George Cross. Indeed, the language used in the

¹¹⁷ 'Women Doctors, Nurses Honoured', *Daily Herald*, 28 June 1941, p. 3.

¹¹⁸ 'Central Chancery of the Orders of Knighthood', *The London Gazette*, 24 June 1941, p. 3646.

¹¹⁹ 'Spartan Sense of Duty', *Liverpool Daily Post*, 18 January 1941, p. 4.

press to report on the case drew heavily upon his physical capabilities; descriptions particularly referred to characteristics of bravery, initiative and courage. It is notable that Miles, a warden, was compared to a Spartan, an individual legendary for their warrior prowess. Miles' behaviour embodied masculine heroism during wartime, as he was willing to sacrifice his own body to ensure the safety of others, even if it meant dying for the cause. Yet as Miles died from his wounds, his medal was never worn by him. Instead, Miles' George Cross functioned as a physical signifier of his actions; saturated with meanings of bodily sacrifice and contribution. In addition, George William Smith, a warden from Stoke Newington, North London, was awarded the British Empire Medal for helping to rescue individuals trapped in a wrecked building. Smith used his 6ft. 1in. frame to act as a human pillar and support a beam so that the civilians beneath it could be rescued. As the *Daily Mirror* reported, Smith, otherwise known as Lofty to his friends, used every ounce of his strength to complete the task.¹²⁰ Clearly, Smith's heroism centred upon the way he was able to use physical power to assist others. Through awarding these individuals with objects of recognition, behaviour was constructed in a way which commended traditionally masculine traits of courage, physical strength, and self-sacrifice. In contrast to women who were decorated for their heroism, medals served to validate the physical capability and protective role of men on the Home Front. As Sonya Rose explains, 'Male heroism on the battle front, and its rough equivalent on the Home Front were common representations that connected masculinity with heroic conduct.'¹²¹ Representations of medals and their recipients, both male and female, drew heavily upon bodily feats. However, male recipients who were decorated with the highest medals were depicted as possessing the most capable bodies. Thus, whilst medals were given to all civilians, it was the achievements of strong male bodies that were the most highly celebrated. These decorated male bodies served to reinforce cultural notions of masculine

¹²⁰ 'Human 'Prop' Saves Eleven', *Daily Mirror*, 28 June 1941, p. 2.

¹²¹ Rose, *Which People's War*, p. 153.

conduct, particularly that of the soldier hero who was physically able to protect and fight for his nation. The ideal of the soldier hero, as Graham Dawson explains, drew upon notions of courage, endurance and physical fitness.¹²² However, when examining the relationship between medals and the body, the term ‘temperate hero’, as presented by Sonya Rose, is perhaps more appropriate. As Rose states, this temperate hero was both a mix of both traits of the soldier hero and the ordinary man.¹²³ The heroic masculinity which was awarded on the Home Front was tempered, combining the good humour and kindness of the ordinary man with the bravery and physical vigour of the soldier hero. Representations of the most prestigious medals celebrated these ideals, and for male heroism to be publicly celebrated, their behaviour had to conform to these expectations.

Decorated civilian bodies in the press and media celebrated the physical achievements of the body. Importantly, an array of medals and awards ensured that a spectrum of capability was commended; the actions of the young and old, male and female all engaged with ideals of courage and civic duty. However, for bodies to be seen as capable they had to conform to cultural expectations surrounding gender, age and occupation. Indeed, during the Second World War, the decorated civilian body acted as a site for the articulation of cultural norms to be expressed, and as such, decorated civilian bodies symbolised an idealised image of Home Front heroism. Adorning the civilian body with objects of recognition attached the body with special symbolic significance, these medals validated behaviour. As such, the decorated civilian also became an object of nationwide emotional value. In 1942, a writer for *The Listener* debated the purpose of medals. They recognised that medals represented more than simply a reward.

What I asked myself is the real purpose behind the award of a medal?

They are not rewards, of course, in the ordinary sense of the word – that

¹²² Dawson, *Soldier Heroes*, pp. 11-13.

¹²³ Rose, *Which People's War*, p. 162.

is to say, they cannot be looked upon merely as a payment. They are in fact just the opposite: they are an acknowledgement, a public acknowledgement of debt, a debt which the nation owes to a citizen whose service has been rendered without counting the cost to himself.¹²⁴

Therefore, through recognising civilian capability, wartime medals and awards fortified the emotional strength of the Home Front population. They encouraged appropriate behaviour and embodied idealised heroism.

Capability Without the Courage

Medals did not only reward behaviour which was connected with saving life, property, or risking one's own life in the line of duty. Indeed, capability could be demonstrated through success and achievement in other areas. Medals and awards also reiterated that mental ability was as important as physical courage. Examination of award recommendations submitted to the wartime Gallant Awards Committee illustrates that civilians were also recognised as capable without placing their lives in danger. For example, James Reginald Howard Roberts, a solicitor and parliamentary officer, received a C.B.E. for his work advising London County Council on the legal aspects of Civil Defence and allied war-time problems, ensuring the petrol supply to Civil Defence vehicles and other emergency and normal services, and for the acquisition, maintenance and repair of Civil Defence and National Fire Service vehicles.¹²⁵ His capability centred upon his expertise and logistical abilities. Moreover, William Stanley Grove received an M.B.E for his work as a Works Foreman in Wandsworth, South London. He was

¹²⁴ LHA, Cicely Hamilton, 'Medals and their Meanings', *The Listener*, 4 June 1942, Vol 27. Issue 699. p. 717.

¹²⁵ TNA, HO 207/328, 'James Reginald Howard Roberts'.

'Central Chancery of the Orders of Knighthood', *The London Gazette*, 28 December 1945, p. 51.

recognised for his work managing a team who were responsible for converting and repairing vehicles to be part of the fleet of Civil Defence.¹²⁶ In his award recommendation it was noted that,

It is largely due to Mr. Grove's enthusiastic leadership and his efforts to impart to others his own skill...that the vehicles of the Council's Civil Defence Services were able to keep running through five years of work under conditions which were much more severe than those for which they were initially intended.¹²⁷

In addition, Ellen Margaret Lawrence was recommended the B.E.M for her 'constant good work' as a welfare advisor in the London County Council Rest Centre Service.¹²⁸ These cases illustrate how civilian conduct could be identified as noteworthy even though behaviour was not directly connected with displays of physical strength, life-saving or self-sacrifice; medals ensured that their actions were presented as noteworthy. War disrupted the way that acts of heroism were perceived. During periods of conflict notions of heroism were reconfigured so that a spectrum of capability was recognised and commended. Instead, these individuals were recognised for behaviour that was crucial if war on the Home Front was to operate effectively.

Furthermore, the 'Dig for Victory' Competition, created in 1940, by the Ministry of Agriculture, sought to reward Londoners for their horticultural ability. It positioned the winners as proficient cultivators of the land; they were the victors in the battle for food production. The winners of the competition showed that their allotment plots were the best cultivated and were able to produce a continuous supply of vegetables for a

¹²⁶ TNA, HO 207/328, 'William Stanley Grove'.

'Central Chancery of the Orders of Knighthood', *The London Gazette*, 28th December 1945, p. 294.

¹²⁷ TNA, HO 207/328, 'William Stanley Grove'.

¹²⁸ TNA, HO 207/328, 'Ellen Margaret Lawrence'.

household throughout the year.¹²⁹ As rewards, winners received monetary prizes or Cups.¹³⁰ In contrast to awards which celebrated physical sacrifice, these awards illustrated a different manner of capability; they rewarded individuals for fighting the battle for food, even if this battle was fought in the vegetable plot. As the *West London Observer* detailed in 1942, as well as recognising outstanding horticultural achievement, the competition led to the creation of allotments throughout London which provided an immense contribution to the national food supply.¹³¹ These awards signified accomplishment, and although the feats in the allotment remained distinctly separate from acts of bravery performed under bombardment, horticultural awards reflected notions of community heroism. Dig for Victory awards recognised that battles were also being fought figuratively on the land.

It is important to note that not all awards had a physical medal or badge to accompany them. Whilst national and regional awards served to publicly recognise certain behaviour, it is significant that the awards themselves varied in their form and appearance. Whilst this point is beyond the remit of this chapter, it is important to acknowledge that absent medals may have affected the way that heroic virtues remained connected to their recipients. Indeed, in many ways, medals reflected a temporary heroism which was firmly connected to a specific moment in time. Whereas some awards such as the George Cross and George Medal, were connected with a physical medal, other awards had no physical medal attached to them. Instead, some awards were simply recognised through a certificate or letter. As such, it is important to question how absent medals affected constructions of heroic behaviour. This problem of absent medals was one which was discussed amongst the ‘Committee on the Grant of Honours, Decorations and Medals in the Time of War 1939-1940’. The committee specifically discussed the

¹²⁹ ‘The Best Diggers for Victory to get Awards’, *The Daily Mirror*, 4 June 1940, p. 4.

¹³⁰ ‘Dig for Victory Winners’, *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, 13 November 1942, p. 14.

¹³¹ ‘Dig for Victory: Competition Results’, *West London Observer*, 06 November 1942, p. 6.

problem associated with Commendations only having a certificate, and suggested that an ‘outward sign’ such as a badge should be worn in order to ‘benefit morale’.¹³² The committee questioned how people’s achievements would be recognised if they had nothing to adorn themselves with. Clearly, the absence of medals to attach to the body seemed problematic if displays of heroic capability were to be publicly acknowledged. If there was no medal to be worn, to what extent did heroic associations transcend the moment that heroism was performed and acknowledged? Moreover, when a medal was present, it is also important to question the extent which it was worn beyond the award ceremony; after all, medals were precious objects and were unlikely to be worn in day-to-day life. Arguably therefore, medals and awards represented civilian behaviour as heroic, but in a way which was fluctuating and temporal. Whilst this chapter has discussed how medals and awards constructed a heroic status around particular behaviour, further research could explore how this heroic status transcended the act of recognition.

Conclusions

During wartime, clothing and medals created an expectation of heroism and rewarded and recognised it. On the Home Front, the body was a site that communicated heroic conduct. As this chapter has illustrated, the relationship between the body and objects was complex; war transformed civilians into embodied beings. The state provision of uniforms transformed individuals in the Civil Defence services into combatants of the Home Front; bodies were militarised as wartime responsibilities and duties altered. The militarisation of civilian bodies through uniforms surrounded wearers with an expectation that they were prepared to face the dangers and responsibilities that a profession required. Uniforms, badges of rank and service chevrons changed the status of the civilian body,

¹³² TNA, HO 186/2908, ‘Committee on the Grant of Honours, Decorations and Medals in the time of War 1939-1940: Mention in Dispatches and Commendations’.

and suggested that the wearer had the potential of performing heroically when tasked with defending the nation. In contrast, medals and awards were symbols of civilian capability and validated heroic behaviour. Medals rewarded men and women of varying ages for a spectrum of heroics, ranging from bravery under enemy attack, or providing support during moments of need. Medals demonstrated that civilians were withstanding the dangers and demands of life on the Home Front. It was important for national morale that individuals were rewarded for notable behaviour to reflect the courage and fortitude that existed within the British people. Indeed, during the Second World War, the decorated civilian body acted as a site for the articulation of cultural norms to be expressed, and as such, decorated civilian bodies embodied an idealised image of Home Front heroism.

Chapter Three

Sustaining Injury: Wounded Bodies and Heroism

In the September 1940 issue of the "B Twenty-One" magazine of Lewisham's warden's post, a poem featured on the last page which encapsulated the ways civilians were expected to safeguard their bodies from physical and mental harm. The poem emphasised that through protecting their physical and mental wellbeing, workers would be of greater value to the war effort.

Waste

Mental waste of energy is just as great a crime,
As waste of food and paper at the present anxious time.
Mustn't spend out worries on a needless trivial thing,
or use reserves of pluck on a groundless happening.
Mustn't throw away our strength on useless work and thought.
Which may be needed even more when health is running short.
Mustn't waste our courage on bravado or contempt,
Thinking danger comes to others leaving us exempt;
Nor yet allow our nerves to be attacked, for, when dismayed,
We shall be hindering the very cause that we should aid.¹

However, the poem also highlighted the ways in which civilians could sustain physical and mental injuries; from worry, from overwork, from acts of boldness, during periods of danger, or during moments of distress.

¹ 'Waste', *The "B Twenty One" Magazine Journal Of Warden's Post B21 Lewisham*, Volume 1, No. 1, Sep-40.

The Second World War positioned Britain's civilian population as central to wartime production and defence, yet, it also placed them at greater risk of being wounded. Once the German raiders reached the British mainland in 1940, civilians were exposed to indiscriminate attack as cities and towns across the nation were targeted. As the battlefield stretched beyond the front lines and into the houses and streets of the nation, civilians sustained injuries that were comparable to those experienced by the armed forces. Within London, aerial bombardment was the most violent and dangerous aspect of war; responsible for killing and injuring civilians to a greater extent than other methods of wartime conflict. The capital was not only central to the war effort, it experienced the greatest degree of enemy attack. As such, Londoners were at greater risk of injury and death than the rest of the country. During the war, 41 percent of flying bombs fell on London and 49 percent of rockets. Out of an estimated total of 147,000 fatal or serious casualties in the British Isles, over half occurred in London.² More than ever before, civilians were exposed to the dangers of falling buildings, exploding bombs and fires in the vicinity of their homes and livelihoods, and as a consequence, the bodies and minds of civilians were both temporarily and permanently altered by war. However, risk of injury and death did not only come from the skies, civilians were also at risk of injury whilst at work, in the streets and in their homes. Injuries were sustained in a range of ways. Yet, as this chapter will illustrate, injuries sustained during wartime were represented differently depending on whether they were caused by enemy action, through workplace accidents, or on the roads. Whether injury occurred at home or at work, civilians became casualties of war, although the extent to which this was formally recognised and represented varied.

² Around 80,000 casualties occurred in London alone. For more information see: Ziegler, *London at War*, p. 337.

This chapter will explore the ways that civilian injury was constructed and represented during wartime. As we will see, maintaining civilian health was a priority during the war; healthy men and women were vital to Britain's wartime strategy. Therefore, it is important to explore how civilian injury was constructed in a period where physical and mental health was of critical importance. Indeed, exploring how civilian injury was represented reveals that the healthy civilian was a valued commodity on the Home Front; it was an individual's duty to remain fit and healthy. However, it also reveals that sustaining injuries, in some instances, aligned the civilian with ideals of war-time heroism, namely self-sacrifice and national duty. Through differentiating between the ways that civilians were injured on the Home Front, this chapter explores how wounds sustained by enemy action were represented differently to injuries sustained from accidents in the workplace or wider community. Notably, injuries caused by enemy action enabled the civilian to be aligned with the identity of the wounded combatant; the injured were represented as individuals who were willing to sacrifice life and limb in the name of victory. Indeed, wounding was a physical reminder of how the relationship between civilians and war had changed. As bombardment brought conflict to the Home Front, civilian bodies were maimed, mutilated and injured in a comparable manner to the armed forces; yet, it was the way that civilians were presented as stoically responding to these injuries that enabled civilians to take on the mantle of the war hero.

Firstly, this discussion will explore the pre-war anticipation of civilian casualties, to provide an understanding of how war was expected to impact upon the civilian population, before discussing the reality and nature of civilian casualties. Secondly, this chapter will examine the way that injuries were both sustained and prevented. It will place particular attention on exploring the relationship between the way injury was caused and how it was subsequently represented in the public domain. A central theme that will weave throughout this discussion is how the wounded civilian was able to engage with

wartime ideals surrounding bodily sacrifice and heroism. This chapter will place the body at the centre of thinking about wartime heroism; the body was a site where physical injuries acted as markers of heroic conduct. Through examining a wealth of material, including posters, information booklets, parliamentary discussions, wartime acts and policies, this chapter will explore how injury was represented, and how constructions of injury on the Home Front shaped ideals of heroic behaviour amongst the civilian population.

It is important to clarify what this discussion will refer to as the ‘civilian war wounded’. In addition to official statistics of civilian casualties, which focus on the number of civilians who were wounded ‘directly due to operations of war’³, this discussion will also consider the individuals who were injured on the road, from factory and industrial work, or in the home or wider community as a result of wartime conditions. It will consider the ways that wartime impacted upon the civilian. Bodies were wounded directly from enemy action, but they were also injured during fire-guard practice, in air transport accidents, or from the inhalation of poisonous substances.⁴ Minds also experienced strain from fatigue, work, from the threat of danger; and in some cases, this strain translated into physical ailments such as gastrointestinal disorders.⁵ Injuries and wounding occurred in ways other than directly due to operations of war; the threat of injury did not only come from the skies. Perhaps, therefore, the term ‘war-related injury or trauma’ is more relevant to this discussion when examining the range of ways that civilians were injured on the Home Front. If this definition is applied, the numbers of civilians wounded from war related circumstances are impossible to estimate; statistics which document non-operational injuries mean that it is difficult to ascertain which

³ Mellor, *Casualties and Medical Statistics*, p. 804.

⁴ Mellor, *Casualties and Medical Statistics*, p. 740.

⁵ Edgar Jones, ‘‘The Gut War’’: Functional somatic disorder in the UK during the Second World War’, *History of the Human Sciences*, 25:5 (2012), 30-48 (p.40).

injuries would have naturally occurred in peacetime and which were a product of war. It is beyond the remit of this chapter to estimate the numbers of civilians injured from enemy action or war work. Equally, instead of focusing on the prevalence of specific injuries, such as burns or fractures, anxiety and neurosis, this discussion will consider the relationship between the identity of the wounded and the way in which injury occurred; the role of an individual within a specific environment was central in shaping the way that an injury was constructed and represented.

Civilian Injury and War

Despite civilians representing a significant proportion of casualties during the Second World War, relatively little historical discussion has focused on exploring their identity as the war wounded when compared with studies of casualties within the armed forces. Instead, current studies have largely focused on how war impacted on civilian physical and psychological health, or how the role of civilians on the Home Front evolved during wartime. For example, Michal Shapira's research into British psychoanalysis during the war demonstrates how civilian emotions were conceptualised and shaped by psychological experts and led to a new social concept of anxiety.⁶ Shapira's work explains how increased numbers of civilian casualties in the Second World War led to debates on mental health to extend from the combatant to the civilian population, and how, the stigma around fear, anxiety and panic reduced.⁷ Edgar Jones, Robin Woolven, Bill Durodié and Simon Wessely's collective study into civilian morale during air raids explores the psychological effect of bombing, revealing that mental illness did not increase significantly throughout the war, with civilians instead proving more resilient than

⁶ Michal Shapira, *The War Inside: Psychoanalysis, Total War, and the Making of the Democratic Self in Postwar Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015) p. 46.

⁷ *Ibid.*

planners predicted.⁸ Hospital studies, such as that performed by David Pearce provide a rich resource for understanding how hospitals were reorganised and managed during wartime. Pearce's case study of the Devon and Exeter Mental Hospitals shows that the civilian psychiatric inpatient population experienced overcrowding, boredom and separation from their families as a result of hospital reorganisation to make room for war casualties.⁹

Discussion of civilian injury generally appears within broader, more comprehensive texts on the Second World War or the Blitz. Susan Grayzel, in her comparative study of air raids from the Great War to the Blitz, discusses how air raids transformed the relationship between combatant and civilians. Grayzel demonstrates that as air warfare became a central part of modern conflict, the vulnerability of civilians was heightened as they became targets of war.¹⁰ Moreover, Juliet Gardiner's study of the Blitz weaves stories of civilian wounding within her discussion to illustrate the devastation that was experienced by citizens throughout Britain.¹¹ Similarly, in Angus Calder's seminal study *The People's War*, stories of injury and death highlight the destruction that aerial warfare brought to Britain's population.¹² Similarly, Helen Jones has noted how civilians were exposed to new risks on the Home Front, dangers that were particularly heightened during air raids.¹³ As Jones has described, risks of injury and death were spread unequally across the civilian population, with those in paid work, especially war-related work at the greatest risk of injury.¹⁴ In contrast, Juliette Pattinson, Arthur McIvor and Linsey Robb have discussed how heavy industry heightened the risks posed to workers bodies. As they

⁸ Edgar Jones et. al., 'Civilian Morale During the Second World War: Responses to Air Raids Re-Examined', *Social History of Medicine*, 17:3 (2004), 463-479 (p. 478).

⁹ David Pearce, 'Evacuation and deprivation: the wartime experience of the Devon and Exeter City Mental Hospitals', *History of Psychiatry*, 22:3 (2011), 332-343 (p. 342).

¹⁰ Grayzel, *At Home and Under Fire*, p. 2-3.

¹¹ Gardiner, *The Blitz*, pp. 185-190.

¹² Calder, *The People's War*, pp. 158-159; pp. 168-169.

¹³ Jones, *British Civilians in the Front Line*, p. 60.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

detail, working class men in particular experienced an increased risk of bodily damage in the workplace. Whilst workers were encouraged to remain fit and healthy, the injuries men experienced through employment served to validate their personal sense of masculinity.¹⁵ While this work will build upon the current literature surrounding civilian injury and particularly the heroic identity of civilians as casualties of war, it will also explore how perceptions of injury were contextualised alongside contribution to the war effort.

Civilian Casualties: Estimates and Reality

Although air warfare was used to the greatest degree during the Second World War, targeting the Home Front was not a new phenomenon. In the First World War, Britain was attacked as part of the new offensive from the air, and for the first time, civilians became casualties of war. London was heavily targeted. The Zeppelin Raids of 1915 and 1916 and the Gotha Raids of 1917 and 1918 marked the two main attacks on London. This bombing campaign aimed to disrupt industrial production, the transport of goods across the Channel, and strike at the morale of the British population.¹⁶ However as London's metropolis was placed under fire, its population were exposed to the destructive nature of air attack. Hundreds of Londoners were killed and injured during this period. In London, the first phase of these raids killed 181 and injured 504 inhabitants, and the second phase killed 486 and injured 1,432.¹⁷ One of the worst raids experienced during the First World War was on 13th June 1917, where 14 Gothas flew over the East End, killing 162 and injuring 426.¹⁸ During this raid 18 schoolchildren were also killed at the

¹⁵ Pattinson, McIvor and Robb, *Men in Reserve*, pp. 205-210.

¹⁶ Ian Castle, *The First Blitz: Bombing London in the First World War*. (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc: 2015) p. 104.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* p. 191.

¹⁸ Ziegler, *London at War*, p. 9.

Upper North Street primary school, in Poplar, East London, when a bomb fell through the roof of the school building.¹⁹ As Philip Ziegler describes, whilst the total deaths from bombing in London were relatively small during the Great War, the psychological shock of this carnage was great.²⁰ For the first time, warfare targeted domestic spaces, and thus, civilian bodies were both physically and psychologically altered by war. As Susan Grayzel explains, the technological advances of air warfare during the First World War served to challenge the idea that the Home Front and war front were separate; and the damage wrought to civilians, both the young and old, illustrated that civilians, as well as the armed forces could experience the dangers of war.²¹

Moreover, the bombing of Barcelona during the Spanish Civil War between 1936 and 1939 again positioned urban spaces as the targets of aerial attack. As Frances Lannon describes, when nationalist planes targeted large cities and small country towns across Spain, distinctions between battlefronts were blurred as civilians became the focus of attack.²² The aerial bombardment experienced during the First World War and during the Spanish Civil War acted as a valuable resource for the British Government to predict how future wars might impact upon civilian populations. With developments in warfare techniques and advances in science and technology, fears mounted throughout the 1920s and 1930s over the levels of destruction that enemy action would bring to the civilian population if air warfare was to play a large part in any future conflict. In the years leading up to the Second World War, casualty estimates were calculated so that precautions could prepare for high numbers of wounded; these estimates heavily focused upon the impact of aerial attack. For instance, in a 1939 letter to Walter Elliot, Minister of Health, the estimated casualty figures were discussed. It stated that if 600 tons of bombs were

¹⁹ Castle, *The First Blitz*, pp. 122-123.

²⁰ Ziegler, *London at War*, p. 9.

²¹ Grayzel, *At Home and Under Fire*, pp. 68-69.

²² Frances Lannon, *The Spanish Civil War: 1936–1939* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2002) p. 72.

dropped daily, 17,500 deaths and 35,000 casualties could be expected to occur across the country in a single day, with the possibility of this number alone arising in London.²³ However, discussion of casualty figures not only focused upon the numbers of physically injured, they also discussed the likelihood of psychological injury. In an article published in the *British Medical Journal* in September 1939, the potential of psychiatric casualties was stressed.

In any war with modern weapons of destruction...psychiatric casualties, will be much the same in character, although the proportion of the different types of casualty may vary...It is recognised by all thinking men and women, medical or lay, that the psychiatric casualties in the present war, of the character we are told we must envisage, may have even more far-reaching effects than physical casualties, loss of life, or material destruction.²⁴

Indeed, it is clear that by the start of the Second World War, the potential vulnerability of the civilian population had been acknowledged; physical injuries, psychological harm and injury amongst the civilian population was accepted as an inevitable product of warfare. Modern conflict had blurred battlefield lines and threatened to mutilate and maim the bodies of both civilian and servicemen.

However, casualty numbers did not materialise in the way that British authorities expected. On Saturday 7th September 1940, the first night of intensive bombardment commenced. Explosives landed on the East End of London and by the morning over 430 people had died and 1600 had been seriously wounded.²⁵ During the first week of the

²³ TNA, MH 76/129, 'Letter to Walter E. Elliot, Ministry of Health', pp. 1-3.

²⁴ Maurice B. Wright, 'Psychological Emergencies in War Time', *British Medical Journal*, 2:4105 (1939) p.576.

²⁵ Ministry of Information, *Front Line 1940-41: The Official Story of the Civil Defence of Britain* (London: HMSO, 1942) p. 12.

blitz, in London alone, approximately 1,286 individuals were killed and 5,699 injured.²⁶ By the end of the war, 146,777 civilians were believed killed or seriously injured throughout the country, with over 80,000 arising in London.²⁷ These casualty figures were far lower than anticipated. For example, on October 15th 1940, 538 tons of high explosives were dropped on London, which by pre-war estimates was expected to cause 25,000 casualties; as it was, 400 civilians were killed and 900 injured.²⁸ Yet, despite relatively low casualty rates, civilians were injured and killed in greater numbers than they had been previously; war injuries were sustained that had rarely been experienced in such high numbers by the civilian population. Although civilians were wounded in a multitude of ways, the spaces that injury occurred and the circumstances that resulted in injury were central to the way that injury was constructed and presented. The following discussion will explore how causes of injury impacted upon the way that wounding was publicly represented. Indeed, the civilian body is an important site to explore cultural understandings of wounding in wartime. Physical and psychological injury carried important cultural meaning during periods of conflict, wounds could suggest carelessness, duty and sacrifice, occupational contribution, or defencelessness and vulnerability. Of particular interest to this discussion is the way that representations of the injured civilian aligned civilians with ideals of wartime heroism. In particular circumstances, the wounded civilian was represented as sacrificing their bodies in the fight for national victory.

²⁶ TNA, CAB 66/12/2, 'War Cabinet, Estimate of Casualties in Air Raids', 16 September 1940.

²⁷ Carol Harris, *Blitz Diary: Life Under Fire in World War II* (Gloucestershire: The History Press, 2010) p. 187.

²⁸ Calder, *The People's War*, p. 168.

Damaged Bodies and Distressed Minds

Civilians experienced both physical and psychological wounding in wartime. Injuries, scars and disfigurements were visible marks of war. Psychological distress signified a less visible injury. Indeed, during wartime, the civilian, as well as the military body was a site to understand the destructive nature of war. However, injuries, both physical and psychological were also a way for identities to be understood. The way an individual was injured, and the circumstance in which injury occurred shaped the way that injury was framed in the public domain. Indeed, as injury was experienced both on the Home Front and the overseas battlefield, the boundary between combatant and non-combatant shifted, as such, distinctions of who was represented as heroic was blurred; wounding caused by enemy action was a catalyst which caused ideals of heroism to expand from the military and into the civilian realm.

Firstly, it is important to consider how injuries sustained in wartime were perceived prior to 1939 in order to understand how the identity of the wounded combatant evolved throughout the twentieth century. During the First World War, experiences of death and destruction shaped the way that physical and mental injuries were perceived. War wounds strengthened cultural understandings of masculinity, sacrifice, soldierly conduct and ideals of the military hero in wartime. During the Great War, the devastation that was experienced by the armed forces, the civilian population, and when the war wounded returned home, shaped the way that disfigurement and death were perceived. As warfare techniques evolved, casualty numbers increased, yet, advances in medicine also meant that greater numbers of individuals survived their injuries. These individuals either returned to duty or returned home. Indeed, understanding the way that injury was perceived in the First World War and interwar period helps to contextualise the way that injury and heroism were perceived after 1939. As Emily Mayhew describes, on the Western Front, the risk of being wounded was so great that every other British soldier

could expect to become a casualty.²⁹ Thousands of British men were injured and killed during the First World War, and the injuries that they sustained were central to how their war experience was conceptualised. The way that wounds were perceived, whether they were mental or physical, and whether an individual survived or died from their wounds, were fundamental to how an individual's contribution towards the war effort was constructed. As Mayhew explains, the casualties of the First World War were different from previous conflicts. Clean bullet wounds of the nineteenth century were replaced by ballistic trauma which tore the body apart. Flesh was torn and bones were shattered, and as a result many men bled to death or died of shock before they could receive medical attention.³⁰ Those that survived experienced mutilation in various forms. As Julie Anderson explains, thousands of servicemen were blinded, deafened, lost limbs, were facially disfigured, or lost their sanity.³¹ Upon returning home, these individuals could not escape public life and the public gaze. As Jeffrey Reznick contends, the mental and physical wounds sustained during the Great War shaped the identity of the Great War soldier through the way that he was perceived by government officials, care providers and the public.³² It is therefore important to question how injury and death created a heroic identity which surrounded those who were wounded. As Ana Carden-Coyne suggests, during the First World War, sustaining a visible wound enabled a soldier to engage with the status of the soldier hero. Providing it was not a severe disability or a mental illness, physical injury and the scars that remained, were of important social value as they enabled the wounded to engage with ideals of masculinity and duty, and the promised status of the soldier hero.³³ As Carden-Coyne notes, military patients often exaggerated their

²⁹ Emily Mayhew, *Wounded: The Long Journey Home from the Great War* (London: Vintage, 2014) p. 1.

³⁰ Mayhew, *Wounded*, p. 5.

³¹ Anderson, *War, Disability and Rehabilitation in Britain*, p. 43.

³² Jeffrey Reznick, *Healing the Nation: Soldiers and the Culture of Caregiving in Britain During the First World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004) p. 117.

³³ Ana Carden-Coyne, *The Politics of Wounds: Military Patients and Medical Power in the First World War*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014) p. 233.

stories of wounding through including experiences of violence, risk and danger, in order to engage with ideals of masculinity and soldierly heroism.³⁴ This type of wounding during the First World War, Joanna Bourke explains, established that being injured in combat, particularly, if it involved losing a limb, made someone a noble hero.³⁵ Indeed, soldiers' mutilations symbolised 'badges of their courage'.³⁶ However, as Julie Anderson explains, during the First World War, individuals who had been disabled as a result of their injuries experienced scrutiny as the value of their bodies was measured. The way in which a disability was caused and its resulting impact on the human body elicited different responses from society.³⁷

The experience of total war during the First World War laid the foundations for the way that wartime injury was presented by the state between 1939 and 1945. As the boundary between the military and civilian combatant was blurred during the Second World War, understandings of who constituted the war wounded and what was defined as a war injury was also distorted. The widespread injury and death that occurred on the Home Front as well as the battlefield was a constant reminder that civilians' role in wartime had evolved. As we will see, the way that civilian injury was represented in the public domain constructed a number of identities surrounding the war wounded. Exploring how injuries were sustained within London is particularly important when analysing the construction of the heroic war wounded. As the metropolis where the greatest number of civilians were injured, London was unique, yet the experience of Londoners also embodied the experience of civilians across the nation. Indeed, when examining how ideals of heroism evolved during wartime, it is important to consider the way that war injuries defined civilians as combatants, like the armed forces, but also as

³⁴ Ibid. p. 232.

³⁵ Joanna Bourke, 'Suffering and the Healing Profession. The Experience of Military Medicine in the First and Second World Wars', in Ken Arnold, Klaus Vogel, and James Peto (eds.), *War and Medicine* (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2008), pp. 108-125 (p.115).

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Anderson, *War, Disability and Rehabilitation in Britain*, p. 42.

combatants in their own right. Notably, as civilians sustained war injuries in different circumstances to soldiers, sailors and airmen, the civilian war wounded represented a new strand of wartime combatant. The following section will explore the notion of the heroic war wounded in depth by separating the discussion into two themes. Firstly, this chapter examines the way that injuries were prevented, and how an expectation centred upon each civilian to remain strong and healthy as part of their national duty. Secondly, the discussion will explore how the civilian war wounded were represented when injuries were sustained. Importantly, heroic virtues were constructed in relation to how injuries were caused, whether from enemy action, or through accidents at work or in the wider community.

The Dutiful Body: Preventing Injuries

As the Second World War altered peacetime living conditions and introduced civilians into new spaces of conflict the risk of injury increased; as a result, the numbers of people being wounded on the Home Front grew. Injuries were not only sustained as a result of aerial bombardment, people were injured at work, in the community and at home. Throughout the war, attention was dedicated to preventing injuries through educational campaigns which sought to recommend appropriate behaviour. In the workplace and at home, these campaigns were an important way for the state to safeguard the population against injury. As Pattinson, McIvor and Robb discuss in their study of reserved occupations, the surveillance of workers bodies reached new levels in wartime.³⁸ Bodies were a valuable commodity in the war production machine, and measures were enforced to conserve and protect them from occupation related injuries and hazardous conditions. As Ronnie Johnson and Arthur McIvor detail, on the request of Ernest Bevin, the Minister

³⁸ Pattinson, McIvor and Robb, *Men in Reserve*, p. 199.

of Labour, a series of initiatives were established in order to protect the civilian worker. The numbers of medical personnel in industry more than doubled during the war, works canteens were established to provide nutritious food, and workers were rotated around jobs to minimise boredom and exposure to toxic materials.³⁹ In daily life the threat of injury was also present; injury could occur as a result of war conditions, such as blackout restrictions, or as a consequence of enemy action. As a result, campaigns were run throughout the war which sought to educate and advise the general public about everyday safety and how to conduct themselves whilst at work and at home; significant focus was placed upon preventing injury before it occurred. As Ernest Bevin, Minister of Labour, declared in 1942, 'The great[est] thing is to teach your people how to act in order to safeguard their life and limb.'⁴⁰ Indeed, significant emphasis was placed upon maintaining the good health of the civilian body and mind, yet, as the following discussion will illustrate, ensuring this was largely considered the responsibility of each civilian. Civilians were advised on how to protect themselves, but it was stressed that it was the duty of each individual to keep themselves fit and healthy.

Whilst prevention was utilised during wartime as a way to encourage each member of the population to protect their own health, encouraging an individual to take responsibility of their fitness was not a new concept. Indeed, during the interwar years, and particularly during the 1930s, a national fitness movement emerged within Britain which developed connections between physical fitness and personal duty. These emerging ideals, Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska describes, were stimulated by post war anxieties about physical deterioration among the British population.⁴¹ In the wake of the destruction of the First World War, maintaining a fit and healthy body was constructed

³⁹ Johnston and McIvor, 'The War and the Body at Work', 113-136 (p. 133).

⁴⁰ Hansard, House of Commons, 'Factories Acts (Administration)', 22 July 1942, vol. 382, col. 57.

⁴¹ Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 'The Making of a Modern Female Body: Beauty, Health and Fitness in Interwar Britain', *Women's History Review*, 20:2 (2011), 299-317 (p. 301).

as an obligation of citizenship for men and women alike.⁴² Both the physically cultivated male and female body were celebrated as symbols of modernity and icons of idealised masculinity and femininity.⁴³ Moreover, as Charlotte Macdonald describes, post-First World War fitness campaigns sought to combine individual health, fitness and enjoyment, with national interest; people were urged to see their own fitness as a duty of citizenship.⁴⁴ The creation of the National Fitness Campaign, in September 1937, signified the height of the fitness movement; the campaign sought to promote a healthy body, mind and human happiness through physical training.⁴⁵ Importantly, the fitness movement of the 1930s stressed the self-responsibility of each individual to maintain good health for the benefit of the nation. It was this message that remained throughout the war years.

Preventing Accidents at Work

The workplace was a space of heightened risk during wartime. Throughout the war, the number of accidents sustained by men and women in factories across Britain increased. In 1938, accident figures were reported at 179,159, by 1945 the annual total for accidents totalled 239,802.⁴⁶ In the factory, war conditions heightened the risk of accidents; inexperienced workers, higher rates of production and new machinery all heightened the risk of injury.⁴⁷ Throughout the war, various campaigns were adopted to combat rising accident rates in the workplace. However, protecting the health of workers was not a new notion. The creation of the Factories Act in 1937 outlined the first comprehensive code

⁴² Ibid. pp. 300-302.

⁴³ Ibid. p. 299.

⁴⁴ Charlotte Macdonald, *Strong, Beautiful and Modern: National Fitness in Britain, New Zealand, Australia and Canada, 1935 – 1960* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013) p. 171.

⁴⁵ Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Managing the Body, Beauty, Health and Fitness in Britain, 1880-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) pp. 309-322.

⁴⁶ Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Factories, Cmd. 6992. (London: HMSO, 1945) p. 6. cited by Pattinson, McIvor and Robb, *Men in Reserve*, p. 207.

⁴⁷ Herman Levy, *War Effort and Industrial Injuries*. (London: The Fabian Society, 1940) pp. 5-6.

for safety, health and welfare in the workplace.⁴⁸ Crucially, the Act highlighted how poor working conditions affected the health of the worker, and introduced guidelines around cleanliness, overcrowding, temperature, ventilation, and floor drainage.⁴⁹ Importantly, this legislation recognised the value of maintaining the health of the worker; healthy workers equalled efficient productivity. However, as Juliette Pattinson, Arthur McIvor and Linsey Robb describe in their study of men in reserved occupations, health and safety measures were often challenging to enforce in wartime factories due to blackout restrictions and production targets.⁵⁰ Therefore, wartime production differed to peacetime production, in terms of workplace conditions, production targets and the number of workers employed. The state placed particular importance on expanding the munitions and related industries at the expense of the less essential industries such as textiles, leather, wood and paper.⁵¹ For instance, industries such as metals, engineering, vehicles and shipbuilding grew from employing 2,590,000 workers in 1938 to 4,496,000 at its peak in 1944.⁵² Similarly, the number of workers employed in the chemicals and explosives sector grew from 276,000 in 1938 to 618,000 at its height in 1942.⁵³ In 1939, these industries employed 16 per cent of individuals in civil employment, by 1943 this had grown to a wartime peak of 23 percent.⁵⁴ While the number of civilians employed in the essential industries grew rapidly, as this discussion will illustrate, protecting the health of the worker developed into not only a responsibility of the employer, but also the employee.

⁴⁸ *Factories Act 1937*, Available at: <<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1937/67/enacted>> [Accessed: November 2018]

⁴⁹ Maurice Malins, 'Public Health and the Factories Act, 1937', *Journal of the Royal Sanitary Institute*, 58:10 (1937), 603-613 (p. 603).

⁵⁰ See: Chapter 5 'Bodies on the line: risk, health and manliness', in Pattinson, McIvor and Robb, *Men in Reserve*.

⁵¹ Peter Howlett, *Fighting with Figures: A Statistical Digest of the Second World War* (HMSO: London, 1995) p. 37.

⁵² 'Table 3.3 Distribution of Total Manpower', in Howlett, *Fighting with Figures*, p. 38.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* p. 37.

During the war, The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (known as the National Safety First Association until 1941) led the campaign to improve workers' safety. Throughout the war, a series of posters were issued by the Ministry of Labour and National Service and produced by the Society. The posters, the *Birmingham Daily Post* reported, sought 'to provide sound and simple advice to people confronted with new and unfamiliar conditions.'⁵⁵ Education was used as a way to protect civilians from injury. Posters either focused their attention on preventing accidents in the workplace or in day to day life. However, whilst the reality of injuries was often serious, posters utilised a combination of humour, facts and shock to convey their safety messages. Humour was frequently utilised as a way to capture the reader's attention. In the workplace, posters reminded employees to 'Learn wisdom from the spider! He wears a safety belt', which depicted an image of a worker hanging from a rope with a safety belt around his waist. Beside him, a large spider dangled from its web.⁵⁶ Similarly, a poster which showed a factory worker dangerously carrying a large pile of boxes depicted the situation in a humorous manner. The worker is seen to exclaim, 'Thank heavens this is my last trip'.⁵⁷ However, the viewer can see that he is about to fall over a toolbox that is out of his line of vision. The play on words highlights that whilst it may be his last trip carrying boxes, his risk-taking could have serious consequences. Moreover, posters which depicted the life of Percy Vere, a character whose escapades serve as lessons to the viewer, also utilised humour. The posters focused on safety conscious Percy making small mistakes in the workplace, and thus, through Percy's experiences viewers were given messages about safety. On one occasion the viewer sees Percy oiling a machine and advising a female worker to cover her hair whilst working at a drill. However, Percy forgets that he

⁵⁵ "Safety First' Activities', *Birmingham Daily Post*, 23 May 1940, p. 4.

⁵⁶ IWM, PST, 14321, 'Learn Wisdom From The Spider!', c.1939-1945.

<<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/11341>> [Accessed: November 2018]

⁵⁷ IWM, PST, 14336, 'Thank Heavens, This is My Last Trip!', c.1939-1845.

<<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/18863>> [Accessed: November 2018]

himself is not wearing the appropriate clothing for the workplace, and gets stuck in the machinery. The final image depicts Percy standing in his tattered clothing, reading a sign about prohibited loose clothing in the workplace while the female worker stands by and laughs.⁵⁸ Other posters used rhyme to convey their message. One poster which showed factory workers at the end of a shift, reminded readers that,

Time to go? Well don't rush out,
It's not worth getting knocked about.
Jams like this will cause delay:
Shoving simply does not pay.⁵⁹

The posters clearly emphasised that it was the responsibility of the individual to safeguard against injury. As Jamie Bronstein has discussed in relation to nineteenth century workplace accidents, accidents in their very nature are accidental; they are part and parcel of employment in the workplace, caused by hapless circumstance or attempted heroism.⁶⁰ Therefore, although accidental, wartime posters sought to combat workplace injury through presenting accidents as both avoidable and unnecessary.

When injuries were caused by workplace accidents, they were represented in a manner which reinforced their avoidable nature. Reports of these injuries in the press, described them in a way which reflected their unfortunate, but needless nature. Importantly, injuries sustained from workplace accidents were not celebrated as a form of heroic sacrifice, instead, they were represented in a way which suggested that they should not have occurred. For example, in 1944 the *Kensington Post* detailed information about a factory explosion in which five women and one man were injured. The article

⁵⁸ IWM, PST, 14500, 'Percy Vere - Number Five (Recto) Charlie's Chain (Verso)', c.1939-1945. <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/18872>> [Accessed: November 2018]

⁵⁹ IWM, PST, 14462, 'Time to Go? (Recto) First Aid Prevents Little Injuries from Getting Larger (Verso)', c.1939-1945. <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/11126>> [Accessed: November 2018]

⁶⁰ Jamie L. Bronstein, *Workplace Accidents and Injured Workers in Nineteenth Century Britain* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008) p. 60.

was brief, recording only the names of the injured persons and how the injury was caused.⁶¹ Similarly, earlier in the war the *Hendon and Finchley Times*, documented how Mr Edward Chapman from Edgware, had fallen from a ladder at work and had struck his head on a piece of metal.⁶² Other articles not only reflected the unfortunate nature of accidents, they also suggested that they were largely avoidable. For instance, in 1940 the *West Middlesex Gazette* reported on a case where a woman had injured her thumb whilst at work in an Ealing factory.⁶³ It detailed how the owners of the factory had been fined for not securely enclosing the dangerous part of the machine which caused her injury. However, the article also detailed the line of the defence, that if the operator had sat square to the machine it would have been impossible for the accident to have happened. It claimed that in the three and a half years that the company had used the machine, this was the first time an accident had occurred. Indeed, it was implied that this injury would have been avoided if the worker had taken the necessary precautions. Furthermore, in 1944 it was reported in the *Uxbridge and Drayton Gazette* how a worker, Mr Arthur Owen Coulson, had injured his thumb with a piece of wire whilst at work, and had later died from the injury.⁶⁴ The article made it clear that Mr Coulson had not sought appropriate medical attention at the time of injury and had not recorded his injury in the factory accident book. Coulson had not followed the procedures to protect his health. Within press articles, a sense of responsibility was placed on the actions of the worker, as previously discussed, this was largely since workers were encouraged to safeguard their own health. As McIvor notes, this was since manpower was a valued commodity, and needed to be maintained.⁶⁵ During wartime, it was detrimental to present workplace

⁶¹ 'Factory explosion: Five Women and a Man Injured', *Kensington Post*, 19 February 1944, p. 2.

⁶² 'Injured at work', *Hendon & Finchley Times*, 26 January 1940, p. 8.

⁶³ 'Woman Hurt in Ealing Factory. Finger Injured: Firm Fined', *West Middlesex Gazette*, 25 May 1940, p. 5.

⁶⁴ 'Death Follows Injured Thumb', *Uxbridge & W. Drayton Gazette*, 10 March 1944, p. 7.

⁶⁵ McIvor, 'Rebuilding 'real men': work and working class male civilian bodies in wartime', 121-144 (p. 123).

injuries as heroic; it was more important for the state to encourage workers to remain fit and healthy. This attitude was echoed in a 'People in Production' file report produced by Mass Observation in June 1942. It suggested that the injuries sustained in industry were an unnecessary consequence of carelessness:

Workers remove the guards from machines because they find it easier to work without them. Girls leave off the caps provided for them by the management and in consequence get their hair caught in the machines. There are jay walkers on the roads, jay workers in the factories. Everybody knows it is dangerous to walk or drive about the roads without taking due care, yet human errors of carelessness continue to produce roundabout a quarter of a million road accidents every year. So, it is in the factories.⁶⁶

As such, rather than commend workers for sustaining injuries from war work, it was of greater benefit to encourage workers to safeguard their bodies against harm. Workplace injuries were constructed as a by-product of industrialised modern warfare. Indeed, in the public domain, accidents and workplace injuries which were considered avoidable were not commended. In the workplace, the actions of employees were controlled and managed; a healthy and efficient worker was more valuable to the war effort than an injured one.

Preventing Accidents in the Community

In addition, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents produced posters to encourage people to avoid accidents in their day to day lives, or to seek medical help for small injuries. Significantly, injury did not only occur at work, the whole of the wartime

⁶⁶ MOA, File Report 1344, 'People in Production', June 1942, p. 208.

environment offered the potential for accidents. The blackout posed considerable risks to the population. A poster produced in 1941, which reminded readers to ‘Go warily after dark and get there’ depicted a snail leaving a house in the dark wearing a hat and carrying a briefcase.⁶⁷ Similarly, a poster which featured an image of a cat’s head stated, ‘I’ve got nine lives, you haven’t. Look out in the blackout, there’s danger on the roads.’⁶⁸ Safety on the road in the day and during the blackout was heavily emphasised throughout the war.⁶⁹ During wartime, roads posed new risks to the population; this increased safety drive sought to combat the growing number of civilians involved in car accidents. Approximately 800,000 individuals were injured in car accidents throughout the war, with a high proportion of them occurring in London.⁷⁰ The combination of speed limits being ignored, a lack of control on drink driving, combined with blackout restrictions and people taking greater risks on the roads contributed towards an increase in road accidents. As the Kings surgeon wrote in 1939 in response to the rising accidents and deaths on the roads, ‘the Luftwaffe were able to kill 600 British civilians a month without ever taking to the air.’⁷¹ Indeed, as Joe Moran notes, in the first four months of war, 4,133 people were killed in road accidents, which meant that it was more dangerous to be on Britain’s roads than in the armed forces.⁷² However, preventing accidents on the roads was not a new concern. As Moran explains, throughout the 1920s and 1930s various movements sought to combat safety on the roads. For example, the introduction of the Highway Code in 1931 and the Road Traffic Act in 1930, and later in 1934, made provision for pedestrian safety through the introduction of speed limits and pedestrian crossings. Significantly,

⁶⁷ IWM, PST, 4770, ‘Go Warily After Dark and Get There’, 1941.

<<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/19279>> [Accessed: November 2018]

⁶⁸ IWM, PST, 15290, ‘I’ve Got Nine Lives - You Haven’t’, c.1939-1945.

<<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/32578>> [Accessed: November 2018]

⁶⁹ Levy, *War Effort and Industrial Injuries*, p. 4.

⁷⁰ Hansard, House of Lords, ‘Road Casualties’, 21 November 1945, vol. 137. col. 1089.

⁷¹ W. Trotter, *British Medical Journal*, Part 2. Vol. 18: 1939, cited by Peter Adey, David J. Cox and Barry Godfrey, *Crime, Regulation and Control during the Blitz: Protecting the Population of Bombed Cities* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017) p. 91.

⁷² Joe Moran, ‘Crossing the Road in Britain, 1931–1976’, *The Historical Journal*, 49:2 (2006), 477-496 (p. 483).

across the interwar and wartime period it was reiterated that safety on the roads was ultimately down to the individual.

Alongside posters produced by the Society, a Road Safety Campaign was created by the Ministry of Transport in 1942. The Campaign was publicised on the radio and in the press, and was also supported by Fougasse, the artist responsible for the Punch cartoons. Fougasse produced a series of humorous road safety drawings to support the campaign, which ranged from advising people how to stand whilst waiting for a bus to not letting children play in the road. The *Dumfries and Galloway Standard* reported on the cartoons, ‘The drawings, which are in the artists inimitable style, depict incidents which, for all their humour, should really be scanned and mentally digested, if we are to reduce the dangers and discomforts of war-time travel.’⁷³ The article concluded, ‘The British like to laugh, even when they are being lectured.’⁷⁴ Indeed, humour was clearly recognised as an important and effective medium for conveying messages of safety on the roads. Moreover, the campaign placed the responsibility upon pedestrians to prevent accidents; it was emphasised that each civilian was liable for their own safety.

Similarly, civilians were also reminded to seek medical assistance as a precaution against small injuries. For example, a poster which depicted an image of a traditional plague doctor, wittily advised the benefits of seeking modern day first aid, it stated, ‘The mediaeval quack wore this headdress to frighten infection away. Today we prefer science to spells and prevention to cure. So get first aid for all wounds.’⁷⁵ In these examples, humour was used as way to educate and advise the reader. For Valerie Holman and Debra Kelly, expressions of humour, and especially black humour, signify mechanisms for

⁷³ ‘Road Safety Campaign’, *Dumfries and Galloway Standard*, 07 February 1942, p. 7.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ IWM, PST, 14491, ‘The Medieval Quack (Recto) Worn Tools Are ‘Quislings’ (Verso)’, c. 1939-1945. <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/19645>> [Accessed: November 2018]

coping with difficult and stressful situations.⁷⁶ Indeed, preventing injury was presented in a way which drew upon humour as a way of addressing a potentially serious situation. However, as Andrew Robertshaw notes, for humour to be successful, it is often based on shared experience, aspirations and even prejudice.⁷⁷ Thus, the campaign posters which were produced throughout the war drew upon situations at work, or travelling between work and home that were relatable. Humour sought to capture the attention of the reader so that a message could be communicated. This message centred upon the dual responsibility between the self and the state in maintaining good levels of health. Moreover, as David Welch suggests, posters such as those produced by Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents, fulfilled an important role in maintaining the morale of the British people and acknowledging the value of remaining physically fit.⁷⁸ The healthy civilian was a powerful tool in wartime. Whilst the state could instruct how to behave, it was the responsibility of the individual to implement the advice; acting safely and ensuring good health was an individual's responsibility. Whether it was in the workplace, at home, or in the streets, campaigns stressed that it was a civilian's duty to administer preventative measures to preserve physical wellbeing.

However, campaigns to reduce injury and accidents also reflected wider wartime concerns for safeguarding the civilian population. The problem of increased accidents on the Home Front, particularly in the workplace, were frequent discussed within Parliament throughout the war. Of particular interest was the impact that accidents could have upon rates of production. As one MP noted in 1942, 'Accidents in factories cause as much concern to employers as to anybody else. Apart from the human aspect of it, it is obviously an economic and financial proposition, affecting the question, which is of great

⁷⁶ Valerie Holman and Debra Kelly, "Introduction. War in the twentieth century: the functioning of humour in cultural representation " *European Studies*, 31:123 (2001), 247-263 (p. 248).

⁷⁷ Andrew Robertshaw, "'Irrepressible chirpy cockney chappies'? Humour as an aid to survival', *European Studies*, 31:123 (2001), 277-287 (p. 278).

⁷⁸ Welch, *Persuading the People*, p. 138.

concern to us to-day, of delay in production.’⁷⁹ Therefore, preventing accidents altogether was key. Indeed, alongside preventing accidents, a central theme which appeared across the material produced by the Society was the value of the healthy civilian to the war effort. Whether in the workplace or in day to day life, the value of the healthy and uninjured civilian to efficient production levels was stressed. Whilst the posters channelled a comical attitude towards workplace injury, serious undertones of remaining healthy were made apparent. The value of the healthy worker to the war effort was further echoed in a 1940 publication, *War Effort and Industrial Injuries*, where maintaining the fitness of the worker was compared to that of the soldier. It emphasised the connection between healthy workers and increased war production, suggesting that,

Every miner killed by a fall of a rock is as much a loss to the war effort as a soldier drowned on Dunkirk beach; every worker who suffers an injury which impairs his skill or who even goes sick for a week with a preventable disease represents a serious wastage of war material... This then is our problem. In totalitarian war the contribution of the civilian worker to the national effort is of enormous importance; the loss of a day or two’s working time of any man or woman may have serious results. Under ordinary peacetime conditions so greatly increase the risk of accident that unless rapid measures are taken to cope with it, the resultant wastage may easily have a decisive influence on the course of the war.⁸⁰

London borough magazines also emphasised the link between individual responsibility, safety and meeting demands of wartime production. Indeed, a poem published in the magazine of the *Hackney Borough ARP Organisation*, informed readers of the social

⁷⁹ Hansard, House of Commons, ‘Factories Acts’, Mr Jones, 22 July 1942, vol. 382, col. 91.

⁸⁰ Levy, *War Effort and Industrial Injuries*, pp. 3-7.

responsibility of maintaining efficient productivity and workplace safety. The first verse of the poem, written by C. Saywell, a member of Post 39, stated,

Efficiency ceases when harmony fails,
Don't go around strewing the highway with nails.
Don't throw monkey-wrenches in cogwheels and such,
For to gum up the works doesn't take much.⁸¹

Indeed, it was stressed that it was the responsibility of the civilian to safeguard against injury in the workplace and wider community; preventing injury was central to ensuring wartime productivity. It was not honourable to sustain wounds in the workplace or in the wider community where they could have otherwise been avoided. Instead, maintaining a healthy body was constructed as central to good citizenship; it was an individual's duty to remain uninjured.

Preventing Wounding from Enemy Action

Air attack also endangered the safety of the civilian. However, in a different way to the dangers experienced in the workplace, community, or home, the danger brought by bombardment was less easy to control. In the public sphere, civilians were instructed how to protect themselves against the dangers of enemy attack. However, the preventative advice that was provided to the population adopted a different stance to the humour used in posters to advise on safety in the workplace and on the roads. Instead, information on how to protect oneself during air attack was communicated in a factual manner in booklets and leaflets so that it could be kept and referred back to at a later date. From as early as 1938, The Ministry of Home Security and the Home Office produced various information booklets which advised on methods of protection against injury or how to administer

⁸¹ C. Saywell Post 39, 'Harmony', *Civil Defence: The Journal of the Hackney Borough ARP Organisation*, May 1940, No. 3, p. 32.

basic first aid to prevent further injury to the wounded. These campaigns aimed to combat the rising rates of injury amongst the civilian population and prepare the population if injury did occur.

Preventative advice addressed how the civilian population were experiencing new injuries which were directly associated with changes in modern warfare. As a result of aerial attack, the civilian body was at risk of lacerations, bruising, incisions, perforation and puncture wounds, injuries from blast explosions, burns, asphyxia by electrocution or by confinement in a poisonous atmosphere, or from drowning.⁸² However, civilians were also at risk of new injuries. For example, prior to air raids, little was known about injuries caused by falling masonry. The injury, which later became identified as crush syndrome, multiplied in frequency on the Home Front, and produced a type of injury which was specific to civilian casualties.⁸³ As air raids destroyed buildings, bodies were crushed underneath, and the number of people suffering from crush syndrome increased. Throughout the war, this injury was documented and discussed in medical journals as physicians, including Eric Bywaters, sought to develop treatments for the condition. Civilians in London were amongst the first to sustain crush injuries.⁸⁴ Bywaters, who was based in Hammersmith, West London, during 1940, witnessed an increase in civilians being admitted to hospital with no apparent external injury, but whose health deteriorated upon admission.⁸⁵ As war progressed, other casualty teams across London and the rest of the country observed new cases of crush injury emerge, which fuelled investigations into the cause and treatment of the syndrome.⁸⁶ The civilian body became a site for new forms of war injuries to manifest as the city was altered by war and changed the way that

⁸² Norman Hammer, *First Aid for War Casualties Occurring at Home from Air Raids and Other Forms of Attack* (London: Dale Reynolds & Co. Ltd, 1940) p. 12.

⁸³ E.G.L. Bywaters, 'Crush Injuries with Impairment of Renal Function', *British Medical Journal*, 22: 1 (1941), 427-432 (p. 427).

⁸⁴ E.G.L. Bywaters, '50 Years on: The Crush Syndrome', *British Medical Journal*, 301 (1990), 1412-1415 (p. 1412).

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 1412-1414.

civilians interacted with it. Significantly, civilians were more at risk of bombing than any other group of individuals. Especially during the start of war, they were at greater risk of sustaining injuries rarely experienced by the armed forces. The rise of new forms of injury amongst the civilian population divided the experience of civilians to that of combatants overseas. As such, wounding caused by enemy action not only defined civilians as combatants, but distinguished them as separate from soldiers, sailors and airmen. These injuries distinguished civilians as a new type of wartime combatant. As such, preventative advice played a vital role in encouraging the population to protect themselves from wounding caused by enemy action.

A similarity between the advice that was provided on preventing injury in the workplace, home and during air raids, was the emphasis upon self-responsibility to keep healthy and prevent injury. As Mark Harrison has detailed in his discussion of military health during the Second World War, whilst the armed services had a right to provide decent medical care to their troops, it was also the responsibility of the soldier to keep 'fighting fit'.⁸⁷ It was the same for the civilian; whilst the state advised ways that civilian health could be protected, it was also the responsibility of the civilian to ensure their own safety. Indeed, in a 1938 publication *The Protection of Your Home Against Air Raids*, it was stressed that it was the responsibility of the head of each household to learn how to protect his own home and people. It stated, 'We all hope and work to prevent war but, while there is a risk of it, we cannot afford to neglect the duty of preparing ourselves and the country for such an emergency...each home and family [must] play their part in doing what they can for themselves.'⁸⁸ The later publication of *Air Raids: What You Must Know, What You Must Do*, in 1940, conveyed the same message. In the foreword to the booklet,

⁸⁷ Mark Harrison, *Medicine and Victory: British Military Medicine in the Second World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) p. 4.

⁸⁸ Samuel Hoare, 'Why this book has been sent to you', in Home Office, *The Protection of your Home Against Air Raids* (London: Home Office, 1938) p. 1.

Sir John Anderson advised civilians on how they could not solely rely on the Civil Defence Services to protect them, individuals had to take the necessary precautions to protect themselves.⁸⁹ Methods of self-protection that were recommended focused upon utilising everyday objects found in the home. For the protection against splinters from windows it was advised that a stout bookcase, stuffed tightly with old books, could be placed over a window frame.⁹⁰ It was also suggested that if limbs had been broken during a raid, a broom handle or umbrella could be used as substitutes for splints until trained persons arrived.⁹¹ This booklet was published as a revised second edition the following year, providing new and updated information on the best precautions civilians could take to protect themselves. In the foreword to the new edition, Herbert Morrison claimed that over a million copies had been sold of the previous volume.⁹² Whilst it is hard to verify the number of copies sold, such a statement may have sought to stimulate interest and encourage new audiences. Even if the figures were exaggerated, the publication of a second edition suggests that the booklet received wide readership. Similarly, in a pre-war film, *If War Should Come*, commissioned by the Home Office, civilians were advised on how to prepare the home against air raids and how to behave if subjected to aerial attack.⁹³ The film advised ‘no one in this country of ours wants war, but if war should come don’t be alarmed, keep a good heart. Whatever happens, Britain is a nation prepared.’⁹⁴ Advice emphasised that each civilian could safeguard against injury if the correct precautions were followed.

⁸⁹ Sir John Anderson, ‘Foreword’, in Air Raid Precautions Department, *Air Raids: What You Must Know, What You Must Do* (London: H.M Stationary Office, 1940) p. 6.

⁹⁰ Air Raid Precautions Department, *Air Raids: What You Must Know, What You Must Do* (London: H.M Stationary Office, 1940) p. 15.

⁹¹ *Ibid.* p. 60.

⁹² Herbert Morrison, ‘Foreword’, in Air Raid Precautions Department, *Air Raids: What You Must Know, What You Must Do. Second Edition* (London: H.M Stationary Office, 1941) p. 6.

⁹³ IWM Film, COI 849, ‘If War Should Come’, GPO Film Unit, 1939.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

Similar advice for self-protection and preparation was offered by London borough Civil Defence magazines. The Chelsea ARP magazine, *Maroon*, asked readers if they were 'positively prepared' for war, and suggested that 'the only safe rebuff for panic [was] organised preparedness'. Indeed, it stressed that since the enemy would attempt to create panic, it was the responsibility of each homeowner to be ready for it.⁹⁵ Similarly, in August 1939, the *Wembley ARP Magazine* instructed,

We've got to be prepared...This does not merely mean the government must teach us ARP and such things. It also means that the public themselves must also be prepared; they should equip themselves with certain appliances necessary to minimise any damage.⁹⁶

Moreover, this narrative was echoed in a series of posters produced during the war which sought to provide advice to the everyday civilian on how to protect themselves against aerial bombardment. Each poster provided clear and coherent advice on how to act in different scenarios. The series covered situations including, 'If You Are Out of Doors', 'If You Are Caught in The Street' and 'If You Are at Home'.⁹⁷ Along with providing clear behavioural guidelines, these posters also provided visual images of how people were expected to behave. Indeed, a dominant message which permeates throughout the material on preparing for war and preventing injury is the notion of individual duty. As such, the emphasis that was placed on self-responsibility constructed a notion of the dutiful civilian who would guard his good health for the good of the country and his fellow citizens.

⁹⁵ 'Are you Positively Prepared?', *Maroon: Magazine Exclusively for ARP Members, Vol. 1. No. 2*, Aug-Sep 1939, pp. 16-17.

⁹⁶ 'We've got to be prepared', *Wembley ARP Magazine, Vol. 1 No. 7*, August 1939, p. 9.

⁹⁷ IWM, PST, 13836, 'In an Air Raid...If You Are Out of Doors', <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/31779>> [Accessed: December 2018]
IWM, PST, 13842, 'In an Air Raid...If You Are Caught In The Street', <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/31787>> [Accessed: December 2018]
IWM, PST, 13865, 'In an Air Raid...If You Are At Home', <<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/31804>> [Accessed: December 2018]

Whilst the whole population were encouraged to protect themselves from the dangers of enemy attack, particular importance was placed on safeguarding the physical health of the Civil Defence and Emergency Services. As the protectors and defenders of the city and its inhabitants, it was particularly important for these services to remain in good physical health so that they could work effectively and efficiently. Guidance encouraged individuals to ensure that their bodies were physically ready for the dangers and challenges that their jobs would demand of them. In Hackney, the *Journal of the Hackney Borough ARP Organisation* stressed the need for Civil Defence workers to maintain good levels of fitness. It warned how,

Many of us are not so young as we used to be and the necessity of keeping ourselves fit cannot be exaggerated. The long periods of stand-by or of necessary inactivity undoubtedly place a strain upon our energies which can only be counteracted by proper physical training.⁹⁸

It is notable that this journal edition was published before London was subject to intensive aerial attack, and therefore, the pressures and responsibilities of the Civil Defence Services could only be estimated. Yet, in contrast to civilians who were encouraged to protect their bodies against danger, Civil Defence personnel were encouraged to prepare their bodies for it. Maintaining good health was constructed as part of their national duty. Similarly, in January 1941, an article in *The Official Magazine: Southgate Ambulance and Nursing Divisions of The St. John Ambulance Brigade*, echoed a similar message. It stressed that,

It is of even greater importance to know how to remain well. This will in most cases enable the individual to remain in the path of good health, and to this enjoy the manifold advantages of happy outlook and

⁹⁸ 'Physical Training', *Civil Defence: The Journal of the Hackney Borough ARP Organisation*, May 1940, No. 3, p. 3.

resistance to disease, that are the natural heritage of the fit man. In practicing physical training, we must fully comprehend the reasons which lie behind muscular action, and the effect that it has upon our nervous system.⁹⁹

For the Southgate Ambulance service, good levels of fitness could be achieved through proper knowledge of the body. Maintain good levels of fitness was stressed as a priority. A strong and physically fit body would create an efficient worker; therefore, it was the duty of each Civil Defence worker to ensure that their body was physically ready for war. In the public sphere, preparing the bodies of Civil Defence and the Emergency Services for war was represented as fundamental to the defence of the nation.

Protecting the Mind

However, emphasis was not only placed upon protecting the physical health of the civilian population, it was also important to protect the wellbeing of the civilian mind. In the years leading up to 1939 and throughout the war, psychologists and psychiatrists estimated the way that total war could affect the minds of civilians. Particular attention was dedicated to assessing how aerial attack could affect psychological wellbeing. Pre-war estimates predicted widespread psychological breakdown, with two to three psychological casualties occurring for every physical one.¹⁰⁰ As Joanna Bourke describes, the experiences of bombing during the First World War caused public officials, politicians and psychiatrists to predict the worst; that under bombardment Britons would descend into mass panic.¹⁰¹ Indeed, preventing psychological casualties was deemed as important as preventing physical injuries. As Jones, Woolven, Durodié and Wessley suggest,

⁹⁹ 'Keep Fit', *The Divisional Review The Official Magazine Southgate Ambulance And Nursing Divisions Of The St. John Ambulance Brigade No. 1 Vol.1*, January 41, p. 9.

¹⁰⁰ Jones et al., 'Civilian Morale during the Second World War', 463-479 (p. 466).

¹⁰¹ Joanna Bourke, *Fear: A Cultural History* (Emeryville: Shoemaker & Hoard, 2006) p. 224.

although cases of mental illness did not materialise in the way that the British government expected, psychological stress may have occurred in the form of functional somatic disorders, such as non-ulcer dyspepsia and effort syndrome.¹⁰² Indeed, the Second World War brought the dangers of the battle front to the Home Front and whilst casualty rates were lower than anticipated, the civilian population experienced psychological injury on a greater scale than they had ever experienced before.

Yet, in contrast to the candid way that civilians were advised to safeguard their bodies, protecting the mind was approached in a different way. Instead, protecting the mind from wartime stressors including bombardment, fatigue and defencelessness was achieved through a subtler means. As Laura Dawes suggests, methods of protection which sought to safeguard the body, such as boarding up windows and carrying gas masks, also served a second purpose.¹⁰³ Along with protecting against physical harm these methods were also psychologically strengthening as it made people believe they were not powerless. As Dawes describes, protective behaviours could make people feel that they were actively defending their country, even if they were nowhere near a gun.¹⁰⁴ Thus, through encouraging the civilian population to take control of the protection of their bodies, it was anticipated that the mind would also be protected. However, as Edgar Jones et al suggest, the methods of protection that were utilised derived from fears surrounding a widespread deterioration of mental wellbeing.¹⁰⁵ For example, it was thought that if civilians were actively encouraged to flee underground, a 'shelter mentality' would be encouraged and levels of mental health could deteriorate.¹⁰⁶ Instead of providing purpose built deep shelters for the masses, methods of emotional protection primarily centred on mentally strengthening the civilian population by encouraging protection against physical

¹⁰² Jones et. al., 'Civilian Morale During the Second World War', 463-479 (p. 463).

¹⁰³ Laura Dawes, *Fighting Fit: The Wartime Battle for Britain's Health* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2016) p. 131.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Jones et al., 'Civilian Morale During the Second World War', 463-479 (p. 466.)

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

harm. The preventative advice to reduce cases of physical wounding not only protected the body but also bolstered the mind. Preventative advice constructed a narrative which proposed that civilians were able to protect themselves from the danger and destruction caused by enemy action. This advice suggested that civilians could limit the extent to which they might be injured. However, a distinction remained between the narratives which surrounded the prevention of accidents in the workplace and wider community, and the prevention of wounding from enemy action. As preventing wounding from enemy action was harder to control, avoiding injuries was not constructed as failing to display good citizenship, instead, civilians were encouraged to prepare their bodies for potential injury by remaining healthy and strong and equip themselves with first aid knowledge so that treatment would be administered efficiently.

In addition, during the war various schemes were established which placed attention on protecting the mental health of specific individuals on the Home Front; these schemes were largely directed at Civil Defence. The Civil Defence Services, as Edgar Jones notes, were exposed to repeated and horrific experiences, and by December 1941, the strain was beginning to show.¹⁰⁷ On a national level, schemes such as the Country Hospitality Scheme and the provision of holiday railway fares were established to provide relief to Civil Defence workers by allowing them a period of leave away from the city. Indeed, the creation of these schemes suggests that particular importance was placed upon bolstering the mental health of the Civil Defence Services. The Country Hospitality Scheme, which was also known as the Rest House Service, was organised by the Civil Defence Workers Health Department, a department which was part of the Red Cross & St. John War Organisation. The benefits of the scheme were repeatedly reported in the press and detailed the benefits of escaping the dangers of the city, particularly for individuals whose jobs brought them into close proximity with danger, such as firefighters,

¹⁰⁷ Jones, ‘‘The Gut War’’, 30-48 (p. 41).

ambulance crews, wardens and rescue parties. The scheme, as one paper reported, was ‘simple and personal’.¹⁰⁸ It focused on providing respite to Civil Defence workers and easing mental fatigue through relaxation in the countryside. Workers applied to be part of the scheme, and once approved, they were placed with a country host for a period of rest. Significantly, these schemes emphasised how a change of environment could benefit the mind. In an article in 1944, *Britannica and Eve* captured the motives for establishing the scheme,

War consists of patches of activity interspersed with frankly irksome periods of waiting for the next round. Home Front participants may be compared to lengths of elastic: suddenly stretched to their fullest expansion, almost to snapping point, and as suddenly released into limpness. Such alternations of tension and slackness are hard on the nerves; hard particularly, on Civil Defence personnel whose work, in the very nature of things, consists of ceaseless “standing by” sandwiched by violent bouts of action under fire.¹⁰⁹

The scheme recognised the importance of preventing illness and breakdown through encouraging physical and mental rest away from the city. Yet, it also emphasised the value of the healthy Civil Defence worker to the war effort. Civil Defence workers were at their most valuable when they were physically and mentally healthy. In 1941 a group of workers from a Bermondsey rescue squad visited a poultry farm in Berkshire. They engaged with daily activities on the farm, including sawing logs, looking after chicks and going down the local pub for a half-pint at the end of the day.¹¹⁰ Other rest houses encouraged visitors to make toys, model ships, dolls houses, or learn leatherwork, knitting and painting. Notably, the houses were ‘not convalescent homes but neither [were] they

¹⁰⁸ ‘Breather for the Defence Worker’, *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, 25 April 1941, p. 123.

¹⁰⁹ ‘Keeping the Home Front Fit’, *Britannica and Eve*, 01 July 1944, p. 44.

¹¹⁰ ‘Breather for the Defence Worker’, *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, 25 April 1941, p. 123.

holiday homes for the robust’, they did not treat an injury but instead aimed to prevent one.¹¹¹ By 1944, it was reported that over 30,000 people had used the scheme as a way of seeking restorative rest.¹¹² This scheme affirmed that the health of workers was physical and emotional; preventing physical and mental fatigue was crucial.

Similarly, a scheme was established in 1941 which provided full time Civil Defence workers with a third-class return railway fare per year to enable them to go on holiday.¹¹³ The initiative reiterated the importance of providing periods of rest to workers in jobs that were physically dangerous and mentally demanding. Indeed, it recognised that escaping the pressures of ordinary life would benefit the mental wellbeing of Civil Defence workers. Within the city itself, it was also recognised that workers required respite to protect against psychological wounding. For instance, in January 1940, the *Journal of the Hackney Borough ARP Organisation* suggested that ‘social activities for members of the ARP was just as essential as the provision of those activities to the Army, Navy and Air Force. All those engaged in Civil Defence needed entertainment at some time to drive the ‘black out’ from their minds.’¹¹⁴ In Hackney, the first steps in providing preventative respite was the formation of a Darts League and the creation of local dances.¹¹⁵ The Hackney Volunteers Social Committee recognised that in order to promote the social welfare of their Wardens, it was important to encourage the social side of ARP.¹¹⁶ These schemes sought to provide mental respite to prevent the development of psychological injury; prescribing rest was used as a means to combat stress. The emphasis that was placed upon preventing psychological injury amongst the Civil Defence services reflects their importance in wartime society. As important individuals in the defence of

¹¹¹ ‘Keeping the Home Front Fit,’ *Britannica and Eve*, 01 July 1944, p. 68.

¹¹² ‘Health of Civil Defence Workers’, *The Times*, 18 March 1944, p. 8. cited by Jones, ‘‘The Gut War’’, 30-48 (p. 41).

¹¹³ Hansard, House of Commons, ‘ARP Workers (Holiday Railway Fares)’, 07 August 1941, vol. 373.

¹¹⁴ ‘As soon as we can be assured...’, *Civil Defence: The Journal of The Hackney Borough A.R.P. Organisation No.1.*, January 1940, p. 19.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.* p. 25.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

the nation against aerial attack, maintaining their health was of national importance; the body of the worker could only function efficiently if the mind was strong and healthy. In contrast to the way that the government encouraged self-responsibility to protect the physical and mental health of the general public, the schemes used to safeguard the mental health of Civil Defence personnel differed. Indeed, the schemes that were established to provide the Civil Defence Service with temporary rest reflects how these individuals were identified as deserving of different treatment. Whereas, it was suggested that it was the responsibility of each civilian to safeguard their own health, as defenders and protectors of life and architecture, it was the government's responsibility to ensure that Civil Defence were protected from mental strain caused by their occupations.

Preventing physical and psychological injury amongst the civilian population formed a central aspect of wartime strategy; on the Home Front it was important that civilians were equipped with the knowledge to evade or limit wounding. Healthy bodies and minds were vital to victory. In the factory and wider community, it was emphasised that injuries predominantly occurred as a result of accident or misfortune. The state emphasised that they were largely unavoidable if the individual took the necessary precautions to ensure their safety. While preventing injury in the workplace did not necessarily position individuals as heroic, it was through remaining uninjured that healthy workers were able to be collectively engage with heroic ideals of endurance and durability. As Chapter One illustrated, factory and industrial work enabled civilians to engage with ideals of heroism through their heroic productivity as warriors of the workplace. Through taking the necessary precautions to safeguard against injury workers were able to positively contribute towards the battle for production. In contrast, while civilians were advised on how to prevent wounding caused by enemy action, these injuries were less easy to prevent. As such, preventative advice empowered the everyday civilian to take control of their own safety. However, particular attention was placed upon

protecting the mental wellbeing of Civil Defence personnel. As the nation's protectors and defenders, it was particularly important to protect the minds and bodies of Civil Defence personnel. However, whether injuries were caused by accident or from enemy action, civilians were constructed as dutiful in their efforts to remain fit and healthy despite the potential for injury across of the wartime environment. Efforts to prevent injury inform how injuries were constructed once they had been sustained. It is important to explore how preventative advice influenced how injuries were understood and framed in the public domain. Campaigns, schemes and advice to prevent injuries on the Home Front lay the foundations for, in certain instances, heroic associations to later emerge when an injury was sustained.

The Resilient Body: Sustaining Injuries

However, despite preventative measures to protect the body and mind of the civilian, injury still occurred. The way that London was transformed by war placed its inhabitants at increased risk of injury when compared with peacetime. Civilians were at increased risk of injury through war work, in daily life, and from the dangers caused by aerial bombardment. As previously discussed, throughout the war, and particularly during periods of bombardment, civilian bodies and minds were exposed to increased levels of danger. Both the young and old, male and female, were at risk. Of particular interest to the second half of this chapter are the physical injuries that were caused by enemy action and how they were represented in the public domain. Physical injuries were particularly framed as heroic. As this discussion illustrates, the way wounding was constructed in the public domain was directly connected with how an injury had been sustained. Injuries that were caused by aerial bombardment enabled the everyday civilian to be defined as the war wounded, and engage with heroic ideals which were traditionally associated with wounding in battle. Indeed, the threat of bombardment was so widespread that all

civilians in the capital were at risk of injury, as such, these injuries were reported on in ways which celebrated the indomitable spirit of Londoners. The press and media focused on the courage, fortitude and resilience of civilians who had been injured by enemy action, rather than the severity of injury; this served an important function as it aligned the wounded with military associations of standing firm under fire despite threats to personal safety. Wounds were conceptualised as physical markers of the bravery and courage that was required during periods of conflict, as well as the endurance and resilience of the British people.

As this section illustrates, wounding from enemy action can be understood in line with a spatial categorisation of injury. This spatial categorisation will refer to the varying spaces where injuries from enemy action were sustained. Injuries from enemy action occurred in the home, in the workplace, in air raid shelters, and on the streets. However, across representations of injury on the Home Front, distinctions existed in the way that the injured were presented; these distinctions centred around the relationship between injury and the space and context in which injury had been sustained, and the occupation and responsibilities of the injured.

During the Second World War, 237,015 civilians were documented as being seriously and slightly injured in the United Kingdom from enemy action. London, which sustained the most concentrated attack, experienced the highest concentration of casualties, with 139,349 injured across the capital.¹¹⁷ London sustained 58.8% of the nation's total wounded. In previous conflicts, the majority of casualties were sustained by the armed forces, although in the Second World War this changed; instead, casualties were sustained in large numbers by both the civilian population and the armed services. The war wounded possessed a dual identity which stretched from the Home Front to the

¹¹⁷ Titmuss, *Problems of Social Policy*, pp. 560-561.

Front Line; the battlefield was no longer a space restricted to offensive military combat, it was also a space of national defence, production and domesticity. The injuries that were sustained, both physical and psychological, shaped the way that civilian involvement in the war was constructed; injury was indicative of vulnerability, danger and duty. As Ana Carden-Coyne has explained, whilst wounds mutilate and maim the body and mind, they also break apart bodily identity.¹¹⁸ During the Second World War, an identity surrounded the civilian war wounded which was shaped by the way that injury was sustained. In the public sphere, injuries were categorised according to their context, and as such, a social significance was attributed to particular forms of injury. Physical injuries that were sustained from aerial attack were represented differently to those sustained from factory and industrial accidents, or on the roads or railways. It is therefore important to consider the way that civilian wounding was represented to provide greater understanding of how the civilian war wounded were conceptualised in wartime, and how notions of vulnerability, danger and resilience shaped representations of injury.

The type of wounding sustained by the civilian population varied depending on a multitude of factors. For instance, an individual's occupation and the spaces of the city they moved within, affected the danger that was experienced and the way they were expected to behave in response to it. The trauma that the body and mind sustained were directly linked to an individual's place and role within society. Some occupations, such as Civil Defence, heightened the potential for injury as workers were expected to actively engage with the danger around them. Some injuries were location specific; casualties rescued from collapsed buildings suffered from injuries that were different to those sustained in the industrial workplace. The young and old, male and female, engaged with London's wartime environment in new ways. Thus, a spatial approach will open up further lines of enquiry for exploring the relationship between the body, wounding and

¹¹⁸ Carden-Coyne, *The Politics of Wounds*, p. 5.

war. Through examining the relationship between injury and the body, and how specific spaces heightened the potential for injury, greater detail will be provided on how the wounded were represented in wartime. Total war increased the potential for the bodies of civilians to be injured, and drew attention to the ways that the civilian population could be affected by modern conflict.

Tens of thousands of civilians were injured in London and throughout the rest of the country as a result of enemy attack. However, the way that casualty numbers were communicated to the public reveals how civilian injury was publicly represented. Indeed, the way that civilian injury was reported in the press and media played a central role in communicating information to its readers about civilian casualties, but it also constructed a narrative around the civilian war wounded. Initially, the Government was reluctant to publicise casualty figures for fears that information could affect morale. However, as war progressed, the Ministry of Home Security sought to expose the British population to accurate numbers of the wounded. The population were gradually exposed to increased information on casualty numbers as the war progressed. In 1942, William Mabane, the joint parliamentary secretary to the Ministry of Home Security, explained the importance that was placed on publishing precise figures, ‘We published figures of casualties. We published them as a total, monthly, to the world. I give my word that these figures were as accurate as human effort could make them to the very last unit.’¹¹⁹ Whether or not these figures were entirely accurate is debateable, as many casualties may have gone unaccounted for if they sought medical treatment at home rather than being treated at first aid posts or hospitals. However, what is significant is that the British Government actively sought to communicate civilian casualty figures to the population.

¹¹⁹ William Mabane, ‘The History and Current Organisation of Civil Defence’, *Journal of the Air Raid Protection Institute*, 4:5 (1942), p. 148.

The government decided that comprehensive casualty lists would be advertised locally at ARP posts, police centres and town halls in each town or district. Each month, the government announced figures of the total number of civilian casualties, these figures were reproduced in the press. However, the reproduction of full casualty lists which detailed individual names of the injured was forbidden.¹²⁰ The reasons for this decision were detailed by Churchill in a discussion in the House of Commons in 1940. Churchill emphasised that daily publication of casualty figures proved advantageous to the German Air Force, and was without benefit to the civil population.¹²¹ Equally, it was also feared that not providing any information at all could fuel false rumours that casualty numbers were worse than they really were.¹²² This monthly publication of casualty figures, as Peter Adey, David Cox and Barry Godfrey have suggested, was centred upon managing levels of morale; too little or too much information could encourage panic amongst the population.¹²³ Therefore, the publication of monthly civilian raid lists exposed the public to nationwide figures of the civilian wounded. However, notable differences existed between the way that casualties on the Home Front were communicated when compared with casualties from the front line. Throughout the war, the War Office produced lists of the military wounded which, if known, included the name and regiment of each individual; these details were reproduced in various national and regional newspapers. Regional newspapers often produced select lists of men who had been injured from a local area. Significantly, whilst civilians and the armed forces were both recognised as the war wounded, the armed forces were provided a heightened identity as the names of the wounded were published. By publishing the names of the armed forces wounded, an enhanced identity was attached to them, they, unlike the civilian wounded, were more

¹²⁰ Hansard, House of Commons, 'Air-Raid Casualties (Publication)', The Prime Minister, 18 July 1940, vol. 363, col. 403.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Hansard, House of Commons, 'Air-Raid Casualties (Publication)', 11 June 1941, vol. 372.

¹²³ Adey, Cox and Godfrey, *Crime, Regulation and Control during the Blitz*, p. 193.

than a statistic. This difference drew a clear distinction between military and civilian war casualties; by including the names of the military wounded, each casualty was given an individual identity, yet, civilian casualties, which existed as a number, were communicated as a collective. The difference in the way that casualty numbers were communicated in the press created a division between the collective identity which surrounded the war wounded, and that which was specific to the military. Arguably, listing the names of military casualties served to strengthen ideals which surrounded military masculinity. As George Mosse has observed, in wartime, masculine identities centred upon manly virtues of courage, sacrifice and camaraderie.¹²⁴ The names of soldiers, sailors and airmen who had been injured were aligned with these ideals; these casualties had sacrificed their bodies and minds for their nation and were honoured as individuals. In contrast, the communication of the civilian wounded through casualty figures detached the public from the identity of the injured; national casualty figures created a collective identity around the wounded.

Yet, civilian injury was not merely documented through the production of casualty lists. The wartime press and media played a central role in aligning wounding from enemy action with the heroism associated with being wounded in battle; they surrounded the civilian war wounded with a heroic identity which centred upon collective courage, endurance, shared sacrifice and defiance against danger. In the public domain, newsreel and film footage recorded the experience of the injured, whereas articles in the press documented details of trauma. Indeed, coverage on screen and in the national and local press humanised the injured civilian on the Home Front; as their story was told, the injured were no longer a statistic. Through documenting the experiences of local residents

¹²⁴ George Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) p. 107; p. 181.

who had sustained injuries, the press and media presented stories of vulnerability, responsibility and resilience that the rest of the population could connect with.

Wounding caused by enemy action featured prominently on screen. Throughout the war, newsreels and films reported on the destruction experienced by civilians from air attack. In particular, newsreels, which were shown in cinemas as part of the general entertainment programme, were an important medium to communicate information to the general population. As Luke McKernan describes, newsreels played a significant role in broadening the outlook and experience of millions, they were an essential part of the entertainment package that the cinema offered.¹²⁵ Newsreels, James Chapman notes, were a central means through which ‘the truth’ could be communicated to the public; whilst the facts could be interpreted in as favourable a manner as desired, no intentional falsehoods were allowed.¹²⁶ As such, the newsreel was an important line of communication to the British public, they informed the population of the reality and destructive nature of war. Newsreels dramatized injury, and through doing so they communicated a powerful propaganda message of what being achieved by the everyday Londoner. While as Ciara Chambers, Mats Jönsson and Roel Vande Winkel state, newsreels were an important way to engage with issues of the day, they did so in a way which endorsed the national status quo and supported social norms.¹²⁷ News companies, including the Pathé Gazette and Gaumont British News, frequently reported on the damage and danger experienced by British civilians during the height of nightly bombing raids; particular emphasis centred upon the destruction sustained to both homes and personal wellbeing.

¹²⁵ Luke McKernan, *Topical Budget: The Great British News Film* (London: BFI Publishing, 1992) p. 1.

¹²⁶ James Chapman, *The British at War: Cinema, State and Propaganda, 1939-1945* (London: I.B. Taurus, 1998) p. 252.

¹²⁷ Ciara Chambers, Mats Jönsson and Roel Vande Winkel, ‘Introduction’, in Ciara Chambers, Mats Jönsson and Roel Vande Winkel (eds.), *Researching Newsreels: Local, National and Transnational Case Studies* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), pp. 1-14 (p. 4).

Newsreels made war exciting, especially when they discussed topics that were particularly threatening. In a 1940 newsreel, *There'll Always Be a London*, the narrator commented on the inescapable danger experienced by Londoners, 'Truly this is a war of all the people, a bomb might fall anywhere...The casualties have been heavy, both in human lives and materials. That is part of the price we are paying for our freedom, it is part of the suffering we must endure for a time.'¹²⁸ While the injuries sustained by Londoners were represented as an expected aspect of life in the capital, civilian wounding was also recognised as an admirable sacrifice in the battle for victory. Similarly, later in the war when London was targeted by V1 and V2 rockets, it was reported, 'These isolated bombs are nothing compared with the heavy blitzes we used to have, but the tragedy is nothing less severe for those who are wounded.'¹²⁹ Towards the end of the war, the Pathé Gazette produced, *Front Line London*, in which the danger that civilians faced under flying bombs was detailed. The newsreel reminded viewers that 'It's a civilian battle again, citizens are both the target and the defenders...The people adjust themselves to the front-line peril and carry on.'¹³⁰ London was presented as an environment where the whole of the civilian population were at risk of wounding; the aerial bombardment of the capital made the potential for injury inescapable. Indeed, a familiar narrative repeats itself throughout wartime newsreels; that civilians were exposed to increased risk of injury on the Home Front. However, it was also important that newsreels emphasised that despite injury, civilians possessed the resolve to carry on. As such, newsreels documented how

¹²⁸ BPA, VLVA4BAI83Z4P46YON32VTRNL3ZJB, 'There'll Always be a London', Gaumont British News, 16 September 1940.

<<https://www.britishpathe.com/video/VLVA4BAI83Z4P46YON32VTRNL3ZJB-LONDON-ENDURES-CASUALTIES-FROM-GERMAN-RAIDS/query/There+ll+Always+be+a+London>> [Accessed: January 2019]

¹²⁹ BPA, VLVA6V2L02I7X1E3CQO6MHVT4NTW4, 'Raider Hits London Dance Hall', Gaumont British News, 1943. <<https://www.britishpathe.com/video/VLVA6V2L02I7X1E3CQO6MHVT4NTW4-LUFTWAFFE-NUISANCE-BOMBING-CAUSES-CASUALTIES-IN-LONDON/query/Luftwaffe+nuisance+bombing+causes+casualties+in+London>> [Accessed: January 2019]

¹³⁰ BPA, 1374.25, 'Front Line London', Pathé Gazette, 1944. <<https://www.britishpathe.com/video/front-line-london/query/Front+Line+London>> [Accessed: January 2019]

civilians were being injured from enemy action, but they also emphasised the collective bravery that was being demonstrated in the face of danger. Civilians in London were constructed as enduring the danger of enemy attack heroically. It was of social importance that whilst viewers were informed of the danger of aerial attack, they were also reminded of the resilience and courage of the population.

Similarly, wartime films also informed viewers how civilians were being wounded as a result of enemy action. In a 1941 documentary style film produced by the Ministry of Information, *Post 23*, reflected the damaging nature of warfare on the civilian population. The film documented the nature of Civil Defence work under bombardment, and in doing so, revealed the vulnerability of the population and their reliance on the Civil Defence services.¹³¹ Whilst light-hearted in its nature, the film intermittently reminded viewers of the reality of the war through including incidents which *Post 23* were required to attend. As the film detailed, ‘In the official reports it’s just an incident, but it’s life or death for one of our families’.¹³² The film then followed with scenes of the injured being rescued by various sectors of the Civil Defence services. Indeed, injury from enemy attack was reiterated as an expected consequence of life on the Home Front. The public were reminded that civilian bodies were now targets of war. This was similarly reflected in the 1940 documentary film *Britain Can Take It*, where the narrator Quentin Reynolds commented on the courage displayed by civilians across London, despite the threat of injury and death brought by the German planes.¹³³ Representations of injury amongst the civilian population drew upon notions of both endurance and sacrifice. Injury from aerial attack was an expected consequence of war; the injuries sustained by the civilian population symbolised national sacrifice, but also endurance in the face of adversity. As the narrator, Ed Murrow, of the 1945 film, *The Eighty Days*, summarised, ‘For the second

¹³¹ IWM Film, UKY 315, ‘Post 23’, Strand, 1941.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ IWM Film, COI 944, ‘Britain Can Take It’, GPO Film Unit, 1940.

time in this war, London has paid a heavy price. The grim and gay defiance of the old was gone, people were tired, but their strength was great, for they knew that the long battle was being won and that their sacrifices were speeding the final victory.’¹³⁴ Film and newsreels regularly referenced the physical sacrifices that were being made by the British population. However, they did so in a way which dramatised the reality of war. As Anthony Aldgate and Jeffrey Richards describe, cinema was a powerful tool in furthering the national cause and sustaining civilian morale.¹³⁵ Documentary films in particular served a dual purpose; to provide instructional films for the services and also to record the behaviour of the British people during a critical point in their history.¹³⁶ As Aldgate and Richards note, documentary films often reflected a similar propaganda message; of a shared will to fight, defiance of the enemy, and a triumphant celebration of ordinary people.¹³⁷ While newsreels and films highlighted that injury amongst the population could not be escaped from, it was constructed in a way which reinforced the sacrifice and reason for which such suffering was being endured. As a collective, the civilian population were presented as heroic in their display of defiance and courage against danger.

In contrast, newspapers and magazines detailed specific cases of wounding caused by enemy action. Whilst they were prohibited from publishing extensive civilian casualty lists, they were not restricted from featuring individual stories of the wounded. As such, stories about air raid injuries reinforced how the health of the civilian body was being sacrificed in the name of the war effort; they also stressed how all areas of society were vulnerable. The press became an important social outlet for communicating the ways in which civilians were being affected by air raids. Whereas newsreels and film dramatised

¹³⁴ IWM Film, UKY 576, ‘The Eighty Days’, Crown Film Unit, 1945.

¹³⁵ Aldgate and Richards, *Britain Can Take It*, p. 4.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.* p. 218.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.* p. 220.

wounding during aerial bombardment, newspapers published articles which provided specific detail on cases of injury; the injured were no longer a collective. These stories often detailed the names of the injured and how injury had occurred. Articles published in the local and national press or in local publications provided readers with stories of both tragedy and resilience. These articles also provided outlets where the heroic nature of injury could be communicated and reinforced.

Local newspapers in particular, favoured stories which detailed the experiences of local residents. For instance, in 1940, the *Uxbridge and W. Drayton Gazette* published a detailed article on how four houses in the West London neighbourhood had been demolished, and how the local residents had fared. It detailed how Mrs. Parker had demonstrated ‘fortitude and courage’ during the rescue effort to remove her from her bombed house; she sustained serious injuries. Next door, Mr and Mrs Watson were also buried in their house, Mrs Watson did not survive and Mr Watson was seriously injured.¹³⁸ Other stories, such as those which featured in the *Norwood News*, detailed the experiences of South London residents. One article described stories of narrow escapes that had been experienced by locals. A family of four had been saved when the daughter had a premonition that their home was in danger; they had retreated to their cellar just before a bomb hit their house. The father, Mr. James suffered injuries to his ribs and was taken to hospital for treatment, Mrs. James experienced shock.¹³⁹ The same year, it was reported how a South London resident, Mrs. Whiteley was injured by flying glass when a blast explosion caused the windows of her house to be blown out.¹⁴⁰ Narratives of civilian injury which focused upon wounds sustained whilst people were in their homes showed how the home, an environment associated with safety and comfort, had been

¹³⁸ ‘Buried under heap of debris: Woman’s fortitude and courage’, *Uxbridge & W. Drayton Gazette*, 04 October 1940, p. 5.

¹³⁹ ‘Civilians narrow escapes in reprisal raid’, *Norwood News*, 16 May 1941, p. 1.

¹⁴⁰ ‘Fatal Casualties in another Raid on Civilians’, *Norwood News*, 14 March 1941, p. 1.

transformed into a space of potential trauma and distress. The home was no longer a space of domesticity; it was also a space where the destructive nature of modern warfare was experienced. Indeed, these stories reflected the vulnerability of the Londoner from aerial attack, but they also echoed defiance. Through reporting cases of injury and trauma which had been experienced by families across the capital, the press drew attention to dangers experienced within the city. In the First World War, the press constructed a similar message around air raid casualties. As Susan Grayzel has explained, in media coverage of casualties during the Great War, the tragic vulnerability of victims remained a dominant theme.¹⁴¹ The injured were represented as vulnerable, but the press also celebrated the bravery of these 'ordinary' British civilians.¹⁴² This construction continued throughout the Second World War, as the vulnerability, but also the endurance and resilience of London's air raid casualties was emphasised.

Arguably, this narrative of heroic endurance was heightened in the Second World War, as the prevalence of injury from enemy action increased. In the tenth edition of the *London Hospital Illustrated*, a story of tragedy and fortitude covered the front page. It reported how a bomb had fallen close to an air raid shelter which a family were sheltering inside. The blast had killed the father and two young boys, leaving the mother widowed with her 14-day old baby, Reggie. Both mother and baby had been seriously wounded in the explosion, but were reported as having made a full recovery and were due to leave The London Hospital 'with a new lease of life'.¹⁴³ This story similarly reflected how civilian bodies were not safe from injury, even in air raid shelters. Whilst the article stressed the severity of their injuries, for example, baby Reggie was baptised in hospital as his condition was so unstable, it also highlighted how injury could be endured with

¹⁴¹ Grayzel, *At Home and Under Fire*, p. 61.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ 'The London helps bombed widow and babe to new lease of life', *London Hospital Illustrated*, Vol. 1, No. 10, 1941-1942, p. 1.

fortitude and courage. The press enabled factual information to spread throughout the population, local papers which published stories of air raid injuries provided a means through which neighbourhoods could read about the fate of family, friends and acquaintances. Such stories brought the reality of war home. The danger of aerial bombardment, as explained by Penny Summerfield, was omnipresent. It was all-pervading and often inescapable.¹⁴⁴ As such, stories of injured men and women, the young and old, reminded readers that they too were at risk of injury, yet, they also suggested that civilians had the potential to display courage and endurance in the face of injury. As Pat Jalland notes, reported behaviour in the London Blitz created an example of how people were expected to behave, and as a result created an accepted behavioural norm.¹⁴⁵ Whether or not civilians responded to injury on an individual level in the way that they were directed to, is virtually impossible to tell. However, coverage of civilians who were injured created a depiction of the injured civilian as vulnerable, but also stoic and brave. The press therefore created a construction of the injured civilian as resilient and enduring; providing a behavioural standard for the rest of the population to replicate. Importantly, since such vast numbers of the civilian population sustained injuries, it was important that wounded civilians were represented as defiant and brave in the face of injury, rather than weak and helpless. In contrast to injuries sustained through accidents in the workplace or streets, injuries from enemy action were not constructed as being caused by carelessness. These stories of courage in the face of injury were of societal importance; it was crucial to the nation's morale that they were informed about how injury on the Home Front was being sustained with courage. Through constructing the injured in this way, civilians were aligned with notions of the heroic war wounded; individuals who had sustained wounds in the fight for victory. While wounding from enemy action reaffirmed the vulnerability of the civilian body, it also aligned the civilian with the experiences of the armed forces.

¹⁴⁴ Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives*, p. 100.

¹⁴⁵ Jalland, *Death in War and Peace*, p. 122.

Although the press coverage of civilian casualties suggested that the population were responding stoically to injury on the Home Front, the representation of injured Civil Defence Emergency Service, and Hospital personnel differed. As discussed in Chapter One, occupational duties exposed these individuals to heightened levels of danger during the Second World War as they engaged with a range of wartime spaces. Whether it was through entering unstable buildings, navigating through blitzed streets, or remaining at a post during periods of bombardment, the work of the Civil Defence and Emergency Services was hazardous. Individuals who sustained injuries during air raids developed a double identity, they were the injured, but this did not detract from their responsibility as rescue workers, messengers or caregivers. The way that injured personnel of the Civil Defence, Emergency, or Hospital services were depicted reflected the complexities that surrounded their identity as the wounded; the responsibilities of an occupation did not diminish upon injury. Stories of heroic endeavour despite injury regularly appeared in the press. For example, in December 1940, the *Middlesex Mercury* described the resilience and duty that had been performed by a group of nurses when their maternity ward had sustained a direct hit. They were described as paying no attention to their cuts and bruises, and instead prioritised the rescue operation to retrieve trapped mothers and babies.¹⁴⁶ A similar narrative surrounded the behaviour of Mrs P. C. Bond and Mrs M. G. Johnson, who were both ambulance drivers of the Grangewood Depot in South East London. As the *Norwood News* detailed, during a night of bombing which the women were off duty, they assisted with rescue work when local buildings were damaged. Despite being injured themselves they were reported as helping with the rescue work and providing aid to injured persons.¹⁴⁷ Another ambulance driver Dora Shadbolt was also celebrated in the *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, when during a heavy raid on London, she sustained serious

¹⁴⁶ 'Hospital Attacked: Extensive Damage', *Middlesex Chronicle*, 07 December 1940, p. 6.

¹⁴⁷ 'Two Brave Ladies Commended by the King', *Norwood News*, 21 February 1941, p. 1.

injuries to her eye and neck.¹⁴⁸ The article emphasised that ‘despite being badly cut...[she] still went to the rescue of other members of her team.’¹⁴⁹ Similarly in 1941 the *Aberdeen Weekly Journal* detailed the story of a ‘Gallant Young Nurse’. In the article, Daisy Jerome, a trainee nurse in Marylebone, was praised for her dedication when assisting with the rescue of patients from the London Chest Hospital when it was severely damaged by bombs; Jerome’s actions were particularly noteworthy as she ‘was injured almost at the outset, and was later knocked unconsciousness, but on recovering continued to assist.’¹⁵⁰ These stories emphasised the changed position of women in wartime. Women not only performed important jobs on the Home Front, the danger caused by aerial bombardment meant they were also exposed to increased risk of injury while at work. Significantly, stories of women who had defied injury to continue their work as members of Civil Defence, the Emergency Services, or Hospital workers, stressed their natural role as caregivers. Women who had disregarded their own wellbeing to attend to individuals who needed their care were celebrated for displaying heroic virtues of comradeship, compassion and self-sacrifice. These heroic qualities were closely associated with occupation and gender; as such women who were wounded but continued to care for those around them were heroic in the way that they fought the battle for life.

Moreover, readers of the *Daily Record* were informed about an anonymous case of an ARP warden in South-West London who disregarded his own wounds in order to finish his shift and rescue casualties, it was only after his shift that he reported to the first aid post for medical attention and shrapnel was removed from his knee.¹⁵¹ The case of Westminster Auxiliary Fireman Harry Errington received particularly widespread attention in the press, with his story being recounted in local papers across Britain ranging

¹⁴⁸ ‘Young heroines of Banff and London’, *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 02 January 1943, p. 2.

¹⁴⁹ ‘Young heroines of Banff and London’ *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 02 January 1943, p. 2.

¹⁵⁰ ‘Warden Hero Wins G.M.’, *Aberdeen Weekly Journal*, 23 October 1941, p. 2.

¹⁵¹ ‘ARP Warden was a Hero’, *Daily Record*, 26 August 1940, p. 1.

from the *Birmingham Daily Gazette* and the *Newcastle Journal* to national papers such as the *Daily Mirror*.¹⁵² Errington's story was notable as he had prioritised saving his colleagues when their headquarters had been hit by a bomb, despite being dazed and injured himself. He received a George Cross for his actions.¹⁵³ Similarly, in the *Illustrated London News*, Anthony Smith of the Chelsea Rescue Service, was celebrated for displaying 'outstanding gallantry in conditions of the utmost danger and difficulty' whilst saving individuals trapped in a collapsed building.¹⁵⁴ Particularly notable was that Smith, despite being injured and almost overwhelmed by smoke and fumes, continued his duties; he also received a George Cross for his actions.

As detailed in Chapter Two, medals attached meaning to courageous conduct; they signified that an individual had exceeded their responsibilities and deserved public recognition. Indeed, individuals who were injured and who later received medals for their behaviour, further reinforced how injury was constructed as a visual marker of heroic conduct. This was particularly the case when an individual had been injured by enemy action but had remained at their post. Indeed, workers of the Civil Defence and Emergency Services were celebrated for their selflessness and devotion to duty. Sustaining wounds made courageous behaviour all the more extraordinary under enemy action; it was this devotion to duty despite the risks to their own life that positioned individuals as heroic as they displayed virtues of heroic self-sacrifice. Tolerating and enduring injuries validated the heroism of the Civil Defence and Emergency Services. However, it is important to recognise that in wartime bodies remained gendered. Although wounding was constructed as a universal experience, the representation of

¹⁵² 'George Cross for AFS Man', *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 09 August 1941, p. 3

'3 Women Get Raid Awards', *Newcastle Journal*, 09 August 1941, p. 4.

'Hurt, Defied Fire to Save Two Pals', *Daily Mirror*, 09 August 1941, p. 3.

¹⁵³ 'Hurt, Defied Fire to Save Two Pals', *Daily Mirror*, 09 August 1941, p. 3.

¹⁵⁴ 'Personalities and Events: People in the Public Eye Today', *Illustrated London News*, 10 June 1944, p. 21.

wounding particularly heightened the heroic masculinity of the wounded.¹⁵⁵ As Ana Carden-Coyne argues, gendered ideals underpinned how the war-wounded body was conceptualised in wartime.¹⁵⁶ As R.W. Connell notes, the male body in particular is a marker of masculinity, symbolising strength through the ability to protect and defend.¹⁵⁷ As Connell further notes, understandings of gender are reinforced through bodily performance; gender is vulnerable if performance cannot be sustained.¹⁵⁸ However, by representing the wounded as stoically responding to injury, notions of wartime masculinity remained resilient. Therefore, whilst, these stories collectively reflected how both male and female bodies could be injured whilst actively engaging with the dangers experienced by enemy action, the narrative which surrounded injured male workers of the Civil Defence and Emergency Services was heightened; it was important that cultural norms of men as the nation's protectors were reinforced.

A similar image of endurance despite injury was communicated in *The Siren*, Holborn's Monthly Magazine for ARP workers, where an article detailed 'three things we like about Holborn Wardens'.¹⁵⁹ Wardens carried out a range of duties, they directed members of the public to shelters during air raids, assisted with casualties after raids, reported the extent of damage to their local control centres, and provided an example how to behave during periods of bombardment.¹⁶⁰ As detailed in *The Siren*, the top characteristic of Holborn wardens was 'their courage in adversity.' The article detailed how:

¹⁵⁵ Whilst women's fortitude and courage in the face of injury received admiration in the press, women never received the George Cross for their actions on the Home Front.

¹⁵⁶ Ana Carden-Coyne, 'Gendering the Politics of Wounds since 1914', in Ana Carden-Coyne (ed.), *Gender and Conflict since 1914: Historical and Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2012), pp. 83-97 (p. 84).

¹⁵⁷ R.W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995) p. 45.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.* p. 54.

¹⁵⁹ Hugh Forsyth, 'Three things we like about Holborn Wardens', *The Siren: Holborn's Monthly Magazine for all ARP Workers*, Vol.1, No. 2, March 1940, p. 4.

¹⁶⁰ Brown, *Put That Light Out*, p. 50.

It is no unusual thing to find large numbers of Wardens lying about the streets, suffering from the most distressing injuries. One may have fractured his spine; another may have dislocated his shoulder; a third may be bleeding freely from a transverse wound...in spite of this, the Wardens keep wonderfully cheerful, and do all they can to help the Stretcher Party.¹⁶¹

The article reassured readers that despite injury, it was also not unusual for wardens to remain wonderfully cheerful and helpful to those attending to them. Moreover, the article comically detailed that on one occasion, an unconscious warden miraculously informed a new stretcher bearer how to treat concussion, and on another, a warden with a broken femur walked to a stretcher to save the stretcher bearers the trouble of lifting him.¹⁶² The feats of Holborn's wardens were clearly dramatized to emphasise their endurance and selflessness despite being wounded. These stories applauded devotion to duty in spite of injury; wounding did not hinder individuals whose job it was to assist and protect. If possible, these workers would prioritise others wellbeing, or help those that were treating their injuries. Incredibly, for Holborn wardens, even unconsciousness did not stop them advising new Civil Defence recruits. The article simply concluded, 'If that isn't the spirit of self-sacrifice, we'd like to know what it.'¹⁶³ Indeed, stories which reported upon the behaviour of Civil Defence, Emergency and Hospital Services, constructed a stoical response to injury. Injury was presented through the behavioural response in relation to it. As Lucy Noakes describes in her exploration of death and grief during wartime, good citizenship depended on a stoical response to suffering.¹⁶⁴ Indeed, the same was the case for injury. As the nation's defenders and caregivers, it was important that the Civil

¹⁶¹ Hugh Forsyth, 'Three things we like about Holborn Wardens', *The Siren: Holborn's Monthly Magazine for all ARP Workers*, Vol.1, No. 2, March 1940, p. 4.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Lucy Noakes, 'Gender, Grief and Bereavement in Second World War Britain', *Journal of War & Culture Studies*, 8:1 (2015), 72-85 (p. 73).

Defence and Emergency Services were represented as resilient as the nation depended on them. These stories created an expectation surrounding Civil Defence personnel, that injury would not detract from their responsibility as defenders or caregivers of the Home Front. Notably, wounds caused by enemy action were not gained in active combat; these civilians were on the front line, they were not required to fight the enemy in the traditional way. Instead, they fought for survival. Despite this, it was important for representations of injury to reflect the resilience and fortitude of the services. As Scott Allison and George Goethals describe, heroic status is largely achieved through the way that obstacles are overcome; such as when people risk life and limb to overcome a great physical challenge.¹⁶⁵ Therefore, through demonstrating courage in adversity, civilians, and particularly Civil Defence, were surrounded by a narrative which commended their bravery whilst sustaining injuries under enemy action.

In contrast to the general population, the injuries of the Civil Defence and Emergency Services were attached with a heightened identity as they had not only been wounded, but had been wounded whilst fulfilling occupational duties. Through demonstrating fortitude and courage in the face of wounding, they were framed as responding heroically to injury. The context in which wounding had been sustained also facilitated representations of heroism. In wartime, the wounded body was a marker of the destructive nature of modern warfare. In the public sphere, sustaining bodily wounds from enemy action carried important cultural association with participation and heroic conduct. As Susannah Biernoff explains, these cultural attitudes stemmed from the First World War where individuals who sustained bodily wounding were celebrated as wounded heroes.¹⁶⁶ Notably, bodily wounding amongst the civilian population enabled injury to be framed in a way which reinforced cultural understandings of wounding and heroic

¹⁶⁵ Allison and Goethals, *Heroes: What They Do and Why We Need Them*, pp. 123-124.

¹⁶⁶ Susannah Biernoff, *Portraits of Violence: War and the Aesthetics of Disfigurement* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2017) p. 57.

combat. As Biernoff further states, to understand the representation of war and injury fully, researchers must look beyond flesh and blood; it is also important to view the wounded body as a symbolic site invested with political and personal meaning.¹⁶⁷ Valour, heroism, patriotism and courage are all concepts that are embodied through wounding.¹⁶⁸ As such, the injuries sustained by the general population, but even more so for the Civil Defence and the Emergency Services, carried connotative meaning of wounding sustained in battle.

However, these stories also served a second purpose. Individual stories in the press and media strengthened the notion of shared experience within communities; for readers a story which reported survival from injury also provided optimism and hope. Aerial bombardment brought increased risk to the population and thus, the reality of injury could not be concealed. However, the way that an injured individual responded to their injuries could be influenced and shaped in the public domain. Through watching films and newsreels, or reading about stories of people being injured, civilians could aspire to act bravely like the people that were reported in the press; it was important for the population to believe that they too were able to demonstrate stoicism and bravery in the face of potential injury and harm.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁷ Ibid. p. 4.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Whilst it is not within the remit of this chapter to discuss psychological wounds in depth, it is important to note that reports of psychological wounding, and the way they were presented, shows a contrast between how physical and psychological wounds from enemy action were understood. As Michal Shapira notes in *The War Inside* (p. 35.) although fear and anxiety were viewed as normal reactions to war, some moral judgement remained about the nature of mental wounding. Popular discourse suggested that the mental wellbeing of the population was strong, when cases did arise where an individual displayed psychological trauma, their wounds were not constructed in the same way as bodily injury. The heroic construction of physical wounds was further heightened by the way that psychological wounding was presented. For example, in November 1940, a case was reported in the *Manchester Evening News* of an ARP women who had been 'found dead under a crag'. She had been on holiday at the time in the Lake District, and was believed to be suffering from bomb shock. Similarly, on the 8th Feb 1941, the suicide of an ARP Ambulance Driver was reported in the *Middlesex Country Times*. The Ambulance driver was found dead at Ealing Cricket Club pavilion. The deceased had suffered from depression for some time, and it was thought that ambulance work had added to a deterioration of his mental state. The relative lack of articles which documented mental stress can be interpreted in two ways. Indeed, on the one hand they could be read as indicative of low levels of neurosis amongst the population. On the other hand, their relative absence could also be read as representative of attitudes towards types of wartime wounding. As Shapira notes, anxiety and fear, although a reality of modern warfare, needed to be controlled and managed. (Shapira, *The*

Conclusions

As the Home Front was transformed into a theatre of war, injury amongst the civilian population increased. As this chapter has shown, wartime dangers impacted on civilian bodies in a multitude of ways. The injured civilian came to represent wartime involvement; wounding was a fundamental way for individual and collective contribution towards the war effort to be recognised. As this discussion has illustrated, representations of injury reflected the complex relationship between civilian health and their interaction and reliance on the environment around them. Throughout the war, preventative campaigns sought to protect the civilian against injury; these campaigns to prevent injuries later informed representations of wounding sustained by the civilian population. Preventing injury from accidents and from enemy action was a personal responsibility. However, the narrative differed when injuries were sustained. Workplace accidents, accidents on the roads, or within the wider community, were constructed as avoidable, whereas, injuries from enemy action were understood as an inevitable consequence of modern warfare. Injuries caused by enemy action defined individuals as a specific type of war casualty; their experience of wounding was explained in ways which suggested heroic defiance. These meanings also aligned the civilian population with the wartime experience of being wounded in battle. This was valuable during wartime; it helped to bolster the population against the reality of enemy attack. Injuries sustained by the Civil Defence and Emergency Services were awarded a heightened heroism as their occupations required them to directly face the dangers caused by enemy attack. Indeed, sustaining wounds from enemy action enabled the civilian to engage with the status of the war hero. As Joanna Bourke has argued in relation to wounded soldiers in the First

War Inside, p. 44.) Documenting cases of psychological distress did not serve a social purpose. Although attitudes towards mental injury progressed from the First World War to the Second World War, attitudes towards fear and mental distress as emasculating remained present. Further research on heroic wounding could explore the contrast in attitudes between physical and psychological wounds on the Home Front.

World War, bodily mutilations symbolised badges of courage, hall marks of service, and proof of patriotism.¹⁷⁰ In many ways, this was the same for civilians in the Second World War; injury from enemy action adorned the civilian population with this same identity, labelling their injury as a mark of heroic defiance, bravery and duty.

¹⁷⁰ Joanna Bourke, 'The Complexity of Medicine and War', *The Lancet*, 373:9658 (2009), 113-114 (p. 114).

Chapter Four

Heroic Deaths: The Civilian War Dead

After hearing that her husband's name was going to be included in the Imperial War Graves Commission's Roll of Honour to the civilian war dead, Mrs G. Price, of Dafforne Road, Tooting, London, sent a letter to the chairman of the IWGC expressing her thanks. She wrote, 'I beg to acknowledge your letter most gratefully received, and I cannot express how pleased I am that my husband's name will be remembered alongside the fighting forces.'¹ For Mrs Price, this inclusion carried symbolic meaning of recognition and acknowledgement; her husband had not died in vain. As this chapter details, during the Second World War, civilian deaths were constructed and represented in ways which aligned the war dead with cultural understandings of dying in battle.

Not all civilians survived wartime injury. The Second World War resulted in greater civilian fatalities than ever before. Between 1939 and 1945, Britain sustained 60,000 deaths from enemy action; 29,890 civilians were killed in London alone.² As the Imperial War Graves Commission roll of honour to the civilian war dead detailed, '[Civilians were killed] while engaged in household or in business activities, or at their posts as members of the Civil Defence Services; deaths occurred in people's homes, in offices and factories, in schools and in public vehicles, in air-raid shelters and in the open country'.³ Death, like injury, was an expected consequence of war. However, official statistics which recorded the rising numbers of the civilian war dead who were killed by enemy action, only told the story of bombing; many more civilians were killed whilst working in wartime industry or through accidents at home or on London's streets. This

¹ TNA, WO32/9850, 'Civilian War Dead, extracts from letters'.

² 'Table 3 & 4', in Titmuss, *Problems of Social Policy*, pp. 559-560.

³ Imperial War Graves Commission, *Civilian War Dead in the United Kingdom. Volume 1* (London: The Imperial War Graves Commission, 1954)

discussion explores how civilian death was constructed, and whether the public representation of the civilian war dead shaped understanding of death during wartime and the role of the civilian during periods of conflict. It will examine this through reports and stories of the dead, burial practices, and rituals associated with funeral services. It will consider how perceptions of duty, courage and sacrifice shaped the way that the civilian war dead were understood, but also how the space and circumstance in which death occurred influenced understandings of gallant behaviour. Importantly, this chapter explores how civilian war deaths were represented, and how dying for a cause enabled the war dead to engage with heroic ideals associated with dying in battle. Notably, this chapter will explore how the war dead were represented in a way which emphasised characteristics of heroism; sacrifice, duty and courage.

As civilians were placed at increased risk of death and disablement during the Second World War, their identity as the war dead evolved beyond victims of war. This chapter explores how the increased frequency of civilian death during the Second World War changed public perceptions of heroism and sacrifice. The all-encompassing nature of the Second World War required civilians to contribute towards the war effort to a greater extent than ever before; civilians fought the battle for production, defended their neighbourhoods, and dealt with the uncertainty that they could be injured or killed in an aerial attack. The changed environment and dangers experienced on the Home Front enabled civilians to engage with the ideals more traditionally associated with dying in wartime. In particular, individuals who were killed whilst knowingly facing danger, or whilst saving the lives of others were presented as noble, self-sacrificing and heroic. Where previously these were traits associated with military conduct, the danger experienced during the Second World War enabled civilians to be recognised for making the ultimate sacrifice and dying for their nation. As this chapter illustrates, the context in which death occurred was central to the way that the civilian war dead were constructed.

Individuals who were believed to have died whilst saving the lives of others were praised for their heroism. In contrast, the deaths of civilians who were killed by enemy action, but who were not considered as placing themselves at undue risk, were surrounded by a narrative which commended their duty and sacrifice. Moreover, child fatalities, although victims of war, were still recognised as worthy. In order to fortify the emotional wellbeing of the population, it was important for all civilian war-related deaths to have meaning.

Significantly, the Second World War blurred understandings of the hero and victim. Death on the Home Front, which defined civilians as victims of war, also facilitated the construction of heroism through displays of resilience, courage and defiance. Civilians could be represented as both heroes and victims; as such the image of the Home Front civilian evolved in line with changes in industrialised warfare. As combatants of the Home Front, the heroic war dead were also victims of the wider political situation. This chapter will question whether the transformation of the civilian population into combatants blurred the boundaries between the armed forces and civilians, and thus, altered the way that war related deaths were constructed. Firstly, this chapter will explore how the news of civilian fatalities was announced, through obituaries, notices, and news articles. Secondly, it will explore how the deaths of civilians were framed through burial practices and spaces of interment. Examination of the practices that surrounded burial of the deceased reveals how the civilian war dead were represented. Indeed, methods of internment carry social meaning and reflect societal attitudes towards the deceased. Lastly, attention will turn to exploring the rituals associated with wartime funeral services; rituals emphasised notions of honour and sacrifice. As this chapter illustrates, it was important for civilians to be represented in a heroic manner in both life and death. The civilian war dead were of important social value on the Home Front; collectively, they represented combined sacrifice during wartime,

and individually, when a civilian had died in courageous or dutiful circumstances, death represented heroic defiance in the face of the enemy.

Indeed, through the way that the Home Front population were informed about the feats of the civilian dead, they were exposed to cultural markers which reinforced ideals of heroism and death during wartime. War transformed the way that civilian loss was understood and how civilian death became represented as a tale of heroic endeavour, national duty and honour, or tragedy and misfortune.

As this chapter illustrates, announcements, burial practices and funerary rituals developed 'categories of valourisation' which shaped understandings of death and elevated the deceased to a heroic status. These categories included celebratory language, sites of cultural meaning, rhetorical phrases, and rituals of citizenship. Constructions and representations of heroic deaths drew upon some, or all, of these categories. These categories also indicate how constructions of the heroic war dead were multifaceted and complex; heroic constructions were layered and interconnected with cultural understandings of wartime contribution, citizenship and duty. As such, these categories acted as indicators of heroism; they distinguished a heroic wartime death and attached social and cultural meaning to the deceased.

Death in Wartime

Within current studies of war and death, scholars have paid particular attention to exploring the changing attitudes towards death and the emotional responses to it. As Pat Jalland reveals in her comprehensive study of death, grief and mourning, the two world wars had a profound impact on attitudes towards death and expressions of grief. As Jalland reveals, the Second World War, which killed ordinary men and women in an unprecedented manner, prompted a specific reaction to civilian deaths. Displays of grief

were openly accepted before 1914, but modern warfare encouraged the British public to display outward stoicism and courage in the face of loss.⁴ Moreover, Lucy Noakes has explored the relationship between death and war through a specific focus on the Second World War and the emotional economy of the nation. As Noakes reveals, there was little room for images of death or narratives of grief during the Second World War, or in the years following it.⁵ Noakes' work builds upon earlier studies of death and grief by exploring grief and bereavement in greater detail. As Noakes argues, during and after the war, the war dead and the grief of the bereaved, were contained to specific cultural and geographical spaces.⁶ In contrast, Julie Rugg's research into burial and funerary practices, reveals how spaces of burial and funerary rituals carry social, cultural and political meanings in wartime. As Rugg suggests, attitudes towards the dead were shaped through the way that the deceased were interned.⁷ This chapter will build upon and complement these studies by exploring how changes to wartime burial practices and funerary rituals shaped the identity of the deceased. It will explore how obituaries and notices, burial practices, and funerary rituals constructed civilian war deaths in a specific manner. Framing the civilian war dead as heroic served to fortify the Home Front population and reassure the bereaved of the honour associated with dying for the nation.

The War Dead: pre-1939

Firstly, it is important to examine how the war dead were perceived prior to 1939 to establish markers of continuity and change in the way that the war dead were publicly represented in the decades leading up to and during the Second World War. As Luc Capdevila and Danièle Voldman describe, as a result of war in the modern industrial age,

⁴ Jalland, *Death in War and Peace*, p. 124.

⁵ Noakes, *Dying for the Nation*, p. 3.

⁶ *Ibid.* p. 266.

⁷ Rugg, 'Managing 'Civilian Deaths due to War Operations'', 152-173 (p. 171).

Western societies faced death on a mass scale. From the millions of young men decimated in the First World War to the men and women wiped out in the Second, the presence of mass death embodied the brutality of modern conflict.⁸ During the First World War, 723,000 British individuals in the military lost their lives.⁹ However, along with the military, the British civilian population also sustained losses during the First World War. The sporadic Zeppelin and Gotha raids which targeted London during 1915 and 1916, and then later between 1917 and 1918 caused 1,413 civilian deaths.¹⁰ Whilst these civilian casualties were only a fraction of the total national losses, they too were caused by the destructive nature of modern conflict. However, it was particularly the military war dead who held an esteemed place in society. As Jerry White notes, before the end of the First World War, local working-class communities began to visibly honour the collective sacrifice made by local residents. Tiny local shrines and rolls of honour appeared on the working-class streets of London as a way to remember brothers, sons and husbands who never returned home.¹¹ As Jessica Meyer explains, individuals who died during the First World War became defined by the way that they died. Notions of courage, duty, sacrifice and patriotism surrounded these individuals, positioning them as the masculine heroes of war who had sacrificed their lives for their country.¹² Public memorials in particular reinforced these ideals. Memorials which commemorated groups of individuals reinforced traditional Victorian attributes of manliness; they glorified death and gave it a purpose, developing an association between death and heroic sacrifice.¹³ However, as Meyer suggests, the dead were not heroes simply through dying, the means of death was

⁸ Capdevila and Voldman, *War Dead*, p. xi.

⁹ 'Table 1. Aspects of War Losses in the Two World Wars', in Jay Winter, *Remembering War: The Great War Between Memory and History in the Twentieth Century* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2006) p. 167.

¹⁰ Alan G. V. Simmonds, *Britain and World War One* (London: Routledge, 2012) p. 162.

¹¹ Jerry White, *Zeppelin Nights* (London: Vintage Books, 2015)

¹² <https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=6051AgAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=Zeppelin+Nights:+London+in+the+First+World+War&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiDwpORzbDoAhWHecAKHTBVDuAQ6AEIJzAA#v=onepage&q=local%20shrines&f=false> [Accessed: 26 June 2019]

¹³ Meyer, *Men of War*, p. 96.

¹⁴ Ibid. p. 80.

also important.¹⁴ Dying in action was a key marker of heroic masculinity, and thus provided a source of consolidation, pride and inspiration for the bereaved.¹⁵ Notably, the space and context in which death occurred was central in shaping how the war dead were defined; notions of sacrifice, courage, nobility and duty shaped the way that the dead were constructed as heroic.

As Capdevila and Voldman suggest, the heroic representation of the military war dead of the Great War was largely a public construction.¹⁶ After the end of the war, spaces devoted to commemoration, including graves, monuments and cenotaphs for the dead were founded out of a public need to remember the dead and honour them; ceremonies conducted in these spaces brought together private grief and public sorrow and were ways of remembering those who had given their lives. New methods of warfare created mass death, but also the absence of bodies upon death. Monuments, such as the tomb of the unknown soldier, provided a way of honouring those who had disappeared in the mud and confusion; these monuments remembered the dead whose bodies had never been recovered.¹⁷ According to David Cannadine, during the interwar period, the collective sorrow felt by the nation caused new practices to emerge to honour the war dead.¹⁸ New national memorials were created to commemorate those who had sacrificed their lives. Arguably, the memorials and monuments that valourised the war dead did so in a way which centred on the Forces. In many ways, these spaces of commemoration and remembrance channelled the notion of ‘hero worship’, as defined by the philosopher Thomas Carlyle in the mid nineteenth century.¹⁹ Yet, in contrast to nineteenth century hero worship which centred upon the admiration of specific individuals, during the First

¹⁴ Ibid. p. 83.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Capdevila and Voldman, *War Dead*, p. 13.

¹⁷ Ibid. p. 166-167.

¹⁸ Cannadine, ‘War and Death, Grief and Mourning in Modern Britain’, pp. 187-242 (p. 226).

¹⁹ Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and The Heroic in History* (Project Gutenberg ebook: 2008) <<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1091/1091-h/1091-h.htm>> [Accessed: 30 August 2019]

World War and interwar period, society utilised public displays of respect and reverence to recognise the collective sacrifices made by their war dead. As Juliette Pattinson describes, these memorials kept alive the notion of the ‘soldier hero’, and enabled the ordinary soldier to emerge as a hero in the dramatic narrative of war.²⁰ Memorials contributed towards the mythologizing of the heroic soldier, suggesting that the heroism associated with death could only be gained through active combat. As such, memorials and ceremonies, Cannadine argues, were a tribute by the living to the dead; they were a reassurance that loved ones were not forgotten and that they had not died in vain.²¹ Moreover, as Lily Kong explains, memorial sites are places of important spatial significance, they connect death and dying with grief and remembrance.²² As such, memorials provided a space which linked the living with the dead, and created a site through which the actions of the dead could be remembered and respected. Although the relationship between death and heroism were made starkly apparent during the First World War, it remained firmly positioned on the sacrifices made by soldiers and sailors.

The civilians who died in German raids over Britain remained absent from ceremonies which focused on the sacrifice of the military war dead. As Susan Grayzel suggests, the civilian war dead of the First World War represented the tragic vulnerability of civilians.²³ As Grayzel notes, during the war, the media frequently emphasised the barbarity of German raids and the loss of innocent lives.²⁴ Civilians on the Home Front had not played an active role in combat, and were thus first and foremost, not heroes, but victims of war. However, it is notable that whilst civilians were vulnerable to enemy attack, facing shared danger was something that they could collectively offer to the

²⁰ Juliette Pattinson, ‘“Shirkers”, ‘Scrimjacks’ and ‘Scrimshanks’?: British Civilian Masculinity and Reserved Occupations, 1914–45’, *Gender and History*, 28 (2016), 709-727 (p. 709).

²¹ Cannadine, ‘War and Death, Grief and Mourning in Modern Britain’, pp. 187-242 (p. 226).

²² Lily Kong, ‘Foreword’, in Avril Maddrell and James D. Sidaway (eds.), *Deathscapes: Spaces for Death, Dying, Mourning and Remembrance* (Farnham: Ashgate 2010) pp. xv-xvi (p. xv).

²³ Grayzel, *At Home and Under Fire*, p. 61.

²⁴ *Ibid.* p. 53-55.

wartime state, regardless of age, gender or class.²⁵ Clearly, the space and circumstance in which death occurred was of fundamental importance to the way that war related deaths were constructed and understood. During the First World War, providing that an individual had died in combat overseas, death was constructed as noble and heroic.

The Civilian War Dead: 1939-1945

Death on the Home Front in London was particularly prevalent during the nine months of the Blitz, which commenced in September 1940. By the end of 1941 over 20,000 civilians had been killed in London alone. Death rates peaked again in 1944 when London was targeted by German flying bombs and rockets.²⁶ Indeed, throughout the war, aerial bombardment posed the largest threat to human life on the Home Front. Yet, it is important to note that individuals were also killed in workplace accidents, on the roads and railways, and from industrial diseases. The location, circumstance and identity of the deceased were tightly connected to the way that deaths were presented in the public sphere. In order to explore the heroic identity of the war dead, this discussion will focus on examining deaths from enemy action. Moreover, this chapter will explore how reports which documented fatalities did not dwell on the devastating nature in which death occurred, and instead focused upon the way that wartime death symbolised the ultimate act of national duty. Upon dying, the civilian war dead, particularly those who had been killed from enemy action, were adorned with an identity which centred upon honour, self-sacrifice and devotion. In some cases, the deaths of specific individuals, such as those in Civil Defence, were heightened to the extent that they were presented as the heroic war dead of the Home Front. Indeed, reasons for honouring the war dead in this way have

²⁵ Ibid. p. 56.

²⁶ 'Table 4: Number of civilians in London Civil Defence region killed by enemy action 1939-1945', in Titmuss, *Problems of Social Policy*, p. 560.

been explored by Pat Jalland and Lucy Noakes in their separate discussions of war and grief. As Pat Jalland describes, the dark side of the Blitz story, where countless bodies were blown to pieces, was suppressed and sanitised during the war. This was motivated out of a desire to sustain morale; for the public wellbeing, wartime censorship prohibited the detailed reports of gruesome deaths and mass burials.²⁷ Instead, reports of the war dead were constructed in a way which bolstered morale. Representing the deaths of the civilian war dead in an honourable manner acted as a powerful tool in emotionally strengthening the population. Loss was more easily managed within the context of national defence and sacrifice.²⁸ Emphasising the sacrifices made by the dead, as Lucy Noakes has detailed, advised the living how to behave in the face of personal loss; as they too had to conduct themselves honourably in their grief.²⁹ Therefore, in order to help the British population make sense of the widespread fatalities, death on the Home Front was presented in a manner which emphasised heroic self-sacrifice. Through focusing on the way that the civilian war dead were valourised, this discussion will complement current studies which explore the control of emotion in wartime, as well as literature which explores civilian identity. It will explore how the notion of the heroic war dead served a social purpose in fortifying the civilian population during times of hardship. Indeed, it is important to remember that the multidimensional identity which surrounded the war dead was for the benefit of the living; the war dead represented both national sacrifice and collective endurance.

In a similar way that the government sought to control how news of the civilian wounded was communicated to the population, the same was the case for communication of the civilian war dead. In 1937 it was predicted that 10,000 deaths per day could occur

²⁷ Jalland, *Death in War and Peace*, p. 124.

²⁸ *Ibid.* p. 123.

²⁹ Noakes, 'Gender, Grief, and Bereavement in Second World War Britain', 72-85 (p. 78.)

across the country if Britain was subjected to sustained aerial attack.³⁰ Moreover, it was feared that London may be subject to, most, if not all of the assault. Whilst these numbers did not materialise, anxiety remained on how best to notify the population about the numbers of civilians killed. The benefits and drawbacks of informing the population were extensively debated amongst the War Cabinet Civil Defence Committee during July 1940. Some committee members believed that it was important to reveal the number of casualties experienced, whereas others believed that it was important to conceal these figures so the enemy could not determine the exact effect of bombings.³¹ As a result, numbers of the civilian dead were announced and communicated in the same way as civilian casualties. While lists of the civilian dead were advertised at public centres throughout towns and districts for the benefit of local communities, the national press were banned from reproducing these lists which included personal details and the location of death, and which could be linked to specific raids.³² Instead, like numbers of civilians who had been injured, figures for the civilian war dead were announced monthly in Parliament and published in the press. This, as Churchill described, '[would] give the public the satisfaction of knowing the worst without enabling the enemy to connect any particular attack with its result, and otherwise gain information at our expense.'³³ Managing how the population were informed about numbers of the civilian war dead was tightly connected with managing morale. Morale was fragile, particularly during periods of intense bombing, and so it was important for news of deaths on the Home Front to be managed appropriately. As Robert Mackay has explained, throughout the war, significant 'official effort went into trying to win and retain the people's hearts and minds for the

³⁰ TNA, CAB 3/6/257, 'Committee of Imperial Defence. Compensation to Civilians for Loss of Life or Injury from Air Attack. Folios 292-300.'

³¹ TNA, HO 186/304, 'Extract from Draft Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet Civil Defence Committee held on Wednesday 17th July 1940 at 10:00am.'

³² For example, the details regarding the civilians killed in the Bethnal Green tube incident in March 1943 were withheld from the public.

³³ TNA, HO 186/304, 'The Prime Minister, House of Commons Private Notice'.

task in hand, to get them to think and behave “correctly”.³⁴ Therefore, monthly figures detailing the civilian war dead informed whilst also preventing mass panic.

However, despite controlling the way that civilian war deaths were communicated, civilian death remained visible and present during wartime. In the same way as the soldiers and sailors of the First World War were remembered and respected, the same was done for the civilian population in the Second World War. In the public domain, a narrative surrounded the civilian war dead, suggesting that their deaths had not been in vain.

Announcements and Obituaries

Throughout the war, obituaries, reports and announcements of civilians who had been killed on the Home Front appeared in a range of wartime literature. Announcements were a valuable way for individuals, particularly local communities, to be informed about fatalities. Newspapers, workplace journals, and borough and service magazines frequently paid tribute to the fallen. Notably, these announcements offered the civilian war dead an identity beyond the publication of monthly casualty figures. Announcements and obituaries publicly detailed the names of those who had been killed along with the circumstances which led to their death. Particularly when death had been caused as a direct result of enemy action, parallels were made between civilian death, wartime duty and national loss. As Lucy Noakes argues, the dead are valuable in wartime; they fulfil an emotional value to the bereaved, yet they also have a political value. The dead are unifying symbols of shared suffering, support and resolution.³⁵ Announcements and

³⁴ Robert Mackay, *Half the Battle: Civilian Morale in Britain During the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003) <<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/kentuk/detail.action?docID=242635>> [Accessed: 03 June 2019] p. 251.

³⁵ Noakes, *Dying for the Nation*, p. 156.

tributes to the civilian dead emphasised how modern warfare had altered sites of conflict and thus, spaces of death; whilst civilians were not wartime combatants in the traditional military sense, they could still die in the same way as the armed forces.

Obituaries were frequently published in both local and national newspapers, and provided readers with insight into the lives and character of those who had been killed. They documented the names of the deceased, when and how they had died. In the *West London Observer*, on 27th September 1940, it was detailed how Mr and Mrs Martin of Fulham had been killed in an air raid. The article praised the couple's contribution towards their local community and their devotion to each other. It noted how, 'they faced death how they faced life, hand in hand, and of them it can truly be said, in their love for each other, their neighbours, and their country. "They fulfilled the Law" – May they rest in peace'.³⁶ Indeed, the reference to 'fulfilling the law' is a direct reference to Jesus and the Bible. In particular, it suggested that the deaths of Mr and Mrs Martin, like the death of Jesus, were valued and meaningful; in dying they had fulfilled their duty to the nation and the war effort. In other newspapers, similar obituaries were published. In November 1940, *The Norwood News* paid tribute to a manager of a local music shop who had been killed in an air raid.³⁷ The article praised his 50-year service at Mess. Beringer and Strohmenger Piano and Music Dealers, but also commended the way he had faced the war with 'great courage and serenity'.³⁸ Whilst both of these examples reflect tragedy they also strongly reflect duty. Death amongst the civilian population was presented as a devastating consequence of modern conflict, yet, newspapers also emphasised how war deaths were honourable. For local communities, regional newspapers were an important way of finding out information about who had been killed on the Home Front, yet, they

³⁶ 'Mr and Mrs Michael Martin killed: Two local air raid victims,' *West London Observer*, 27 September 1940, p. 5.

³⁷ 'Mr J. Houghton's Tragic Death: Manager of Local Music Shop', *Norwood News*, 15 November 1940, p. 3.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

also reassured readers of the respect which surrounded civilians whose deaths had been caused by enemy action.

Business, company and service magazines were also spaces where readers were informed of deaths amongst the civilian population. In particular, *The Westminster: The Magazine of the Westminster Bank Staff*, not only honoured staff members who had joined the armed forces and had died, it also paid tribute to members of staff who had died of illness, or who had been killed by enemy action in London or in bank branches across the country. For example, in the November issue in 1940, an obituary detailed how Mr. J.H. Dawes ‘fell victim to enemy machine gun fire during an air raid on the south-western suburbs of London.’³⁹ Similarly, in the Spring 1941 issue, it was described how Mr. C. Love, and his wife, had been tragically killed by enemy action whilst in their home.⁴⁰ Yet, whilst *The Westminster* published reports of civilian deaths, they were overshadowed by the endless pages dedicated to the fallen of the armed forces. For example, in the issues which detailed the deaths of Mr. Dawes and Mr. Love, news of their deaths were dominated by the Roll of Honour dedicated to honouring members of The Westminster bank staff who had served and been killed overseas. The obituaries of Mr. Dawes and Mr. Love, whose deaths were detailed as part of a section towards the end of the issue, were dwarfed by the extensive Roll of Honour for members of the armed forces; a full page was dedicated to each of the fallen which included a picture and short biography. As such, the deaths of civilians, whilst significant, were overshadowed by reports of the nation’s fallen soldiers, sailors and airmen. Moreover, the *Women’s Auxiliary Fire Service (WAFS) magazine* (later renamed the *N.F.S. Firewomen’s Magazine*) intermittently included a roll of honour to pay tribute to members of the service who had lost their lives

³⁹ ‘Obituary Mr. J.H. Dawes’, *The Westminster: The Magazine of the Westminster Bank Staff*, Vol. 34, No. 5, November 1940, p. 184.

⁴⁰ ‘Obituary Mr C. Love’, *The Westminster: The Magazine of the Westminster Bank Staff*, Vol. 35, No. 1, Spring 1941, p. 38.

on the Home Front. In the March-April 1943 issue, a Roll of Honour was included which listed the names of three firewomen who had been killed, Fw D.M. Kerley, Fw D.M. Lay and Fw S.L. Young. The list was accompanied with the line,

At the going down of the sun and in the morning

We shall remember them.⁴¹

This line was a direct quote from the poem, 'For The Fallen' by Robert Laurence Binyon. The poem, originally published in 1914, was written shortly after the outbreak of the First World War and sought to honour the thousands of men who had been killed fighting for their country. The poem received widespread readership, as John Hatcher describes, due to its initial publication in *The Times* in 1914 and subsequent publication in *War Poems from the Times* in August 1915.⁴² As Hatcher further notes, 'For The Fallen' became wholly absorbed into British culture due to its use in Remembrance Day services and inscription on tombstones and war memorials; the poem came to represent communal experience and collective sacrifice.⁴³ The poem embodied the honour that surrounded the war dead. Therefore, due to the poem's important cultural significance, its use in the *N.F.S Firewomen's Magazine* Roll of Honour served to reiterate the respect felt towards individuals who had lost their lives as a result of enemy action; including women serving on the Home Front. Significantly, this celebratory language reminded readers of the blurred boundaries between civilian combatants and the armed forces; like the military these individuals were uniformed and serving their country. Death could occur in all theatres of war, as a result it was important to represent the deaths of civilians as equally honourable to service personnel.

⁴¹ 'Roll of Honour', *N.F.S. Firewomen's Magazine*, No. 25, March-April 1943, p. 10.

⁴² John Hatcher, *Laurence Binyon: Poet, Scholar of East and West* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1995) p. 192; p. 198.

⁴³ *Ibid.* p. 195.

The prevalence of these obituaries and announcements was not uncommon; throughout the duration of the war, announcements paid tribute to the loss of members of the local community. However, they did not dwell on the devastation or tragedy associated with death, and instead focused on honouring the dead. As Lucy Noakes demonstrates in her exploration of grief and death in wartime, cultural texts, such as newspapers and magazines, informed the British people how to publicly manage their grief in wartime. Readers were advised that one way to win the war was through remaining stoic in the face of loss; which would make the sacrifices of their loved ones worthwhile.⁴⁴ Stoicism was a means to both maintain morale and honour the dead.⁴⁵ Creating an honourable narrative around civilian deaths served to support the emotional wellbeing of the population, and encourage stoic responses to death. As a result, deaths from enemy action were represented through a focus on the duty that civilians had fulfilled in dying. In many ways, a discourse of wartime duty surrounded the civilian war dead and served to justify their deaths and, in turn, provide comfort to the living. The language used in announcements and obituaries emphasised that civilians who had died from enemy action were valued and respected.

However, when an individual actively engaged with dangers, and died as a consequence, a heightened narrative surrounded their death. Civilians who actively placed themselves at risk in order to save others were constructed in a way which emphasised their heroic behaviour. As Scott Allison and George Goethals describe, hero status is often achieved when an individual makes a great personal sacrifice, the pinnacle of which is when people give their lives for a cause.⁴⁶ Therefore, when civilians were killed, and the circumstances surrounding their death were considered not only honourable, but also noble and courageous, their death was presented in a heroic light. A

⁴⁴ Noakes, 'Gender, Grief, and Bereavement in Second World War Britain', 72-85 (p. 78).

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Allison and Goethals, *Heroes: What They Do and Why We Need Them*, p. 13.

notable example of this is the case of Albert Ernest Dolphin, who worked as a porter in the South Eastern Hospital, New Cross, London. Dolphin's actions were officially reported in the *London Gazette* on 17th January 1941, where the circumstances leading up to his death were detailed.⁴⁷ It was described how, during a night shift, a high explosive bomb fell on the kitchens of the hospital, causing considerable structural damage and killing four nurses. Dolphin, along with others helpers, rushed to the site where the damage had been caused, and sought to release a nurse who was pinned under a block of masonry by her legs. However, when the masonry began to crumble, Dolphin, unlike the other helpers who retreated for their own safety, remained with the nurse and used his body to protect her from the falling wall, at the cost of his own life.⁴⁸ For his actions in saving the nurse's life, Dolphin was posthumously awarded the George Cross.⁴⁹ Stories of Dolphin's actions were reproduced by wartime presses across the country; the whole nation was made aware of the courageous behaviour that had been performed. Articles repeated phrases such as 'gave his life' and 'to protect her' to reinforce how Dolphin had sacrificed his own safety for the benefit of another. Indeed, the *Dundee Evening Telegraph* even noted how Dolphin had 'Scorned Danger in Heroic Rescue Feats'.⁵⁰ Moreover, the *Belfast News Letter*, in an article detailing the recipients of medals, noted how 'selfless devotion to duty has nowhere been more exemplified than in the London hospitals, [which are] notoriously attractive targets for the terror bombers'.⁵¹ Dolphin was one of the individuals the article commended for his heroic behaviour in saving the nurse's life.⁵² The language used in press reports celebrated Dolphin's selflessness and devotion to those around him. Indeed, it was this active engagement with danger,

⁴⁷ 'Central Chancery of the Orders of Knighthood', *Supplement to The London Gazette*, 14 January 1941, p. 329.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ 'Scorned Danger in Heroic Rescue Feats', *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 18 January 1941, p. 5.

⁵¹ 'Heroic Hospital Porter', *Belfast News-Letter*, 18 January 1941, p. 7.

⁵² *Ibid.*

combined with a desire to save the life of another, that enabled Dolphin's behaviour to be considered heroic. As Selwyn Becker and Alice Eagly note, traditionally, understandings of heroic behaviour are tightly associated with two qualities; firstly, that actions are performed voluntarily and exceed the bounds of expected service, and secondly, that individuals willingly risk or sacrifice their life for the benefit of others.⁵³ Through facing danger and sacrificing his own life for another, Dolphin engaged with these traditional ideals of heroism.

Moreover, Dolphin's actions reinforced traditional gender ideals of the masculine protector as he died whilst protecting a female nurse. As Becker and Eagly further state, risk taking is a behavioural trait that is closely associated with masculinity.⁵⁴ Therefore, stories which commended Dolphin's actions, centred upon his ability to adopt the role of the masculine protector. As such, these accounts connected the deceased with, as Graham Dawson has argued, ideals of the 'soldier hero'. As Dawson notes, this concept has formed one of the most durable and powerful forms of idealised masculinity in Western culture; virtues of strength, courage and endurance have been defined as inherent forms of manhood.⁵⁵ Through displaying traditionally masculine traits of physical strength and practical competence, Dolphin's actions were presented as heroic as he was able to protect and defend. However, as Sonya Rose has more recently suggested, during the Second World War, heroic masculinity evolved to combine these traditionally masculine traits of bravery and physical strength, with the courage and endurance displayed by the ordinary man.⁵⁶ Thus, heroic feats which resulted in death, centred Home Front heroism around ideals of selflessness and courage, and away from the aggression and physical combat connected with the soldier hero. Announcements which detailed how civilians were

⁵³ Selwyn W. Becker and Alice H. Eagly, 'The Heroism of Women and Men', *American Psychologist*, 59:3 (2004), 163-178 (p. 164).

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Dawson, *Solider Heroes*, p. 1.

⁵⁶ Rose, *Which People's War*, p. 160.

responding defiantly to the dangers bought by enemy action positioned the war dead as figures to be celebrated for their bravery and courage.

In a text published in 1941, *Hospitals Under Fire: But the Lamp Still Burns*, further reference was made to Dolphin's actions. The book detailed the bombing of London's hospitals and the courage performed by its workers. Towards the end of the book, space was devoted to the celebrating the 'Heroes and Heroines of the Medical Services'. It noted how,

What epic stories may yet be written of this new Georgian age, its chivalry and gallantry, endurance and sacrifice, when even the bare details of awards, as reproduced in the daily Press, can thrill us! Here are some of these details relating to early awards made to doctors, nurses, ambulance-drivers, hospital porters, and other heroes and heroines of the Medical Services.⁵⁷

One of the individuals honoured was Dolphin. In a comparable nature to press reports, *Hospitals Under Fire*, praised how Dolphin had saved another at the cost of his own life.⁵⁸ The text commended Dolphin's selfless behaviour, it stated, 'there can be no doubt that Dolphin, although aware that the wall was about to collapse, deliberately remained where he was, and threw himself across Nurse Sole's body in an endeavour to protect her, which he succeeded in doing at the cost of his own life.'⁵⁹ Moreover, in 1943 a painting of Dolphin was commissioned by the Ministry of Information. The image, produced by Terence Cuneo, depicted Dolphin's actions moments before death and emphasised his selflessness through the way that his body was displayed leaning over the nurse in order

⁵⁷ George C. Curnock, *Hospitals Under Fire but the Lamp Still Burns* (George Allen & Unwin Ltd: London, 1941) p. 139.

⁵⁸ Ibid. p. 140.

⁵⁹ Ibid. p. 140.

to protect her.⁶⁰ Dolphin was one of many civilians whose deaths were publicly reported in obituaries, announcement and in memoriam notices; these stories served to publicly record the heroism that was being performed by civilians throughout Britain. These announcements, although highlighting the destructive nature of modern warfare on the body, also reminded the British public that civilians were no longer victims in this new war. Individuals who actively confronted the dangers brought by enemy action, questioned the extent to which civilians were helpless and vulnerable against the dangers of modern warfare. As Dolphin's case demonstrated, civilians were now active agents in war. Through emphasising how civilians were bravely facing the dangers brought by enemy action, the British population were reminded that civilians were no longer passive onlookers of modern warfare. Through dying courageously, individuals were constructed as taking an active role in the final moments of life.

In addition, the death of Frederick John Cradock was also announced in newspapers across the country. Cradock was working in a boiler house when an explosion took place and died whilst trying to save a workmate who had been trapped between the furnace and the boiler and was being engulfed by scalding steam and boiling water. Newspapers including, the *Sussex and Essex Free Press*, *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, *Newcastle Journal* and *Belfast News-Letter* all reported on Cradock's heroic rescue efforts and subsequent death.⁶¹ Describing the rescue, *The Newcastle Journal* detailed how, '[he] could still have jumped to safety, but, despite his terrible injuries, he returned to make a second gallant effort to get down into the well. His comrades bought him out dead.'⁶² Similarly, the *Belfast News-Letter* echoed, 'he gave his life to try to save a

⁶⁰ TNA, INF 3/477, 'Mr A.E. Dolphin by Terence Cuneo'.

⁶¹ 'Gave Life for his Friend', *Sussex and Essex Free Press*, 23 March 1944, p. 1.

'Died Trying to Save Mate', *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 11 September 1943, p. 4.

'The George Cross: Boilerman Gave Life for Comrade', *Belfast News-Letter*, 11 September 1943, p. 2.

'GC for Fatal Rescue Bid', *Newcastle Journal*, 11 September 1943, p. 3.

⁶² 'GC for Fatal Rescue Bid', *Newcastle Journal*, 11 September 1943, p. 3.

workmate'.⁶³ Clearly, Cradock's actions formed a central part of the stories that reported on his death; through displaying devotion to his colleague his behaviour engaged with ideals of heroic self-sacrifice. However, it is significant that Cradock died in Suffolk, and not in London. Instead, reports of Cradock's actions complemented the heroic behaviour occurring in London, such as that of Dolphin, and illustrated that across the country civilians could, and were, dying in heroic circumstances. The fact that Cradock was also posthumously awarded the George Cross, the first medal of its kind to be awarded which had no connection with the war or war work, further reflected how his behaviour was conceptualised.⁶⁴ Importantly, Cradock had not died as a result of workplace negligence, he had died after going to the aid of his colleague. These announcement, obituaries and reports served to reinforce notions of the selfless and altruistic hero of the Home Front; individuals who were willing to place themselves in danger for the benefit of others.

Importantly, reports of heroic civilian deaths informed the population of how the everyday civilian could engage with the many facets of heroism during wartime. Announcement, obituaries and news articles were spaces where the deaths of civilians could be recognised in the public sphere. The celebratory language used in obituaries and announcements, triumphed the way that civilians who were killed by enemy action had faced death with bravery and had therefore, fulfilled their duty as combatants of the Home Front. Reports notified workers or communities of losses within a place of employment or local area; in doing so these announcements paid respect to the dead. Moreover, where an individual had actively faced danger, stories also served as an important reminder that heroic behaviour could be performed by all civilians on the Home Front, regardless of occupation. After all, as a porter and a boilerman, neither Dolphin or Cradock would have been expected to have behaved in the way that they did; they were not part of the Civil

⁶³ 'The George Cross: Boilerman Gave Life for Comrade', *Belfast News-Letter*, 11 September 1943, p. 2.

⁶⁴ Michael Ashcroft, *George Cross Heroes* (London: Headline, 2010) p. 130.

Defence Services and therefore protecting others was not part of their responsibilities. Instead, their stories illustrated that in the capital and elsewhere, rescue efforts were being performed by the everyday civilian. This made their stories noteworthy. Death was also an important reason as to why their cases were constructed as heroic. As Allison and Goethals describe in their exploration of heroes, death can cement, and preserve, heroic status.⁶⁵ In stories which recounted extraordinary behaviour performed by ordinary people, death formed the pinnacle of the narrative. Where previously, self-sacrifice was traditionally associated with military combat, civilian engagement with danger on the Home Front enabled civilians to be recognised for this virtue. Indeed, dying served to enhance the way that civilian behaviour was represented as heroic. As Allison and Goethals further describe, this is because dying is the largest personal sacrifice an individual can make.⁶⁶ When death is preceded by rescue efforts and danger, death itself heightens understandings of heroic behaviour as the deceased are perceived as having acted morally at a critical juncture.⁶⁷ In contrast to the way that injury shaped constructions of heroism, dying served to heighten a heroic status. As described in Chapter Three, injuries, particularly those sustained by enemy action, served as visible markers of national service and sacrifice. However, for an injury to be represented in this way, it was important for it to have been sustained in a way which was considered honourable. For an injury to be constructed as heroic it had to be caused by enemy action, rather than from foolishness or negligence. In contrast, the civilian war dead were constructed as heroic simply through dying from war related circumstances; death did not have to occur in a blaze of glory to be constructed as heroic. Instead, civilians who died from enemy action in their homes were framed as noteworthy, equally, the deaths of civilians who placed their lives in danger to save others were constructed as valiant and

⁶⁵ Allison and Goethals, *Heroes: What They Do and Why We Need Them*, p. 13.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

courageous. Whilst, the heroic scale of these deaths varied, it is notable that civilian deaths from enemy action were all constructed as heroic. While the deaths of civilians collectively symbolised the destructive nature of modern warfare, they also represented sacrifice. The celebratory language used in announcements and obituaries surrounded the civilian dead with a heroic status as dutiful citizens, and publicly recognised their sacrifice in the fight for victory.

Burial Practices and Spaces of Internment

During times of war, burial practices are of particular social value; they are temporal events in which the living can physically and, to an extent, emotionally part with the dead. As such, it is important to recognise the social role that burial fulfilled prior to 1939. As Pat Jalland explains, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the function of funeral ceremonies evolved in line with the social needs of the population. In particular, Jalland notes that the First World War was central in reforming burial practices and funeral services. As vast numbers of adult sons were prematurely killed whilst serving overseas, their deaths could not be mourned in the traditional manner; many bodies were never returned home and thus, families were faced with mourning without a grave.⁶⁸ Thus, without a body, a burial could not follow. This, as Julie-Marie Strange notes, made bereavement particularly hard for families, as they had no grave to project their grief.⁶⁹ Instead, sites such as the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, represented the funeral service and burial many never had.⁷⁰ Thus, war memorials and war cemeteries served an important function during and after the First World War; they were a public space where

⁶⁸ Pat Jalland, 'Victorian Death and its decline: 1850-1918', in Peter C. Jupp and Clare Gittings (eds.), *Death in England: An Illustrated History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp. 230-255 (pp. 251-253).

⁶⁹ Julie-Marie Strange, *Death, Grief and Poverty in Britain, 1870-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) p. 267.

⁷⁰ Jalland, 'Victorian Death and its decline: 1850-1918', pp. 230-255 (pp. 251-253).

individuals without a grave could be remembered and honoured. As Jalland further notes, in the absence of graves, memorials served as focal points for mourning, and served to affirm the value of the sacrifice made by the deceased.⁷¹ For the war dead of the First World War who were buried in cemeteries at home and abroad, their graves embodied the sacrifice that had been made by fellow soldiers and sailors. These war graves, managed and maintained by the Imperial War Graves Commission, were sites of honour and reflected the collective sacrifice made by the nation.

However, the practice of civilian bombing in the Second World War not only altered who was killed, but also further altered practices of burial.⁷² On the Home Front, this was most prominently seen in the introduction of state-funded mass graves for the civilian dead. Plans for mass graves developed from the need to effectively manage the high numbers of civilian casualties that were predicted. These predictions had largely been calculated from the experiences of bombing during the Spanish Civil War and had enabled the British government to estimate how the civilian population could be affected by aerial bombardment.⁷³ Preparations for war not only involved protecting the population, it also involved planning how to efficiently deal with high numbers of civilian fatalities. During the Second World War, as Julie Rugg describes, the Ministry of Health Circular, *Civilian Deaths Due to War Operations no. 1779*, published in February 1939, outlined the management of mass fatalities and emergency burial procedures.⁷⁴ It suggested that one way in which local authorities could effectively bury large numbers of their war dead were through mass graves.⁷⁵ The dead who were unclaimed,

⁷¹ Jalland, *Death in War and Peace*, p. 60.

⁷² This discussion will focus primarily on burial rather than cremation, as in 1939 only 3.51% of the population opted for cremation. (Source: 'Table: Progress of Cremation in the United Kingdom between 1939-1945' in Peter C. Jupp, *From Dust to Ashes: Cremation and the British Way of Death* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2005) p. 129.

⁷³ Gardiner, *The Blitz*, p. 50.

⁷⁴ Ministry of Health, *Civilian Deaths due to War Operations*, Circular 1779, 28 February 1939, cited by Rugg, 'Managing 'Civilian Deaths due to War Operations'', 152–173 (p. 152).

⁷⁵ Rugg, 'Managing 'Civilian Deaths due to War Operations'', 152–173 (p. 152).

unidentified or whose relatives did not want to organise a private burial were buried by the local authorities in cemeteries or emergency burial grounds.⁷⁶ As Rugg further explains, the official narrative which surrounded publicly funded mass graves was one which aimed to echo the ‘we are all soldiers now propaganda’.⁷⁷ This notion was also reiterated in the creation of the 1939 *Personal Injuries (Emergency Provisions) Act*, which reinforced the notion of collective sacrifice through providing civilians with compensation for war injuries. Indeed, these circulars and Acts demonstrated to the Home Front population that war now threatened the mortality of civilians as well as the armed forces. Significantly, through aligning the civilian war dead with the armed forces dead, the state sought to present death in wartime as a collective sacrifice.

The narrative of collective sacrifice was clearly reflected in a circular which was sent out to local authorities in September 1940. It stressed that, if the death toll is very heavy, ‘local authorities should do all they can to encourage the idea that under the conditions of air bombardment, burial of a civilian by the local authority is no less honourable than burial of a soldier by his comrades upon the field of battle.’⁷⁸ However, as Pat Jalland notes, despite the efforts to reassure civilians that mass graves were an honourable form of wartime burial, Britons associated them with indignity, lack of respect and loss of identity.⁷⁹ Instead, mass burials were associated with pauper burials and the horrific mass graves on the Western Front in the First World War.⁸⁰ This attitude was reflected in a series of letters between Reverend E.A. Moir and The Ministry of Health during 1947. In the correspondence, Reverend Moir expressed his disdain that during the war his wife had been buried in a ‘common grave with other coffins piled on top’.⁸¹ Moir

⁷⁶ A.B. Williamson, ‘The Problem of the Disposal of the Dead After Air Raids’, *Public Health*, 52 (1939), 329-332 (p. 329.)

⁷⁷ Rugg, ‘Managing ‘Civilian Deaths due to War Operations’’, 152–173 (p. 167).

⁷⁸ TNA, HLG 7/436, ‘Deaths Due to War Operations, Draft Circular’, September 1940.

⁷⁹ Jalland, *Death in War and Peace*, p. 129.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ TNA, HO 45/21922, ‘Letter from Reverend Moir to Minister of Health’, 14 February 1947.

and his wife had been injured in the summer of 1944, when a V1 rocket had hit their house in Lewisham, South London. Moir, upon being informed that his wife had died from her injuries, gave consent for a national burial, believing that she would be, as he described, ‘buried as our soldiers who died in the front line’, with separate graves and headstones, and each plot being carefully kept and tended.⁸² Moir compared his wife’s internment in a mass grave, to a paupers burial, and expressed that as such, she had been buried in an undignified manner.⁸³ Notably, Moir’s expectations of what constituted a ‘soldiers burial’ differed from the reality offered to the civilian population; it was this that caused dissatisfaction with mass graves. The Ministry of Health responded to Moir’s dissatisfaction with reassurance that the government were considering ways in which the mass graves would be suitably marked.⁸⁴ As Lucy Noakes argues, the public dissatisfaction with mass burials also surrounded the internment of individuals in the Civil Defence Services. Despite government claims that the burial of Civil Defence in mass graves was equal to the military, this form of burial failed to attach the necessary political value to bodies of the dead as respected members of a nation at war.⁸⁵

Official efforts sought to remove the negative connotations from mass graves and the links with pauper burial. This endeavour was reflected in a government report which detailed the procedures of burial. It recommended that whilst trench graves were an effective method to secure ‘speedy internment’, bodies should be placed along the trench at grave span intervals to give the illusion of a row of separate graves once covered.⁸⁶ Clearly there was a conscious effort to bury the civilian war dead in a manner which reassured the Home Front population that the deceased were individually respected rather than dealt with as a collective. Notably, sites of burial carried strong cultural meaning in

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ TNA, HO 45/21922, ‘Letter from AW Peterson to Reverend Moir’, 10 April 1947.

⁸⁵ Noakes, *Dying for the Nation*, p. 161.

⁸⁶ TNA, HLG 7/436, ‘Deaths due to War Operations, Expenses of Burial’.

wartime and reflected notions of a respectable, or dishonourable death. Indeed, in her exploration of the management of burial space in Rural North Yorkshire, Julie Rugg has emphasised that whilst trench burial was necessary during periods of intensive bombardment, it was avoided as long as was practicable; instead, the use of individual graves was prioritised.⁸⁷ Thus, the burial of the civilian war dead was complex; whilst mass graves on the Home Front were presented as equal to trench burials, they were only used when death rates exceeded the ability for individual graves to be excavated. Arguably, separate graves carried important social meaning; they signified to the population that in death each individual was honoured and respected, both on their own, and as part of the collective civilian war dead. Individual and mass burials were sites of cultural significance, they reflected attitudes towards the internment of the nation's war dead. Moreover, through adapting burial practices to allow for high death rates, the civilian war dead were constructed and recognised as combatants; modern conflict had changed causes of death and forms of burial during times of war.

It is also important to consider the specific sites within the cemetery in which the civilian war dead were buried. Examination of spaces of internment reveals how sites of burial presented the war dead in way which connected death with honour and sacrifice. During the Second World War, local authorities across Britain set aside plots for the burial of service personnel. As Philip Longworth describes, by 1942, there were 1300 plots in civil cemeteries and churchyards that had been allocated for the burial of the war dead.⁸⁸ These plots were intended for the burial of individuals from the armed forces and were maintained and cared for by the Imperial War Graves Commission (IWGC).⁸⁹ However, the Ministry of Health Circular, *Deaths Due to War Operations No. 2192*,

⁸⁷ Julie Rugg, *Churchyard and Cemetery: Tradition and Modernity in Rural North Yorkshire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013) p. 370.

⁸⁸ Philip Longworth, *The Unending Vigil: The History of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (Barnsley: Leo Cooper, 2003) p. 175.

⁸⁹ Julie Summers, *British and Commonwealth War Cemeteries* (Oxford: Shire Publications, 2010) p. 21.

published in November 1940, altered who was eligible for burial within these plots. It detailed how the IWGC had suggested that these plots should also be available for the burial of Civil Defence personnel killed on duty or who had died from a war service injury.⁹⁰ This signified an important shift in the way that war-related deaths within the civilian population were understood. In particular, the inclusion of Civil Defence personnel in war graves suggested that their deaths were attached with a heightened sense of honour and respect when compared with other members of the civilian population. Indeed, sites of burial carry important cultural significance. As Julie Rugg describes in her exploration of places of burial, war cemeteries are particularly important during periods of conflict as they establish understandings of national identity.⁹¹ They are more than solely a place to bury the dead; they also serve as visual markers to the sheer number of individual sacrifices that war demands.⁹² Therefore, the inclusion of Civil Defence personnel in plots reserved for the war service dead served to heighten the deaths of specific individuals. Site of burial acted as cultural indicators for honourable and heroic deaths. For example, at war graves in London Road Cemetery, Mitcham, South West London, three members of the Auxiliary Fire Service (AFS) were buried alongside individuals from the armed forces.⁹³ The AFS individuals were Edward George Pepper, Ernest Francis Robinson, and Cecil Arthur Elliman, who were all killed by enemy action on 10th May 1941 whilst relaying water from the basement of The Surrey Theatre, Southwark. The site of these AFS burials in London Road Cemetery is particularly significant. Whilst they are included in the war service plot, they remain separate from the rest of the armed forces burials. Thus, the meaning of these burials appears twofold.

⁹⁰ TNA, HO 186/2550, 'Ministry of Health Circular 2192: Deaths Due to War Operations', 1 Nov 1940.

⁹¹ Julie Rugg, 'Defining the Place of Burial: What Makes a Cemetery a Cemetery?', *Mortality*, 5:3 (2010), 259-275 (p. 261).

⁹² *Ibid.* p. 271.

⁹³ London Road Cemetery, London Road, Mitcham, CR4 3LA.

<https://www.merton.gov.uk/assets/Documents/london_road_cemetery_website_layout.pdf> [Accessed: 08/06/19] [Cemetery visited: 08/06/19]

As they remain physically separated from the rest of the civilian war dead, it suggests that their deaths are connected with a heightened sense of honour, and yet, the division between the graves within the plot suggests that their sacrifice remained visually separate from the sacrifice of the armed forces. The IWGC headstones themselves, although markedly similar, also differed between armed forces and civilians. The headstones were all made from white Portland stone, and the inscription followed the same format. They each had a regimental or service badge at the top, followed by the details of the deceased, and an icon to distinguish religious beliefs. The main difference was that civilian headstones had a notch missing from each top corner; this made the deceased distinguishable. Yet, despite this, through their burial in war service plots, the deaths of firemen were attached with a heightened sense of honour. As Rugg has explained, cemeteries are sites of meaning; they are spaces of symbolic significance and are central in shaping personal and community identities.⁹⁴ Therefore, civilians buried in war service plots became connected with cultural understandings of the duty and honour associated with IWGC war graves. These war graves within local churchyards or cemeteries constructed individual deaths as particularly honourable, they also created sites of remembrance for local communities; they were sacred spaces which valourised the deceased. As Samuel Walls notes, IWGC burials sites not only materialised loss, but were also sites of public recognition, and public remembrance.⁹⁵

It is important to note that the inclusion of Civil Defence personnel in war service graves was rare. Across London, only a handful of civilians were buried in war service plots. In addition to the firemen buried in London Road Cemetery, three firemen were also buried in plots in Alperton Cemetery, Wembley.⁹⁶ Instead, the majority of the civilian

⁹⁴ Rugg, 'Defining the Place of Burial', 259-275 (p. 272).

⁹⁵ Samuel Walls, 'Lest we forget': The spatial dynamics of the church and churchyard as commemorative spaces for the war dead in the twentieth century', *Mortality*, 16:2 (2011), 131-144 (p. 140.)

⁹⁶ The firemen buried in Alperton Cemetery, Clifford Road, Alperton, Wembley, Middlesex, HA0 1AF are: Albert Francis Dearle Brooker, Stanley Thomas Conniff, William Frederick Knight.

war dead were buried outside of service plots, in private plots, or communal graves. As such, a clear spatial separation existed between the way that the civilian and armed forced war dead were laid to rest. This separation was addressed in the years after the war by members of the Home Office and Ministry of Health who highlighted how there was no official scheme to mark the graves of Civil Defence personnel or civilians that were buried outside of service plots.⁹⁷ Correspondence between these departments reveals that there was demand for the IWGC to mark and maintain the graves of all air raid victims, regardless of their burial location, in order to ‘assimilate the treatment of the graves of civilian and military casualties’.⁹⁸ These plans were not realised. Instead, to honour the civilian war dead, the IWGC recorded the names of each civilian in a seven volume Roll of Honour.⁹⁹

In contrast, where IWGC graves were spread throughout cemeteries and graveyards, war-related deaths were not separated from civilians who were also killed during wartime and were not buried in war graves plots. In many local churchyards and cemeteries on the Home Front, the burial sites of war service personnel were situated amongst other graves. This distribution created a visual and spatial indicator of shared sacrifice. As such, since there was no differentiation between burial sites, it suggested collective loss. Without a distinction between plots, there was no spatial separation between honourable deaths during wartime.

<<https://www.brent.gov.uk/services-for-residents/births-marriages-and-deaths/deaths/list-of-brent-cemeteries/alperton-cemetery/>> [Accessed: 09/06/19]

⁹⁷ TNA, HO 186/2628, ‘Letter from Hutchinson to KAL Parker’, 07 February 1946.

⁹⁸ TNA, HO 186/2628, ‘Letter from K.A.L. Parker to Colonel W. Russell Edmunds’, 18 March 1946.

⁹⁹ Once completed, the Roll of Honour to the Civilian War Dead was placed in St George’s Chapel, Westminster Abbey, London. A copy can be viewed in the British Library, London.

Funeral Services as Ritualistic Events Against Death

In addition, funeral services were also important in shaping how civilian death was framed in wartime. Funerals are ritualistic events; they are tightly connected with the burial process, but unlike internment, are solely for the benefit of the living. Indeed, during the wartime period, funeral services shaped the way that the identity of the dead was constructed, communicated and understood. Funeral services were particularly important in constructing the identity of the war dead; civilian death could be presented as both honourable and courageous, or honourable and tragic. The circumstances surrounding death, and the role that the deceased played in wartime society were central in shaping how death was represented. In particular, funeral services heightened and shaped understandings of heroic behaviour. This was achieved through two means, firstly, through the words spoken at the service itself, and secondly, through rituals connected with the service. Of particular interest to this section are the funeral services of individuals who were killed by enemy action and were presented as having sacrificed their lives for the benefit of others. The deaths of these civilians were represented in a way which focused on the courageous and selfless nature of the deceased. As this discussion demonstrates, funerary rituals built up the identity of the hero; they reflected an appreciation for the war dead, and elevated them to a heroic status.

The language used during funeral services was important in shaping the narrative of death on the Home Front. Regional newspapers recorded the proceedings of local funerals and provide a valuable resource for accessing the words used in each service. For instance, at the funeral service of three South London wardens, Mr. Pocknall, Mr. Collins and Mr. Bush, the Reverend conducting the service declared,

They won not only the gratitude of their country, but the approbation of Christ himself. Greater love hath no man than that he should lay down

his life for his friends. They set an example which we ourselves are called upon to follow.¹⁰⁰

Indeed, the language used to describe the actions of the deceased glorified death. It suggested that in dying for their country, they had fulfilled their national duty. The words spoken at the service, according to Douglas Davies, can otherwise be considered as the ‘words against death’.¹⁰¹ These words, Davies suggests, serve to comfort the grieving, to impart religious meaning, and to assure that death has not been in vain; what they do is confront death with hope.¹⁰² Yet, as Aaron William Moore suggests, despite the constant propaganda urging civilians to ‘do their bit’, individuals usually prioritised the survival of their family ahead of national victory.¹⁰³ It therefore seems notable that during funeral services, the behaviour of individuals who were willing to lay down their lives for friends, or even strangers, was met with approval and commendation. Emphasis on brave and courageous behaviour aligned the dead with ideals of heroism. Indeed, the celebratory language used during funeral services honoured heroic virtues of self-sacrifice. Rhetorical phrases such as ‘lay down his life’ attached value to the deaths of the deceased; they had died for a reason. Moreover, in line with Moore’s analysis, the words spoken at funeral services arguably served to encourage onlookers to lay down their lives for strangers, and not only family members, if a moment required it; these services arguably acted as moral encouragement to urge others to behave in the same way if faced with similar circumstances.

In addition, specific rituals connected with the funeral service presented civilian death in a way which reflected national sacrifice. Rituals were an important way for the

¹⁰⁰ ‘Gave Lives for Others. Funeral of Three Air Raid Wardens’, *Norwood News*, 10 January 1941, p. 2.

¹⁰¹ D.J. Davies, *Death, Ritual and Belief* (2nd ed.) (London: Continuum, 2002) cited by Tara Bailey and Tony Walter, ‘Funerals Against Death’, *Mortality*, 21:2 (2016), 149-166 (p. 153).

¹⁰² Bailey and Walter, ‘Funerals Against Death’, 149-166 (p. 154).

¹⁰³ Aaron William Moore, *Bombing the City: Civilian Accounts of the Air War in Britain and Japan 1939-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018) p. 45.

living to process the loss of a family member, friend, or a member of the community. As Harold Mytum explains, rituals, such as visiting the body, sitting with the corpse, attending the funeral, and visiting the grave, reveal societal attitudes towards the body of the deceased.¹⁰⁴ Of particular interest here are the rituals associated with adorning the coffin, and the act of attending the funeral. These rituals were important symbols of citizenship during wartime, they acted as important indicators of a heroic and honourable death. Funerals, which incorporated rituals of respect, invested the dead body with meaning. As Michael Drake notes, these ceremonies carried a patriotic function and reintegrated the dead back into the community of the living.¹⁰⁵ Funeral services were liminal and temporal events, moments between life and death, in which communities could publicly value the dead.

For example, on the Home Front, Union Jack flags were used during funeral services to drape over the coffin of the deceased. However, prior to the Second World War, this practice was generally reserved for military funerals, or for civilians who had previously served in the forces. Yet, as war progressed, the use of Union Jack flags became more frequent in civilian funeral ceremonies, and thus created parallels between the civilian and armed forces. Examining the use of the national flag as a coffin pall for civilian funerals reveals how attitudes evolved towards the civilian war dead. As war progressed, and civilians increasingly became defined as combatants of the Home Front, the civilian war dead were represented in ways which reflected their value to the war effort. As Stephen Heathorn has explained in his exploration of home, country and race, the Union Jack was a powerful symbol of Britishness and represented all that was

¹⁰⁴ Harold Mytum, *Mortuary Monuments and Burial Grounds of the Historic Period* (London: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, 2004) p. 159.

¹⁰⁵ Michael S. Drake, 'The War Dead and the Body Politic: Rendering the dead soldier's body in the new global (dis)order', in Kevin McSorley (ed.), *War and the Body: Militarisation, practice and experience* (London: Routledge, 2013) pp. 210-224 (p. 214).

considered ‘great and good’.¹⁰⁶ During times of conflict, Heathorn further describes, men who died whilst fighting for their country were buried wrapped in the English flag to symbolise how they had served their nation.¹⁰⁷

By the Second World War, this ritual of covering the coffin of the deceased with the national flag had spread into the funeral services of the civilian dead. As parliamentary questions to the Minister of Health in 1940 illustrate, local authorities were actively encouraged to use the Union Jack flag in civilian burial ceremonies.¹⁰⁸ However, whilst using the Union Jack flag was considered appropriate for civilian funerals, it was stressed that it was particularly appropriate for individuals whose death had been caused by enemy action. As the Minister of Health, Malcom MacDonald detailed, ‘use of the flag would be appropriate and would be a fitting tribute to those whose death is due to enemy action, whether or not they are Civil Defence Volunteers.’¹⁰⁹ A directive was distributed nationally to local councils in November 1940, where the process for dealing with the civilian war dead was outlined.¹¹⁰ Significantly, the circular emphasised that for civilian deaths caused by enemy action, use of the Union Jack as a coffin pall was a fitting tribute. It assured those responsible for funeral arrangements that they were ‘fully at liberty to use the flag in this manner as in the case of military funerals.’¹¹¹ Indeed, the use of the national flag in civilian funerals is significant when exploring the way that the civilian war dead were honoured. As Elizabeth Hallam and Jenny Hockey note, material objects have the capacity to bind the living and the dead, they create temporal connections by

¹⁰⁶ Stephen J. Heathorn, *For Home Country and Race: Constructing Gender, Class and Englishness in the Elementary School, 1880-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000) p. 187.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.* p. 191

¹⁰⁸ Hansard, House of Commons, ‘Air Raid Casualties (Funeral Expenses)’, 12 November 1940, Vol. 365, Col. 1595.

¹⁰⁹ Hansard, House of Commons, ‘Funerals (Military Honours)’, 07 November 1940, Vol. 365, Col. 1460.

¹¹⁰ TNA, HLG 7/761, ‘Deaths Due to War Operations. Circular 2192’, 1 November 1940.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

creating a material presence in the face of embodied absence.¹¹² In wartime, Union Jacks flags were important objects in attaching meaning to the lives of the deceased. The national flag was used to honour the dead, yet, depending on the context surrounding death, it was either used to honour the actions of the dead, as was often the case in the funerals of Civil Defence personnel, or pay tribute to the innocent, which was seen during funerals where a large number of air raid victims were being interned. Importantly, the occupation of the deceased, and the way in which death was caused, was central in how rituals created a narrative of heroism.

For example, coverage of the funeral services of individuals in Civil Defence suggests that draping the coffin with the national flag was important in surrounding the deceased with honour; it reinforced that their death was valued and respected. In 1941, the *Norwood News* reported on the funeral services of two local wardens, Mr C. Smith and Mr E. Pearce, who had been killed whilst on duty when a bomb blast had blown them through a passage.¹¹³ The funerals, which were held separately, emphasised the camaraderie of the Warden's service and, arguably, its parallels to a military regiment. At both services, it was reported that Union Jack flags covered the coffins. Moreover, in the service of Mr Smith, his helmet was also placed on his coffin, and as his coffin was laid to rest the wardens attending his funeral gave him the last salute. These wardens had died whilst on duty, and thus, in attaching military rituals to their funerals, parallels were drawn between the deaths of civilian and military individuals. Indeed, these funeral practices carried important cultural and social meaning; they attached respect to the war dead. The Union Jack was an object which was imbued with cultural significance; and created narratives of identity for those connected with it. As Nicholas Saunders notes,

¹¹² Elizabeth Hallam and Jenny Hockey, 'Introduction: Remembering as Cultural Process', in Antonius C.G.M. Robben (ed.), *Death, Mourning and Burial: A Cross Cultural Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2018), pp. 52-63 (p. 62).

¹¹³ 'Wardens killed as they went out on patrol', *Norwood News*, 25 April 1941, p. 1.

objects of war are not anonymous objects, they can be seen as embodying an experiences and attitudes, and reflect the interplay between material culture and people.¹¹⁴ This object embodied the wartime desire to recognise the existence and contribution of the dead. In addition, similar rituals occurred at the funeral of a Westminster Housing estate caretaker, and local ARP volunteer, in December 1940. The *Chelsea News and General Advertiser* reported how, in addition to a Union Jack flag to cover the coffin, porters from the estate and Wardens from the local ARP post formed a guard of honour and marched in front of the hearse, and also acted as pall bearers at the cathedral and at the cemetery.¹¹⁵ Indeed, in these examples, military funeral practices valourised the dead and heightened the identity of the deceased.

Moreover, on 26th July 1944 a funeral was held in East Sheen Cemetery, Richmond, to bury Mrs M.P. Fincher, a local warden who had died from fatal bomb injuries. It was reported that a large number of fellow wardens attended the funeral, yet, it was also described how her coffin was covered with both a Union Jack and French flag, as a homage to her French heritage. The *West London Observer*, noted how the service paid fitting tribute to Mrs Fincher's career as a Warden and first aider, and reminded readers of her bravery in the last war during which she was awarded the Croix de Guerre, the French military medal for bravery.¹¹⁶ Indeed, it is significant that the Union Jack flag was used to cover the coffins of women, as well as men, who were killed by enemy action. Once a ritual that was connected with funerals of the armed forces, the use of the national flag in civilian funerals not only served as a physical reminder of how the war dead were now found on the Home Front as well as overseas, it also blurred the boundaries between gender and dying in wartime. This ritual reminded society how warfare techniques had

¹¹⁴ Nicholas Saunders, 'Culture, Conflict, and Materiality: The Social Lives of Great War Objects', in B. Finn and B.C. Hacker (eds.), *Materializing the Military* (London: Science Museum, 2005), pp. 77-94 (p. 78).

¹¹⁵ 'Caretakers Funeral, Union Jack and Steel Helmet on Coffin', *Chelsea News and General Advertiser*, 27 December 1940, p. 2.

¹¹⁶ 'Funeral of a Hammersmith Warden', *The West London Observer*, 04 August 1944, p. 2.

changed, and how civilians, both men and women were being killed by the enemy. The use of the Union Jack, a national symbol of pride and Britishness, served to attach honour to the deaths of the civilian fallen.

This ritual was also used in the funerals the Fire Service personnel. As discussed in Chapter One, men in the fire service were particularly heroised in wartime, as their engagement with danger positioned them as the protectors of the Home Front. As such, funerary rituals served to further enhance the heroism of the service. Use of the Union Jack flag as a coffin pall featured in documentary films which sought to celebrate the work of the fire service. For example, *London's Fire Raids 29th-30th December 1940*, produced by the Pathé Gazette to record the experiences of the London's fire services during a night of the blitz, concluded with scenes of a fire service funeral, where a coffin, covered in a Union Jack flag, was carried to the graveside by fellow members of the service.¹¹⁷ Similarly, the final scenes of Humphrey Jennings *Fires Were Started* (1943) featured similar scenes.¹¹⁸ A fireman's coffin, draped with a Union Jack, was carried to the graveside by fire service personnel, whilst mourners looked on. A London AFS fireman, Harry Stedman also documented the use of this ritual at the funeral service of a colleague. In his wartime memoirs of working in the London AFS, published in 1942, Stedman recorded how, at the funeral service of his good friend Colin, a Union Jack had been used to cover his coffin.¹¹⁹ As Stedman detailed, 'all that was left of Colin lay under that Union Jack, but his spirit, gay and humorous, remains, and will remain, for it is the spirit of the people of an island race who know what they fight for, and love what they know.'¹²⁰ Indeed, the Union Jack symbolised patriotism and national service. As Capdevila and Voldman state, patriotic funerary rituals detached the independent identity

¹¹⁷ IWM Film, LFB 53, 'London's Fire Raids 29th-30th December 1940', London Fire Brigade Film Unit and Pathé News, 1942.

¹¹⁸ *Fires Were Started*, dir. Humphrey Jennings. (United Kingdom: Crown Film Unit, 1943)

¹¹⁹ Henry Stedman, *Battle of the Flames* (London: Jarrolds, 1942) p. 55.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

from the war dead; these rituals were broader metaphors for the sacrifice made by the British public.¹²¹ Indeed, these rituals denoted heroism through the way that they were cultural indicators of national duty and citizenship.

However, as discussed, the use of the Union Jack flag in funeral services was not limited to Civil Defence; it was also used in the funerals of ordinary civilians who had been killed by enemy action. At the funeral service held at Battersea Cemetery, Morden in March 1944, Union Jacks were draped between the graves, an act the *Chelsea News and General Advertiser* described, ‘silently denot[ed] the sacrifice made by the dead civilians.’¹²² Indeed, this ritual, which was closely connected with honouring the dead, publicly respected the deaths of innocent civilians. In contrast to individuals in the Civil Defence Services, whose wartime job roles brought them into close contact with danger, and who had served their country through their work, ordinary civilians represented the innocent casualties of war. It was therefore important that their deaths were honoured in the same way as the Civil Defence Services and the armed forces, as they too were on the front line. Throughout the war, Britain’s civilian population were reminded that they were the combatants of the Home Front; it was therefore important that this narrative was reinforced in life but also in death. In particular, legislation such as the *Personal Injuries (Emergency Provisions) Act (1939)* reinforced how the relationship between the civilian body and war had changed. In the words of the Act itself, it sought ‘to make provision as respects [to] certain personal injuries sustained during the period of the present emergency’.¹²³ It outlined how civilians would receive compensation for injuries, disablement or death.¹²⁴ Whilst the Act differentiated between the rates of compensation

¹²¹ Capdevila and Voldman, *War Dead*, p. 120.

¹²² ‘Air Raid Victims Buried at Battersea Cemetery’, *Chelsea News and General Advertiser*, 10 March 1944, p. 6.

¹²³ *Personal Injuries (Emergency Provisions) Act 1939*. 2&3 Geo. 6. CH. 82. p.1

¹²⁴ *Personal Injuries (Emergency Provisions) Act 1939*. The act detailed that compensation would be given to war injuries sustained by gainfully occupied persons, and war service injuries sustained by Civil Defence Volunteers.

awarded to men and women, as Harold Smith and Julie Anderson have discussed in their separate studies of disability and war, what remains significant is that it was considered necessary to award civilians for injuries sustained during wartime.¹²⁵ Indeed, the Act represented how wounding and disablement had altered civilian identity and transformed them into combatants. Moreover, this piece of legislation in particular reinforced the wartime ‘civilian soldiers’ propaganda. In a war which sought to mobilise the whole population, it was important to reassure civilians that their bodies, in both life and death, were considered valuable. *The Personal Injuries (Emergency Provisions) Act* aligned the body of the civilian combatant with the armed forces through compensation for war injuries, and formally connected injury with national sacrifice. As David Welch describes, it was important for the British Government to ensure that civilian contribution to the war effort was recognised in order to maintain levels of morale; bodily sacrifice was an important part of this contribution.¹²⁶ Legislation such as the *Personal Injuries Act*, acknowledged that civilians were in the front line and should receive the relevant compensation for being so. It was important therefore, that this narrative which was emphasised in life was also reinforced in death. Rituals, such as using the Union Jack as a coffin pall, ensured that this narrative of national sacrifice remained. Civilians, like the armed forces, were on the front line, and it was therefore important for their deaths to be honoured in an equal and comparable manner. As Welch further describes, it was important for civilians to see themselves as ‘soldiers in the front line’; use of the Union Jack as a coffin pall encouraged this opinion.¹²⁷ Indeed, the civilian body is an important site for examining changed attitudes towards the deaths of men, women and children. The rituals which surrounded internment are valuable indicators of the social value of the

¹²⁵ Unequal rates of compensation will not be explored here. For more information see Harold Smith, ‘The Problem of “Equal Pay for Equal Work” in Great Britain During World War II’, *Journal of Modern History*, 53:4 (1981) 652-672.

Anderson, ‘British Women, Disability and the Second World War’, 37-53.

¹²⁶ Welch, *Persuading the People*, p. 83.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

deceased. Funerary rituals, such as the use of the Union Jack flag, served to reflect a collective sacrifice across individuals who had been killed by enemy action.

It is important to note that the use of Union Jacks as coffin pall alone were not indicative of heroism. Instead, this ritual built upon and complemented the way that heroism was constructed spatially and temporally. This ritual served to honour the deaths of the fallen through endorsing narratives of sacrifice and duty. Where specific behaviour during life was considered heroic, such as when an individual had actively sacrificed their life for another's, funeral rituals heightened the heroic identity of the deceased. This was particularly the case for individuals of the Civil Defence Services, if an individual had died whilst on duty, or had actively facing danger; dying whilst facing enemy action enabled heroic narratives to surround the war dead, as they had in many ways 'died in battle'. These rituals of citizenship confirmed the value of the dead. Indeed, constructing ideals of heroism in wartime were complex and closely connected with spaces of danger and perceptions of self-sacrifice, and in the way that deaths were communicated to the population.

In addition, attending a funeral service was also an important ritual associated with burial. It was a ritual undertaken by not only the relatives and friends of the deceased, but also members of the local area. As such, attending a funeral service arguably served to unite the living with their war dead. Indeed, as Eva Reimers has described, rituals connected with the funeral service not only serve to unite participants, but also bridge the gap between a community's past, present and future.¹²⁸ They are performative actions and serve as important markers for the living; rituals are used to demonstrate where people belong and who they are.¹²⁹ As Reimers notes, 'besides being means to show respect for the deceased and support for the bereaved, death rituals can consequently be

¹²⁸ Eva Reimers, 'Death and identity: graves and funerals as cultural communication', *Mortality*, 4:2 (1999), 147-166 (p. 148).

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

regarded as tools for the construction of individual and collective identity.’¹³⁰ Attendance to funerals created commonality of experience. Therefore, it is important to consider how the act of attending a funeral impacted upon how the deceased were constructed and presented. Indeed, this section emphasises that the funeral attendance of individuals in the Civil Defence Services contrasted with the funerals of blitz victims; both sets of individuals constituted the war dead, yet the circumstances surrounding death meant that were adorned with different identities. Funeral attendance was a way for the living to honour their war dead and align them with heroic ideals.

File reports compiled by Mass Observation suggest that attending a funeral was a common event in towns and cities that had been blitzed. In September 1941, a report recorded the details of an unspecified mass funeral of a type common in blitz-towns. It noted that the funeral was advertised widely, as a result a great many people knew when and where the funeral was happening. Moreover, it was detailed that during the funeral procession, ‘spectators lined the route, and the pavements were fairly crowded the whole way.’¹³¹ Once at the cemetery, the report detailed how the relatives of the deceased joined the procession.¹³² This pattern of high attendance was similarly apparent in reports of funeral services in the press; it was popular to attend funeral services or witness funeral processions. However, in a Mass Observation Report on Metropolitan Air Raids in August 1940, it was described how locals expressed relatively little interest in the funerals of Croydon casualties. It stated how the number of people in the streets and at the graveside was normal.¹³³ The report suggested that, particularly during the early days of bombing, not attending funerals may have represented a physical display of defiance against the enemy.¹³⁴ It is difficult to establish the extent to which this defiance was

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ MOA, File Report 953, ‘Two Blitz Occasions’, November 1941, p. 3.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ MOA, File Report 364, ‘Metropolitan Air Raids’, August 1940, p. 6.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

prevalent in other boroughs across London, and the extent to which it altered during the course of the war. However, in the following discussion, examination of specific funeral services suggests that mass attendance was particularly apparent at the funerals of notable individuals or groups of people; it was particularly popular to attend the funerals of individuals who were considered to have acted courageously in the face of death, or who had been killed on mass.

Of particular interest to this discussion is the mass attendance to funerals of individuals who were considered to have died whilst fulfilling an occupational duty. Notably, attendance to the funeral procession and service reflected appreciation of the dead. A significant example of this was the funeral of individuals from the Beckenham Fire Service in April 1941, which was reported on by the *Illustrated London News* the following month.¹³⁵ The funeral procession was extensive, fire engines were loaded with wreaths, and members of the public lined the streets to watch the procession. While the article in the *Illustrated London News* did not specify the names of the deceased, it is likely that the funeral was for the 21 members of the Beckenham Auxiliary Fire Service who lost their lives while on their way to fight a fire in another district in London on 17th April 1941.¹³⁶ In the images published in the newspaper article, the streets were lined with members of the public watching the procession. This procession directly mirrored how cultural attitudes towards the AFS had developed throughout the war. As Linsey Robb explains, in the early years of the war, before the Blitz, individuals in the fire service were viewed as objects of ridicule, although once German bombs began to fall on Britain they were transformed into heroes.¹³⁷ As Robb further suggests, the shift from passive to defensive warfare transformed the identity of the AFS as they were praised for their

¹³⁵ 'Battle of the Flames, Raid Damage and AFS Heroes Buried', *Illustrated London News*, 03 May 1941, p. 21.

¹³⁶ 'Auxiliary Firemen Killed', *Norwood News*, 25 April 1941, p. 4.

¹³⁷ Robb, 'The Front Line': Firefighting in British Culture, 1939–1945', 179-198 (pp. 181-183).

courage and bravery; this change in attitude was reflected in a range of cultural mediums including film and literature.¹³⁸ Yet, this change in opinion was also reflected through funerary rituals. Attending funeral processions, such as that in Beckenham in 1941, allowed the public to celebrate and recognise the contribution firemen had made in protecting London's architecture and people. Moreover, as Tara Bailey and Tony Walter suggest, attending a funeral has traditionally been a way for the living to pay tribute to the individual who has died.¹³⁹ Therefore, attending a funeral or watching a funeral procession, was an important ritual for the living, it united the living and the dead, and enabled the living to honour individuals who had sacrificed their lives in protecting their country.

Similarly, at the funeral of three wardens in Notting Hill, large crowds of residents gathered to watch the service. The service was reported on by the *West London Observer*, which described how the church was filled with members of the public along with relatives of the three men. It stated, 'A great crowd gathered to honour these heroes, the large church being quite inadequate to hold everybody who wished to be present.'¹⁴⁰ Indeed, mass attendance at a funeral suggested that it was an event of significance; it was a way for the living to publicly honour the dead. Notably, the heroic ideals which were attached to individuals who had died on duty, or who had sacrificed their lives in order to save another's, were heightened through public attendance to their funeral service. Attending funeral ceremonies, as Capdevila and Voldman describe, were moments of great intensity during times of war; they were ritualised expressions of farewell. Attendance to public funerals allowed the feats of the dead to be embraced by the living, and served a political and patriotic purpose.¹⁴¹ In this regard, funerals were temporal

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Bailey and Walter, 'Funerals Against Death', 149–166 (p. 163).

¹⁴⁰ 'Kensington Remembers its Wardens', *West London Observer*, 18 October 1940, p. 5.

¹⁴¹ Capdevila and Voldman, *War Dead*, pp. 137-138.

events in which the living could collectively commend the heroic feats of the dead. Through attending funerals, the civilian population confronted death and the potential danger of life on the Home Front. Attending funerals was important; it was a ritual of social worth for two key reasons. Firstly, the civilian war dead on the Home Front were present; unlike the dead of the armed forces, they could be buried by their relatives and laid to rest in their local community. Honouring the deaths of individuals who were considered heroic was of social value; publicly honouring the deaths of individuals who were courageous, capable and self-sacrificing boosted morale and showed appreciation for the dead. Secondly, services reminded the public that if they died in similar circumstances, they too would receive a hero's funeral.

Yet, attending funerals of the civilian war dead also challenged previous wartime narratives surrounding gender and death in wartime. As Anne-Marie Claire Hughes has described, during the First World War, the dominant narrative was that men died and women mourned them.¹⁴² As Hughes illustrates, this narrative did not account for national female heroes such as Edith Cavell, who demonstrated that women could also die heroically in wartime.¹⁴³ Indeed, the same occurred in the Second World War, as women who died on the Home Front, in dangerous roles, or whilst saving the life of another, challenged traditional understandings of feminine behaviour in wartime. Though their involvement in Civil Defence women worked in dangerous occupations, as ambulance drivers, wardens, on pump crews, and as Police Officers. Under bombardment these occupations were dangerous as women were exposed to the dangers of falling bombs. The public attendance to funerals of women who had been fatally injured on the Home Front highlighted how both women and men could be killed by enemy action, and that

¹⁴² Anne-Marie Claire Hughes, 'War, Gender and National Mourning: The Significance of the Death and Commemoration of Edith Cavell in Britain', *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire*, 12:3 (2005), 425-444 (p. 425).

¹⁴³ Ibid.

both men and women mourned the war dead. For example, at a funeral of Auxiliary Fire Service personnel during 1940, nine men and one woman were buried. The *Norwood News* reported on the event, stating that during the procession to the cemetery, ‘thousands of people lined the route, workmen laid down their tools and doffed their caps, while many women wiped the tears from their eyes. It was a final tribute to those who had lost their lives whilst serving their country against the menace of the skies.’¹⁴⁴ This funeral procession was highly attended by the local community; watching the procession was a way for locals to recognise the sacrifice paid by the fire service. The procession also reminded onlookers of the way that war had blurred the lines between gender and war. Notably, for the ten AFS individuals, their occupation as members of the fire service bonded them together; they had all died at their various posts at the hands of enemy action, regardless of their gender or role within the service. Funeral services which remembered the lives of both men and women highlighted that women’s bodies were also vulnerable to the dangers of war. Moreover, the funeral of 19-year-old Margaret Edith Passingham, a part time Warden of Post 19, Fulham, also highlighted how, in death, women were honoured for their contribution to the war effort.¹⁴⁵ The service received a smaller public attendance; yet it emphasised the dangerous roles women performed on the Home Front. Public attendance to funerals honoured the civilian war dead; attendance was a performative display of respect and reverence.

However, it was not only members of the public who attended funeral services and processions, Civil Defence units and the Emergency Services were often also present. Their presence at funerals was of important symbolic significance; it attached meaning to the event, and showed that death was not only honoured by the local community, but also by local Civil Defence units. Significantly, the presence of various uniformed

¹⁴⁴ ‘Impressive Scenes at A.F.S. funeral’, *Norwood News*, 15 November 1940, p. 2.

¹⁴⁵ ‘Miss M.E. Passingham: Wardens as Pallbearers’, *Fulham Chronicle*, 19 November 1943, p. 3.

detachments served to militarise the ceremony. At funerals such as that of Air Raid Warden, Eustratius Sevastopulo, the first warden to die from enemy action in Kensington, fellow wardens attended the service and formed a guard of honour. The *Kensington Post* reported on the event, detailing how the guard of honour served to pay a last tribute to Savastopulo, who in his last moments of life, had ‘displayed considerable courage and resolution.’¹⁴⁶ Moreover, at the funeral of a warden from Hendon, North London, a similar display was revealed. The service, whilst highly attended by friends and family, was also attended by warden colleagues, and representatives of the Fire Service and the Police, whose presence served to pay tribute to an individual who, as the *Hendon and Finchley Times* described, had ‘met his death...in the defence of London.’¹⁴⁷ In addition, at the funeral of three Wandsworth wardens, sectors of the Civil Defence services were present not only during the church service, but also after the service, where fellow wardens provided a guard of honour for the cortege.¹⁴⁸ The attendance of Civil Defence services at funerals reinforced parallels between conflict and camaraderie. Importantly, the attendance of Civil Defence units to funerals demonstrated unity in the face of death, and particularly when the deceased was a member of a local organisation, it displayed loyalty.

Moreover, at the funeral of two ‘Boy Heroes’, who died in Bermondsey in March 1941, wardens and scouts attended and formed a guard of honour.¹⁴⁹ The boys were Harry Hughes and Ernest Fricker, members of the Bermondsey ARP services. However, it is significant that their deaths were widely attended, even though they did not die whilst trying to save the life of another, instead, they were killed whilst on duty when a building fell on them during a raid. Instead, the circumstances surrounding their deaths meant that

¹⁴⁶ ‘Borough’s First Warden to Die from Raid Wounds’, *Kensington Post*, 01 February 1941, p. 1.

¹⁴⁷ ‘A Warden’s Funeral’, *Hendon and Finchley Times*, 04 October 1940, p. 3.

¹⁴⁸ ‘Funeral of Heroic Wardens’, *Norwood News*, 10 January 1941, p. 2.

¹⁴⁹ ‘Boy Heroes’ Funeral’, *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 18 March 1941, p. 3.

they died whilst performing their duty as ARP members under enemy attack. The act of remaining on duty despite potential danger, was enough for Hughes and Fricker's funeral to attract a crowd of mourners and fellow service personnel. Moreover, the age of these boy heroes is significant. They were only 17 years old when they were killed, and were thus legally too young to serve under *The National Service (Armed Forces) Act (1939)*. However, in their roles as Bermondsey Air Raid Wardens, they were exposed to comparable dangers and risks to life as adults on the front line. The deaths of adolescences in defence roles on London's Home Front, and across Britain, was significant as whilst they were younger than conscription age, they were actively facing danger and dying for their nation. As such, adolescents fulfilled a unique role in Civil Defence positions; they were the juvenile combatants of war. Through dying whilst on active duty as members of the Civil Defence services, their deaths were constructed as heroic as they engaged with wartime ideals of self-sacrifice and duty. As such, the mass attendance of members of the Civil Defence services denoted the heroic status of individuals who had died; their presence at funerals services served to publicly honour the actions of one of their own.

Reinforcing the heroic dimensions of war deaths was of important social value in wartime. The heroic identity which was constructed around the civilian war dead served a political and social purpose. For the living, it was important that the deaths of friends and relatives fulfilled a purpose. As Eva Åhrén notes, burials and funerals create meaning out of death.¹⁵⁰ Funeral services acted as an outlet where the heroic nature of death could be formally recognised, acknowledged and shaped. Funerary rituals confirmed that death amongst the civilian population had not occurred in vain. Individuals who had died in their homes from enemy action, or whilst actively engaging with the dangers of modern warfare, had all given the ultimate sacrifice. It was important that courage and valour was

¹⁵⁰ Eva Åhrén, *Death, Modernity, and the Body: Sweden 1870-1940* (Rochester, N.Y: University of Rochester Press, 2009) p. 4.

not only commended and recognised in life, but also in death. Indeed, rituals aligned the civilian war dead with heroic virtues associated with dying in battle.

However, public attendance was also high at the funeral services of children. In contrast to the heroic war dead, the deaths of children were surrounded with a narrative of vulnerability. This vulnerability stemmed from the way that children symbolised the innocent victims of war. In contrast with adults and adolescents, who were encouraged by the state to take an active role in wartime production and defence, children remained in a passive role. However, their deaths were not presented as futile. A prominent example of this construction was at a funeral service in South London in 1943. Thirty-eight children and six teachers were killed when Sandhurst Road School, Lewisham was directly hit by a bomb. At the funeral, which was held on the 27th January 1943, thirty-one children and one teacher were buried together in a mass grave, out of a total of thirty-nine children and five teachers. As Lucy Noakes describes in her exploration of grief and bereavement in wartime, this case in particular, highlighted the enormous human cost of war.¹⁵¹ The circumstances in which their deaths occurred is significant; at the time they were targeted these children and teachers had no defence against bombing. In contrast to civilians who, in the moments before death, had battled against enemy action, through physical action or emotional defiance, the way the deaths of children were represented suggested that they had been killed unfairly and dishonestly. Indeed, the *Illustrated London News*, which published images of the service, described the deceased as victims of war.¹⁵² The funeral service was widely attended, by members of the London County Council, and over two hundred relations of the children.¹⁵³ Notably, in contrast to the deaths of adults killed by enemy action, this ritual of attendance did not denote heroism,

¹⁵¹ Noakes, 'Gender, Grief, and Bereavement in Second World War Britain', 72-85 (p. 72).

¹⁵² 'The Massacre of the Innocents: The Burial of Lewisham's Child Victims', *Illustrated London News*, 06 February 1943, p. 18.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

instead it emphasised how children were victims of war on the Home Front. However, widespread public attendance at the funerals of raid victims suggests that the deaths of the civilian war dead were still publicly valued; through attending funerals, the public were able to demonstrate solidarity in the face of death. This was important in ensuring that even victims of war were honoured as members of a nation at war. As Noakes describes in her examination of expressions of grief in wartime, the attendance of the general public and local dignitaries to funerals served a dual purpose, to honour the dead, but also to provide condolence to the living and ensure that funerals were not morale sapping occasions.¹⁵⁴ The deaths of children also served a purpose in wartime; they embodied the brutality of war, whilst reflecting a shared desire to defeat the enemy.¹⁵⁵ It is important to emphasise that whilst not all deaths were framed as heroic, civilian deaths were constructed in a way which attached honour and value to the deceased. Thus, the funerals of children or raid victims were often surrounded with a narrative of tragedy, rather than valour, and sharply contrasted with the funerals of individuals whose deaths were represented as courageous and self-sacrificing.

Conclusions

Announcements and obituaries, burial practices and funerary rituals symbolised a heroic identity around the civilian war dead. As this chapter has shown, constructions and representations of the heroic war dead drew upon categories of valourisation to elevate the dead to a heroic status. Celebratory language, rhetorical phrases, sites of cultural importance, and rituals of citizenship acted as cultural markers which surrounded the deceased with notions of honour, national duty and self-sacrifice. Deaths caused by

¹⁵⁴ Noakes, 'Gender, Grief, and Bereavement in Second World War Britain', 72-85 (p. 78).

¹⁵⁵ Lucy Noakes, 'Valuing the dead: death, burial and the body in Second World War Britain', *Critical Military Studies*, (2019), 1-19 (p. 2). <DOI: 10.1080/23337486.2019.1663683> [Accessed: 10 February 2020]

enemy action, or in circumstances which required civilians to place themselves in danger, were particularly heightened to a heroic status. Arguably, dying from enemy action reinforced the extent to which civilians were able to engage with ideals of wartime heroism, as through death, individuals had sacrificed their lives in the fight for victory. As Scott Allison and George Goethals have described in their exploration of the social values of heroes, in death, individuals are viewed more favourably.¹⁵⁶ Individuals who display conscience and competence while championing a worthy cause are presented in a heroic manner; society particularly cherishes individuals who die whilst behaving in this way.¹⁵⁷ Death offered the opportunity for an individual's behaviour to be represented and constructed in a heroic manner; death was the ultimate sacrifice. The combination of announcements, burial practices and funerary rituals enabled the civilian to be aligned with ideals of heroism. The deaths of civilians were constructed in ways which celebrated the brave endeavours of individuals who had lost their lives; interpretations of heroic deaths centred around those who had died whilst on 'active duty', whether this duty was working as a member of Civil Defence, working in a factory, or defending one's home and family. Members of the Civil Defence services, who had been killed on active duty, were particularly valourised in death. Whilst not every death was represented in a way which reflected heroic qualities, burial practices and funerary rituals reveal that during wartime the state, as well as local communities, made a concerted effort to valourise their war dead. Through reinforcing the heroic status of the deceased, the British public were informed that in death civilians were respected, honoured and appreciated.

In wartime, a narrative of appreciation was centred around the war dead. As this chapter has illustrated, wartime practices and rituals were imbued with meaning. These practices and rituals were of social, cultural and political significance, and as such, shaped

¹⁵⁶ Allison and Goethals, *Heroes: What They Do and Why We Need Them*, p. 189.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

the identity of the deceased. In many ways, the heroic identity which surrounded the nation's war dead was not for the dead, it was for the living. Heroic identities reassured civilians that their loved ones had not died in vain. This chapter has also highlighted that although dead, bodies were valuable. As the heroic war dead, their value transcended the corporeal dimensions of the body and into spiritual and emotional realm. In wartime, death gives life meaning. Thus, constructions of the heroic war dead were used to symbolise the collective endurance and fortitude displayed by the Home Front population.

Conclusion

The Second World War was a period of change; lives were disrupted, citizens were mobilised, and the effects of conflict were brought directly into the domestic spaces of the nation. As this study has shown, civilian heroism was manufactured in response to the changed nature of modern warfare. Constructions of heroism did not appear in a vacuum; they fulfilled cultural needs and served social purposes. As this thesis has argued, Home Front heroism was spatial, temporal and corporeal; behaviour was framed in line with space, circumstance and the body. This study has deconstructed the complex layers of wartime heroism to show that there were multiple strands to the way that heroism was represented; notions of civilian wartime heroism were multidimensional, transient, perpetual and versatile. During the Second World War, ideals of heroism were flexible and were moulded to include a range of behaviours, individuals and contexts. While the chapters in this thesis have separately analysed the various ways that civilian heroism was represented and communicated, collectively these chapters illustrate how ideals of Home Front heroism were layered and complex. As this thesis has shown, it was the multifaceted nature of civilian heroism which made it such a powerful creation during wartime.

A number of social and cultural historians have explored the attributes of Home Front heroism. However, in contrast to Penny Summerfield, Linsey Robb and Sonya Rose, who have argued that ideals of heroism were shaped by conformity or departure from notions of masculinity and femininity, this thesis argues that in wartime heroic virtues were not only shaped by gendered behaviour, but also through occupational expectations, the potential for rewards, wounding, and death.¹ This thesis has built upon studies which explore the gendered nature of wartime heroism, to reveal that heroism was

¹ Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives*, pp. 77-114.
Robb, *Men at Work*, pp. 76-100.
Rose, *Which People's War*, pp. 151-196.

framed in accordance with gender ideals, yet, it was also framed in relation to wartime values of duty, responsibility and citizenship. In contrast to John Price who suggests that in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the behaviour of civilians was constructed as an ‘everyday heroism’ due to the way that it involved familiar activities and took place in commonplace environments, this thesis has shown that war supplanted notions of everyday heroism.² War was a period of flux, and as such, civilian heroism was far from an everyday phenomenon; in wartime, civilians were presented as ordinary people doing commendable and often exceptional things. Through examining heroism in the Second World War, this study has explored in greater detail how heroic figures and virtues were manufactured and represented. Through focusing specifically on London, this study has shown that the experiences of Londoners were often used as representative of the nation. Stories of heroism within the capital were reported in newspapers and shown in newsreels across the country. For example, images of London’s wartime skyline, including the iconic scene of St Paul’s Cathedral emerging unscathed from clouds of smoke and fire during a night of bombardment, were viewed by civilians nationwide as they were published in the national press. London was at the forefront of war of the Home Front, as such, London’s cityscape bore the brunt of enemy attack. Londoners occupied a unique position on the frontline; their experiences were presented as exclusive to the capital but also illustrative of the nation as a whole.

Through using a range of methodological approaches, including a spatial analysis, examining the body as a site where heroic values were articulated, and exploring the material culture of heroism, a nuanced contribution can be made to the discussion of wartime heroism. This methodology reveals that notions of wartime heroism were manufactured, produced and communicated in various ways and by different outlets. This thesis also reveals how war altered the way that heroism was conceptualised. Through

² Price, *Everyday Heroism*, p. 200.

reviewing the four intersecting themes which weave throughout this study; space, material culture, the body, and death, this thesis reveals that to understand how wartime heroism was constructed requires many layers of analysis.

Throughout the war, heroism was framed in relation to its spatial dimensions. As modern warfare brought conflict to the Home Front, cities across Britain were transformed. London was particularly changed by war due to its geographical importance as the centre of trade, government and royalty. London was the heart of the nation. During wartime, peacetime spaces were made unfamiliar. London's skyline was filled with barrage balloons, homes and factories were furnished with air raid precautions, and gardens contained Anderson shelters, replacing lawns, vegetables and flowers. By night, city streets were enveloped in the darkness of the blackout, and anti-aircraft beams scoured the shadows for enemy aircraft. This landscape became representative of spaces of combat and men and women of varying ages were thrust into this new environment. Engagement with familiar and unfamiliar spaces on the Home Front influenced how civilian behaviour was conceptualised and framed during wartime, across a range of spaces, a multiplicity of heroism was recognised. As Chapter One has shown, within London, spaces were reshaped by production demands, the threat of danger and the risk of death. Yet, modern warfare also reconfigured how civilians engaged with spaces that they once knew as home. The demands of production, protection and defence provided civilians with the opportunity to behave heroically. As this thesis has shown, within London, in the factory, the city on fire, and the ambulance, behaviour was framed in relation to social contribution. Wartime production demands brought new workers into the factory environment. As both men and women were celebrated for their wartime work, productivity was represented as a form of heroism. The heroism of wartime workers centred upon their contribution to production demands; these workers were positioned as central in the battle for victory. Throughout the war a strong propaganda

message was communicated to the British public that without their contribution to armaments and hardware, the armed forces were not equipped to fight overseas. The spatial significance of the wartime factory prompted heroic ideals to broaden as the contribution of workers was represented as vitally important to the war effort.

Aerial bombardment transformed the cityscape. As London was targeted by the enemy, neighbourhoods were transformed into battlefields, streets were set alight, and buildings were demolished. Within the burning city, civilians were collectively celebrated for displays of fortitude during periods of enemy attack. Fires were a constant result of bombardment. Between 1940 and 1941, incendiary bombs were used by the German Luftwaffe to create widespread destruction across urban areas. Notably, the demolition caused by incendiary bombs surpassed the moment of contact; each incendiary bomb was responsible for sparking fires which spread across the buildings and dwellings of the capital. Fire changed the face of London's wartime landscape as night upon night the darkness of the blackout was illuminated with a crimson glow as fires swept throughout neighbourhoods and industrial districts. Notably, bombardment created a unique landscape for heroism. Whereas the armed forces travelled to the battlefield, the front line was brought to the civilian population. This battlefield-like environment heightened the heroic identity of, and offered opportunities for heroic acts, to particular individuals. Most notably, engagement with the burning cityscape enabled firemen to be represented as heroic protectors. Across a range of wartime propaganda, the public were reminded how fighting fires positioned firemen as equal to the armed forces. Their heroism centred upon their engagement with danger; like soldiers, sailors and airmen, firemen were tasked with fighting a battle which placed them at increased risk of being injured or killed. During periods of bombardment the Fire Service battled for hours on end to contain large blazes and prevent small fires from spreading. Yet, firemen were not only positioned as heroic in their protection of people, they were also positioned as heroic in their battle to save

sites of architectural importance across the city. Fire was symbolic of destruction, but also renewal; fire brought devastation and ruin, yet, it also suggested that London would emerge from the ashes stronger than before. Like Mark Connelly, this work has argued that wartime propaganda utilised images of fire to heighten the heroic identity of the Fire Service during the Blitz.³ In the press and media, the city on fire was constructed as a masculine domain. As such, representations of men in the Fire Service channelled traditional notions of wartime heroism as firemen fought to battle the flames.

The ambulance was also a space of heroism. Yet, unlike the wider landscape of the burning city, the ambulance remained less of a specifically gendered space. Both men and women were encouraged to enrol as ambulance drivers and attendants. Yet, through their work as ambulance personnel, women faced dangers which were traditionally associated with men during periods of conflict. Aerial bombardment altered the nature of peacetime ambulance work and the process of transporting the wounded; during periods of enemy attack, ambulance personnel faced the dangers of falling bombs whilst fulfilling their occupational duties. During wartime the ambulance was a liminal space between life and death, safety and danger; it was an enclosed environment within the wider dangers of the city. The peacetime safety of the ambulance vehicle was reconfigured in wartime; under bombardment, the ambulance, and those within it were vulnerable to further risk, damage and destruction. During periods of enemy attack, the ambulance was an important arena for female heroism. The behaviour of female ambulance personnel was represented in ways which enabled women to build on traditional notions of women as maternal nurturers. Whilst ambulance work was represented as a caregiving profession, under wartime conditions workers were also recognised for their courage and bravery when attending to the wounded. Spatial engagement reinforced and contested traditional wartime gender ideals. In the public domain, behaviour was associated with gendered

³ Connelly, *We Can Take It*, pp. 131-138.

expectations, and conduct which fulfilled social contribution and was of cultural importance. However, spaces which remained less traditionally gendered, such as the ambulance, exposed women to the same dangers as their male colleagues. This caused ideals of gendered heroism to blur, as women actively faced danger as part of their occupational duties. The spatial analysis of heroism reveals that women were recognised for heroic conduct beyond the remits of nursing.

In contrast to the First World War where women remained behind the lines, during the Second World War, women were actively encouraged to move into the line of danger; neighbourhoods and districts became sites of local danger as war was brought to the Home Front. Importantly, ambulance work enabled women to traverse behavioural expectations and gender boundaries. Spatial engagement and behavioural expectations played a fundamental role in the way that wartime heroism was constructed and represented. As attitudes towards women's role in the war slowly altered, notions of female heroism evolved. Although ideals of female heroism were still largely informed by social and cultural ideals of gender, women were recognised for extraordinary and exceptional heroism beyond the expected remits of femininity and war.

Heroic identities were also forged through wartime material culture. As this thesis argues, during wartime objects such as uniforms and medals carried particular social and cultural meaning and shaped facets of identity. On the Home Front, objects which adorned and decorated the civilian body shaped how heroism was perceived. As discussed in Chapter Two, uniforms, medals and awards altered how the corporeal potential of the civilian body was constructed in the public domain. Objects, which carried social and cultural meaning, cultivated and supported heroic identities. As this thesis argues, uniforms were significant objects of cultural meaning; they signified skill, expertise and potential. During periods of conflict, uniforms not only militarised the body, but also offered the potential for heroism. During the Second World War, individuals in the Civil

Defence and Emergency Services were provided with uniforms so they were better equipped to face the hazardous conditions on the Home Front. Yet, along with providing workers with appropriate clothing, uniforms brought together the numerous sectors of Civil Defence and the Emergency Services. Their uniforms were inspired by military designs and suggested that wearers were ready for combat. Militarising the bodies of the Civil Defence and Emergency Services created a collective identity and reflected heroic potential; the population relied on these individuals to defend and protect the city in a similar way to those safeguarding Britain through fighting beyond its borders.

In contrast, medals and awards recognised heroic conduct through attaching acclaim to particular behaviours. Medals constructed and reflected meaning around a set of behaviours or actions; they were physical embodiments of civilian heroism. Medals, awards and commendations recognised a variety of heroics, including bravery and courage, but also intellect and knowhow; this spectrum ensured that a range of civilian behaviours were recognised as notable. Medals recognised the feats of the body and the mind and reflected the changed relationship between bodies and space during wartime. For example, elderly individuals who were awarded for singlehandedly extinguishing incendiary bombs, or children who cycled through bombed streets to relay messages were recognised as all the more notable due to their rejection of their own personal vulnerability within spaces of war. Medals and awards served an important role on the Home Front; they were didactic objects which encouraged particular behaviours. Although they were objects which were rarely worn in public, newspaper reports of civilians who had been awarded medals ensured that the population were kept informed of distinguished conduct. The coverage of medal recipients in the press and media conveyed a powerful message, that in this new war, civilians not only within London but across the nation, were displaying and being recognised for heroism in the face of hardship and adversity.

This thesis argues that war was an embodied experience. War was experienced through the bodies of the civilian population, as such, the civilian body was central to constructions of wartime heroism. The body was a site where heroic virtues were identified. As Chapter Three shows, wartime wounding shaped notions of heroism as injuries were conceptualised in accordance to how they were sustained. Specific spaces heightened the possibility for injury; the population were at risk of injury at work, at home, and on the streets. During wartime, propaganda campaigns advised civilians how to protect their bodies from workplace injuries and accidents in the wider community. Accidents in the home, workplace and city streets increased as spaces were made unfamiliar by the wartime landscape. Yet, civilians were informed that accidents in the workplace and community were unnecessary and should be avoided. Since maintaining a healthy workforce was a priority in wartime, civilians were praised for remaining uninjured.

By contrast, wounding from enemy action was represented as having been sustained heroically. Although the population were advised how to protect themselves from enemy attack, the potential for widespread injury was high. Throughout the war, the government provided civilians with pamphlets and booklets advising how to protect against enemy attack. Certain spaces heightened the potential for wounding under enemy action; wounding occurred at home, at work, in shelters, and on the streets. Yet, when wounding had occurred as a result of enemy action, the wounded were identified by notions of being wounded in combat. War wounds were represented as markers of courage; they symbolised the destructive nature of warfare and were framed as akin to battle wounds. Notably, it was the way that wounds were sustained, rather than the physical wounds themselves that mattered to constructions of heroism; civilians who sustained wounds from enemy attack were likened to the armed forces as they too were wounded in battle. Wounding caused by enemy action defined the civilian injured as a

separate type of war casualty. However, in contrast to the general population who were encouraged to take shelter during bombardment, the Civil Defence and Emergency Services were placed at heightened risk of injury as they had a duty to fulfil occupational responsibilities. As such, injuries sustained by the Civil Defence and Emergency Services were attached with a heightened meaning as they had not only been wounded, but had been wounded in action. Wounding reflected the vulnerability of the body and the proximity of civilians to danger. Therefore, surrounding wounding with a heroic narrative served a social purpose; it was important to reassure the public that injuries were marks of bravery and courage and were a worthwhile sacrifice.

Heroic identities were also constructed in death. Across London, around 30,000 civilians were killed by aerial bombardment. As the city which experienced the most significant concentrations of attack, it also sustained the highest levels of civilian fatalities. Throughout the war, burial practices and funerary rituals were authorised by the state to manage the disposal of the war dead. These practices and rituals ensured that in death, the bodies of the deceased were valourised. As detailed in Chapter Four, the identity of the civilian war dead was understood through an array of practices and rituals, these customs ensured that deaths from enemy action were particularly aligned with heroic qualities. Similar to Noakes, this work has highlighted how the civilian war dead were attached with symbolic value in wartime.⁴ Creating a heroic narrative around deaths from enemy action was of social importance. As thousands of civilians were killed on the Home Front from enemy action, it was important that their lives were represented as worthy and of value to the war effort. The state recognised that in death, as in life, civilians should be treated and respected as combatants. The burial of the civilian war dead on the Home Front shaped how death was conceptualised by the public, as a conscious effort was made by the British government to align the civilian war dead with

⁴ Noakes, *Dying for the Nation*, p. 185.

the dead of the armed forces. As such, a heroic narrative surrounded the civilian war dead which centred upon courage and self-sacrifice. For example, burial in official war graves valourised the war dead. Yet, some burial practices such as mass graves, which attempted to attach civilian burials with the reverence of a soldier's burial, were unpopular with the public. While mass graves aimed to solve the logistical issues associated with excavating large numbers of graves, they were long-associated with a pauper's burial. For the good of public morale, it was important for the state to valourise civilians who had died for their country. Embodied practices and rituals connected the deceased with traditional notions of heroic war deaths. Rituals, such as covering the coffin of the deceased with the Union Jack flag, were used to attach military honour to civilian funeral; this ritual suggested that the deceased had died for their nation. Equally, the public attendance to funerals of the civilian war dead also attached honour to deaths, and embodied practices and rituals layered heroic identities, and raised some individuals, such as those in the Civil Defence and Emergency Services to a higher status. Dying was the biggest sacrifice an individual could make in wartime, therefore, it was crucial that the deaths of civilians were attached with meaning. However, the deaths of children were represented differently to those of adults. When children were killed by enemy action, their deaths remained centred upon their status as victims of modern warfare. In death, children were angelic, rather than heroic.

Examining the four interlinking themes that weave throughout this thesis highlights the temporal qualities of wartime heroism. Constructions, representations and communications of heroic ideals were flexible and mutable. This study reveals that representations of civilian heroism were specific to the wartime period, and were fuelled directly from the way that war changed the cityscape and the spaces within it. War altered daily life, as a consequence, heroism was recognised in new spheres and in new contexts. Industrial spaces became sites of strategic importance in wartime, and as a direct result,

workers were raised to a heroic status through their efforts in meeting production demands. Yet, above all, constructions of heroism were contingent to periods of bombardment, which brought danger, destruction and death to the Home Front; this created an increased potential for heroics. As this thesis reveals, the Civil Defence and Emergency Services were particularly recognised and rewarded for heroic behaviour during periods of bombardment. However, danger, destruction and death also created a heightened need for heroism. During periods when London was under enemy attack, constructions of heroism were more prevalent than periods when the capital was not being targeted. This suggests that during periods of disorder and hardship, there were not only increased cases of heroic conduct, but there was also an upsurge in the appetite for heroism. Constructions of heroism were manufactured to meet this social need to see bravery, fortitude and endurance during times of strain. During and after periods of bombardment the state issued morale boosting propaganda to the British public, as such, the heroism the British people, and especially Londoners, appeared across a range of pamphlets, books, films, documentaries and radio broadcasts. It was particularly important for the state to recognise the collective courage and heroic endurance displayed by all civilians, accompanied by individual stories of bravery and defiance.

Exploring how heroism was framed during wartime reveals how heroic virtues broadened and evolved. On the Home Front, civilians were celebrated for displays of courage, bravery, duty, expertise, self-sacrifice, wounding and lost lives. These ideals embodied traditional concepts of wartime heroism and were directly linked to military conduct within battlefield environments. The danger and destruction experienced on the Home Front created the potential for civilians to behave in ways which were traditionally associated with the armed forces in times of war. Extinguishing fires, transporting the wounded, ushering others to safety, and conveying messages under threat all enabled civilians to display, and be recognised for, these traditional qualities. These ideals of

heroism were temporal virtues, and were predominantly recognised during periods of enemy attack.

In contrast, this thesis has shown throughout the course of the war, other virtues were associated with the heroic ideal. In the workplace, heroic productivity was celebrated. Moreover, ordinary civilians conducting daily life under bombardment were commended for their collective endurance and fortitude, indeed, civilians were celebrated for simply enduring a situation heroically. Compassion and caregiving were also given the same type of value and recognition as more traditional heroic ideals. As gender roles blurred in wartime, both men and women worked as protectors and caregivers. For men, such as those in the fire service, their masculine heroism was tempered by displays of kindness and camaraderie as they worked together to protect the population from the dangers of bombardment. For women who worked in dangerous professions, such as the ambulance service, displays of courage and bravery at the hands of the ambulance wheel were tempered by caregiving virtues. Understanding how heroic features broadened and evolved reveals how specific qualities were attached to specific occupations, genders, or contexts. However, it also reveals how these attributes were malleable during wartime and could be displayed by a number of individuals. Throughout this study, the close examination of how heroic virtues were constructed in the public sphere reveals that whilst a spectrum of civilian heroism existed, some qualities, such as self-sacrifice and fearless valour were positioned as superior. The age, gender and occupation of an individual also affected how heroism was perceived, for instance, if heroic behaviour defied social expectations or obligations, then it was often elevated. Equally, if an individual lost their life whilst saving the life of another they were particularly valourised. Examining the qualities of wartime heroism reveals that heroic virtues could be displayed by the whole population, regardless of age, gender or occupation. In wartime, heroism

was given new meaning as the entirety of the population were exposed to the demands and dangers of modern warfare.

This study reveals that civilian heroism was largely constructed through wartime propaganda. The Ministry of Information, which oversaw the production of films, booklets, posters, radio broadcasts and exhibitions, were largely responsible for constructions of heroism in the public domain. Wartime propaganda played a central role in shaping the discourse around civilian heroism, and often these official narratives were echoed at the local level. Service magazines and workplace journals endorsed the heroism of their employees or members, and wartime literature and war art, sometimes even unintentionally, echoed official constructions of heroism. Legislation and circulars shaped how the civilian role in wartime was conceptualised. However, an analysis of wartime heroics reveals that civilian heroism was, in many ways, accidental. Displays of heroic behaviour occurred due to the devotion to duty performed by individuals, and as a result, heroic ideals were thrust upon the civilian population. The civilian population were endowed with heroic attributes, yet, on a personal level, people did not frame their own behaviour as heroic. Rather, heroism was an externally imposed construction. Therefore, this thesis highlights that as individuals repeated official narratives surrounding expectations of heroism, national duty and wartime citizenship, it is hard to uncover how people truly felt about their own personal heroic behaviour.

It is clear that wartime heroism was framed to serve a specific set of functions. Real, anonymous and fictional heroes served as exemplars of behaviour and embodied ideals for the rest of the population to aspire to. The temporal nature of heroism, in the way that constructions of bravery and valour increased during periods of adversity, illustrates how Home Front heroism needed to be recognised and valourised during times of strain. Propaganda, cultural objects, practices and rituals confirmed the existence and importance of heroism. It was vital for the confidence of civilians on the Home Front to

believe that there were heroes in their midst during times of hardship. As such, heroic constructions were employed as motivational tools to encourage the population to fulfil their duties as citizens of the Home Front, whether it was through war work, or responding appropriately during periods of bombardment. Stories of heroism in the public domain gave civilians the confidence to know and test their own heroic potential. These reports and tales reassured civilians that if the moment required it, they might be close to someone who would save them, or they might find capacity within themselves to save others.

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